

How to Select a Proper Youth Bat

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Possibly the most important choice your player will make prior to any given season is on what bat to use. There are a host of different choices out there, ranging from inexpensive (\$20-\$30) to extremely pricey (\$250+). You'll need to decide what sort of price range you have prior to shopping for bats, so that you can really compare "Apples to apples".

The point of the baseball bat is, of course, to allow the player to focus as much power as possible upon the baseball. While this may sound simplistic, it does lead us to the guiding principle behind selecting a bat - a player should swing the heaviest bat he possibly can *without* sacrificing any of his bat speed. Bat speed is the number one creator of power in a swing. Of course, the laws of physics tell us that if you can swing a heavier bat with the same velocity as a lighter one, you will produce more power - energy equals mass times acceleration, after all!

Length, weight, and drop

There are three major standards that apply to every baseball bat. The first is length, measured in inches. The second is weight, measured in ounces. The last is drop, which is figured by subtracting the weight of the bat from its length. If a bat is, say, thirty inches long and weighs twenty-three ounces, it is said to have a "minus seven" drop, due to the fact that it weighs seven ounces less than the length in inches.

Wood or aluminum?

The real question here is aluminum or aluminum. No, that is not a typo - there is really no place for wooden bats in youth baseball these days. A wooden bat has no hope of being as light as its aluminum counterpart, even if that counterpart is made of "cheap" material. Consequently, the player will not be able to swing as hard, nor generate as much bat speed. Wooden bats simply cannot produce as much power as aluminum. Wooden bats are fantastic for nostalgia, and are the equalizer at the professional level, but your child needs to be swinging metal - in fact, most leagues require that bats be aluminum.

CU-31? CU666? SC-900? ST+20?

What the heck do all of these mean?

These are various designations representing the alloy used in the construction on the bat. Generally, the more expensive alloys allow for more "jump" off of contact, resulting in measurable gains in distance from hitting. Yes, youth baseball technology has caught up with golf - you can literally buy yourself additional distance on your hits.

Of course, this comes at a sometimes expensive price tag. Baseball bats only have so many "good hits" in them before they become dead. Avoid hitting in extreme cold, or hitting non regulation baseballs, as you can damage your bat and void your warranty. Realize, too, that your child may grow enough that they may only get one season out of a bat, regardless of how well you care for it. Keep these factors in mind as you weigh price versus performance.

But what size bat should I purchase?

You should determine the correct length of your player's bat first, and then take a look at weight and drop. Larger drops (and thus, lighter weights) are usually preferred, as the player can generate more bat speed with a lighter bat. I have time and again seen as little as two ounces make a huge difference in a young player's swing!

At the bottom of this article is a chart containing suggested bat lengths and weights, but this is a guideline only. Some players prefer to choke up on the bat, allowing them to purchase a longer model. Some players are simply stronger than others, and can handle a larger bat more easily than similarly-sized children.

An excellent test is to have your player hold the bat by its handle, then stretch his arms out so that his body makes a lopsided "t" shape (lopsided because the bat makes one arm much longer than the other). If he cannot hold the bat level with his shoulder for at least a count of ten, the bat is too heavy for him.

Determine Your Bat Length by Weight and Height

height	3'-3'4"	3'5"-3'9"	3'10"-4'	4'1"-4'4"	4'5"-4'8"	4'9"-5'	5'1"-5'4"	5'5"-5'8"	5'9"-6'	6'1"+
weight	Bat length									
< 60	26"	27"	28"	29"	29"					
61-70	27"	27"	28"	29"	30"	30"				
71-80		28"	28"	29"	30"	30"	31"			
81-90		28"	29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	32"		
91-100		28"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
101-110		29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
111-120		29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"		
121-130		29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
131-140		29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
141-150			30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	33"	33"	
151-160			30"	31"	31"	32"	32"	33"	33"	33"
161-170				31"	31"	32"	32"	33"	33"	34"
171-180						32"	33"	33"	34"	34"
180+							33"	33"	34"	34"