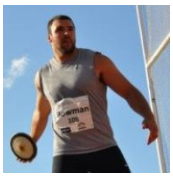
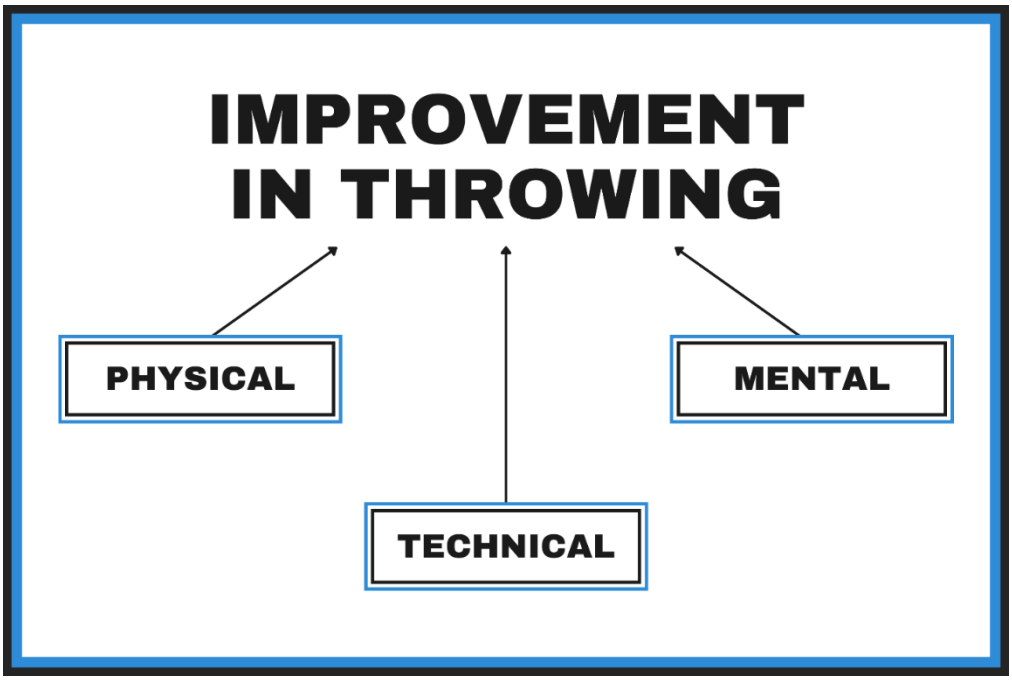
# The Ultimate Guide to Discus

*John Bowman's System of Discus Throw Development*





# Introduction

The goal of this 3 part guide is to give you a framework for understanding what truly drives performance in the discus throw, what to work on in your technique, and how to throw your best when it matters most.

We live in a world with more throwing information than ever before. Coaching videos, social media posts, training programs, and technical tips are everywhere. **The problem isn't a lack of information. The problem is a lack of clarity.**

Without a clear understanding of what actually drives improvement and how to organize it, you spend your time chasing the next drill, cue, or workout instead of focusing your energy on the things that make the biggest difference. Information alone doesn't produce better throwers. Acting on the right information does.

As a young discus thrower, I searched for anything that I thought might help me throw farther. Whenever I discovered something that seemed helpful, I added it to my training. Over time, my training became a collection of drills, exercises, and workouts but I didn't understand how to fit it all together to produce long-term sustainable improvement. That led to overtraining, injury, inconsistent performance, and a lot of frustration.

That experience taught me an important lesson: **success in the discus throw is about working on the things that matter most and having a strategy for applying them consistently.**

This guide is designed to provide both. It will give you clarity about the principles that truly drive throwing performance and practical advice for implementing them in your own training.

# About John Bowman

For more than 25 years, I've dedicated my life to understanding what truly makes the discus go farther and how to repeat that performance as often as possible. That journey started with my own training and competition and has continued through coaching and educating throwers around the world.

I was a five-time NAIA All-American, threw a personal best of 211'6" (64.47 m), competed at three U.S. National Championships—including the 2012 U.S. Olympic Team Trials—earned a B.S. in Exercise Science, and trained under Olympic champion coach Vesteinn Hafsteinsson. Today, I continue my own development preparing for the 2028 U.S. Olympic Team Trials, while teaching throwers and coaches around the world about the strategies that consistently make the discus go farther.

# Table of Contents

**Part 1 - The 3 Drivers of Discus Throw Performance** **4**

*-What Actually Helps You Throw Farther*

**Part 2 - 23 Common Errors in Discus and How to Fix Them** **12**

*-The Discus Thrower's Field Guide to Diagnosing Common Errors*

**Part 3 - How to Throw Far When It Matters Most** **37**

*-Systematically organize your training to develop your ability and perform when it matters most.*

# Part 1 - The 3 Drivers of Discus Throw Performance

*What Actually Helps You Throw Farther*

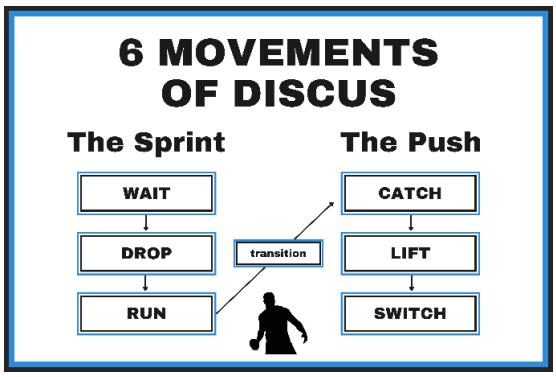
I have observed that there are three main drivers of discus throw performance: Your level of **technical** proficiency, your **physical** ability, and the strength of your **mind**. When you intentionally develop these three areas, your improvement becomes intentional and predictable instead of accidental.

1. **Technical Development**—improving the quality of your technique for smoother, faster, and more powerful throws.
2. **Physical Development—**building greater strength, speed, mobility, and throwing capacity to raise the ceiling of your throwing potential.
3. **Mental Development**—cultivating a sound mind, which produces better decision making for continual improvement and better competitive outcomes.

## #1 Technical Development

- **Build a technique that allows you to *attack* the throw with confidence.**

The goal of great technique is to create the conditions necessary for you to attack the throw with as much force as possible without losing control. This is accomplished by moving through a series of movements (six) that flow from one position to the next. This produces balance and stability, which creates smooth continuous acceleration across the circle—which then leads to farther throws.




Each good position makes the next movement possible, while every poor position interrupts the flow of acceleration. That's why I say, **"Positions Create Distance."** You literally start throwing farther when you are in better positions.

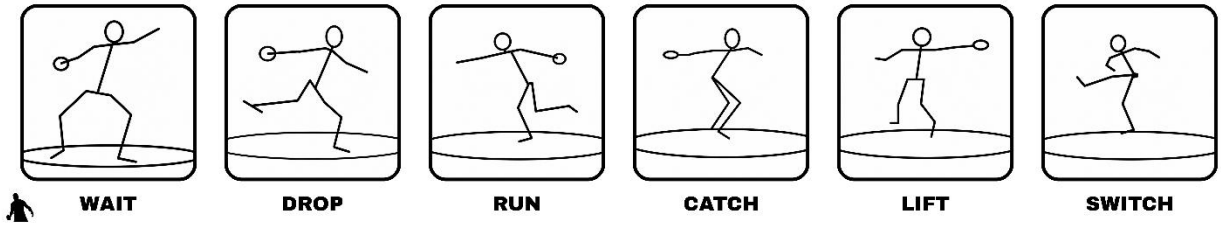
Because of this, I've found the most effective way to learn the full spin technique in discus is through

a series of **movements to feel** rather than positions to mimic. There are six movements that make up the full-spin discus throw. The first three movements make up the **Sprint Phase**, and the last three movements make up the **Push Phase**.

## The Six Movements of the Full-Spin Discus Throw Technique

*(These movements are described from a right-handed thrower's perspective. If you are left-handed, simply switch the words "right" and "left.")*

The following description is my attempt to tell the story of the discus throw through the perspective of what the we should **feel** moving from one position to the next.




# The Sprint Phase

**The WAIT —** You're standing tall, both feet just a few inches from the back of the circle. Behind you, the sector where you are going to launch this discus. You feel tall with a big chest, your arms out wide, and your knees slightly bent. As you wind up, you feel your right foot firmly planted on the ground—tension begins to build in your hips, but you resist moving the right foot as you complete the wind up. Then, the throw begins… you push the left heel forward, keeping your chest up and you wait. You wait for the left heel to fully push forward while you keep your chest up, looking directly ahead, and keeping your knees apart. You force your knees to stay wide, almost like there is half a broom stick stuck between your knees. Once the heel is fully forward, you let the right foot and leg rise as you begin to shift your hips over toward the left and begin sinking onto the left knee.
**KEY CUE -** *Patiently wait for the left heel to fully move forward*.

