

Fundamentals of the Short Game

by Marty Kreman

Keys to All Bunting

- Bunting is “catching.”
- Barrel above the handle.
- Have a good grip on the bat.
- Start at the top of the zone.
- Bunt a strike. If it’s hard to reach, it’s not a strike.

Sacrifice Bunts

What’s the point? The batter is willing to make an out to advance a runner.

Two styles of footwork.

Pivot Bunt: Front foot slides toward the plate (very important for plate coverage) and batter pivots on the balls of her feet.

Pros: It’s quick; batter is already aimed toward 1st; makes it easy to evade an inside pitch.

Cons: Harder to track the ball; harder to get the bat out front.

Squaring to bunt: Back front steps forward to be “even with” or “in front of” the lead foot.

Pros: Good eyes on the ball; bat is out front and controlled easily.

Cons: Slightly slower than pivot; more dangerous on an inside pitch.

Keys to success:

- Establish the position early.
- Stand toward the front of the box to bunt fair.
- Batter and bat should be as still as possible.
- Go to the ball with your knees.

Bunt in different directions! Pull the handle toward you to pull the ball; push it forward to bunt the other way.

Bunts for a base hit

What’s the point? A last second bunt drops the ball into play and catches the defense by surprise, allowing the batter to get on.

Right Handed: Best done with the pivot style. Technique is the same, but the move is made later. The batter must get the bat in position very quickly.

Left handed drag bunt

Keys to success:

- Start out slow. Walking speed is fine.
- Don’t forget the bat. Push it out front so you can see it.

- Move straight toward the pitcher to stay on the ball.

Pros: All the benefits of the right-handed “bunt for a base hit” plus extras: Batter starts out 4 feet closer to 1st base and is already on the move when contact is made.

Cons: Very difficult because the batter’s head is moving; easy to leave the bat behind; easy to run away from the pitch.

Left Handed Slap

What’s the point? Very difficult to defend. Defense doesn’t know whether to defend the bunt or the slap. Batter is on the move early and closer to 1st base. Batter gets a long look at the pitch.

Keys to success:

- Stay balanced.
- Start slow.
- Hit the ball over plate.
- Swing easy.
- Keep the barrel back as long as you can.
- Keep the front shoulder in.

Pros: Confusing for the defense; allows a drag bunter to stay on the lefty side even with two strikes; quick to 1st.

Cons: Not the most powerful way to hit the ball; easy to get turned toward 1st too early.

Fake Bunt/Hit

What’s the point? Knock the ball past the defense when they charge for the bunt.

Keys to success:

- Don’t show bunt too early or you’ll give it away.
- Don’t pull the bat back too far.
- Just make contact. It doesn’t need to be hard.

Pros: Takes advantage of a confused defense; allows hands to be out front early; bunt position gives a better look at the ball than the swing position.

Cons: Tricky to pull off against a smart team; usually not much power in the hit.

Push Bunt

What’s the point? Same as Fake bunt/hit.

Keys to success:

- Get the bat out front early like you would for a sacrifice.
- Stay balanced so you can use your legs.
- Keep the bat close (arms bent) while you wait for the ball.
- Shove forward – a little is enough.

Pros: More effective at fooling the defense than the fake/hit

Cons: Very difficult to do; location is key: you may end up hitting the ball right at the defender, making it easier to turn a double play.