

As a pitcher develops into more competitive baseball, the individual must be able to change speeds in order to be a successful player. The change-up, thrown with the release and mannerisms of a fastball, is a deception pitch designed to disrupt a hitter's rhythm and timing. Its unique grip results in less velocity and more movement than a fastball.

Note that the change-up's effectiveness relies on how the hitter reacts. If the hitter reacts right on it, able to make contact without adjusting timing, then the change-up is too fast. If the batter double clutches and still hits the ball or has the time to recognize the pitch and take it, it is too slow. You can throw a great change-up by following through on a solid grip and mechanics.

The change-up is a pitch with which a pitcher will need to experiment since there are several grips from which to pick. Regardless of the grip chosen, the pitcher will be throwing the ball back inside of the ball. Pitchers may use any of the three grips for fastballs but with a looser, deeper grip. If this is not enough to slow down the pitch, there are two more common grips: the three-finger change and the circle change.

The three-finger grip is a standard grip used in change-up. It is excellent for young pitchers, especially those with smaller hands. Here, the pitcher's index, middle, and ring fingers are centered on top of the ball. The pinky and thumb fingers are then placed on the smooth leather directly beneath the baseball.

However, the circle change is the most common alternative to the standard change-up grip. Here, the arm motion and release point are about the same as the fastball but with a difference in grip. In the circle change, the forefinger and thumb touch to create a circle on the side of the ball. The remaining fingers are spread around the ball. The ball rests back close to the palm, coming off the outside of the hand on its way to the plate. The narrow seams of the ball should be placed inside the circle so that the ball is thrown with a four-seam rotation, resulting in more spin. This will produce the optical illusion of a smaller ball.

Compared to the fastball, which uses leverage to impart force and spin using the first two fingers, the change-up applies the force around the ball, concentrating it in the middle of the ball and taking speed off.

Regardless of the grip, the pitcher must remember not to attempt to turn the pitch over to produce spin, as this will cause stress in the arm and may result in injury. Also, remember that the closer the pitch is to the fastball mechanically, the better. The pitch should have the same arm speed, extension, and release point. However, where the pitch would finish with the palm almost facing up after a fastball, it ends with the palm out, facing the arm side, after the change-up.