

Disclaimer: This guide will explain how I throw a backhand. It is not necessarily *the* right way to throw a backhand, and I know of other people that use slightly different grips or motions and still have a successful backhand. There are certain guidelines that will apply to *any* good backhand technique, and I will try to make it clear when I am explaining something that is specific to my technique or a general concept that should be applied to any throwing technique.

General Thoughts on Throwing

The most important thing you can do to improve any throw is to practice. Practicing is different from tossing. Practicing is throwing with a purpose. When we practice as a team, we are not just playing pick-up. If you are mindlessly tossing, then you might as well expect us to reach nationals by simply playing pick-up a few times a week. When you are throwing with someone, you need to analyze each of your throws. Focus on improving on the techniques I will layout here. Don't settle for "that throw was good enough", everything can always be better. Learn to be critical of yourself, and of your teammates (criticism is great when it is given in a constructive manner (this is something that I am trying to personally improve)). **Questions to ask yourself after each throw:**

- Was it flat? (it should be)
- Did it wobble or flutter at all during its flight? (it shouldn't have)
- Did it go where I was aiming? (it should have)
- Did it reach the person at the perfect height (between mid-thigh and shoulders)? (it should have)
- Did it reach the person with touch (if the person decided not to touch the disc would the disc float in his area and land softly or would it zip by him)? (it should have reached the person with touch)

When you are throwing work on stepping out, throwing at normal and low release points, and when you get good at that throw a few *real* pivots before you throw. It should be natural to step out on almost all of your throws, because you will need to step out even on open side throws. Remember every throwing drill is also a catching drill. Don't get lazy and lose focus when the disc is traveling towards you, make sure you are focusing on proper catching technique, so that come game time the correct technique is all your muscles know.

Throwing a flick can be broken into 2 parts: The Grip, and The Motion.

The Grip

General Concepts:

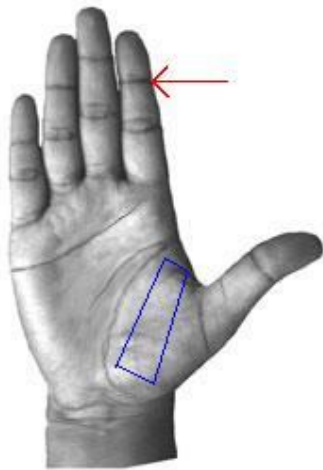
Whatever grip you choose, the disc should be parallel with your arm, when you extend your arm fully. When checking your grip, hold your arm straight out and down, the disc should look like a continuation of your arm. That means the disc should be parallel with your arm (not jutting out to one side), and it should be in a straight line with your arm.

Your thumb should rest on top of the disc and your other fingers should wrap around the rim so that your fingertips end up somewhere underneath the disc. A common mistake that people make when learning to throw backhand is to place their index finger on the outside of the rim, instead of underneath the disc. The tip of your index finger should NOT rest on the outside of the rim.

My Specific Grip:

The grip that I use entails holding the disc with a very loose grip. It is tight enough so that if I throw a backhand fake, I don't lose control of the disc, but my grip seems to be looser than many other grips I've encountered. Because the grip is loose, I am generally unable to hold the disc with only one hand. I hold the disc in my right hand, and use my left hand to stabilize the disc. Once I begin the throwing motion, the momentum of the disc stabilizes it, and I no longer need my left hand to stabilize it.

To grip the disc, start with your dominant hand palm up. There is a fleshy area at the base of your palm, above the wrist, and just below where your thumb connects to your wrist. Place the outside rim of the disc along this area (see blue area in the picture below).



Place your thumb along the top of the disc so that it is nearly parallel with the rim of the disc, but pointed slightly toward the middle of the disc. Wrap your other fingers underneath the disc so that your fingertips are touching the inside of the rim. (When I wrap my fingers underneath I find that the lower part of my fingertip is contacting the rim, and my fingernails don't make any contact with the rim or the underside of the disc.) Slide your fingers (especially your index finger) up and down along the circumference of the rim until you find a position that is both comfortable (keeping in mind that any new grip you are learning will probably feel awkward at first) and results in the disc being parallel to your arm (when extending your arm, see "General Concepts" in this section). When I'm holding the disc, my index finger is touching the bottom of the rim at the spot highlighted by the red arrow in the above picture.

The Motion

Start with your body facing the direction you are going to throw in. *Make sure you are looking at where you are going to be throwing!* Hold the disc as described in "The Grip" section; you will probably want to stabilize the disc by also holding it with your

non-dominant hand. While keeping your pivot foot down, step out across your body with your dominant foot (i.e. for a right handed thrower, you will step to the *left* with your *right* foot). This is the opposite of what you do when you throw a ball. When throwing a ball you step with your non-dominant foot, for a disc you step with your dominant foot. You want to step out at about a 30 degree angle (slightly forward, but mostly to the side). As you get better at throwing you can practice stepping out farther and farther.

As you are stepping out, rotate your body away from your target and bring the disc backwards. Begin to move the disc forward. Once the disc starts to move forward, release it from your non-dominant hand (if you were using that hand to stabilize the disc). The forward momentum of the disc will be enough to stabilize it. **The important things to remember when the disc is moving forward:**

- The disc must be flat! (ignoring rare exceptions)
If the disc is pointed up, down, left, or right your throw will not come out flat.
- The disc must travel in its own plane. (ignoring rare exceptions)
If you have the disc flat, but your motion carries the disc up or down then the disc is not traveling in its own plane. If the disc pops up after you release it, it is probably because it is not traveling in its own plane; this may be because you are moving the disc up or down through the throwing motion, or you may be throwing in a straight line, but the disc is not flat.
- The disc must move in a straight line during the throwing motion! (there are no exceptions to this)
When throwing, pull the disc across your chest/mid-section (around the bottom of your rib-cage or top of your abs). To do this you will have to dynamically bend your elbow. When the disc is far back your elbow will be mostly straight, when the disc is near your chest/mid-section your elbow will be bent, and when the disc is out in front of your elbow will once again be straight.
Don't make the mistake of keeping your elbow straight the whole time. This will result in an arcing motion by the disc, instead of a straight line. The consequences of this will be loss of accuracy, stability, power, and touch.

Throughout the whole throwing motion take care to keep your muscles and joints loose (especially your wrist). **DO NOT ADD ADDITIONAL SNAPPING TO YOUR WRIST AT THE END OF THE THROWING MOTION!** If you keep your muscles and joints loose, and throw with a proper grip and the proper motion, your wrist will snap all that it needs to on its own. Trying to add extra snap will cause your throw to come out bladey and craptacular!

When throwing, you want to keep your upper-body relatively upright. Excessive leaning will throw-off your balance, and result in a poor throw. The best way to force your upper-body to stay upright is to bend your knee on your back leg (non-dominant/pivot -leg) when you step out (i.e. a right handed thrower should step out with his right leg and bend his left knee). A good backhand form will often mean that both of your knees are bent around 90 degrees.

Make sure that you are looking at your target* for the entire throwing motion. It is very easy to get lazy when throwing a backhand, and allow your body to pull your head to the side. Resist the temptation to be lazy, when practicing your backhand, make a

conscious effort to look at your target for the entire motion. This is probably the most significant thing that you can do to improve your accuracy.

*Target in this case does not necessarily mean the person that you are throwing to.

Target means the space that you are throwing to (this can either be a back corner for a huck, or a space *in front* of your receiver for an in-cut).

Now analyze the throw you just made (see questions to ask yourself after each throw, above).