

Skill #1: CATCHING



Objective: To grasp hold of the disc in a secure way.

Cues: Eyes>Feet>Hands

There are two recommended ways to catch a disc. The most secure catch is the pancake catch, which is best for catching the disc when it is between your waist and chin. The more challenging type of catch is the crab catch, which is best for catching a disc that is above your chin or below your waist.



the pancake catch



the crab catch

Steps

Skill #1: CATCHING

1. Demonstrate a pancake catch.
 - Extend your arms forward, with one palm facing up and the other facing down, and clap your hands together around the middle of the disc while keeping your body directly behind it.
2. Demonstrate a crab catch.
 - Form claws with your hands with your thumbs down if the disc is above your shoulders and thumbs up if the disc is below your waist.
 - Squeeze the rim of the disc with both hands to make the catch.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Have players line up across from you. Throw the disc up in the air and have players practice catching it with the pancake catch.
- ▶ Next, throw the disc high or low to players to have them practice the crab catch.
- ▶ Throw just to the outside of the receiver's body so players learn to move their body behind the disc to catch it.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ Make sure players are catching the disc with two hands and keeping their eyes on it.
- ▶ Encourage players to position their body directly behind the disc when they catch it and not off to the side.
- ▶ If you have young players who are nervous about catching the disc, foam discs or 145g discs can be valuable alternatives.



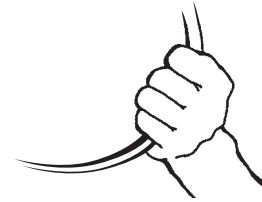
Skill #2: BACKHAND



Objective: To pass the disc to a teammate with a throw that comes across your body.

Cues: Grip>Step>Snap

The backhand throw is one type of throw to move the disc between teammates. It is the most common throw used in ultimate.



the backhand grip



throwing the backhand

Steps

Skill #2: BACKHAND

1. Grip the rim of the disc in the palm of your hand with your thumb on top and your four fingers wrapped around the edge.
2. To throw the backhand, step across your body, keeping your feet shoulder width apart, and point your throwing shoulder at your target.
 - While keeping the disc flat, swing your arm toward your target and snap your wrist to release the disc. Extend your arm toward your target as you release.
3. **Exercise:**
 - Have players find a partner and practice throwing backhands to each other from five yards apart.
 - With each catch, both partners take one step back. With each drop, both partners take one step forward.
 - First pair to reach 20 yards apart wins.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Have players form a circle and throw to each other, calling out the person's name they are throwing to beforehand. As players learn each other's names, add more discs to the circle.
- ▶ Pick a nearby target (such as a tree or sign). Players have three tries to hit the target from 5, 10, and 15 yards away.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ If the disc goes too far to the left or right, make sure their shoulder and hand line up with the target when releasing.
- ▶ If the disc is flying too high or low, tilt the front of the disc up or down to keep it flat.



Skill #3: FOREHAND



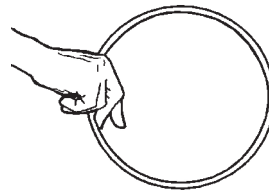
Objective: To throw the disc to a teammate with the palm of your hand facing up.

Cues: Grip>Step>Elbow>Snap

The forehand throw, also known as the flick, is another type of throw to move the disc between teammates, most often used when the backhand throw is too difficult to complete.



forehand grip



Steps

Skill #3: FOREHAND

1. To properly grip the disc for a forehand throw, place your middle finger against the inside of the rim and spread your index finger a few inches apart to make a V-shape.
2. Grip the top of the disc with your thumb. Turn the disc over with your palm facing up.
3. Extend your forearm out to your side, keeping your elbow slightly bent.
4. Step out to the side with the same leg as your throwing hand, keeping your other foot down.
 - Snap your wrist and release the disc toward your target. Your fingers should point toward your target as you release.
5. **Exercise:**
 - Have players find a partner and practice throwing a forehand five yards apart.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ With the same partner, stand 10 yards apart and try and complete as many passes as possible in one minute.
- ▶ Add in a defender to each group to guard the thrower. This helps the thrower get accustomed to passing the disc around a defender. Have players rotate throwers and defenders after 10 passes.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ If the disc is curving or tilting inwards, make sure the player is keeping the disc flat during their throw.
- ▶ If the disc is wobbly while in the air, the player needs to flick their wrist more to make the disc spin faster and stay level while in flight.



