

Baseball Pitching Grips **101**



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Congratulations on receiving your copy of ***Baseball Pitching Grips 101*** I'm happy to tell you that you've found the right resource for improving your knowledge and understanding baseball pitching grips. In this illustrated pitching guide you will find a step by step process of pitching grips broken down into an easy-to-follow guide. You will find **pictures, strategies, drills, and helpful tips** that will give you all you need while you develop your own repertoire of pitches to use effectively.

The philosophy, fundamentals, and pitching grips within these pages have been used to successfully instruct countless athletes. The information accumulated has been learned and practiced at all levels of baseball and countless hours of practice, research, and development. Pitching a baseball and developing proper pitching grips and arm motions is one of the toughest athletic activities to master as a baseball player. We fully understand that it is equally challenging to coach pitching grips and usages. As you continue to work through this guide, we at The Pitching Academy welcome your communication of thoughts, successes, and questions. Come and visit often and join us in our mission to improve the baseball community in America.

Let's learn some pitching grips!



Dan Gazaway

Dan Gazaway is the owner and founder of The Pitching Academy and Your Sport Guru. Based out of Utah County, Dan is one of the foremost pitching instructors and teachers in the region. His Pitching Mechanics DVD and other training information has become very popular online and utilized by countless athletes across the nation. Coach Gazaway has instructed over 1,000 pitchers in the last seven years; is certified as a professional pitching instructor. Dan is fully dedicated to helping athletes excel as leaders on and off the field.

Dan's contribution to this manual is his extensive knowledge, research, and instruction on pitching grips and pitching theory.

Nate Barnett

Nate Barnett is owner of BMI Baseball, The Pitching Academy, and Your Sport Guru. Nate teaches hitting, pitching, and the mental side of baseball to youth athletes throughout the Puget Sound, Washington. Nate writes baseball training articles for many websites and continues to publish work on the fundamentals of baseball. Nate graduated from college at George Fox University as All-American and GFU Hall of Fame honors. He finished his career in the minor leagues as a first baseman in the Seattle Mariners organization.

Nate's contribution to this ebook is from both a pitcher and hitter's perspective. Playing both pitcher and first base throughout college, Nate adds a unique perspective on what hitters think and feel about hitting different baseball pitches. You will find these comments through the ebook.



The Myth of Pitching Grips Explained

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The phrase “baseball pitching grips” is one of the most widely searched for phrases regarding pitching instruction on the internet today. There is a good chance that you found this ebook by searching for those words on Google. Everyday, players, coaches, and parents are drawn to information that will provide an added advantage on the mound or in their instructional practices. While we believe that having an effective assortment of pitches is valuable as a pitcher, it is not the most important factor. What can be more important than throwing an untouchable slider, or a curveball that breaks off the table in front of the plate? The **mechanics** and **control** it takes to throw pitches effectively and without injury is the most important part of pitching.

Therefore, before you attempt to learn and use the different pitching grips in this guide, we need to make something **VERY** clear. Without **PROPER** pitching mechanics, your risk of physical injury will increase tremendously if you throw complex pitches long-term with inferior mechanics. It is far worth your time and athletic health to invest in a pitching coach, instructional DVD's, or other forms of pitching instruction to make sure you stay healthy.

If you have made it this far without jumping ahead to the pitching grips themselves, you've made a wise decision. Having a personal pitching philosophy will help you better approach learning the pitching grips on the following pages. Let us share our pitching philosophy with you.

There are pitchers and throwers in the world of baseball. Pitchers are those athletes who choose to work hard daily in learning new physical, mental, and emotional strategies that will propel them to the next level. Throwers do the opposite. These "athletes" get on the mound in the spring without having properly conditioned their body in the offseason. Nor do they care, since they have always done it this way and had some success "last year". Unfortunately, dark days are ahead for this type of athlete as the competition will soon punish the lack of work ethic and force change.

In order to be a good pitcher, you will need **three pitches** you can throw for a strike near 60% of the time. It is far, far more valuable for you to develop two to three really good pitches, than five to six pitches that you don't have much control over. Because hitting is a matter of timing, it's your job to throw off that timing. When you are successful at doing that, you will become a great pitcher.



Notice the space between the ball and the inner part of the palm. This promotes good backwards rotation.



Place the thumb underneath the baseball and in the center. Your thumb should split the ball in half.



