

CATCHER POP TIMES

Average pop times for softball catchers typically range from **2.5 seconds** at the youth level to under **1.8 seconds** for elite college prospects. This metric measures the time elapsed from the moment the pitch hits the catcher's glove to when the throw reaches the infielder's glove at second base.

Pop Time Benchmarks by Age & Level

These benchmarks reflect general averages and elite goals for fastpitch catchers:

Level / Age	Average Range (sec)	Elite / Goal (sec)
Youth (8u – 12u)	2.2 – 2.5	2.1 or lower
Middle School (13u – 14u)	2.0 – 2.2	1.9 or lower
High School (15u – 18u)	1.9 – 2.1	1.8 – 1.85
College (D1 – D3)	1.8 – 2.0	< 1.8
Professional / Olympic	1.7 – 1.9	1.6 or less

Recruiting Standards by Division

College coaches use pop times as a primary filter for evaluating defensive readiness:

- **Division 1:** Programs typically look for a sub **1.8 second** pop time.
- **Division 2:** Coaches generally target times under **1.9 seconds**.
- **Division 3:** A consistent time under **2.0 seconds** is standard.

Factors Influencing Pop Time

- **Exchange Time:** The time it takes to transfer the ball from the glove to the hand, ideally between **0.4 and 0.8 seconds**.
- **Overhand Velocity:** Higher throwing speed (60+ mph) is the most significant contributor to lower pop times, as most of the time is spent while the ball is in flight.
- **Environment:** Pop times in controlled practice settings are often **0.1 to 0.2 seconds faster** than "game pops" recorded under pressure.

Average pop times to third base are significantly faster than those to second base due to the shorter distance (60 feet instead of 84 feet 10 inches). While second-base pop times are the primary recruiting metric, third-base times generally range from **1.2 to 2.5 seconds** depending on the player's age and

competitive level.

Average Pop Times to 3rd Base by Level

Estimated third-base benchmarks based on general fastpitch performance data:

Level / Age	Estimated 3rd Base Range (sec)	Elite / Goal (sec)
Youth (8u – 12u)	1.9 – 2.5	1.8 or lower
Junior High (13u – 14u)	1.6 – 1.9	1.5 or lower
High School (15u – 18u)	1.4 – 1.7	1.35 or lower
College (D1 – D3)	1.3 – 1.6	< 1.3
Professional / Olympic	1.2 – 1.4	1.1 or less

Recruiting Context

- **The "Rule of Thumb":** Because the distance to third base is shorter, pop times are typically **0.3 to 0.5 seconds faster** than times to second base.
- **Division 1 Standards:** While recruiters focus on the sub-1.8s second-base time, they look for third-base pops that demonstrate a **quick transition** and the ability to stay balanced while throwing across the body.
- **Accuracy Over Speed:** Throwing to third often involves more difficult angles and baserunner interference. Coaches value **accuracy** and a clean "exchange" (ideal target: <0.7s) more than raw arm strength on this specific throw.

Why 3rd Base Times Vary

- **Body Mechanics:** Throwing to third requires a different pivot than throwing to second, which can slightly increase the exchange time for some catchers.
- **Pitch Location:** A pitch on the outside corner for a right-handed hitter makes the throw to third faster, while an inside pitch requires moving around the batter, adding time.

Average pop times to first base in softball are generally the fastest on the field, typically ranging from **1.3 to 2.4 seconds**. This is because the distance from home to first base is the shortest of the three possible "pop" throws (60 feet, compared to approximately 84 feet 10 inches to second base).

Average Pop Times to 1st Base by Level

While official recruiting standards focus almost exclusively on throws to second base, these estimated first-base benchmarks are based on standard exchange speeds and flight times over 60 feet:

Level / Age	Estimated 1st Base Range (sec)	Elite / Goal (sec)
Youth (8u – 12u)	1.8 – 2.4	1.7 or lower

Junior High (13u – 14u)	1.5 – 1.8	1.4 or lower
High School (15u – 18u)	1.4 – 1.6	1.35 or lower
College (D1 – D3)	1.3 – 1.5	< 1.3
Professional / Olympic	1.2 – 1.4	1.1 or less

Sources: [Discuss Fastpitch Community](#), [The Softball Zone](#)

Key Metrics & Execution

- **The "Rule of 0.5":** As a general rule, a throw to first base is approximately **0.4 to 0.6 seconds faster** than a throw to second base due to the ~25-foot difference in distance.
- **Recruiting Importance:** Recruiters look for a sub-1.8s pop time to second base [Dynamite Sports](#); however, a quick first-base pop is essential for "back-picks" to catch runners leaning too far off the bag after a pitch.
- **Exchange Speed:** At elite levels, the "exchange" (time from glove to release) should be between **0.6 and 0.7 seconds**. Any time saved in the transfer directly lowers the total pop time regardless of the base. [Athletes Untapped](#)

Factors Unique to the 1st Base Throw

- **Footwork Direction:** Unlike throwing to second, which is a straight-line pivot, throwing to first requires a catcher to clear a right-handed batter. Elite catchers often use a "step-back" or "drop-step" to create a clear throwing lane, which can slightly vary the time compared to a clean throw to third.
- **Target Accuracy:** Because first base is often a "back-pick" scenario, accuracy is prioritized over raw speed. A 1.4s pop time that is off-target is less effective than a 1.6s pop time delivered perfectly to the tag.