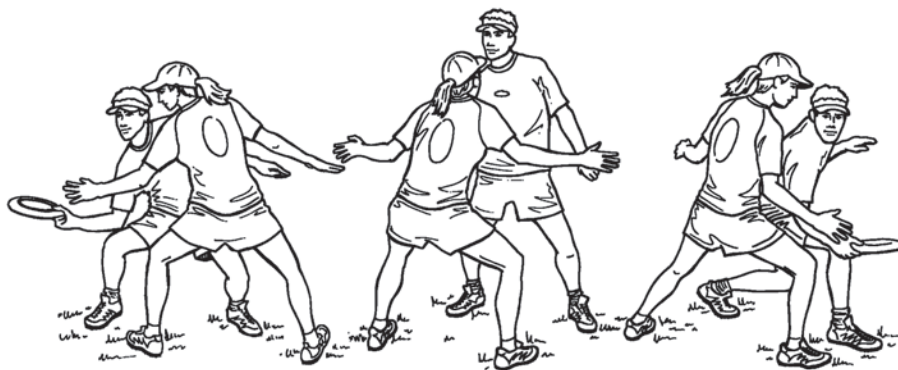
Skill #4: MARKING



Objective: To put pressure on the thrower by using your body to defend a throw and cause a turnover.

Cues: Hands Low and Outstretched>
Knees Bent>Shuffle

Marking is when a defender guards the thrower and attempts to either prevent a throw or make it more difficult. The defender can cause a turnover by either blocking the disc with their body or forcing a bad throw.



Steps

Skill #4: MARKING

1. Stand in front of the thrower (at least the width of one disc apart) on the balls of your feet. Keep your feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent.
 - Outstretch your arms and hands and keep them low so they are in the way of the disc and the thrower's release point.
 - Shuffle side to side to stay in front of your opponent's throwing lane. Never cross your feet.
2. Face the players while holding a disc and move it out to the right or left. As the disc moves, have players shuffle right or left to mirror the movement.
3. **Exercise:**
 - Have players find a partner and practice marking. One player holds the disc and moves it around while the other sets up a marking stance and tries to follow the disc with their hands.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Have players form groups of three. Two players stand about 10 yards apart and a third player marks the thrower. After each throw, have players rotate from thrower to mark, mark to catcher and catcher to thrower.
- ▶ When teaching the mark, some coaches like to include the more advanced skill of stalling. Once thrower catches the disc, the mark begins to count to 10 by saying "Stalling one, stalling two..." The thrower must throw the disc before the mark reaches 10. If the thrower fails to do so, a turnover occurs.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ If the thrower can throw the disc easily around the mark, make sure the mark is keeping their hands low and in front of the disc.
- ▶ If the mark is off balance, have them take a wider stance and remind the mark to shuffle their feet to stay in front of the throw instead of leaning to a side.



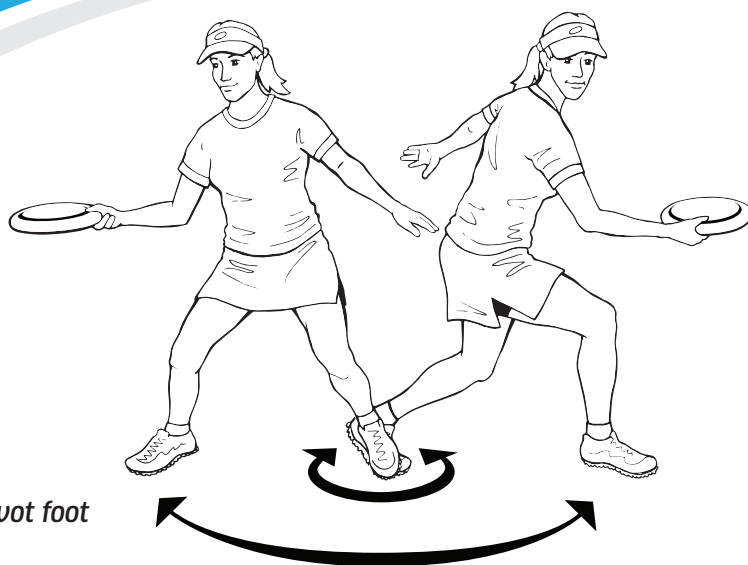
Skill #5: PIVOTING



Objective: To rotate away from a defender to create more space for a throw.