Description:

The four-seam fastball is the most common pitch to throw during any given game. Most pitchers throw this pitch 60%-80% of the time. It is vital to be able to throw this pitch hard and with good accuracy as you will rely on it often.

The Grip:

To grip of four-seam fastball place your index and middle finger over the widest seams of the baseball (the horseshoe). Your thumb should be placed on the bottom part of the baseball, therefore splitting the baseball in half between your index and middle fingers. Make sure there is a gap between the ball and your palm near the base of your thumb. Younger pitchers will tend to have a smaller gap because of smaller hands.



Release:

This pitch is designed to be thrown with maximum velocity and backspin rotation. A loose wrist will allow this pitch to be released from your fingers with severe backspin and with a 12 o'clock 6 o'clock rotation. This pitch is designed to be straight and hard. In order to make sure this happens, finish with your finger tips moving towards the catcher as long as possible to insure maximum extension.

Timing:

This pitch is most often used early in the count to get ahead of hitters. It is also used to set up off speed pitches often making them more effective. It should be said that throwing a good fastball in a count that typically favors an off speed pitch is a good weapon from time to time. Be careful throwing this pitch with the same velocity too many times in a row. Because of its straight trajectory, the four-seam fastball is a pitch that can be timed relatively easily by many hitters.



The Hitter's Perspective - **Nate Barnett**

“From a hitter’s stand point, the four-seam fastball was the pitch I was looking for the most. Because I was an aggressive hitter I would look for this pitch early in the count in the location I wanted. If the location was right, I wouldn’t wait to hit the pitcher’s off speed stuff later in the count as he wanted.

The only trouble a four-seam fastball gave me was when a pitcher was smart enough to learn to throw it in counts that he knew I was expecting something off speed. Especially during the 0-1,1-2 counts. It was during these counts that I was the most vulnerable to a four-seam fastball because I wasn’t necessarily expecting it. But the pitcher still had to be careful because while I wasn’t necessarily expecting the fastball, that didn’t mean for one minute that I would miss the pitch if he made a mistake with it.

Good hitters love to hit this pitch when they expect it. But, if you learn hitters’ habits during the game, you can predict what they are looking for and throw the opposite. You’ll win a lot of games if you can get inside the head of your opposing hitters.”



With the two-seam fastball place the index and middle fingers on the seams on the narrow part of the baseball.



The fingers should be wide enough to cover the seams on the narrow part of the baseball.



Description:

The two-seam fastball is the sister of the four-seam fastball. Any pitcher should mix this pitch with his four-seam as the hitter will see different movement from both pitches. This pitch is a “movement” pitch.

The Grip:

Your index and middle finger cradle the two sides of the seams. The grip is slightly tighter and deeper in the throwing hand than the four seam.



Release:

The two-seam fastball is unique because, at release, the air cuts through the two seams giving it drag on the ball. The ball will cut to the right for a right-handed pitcher and to the left for a left-handed pitcher.

Timing:

This pitch is primarily used when you are slightly ahead in the count. I liked throwing the two seam when throwing inside to a right-handed hitter because the ball cuts right. The four-seam is considered a straight pitch as the two-seam creates more movement. You should get accustomed to using both pitches in your arsenal.

The Hitter's Perspective - **Nate Barnett**

“As mentioned in the previous section on the four-seam fastball, I loved to hit straight and hard pitches, as do most hitters. This is why a two-seamer was a bit troublesome when I saw it. The good news for me was that most pitchers chose the easy road and neglected to really learn how to throw a two-seam fastball and use it to their advantage. I think that the best way to fool good hitters is to have a couple different pitches that are initially perceived as the same from a hitter's point of view. A two-seam fastball does just that. It comes out hard and straight, but the extra movement can be enough to keep the pitch off of the sweet part of the bat.

Pitchers who can develop this pitch now have an extra bullet in their gun so-to-speak. More options, mean more questions in a hitter's mind. Once a pitcher goes through the lineup once, good hitter's will begin to pick up patterns in pitches. At this point it's apparent to all those paying attention which pitch a pitcher has working and which he does not. The good thing about the two-seam fastball, from a pitchers perspective, is that it is not too far different from a four-seam fastball grip.”



Take the four-seam fastball grip and slide your fingers together and move them to the right side of the ball.



