

## THROWING DRILLS

It is common to start every practice by having the kids partner up and throw to each other, however if they are not doing it the right way, then this is wasted time. Make the best use of this time by teaching them the proper form, and creating good habits that they can apply any time that they are playing catch:

### Warm Up Throwing Drills:

**Grip** – With a partner have the players take a knee (glove knee up) facing each other no more than 10 feet apart. With their throwing elbow bent and propped up on their glove, play pass. This will resemble throwing darts, as the fore arm and wrist is all that is used. This puts emphasis on using the proper 4 seem grip and the kids will start to get a feel for how to hold and release the ball. The ball should be held with their finger tips on the threads which will create rotation as it comes off their fingers.

**Get Sideways** – Now standing and a little further apart have them stand sideways with weight balanced equally and ball in glove with hands together. To throw they separate their hands and shift their weight first back then forward to throw. With good rotation in the hips, bringing their chin towards their target, follow through after the throw, finishing with chest over front knee.

**Equal and Opposite** – An important aspect of doing the above drill correctly can be demonstrated by having them freeze once their hands separate. As they are frozen Coach, and partner, and player themselves can check their posture. Their arms should be extended “Equal and Opposite” not one up and one down, not one bent and one straight, but like a mirror image of each other.

**Reach for the Cookie** – Another common mistake especially for younger kids with smaller hands is that they clutch the ball or throw it with their fingers under the ball. This can be correct during the frozen separated stage by thinking of the ball as a cookie in their hand that they are reaching back and taking out of a cookie jar. Their hand literally turns AWAY from them. Another way to teach this to an infielder or pitcher is “Waive to the center fielder” because their hand is again turned around as if waving to someone standing in center field.

**Ice Cream Cone** – The Glove arm is actually just as important as the throwing arm. That is your aiming device, and the path that the lead arm takes the throwing hand will follow. For instance some kids will throw open wide their lead arm and it causes accuracy problems, or throw their lead arm downward which cause their throwing motion to catapult upwards. The correct path is actually to pull the lead arm back towards the body, tucking the elbow in and bring the glove towards their chin. A good way for a young player to think about it is as though they have a burger or an ice cream in their glove and as they finish their throw, they should be able to lick the ice cream out of the top of their glove. Take a look online and compare the throwing motion of Tim Tebow vs. one of the Mannings, and you will see why people are so critical of Tebow as a passer.

**Receiving** – Catching the ball is just as important in these drills as receiving. Again no wasted time and no wasted activity. The receiver should be ready to catch every throw with 2 hands up in front of his body presenting a target. Once they are standing, the catch should be made with glove out in front and Glove-side leg in front. Use 2 hands to secure and then transfer the ball to throw.

**Box Step** - Receiving the ball in the above manner is important because it allows them to immediately transfer and begin the proper motion to throw the ball back. The first step of which is the “Box Step”, which is to bring your throwing side foot from the back, towards your target, landing in front of you sideways open to

the target. Once this foot lands, they then take another step with their glove side leg to get sideways again, at this point they should be right back at Equal and opposite. It is a beautiful thing to see when it all comes together and they then throw the ball and the partner repeats the same steps. It is like a dance.

### **Throwing Games:**

Once players are properly warmed up you can transition right into any number of very common competitive games

**“In a Row”** – Standing at equal distances, which pair of players can successfully throw back and forth the most times in a row. Determine a winner, then play again until someone beats that record. The ultimate winner is the team that beats the record the third time. This mimics innings in a game, and teaches them that they have a chance to come back and raise their level of play each inning. Throw a wrench in the game by randomly rotating partners to mix things up.

**Step Back** – Increase the level of difficulty now by making the competition based on successfully throwing a ball back and forth over an increasing distance. This will force the kids to use their feet applying the box step to create momentum, and gain ground toward their target. Everyone starts the same distance away from their partner. Each round consists of throwing the ball back and forth without dropping it. After each round, one side all take 2 steps backwards and the teams continue to progress level by level until only one team successfully completes the level. You can be lenient by giving each player one drop, then the third “strike” and they are out.

**First to 10** – You will find that in the above drill the kids start to take their time with each throw, which isn’t bad if they are still using the right mechanics, but to speed things back up a bit, play “First to 10” Catches. With partners all standing at equal distances, which team can be the first to 10 throws. This puts emphasis on quick transfer and good feet to be the fastest. As a general rule, you should always try to build up to a drill where they are in a situation that mimics the paces of a real game situation.

### **Team Drills:**

See the “Infield Box Drill” diagram for ideas of how to recreate a baseball diamond without actually taking the field, and create team throwing games that mimic real game actions and necessary throws that will occur in a game