Cues: Plant>Step>Rotate

Pivoting around a mark increases the probability for an easier throw to a receiver. The pivot foot is on the opposite side of the throwing arm and remains stationary, while the non-pivot foot rotates to create space.



rotating on a pivot foot

Steps

Skill #5: PIVOTING

1. Have players identify their pivot foot by raising their throwing hand. The foot on the opposite side of the raised hand is their pivot foot.
2. Set up a compass drill by placing cones north, south, east and west around the players.
3. Call out a direction and have players step with their non-pivot foot towards the correct cone.
4. Encourage players to keep their eyes downfield as they pivot. This enables them to time their throws and be aware of where their teammates and opponents are.
5. **Exercise:**
 - Have players partner up and practice pivoting into either a backhand or forehand throw. Players must pivot in two different directions before they decide to throw it to their partner.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Have the team set up in a wide circle with one disc. The player with the disc must try to throw across the circle while pivoting around the mark.
- ▶ If the throw is incomplete, the thrower becomes the new mark. If complete, the mark remains and guards the next thrower.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ If player keeps lifting the pivot foot, have him or her imagine that the pivot foot is nailed into the ground and can only rotate, but not lift it.
- ▶ If a player is pivoting wildly, then once they pivot they have to hold their position for two seconds, while keeping their eyes looking downfield.



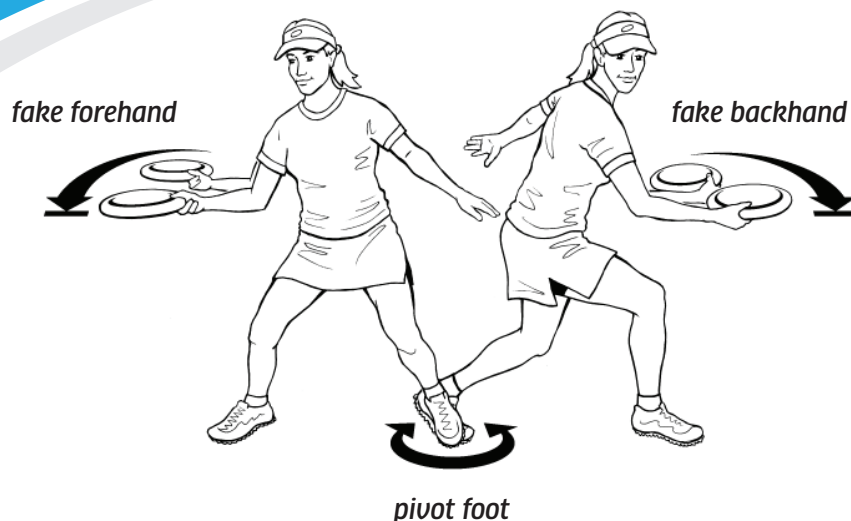
Skill #6: FAKING



Objective: To trick your defender into thinking you are throwing in a certain direction, in order to create space to throw to a different direction.

Cues: Pivot>Snap

A thrower will sometimes fake a throw using believable body movements that simulate a throw, such as a wrist snap, arm or shoulder motion or pivot, to move their defender to one side, creating an opening for an easier throw to their teammate.



Steps

Skill #6: FAKING

1. Demonstrate a proper fake.
 - Simulate the motion of a backhand or forehand throw without releasing the disc.
 - The key is to exaggerate the arm motion or pivot to fool the mark into falling for the fake.
2. Players should fake away from where they want to throw as well as a different throw from the type they want to throw.
3. **Exercise:**
 - Have players find a partner and choose one thrower and one mark per group.
 - Have the thrower make different fakes that the mark has to react to. Switch the mark and thrower twice.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Have the players form groups of three with a mark, a thrower and a receiver. The thrower should make at least two fakes before completing a throw to the receiver, while the mark attempts to block the throw.
- ▶ If the disc is caught, the receiver becomes the thrower. If it is dropped or blocked, the thrower becomes the mark.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ If the player is having trouble completing a fake due to their grip of the disc, have the player practice changing between the forehand and backhand grip.
- ▶ If a player is having trouble selling the fake, demonstrate one or two believable movements to use instead of wildly scrambling.



