

EVALUATION CHECKLIST FOR CATCHERS

The catcher plays a key role in the success of your program. The catcher must be the team's leader. The catcher has the entire field in front of them and they are able to read and react to every situation. While the ball is in play, the catcher is the only position that never has their back to the action. The catcher must take command and deserve respect and performance from her pitching staff and other position players. When a critical situation is at hand, the catcher must step-up and take charge of the game. The number one goal of any team should be keeping runners off base. If runners do not get on base, the opponent has a very difficult time scoring. When runners do get on, keeping them where they are or forcing them out at the next base is vital to winning ball games. Holding runners to the base they have just reached is a difficult task that falls on the shoulders of the catcher most of the time. The more control a catcher assumes, the more successful the defensive execution. In order for a catcher to gain control, she must build confidence in her physical abilities and also support it with her knowledge of the game.

It is essential to critique an athlete's catching skills to develop an objective list for improvement. The following checklist is an extremely valuable tool for the coach to utilize when evaluating a catcher. The "needs work" column will define the catcher's skills that need to be addressed more frequently. As a coach, it is imperative to give feedback and guidance to your athletes. The checklist is a clear cut way to show your athletes what you expect them to be able to perform.

A coach that is out there trying to recruit a catcher or holding tryouts for their team will find the checklist an easy and thorough way of assessing a catcher's talent. The checklist will help you view how a particular catcher will fit into your program.

<u>EXCELLENT:</u>	<u>GOOD:</u>	<u>NEEDS WORK:</u>	<u>SKILL: STANCE</u>
			Feet are a little wider than shoulder width apart, toes pointed out.
			Remains on the flat of their feet, with weight up toward the balls of feet
			Arms are relaxed, elbows outside the knees and flexed when receiving the ball.
			Throwing hand is fisted with thumb inside fingers.
			Throwing hand is behind the back with no runner on base.
			Throwing hand is behind the glove with runner on base.
			Head is near the glove and facing directly toward the pitcher.
			Head is above the shoulders and hips below.
			Uses her body as well as her glove to set up behind the portion of the plate in which the pitch is being called.
			Shoulders and chest are upright and tall if receiving a high pitch.
			Shoulders and chest are leaning over, getting low to receive the low pitch
			Feet are lined up evenly, not staggered.
			Sits as close to the plate as possible, adjusts on different hitters.

<u>EXCELLENT:</u>	<u>GOOD:</u>	<u>NEEDS WORK:</u>	<u>SKILL: GIVING THE SIGNAL</u>
			The glove is outside below the left knee (right handed catcher) blocking the view of signals from base coach.
			Knees are close together to hide signals.
			Fingers stay even with legs, not below when giving the signal.
			Catcher indicates type of pitch clearly to pitcher (look for a clear understanding from the pitcher).
			After giving the signal and the batter turns to the pitcher, moves to receive the pitch.

<u>EXCELLENT:</u>	<u>GOOD:</u>	<u>NEEDS WORK:</u>	<u>SKILL: RECEIVING THE PITCH</u>
			Catches the pitch with one hand.
			Moves and receives the pitch with the body behind the ball.
			Frames pitch by pulling the CLOSE pitches into the strike zone.
			Doesn't try to frame every pitch. (Keep strikes strikes!)
			Moves behind the ball getting lead foot out first.
			Moves diagonal to field of play to receive the ball, so that if it is low, she can block and keep the ball in the middle of the field.
			Balls in the dirt are blocked by her body, yet catcher maintains balance.
			When blocking balls in the dirt, she is leaning with the upper body over the ball and chin down. Causes balls to drop right in front of her.
			When catching, brings both glove and ball up to her ear to get into position for quick throw.
			Reaches into the glove to get the ball, does not flip it into throwing hand.
			When blocking balls in the dirt, she catches the ball between her legs with both hands (throwing hand behind glove - pinkie to pinkie). Gets the fingers down to the ground, not the back of her hand.
			When blocking, gets knees to the ground as quickly as possible.
			Replaces her feet with her knees to absorb the ball.
			When blocking side to side, gets an aggressive push off with legs toward the direction of the ball.
			Receives very low pitches with glove fingers pointed down. If it is out of the dirt, tries to "pick flowers" with glove fingers pointed up.
			Receives high pitches with glove fingers pointing up.
			Keeps body down to aid in calls - doesn't rise up with the pitch if she doesn't need to.
			Turns pinkie in (right handed catcher) on inside pitches (to right handed batter) to frame for strikes.
			Turns thumb in (right handed catcher) on outside pitches (to right handed batter) to frame for strikes.
			Has quick hands. Beats the ball to the spot (doesn't wait and jab at the pitch).

<u>EXCELLENT:</u>	<u>GOOD:</u>	<u>NEEDS WORK:</u>	<u>SKILL: THROWING</u>
			Gets into throwing position quickly using either pivot hop (for younger catchers) or pivot (for more advanced catchers).
			When in the throwing position her weight is on her back foot.
			The movement of the throwing hand is efficient and comes directly back near the throwing hand ear.
			The throw is an overhand throw with vertical spin.
			The throw has a very short take back.
			Catcher has a quick release.
			The catcher has a strong arm.
			Catcher follows through with her hand and trail leg.
			When throwing out runners at first on a bunt or pass ball, the catcher stays low and can use sidearm throw when appropriate.
			Catcher rounds the ball getting her chest over it and in a position to scoop up the ball on a pass ball or wild pitch.
			Picks up the ball with both the glove hand and ball hand in a scooping or raking action on pass balls or wild pitches.
			Angles her body to the base the runner is advancing to

<u>EXCELLENT:</u>	<u>GOOD:</u>	<u>NEEDS WORK:</u>	<u>SKILL: DEFENSIVE SITUATIONS</u>
			Fields the bunt with two handed scooping motion next to the back foot.
			Prior to fielding the bunt has feet lined up in direction of anticipated throw.
			When throwing she takes a one step throw, does not shuffle or slide into the throw.
			Catches pop ups on throwing side facing foul territory. Glove fingers are pointed up.
			First step to the pop up is to the side in which it is hit.
			Finds the pop up and then throws the mask. Mask is throw away from where she is fielding the pop up.
			Backs up plays at first base with no one on base.
			Communicates and lines up cut-off for throws home.
			Communicates to infield and calls plays in the infield.
			Blocks balls on throws home.
			Sets up about a foot up the foul line with the left foot on the foul line and is squared to the throw when receiving the throw home.
			Uses a two handed tag on the runner coming in at home plate.
			Blocks the plate when a runner slides at home.
			Throws each pitch back to the pitcher's left shoulder as a practice throw to second base.
			Throws knee high on the inside corner at second base for a steal
			Throws low inside to first or third for a pick off throw.
			Uses correct footwork on force outs at home and throws back to first or third.
			Knows the rules!
			Has knowledge of pitching techniques, control, and how different pitches are thrown.
			Communicates with the pitcher in a positive approach.
			Learns the opponents weaknesses and tendencies.
			Calls the correct pitch for the situation.
			Works well with the umpire and is aware of his strike zone.
			Knows each pitchers strengths and weaknesses and adjusts calling the game to the particular pitcher on the mound.
			Gives energy to the pitchers and changes according to the pitcher's needs.
			Knows how to motivate each pitcher.