**The DROP —** Your left foot never stops moving. It continues to turn and grind on the concrete as you pick the right foot up off the ground. Now, the work begins… You increasingly feel your body weight move toward the left foot. You're still upright, your knees are wide, and you feel your left arm reaching toward the back of the cage, almost as if you are trying to scrape the net with the back of your left hand. As the right foot fully comes off the ground

and rises, you push your left knee down toward your toes, the left hip moves forward, and you feel yourself completely shift to the left side. This is the DROP. The left knee moves over the toes so deeply that you begin to feel stability and power develop. You are in control and continue pushing your knee down. This sets up the conditions for you to attack the throw with everything you've got!
**KEY CUE –** *Sink hard over the left*.

**The RUN —** Now, you are on single support, and your left foot has turned nearly all the way toward the throwing area. Your left shin is parallel to the concrete, your left arm is in control and in front of you, your knees are still wide, and your right leg is at its highest point. This is the attack position. You can see the throwing area in front of you, your arms are out wide, and you feel the right leg coming around aggressively toward the center of the concrete circle. This is the RUN… you are running away from the discus, almost like the discus is attached to a string behind you, and at this moment, your left foot comes off the ground with a bent left knee to let the hips switch. This is the point when your right side passes your left. The tension is immense, and you push forward with the discus behind you in a full sprint. 100% intensity. As your right leg moves toward the center of the ring, it lands hard, hard enough to hear it, with the heel up, arms out wide, and you can see the left sector line in the throwing area. Your right foot immediately begins to turn upon landing, and it continues to turn, which leads you to the next movement.
**KEY CUE** - *Run away from the discus in a full sprint, while looking forward with arms out*.

*Note: Right foot contact marks the transition from the Sprint Phase to the Push Phase*.

## The Push Phase

**The CATCH —** After your left foot comes off the ground, it races to the front of the circle. You're trying to catch the discus as far back as possible to create the most hip-to-shoulder separation as possible *(this creates power in the next movement)*. You're moving your left foot so fast across the circle that it almost feels like you are trying to stop as you forcefully put your left foot down, flat and open, at the front. At this moment, you're holding your arms out wide, your hips are under you, you're up on the ball of your right foot, your knees are slightly bent and open, you see the cage poles behind you, and you can feel the tension between your right hip and shoulder grow stronger. You caught the discus deep and this sets up the final burst of acceleration.
**KEY CUE –** *Get the left foot down as fast and flat as possible*.

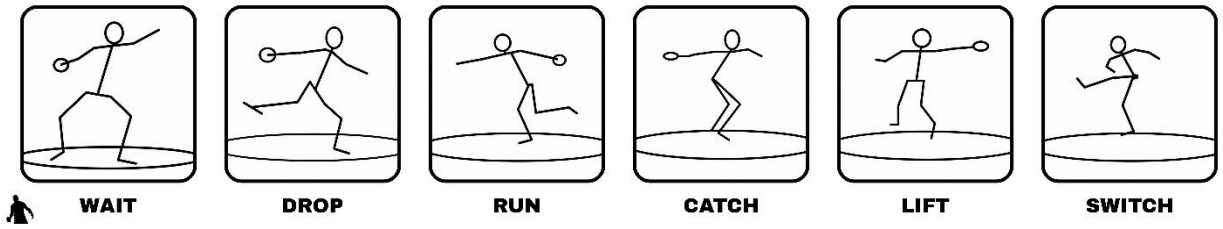
**The LIFT —** As your left foot slams onto the concrete at the front of the circle, you continue to hold your arms out wide, and your hips are under you as you turn and push your right foot against the ground. This movement causes your right hip to lead the discus. As this happens, it automatically causes your right leg and hip to extend and your left leg straightens. This creates a block effect making the discus accelerate rapidly around your body and through the final path of the orbit—from its final low point directly behind your right leg to the release position at shoulder height. You feel a strange, yet powerful connection between your foot, through your torso, shoulder, and finally into your hand. The harder you turn and push your right foot the more tension and connection you feel. You are in control of the throw as the discus is accelerating rapidly around your body. You continue to turn and push your right foot all the way until the absolute last moment before the discus leaves your hand and your feet leave the ground.

**KEY CUE –** *Turn & push the right foot against the ground to accelerate the discus*.

**The SWITCH —** As the discus leaves your hand, you come up off the ground… not because you are trying to, but because you have too—it's automatic. You focused so hard on pushing against the ground that now you just pop up without having to think about it. Even though you are in the air, you are in complete control, and you begin to twist. When you come back down on the ground, your right foot lands where your left foot was. It lands flat and you have this feeling that there is no wasted energy. You're not spinning or bending over trying to stay in the ring. You are confident and in control. Then the left foot comes down behind your right. When you move across the circle correctly, the switch becomes the natural result of your technique, allowing you to stay in the circle for a fair throw.

**KEY CUE –** *Put the right foot where the left foot was*.

Now, the throw is over, you are standing inside the circle, and you watch your discus fly into the throwing area where a light right cross wind is carrying it further than it has ever traveled. You did it. You sprinted across the circle and pushed the discus with all your might, and it is now flying perfectly into the throwing area. Well done.



# #2 Physical Development

- **Build the strength, speed, mobility, & capacity needed to raise the ceiling of your throwing potential.**

## Build Up Your Strength

Strength is one of the defining characteristics of great discus throwers. Look at the best throwers in the state, the country, or the world, and you'll find impressive numbers in the weight room. It's because the best throwers aren't just technically skilled—they're exceptionally strong and powerful.

As you pursue strength, it's important to focus on exercises that develop total-body strength, explosive power, and athleticism rather than spending too much time on bodybuilding-style workouts. Your goal is to build strength that transfers directly to the discus throw.

**ACTION ITEM:** When planning your workouts, include compound lifts like the squat, bench press, deadlift, and power clean, training each muscle group twice per week.

## Work On & Keep Your Speed

Your goal isn't just to get stronger, it's to become as explosive as possible. In other words, it's how fast you accelerate. This is an extremely important component for increasing your speed across the circle.

As you build up your strength in the weightroom, be mindful of your body weight. Although higher body weight is generally a characteristic of great throwers, it's important that you also maintain and improve your explosiveness. **Here's the test**: if you are gaining body weight faster than your strength can handle, it may have a negative impact on your throwing by making you slower and less explosive, which leads to less acceleration across the circle and shorter throws. **The point is this:** you'll throw the farthest when you're strong, fit, and continue to improve your ability to sprint and jump.

**ACTION ITEM:** Add short sprints, box jumps, and medicine ball throws to your training each week in addition to normal weightroom training.

## Improve Your Throwing Specific Mobility

Throwing specific mobility has two important jobs:

1. Good hip, trunk, shoulder, and chest mobility make proper technique easier to do.
2. Good mobility makes you more durable in training, which allows you to train harder and more often—which promotes faster improvement.

Although mobility training is one of the most overlooked parts of discus throw development, adding it into your regular training only takes 5 to 10 minutes a day. When done regularly, it will completely transform your technique and longevity.

**ACTION ITEM:** Use 3–4 rotational warm-up movements that focus on hip and trunk mobility to prepare your body for each throwing practice and do a rotational mobility circuit 1-2 times each week as part of your conditioning.

## Increase Your Throwing Capacity

Great throwers take a lot of throws. Day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, they accumulate an enormous amount of throwing. But if you've ever tried to jump right in and throw that much, you know it's hard to last even a week. The secret is that great throwers didn't start there—they methodically threw themselves into shape.

This is the idea I want you to get from this... little by little, you can build your capacity to throw. Over time, you can develop the ability to not only take a high volume of throws, but to take a high volume of *good* throws—throws where you are actively improving your technique. This is a quality every thrower can develop, no matter where you're starting. As your capacity to throw increases, so do your opportunities to improve your technique. And over time, farther throws will follow.

**ACTION ITEM:** Throw twice per week, taking 20–30 quality throws each session. After 2–3 weeks, gradually increase to three sessions. As your body adapts, continue progressing toward four and eventually five sessions per week, and even increasing to 30-50 throws each session—while maintaining quality technique.

