

Keep the Heel Down

The purpose of this document is to define the relationship between heel and toe in throwing, pitching and hitting. In each, we swing the arm off the heel, and then extend the arm towards the target off the toe. Whether hitting, pitching or throwing, pushing off the toe too soon causes both balance and power problems. The secret to hitting and pitching is a coordinated arm swing. Pushing off the toe too early before the end of the arm swing (where you crack the whip) takes the power out of that coordination. The coordinated arm swing is always an accelerating motion off the vertical axis, and this type of motion starts and ends at the heel. By coordinated I mean, after you get your arm up to speed, you extend it towards your target to twirl the bat or spin the ball. Also, coordination means the whipping motion (that causes the arm to extend, the ball to spin, and the bat to twirl) comes all the way from the heel. So, whip off the heel and extend off the toe. Also, use the vertical axis and the big muscles of your body to power your whip. As you are powering your whip, you are accelerating your arm swing.

Which Heel?

To coordinate a whipping motion, we begin with the heel, and the heel we begin with depends on what we want to do with the pitch. To keep the ball low in the strike zone with a low release, I swing my arm from the right heel placed at the back of the rubber so my toe will extend off the solid front of the rubber, not from the dirt. To produce a very high release point (for high roll under rise balls and high rollover drops), I step out onto the front heel and counter rotate (rotate the vertical axis in the opposite direction of the pitch). Using the heels for balance, both of these are very easy to coordinate. For max power, my friend Steve Thompson uses his back (left) heel for powering the whip and a very late push off the rubber with his right toe. Steve can only do this when he is on the mound, so for his sideline warm up pitches he uses his right heel and right toe. Which heel? We use right heel, left heel and front heel, depending on what we want to do with the pitches.

Summary: Keep the Heel Down

The purpose of this document is to define the relationship between heel and toe in throwing, pitching and hitting. In each, we swing the arm off the heel, and then extend the arm towards the target off the toe. Whether hitting, pitching or throwing, pushing off the toe too soon (during the arm swing, before the arm extension) causes both balance and power problems. The secret to hitting and pitching is a coordinated arm swing. The coordinated arm swing is always an accelerating motion off the vertical axis, and this type of motion starts and ends at the heel. Coordination means the whipping motion that causes the arm to extend, the ball to spin, and the bat to twirl. No matter which way you rotate (forward or counter) use the vertical axis and the big muscles of your body to accelerate your arm swing and power your whip. That coordination comes all the way from the heel.