

## Three Finger Changeup – Who needs a curveball?

Hopefully by this age your pitchers can all throw a good four-seam fastball. Unfortunately the hitters can all hit that too. And with all the medical advice on waiting to throw a curveball until they are older the changeup is the answer. The good thing about a changeup is that it does not put any more stress on the elbow or shoulder than a fastball does so even though it is a feel pitch they can throw as many of them as they want. A changeup that can be thrown for a strike will keep batters from waiting on the fastball. Just make sure to mix up the pitch selection so it is not always a change up on an 0-2 count. Coaches and players will figure that out fast.

A three-finger changeup is a good off-speed pitch to start off with since you have more control than with a circle change. You also do not need to have big hands for this pitch.

To throw an effective three-finger changeup, center your ring, middle, and index fingers on top of the baseball (as shown in the third picture at right). Your thumb and pinky finger should be placed on the smooth leather directly underneath the baseball (as shown in the middle picture).



A lot of pitchers like to "touch" their pinky and thumb when gripping this pitch (as shown in the middle picture). It helps to develop a good "feel" for the pitch, which is important since the changeup is a finesse pitch.

OK, now that you've got your grip, hold the baseball deep in the palm of your hand to maximize friction and to "de-centralize" the force of the baseball when the pitch is released. This helps take speed off of the pitch. Throw it like you would a fastball: Same mechanics. Same arm speed. Same everything. This is key. Everything should look like a fastball to the batter. I even advise my kids to always do the changeup grip to start and switch to the four seam grip while the ball is in the glove. Fumbling with the grip before the pitch is a big tip off to the batter that something special is coming.

One way to develop "fastball mechanics" but changeup speed is to practice throwing your changeup as you long toss (throwing beyond 90 feet). Alternate fastballs and changeups at 90-or-more feet for about 20 throws a couple of times a week.