

Pitching grips: How to throw eight baseball pitches

So you want to know how to throw a new pitch? Here's how former Red Sox pitching coach Dave Wallace teaches them....



Four seam fastball: You want your fingers a little bit apart. Preferably on the other side of the seams so when the ball comes out you have resistance to throw against. It's firm with the fingers but should be somewhat of a subtle wrist. You don't want to be stiff.

A little space in here [between the palm of the hand and the ball].

The thumb almost bisects [the index and middle finger].

The movement would be straight. Four seams rotating out of your hand. The guys who throw hard, it's going to seem like the ball takes off.



Sinker ball: Most of the time, your fingers are parallel with the seams. Sometimes, depending on finger pressure, it could be on one seam, it could be on the other seam.

A lot of guys throw a sinker off of the middle finger. The movement is down and late. It sinks, for a righthanded pitcher, into a righthander, and away from a lefthander.

For a lefthander, it's into a lefthander, away from a righthander.'

Pitching grips: How to throw eight baseball pitches – Page 2



Curve ball: Usually, it's this middle finger, inside a seam. And what you want to do is throw it like a fastball to here [where the elbow and arm form an L, with your arm perpendicular to the ground], and turn your hand in.

You're pulling down the front of the ball, trying to increase the rate of rotation, which is usually 13 revolutions from the time it leaves your hand until it gets home. Right here, like an L shape, I'm going to pull down the ball and make it spin as much as I can. There's various ways to teach it and throw it.



Knuckleball: The whole idea is to make that ball come out of your hand taking the spin off of the ball. That's what a knuckleballer's intent is. Because the resistance of the air will handle the movement. Fingernails digging into the ball. I know Tom Candiotti used to get manicures all the time.

The thing I learned right away is it's more important to be in the right position. You have to be so precise." Which, Wallace said, underscores pitching as a whole.

"It's the constant struggle for perfection," he said, "with the realization that you'll never achieve it.

Pitching grips: How to throw eight baseball pitches – Page 3



Splitter: It's a fastball. I'm just splitting the seam. What you don't want to do is get under the ball and it doesn't break. It hangs. [Executed properly] it breaks down.



Slider: That's the one where at the end you really make an effort to get on top of the ball. You can call it a slider, a curve, a slurve. Sometimes a cutter is a slider. Usually you have finger pressure on your middle finger, across the seam or on the seam.

Pitching grips: How to throw eight baseball pitches – Page 4



Circle change up: The circle change is the most common. Usually, with a fastball, you have 100 percent of your strength in these two fingers, the index and middle fingers. You take 50 percent of that strength away by removing the index finger. So you're holding the ball real lightly. ... Your wrist is real loose. The ball is real loose in your hand. And you just throw a fastball.

That's why you teach it at a young age, because it's just repetition. ... The whole idea is to make it look like a fastball coming out of your arm.



Cutter: Usually you hold it like a fastball. The grip is a little bit off of center. Throwing it is like a fastball, and right here [at about the release point, turn over your wrist].

The idea is, it's got fastball rotation, and at about 59 feet, it cuts into a righthander for a lefthanded pitcher. For a righthanded pitcher it cuts into a lefthander.

Why is Mariano Rivera's cutter so good? Because it's so late and so quick, and the rotation has such good fastball rotation. It looks fastball to a hitter because you can't see the rotation.