

# Aurora Area Girls Softball

## Fundamentals of Fast Pitch

By Diane Fulfer & Andrea Fulfer

**This is a brief overview of some of the theory and fundamentals we teach in our clinics throughout the year. The information is intended to aid coaches and parents as well as the pitchers themselves, in maintaining top form. Becoming a successful pitcher does not happen overnight. It takes patience on the part of all; the pitcher, the parent, and the coach. Pitching is a skill which must be learned both physically and mentally; it takes many, many hours of quality practice (not quantity!). All pitchers, even the best, have had bad innings, bad games, and days when they could not get the ball even close to the plate, So don't get frustrated and remember, "One of the most important qualities a pitcher can possess is the desire to persevere." (Michelle Smith, Pitcher, USA Gold Medal Team)**

**If you have any questions or would like more information concerning clinics or individual lessons, please call.**

**Thank You and Good Luck!**

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### **PITCHING BASICS**

#### **Rocking**

**The pitcher should begin balanced on the pitching rubber with all of her weight on her drive leg, and her arms relaxed. As she begins her wind-up, her weight should transfer back to her stride leg. As her hands prepare to go towards the plate, and she prepares to stride, weight is then transferred back to the drive leg.**

#### **The Stride**

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## **Arm Motion**

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## **Leg Drive**

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## **Pitches**

### **Change-Up**

There are a variety of grips for the change-up: knuckle, palm, or circle. Use the one which works best for you. When pitching the change-up, be sure to keep your arm speed and motion the same as the fastball in order to fool the batter. The release is the key; be sure to extend the release toward the catcher. Be sure to have a “soft” release. The stride should be the same or slightly longer than the fastball.

### **Spin Drop**

Grip the ball with three fingers over one of the four seams. The stride is short enough to push over the ball. The key to the pitch is the spin of the ball with the wrist cocked and not snapping the wrist. Release early and follow through up to the ear making sure to stay tight to the body. When learning the pitch, start the motion slowly until the ball drops, and then gradually speed up the motion.

### **Over-the-top Drop**

Grip the ball the same as the spin drop. The stride is shortened. The key is the release of the ball. When coming to the release point, snap the ball down while keeping the elbow straight. Be sure to keep the arm close to the body and go down the leg with the release with the fingers pointing down. The shoulder of the throwing arm should slightly follow the downward motion.

### **Curve**

## Wrist Snaps

**Purpose:** To increase wrist strength, and wrist snap in the motion. This will lead to an increase in speed.

1. Stand 3-5 feet from a catcher or wall.
2. Hold your arm straight down at your side next to your hip.
3. Cock your wrist as far back as possible, without moving your arm.
4. Throw the ball by snapping only your wrist and fingers, and then allowing your arm to follow through completely as it would in your motion.

**Concentrate on:** cocking your wrist completely, and letting the ball roll off your fingertips as you snap.

*“The best pitch looks like a strike. . . but isn’t.” Warren Spahn*

## Slingshot Throws

**Purpose:** To work on wrist snap, release point, follow through of arm and glove pull.

1. Stand sideways (at a 90 degree angle to catcher) with feet shoulder width apart, 10— 15 feet from the catcher.
2. Pitching arm should be high, with elbow bent at a 90 degree upward, glove pointed toward the catcher.
3. Cock your wrist so you can see the back of your hand, and the ball is facing the sky.
4. Pitch the ball (do not move your feet) follow through making sure to close your hips.

**Concentrate on:** snapping the wrist at the release point driving hard with the back leg toward the catcher in order to close the hips, pulling the glove and following through with the arm.

## Wheels:

**Purpose:** To work on the entire upper body motion as a whole, in particular the opening and closing of the shoulders and maintaining balance.

1. Stand facing the catcher 20 - 20 feet away, with feet shoulder width apart.

2. Pitch with your normal motion but keep your feet still, do not take a step.

**Concentrate on:** making a good circle with your arm (keep it in close to your body), getting your glove up and pulling it down, opening and closing your shoulder, wrist snap, and follow through.

Keep your weight on your heels and do not lean forward.

### **Pitching on One Foot**

**Purpose:** To improve balance, and keep from bending over.

(This drill is basically the same as wheels but is performed on one foot.)