# #3 Mental Development

Developing as a thrower isn't just about improving your technique or building a stronger body. I've learned that developing a sound mind—one that slows down, understands the situation, and makes wise decisions—is just as important. The following lessons have become guiding principles that continue to shape both my development and my enjoyment of the sport. I believe these principles will help you think more clearly, make better decisions, and ultimately will help you throw farther.

**Lesson 1 – Be Willing to Change Your Mind**

Improvement begins when you're willing to admit that your current understanding may be incomplete. Seek good coaching, pay attention to the evidence, and don't be afraid to change your thinking when a better way becomes clear.

**Lesson 2 – The Slowest Processes Create the Fastest Improvements**

The greatest improvements happen slowly, one decision and one practice at a time. Choose one thing to improve, work on it consistently, and give yourself enough time for meaningful change to take place. Small steps over a long period of time. Think in months and years instead of days and weeks.

**Lesson 3 – Do It Anyway**

There will be many days when you don't feel like training, competing, or making the choices required to improve. Decide ahead of time that you'll do the right thing, then show up even when you don't want to. Let consistency become your advantage.

**Lesson 4 – Listen to the Evidence**

How you feel will change from day to day, but the data and results from your training reveal what's really moving you forward. Track your training, learn from the results, and let the evidence guide what you do next.

**Lesson 5 – Make Throwing a Way of Life**

The best throwers don't simply make time for training—they build a lifestyle that supports it. How you eat, sleep, recover, and organize your training all play an important role in your success. Let your daily habits reflect the athlete you want to become.

**The athletes who throw the farthest don't just practice the discus—they become the kind of people who consistently do the things that lead to throwing farther.**

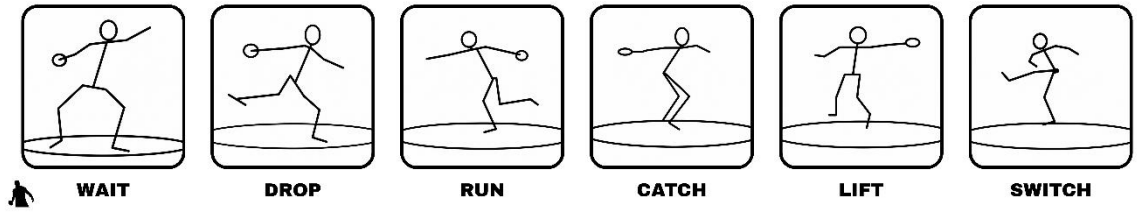
# Putting Discus Thow Development into Your Practice

*The following outline demonstrates how to organize both your technical and physical development through a typical week of training. The suggested throwing and conditioning practices are set up for an intermediate thrower, if you are a beginner, you may reduce the training to two conditioning and two throwing workouts per week.*

| Day | Technical Development | Physical Development |
|---|---|---|
| Monday | PUSH FOCUS – field throws only stands, halfs, walking halfs (20-30) | Lower Body Strength + Rotational Mobility Circuit |
| Tuesday | RING THROWS – all drills evenly distributed (30-40) | Upper Body Strength |
| Wednesday | Rest | Rest |
| Thursday | SPRINT FOCUS – quickly build to non-reverse fulls & fulls (30-40) | Lower Body Strength + Rotational Mobility Circuit |
| Friday | RING THROWS – all drills evenly distributed (20-30) | Upper Body Strength |
| Saturday | SLAM SESSION – competition simulation full throws (10-15) | Sprints & Jumps Circuit |
| Sunday | Rest | Rest |

# Part 2 - 23 Common Errors in Discus and How to Fix Them

*The Discus Thrower's Field Guide to Diagnosing Common Errors*




## How to Use this Field Guide

One of the most important factors of improvement is knowing **what to work on next**. When you can identify what is limiting your throw and focus your training on the right thing, you can improve faster—and, over time, raise the ceiling of what you're capable of throwing.

This field guide is designed to help you understand the bigger picture of discus technique by helping you recognize what can go wrong within the six movements of the full spin and, more importantly, begin to understand **where the problem started**.

Inside, you'll find **23 of the most common errors I see discus throwers make**, covering both the **Standing Throw** and the **Full Spin**. For each observation, I'll show you what you might see, explain why it happens, and give you something to work on. In some cases, the thing you see will be the thing that needs to be fixed. In others, it will be a symptom of something that happened earlier in the throw. Learning to recognize that difference is what allows you to spend your time working on the **right thing**.

Take some time to look closely at your own throw. Watch yourself on video. Watch your teammates or athletes you coach. Don't worry about finding everything at once. Start with one thing that doesn't look right, find it in the guide, and work backward to understand where the problem started. **The time you spend learning to see and understand your own technique is time well spent.** The better you become at knowing what to work on, the more productive every throw and every training session can become.

# Quick Reference: 23 Common Errors

## The Standing Throw

#1 – Wind-Up Too Far and Left Knee Collapses Toward the Center 14

#2 – Discus Does Not Reach the High Point in the Wind-Up 15

#3 – Wind-Up Path Is Too Narrow 16

#4 – Right Foot Is Flat and Does Not Turn During the Throw 17

#5 – Athlete Pulls Down with the Non-Throwing Arm/Shoulder to Create Speed 18

#6 – Athlete Is Bent Over as the Discus Leaves Their Hand 19

## The Full Spin

#7 – Right Foot Moves During the Wind-Up 20

#8 – Throw Is Initiated by Aggressively Swinging the Left Arm 21

#9 – Left Foot Does Not Turn as the Throw Starts 22

#10 – Right Knee Collapses Inward and Right Foot Points Down 23

#11 – Rising as Left Foot Comes Off and Right Leg/Hip Kick Up 24

#12 – Athlete Pre-Turns in the Air 25

#13 – Right Foot Lands Flat in the Middle 26

#14 – Right Foot Does Not Turn, or Turns Late, in the Middle 27

#15 – Left Arm Tucks In During the RUN 28

#16 – Body Weight Shifts to Left Side as Left Foot Lands at the Front 29

#17 – Left Foot Lands in Front of the Right Foot at the Front 30

#18 – Torso Bends and Hips “Break” During the LIFT 31

#19 – Bent-Over Posture Leading Up To and During the Release 32

#20 – Discus Hits the Cage After Release 33

#21 – Discus Goes Out the Right Sector After the Release 34

#22 – Discus Goes Out the Left Sector After the Release 35

#23 – Athlete Cannot Stay in the Circle After the Throw Is Completed 36

# 6 Common Errors in the Standing Throw

## #1 – Wind-Up Too Far and Left Knee Collapses Toward the Center

### WHAT YOU SEE:

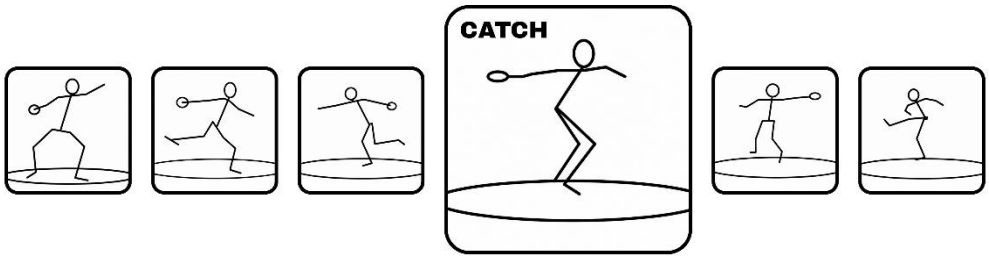
The athlete winds up to the point that the left leg rolls inward, causing the hips to collapse.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

The athlete may have been taught—or may believe—that winding up as far as possible will create more potential energy for the throw. Although there may be some initial success, doing this creates **"false tension"** and breaks the real tension between the hips and shoulders. True hip and shoulder tension is what allows force to be transferred from the legs, through the torso, and finally into the discus.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Only wind up as far as you can while keeping your left foot mostly flat and open on the ground. Typically, bending the knees more allows you to maintain the proper lower-body position. This type of wind-up will feel slightly restrictive, but that feeling is the result of creating **true hip and shoulder separation.**



# #2 – Discus Does Not Reach the High Point in the Wind-Up

### WHAT YOU SEE:

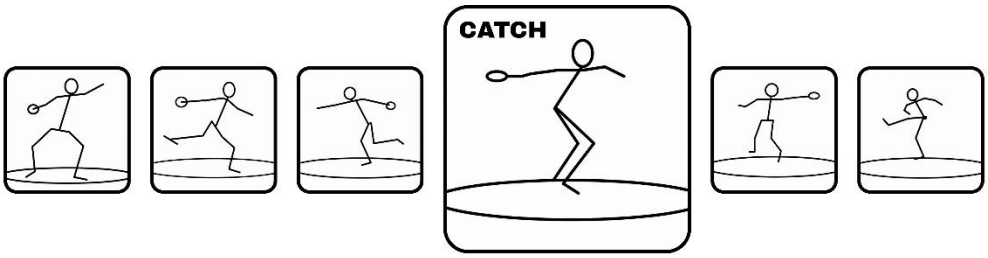
The athlete keeps the discus low and close to the body during the wind-up instead of bringing it up to approximately shoulder height.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

The athlete may not know that the discus should reach the high point, or the position may feel uncomfortable or out of control. To maintain control, they keep the discus low so they don't drop it.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Turn the discus over slightly in your hand so it doesn't fall out. Also, remember that as long as your arm and the discus are moving, the discus will stay in your hand because of centripetal force. The discus should travel to approximately shoulder height during the wind-up.



