

Throwing and Catching a Disc

There are many ways to teach a player to throw and every coach will have a different approach. The approach taught in the AFDA course is based on avoiding information overload and is designed to give the coach a process for teaching, analysing and correcting throwing technique. These instructions are aimed at the beginner thrower.

Catching the disc

The crocodile catch is the first skill to teach a novice player. The crocodile catch, combined with a backhand will assist a novice player to get involved in their first game.

The Crocodile Catch



This skill is best taught by demonstration. The key teaching points are:

- The catcher should be facing the thrower straight on.
- Hands should start roughly a foot apart, palms facing towards each other. Usually the catcher's dominant hand will be on the bottom.
- Elbows should be in front of the body.
- As the disc arrives the catcher should bring their hands together to trap the disc.

Many novice catchers report that they jam their fingers into the rim of the disc when using the crocodile catch. Experienced catchers automatically flare their fingers out when making a crocodile catch to avoid this.

This catching style is the most effective because:

- The hands start a foot apart, so the catcher can make allowances for wind moving the disc in flight.
- If the catcher misses the disc with their hands, they will often catch the disc in their forearms.
- If their body position is correct, they can also catch the disc after it rebounds off the body or upper arm (assuming they miss it with hands and forearms).

This style of catching allows for the greatest margin of error.



The catching zone



The catching zone

If the disc arrives in the 'catching zone', it should be caught with a crocodile catch. The 'catching zone' is the area from above the knees to just above head height, bounded by the arm span of the catcher. If the disc is above chest height, the catcher will need to make a small jump to catch the disc.

If the disc is outside this zone it is likely that the catcher will need to use a one handed catching technique.

General issues:

The catcher may be afraid of the disc. They will move away from the disc as it comes towards them. This is often because they are not sure how the disc is going to fly. Encourage them to step into the disc as it comes. Try to pair them with a skilful thrower who can deliver the disc softly and accurately.

The backhand throw

The Grip(s)

This section shows two different grips



Basic grip

Basic grip

It is best to teach a new thrower to hold the disc using the Basic grip. This grip increases accuracy and control for the thrower.



Power grip

Power grip

The Power grip is for throwers who wish to increase the distance of their long throws. It is the most difficult to control but will add substantial distance to the backhand.

The Power grip allows more power than the Basic grip but requires more skill to control the disc.

General issues:

It is common for a player who switches to the Power grip to suddenly find that they cannot control the direction it flies. Control will return with practice.



Backhand throw



Skill breakdown of the backhand

The key points to iterate when teaching the backhand to beginners are:

1. Hold the disc like you're shaking hands
2. Turn your body so that you are side on to your target
3. Bring the disc through in a straight line
4. Point your arm to your target after release

Detailed description at each stage of the throwing motion for throwing a flat backhand for beginners.

Step	Description	Cue	Common Errors
<i>The grip</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backhand grip - three fingers inside the rim, index finger underneath the lip of the disc. • Thumb tight on the flight rings. 	<p>"Grip like you're shaking hands"</p> <p>"Thumb on the flight rings"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not gripping the disc tightly enough • Not placing the thumb onto the flight rings
<i>The preparation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start facing forward • Support the disc with two hands • Step across your body and move throwing hand into backhand grip • Shoulders and hips slightly rotated to throwing side • Knees slightly bent 	<p>"Side on to your target"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clunky grip change • Not getting side on to target prior to throwing • Only one hand used, leaving 'off-arm' by the side of body
<i>The acceleration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release the off-hand • Bring elbow and wrist forwards keeping the disc in a straight line • Angle the outside edge of the disc down 	<p>"Bring the disc through in a straight line"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rounding motion during the acceleration
<i>The release</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release the disc with 'outside edge' angled down • Flick elbow and wrist on release to launch the disc. • Release below hip height. • Follow through to point your throwing arm to your target 	<p>"Point your arm to your target after release"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not following through with a point • Outside edge of disc angled upwards

This assumes that a pivot foot is established, and that the thrower is right handed. It also assumes that the coach has discussed grips and has demonstrated the throwing skill to the group.

The forehand throw

The Grip



Power grip

Power grip

Grip the disc with a forehand 'power' grip (also called 'pistol' grip). Two fingers are placed inside the rim of the disc, and are slightly bent. The other two fingers extend and support the outside rim of the disc.

The thumb is placed tightly onto the flight rings.

In general, a stronger grip will allow a thrower to generate more spin.

If the thrower has small hands and can't control the disc, use a smaller disc like the Discraft J-Star.



Top view of power grip



Forehand throw



Skill breakdown of the forehand

The key points to iterate when teaching the forehand to beginners are:

1. Grip the disc with a pistol grip
2. Hold the disc to the throwing side with two hands, vertically
3. Loop the disc from high to back to low
4. Palm faces up upon release

Detailed description at each stage of the throwing motion for throwing a flat forehand for beginners.