Experiment with different amounts of pressure on the baseball to find what will work for you.



Description:

The cut-fastball acts as two pitches in one – slider and fastball – The cut-fastball has a fastball rotation, but around 55 feet it cuts. For a right handed pitcher it cuts into a left handed batter. Just opposite for a left handed pitcher.

The Grip:

The grip on the cut-fastball is similar to that of a regular four-seam fastball. Grip it like you do a four-seamer but instead bring your thumb up the inside of the ball. The cutter is like throwing an off-center fastball. The index and middle fingers are close together. Like any other pitch, don't grip it too tight. Experiment with different amounts of pressure on the ball to get a feel of what is going to work best for you.

Release:

This pitch is designed to throw just like your regular four-seam fastball, only slightly off center. Pull this pitch out of your glove the exact same way you would your fastball and give it a ride.

Timing:

The purpose of throwing a cut fastball is to make the hitter hit the ball without connecting with the fat part of the bat on the baseball. The hitter will see a fastball and will not expect the ball to move. This is a good 3rd or 4th pitch and doesn't have to be used much, but used strategically. If it is a pitch that you can get to work, but doesn't become a dominant pitch for you, throw it to hitters who have figured out the timing of your regular fastball. The movement will be just enough to reduce their confidence and throw off their timing.

The Hitter's Perspective - **Nate Barnett**

“The cut fastball is sneaky. Most of the time right-handed pitchers would throw this pitch off the outside corner and let it slide back over the outside corner to me (a lefty). It was really a pitch I didn’t see coming many times because it typically breaks less than a slider; it looks just like a regular fastball. Most of the time I would not recognize a great cutter until after I swung and made contact. It would puzzle me because I wouldn’t make as solid of contact as I thought I should. Good cutters simply sabotage a hitter’s confidence because it prevents solid contact if thrown correctly.

For a good example of how a cutter can mess with hitters, take a look at some footage of Mariano Rivera throwing a cutter if you can get your hands on it. Otherwise watch closely on television if you get the chance during the season. What you will see is that hitters will take a solid swing at what they think is a straight fastball, only to have the contact be less than solid.”



Make sure your middle-finger rests against the inside part of the seam. This will give you better control.



The wrist and forearm angle are the most important. This promotes proper release and rotation.



Description:

The curveball is a staple pitch for any good pitcher. It is one of the most common off speed pitches thrown and is relied upon 20-25% of the time in an any given outing. It is quite important to be able to create the right rotation with this pitch and maintain consistent control. Hanging or loopy curveballs can get hit a long way by good hitters.

The Grip:

Place your index and ring finger on the seams opposite of the thumb. The thumb and middle finger split the baseball in half for optimal control. Apply some pressure on your thumb and middle fingers. Your index finger should simply rest on the ball next to the middle finger. Beginning curveball pitchers can lift their index finger from the ball to ensure no pressure is applied.

Release:

The curveball is thrown with the same arm speed and arm angle as your fastball. Wrist and forearm angle is the most important factor when learning proper rotation and release of the curveball. Make sure when you take the ball out of the glove that your palm is facing you. While a 12 to 6 o'clock break on a curveball is best, it is very rare. Since most pitchers throw with a three-quarter arm slot it is not reasonable to expect a 12 to 6 o'clock rotation. A 1 to 7 break is more realistic for a right-handed pitcher; 11 to 5 o'clock break for a lefty.

Timing:

Pitchers who play in youth leagues (below high school) will benefit greatly by throwing a curveball on an 0-0 count if it can be thrown consistently for a strike. When competing in high school or higher, a good time to throw a curveball is on a 1-2 count. It is important that pitchers understand that you only need to throw a curveball 20-25% of the time to be effective. Unfortunately, many youth pitchers have early success with this pitch and use it much too often.

The Hitter's Perspective - **Nate Barnett**

“Being a fastball hitter, it was my goal to never get buried in a count where I would be susceptible to a pitcher’s curveball. Many pitchers worked hard on this pitch, and good ones were tough to hit.

