# **11 Responsibilities of a Catcher**

Just know, the pitcher gets the headline while the catcher does the work.

Actually, we don’t want the pitchers to know that. But the little secret among catchers is that you are actually the one who controls the game — you just don’t get the credit.

But that’s okay. While it’s not particularly glamorous, every coach knows how important a catcher is to his team’s success. A great catcher can make his pitchers better. A great catcher can make all of his teammates better.

Of course, having the responsibilities of a catcher while getting little of the glory isn’t a particularly desirable task. But if you’re up to taking on the following 11 responsibilities, you have the potential to be a great catcher…

## **1. Be Selfless**

It’s not about you.

You touch the ball as much as everyone but the pitcher. But when you do your job properly, you’re barely noticed.

That’s okay. You don’t need the attention. Or at least, if you want to be a great catcher you had better not care about getting attention.

You’re not the pretty boy. You’re not glamorous. When the game is over, everyone talks about the pitcher.

But you don’t care.

## **2. Make Your Pitcher Look Good**

As a selfless catcher, you have one primary responsibility: ***Make your pitcher look good.***

The pitcher will get all of the credit. A catcher needs to accept it. Enjoy it. It’s his job to get that pitcher his glory.

If the catcher drops a close strike, the umpire may call it a ball. If the catcher snags a pitch just off the plate, the umpire may call a strike.

After a big victory, the pitcher gets credit for the win, not the catcher. The pitcher gets credit for all of the strikeouts, not the catcher. The pitcher gets credit for limiting the number of hits, not the catcher.

That’s okay. If a pitcher looks good when all is said and done, you did your job.

## **3. Keep Your Pitcher Confident**

Pitchers are fragile. Or again, that’s the secret among catchers.

If he’s getting shaken up or nervous, or stressed out on the mound, call time to slow him down. Remind him how amazing he is. You need a confident pitcher for the game to go well.

Keep him loose. Keep him focused. Keep him feeling great about himself. Remind him of how good he is and how many strikes he’s thrown to you. Remind him all of the fielders are there to help him. Remind him that his job is to make the batter hit the ball.

## **4. Let Nothing by You**

You’re the only player on the field with gear on. You must use it. You have no business being afraid of the ball.

***Let nothing by you.***

Dive at the ball. Throw your body at it. Kick it. Hit it with your mask. Do ***everything you can*** to stop it.

***Let nothing by you.***

There is little that is more frustrating to an opposing team than a catcher who forces them to go base to base rather than allowing the occasional easy jog to the next base because the ball went to the backstop.

***Let nothing by you.***

While nothing should ever get by you, this is especially true with a runner on third. That is your runner. Even the wildest of wild pitches can’t find the backstop with you behind the plate.

***Let - nothing - by - you!***

## **5. Have a High Pain Threshold**

You may have gear, but that doesn’t mean this will be easy.

You’ll take foul balls off of your mask. Sometimes repeatedly.

Batters will hit you on the back swing. Or they’ll throw their bat at you on the way to first. Thanks, guys!

More than any other player, you’ll take wild pitches and foul balls off of the unprotected parts on your body. And while the typical player will need a coach to come out a check to see if they’re OK, you grit your teeth and get ready for the next pitch.

You’ll dive. You’ll leap. You’ll collide with runners. You’ll have more bumps and bruises at the end of the game than you’ll be able to count.

But this is in your job description. And you wear it like a badge of honor because no one else would be willing to take that type of abuse.

## **6. Keep the Umpire Happy**

Umpires are human. You’d be surprised how that fact can impact the borderline calls.

Make that umpire your best friend. Ask him about how long he has been an umpire or how many years he played baseball as a kid. What job does he do? Ask if he likes to be an umpire. Ask if he has any pointers for you – anything you can do to be a better catcher.

When that umpire takes a foul ball, call time. If it hit him hard, walk slowly to your pitcher for a meaningless conversation. When you get to the mound, just whisper to the pitcher how funny it was that he just hit the umpire. Then walk back to the plate. When you return, ask that umpire if he’s okay.

Protect that umpire. Make it your job. If a ball gets by you that hits the umpire, apologize and shake his hand.

## **7. Know the Situation**

Your pitcher is nervous. Your teammates in the field aren’t paying attention. It is your responsibility to know what’s going on.

Much of this is simple situational awareness, and you’re primarily responsible for most of it.

You should know the count.

You should know where you are in the lineup (who the hitter is).

You better know how many outs there are.

You better know how many runners are on base, where and what types of runners they are (fast, slow, aggressive).

You better know the score.

A catcher who isn’t constantly aware of these situations isn’t able to best help his team. Handling the physical side of the game alone simply isn’t enough…for a catcher.

## **8. Be a Leader**

Every good team needs a leader. And one of the leaders — if not ***the leader***— needs to be the catcher.

Be a positive force. Keep everyone up when things are looking down.

Be vocal. Be friendly. Be directive. A catcher needs to be heard.

Lead by example. Always work hard – no one should outwork the catcher. Set the tone for your teammates.

## **9. Direct the Defense**

You’re the field general. Not the shortstop. Not the centerfielder. You can let those guys think it’s them, but it’s actually you.

You know the lineup. You know what the other team has done and what they are capable of. Make sure your teammates know, too.

If you see your right fielder is too deep for the current batter, bring him in.

If you know the current batter likes to pull the ball, move your third baseman closer to the line.

After the second out is recorded and prior to the first pitch to the next batter, stand in front of the plate, take off your mask and yell for all of your teammates, both dugouts, and both sidelines full of parents to hear: ***“Two outs!”***

You know the situation. You know where the next play needs to be. ***Remind your teammates!***

**Give your pitcher a look saying, “You’ve got this!”**

## **10. Make Smart Throws**

A catcher can hurt his team in multiple ways. He allows runners a free pass when the ball gets by. He doesn’t know where the play should go.

But he can also hurt his team by making poor — and unnecessary — throws.

That runner is going to make it to second easily? Don’t throw it. If you do, it sure better be a good throw, or you’ll let that runner move on to third.

There’s a bunt in front of the plate with a runner going to third. Do you take the out or attempt to throw out the runner at third? If you make the throw to third, it had better be a good one.

## **11. Be Selectively Aggressive**

Above, you’d think that a good catcher would rarely throw the ball. That’s not necessarily the case. They just need to be smart about it.

If a good baserunner on first is dancing too much, make a surprise throw over and send him back to his bench. Make him think twice about taking that big lead next time.

If there’s a lazy runner on third with the best hitter at the plate and one out, throw a bullet to third. Catch him napping.

Make good throws. Make smart throws. But be aggressive and make those runners take one less step off of the base. Make them one step slower to the next base.

As a selectively aggressive catcher, you will be noticed. And your team will gain outs because of it.

**The life of a catcher isn’t glamorous. It’s dirty. It’s painful. It’s hard. It hurts. But for a team to be successful, it’s necessary. A good catcher can change a game as much as any player on the field.**