

How to Break in a Ball Glove

Every baseball or softball player has a special connection to their glove. Every crease and seam has been worked into place through countless catches, grabs and snags. A lot of effort has gone into shaping that mitt, and it all starts with the break-in.

Players of all skill levels should break in their glove before play. Properly breaking in your glove can help make sure it is comfortable for use and moves well with your hand. Your glove should fit snug and feel as if it is an extension of your hand. Breaking in your glove helps add to this cohesion and eliminate any unwanted stiffness or rigidity. It can also create a pocket that will more securely hold the ball.

There are several different ways to break in your new baseball or softball glove. With the help of these tips and tricks, you can customize your fit for a season's worth of celebration-worthy catches.

MOISTEN THE GLOVE'S LEATHER

Pour a small amount of hot water (150 to 170 degrees Fahrenheit) over any area of your new glove you want to make softer. Do not put your glove in the microwave or use detergents to soften the glove, as this can damage the leather. You can also use a small amount of glove oil applied with a sponge. Never put glove oil directly on the glove. It can be too concentrated at the point of application and can leave that spot soaked and heavy.

WORK THE MOST RIGID PARTS OF YOUR GLOVE

Once the glove is saturated with warm water or glove oil, bend the thumb and pinky back and forth toward each other and away from each other to begin breaking in these stiff areas of your mitt. Squeeze the thumb and pinky together. Push the back fingers down and squeeze the palm liner. Pull the web top to stretch it a little. Repeat this process six to eight times before your glove is completely dry.

SOFTEN THE GLOVE

Just like other leather products, your glove should start to soften with extended use. To speed up this process, you can help soften your glove by using a wooden mallet or 5 lb. neoprene dumbbell to pound the pocket where you would catch the ball. Pound the web as well to create a fold where you want your glove to break. This can help create a nice valley for the ball to fall into, as well as iron out any unwanted wrinkles for a smooth pocket finish. If you don't have a mallet or dumbbell, try throwing a ball into the pocket 30 or so times before the glove dries. Pounding the pocket additionally helps the leather conform to your hand for that ultimate break-in.

SHAPE THE GLOVE

Put a ball in the pocket and wrap your glove with two to three rubber bands. The bands should be very snug, but not tight, and form an "X" shape as they overlap one another. Allow your glove to set this way for four to five hours. This will help your glove begin to take the shape you want when it dries and not revert back to its natural shape. Pound the pocket again after you remove the ball to work the pocket even more.

JUST PLAY CATCH

The most fun way to properly break in your baseball or softball glove is to simply play as much catch as possible with it. Through rounds of catch, your glove will slowly begin to form to your hand and the leather loosen with each catch. Playing catch day in and day out is going to be the best way to make sure your glove breaks in to your hand structure, as no oil or cream or pummeling treatment can beat a good old toss when it comes to recreating actual game experiences.

In addition to these techniques, you can also put your trust in the Pros at DICK'S Sporting Goods. Use their [in-store glove steaming service](#) to help improve the playability of your mitt in a flash.

CONDITIONING THE GLOVE THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

Remember to store your glove in your house – as opposed to in the trunk of your car or in your garage – for longer life and to help maintain better condition. Don't forget to also care for your glove's leather by applying a small amount of oil or glove conditioning cream every so often during the season. It's also a good habit to treat your glove just before you store it away for the offseason.

BONUS PRO TIP: Use conditioners and oils sparingly. Over-caring for your glove can be detrimental, as the oils can make your glove heavier and actually shorten the leather's lifespan. Roughly three to four treatments per season should be enough to keep your equipment in top-notch condition all year.

There are no shortcuts to a properly broken-in softball or baseball glove, but by practicing these helpful tips and getting in as many rounds of catch as possible, your new mitt should be ready for the diamond in no time.