

Everything You Need to Know About Buying a Baseball Glove

One of the many questions asked by parents especially those of children new to baseball is what kind and size of glove should I buy for my child. No matter what level of baseball you play selecting and buying a baseball glove is a personal decision. As with baseball bats, new glove technology has delivered baseball gloves that not only enhance performance but also are tailored to an individual player's strengths and their parent's budget. It is essential that you select a baseball glove that fits your child's hand size, skill level, but generally speaking smaller is better as the glove is easier to move and the ball is easier to get out of the pocket. Below are some things for the Little Leaguer and their parents to consider if you are looking to buy a baseball glove.

Baseball Gloves vs. Baseball Mitts

The main difference between baseball gloves and mitts is that gloves have fingers and mitts don't. Mitts tend to do a better job of controlling balls that don't hit in the pocket and can aid scooping ground balls and short hops. First Base and Catcher are the only positions allowed to use mitts. For youth players 5 to 12 years old baseball gloves are designed for general use as players will play many different positions. As players get older and start playing specific positions more often you may want to select a glove designed for infield or for outfield. If you play both, select a glove for the position you will be playing most often. First Base and Catcher are the exception. Even at the youth level you can select a mitt designed specifically for these positions. A catcher should always use a catcher's mitt as the design provides extra protection for the hand.

How to Measure Baseball Gloves

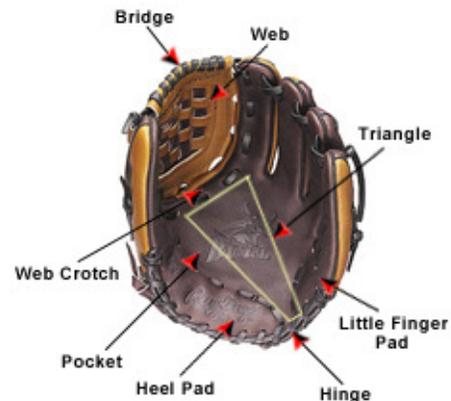
Fielders gloves and first base mitts are measured by starting at the top of the index finger of the glove down the finger along the inside of the pocket and then out to the heel of the glove. A flexible tape measure has to be used, not a stiff ruler. Measure from the highest point on the glove (normally the index finger). Lay the tape measure across the palm of the glove, so that it folds across and into the indenture, down to the heel of the glove. Professional baseball has a 12 inch maximum height for a glove, although this rule has not been strictly enforced.

Size

Use the chart include with this article as a general guideline for determining glove size. A glove should feel fairly snug when adjusted. Check to make sure the glove adjusts to your hand. Allow room for batting glove if you wear one. Except for pitchers, most players should wear a batting glove inside their fielder's glove. The batting glove will absorb most of the sweat from your hands, thus protecting the lining of your glove. Change the batting glove when it gets wet or rotted.

Sizing a Baseball Glove		
Age	Position	Glove Size (in inches)
5-6	General	10 to 10 ½ (youth model)
7-8	General	10 ½ to 11 (youth model)
9-12	General	11 to 11 ½ (youth model)
Teen/Adult	Infield	11 to 11 ½
Teen/Adult	Outfield	12 to 12 ½

Use this chart as a general guide for sizing a baseball glove



Glove Quality

Higher quality baseball gloves and mitts are usually distinguished by higher grade leather, better construction and better design. These work together to produce a glove or mitt that is durable and helps the ball into and out of the pocket. The highest quality gloves are usually made of heavy leather that will need some time to break-in and typically do not have palm pads or Velcro adjustments.

Youth Gloves

Youth gloves are smaller so kids will be able to maintain glove control, typically are designed to be easy to break-in and will sometimes have a notch in the heel to help the glove break-in correctly. Youth gloves are designed with smaller finger and wrist openings to better fit smaller hands, generally have a Velcro or other type wrist adjustment, a great feature in youth gloves as it will help keep the glove fitting properly over a longer period of time and will allow the use of the glove by more than one person. Youth gloves may have an over-sized pocket to aid youngsters who are learning how to.