One of the best strategies used against me were when pitchers chose to throw me backwards. What I mean is that I would sometimes (with good pitchers) see curveballs during 1-0 and 2-0 counts. This did two things to throw off my approach:

1. Because the pitcher had confidence in his curveball, no longer were reliable fastball counts 2-0, 3-1, times when I could fully expect to see a nice fat fastball. Even if I didn’t see a curveball on those counts, the thought had crossed my mind a curveball may be coming, and sometimes that was all it took for me to keep from “pulling the trigger” when I normally would.
2. If any doubt entered my mind about my ability to hit the pitcher hard, it would negatively effect my decision making. If I knew a pitcher had a good curveball, it made his fastball that much better. I say this because an average fastball could sneak up on me if I wasn’t looking for it.”



The slider grip is the same as the curveball grip. Pressure should be placed with the thumb and middle finger.



Notice the palm is slightly turned in for the slider versus **fully** turned in with the curveball.



Description:

It is said that the slider is the hardest pitch on the throwing arm. This is true! The reason is that when you apply force and rotation on the ball at the same time, your arm can truly feel the effects. The key is to limit the number of sliders you throw per game. Rely on the slider only a maximum of 20% of the time.

The Grip:

Place your fingers the same way you would with a curveball grip putting your index and middle fingers close together. The thumb and middle finger split the baseball in half (see above). Keep your ring finger and your pinkie off to the side as they are not an integral part of the grip. Put a little more pressure on the baseball with your thumb and middle finger. Your index finger should rest on the ball lightly with little pressure.

Release:

The slider breaks down and in about six inches to an opposite hand hitter. At first, the slider appears to be a fastball but breaks at the last minute and comes in about six to eight miles an hour slower than the fastball. It is one of the fastest pitches thrown other than a fastball. It is often recommended that a pitcher only learn how to throw a slider when he cannot throw a great curveball. Throwing a slider is similar to throwing a curveball, however, the main difference is that rather than your palm facing you (curveball), it is only slightly rotated inward. (Refer to illustration on previous page). Using your fastball pitching mechanics with identical arm speed and arm slot, release the baseball in front of you. Experiment with how late you can release the ball and still throw a strike. The later the release, the better.

Timing:

The National Pitching Association research shows that when a slider is throw on a 0-0 count and is put in play, the hitter's average is a mere .078! That's success! Therefore, because the illusion of a fastball, the slider throw on a 0-0 count can be a huge benefit to a low-pitch inning. As much as pitchers enjoy the strikeout, groundballs and pop outs will keep a pitcher in the game much longer because of the low pitch count.

The Hitter's Perspective - **Nate Barnett**

“A good slider was by far the most difficult pitch for me to handle as a hitter. The reason for this is because it’s thrown hard and resembles a fastball initially (if thrown well). Of course late in the delivery, this pitch would take off and break hard; it was sometimes nearly impossible to read consistently.

I remember a time when I got the chance to face Francisco Rodriguez (now a premier closer in the Bigs) when he was in the minor leagues. It was his rookie season and he was throwing his slider around 87 mph. As a lefty I was fortunate to never see his slider when I faced him. I guess I was lucky and got to see his 101 mph fastball instead. It was the lesser of two evils for sure! What I do remember is that the righties who faced him had a terrible time picking up the late break of his slider and looked foolish as on many pitches.

I was fortunate to face fewer great slider pitchers as compared to great curveball pitchers. And if given the choice I’d take a good curveball pitcher any day to hit off of.



The smaller the circle, the more movement downward you will have on the pitch.



The slight wrist and forearm pronation is important when throwing the circle change.



Description:

The Circle Change has a screwball type movement and it breaks down and away. It appears to look like a fastball and, when it is thrown correctly, can be very deceiving to the batter. Throwing the pitch correctly means you pronate your wrist and forearm slightly inwards. Your arm slot is the same as your fastball pitching mechanics. Arm speed is the exactly the same as your fastball.

The Grip:

Place your fingers in the same position as you do with your fastball (thumb and middle finger split the baseball in half). Next, make a circle with your thumb and index finger. The tighter the circle the more drop you will have. However, your wrist and forearm angle is more important than the grip with this pitch. The most difficult part of this pitch is the forearm angle.



Release:

You will not find success with this pitch unless you throw the circle (or okay sign) toward home plate; that is what truly slows the pitch down. Keep your arm speed the same so that the pitch will be deceptively slow to the hitter. Arguably the most challenging pitch to learn is the circle change because of how the pitch is released. While the pitch can be tricky to learn, do not alter your body movement or motion in any way while attempting to throw it. Instead, work hard on the wrist and forearm angle.