# #3 – The Wind-Up Path is Too Narrow

### WHAT YOU SEE:

As the athlete winds up, the arm and discus stay low and close to the body, even if the discus eventually reaches the correct high point.

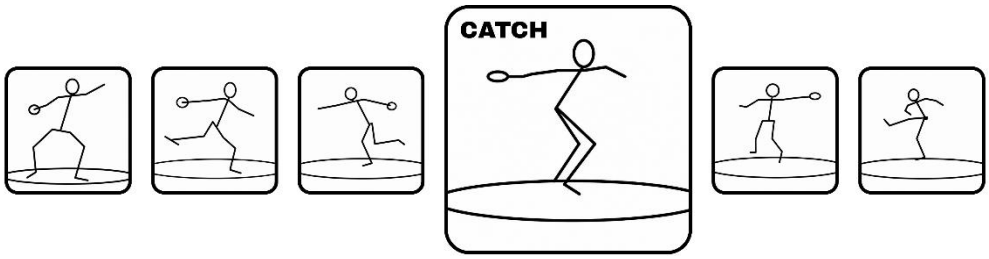
### WHY IT HAPPENS:

The athlete may not know that the discus should travel out and around the body. Unless the athlete actively does this, the arm and discus will naturally remain close to the body because that position is easier to control as the discus swings into place.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

During the wind-up, you want approximately a **90-degree angle between your torso and your arm**. As you wind up, the discus should travel in a wide path out and around your body, eventually reaching the high point at the full wind-up position.

**Important:** The low point of the wind-up should be directly behind the back leg.



# #4 – The Right Foot is Flat and Does Not Turn During the Throw

### WHAT YOU SEE:

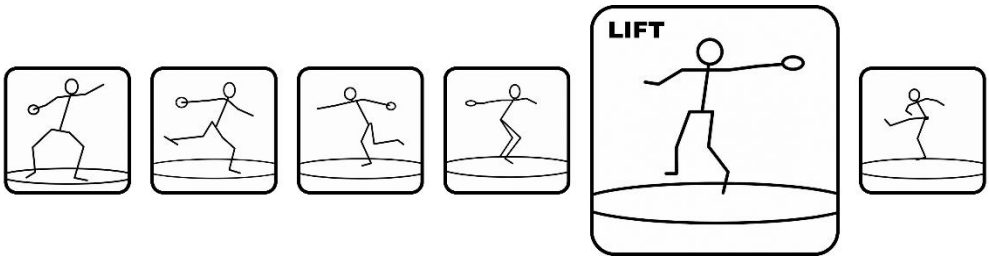
After the wind-up, the right foot remains flat on the ground rather than being up on the ball of the foot, and it does not turn as the throw starts to develop.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

The athlete may not realize the importance of turning the right foot, so they simply push off the foot rather than turning and pushing against the ground. When the foot starts flat, the athlete can push off it without turning. This causes the body weight to move toward the left instead of allowing the athlete to turn, push, and extend the right knee. *(See #5 & #6.)*

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Keep your heel up, your knee bent, and stay on the ball of your foot so that your right foot remains mobile and capable of **turning, pushing, and extending against the ground.**



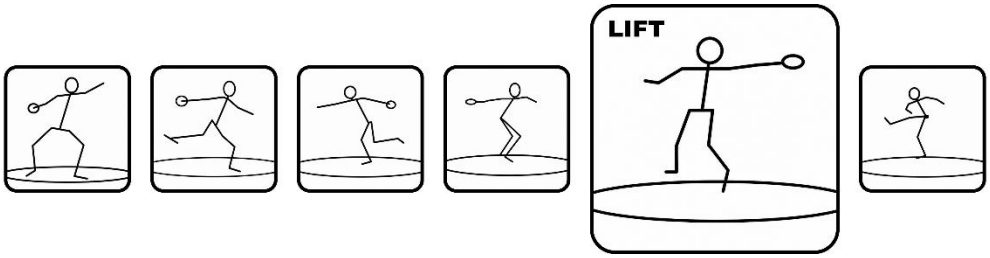
# #5 – Athlete Pulls Down with the Non-Throwing Arm/Shoulder to Create Speed

**WHAT YOU SEE:**
The athlete uses the left arm and shoulder to swing up and then pull downward, rather than allowing the right side to turn, push, and extend to produce the movement of the standing throw.

**WHY IT HAPPENS:**
The right side isn't starting the movement. When the right foot is flat and the athlete has over-wound (#1), the natural response is to yank with the left arm and shoulder. This forces the athlete onto the front leg to produce power, which is why the right foot leaves the ground too early and contributes to the left shoulder dropping at the finish (#6).

**WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:**

Keep your emphasis on the right side initiating the movement by **turning, pushing, and extending up.** You need **#1, #2, and #3** to be in place to do this well.



# #6 – The Athlete is Bent Over as the Discus Leaves Their Hand

### WHAT YOU SEE:

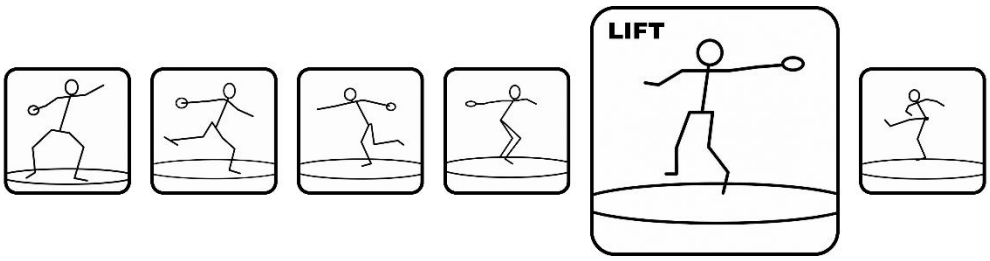
The athlete is bent over at the waist, with the left arm and shoulder down and the right arm much higher than the right shoulder as the discus leaves the hand.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

This is directly connected to #5. When the athlete's body weight shifts onto the left and the left arm and shoulder lean hard down over the left, the hips will “break” and move backward, causing the torso to bend forward.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Focus on lower-body posture and engaging the right foot early. Correcting the underlying errors in **#1 through #5** removes the need for you to swing your left arm, lean forward and over the left, and pull down with your left side to create the energy for the throw.



# 17 Common Errors in the Full Spin

## #7 – Right Foot Moves During the Wind-Up

**WHAT YOU SEE:**

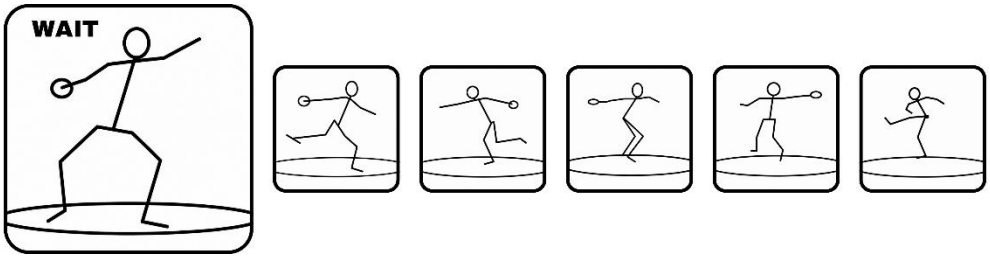
As the athlete completes the wind-up at the start of the full spin, the right foot moves or twists instead of staying flat and planted.