1. Stand on right foot, (right handed pitcher) keep the other foot off the ground as long as possible.

2. Pitch the ball using normal motion, but staying on one foot through the pitch.

**Concentrate on:** not bending over, and keeping a good center of gravity.

### **One Minute Drill**

**Purpose:** relaxation and endurance

1. Have someone start timing one minute.

2. Pitch back and forth to your catcher as quickly as possible.

**Concentrate on:** as soon as you catch the ball, throw it right back and don't worry about getting set. The object is to get in as many pitches as possible in one minute.

### **Visualization: Pitching With Your Eyes Closed**

**Purpose:** To improve concentration and overall motion.

1. Focus on the target and then close your eyes. Pitch normally.

2. As you pitch, pretend you are watching yourself on video.

3. Watch yourself throw the perfect motion.

4. As you watch the motion in your head, perform every step exactly as you see it.

**Concentration:** having a picture of the perfect pitch on your head and

relaxing as you throw.

### Throw on One Knee

**Purpose:** To improve wrist snap and stay up straight. (Stated for a right-handed pitcher, lefties reverse)

1. About 15—20 feet from the catcher go down onto the right knee and point the left foot toward the catcher, pointing the glove. *You* will begin all of the four stages the same except for the throwing hand

2. (First stage) The throwing arm is at the side with the wrist cocked.

3. (Second stage) The throwing arm is shoulder high held straight out.

4. (Third stage) The throwing arm is at a 90 degree angle

5. (Fourth stage) The arm is straight up in power position.

6. From the stage follow through remembering to snap at the release point and pull the glove down.

7. Repeat each stage in succession 10—20 three each.

**Concentrateon:** snapping the wrist at the release point and pulling the glove down and square up to the catcher with the shoulders. The elbow should follow through to the ear.

*“A can-do mentality is a pitchers best friend.” Nolan Ryan*

### Pitching Problems

Problem	Reason	Correction
1. Ball High up straight	Late release, bending over,	Hit you release point, stand
glove and	cupping the ball not snapping	cock the wrist out of the
	wrist (pushing the ball)	good snap

**2. Ball Low up straight**      **Early release, arm to slow, bending over, no wrist snap**      **Hit you release point, stand stand up straight, good wrist snap**

**3. Ball inside and shoulder**      **Stride too far to the right, hips not closing, twisting the wrist through straight**      **Step straight ahead, close hips with good leg drive, follow ahead, keep the hand behind the ball**

**4. Ball outside above**      **Step too far left, follow through across body, turning the hand over the ball on release**      **Same as**

**5. Speed decreased Shortening the arm due to shoulder. Explode out**      **Relax the arm and tenseness, grip too tight, arm of the glove, good wrist snap, and leg drive**      **speed too slow, no wrist snap**

***A pitcher who hasn't control hasn't anything." Joe McCarthy***

**View from the side:**

**Top of Backswing**

**Stride foot landing**

**Heel toe**

**Hips and shoulder opens**

**Arm extended over head**

**Wrist cooked Knees flexed**

**Weight even and standing up straight**

### **Middle of Downswing**

**Closing hips**

**Bent elbow wrist still cooked**

**Knees flexed**

**Eyes on target**

**Beginning to drive to plate**

**Up straight**

### **3. Point of Release**

**Arm straight**

**Hips closing**

**Leg driving forward**

**Weight on stride foot**

**Up straight**

### **4. After Release**

**Hips closed**

**Leg driving forward**

**Body upright and balanced**

**Knees lined**

**Bent arm**

**5. Follow through**

**Bank leg forward**

**Arm elbow moving forward**

**View from the back:**

**Top of Backswing**

**Ball high overhead in line with body**

**Standing tall**

**Knees flexed**

**Step toward catcher**

**Hips and shoulder open**

**Middle of Downswing**

**Elbow bent**

**Trunk slightly lateral lean to the right**

**Armin line with good circle**

**Point of Release**

**Fully extended, perpendicular arm**

**Hips closing, leg driving forward**

## FollowThrough

Weight over front leg

Back foot driving forward

Arm follow-through going toward catcher

*“Pitching is the art of instilling fear”.* **Sandy Koufax**