

HOW TO INCREASE PITCHING VELOCITY

(Source: <http://www.softballspot.com>)

Here are 3 of my favorite drills to increase pitching velocity. These can all be done with all age levels and skill.

To make any of the drills easier or harder, just change the distance between the pitcher and target.

Drill #1: The Wrist Snap

The purpose of this drill is to help your girls develop a strong wrist snap, which will dramatically increase the speed that they can pitch the ball.

Have your pitcher stand with their non-throwing side facing a target on a net, fence or wall approximately 5 feet away. The target should be at around 2 feet x 2 feet and placed at a height around 3 feet off the ground.

With the feet slightly apart, have the pitcher hold her pitching-side forearm with her non-pitching hand, immobilizing it (so for a right-handed pitcher, she would hold her right forearm with her left hand).

Next, cock the pitching wrist back, and snap it forward. Release the ball and attempt to hit the target. Focus on keeping the arm still, while using the wrist snap to create the velocity behind the ball.

Drill #2: Downswing Drill

This drill is designed to help you combine a strong wrist snap with the downswing motion of the windmill pitching mechanics. Have your pitcher stand around 10 feet away from a 2x2 feet target.

Start with the pitching arm at the top of the windmill circle, right before the downswing begins. Cock the throwing wrist back, and extend the non-throwing arm out, facing the target.

Begin the pitch by lifting and replacing the front foot and beginning the downswing motion. Have the pitcher pull the non-throwing elbow into her side, then snap the wrist and release the pitch just as the ball passes her hip.



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Drill #3: Progressive Distance Drill

This drill focuses on developing both pitch speed and accuracy at the same time.

Set up five pitching rubbers (or simply mark them in the dirt) at distances of 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40 feet from a target.

The pitcher will begin at the 15 foot rubber, taking 10 pitches to start. As she is pitching, focus on the following mechanics:

- 2 or 3 finger grip.
- Make a full 1-second stop with hands together.
- Shift weight to pivot foot.
- Arm travels in a perfect circle, in line with the plate
- Open the hips and shoulders at the top of the swing
- Step in the direction of the target
- Close the hips and shoulders at the bottom of the arm swing as the ball is released
- Snap the wrist as the ball is released
- Follow through in the direction of the target
- Assume a fielding position

If the pitcher can successfully hit the target 7 out of 10 times, have her move back 5 feet to the next location.

Probably the biggest mistake pitchers make is "aiming" pitches. This will cause them to over think their pitch location and lose their velocity. Instead, work on drills that reinforce proper pitching mechanics and consistent technique. Over time, it becomes part of their muscle memory... and is as natural as brushing their teeth or tying a shoelace.