**WHY IT HAPPENS:**

This simply happens because the athlete is allowing it to happen, or because they are winding up so far that the right foot has to move. This is similar to how the left foot needs to stay flat and open during the wind-up of the Standing Throw (#1). A flat right foot maintains stability and posture during the wind-up.

**WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:**

The fix is simple: as you wind up, make sure your right foot stays flat and planted. Only wind up as far as you can while keeping your right foot stable. There is a lot of room for personal style in the wind-up, so have fun with it—but make sure the right foot remains stable.



# #8 – Throw is Initiated by Aggressively Swinging the Left Arm

### WHAT YOU SEE:

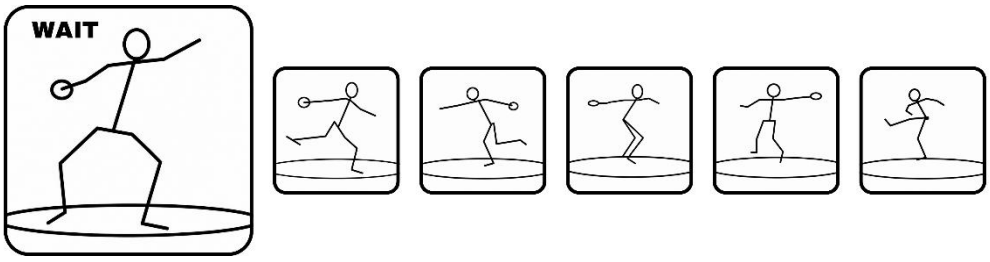
The athlete swings the left arm to create the initial energy to start the throw. This is characterized by the left arm swinging past the body and causing the athlete's body weight to move backward into the ring prematurely.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

In the full spin, the left side is the engine that creates power at the beginning of the throw. Ideally, the left foot turns aggressively while the left arm maintains control and posture, allowing the athlete to spin around the left foot. If the left foot does not turn, the left arm must take over. Swinging the left arm could be intentional, or it could be a by-product of not turning the left foot properly.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

After the wind-up, make sure your **left foot—specifically the left heel—moves first and pushes forward aggressively**, while your left arm is still in front of you and your right foot is still on the ground.



# #9 – The Left Foot Does Not Turn as the Throw Starts

### WHAT YOU SEE:

The left foot does not turn as the throw starts.

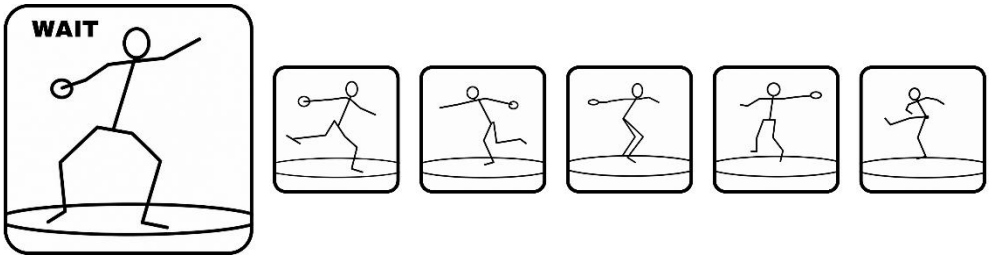
### WHY IT HAPPENS:

This could be a symptom of an overactive left arm, or the athlete may not know that the foot needs to turn to start the throw. When this happens, the left arm takes over the throw to create the energy needed to get into the spin, as covered in #8.

In addition, if the athlete's body weight does not get over the left foot, the athlete literally cannot turn effectively around it. If the athlete begins the throw with the left arm rather than the foot, their weight shifts behind them, which creates problems down the line.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

As you push the left heel forward, you must also shift your weight slightly toward the left foot so that your body weight is **close to being over it**. This will allow the foot to turn.



# #10 – Right Knee Collapses Inward and the Right Foot Points Down as it Comes Off

### WHAT YOU SEE:

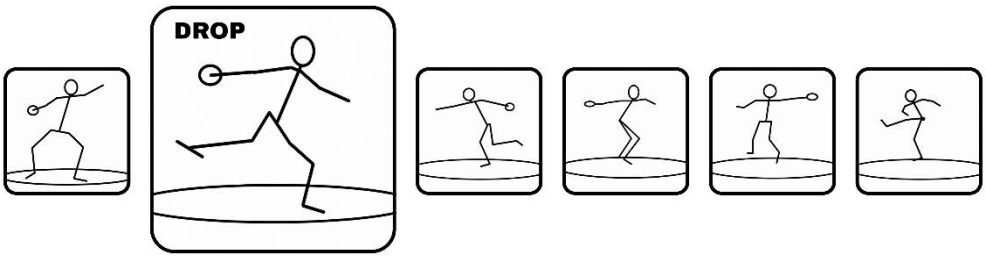
The right knee collapses inward and the right heel/foot kicks upward, which causes the toe to point downward as the right foot comes off the ground.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

This is directly connected to #8 and #9. If the left arm initiates the throw and the foot doesn't turn, the athlete's weight falls backward. Then the right knee collapses and the right heel kicks up, which makes the right foot and leg “drag” around the left. The right leg should not passively drag behind the left side. Rather, it should be **active and controlled, moving up to its high point as it comes off the ground.**

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Shift your body weight over the left foot and keep your knees apart as you start the throw. This allows the right foot to come off the ground while the right leg rises actively, with the knee dropping as the right leg reaches its high point.



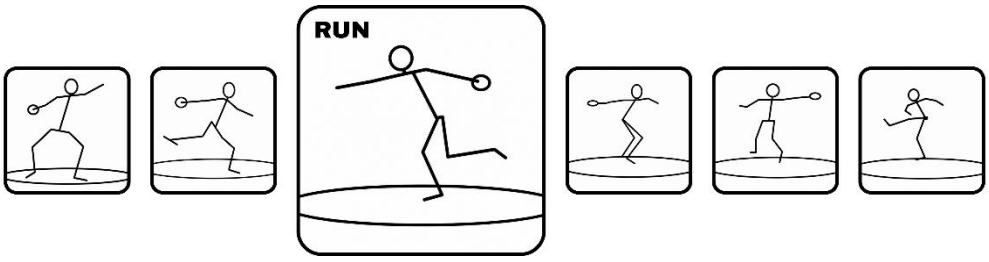
# #11 – Rising as Left Foot Comes Off and the Right Leg and Hip Kick Up into the Middle of the Circle

**WHAT YOU SEE:**
The athlete straightens their left leg as they come off the ground, which causes them to rise as they go into the middle. This is usually accompanied by the athlete pre-turning as they come off the left (error #12).

**WHY IT HAPPENS:**
The athlete has not properly shifted their body weight over the left foot and/or the left foot has stopped turning.

**WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:**

Focus on smoothly turning around the left foot while keeping the left knee bent, or actually drop lower onto the left knee as you sprint off the left foot.



# #12 – Athlete Pre-Turns in the Air Before Landing on the Right Foot in the Middle

### WHAT YOU SEE:

The athlete continues to rotate in the air rather than creating a period of linear movement before the right foot lands in the middle.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

The athlete may have been taught to pre-turn (generally related to kicking the right leg up and around the left leg at the start), or they may not understand how to create linear energy after leaving the left foot. At this point in the throw, two things can happen:

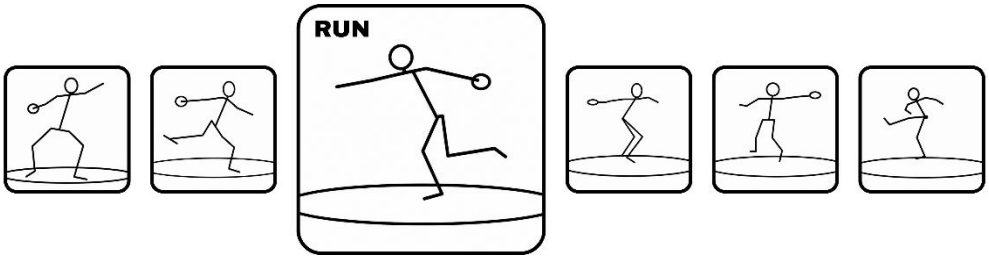
1. **They rise and pre-turn before they land.**
2. **They "run away from the discus,"** creating linear movement, as described in *The Ultimate Guide to Discus*.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Focus on finishing the turn out of the left: **push the heel forward, shift your weight over the left foot, turn smoothly, and come off the ground with a bent left knee.** Then bring the right foot down toward the center of the circle in a hard and fast motion.

