



The simple basics of hitting ...

1. GRIP AND STANCE

A. Grip

- Hold the bat as you would a sledge hammer handle (with one hand directly above the other).
- Line-up door-knocking knuckles (middle knuckle).
- Hands and wrists are relaxed in the stance; the grip on the bat will tighten slightly as the swing starts.

B. Stance

- Somewhat cosmetic (most variety in hitting will be found in the stance).
 - Stance must be comfortable, relaxed and allow hitter to move into a strong attacking position.
 - Must have the ability to create rhythm in the stance (unlocking of body parts).
 - Should allow the hitter to get a good two eye look at the pitcher
 - Should allow the hitter to achieve proper plate coverage upon reaching toe touch (stride)
 - The only mistake you can make in stance is getting too wide!!
 - Some hitters prefer their hands high, some a little lower. The hand position in the stance is up to the individual.
- The hand position in the stance must allow the hitter to move to a strong hitting position when the front foot reaches toe touch. The ability to reach this position on time and with minimal movement is essential.

C. Lower Body Position

- Feet in good athletic position (like guarding someone in basketball)
- Feet are slightly outside the hips, slightly wider than shoulder width apart
- Weight is on the inside of both feet
- Knees are inside of the feet
- Bending in ankles and knees
- Slight bend at the waist ("head over toes" or slight bow toward the plate)
- To make sure you can achieve full plate coverage, reach out and tap the outside corner of the plate with only the bottom hand on the bat.
- Stand even with the center of home plate or with your belly button lined up with the front edge of the plate
- Weight stays centered (balanced) in the stance (evenly distributed from front side to back side – 50/50).

D. Upper Body Position

- The bottom hand should be held at least at the top of the strike zone. Better to have hands too high than too low.
- Bat held at or inside of back shoulder.
- Bat held at 45° angle.
- Elbows down but in a strong throwing position

- Drill: with a short, light bat, have the hitter hold the bat with their top hand only and hit one-handed. The hitter will automatically bring the top hand elbow down into the strongest natural position.

Keys for Whole Body

- Good vertical alignment – shoulders over hips, hips over knees
- Big rhythm early in stance to small rhythm just prior to pitcher's motion

2. LOADING or TRIGGERING Phase

(slight movement away from the pitcher)

- Slight weight shift to inside of back leg (knee inside of foot)
- Movement can be back or down into back leg
- Hands move to strong “throwing” position (as if skipping a rock)
- Hand movement slow and continuous (on time with the pitcher)
- Hand stay even to or slightly inside of front elbow
- No twisting of upper body

3. STRIDE or TOE TOUCH

(movement toward the pitcher to establish a strong hitting position)

- Stride concludes at toe touch, but can vary (early stride, stride on heel, no stride)
- Weight lands on inside of front foot
- Front foot down early versus late (recognize and react)
- Hips and shoulders remain square to the plate
- Move to a strong hitting position
- Equal bend in the knees
- Front foot at 45° angle
- Hands end up in a strong throwing position
- Hands even or slightly inside of lead elbow
- Bat angle slightly back towards head
- Back elbow slightly elevated to create space between back elbow and hip

4. SWING

(Rotational movement that takes the bat from launching position to contact)

- Weight shifting into front side initiates rotation (just prior to heel plant)
- Back elbow falls into “slot”
- Hips and hands work together (skipping a rock)
- Hands stay inside of ball to bat lag position (knob pointing towards pitcher; barrel pointed towards catcher).
- Lead with front elbow
- Bat head on plane and ready to release forces (bat stays in the strike zone longer)
- Hands in front of center of gravity (belly button)
- Contact: position that allows you to release the bat with the most force:
 - Middle pitch: barrel even with hands
 - Inside pitch: barrel ahead of hands
 - Outside pitch: barrel behind hands
- Hit against a firm front side

- Hand position: palm up/palm down
- Lead elbow above hands, hands above barrel
- Wrist straight
- Eyes and head focus on the ball / head down
- Back heel finishes up

5. FINISH

- Ultimate goal is to hit through a large zone
- Extension occurs after contact (bat pointed towards the pitcher)
- Rolling of the wrist occurs after extension
- Finish the swing around shoulder level or higher

6. MENTAL ASPECTS of HITTING

- Use funnel approach (broad to narrow thoughts going from the players' bench to the batter's box)
 - Players' Bench: gather information about the pitcher, situation, etc. What may I be asked to do by the coach
 - On Deck Circle: time the pitcher, positive self-talk
 - Batters Box: See the ball – hit the ball!
- Relaxation: Control breathing (deep breath as hitter steps into the box)
- Positive thoughts (focus on “what I want to do” rather than “what I don't want to do”)
- Coach needs to know what verbal clues work for individual hitters
- Avoid too much coaching just before an at-bat or between pitches
- Challenge for coaches and hitters is dealing with the 7 out of 10 “failures” at the plate
- Keep a “well hit” average, as opposed to batting average
- Focus on having good at-bats. Evaluate at-bat on something other than outcome (“did you see the pitch?” “were you relaxed and in control?” etc.)
- Batting practice is the time for the coach to give hitters confidence, make them feel good about their performance.
- Confidence is a big key – preparation builds confidence.
- Visualize success – encourage hitters to keep a “DVD” in the head to play back good at-bats in their minds.

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