

## Four Key Elements of Basic Hammer Throwing

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For ease of discussion a right-handed throw will be described. Reference points on the circle are as follows: back midpoint is zero degrees and front midpoint is 180 degrees.

1. **Posture:** The athlete must keep a solid athletic position (feet shoulder width apart, knees flexed). Weight should be evenly balanced between both feet. Keep an erect torso-never bend at the waist. The body and ball work together as a system. There should not be segmentation between the upper and lower body. With the arms extended in front of the chest, the athlete establishes a triangle with the shoulders, chest and arms. The head should stay within the triangle. The hips, knees and feet stay pointed toward the ball. The upper and lower body work as one unit. Athletes should be aware of their posture and walk around confidently with the head up and shoulders back. **Be confident and powerful.** This confidence will carry over to athletic performance.
2. **Rhythm:** The athlete must "feel " the ball and visualize the throw so the system works as one unit. To establish a rhythm and orbit of the ball during the winds, the athlete should start working the ball early on the right side at approximately 270 degrees. This can be accomplished by the slight turn of the torso to the right and extending the arms out to 270 degrees while pushing the ball out and around. Each wind should be progressively faster with the last wind being the speed of the first turn. Winds should be controlled and establish a rhythm. Sweep the ball out and around into entry. Set up the system and accelerate the ball through each turn. Left heel turn, right toe pivot, step under is the footwork sequence. To accomplish successive turns simply push the ball past you while pivoting feet to 180 degrees and then step under with the right foot. The ball should turn the athlete.
3. **Balance:** It is essential to keep a central axis of rotation while maintaining good counter against the ball. If the athlete sits back too much or gives into the ball (breaks at the waist) or bends left or right, balance and counter will be thrown off. Balance and counter directly affect the orbit of the ball. A strong core position is essential. An athlete must have sufficient core strength in order to maintain core position. Core strength is characterized by strength from the knees to the chest.
4. **Ball Speed:** Ball speed at the moment of release is the major determining factor in the distance of the throw. The athlete must keep their torso erect. If they deviate from the core position, the ball will decelerate. The system (ball and athlete) turn as one. Both feet must constantly be turning with an emphasis on an active right foot. Strike the ball out and around to 180 degrees on each turn while maintaining a strong counter against the ball. As the ball accelerates through each turn the athlete must continue to counter the ball through the release. Think of the release as just another turn. **BE PATIENT.** A common error is to "rip" at the hammer and rush through the release. As a result, the ball will be pulled out of its orbit and decelerate. The ball should create enough force to turn the athlete. This is a very dynamic feeling. If the athlete tries to turn the ball, this will result in a

slower drag position with the body ahead of the ball, thus diminishing ball speed. If the athlete is out of control, they may be starting off too quickly. Remember that the ball needs to be at maximum speed upon release.

This article complements a free instructional video "Basic Hammer Throwing - A Field Event for the New Millennium" that available through USATF Women's Development. A copy of the video can be obtained by contacting Jeri Daniels-Elder at [JDEHammer@aol.com](mailto:JDEHammer@aol.com) or by calling (814)234-3687.