**At right-foot contact:**

1. Your heel is up.
2. Your knee is bent.
3. Your right "pocket" is facing the throwing area.
4. Your arms are out like a **"T."**



# #13 – Right Foot Lands Flat in the Middle

### WHAT YOU SEE:

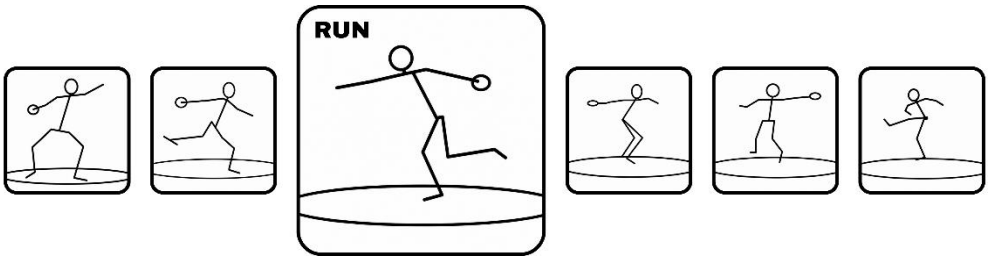
The right foot is flat on the ground when it lands rather than being up on the ball of the foot.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

The athlete may not know that they need to keep the heel up. Or, it may be caused by the athlete rising and pre-turning too much as they come off the left foot. As the athlete comes back down, there is tremendous force placed on the ankle and foot, making it difficult to stay up on the ball of the foot. The foot then collapses under the force.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Your right foot needs to travel from its high point down to the center of the ring while your body remains level or drops slightly. This allows you to keep your heel up as you land.



# #14 – Right Foot Does Not Turn, or Turns Late, as it Lands in the Middle of the Circle

### WHAT YOU SEE:

As the right foot lands, it does not turn, or there is a pause before it starts turning.

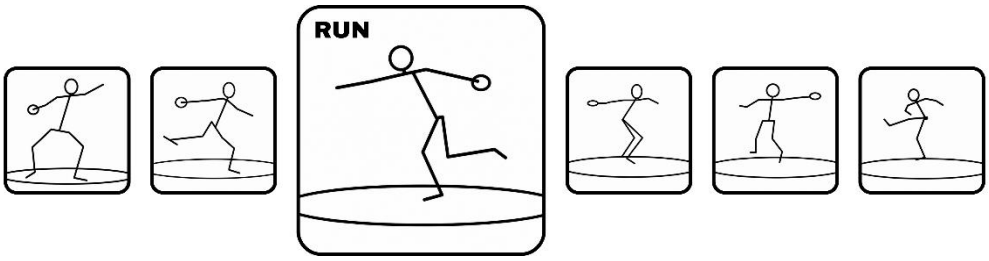
### WHY IT HAPPENS:

There are two primary causes:

1. **The right foot landed flat, so it literally cannot turn.** Being up on the ball of the foot is one of the things that allows the foot to turn.
2. **The athlete rose and pre-turned as they came off the left and back down onto the right.** This causes the right foot to "settle" into place while the left side catches up, making it difficult for the right foot to turn and work against the ground immediately upon landing.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

| |
|---|
| You must stay low as you come off the left foot and land on the ball of your right foot. Once it lands, actively think about turning it as the left foot comes down. |



# #15 – Left Arm Tucks in as the Left Foot Comes Off and the Right Lands (the RUN)

### WHAT YOU SEE:

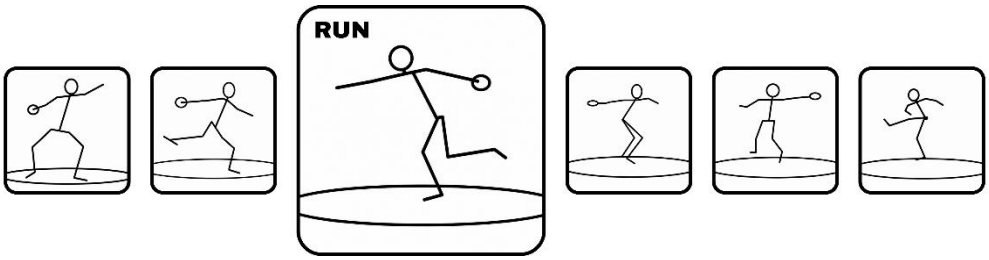
The left arm drops and/or tucks in as the athlete moves off the left foot and onto the right.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

This is often a counterbalance effect that develops when the athlete has too much pre-turn going into the middle and is reaching too much with the right foot as it lands. Sometimes this is taught because it can help the athlete feel like they are gaining or keeping the discus farther back. But this is not recommended because hip-to-shoulder tension should be created by **genuine separation between the hips and shoulders**, rather than by creating **"false separation" through arm positioning.**

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Keep your arms long and opposite from each other, like a capital **"T,"** from the time you come off the left foot until the right foot lands in the middle.



# #16 – Body Weight Shifts to Left Side as the Left Foot Lands at the Front

### WHAT YOU SEE:

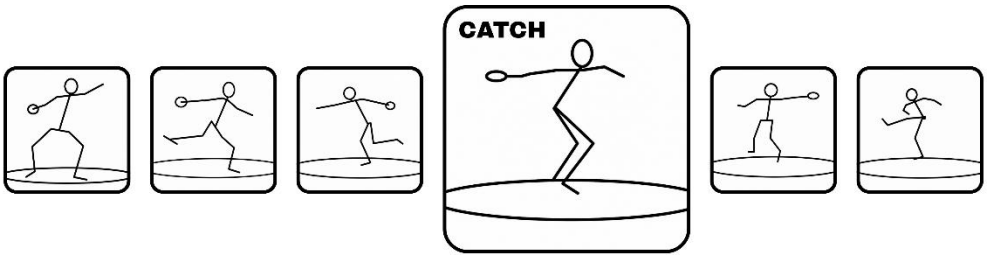
As the left foot makes contact at the front of the circle, too much of the athlete's body weight falls toward the front of the circle rather than staying on top of the right leg.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

This happens because the right side is waiting for the left side to catch up, which creates a **teeter-totter catapult effect** (think about errors #13 and #14). As the athlete's body weight comes down and is transferred into the ground, the weight is forced forward in a linear path rather than being directed over the right foot rotationally. That forward movement eliminates the right side's ability to push against the ground as the left foot makes contact.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Focus on staying low, with a bent left knee, as you come off the left foot in the back. Stay on the ball of your right foot in the middle. Then put your left foot down as soon as you can.



# #17 – Left Foot Lands in Front of the Right Foot at the Front

### WHAT YOU SEE:

The left foot comes down early and lands in front of the right foot, causing the hips to come together tightly and constricting the right hip from fully opening up toward the throwing sector. This is likely the cause of #20 and #21.

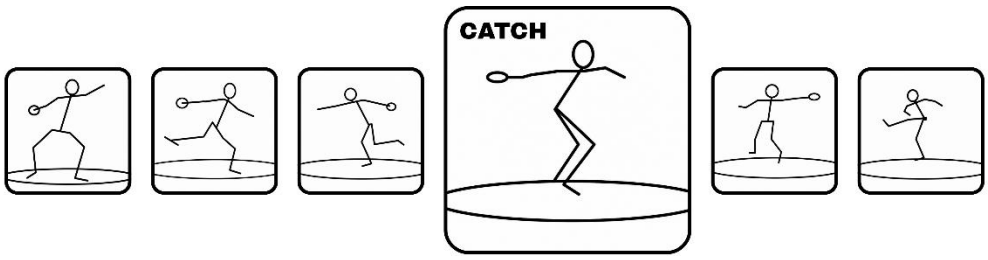
### WHY IT HAPPENS:

The primary cause is **reaching with the right foot as it lands in the middle**. When the right foot reaches out and the athlete's body weight is not over the foot, it creates the **teeter-totter catapult effect** described in #16. The origin of this problem stems all the way back to errors **#11 through #16**. When the athlete loses the proper position in the middle, the hips break and kick backward as the left foot comes around, causing the left foot to land too early and preventing it from rotating all the way to its proper position just behind the right foot.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Stay low, with a bent left knee during the RUN. Land on the ball of your right foot in the middle with your knee bent, your pocket facing the sector, and your arms out. Then rapidly bring the left foot to the front of the circle.

The better the position is in the middle of the circle and the faster the left foot moves from back to front, the more likely the left foot will land in the right place.



# #18 – Torso Bends and Hips "Break" During the LIFT

### WHAT YOU SEE:

The torso bends down and the hips "break," sending them backward as the athlete begins to work the discus (the LIFT).