Timing:

Throw the circle change early in the count and try to get a ground ball out of it. Remember, it is best to throw fewer pitches in an inning than to try for strikeouts. The best change-up counts are the same as the split-finger fastball counts 3-1, 2-1, and 2-0. Also, whenever a fastball is in order a changeup can be thrown in its place. Becoming a successful pitcher simply means you mess with and throw off a hitter's timing. When you are successful at doing that you will get any hitter out. The circle change-up is perfect for that when it is implemented correctly.

The Hitter's Perspective - **Nate Barnett**

“Besides the slider, a good change-up is terribly frustrating for most hitters. Because of its resemblance to a fastball initially, it can be particularly deceiving in fastball counts. I’m not sure why I don’t see more good change-ups in youth baseball today, but it’s a very much underutilized pitch.

Hitters hate facing pitchers who change speeds well, it’s tough to get good timing on anything. For a great example of this, you have to look no further than Jamie Moyer, who at age 45, helped his Phillies win a World Series championship in 2008. His signature pitch throughout his entire career has been his outstanding change-up. With a fastball that rarely ever reached 85 mph, Moyer’s ability to keep hitters off balance has paid off big time.

Circle change-ups with movement are deceiving and I would argue are nearly unhittable if thrown in the right location and in the right count. Being a pitcher also throughout my collegiate career, I relied on the change-up a lot to keep hitters off balance. Early in my pitching career I was leery of developing it because the thought of throwing a pitch slower to hitters seemed backwards. Wow, was I mistaken as it became my best pitch!”



This splitter is released just like a four seam or two seam fastball. The wider the fingers the slower the speed.



Make sure your thumb is centered below the baseball in between your index and middle fingers.



Description:

The split-finger fastball, also known as the splitter, is deceiving because it appears (to the batter) to be a fastball; however it drops or fades down at the last second as it nears the plate. The splitter is 4-7 mph slower than the fastball. A common misconception about this pitch is that it is a fastball. It is utilized as an off-speed pitch.

The Grip:

To grip the split-finger fastball, place the index and middle finger on different sides of the two seams; “splitting” your two fingers. The V in the split takes the place of the middle finger. The further you split your fingers, the more movement you will get on the ball. The pitch is thrown just like a regular fastball. The wrist and forearm angle are the same as a four or two seam fastball.

Release:

The toughest part about this pitch is the grip. When you release the baseball, it can feel like it is slipping through your fingertips. This is a normal feeling until you get used to the release. Because this is one of the only pitches your thumb and middle finger don't split the baseball in half, it is easy to twist the ball at release. You need to pretend that there is an imaginary middle finger splitting the ball in half with your thumb. Pitchers who tend to "twist" the ball at release are the ones who are prone to injury with this pitch.

Timing:

Once you have established your fastball (meaning the hitter has seen it) you can throw your splitter. Anytime you have a fastball count, a splitter can be thrown. Some of the best counts to throw the pitch are a 3-1, 2-1, or a 2-0 count.

The Hitter's Perspective - **Nate Barnett**

“I was fortunate to avoid seeing a good splitter until later in my career. The split-finger fastballs I saw in college were usually mediocre at best. Those who threw one didn’t have an overpowering fastball in the first place. And, if pitchers left this pitch up in the zone, it became a nice hittable pitch for me. Those who were able to get the pitch down in the zone had good success. It came in straight but then late in its flight it would take off and break downward quickly. It’s a very tough pitch to pick up early and that’s what makes it effective. It’s never quite as fast as a four seam or two seam fastball because of the grip, but faster than a change-up.

The guys who could throw it consistently low in the zone were annoying to hit off of because they would use it a lot. To my advantage, most could never keep it down in the zone all of the time and therefore they got hit hard.

It’s is a good pitch to learn if you can mix this pitch into your bag of pitches semi-infrequently to give a hitter a glimpse of something new. Younger pitchers may have a tougher time gripping the splitter correctly, but if you can develop the knack, it’s a good pitch to learn at any age.

You now have a road map for developing some useful and highly effective pitching grips! Remember, consistent practice is the key. And because I don't want you to feel like you are on your own, you will be included in our emails that will provide you with additional helpful tips as you develop these important pitching grips.