Step	Description	Cue	Common Errors
The preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To start, toes and nose face forward. Hold the disc with two hands horizontal (neutral/athletic stance). • Switch to forehand grip with throwing hand while continuing to support with 'off-hand'. Move the disc to vertical and to the throwing side of the body. • The shoulders and hips are slightly rotated to the throwing side. The knees are slightly bent. 	<p>"Toes and nose forward, with disc horizontal"</p> <p>"Two hands"</p> <p>"Disc vertical"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clunky grip change • Elbow locked against hip, with no backswing (this is due to the disc being kept horizontal. A disc starting vertical lets the elbow move further back.) • Only one hand used, leaving 'off-arm' by the side of body.
The grip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forehand grip - two fingers inside, two open fingers supporting the outside rim of the disc. • Fingers inside the rim are slightly bent / relaxed. Thumb tight on the flight rings. 	<p>"Make a pistol, then straighten your other two fingers"</p> <p>"Thumb on the flight rings"</p>	<p>Incorrect Grip, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thumb down the rim, not on flight rings. • Outside fingers bent, and not supporting the outside edge of the disc. • 'Split' fingers inside rim.
The acceleration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release the 'off-hand' from the disc then loop the disc back. • Loop the disc from high to back to low. • Continue the loop by dropping the disc low, down to hip height. • Rotate shoulders/hips forwards. • Relax the throwing shoulder and arm, allowing the disc to lag behind the elbow, enhancing the power generated. • Accelerate the disc forwards at/below hip height. 	<p>"Relax"</p> <p>"Loop from high to back to low."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elbow locked against hip, with no backswing (this is due to the disc being kept horizontal. A disc starting vertical lets the elbow move further back.) • Lack of power generated due to tight shoulder/arm.
The release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Release the disc with 'outside edge' (edge that is away from 	<p>"Outside edge of disc slightly down"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside edge of disc rolling over during flight ("outside-in")



	<p>your body) angled slightly down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flick elbow and wrist on release to launch the disc. • Release just below hip height. • Palm faces up during follow through. 	<p>“Release below your waist”</p> <p>“Flick”</p> <p>“Palm up”</p>	
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Setting up beginner throwers for success

With new throwers you have to set your drills and throwing practice up very carefully. As a coach you need to put new throwers in a position where they can achieve a moderate amount of success every time they come to training. Here are some considerations for teaching people to throw:

- 1) Organise throwing practice so that players are throwing in pairs. This is the best way to maximise the number of throws for each player.
- 2) Be aware of the wind conditions. Try to get new throwers to throw downwind or at worst across the wind. Their completion rate will decrease greatly if you have them throwing into the wind. This is especially true for forehands.
- 3) Be aware of how far apart players are as they practice their throwing. Start new throwers close together. One strategy that will help them find a good throwing distance is to get pairs to increase the distance they are throwing by 2 paces when they make 5 completions in a row.
- 4) Try to pair new throwers with experienced throwers. This will increase the overall success rate and allow you to challenge your better throwers to be accurate. The experienced throwers will have the least favourable position to throw from. This also allows you to get the experienced players to help the new throwers.
- 5) Use a training grid (ie two parallel lines of cones showing where you would like the players to stand). This is the most efficient way to organise throwing training.

Demonstrating throwing grips

- Demonstrate this separately from demonstrating how to throw. Try to give each thrower a disc and stand in a circle and compare grips.
- You can also hold the disc in the correct grip and then turn it over and offer it to the person you are teaching. Get them to copy your grip on the disc. Then release the disc. They will be holding the disc correctly.
- A player's grip on the disc should be firm. To demonstrate this, hold the disc firmly in the correct grip and ask a player in the group to pull the disc out of your hand. They should not be able to remove it easily.

Analysing throwing technique using ‘G-SWAP’

In general, if you correct these 5 points, it will cover most of the common throwing errors exhibited by novice throwers. You can remember these 5 points by remembering G-SWAP.

- G**rip - are they holding the disc correctly
- S**tance - are they standing correctly
- W**rist - are they flicking their wrist
- A**ngle of the disc - is it angled down
- P**oint - are they pointing at their target after they have thrown.

You can use G-SWAP for backhands and forehands. The G-SWAP system can be used to analyse all throwers. As you watch a thrower, run through the five elements of G-SWAP in your head and this will assist you in figuring out how to help a thrower to improve their throws.



Other considerations

Even in the early stages of teaching a novice thrower there are a few throwing drills that will give them invaluable skills for future play. These are:

Short, quick release throwing drill

Pair throwers up over 4-8m (depending on ability). Instruct them to throw using only their wrist (i.e. no arm wind up).

Relevance

This is an effective way to teach throwers to use their wrist. Later on, this style of throwing is useful for throwing a dump and for breaking the mark.

Games

- 'Minute to Win It' See how many throws they can make in 60 seconds.
- See how far away from their body they can throw this throw.

Hucking

Pair throwers over the greatest distance they feel they can throw. Instruct them to work on throwing the disc as far as possible. For this drill you will need to demonstrate a full wind up and emphasise the need to keep the disc moving in a straight line during the throw. Instruct the throwers to maintain a pivot foot.

Relevance

This is an effective way to teach throwers to extend their range. It also allows them to play with using their arm as part of the throw. The further a player can throw, the more effective they will be on the field.

Games

- Take the group out to play disc golf.
- Discuss pulling and allow throwers to huck without having to maintain an established pivot foot.