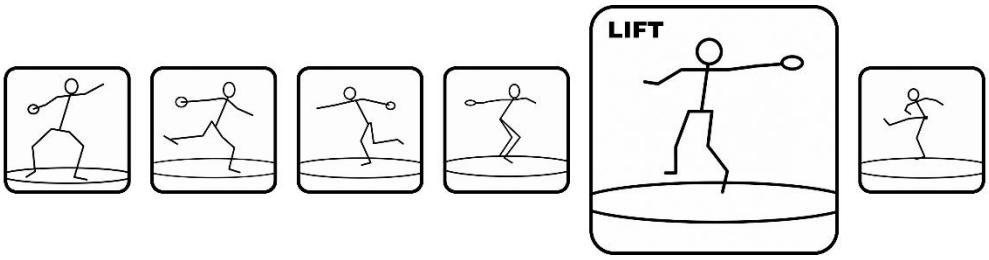
### WHY IT HAPPENS:

This happens because the right foot did not turn, which caused the hips to kick backward, the body weight to shift toward the left leg, and the left arm to become the primary driver. The left arm then rises quickly and pulls down hard as a last-ditch effort to accelerate the discus.

This creates a **division of energy**: some of the athlete's energy goes toward the left, pulling away from the throw, while the rest goes into the discus, rather than all of the energy being directed into the discus.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Restore the right foot **turn, push, and extension** while maintaining an **arms-out and hips-under posture**. The right side must continue turning and pushing in order to keep the left side from taking over the job of accelerating the discus.



# #19 – Bent Over Posture Leading Up to and During the Release

### WHAT YOU SEE:

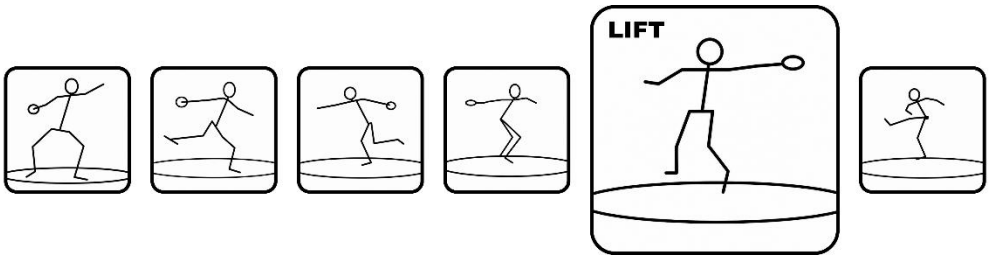
The athlete remains bent over at the waist as they come into the release, with the left arm and shoulder down and the right arm much higher than the right shoulder as the discus leaves the hand.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

This is directly connected to #5 and #18. When the athlete's body weight shifts onto the left and the left arm and shoulder lean hard down over the left, the hips “break” and move backward, causing the torso to bend forward.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

Focus on lower-body posture and engaging the right foot early. Correcting the underlying errors that lead to **#18** removes the need for you to swing your left arm, lean forward and over the left, and pull down with your left side to create the energy for the throw.



# #20 – Discus Hits the Cage After Release

### WHAT YOU SEE:

The discus leaves the athlete's hand early and hits the cage (more extreme version of #21).

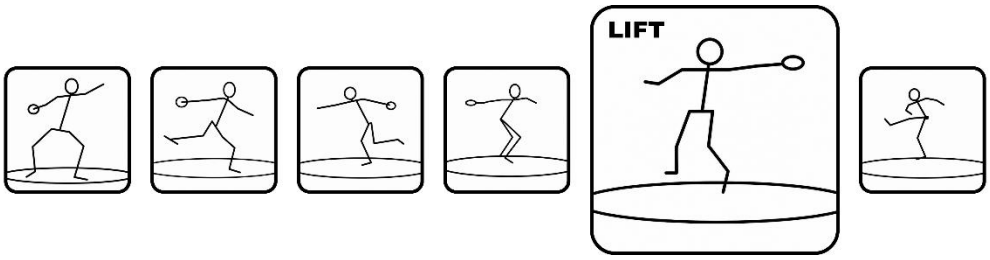
### WHY IT HAPPENS:

There are three main reasons this happens:

1. **The right foot is under-turned**, likely because it is flat (#14), so the force of the throw is literally directed toward the cage rather than the throwing field.
2. **The left leg is blocking the right**, as described in #17.
3. **The left side is overactive.** The body moves toward the left while the discus moves too far to the right, as described in #18 and #19.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

You can address all three errors by staying on the ball of your right foot and **turning, pushing, and extending the right side** all the way until the right hip is facing the throwing area, while maintaining a strong **"T" posture**.



# #21 – Discus Goes Out the Right Sector After the Release

### WHAT YOU SEE:

The discus leaves the hand early and flies outside the right sector line. This is a less severe version of #20.

### WHY IT HAPPENS:

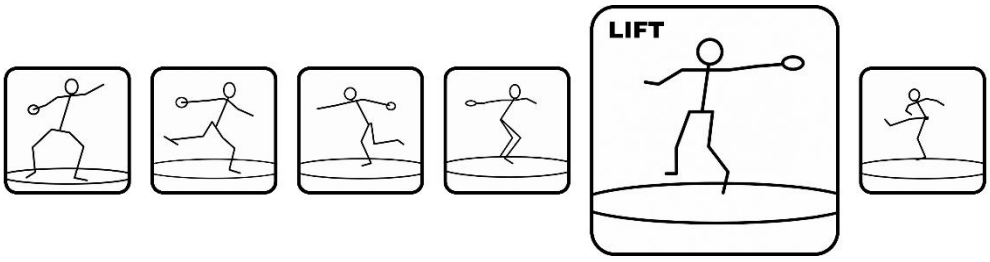
This is caused by the same three factors as #20:

1. **The right foot is under-turned**, likely because it is flat (#14), so the force of the throw is literally directed toward the cage rather than the throwing field.
2. **The left leg is blocking the right**, as described in #17.
3. **The left side is overactive.** The body moves toward the left while the discus moves too far to the right, as described in #18 and #19.

The difference is primarily the **severity of the error**.

### WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

You can address all three errors by staying on the ball of your right foot and **turning, pushing, and extending the right side** all the way until the right hip is facing the throwing area, while maintaining a strong **"T" posture**.



# #22 – Discus Goes Out the Left Sector After the Release

## WHAT YOU SEE:

The discus comes out of the hand late or travels past the left sector line.

## WHY IT HAPPENS:

There are three possible causes:

**1. Technical error — the athlete is over-rotating at the front.**
The right foot may be over-turned in the middle, and/or the left foot may be lagging behind and coming down too late. This causes the left foot to travel too far past the right foot, which points the throw too far to the left.

**2. Training-related timing change — the athlete has recently spent time training with an overweight discus.**
After a period of training with an overweight discus, returning to the normal-weight discus can temporarily change the athlete's timing. The discus may travel too far to the left until the athlete re-establishes the correct timing.

**3. Environmental factor — wind.**
A strong right crosswind can carry the discus farther to the left than normal, pushing it over the left sector line.

## WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:

First determine which of these three factors is causing the problem. If it is a technical error, focus on the position and timing of the right and left feet in the middle and at the front. If it follows a period of overweight-disc training, give yourself time to re-establish the timing with the normal-weight discus.

If the throw is being affected by a strong crosswind, you have two options: **line up farther to the left at the start so that the throw is pointed closer to the right sector line, or keep the discus flight low and flat to reduce the effect of the wind on the flight.**

# #23 – Athlete Cannot Stay in the Circle After the Throw is Completed

**WHAT YOU SEE:**
The athlete loses control and steps or falls out of the circle after release.

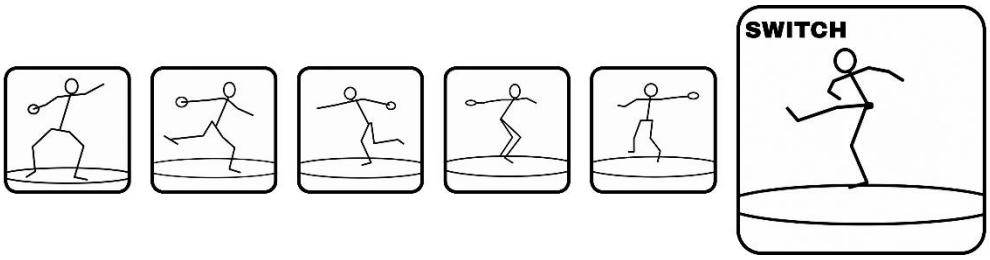
**WHY IT HAPPENS:**
The founding principle for staying in the circle after the throw is this: **if you scratch the throw in any way, it always comes back to a technical error.** If the throw is technically sound, you will stay in the circle.