Skill #7: CUTTING

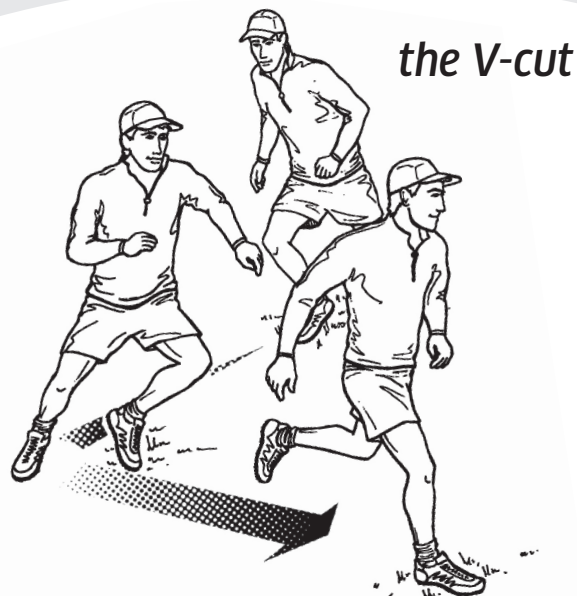


Objective: To create space between you and your defender by quickly changing direction.

Cues:

- >Drop Hips
- >Quick Steps
- >Plant Outside Foot
- >Change Direction

Cutting is a great way for players without the disc to evade their defenders and get open for a throw. Players can make either an in-cut toward the thrower or an out-cut away from the thrower.



Steps

Skill #7: CUTTING

1. Set up five cones to form an M. Have players start at the far left or right and run to each cone, creating the letter M as they cut.
 - As players approach each cone, they should keep their hips low and take quick stutter steps.
 - Once they reach cone, players should plant their outside foot into the ground, turn their hips to change direction, and explode into a sprint toward the next cone.
2. **Exercise:**
 - After going through the drill once, throw a disc and have players catch it as they run through the last cone.
 - Take two of the cones away and make a V in order to practice one v-cut toward the thrower. Have players catch the disc as they run through the last cone.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Take away a third cone. Once players run to the second cone, they can decide whether to make an in-cut or an out-cut to catch the disc.
- ▶ Add in a defender against the cutter, so players can practice losing their defender.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ Remind players that they should not make cuts toward the sideline (horizontally). Cuts should be sharp and fast at an angle toward or away from the disc.
- ▶ Make sure players run through the catch and slow down to a stop after they have caught the disc. Slowing down as you approach the disc will give the defender time to catch up and potentially make a defensive block.



Skill #8a: FORCE



Objective: To pressure the thrower into throwing to a certain side of the field.

Cues: >Forcing Forehand
>Forcing Backhand

This type of defense forces the thrower to throw a forehand or backhand to a certain side of the field by taking away half of the field (when viewed vertically).



Forcing forehand



Forcing backhand

Steps

Skill #8a: FORCE

1. Demonstrate the body positioning for the two main types of force: forehand and backhand.
 - **Forehand Force:** have a mark stand at a 45-degree angle near the thrower's non-throwing shoulder, blocking a backhand throw and pressuring the thrower to throw a forehand.
 - **Backhand Force:** have a mark stand at a 45-degree angle near the thrower's throwing shoulder, blocking a forehand throw and pressuring the thrower to throw a backhand.
2. Demonstrate the difficulty of throwing to the break side by pivoting around the mark's force and extending your arm and body away from the defender. If a thrower completes a pass on that side, they are essentially "breaking" the mark's defense.
 - Then show how much easier it is to throw to the open side, the side the mark is forcing the throw to go.
3. **Exercise:**
 - Have each player be a mark and practice forcing you to throw to the open side with both the forehand and backhand force.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Have players form groups of three with a mark, a thrower and a receiver. The mark will force a throw to the open side and begin counting the stall at "stalling five". The receiver fakes to the open side and cuts toward the break side.
- ▶ The thrower will fake to the open side and then attempt to throw around the mark (on the break side) with a backhand throw or a flick. Have players rotate from thrower to mark, mark to receiver, and receiver to thrower.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ If a thrower is able to pivot around a defender on the break side, encourage the defender to guard the side of the thrower rather than the middle.
- ▶ If the defender is forcing the wrong side, make sure you and other players communicate before and during play which side is the open side.



