

## A Beginner's Guide to Throwing the Weight

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The weight, no matter what age group you are in or what size you throw, is an event that has grown by leaps and bounds over the past few years. There are many states that now include it in high school, and the master's weight throw is now being included in meets that never carried it before. With all of this interest, one problem that I am now seeing is that the coaching out there is very limited. Most coaches are either learning how to throw at the same time as their athlete, or they are hammer throwers trying to convert their old technique with a heavier ball. This article should clear up some of the confusion for beginner weight throwers and teach them the correct progressions to start throwing correctly.

First things first. What size ball do you use? This chart should help.

HIGH SCHOOL BOYS-----	25 LB
HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS-----	20 LB
COLLEGIATE MEN-----	35 LB
COLLEGIATE WOMEN-----	20 LB
MEN AGE 30-49-----	35 LB
MEN AGE 50-59-----	25 LB
MEN AGE 60-69-----	20 LB
MEN AGE 70-79-----	16 LB
MEN AGE 80 & UP-----	12 LB
WOMEN AGE 30-49-----	20 LB
WOMEN AGE 50-59-----	16 LB
WOMEN AGE 60 & UP-----	12 LB

(please note \*\*Youth weight throw is not recognized by the USATF as a sanctioned event. Some areas of the country do throw the weight in youth competitions. If you or one of your athletes is scheduled to throw in a youth meet, you will need to contact the meet director and check what size weight they will be using for the age group\*\*)

Second, what size circle do you use? The circle used for the weight is the same size circle used for the hammer and the shot put. It is 7' in diameter and does not have a toe board. The circle will either be made of cement for outdoor meets or wood for indoor meets. The outline of the circle can either be painted or recessed.

Third, what equipment will you need? To throw the weight properly, you will need to buy a good set of throwing shoes. The throwing shoes need to have a rounded bottom and can either be smooth or have a gritty texture. More advanced throwers will use the smooth textured bottoms because they can use them to generate speed, but for a beginner thrower, the texture really does not make a difference. You will also need a glove. There are many good gloves out there to choose from. If you are a right handed thrower, you will need a glove that fits on your left hand. If you are a left handed thrower, get a glove

that fits on the right hand. Gloves are made from all different types of material. Thick leather gloves will give you and your hand the most protection, but you can not feel the handle that well in your hand and the leather will tend to bunch up against the handle. Thinner gloves offer little protection but the thrower can really feel the handle in his or her hand. Leather work gloves will also do the trick. Simply cut the fingers off and use a leather or Velcro strap to fasten it onto the wrist. Of course, you will need a practice weight to throw. If you are just starting out, an outdoor iron weight will work well. If you are going to be practicing indoor, you will need to get your hands on a good indoor bag weight so you do not damage the floor. Once these things are attained, you are now ready to throw.

Next, how does the handle fit into your hand? If you are a right handed thrower, the weight will be placed in your left hand (glove hand). Your right hand will then go below your left hand so they are both cupped together inside of the triangle handle. Do not interlock your fingers. Start by getting a feel for the weight. Try swinging the weight between your legs and from side to side. At first you will have to struggle to keep your balance and your hand may start to hurt a little depending on what type of glove you are using. After a while, you will become more comfortable holding on to the handle and the weight will not hurt as much. You will find that your glove will become worn where you like to place the weight. Once you are used to holding the implement and can keep your balance, you are then ready to try a few releases.

If you are a right handed thrower, you will be releasing the hammer over your left side. Left handed throwers will be releasing over their right side. All descriptions from this point forward will be for a right handed thrower. If you are left handed, simply reverse the directions. Start the beginning of the throw with your knees bent at a comfortable depth and your back straight facing the back of the circle. Start with the weight in your glove hand and begin swinging it back and forth. While building momentum you will then cup your non-glove hand under your glove hand. Relax your arms and keep them as long as possible without rounding your back. Build momentum for the throw by taking a few side to side swings with the hammer. More advanced throwers will wind the weight around their heads similar to a hammer. Once you feel like there is enough momentum, pivot on your left heel and your right toe, explode by forcefully extending your legs, and release the hammer in an upward motion over the left side. When you finish, your feet will stay planted on the ground and your body should turn and be facing the direction of the throw. Make sure that you fully extend your entire body to really put everything behind the throw.

Beginner weight throwers will tend to want to go right into the entire throw with different types of turns and technique drills. However, one needs to remember that the finish of any throwing event is the most important step. Make sure to get comfortable with your balance, with the feel of the weight in your hand, and with the full release. The release should feel like second nature to you. Once this is accomplished, you can then start to learn how to turn in the circle and release at the end