A Warm-up Routine for Softball Pitchers

Knowing a few pitching drills is one thing. Knowing how to use those drills efficiently and effectively, though, is quite a different story. Because pitching is a collective process, jumping into a drill that you aren’t quite ready for can hurt you more than help you.

**Tips for Starting Out**

Every drill outlined below is fully detailed in two of iSport’s pitching guides that focus on [wrist snaps](http://softball.isport.com/softball-guides/softball-pitching-drills-the-wrist-snap-posture) and [forward momentum](http://softball.isport.com/softball-guides/pitching-drills-drive-momentum). Review these guides until you are familiar enough with them that you can do them without having to read it straight from the guide. Otherwise, make sure you bring them with you!

Also, here are some tips to ensure you get the most out of these exercises:

* Take every drill slowly and stayed focused. Quality is far more important than quantity. After about 10-15 pitches, move onto the next drill.
* If you’re having trouble with one, stay at it for a few more pitches. You don’t want to move on if you aren’t ready; doing so will only hinder your performance.

Hot Tip: Warm Up!

Too many pitchers, regardless of their age, don’t take warming up seriously. But throwing when you’re arm isn’t warm can be dangerous. Always warm up your arm with regular, over-the-top throws before doing a full pitching warm-up routine.

**The Progression**

Described below is a warm-up routine that’s suitable for pitchers of every level. Follow the order of the exercises as they’re arranged here; this routine is specifically designed to gradually fire up each of the muscles you’ll need to pitch. By the time you step onto the mound to throw, you’ll be fully warmed up and ready to roll.

*Note: These drills are described for right-handed pitchers. For left-handed pitchers, simply reverse the legs and arms.*

**1. Step & Snap**

The pitcher should stand about 5-10 feet in front of the catcher to perform this drill. She’ll start with her arm just behind her hip. Then she’ll simply step forward with her left foot, and drag her right foot behind her as she snaps the ball. Her right foot should step in line with her left to finish the drill.

* Before moving forward, make sure your pitcher has been throwing consistent strikes. From such a short distance, if the pitcher is having trouble here, she will undoubtedly have trouble at further distances.
* A pitcher can also choose to do the sideways snap drill. She’ll stand at the same distance, but perpendicular to the catcher. With her feet set wide apart, she won’t drag her foot. As she snaps the ball at her hip, she’ll simply shift her weight forward. The pitcher may choose one of these drills to focus on, or alternate between both.

**2. One-Knee Windmill**

The pitcher will walk about five feet back towards the pitching mound (three or four big steps). She will kneel on her right knee, keep her upper body perfectly straight, and perform a full windmill to pitch the ball.

**3. One-Legged Balance**

Standing up exactly where she was for the one-knee windmill, the pitcher will balance on her right leg and pitch the ball. Her left leg should be lifted in the air, bent at the knee and forming a 90-degree angle. She can only drop this leg to the ground *after* she has released the pitch.

**4. Sideways “K”**

This is more of an alternate drill than a set one. If your pitcher is having problems closing her hip, this should definitely be incorporated into her routine. If not, it is optional:

1. Taking a step or two back from where she was for the one-legged balance drill, she will stand perpendicular to the catcher.
2. She’ll throw her arm backward, all the way overhead, for negative momentum, and then step forward as she performs the windmill.
3. She’ll need to close her back hip while she is dragging her right foot in order to throw a strike.

She should step her right foot in line with her left to finish the pitch.

**5. One-Knee, Double Windmill**

Taking three more big steps towards the mound, the pitcher will kneel on her right knee and perform *two* windmills before releasing the ball.

**6. Three-step Walk-through**

Starting *behind* the mound, the pitcher will start far enough that she can take three strides forward to land on the mound. She’ll start with her right foot (right, left, right) and on her third stride, she should be on the mound, mid-windmill. She will then push off the mound and pitch the ball. After releasing it, she will take three more steps towards the catcher (right foot, left foot, right foot).

Hot Tip: Power Line

To work on balance-control issues, draw a power line:

* After counting off her six steps for her lunge line (detailed in iSport’s guide about [drive and forward momentum](http://softball.isport.com/softball-guides/pitching-drills-drive-momentum)), the pitcher should draw a line straight through it, dividing it in two.
* After the lunge, her right foot should land to the right of the power line, and her left foot to the left.

Using a power line can easily help a pitcher gain confidence in balancing and driving straight at her target.

**7. Behind & Step**

The pitcher will now start only one step behind the mound, with her hands apart. She will bring them together, and then throw them down and back as she bends at the waist and knees to push off the mound. Then she will drive her right foot to the mound, and lunge with her left to pitch the ball.

**8. Double Tap**

The pitcher will move onto the mound for this drill. With her right foot on the mound, she’ll place her left foot somewhere (comfortably) in front of it. To begin the motion, she will tap her left foot twice. As she is completes her second tap she should start the windmill. Then she’ll lunge off the mound to complete the pitch.

**9. 45-degree Angle**

The pitcher will start with her left heel against the mound and her right foot regularly placed on the front of it. She will turn her body 45-degrees away from the plate. The turn should be made towards the pitcher’s arm: A right-handed pitcher will turn to the right, and vice versa for lefties. Then she will pitch the ball, focusing on closing her hip in order to throw the ball straight.

**Throw from the Mound**

After you’ve warmed up, you are ready to throw! Before you start throwing different pitches or keeping a pitch count, practice at least ten more pitches straight down the middle. That way, you’ll be plenty warm before you start. If you want to do a quick warm-up of other spins, go back to the first drill, **Step & Snap**, and practice about 10 spins of each pitch before going back to the mound to throw them. And remember, quality is far more important than quantity!

Read more at: [**http://softball.isport.com/softball-guides/a-warm-up-routine-for-softball-pitchers**](http://softball.isport.com/softball-guides/a-warm-up-routine-for-softball-pitchers)