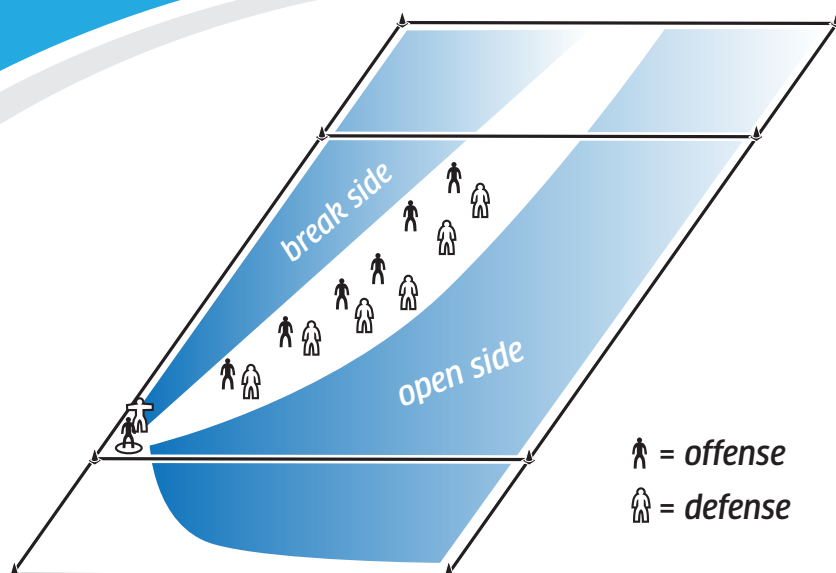
Skill #8b: DOWNFIELD DEFENSE



Objective: To take away the cutter's ability to receive throws in a certain area of the field.

Cues: >Break Side
>Open Side

The downfield defender's goal is to stop throws to the area the thrower's mark is forcing open, by placing themselves in front of their opponent on the open side.



Steps

Skill #8b: DOWNFIELD DEFENSE

1. Have a mark set a forehand force on you.
2. Position the downfield defenders on the open side of the cutter they are guarding.
 - Downfield defenders should position themselves on the open side no matter where the cutter cuts.
3. **Exercise:**
 - Setup cones in an M. Have players find a partner. One person will be on defense and the other person will be on offense.
 - The offensive player cuts between the cones while the defender stays with the cutter, turning their hips to keep their same position in front of the cutter.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Have players set up groups of four with two offensive players (thrower and cutter) and two defensive players (mark and downfield defender).
- ▶ Have the mark let their downfield defender know beforehand which side is the open side to guard, and then force either a backhand or forehand throw to that side.
- ▶ Have the cutter make an in-cut, then an out-cut and then cutter's choice. After each offensive player has made three throws/cuts, switch offense and defense.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ If defender is having trouble reacting to the cutter, encourage the defender to keep their body balanced and their hips low and aligned with the cutter.
- ▶ If defender is losing the location of the disc, encourage them to keep their head on a swivel and constantly be aware of the positions of the thrower and other cutters.



Skill #9: HAMMER

Objective: To throw the disc upside down and over your head with a forehand grip.

Cues: Grip>Step>Lift>Snap

The hammer throw is another type of throw, typically used to pass the disc over a defender. This throw should be used with caution, as it is a difficult throw to master and can easily be affected by the wind or tall defenders.

throwing the hammer



Steps

Skill #9: HAMMER

1. Using the same grip as the forehand throw, bring your throwing arm behind your head at a 45 degree angle, as if you are serving an overhead in tennis, and cock your wrist back. The disc should be upside down over your head.
 - Shift your weight to your pivot foot as you lift your arm over your head.
 - Stepping with your non-pivot foot, snap your wrist and release the disc above your head and at a light angle toward your target.
2. **Exercise:**
 - Have players practice holding the disc with the forehand grip, then practice the motion of the hammer.
 - Have the players imagine they are throwing over a tall defender to the receiver.

Advanced Practice

- ▶ Have players find a partner and practice throwing a hammer back and forth from five yards apart.
- ▶ To challenge players, add a defender and increase the distance of the throws.
- ▶ Have players see how many throws they can make into a basket or hoop.

Quick Fixes

- ▶ If a player's throws are wobbling or dropping to the ground before reaching the receiver, have the thrower release the disc higher and snap their wrist harder.
- ▶ Right-handed throwers will see that the disc tends to arc from left to right, and vice versa for left-handed throwers, so encourage throwers to aim to one side of the receiver so the disc curves towards the receiver as it approaches them.