Common reasons include:

1. **Bending at the waist**
2. **The teeter-totter catapult effect**
3. **The left arm/side being overactive during the last phase of the throw**
4. **Insufficient training** — the athlete is simply not accustomed to throwing and spinning

**WHAT SHOULD THE ATHLETE WORK ON:**

Identify which area of your technique is breaking down, using this guide as your reference, and work on that part of the technique. As your technique improves, your ability to stay in the circle should improve as well.



# Part 3 - How to Throw Far When It Matters Most

*Systematically organize your training to develop your ability and perform when it matters most.*

## Throwing Far Doesn't Happen on Accident

Throwing farther requires more than just improving your technique and becoming stronger. You also need to organize your training so that each stage builds on the one before it, developing your capacity so that you can perform your best when it matters most.

**How to Throw Far When It Matters Most** introduces a five-block training progression designed to help you systematically develop your throwing ability, manage training demands, and arrive at your most important competitions ready to perform. The goal is to give you a clear framework for organizing your training while allowing you to adapt it to your experience, circumstances, and individual needs.

## Your Training has Two Important Jobs.

1. **To raise your ability to throw farther.** This is what we discovered in *The Ultimate Guide to Discus*: how Technical, Physical, and Mental Development unlock your ability to throw farther.

2. **To prepare you to throw your best when it matters most.** This means organizing your training so that you are prepared to perform at your best during the most important time of your season. Maybe it's the conference meet, the State Championships, or even a national event.

## Systematic Progression = Predictable Performance

After years of training, competing, coaching, and relentlessly pursuing far throws, I've come to use a **five-stage approach** to training that provides throwers with a better chance at throwing far when it matters most. The 5 stages are:

**Prepare → Build → Overload → Specialize → Peak**

The five stages of training are represented in **five training blocks**, which break your season into five evenly spaced training periods, each block **serving a specific purpose in training.** When followed in sequence they create a training progression engineered to help you peak when you want.

## BLOCK 1 — PREPARE

Designed to **build your foundation for training throughout the season.** It uses basic strength and conditioning movements to build the base you need for more intense training later in the season.

## BLOCK 2 — BUILD

Designed to **increase your capacity to lift and throw.** This is where you move to more traditional strength and conditioning exercises and begin increasing your throwing volume.

## BLOCK 3 — OVERLOAD

The **most demanding training block of the season, with the highest overall training volume.** The goal is to create the largest training stimulus of the season so that you can reduce volume and peak later in the season.

## BLOCK 4 — SPECIALIZE

Where training shifts toward **more discus-specific training and the highest throwing volume of the season.** Lifting becomes more explosive as you shift the strength you've developed in the previous two blocks toward power and throwing performance.

## BLOCK 5 — PEAK

Where you **reduce overall training volume while maintaining explosiveness.** The goal is to arrive at your most important competitions fresh, powerful, and technically prepared to perform.

---

**Your training needs to be both systematic and personalized for your training situation.** The five-block system gives you structure for developing your throwing ability while also allowing you to adapt your training to your experience, circumstances, strengths, weaknesses, and current needs.

The pages that follow provide two specific sets of guidelines for lifting and throwing workouts. The first two tables represent the training progression for a high school or developing thrower that does not include Olympic lifting. The second two tables represent training for a collegiate or advanced thrower that does include Olympic lifting as part of training.

**The tables show how throwing and lifting progress through each block.** Both sets of guidelines share the same progression, but with different exercise choices and overall throwing and lifting volume. Also, in the **Program Library** in the Members Area, you'll find complete examples of each block and templates you can use to build your own program.

# High School / Developing Thrower

*5 Month progression with no Olympic lifting*

## Program Progression

| | BLOCK 1 | BLOCK 2 | BLOCK 3 | BLOCK 4 | BLOCK 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAINING DURATION / DATE | January | February | March | April | May |
| THROWING VOLUME | Low | Medium | High | Highest | High |
| THROWING SESSIONS / WEEK | 1 to 2 | 2 to 3 | 3 to 4 | 4 to 5 | 3 to 4 |
| LIFTING SESSIONS / WEEK | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| OVERALL TRAINING VOLUME | Low | Medium | Highest | High | Medium |

## Lifting Specifics

| | BLOCK 1 | BLOCK 2 | BLOCK 3 | BLOCK 4 | BLOCK 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| DYNAMIC TRAINING | N/A | 3 sets | 4 sets | 5 sets | 4 sets |
| MAIN LIFTING MOVEMENTS | 3–4 sets × 10–15 reps | 3–4 sets × 8–12 reps | 4–5 sets × 6–10 reps | 4–5 sets × 4–8 reps | 3 sets × 5 reps |
| AUXILIARY, CORE, ROTATIONAL | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps |

# Collegiate / Advanced Thrower

*10 Month progression with Olympic lifting*

## Program Progression

| | BLOCK 1 | BLOCK 2 | BLOCK 3 | BLOCK 4 | BLOCK 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| TRAINING DURATION / DATE | September–October | November–December | January–February | March–April | May–June |
| THROWING VOLUME | Lowest | Medium | High | Highest | High |
| THROWING SESSIONS / WEEK | 2–3 | 3–4 | 4–5 | 5 | 4–5 |
| LIFTING SESSIONS / WEEK | 2–3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| OVERALL TRAINING VOLUME | Lowest | Medium | Highest | High | Medium |

## Lifting Specifics

| | BLOCK 1 | BLOCK 2 | BLOCK 3 | BLOCK 4 | BLOCK 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| OLYMPIC / DYNAMIC | (warm up routine) | (warm up routine) | 4–5 sets × 3–5 reps | 4–5 sets × 2–4 reps | 3–4 sets × 3 reps |
| MAIN LIFTING MOVEMENTS | 3–4 sets × 10–15 reps | 3–4 sets × 8–12 reps | 4–5 sets × 6–10 reps | 4–5 sets × 4–8 reps | 3 sets × 5 reps |
| AUXILIARY, CORE, ROTATIONAL | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps | 1–4 sets × 10–20 reps |

# Start Building Your Own Program

Now that you've seen the training guidelines represented in the tables on the previous page, look at how the guidelines are applied through exercise selection, throwing volume, training frequency, and sets and reps. Use the examples to begin thinking about **what your training could look like based on your experience, your situation, and the time you have available.**

I want you to remember this: Your program is a **framework, not a contract.** Life happens. Schedules change. Illness and injury happen. You may not always be able to follow your plan exactly, and that's okay. What matters is continuing to find ways to train, adjust when necessary, and keep moving forward.

If your plan needs to change, change the plan. If you need to reduce training, reduce it. What matters most is that you get back in the weight room and back in the throwing circle.

**Consistent training over time is what enables improvement.**

## Where Do You Go From Here?

Throwing farther isn't about finding the perfect drill, workout, or technical cue. It's about understanding what drives performance, recognizing what is holding your throw back, and consistently working on the things that matter most.

Use this guide as a reference as you continue to develop. Build your understanding of the three drivers of performance. Study your technique and learn to identify where problems begin. Organize your training so that each stage builds on the one before it, preparing you to perform your best when it matters most.

You don't need to fix everything at once. Identify one thing to improve, make a plan, and give yourself the time and consistent work needed to make progress. As you learn more about your own throwing, you'll become better at deciding what to work on next and how to move forward.

The goal isn't just to throw farther today. It's to build the ability to keep improving over time.

**Get out there and throw.**

**If you're ready to stop guessing about what you need to work on and start making real progress toward your next PR, I'd love to help you get there.**

## JOIN MY **PR ACCELERATOR** PROGRAM

- 1-on-1 call with John to go over your current training situation, challenges, and goals
- Weekly Video Review of your throw with detailed feedback of what you are doing well and what to work on next
- We're not just working on your technique, we're making sure your training is organized around your goals so that everything works together.
- Schedule additional phone calls as needed to make sure you're staying on track as your training progresses.

The goal is to give you clear direction so you know where to focus your time and energy instead of spending time on things that aren't moving you forward.

# PLUS

Get a **FREE CUSTOM TRAINING PROGRAM** (valued at $300) built specifically for you as part of your membership.

LEARN MORE AT BOWMANTHROWS.COM