

Hitting Clinic

“The art of hitting has changed since our glory days”

Objective

- Know positioning in the batters box to insure plate coverage
- Learn stance to maintain balance throughout the swing
- Use hips and legs to generate bat speed
- Develop a consistent swing through hitting zone and contact point
- Eyes - Batter always keeps eyes on ball

The Basics - Setup

- Grip - Wrap fingers around bat handle
 - ☛ Firm, but don't “strangle” the bat
 - An overly firm grip slows bat speed
 - ☛ “Knocking knuckles” of both hands are aligned
- Stance - Athletic Position, Elbow Relaxed
 - ☛ Feet slightly wider than shoulders
 - A narrow stance leads to lunging at ball leading to: 1.) bad balance and 2.) weight transferred to front leg before swing, slowing bat speed
 - A stance that's too wide prevents leg drive, slows bat speed
 - ☛ Slightly more weight on balls of feet; heels on ground
- Alignment - Toes lined up with pitcher/center field
 - ☛ Open stance (right handed batter aligned with 3rd base)--Prevents batter from reaching outside of plate
 - ☛ Closed stance (right handed batter aligned with 1st base)--Prevents batter from clearing hips, slowing bat speed
- How close to plate? - Need to be close enough to have bat reach the outside corner
 - ☛ Place end of bat on the the black (back outside corner)
 - ☛ Position bat from back outside edge to back inside edge of plate; knob pointing to batter
 - ☛ Batters toes touch line perpendicular to line formed by knob of bat

- It's critically important for batter to cover the outside of the plate
 - ✦ Most Little League strikes are on the outer 1/3 of the plate

The Swing Sequence - Red, Yellow, Green

1. Red - Stop (Stand Still)

- Batter relaxed
 - ✦ Can rest hands on shoulder
- Keep fingers wrapped around handle, knocking knuckles aligned

2. Yellow - Ready to Go (Ready to Receive Pitch)



- Pick hands off shoulder
 - ✦ Split (gap) between hands at shoulder level
 - ✦ Keep back elbow relaxed (chicken wing)
 - Stride toward pitcher
 - ✦ Stay in line with pitcher
 - ✦ Stride can vary from step down, to a step four-to-six inches toward pitcher
 - Pick hands off shoulder and stride occur simultaneously
- ### 3. Green - Go...Swing
- Emphasize leg use

- ❖ Hips/legs start the swing
- Rotate back foot to “open hips”
- Hands first
 - ❖ Hands in front of bat at contact
 - ❖ Bat in front of hands results in weak grounders/pop-ups
- Don't use shoulders to swing
 - ❖ Causes upper hand to dominate - bat in front of hands





4. Finish

- Bat/hands slightly above left shoulder (for right hand batter)
 - ✦ 2 hands on bat for Tee-Ball/Rookie
 - ✦ 1 or 2 hands on bat for Minors/Majors
- Head balanced over center of body; chest behind front knee
 - ✦ Lock front leg (straight)
 - ✦ Back toe down, weight on ball of foot



Hitting Drills

- I. Conduct different drills at multiple stations**
 - II. No more than 4 players at any station**
 - III. Keep drills fun and as simple as possible**
 - IV. Competition (fun) is an excellent way to keep players engaged**
1. Teammates critique each other on technique for red, yellow, green drills
 - Children learn a lot through visualization
 2. Batting Tee
 - Set ball at belt level
 - Swing to hit line drives
 - Aim for “window of opportunity”
 - Area between pitcher/2nd base for right handed batter
 - Hit ball with backspin (ball carries) not topspin (ball dives to ground)



3. Teammates pitch to each other (under coach supervision)
 - Work on fluid swing
 - Repetition of red, yellow, green swing
4. Front Soft Toss - Behind L-Screen or with Wiffle Balls
 - As with hitting live pitching, balls should come from the front (pitcher position)
 - Red, yellow, green
 - Fluid swing
 - Finish on shoulder
 - Hold balance
 - Always Soft Toss from front, not from the side
 - Batters never see a pitch coming from the side in a game

5. Player Homework

- With and without bat, practice rotating back foot/initiate swing 500 times before next practice
- With and without bat, practice red, yellow, green (Mom and Dad can participate)
 - ✎ This drill can be done during commercials while watching TV

Base Running

1. From Home to First Base

- Players must learn to run through first base before slowing down
- Aim to touch the front half of the base
- Molded plastic cleats present a risk of slipping and falling if players land on the middle of the base
- Half foot on dirt, half on base gives stability
- Players must learn to run through first base before slowing down

2. Extra Bases from Home - Rounding 1st Base

- Hit inside corner of bag with left foot
- This will swing right hip/leg towards 2nd base
- If hit bag with right foot, momentum is likely to carry runner to right field
- Upon passing 1st base, runner must pick up 3rd base coach for direction
- Players must learn to run through first base before slowing down

Extra Hitting Information for Advanced Players

- Getting backspin (ball carries better)
 - ✎ Hit (chop) down to ball
- Avoiding an uppercut
 - ✎ Pulling knob of bat toward pitcher leads to a level swing
 - ✎ Do tee work; hit ball off tee into ground--aim for ball to land two feet in front of tee
 - ✎ Don't drop back shoulder
- When there are two strikes on the batter
 - ✎ Choke-up on bat
 - ✎ See the ball as deep as you possibly can (don't swing too early)

- Put the ball in play; force the defense to beat you

Picking the Right Weight Bat

- Hold bat horizontally at shoulder height
 - If player cannot hold bat at this level for at least 7 seconds, the bat's too heavy

Avoiding Injury - Hit by Pitch

- Turn back, face umpire, duck, drop bat
 - There's more cushion on batters' hind side than on his chin
 - Drop bat, don't give away cheap strike on a wild pitch

Batting Practice Tips

- Always keep your eye on the ball
- See the ball hit the bat
- Only swing at strikes - even in practice
 - Don't tell the kids to swing at everything in the cage
 - Help players develop plate discipline
- Work on mechanics in the cage, not in the game

Contact Information

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