

Low Release—Where to Start, Copyright Robert D. Pace 01/03/2023

The purpose of this document is to define the low-release pitches, which will show why they are the place to start when learning to pitch. With low-release pitches we start high and release low. High-release pitches are the opposite, start low and finish high. Wrist flips down from the high-release and up from the low-release. Both are done with a pulling motion where the whip power is applied way before the release. One of the main reasons we start with the low release is it is easy to screw up the whip power with the high release, easy to push instead of pull, easy to use the small arm and hand muscles and bones instead of the large hip, back and leg muscles and bones. Therefore, easier to get a sore arm. Plus, low-release pitches are the best way to learn to feel the whip. So, that feeling can then be transferred to high-release pitches.

Elbows In for Overhand

Throwing overhand with low-release we whip the arm with the elbows in, they are both in. To whip the arm, we pull that elbow with whip energy happening when the elbow goes by the ear, just like a bull-whip. We pull it straight at the target. Before we whip it, we relax and turn and let it flow back with the elbow in.

Elbows out for Underhand

Throwing underhand with low-release we whip the arm with the elbows out, they are both out. To whip the arm, we pull that elbow with whip energy happening when the elbow goes by the hip, just like a bull-whip. We pull it straight at the target. Before we whip it, we relax and turn and let it flow back with the elbow out.

Everything else is the same for both

The grip, the balance leg, the power hip, windmill or figure eight, release fingers or where the ball leaves the hand, these are all the same overhand or underhand. We never want to push the ball with our little bones and muscles, always want to pull the ball with our big bones and muscles. Whipping the ball is more accurate. All these other things we need to already know to play defense. For example: throwing to a base we want backspin so the ball will not spike and the miss pattern will be up. If it hits the ground the ground will stop the spin and it will skip straight.

Grip

I like to use the same grip with all my pitches, and I can put great spin on all of them. I use the same grip I use when playing the field. Infielders, outfielders and catchers do not change grips for the different throws, but they spin the ball differently for different throws. Just like defense, because we don't spin the ball with our fingers, we can do this when we whip the ball but not when we throw with our arms and fingers. Since we are always pulling hard on the ball, to keep the ball from falling out, we have the fingertips slightly bent. That bend also helps the spin. In other words, hold ball in finger tips same way as we do for other positions and sports.

Balance Leg and Power Hip

When we move down, we balance on the heel and when we move up, we balance on the ball of the foot.

For better control and more speed, we never power the throw with both hips. When we throw off the front foot we balance on that foot. To get there, we push hard off the back foot which becomes the front balance foot. Then we use the back hip to power the whip. When we throw off the back foot we balance on that foot and use the front hip to power the whip. Normally we want to learn to move the ball away from the batters first because the miss pattern will be over the plate. When that is mastered, we can move the ball towards the middle of the plate by just swapping the balance foot. More on that later. By the way, we do that when pitching batting practice, pitches breaking to the line down the middle of the plate.

Figure Eight and Windmill

The way we make the ball move left or right is by switching back and forth from Figure Eight to Windmill.

Everything else is the same. Same balance point Figure Eight moves left and Windmill moves right. Here we are talking about Low-Release aimed at the outside corners, but it works the same for High-Release. With the same balance point, windmill throwing to the other side of the plate will move that way, opposite from that is Figure Eight to the same side as the balance foot. This is true whether the balance foot is the back or front foot. The difference between back foot or front foot balance points: front foot is faster with smaller break, back foot is slower with greater break, plus front foot rise balls and drops, and back foot sliders and screw balls.

Release Fingers

Holding the ball with the fingers slightly bent. I throw with three finger tips touching the ball, and I automatically shift my fingertips to the same spot on the ball all the time, pitching or fielding. I believe it is hard to pull with more than three bent fingers, but start out with the same grip used fielding. However, release off the three I use: thumb, index and middle fingers. With those three fingers bent, the only slight change I make after the whip is to tip the thumb on edge to make the ball spin towards the bottom of the hand, otherwise I let it spin towards the top of the hand, same thing I do on defense. We release off the bent thumb for changeups, up or down depending on towards the top or bottom of the hand. We release off both bent fingers for the faster speeds, towards the bottom of the hand feels like straight off the middle finger and towards the top of the hand for the other spin.

Summary: Low Release – Where to Start

Low Release pitches teach us to whip the ball. Whipping the ball spins the ball, more accurate because we are relaxed upon release and balanced. When whipping the ball everything feels the same whether we are using windmill or Figure Eight, breaking left or right, balancing front foot or back, powering with the front hip or back, releasing off the thumb or fingers towards the top or bottom of the hand. It's like they are interchangeable parts. To get there (assuming batter has elbow up like most these days) begin with the low-rise to the outside, then the low-drop, to the inside, against both right-handers and left-handers, overhand or underhand. Begin low-release to perfect the whip.