

Throwing

Learn about all the different ways you can yeet a frisbee

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Intro to Throwing

Throwing is the defining skill of ultimate. It's the first thing that distinguishes ultimate from other sports for newcomers, and is a large part of how players & teams differentiate themselves. This is because there are countless ways to throw a frisbee and while most throws can be neatly classified into a handful of distinct throwing types--two of which are almost used exclusively in competition, backhand and forehand--each type of throw can have many variations based on distance, velocity, spin, curve, release point, throwing-hand, pitch, etc... Additionally, the individuality of every person's body results in every player having a different ideal throwing form.

Unlike its counterpart skill of catching, ultimate players at every level rightfully spend a large amount of their practice time honing their throwing abilities. However, what throws players choose to practice and how they go about practicing them can vary wildly. Even among coaches, there are differing opinions on how to teach new players to throw.

Excel Ultimate's throwing introduction video is a great tutorial showing the basic concepts behind the backhand and forehand.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/INQexzgzw4?end=221>

Learning To Throw

Throwing a Frisbee is a complex motion that involves your entire body. However, the first hurdle that any player has to overcome when learning a new throw is the unfamiliar sensation of holding the frisbee in a new throwing grip. Throwing practice is going to be much less effective if you do not feel like you cannot comfortably hold the frisbee with the desired throwing grip. Therefore I recommend players trying to learn a new throw in the minimum number of throwing sessions to find time when they have a free hand--such as while watching TV, walking on the street, sitting as a passenger--to hold a disc firmly in the new throwing grip and practice varying the angles at which the disc is held. Once a player feels comfortable holding the disc in a certain way, they can focus on adjusting other aspects of their throwing motion during throwing sessions.

Most players when learning to throw will benefit from using mechanical cues to simplify the overall throwing motion. A cue is a simple mechanical task that a player can focus on, such as snapping their wrist or dropping their shoulder, that will inform the mechanics of the rest of the throw. Focusing on one or two cues will reduce the processing time needed when performing a new throw and makes throwing under pressure less overwhelming. There are many cues for every type of throw and different cues work for different players. A player may even find that the cue that works best for them will change between throwing sessions. The specific pages for each kind of throw will introduce some basic cues that new players can experiment with.

Throwing Characteristics & Glossary

There are many variations for each type of throw such as backhand and forehand that players can learn. Throw can vary based on different characteristics such as speed, distance, height, curve, and release point. Great throwers are able to control these different throwing dimensions and can choose the right combination of characteristics for each situation.

There is a ton of slang and jargon that ultimate players use to describe these throwing characteristics. Here are the definitions for some of the more common ones:

Air-bounce: A throwing technique that causes the disc to bounce on the air and rise during its flight, completed by imparting downward pressure on the top side of the disc at the point of release. Normally done with a backhand grip. It can create more of a floating disc flight.

Around: A throw — often, but not necessarily a break throw — that goes to the side of the marker that is opposite to the force side.

Blade: A pass, usually a forehand, that is thrown with the disc released at a steep, even vertical, angle and remaining on that flight path.

Break: A throw to the part of the field that the marker was attempting to protect.

Dish: A short pass. Most often, this is a reset throw or one to a player that is moving downfield with forward momentum, usually with their eyes on the downfield cutters. Synonymous terms: **pop pass, flip pass**

High-release: Referring to the height a pass is released from compared to the body; can be applied to any throw that is released above shoulder-level where the top of the disc is still facing up (ie, not an upside-down throw like a hammer or scoober).

Huck: A long-distance throw, typically over 30 yards.

Inside: A throw to the breakside space or throwing lane that is on the side of the marker that is closer to the force side.

Inside-Out (IO): The shape of a throw that begins its flight with the top of the disc facing away from the thrower but is angled to flatten out or turn later in its flight. Compare to “Outside-In.”

Low-release: Referring to the height a pass is released from compared to the body; can be applied to any throw that is released below knee-level.

Outside-In (OI): The shape of a throw that begins its flight with the top of the disc facing toward the thrower but is angled to flatten out or turn later in its flight. Compare to “Inside-out.”

Shape: The ability for a throw to curve - Inside-out or Outside-in.

Touch: A throw or the property of a throw that moves slowly, allowing receivers to easily chase down and catch the disc.

[Ultiworld's Frisbee Glossary](#)

Backhand

The most common throw. Easy to learn, difficult to master!

Backhand Basics

For anyone who picks up a frisbee, the backhand will be the first throw that they try. It's the most intuitive throw and is often the throw that players are most comfortable with and can throw the farthest, to the point that the most defenses are built on the premise of not letting players throw backhand. Even so, the backhand, along with the forehand, account for the vast majority of throws that occur in a game of ultimate and is therefore an extremely important throw to develop.

Rowan McDonnell once again has a video covering the basics of the throw:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/As1X0JNWILY>

Once a player is able to comfortably throw a standard backhand, they can further develop the throw by learning how to vary certain characteristics of the throw such as release point, curve and distance.

In my opinion however, for beginners trying to add some variation to their backhands, the most valuable throwing characteristic to change is pivot distance as it allows players to adapt to various defensive situations without requiring a lot of practice.

Backhand Variation: Pivot Distance

Being able to vary the distance of one's crossover step gives players a ton of flexibility to deal with various defensive situations.

The most obvious advantage you can gain from a varied step out distance is the ability to step around a mark, as shown in the video example below. Putting distance between your release point and your mark enables players to throw to the breakside for resets and inside looks more easily. It also allows for throwing to the open side with less pressure.

In addition to being able to step out farther, being comfortable able to throw a backhand with a small or no step is also an important skill to develop. You can release a backhand much quicker if you do not need to step out first and if you are throwing in the opposite direction of the mark, you can place your body between the disc and the mark.

Backhand Variation: Curve (IO & OI)

When first learning how to throw a backhand or forehand, players are ideally taught to throw the disc straight with no curve. However, knowing how to put shape on one's throws is very important for players trying to further improve their throws beyond the standard mid-range flat throw. This is because adjusting one's throwing form will often result in changing the disc's release angle along with the throw's curve. Understanding the mechanics behind IO & OI backhands will inform players on how to avoid or utilize the curve that they experience when trying new throw variants.

OI backhands are most commonly used for around throws and away throws that don't require the thrower to throw as far as they can.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/0osjIXH2osU>

Inside out backhands are useful for inside break throws and putting maximum distance on hucks.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/fNAGXCTJb8g>

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/7fVVOeNwOp8>

Backhand

Backhand Hucks

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/onlFPdnNg-w>

https://www.youtube.com/embed/MZScUa_xvrQ

Backhand

Backhand Variation: Release Height

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/oN1bzPCKkGE>

Forehand

look at da flicka da wrist

Forehand Basics

The Forehand (AKA flick) is the throw that most players use to throw on the opposite side from their backhand: If you're right handed, backhands are most comfortably released on the left side of your body and a forehand will allow you to do the same on the right side of your body. Forehands in general are harder to learn than backhands, such that many defensive schemes will try to force players to throw only forehands. However once learned, many players find that the flick can have certain advantages over backhands including reach, release speed and control.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/AiU5518a1q0>

Forehand

Forehand Hucks

For right-handed players, forehand hucks are arguably more important than backhand hucks simply because you will more often than not be forced to throw flicks by the defense. As such for players who want to have a versatile throwing arsenal, the flick huck is an important skill to learn to force defenses to respect the deep space.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/mXqHmC-xIZ0>

Forehand

Forehand Variation: Curve (IO & OI)

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/lpjgNXyOVKY>