Perhaps the most important point in this section is to avoid the temptation to buy a glove that is to "large" for the person using it with the thought in mind "they will grow into it". What will actually happen is the player will get discouraged and want to quit after the glove falls off his hand a couple of times or you will get discouraged and

either go buy another glove the right size or wonder why "little Johnny" can't keep his glove on like the rest of the guys. Either way its a lose-lose proposition. Buy the right size the first time and avoid needless pain.

Female Gloves

Baseball gloves and mitts that are specified as women's or female are usually designed with narrower finger stalls and smaller wrist openings to provide a better fit.

First Base Mitts

Most first base mitts designed for baseball use are 12 to 12 1/2 inches. First base mitts have a thin but stiff pad that runs around the circumference of the mitt and little or no padding in the palm or finger area.

Catchers Mitts

Baseball catcher's mitts usually have a very thick pad around the circumference of the mitt and thick padding in the palm and finger area and a small pocket.

Open vs. Closed Web

The web of a glove is that portion of the glove between the thumb and the index finger. For most positions, an open web vs. a closed web is a matter of personal preference. Open web gloves tend to trap the ball a little better than closed web gloves. Closed web gloves tend to get the ball out of the pocket a little quicker. First and Third base players tend to prefer open web gloves. Middle infielders tend to want closed web gloves to help get the ball out of the glove quickly. Pitchers usually want closed web gloves so they can hide the ball easier.

For general purposes in Little League baseball a closed web glove is preferable as players move around to many different positions.

Conventional Back vs. Closed Back

Conventional (open) vs. closed back is mainly a matter of style and personal preference. Conventional back gloves tend to be a little lighter and can fit a bit tighter in the wrist which is preferable for the Little League player. Some closed back gloves have straps with Velcro that allow you to adjust how tight or loose the glove fits.

Price

A good glove does not have to be expensive. There are gloves that will give many seasons of satisfactory service for under \$75. You can pay more, but more money does not necessarily mean a better, more serviceable glove. There are expensive gloves (\$100-\$300+) which may last one or two seasons, and there are inexpensive baseball gloves that can last for ten years or more with routine maintenance. For the Little Leaguer a glove in the \$50 to \$70 range will provide several years of service.

The more expensive gloves do tend to use better (often heavier) leather than less expensive gloves. All things being equal, with careful maintenance, the higher quality glove should last longer. The question is "is the more expensive glove worth the price?" especially for the Little Leaguer who will like need a new glove as they grow.

Breaking In A New Glove

Most youth gloves do not need extensive break-in periods. Use the following procedure to shorten the breaking period for higher quality leather gloves made of stiffer leather. Apply a small amount of Glove Oil in the triangular area shown. Rub it into the leather until most of it has been absorbed, then wipe off the excess with a soft towel. Next, fold the glove at the hinge and exercise that area a bit. Then, fold the glove and squeeze the fold so that a crease can be formed along the triangle line from the index finger side to the hinge. After setting this crease, re-fold the glove and form a similar crease from the thumb side of the triangle to the hinge. The final step is to re-fold the glove so a crease can be formed from the center of the web crotch to the hinge. When finished with these steps you should be able to see three distinct creases fanning out from the hinge to the web crotch. After completing these steps (about 20 minutes) put the glove on your hand and close it a few times. You should be able to feel a difference in the way the glove responds. Repeat this procedure in a few days, but do not use the glove oil in excess. Here's a tip from one of our readers. He conditions a new glove using the above procedure, and then goes to a batting cage (at an off-peak hour, so there will be fewer distractions and less chance of injury). He buys a bucket of balls to **catch**, not to hit. He says that after one session the glove is game ready.

Caring For Your Glove

The most important part of caring for your glove is to recognize that leather will deteriorate if subjected to repeated exposure to moisture and heat. Saliva will also result in damaged leather, so Don't Spit In Your Glove. Leaving your glove out in the weather will ruin it, as will putting it away wet from perspiration. Always wear a batting glove under your baseball glove (except for pitchers) - this absorbs the sweat from your hand. When your batting glove gets wet, change it. This will add years to the lining of your glove. When your glove gets wet, dry it with a towel or soft cloth, and leave it exposed to room air for a few hours until the lining is dry. After it dries, use a little glove conditioner to moisten the leather. When you put your glove away, put a softball in the pocket and wrap it with a wide rubber band.