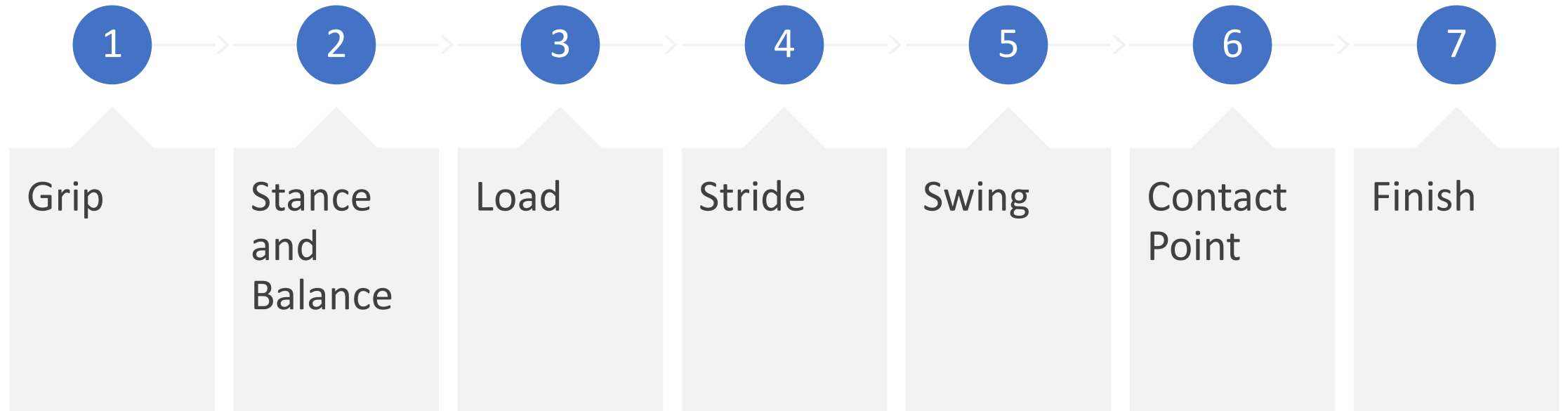


Basics of Hitting

Patriot Athletic League

Source: usabaseball.com

Stages of the Swing





The Grip

- For a right-handed batter, the left hand should be above the knob of the bat and the right hand should be above the left hand.
- For a left-handed batter, the right hand should be above the knob of the bat and the left hand should be above the right hand.
- There should be no space between the hands on the grip of the bat.
- To grip the bat in the proper position in the hands, have hitters lay the bat handle at top of the palm where the fingers and palm meet, rather than deep in the palm.
- The middle knuckles should be aligned for both hands.
- **The hitter's back elbow, grip, hands, and upper body should remain relaxed and not tense.**

Grip

- **Coach Derek Shelton (Tampa Bay Rays):**

We're going to start out with the grip. The grip is one of the basic things with a swing. It can make a good swing bad and a bad swing good. So, what we're going to try to do is make sure our knuckles line up. A real simple drill to do it is just lay the bat down like it's a golf club, put the grip in, we're going to have our knuckles lined up. If it's not perfect, that's fine. But what we really want to make sure of is that we don't have the palm in here or the palm back in here because having the bat deep in our hands can cause a bad swing right off the bat. So, real simple grip. Try to line it up and try to stay loose.



Stance and Balance

- The fundamental basis of hitting mechanics is balance. Without balance, a productive swing is not achievable.
 - The hitter's base should be athletic and comfortable, and will vary from hitter to hitter.
 - An athletic base is generally defined by having flexion in the knees and waist and the weight on the balls of the feet.
 - Before starting the swing, the hitter's weight should be evenly distributed on both feet, and shoulders should be level.
 - In the batter's box, hitters should stand close enough to home plate to be able to cover the outside corner of the plate while swinging.

Stance and Balance

- **Coach Derek Shelton (Tampa Bay Rays):**

The next thing we're going to talk about is the stance. The one thing that people talk about in baseball is that baseball is not an athletic sport. That's not true. **A real simple drill that we can do for stance is to try to make sure that your weight stays inside your knees, you're in a good position. It doesn't matter how wide you are, how narrow you are. Everyone wants to say you have to be this way, this way.** It's not true. The one thing we want to make sure of, though, is that we have like nails through the middle of our shoes so we're in this good, athletic stance. A real easy drill is to put your player in this stance right here, come up, put a little push in their chest. If they fall back, they're not in a strong position. Good strong position, head over your body, making sure you stay stable within your feet.



The Load

- Every hitter will have a different load.
 - To load in anticipation for a pitch, the hitter should shift some of their **weight** onto their back side.
 - The hitter's **hands** should also shift slightly back away from the ear, but should remain near the same level—not drastically dropping or raising.
 - This shift in weight may cause the hitter's **shoulders** to rotate. This movement is acceptable as long as it is a very slight rotation.
 - Make sure the **hitter's head and eyes** stay focused on the pitcher.

The Load

- **Coach Derek Shelton (Tampa Bay Rays):**
- The next part of the swing we're going to talk about is the load. Every hitter has a different load. **The one thing, little kids, coaches, you have to be very conscious of is the fact that little guys are going to mimic what major league hitters do. Don't do that. We're going to give you a real simple drill for the load. Just throw the barrel of the bat, if you're a right-handed hitter, down the first base side, throw the bat back. That position right there, that launch position, is where you should load from.** So, it's real easy to do. Everybody's going to do it a little different. Barrel of the bat down the first base line, throw it back. From this position right here, that's that strong loaded position that every hitter needs to get to release the barrel.



Stride and Separation

- Simultaneous to the load occurring, the hitter will stride, which creates separation.
 - The stride should be a small step forward with the hitter's front foot.
 - When striding, the hitter's knees should stay slightly bent so that they are in an athletic position, and their weight should remain on the balls of their feet.
 - The hands should remain in the load position during the stride, and there should be minimal movement of the head, shoulders, and arms.
 - The hitter should remain balanced throughout the stride.

Stride and Separation

- **Coach Derek Shelton (Tampa Bay Rays):**

Okay, the next thing we're going to talk about with a basic swing is the stride. We talked about our stance, we talked about our load. **Our stride is actually kind of part of our load.** We want to make sure that when we stride, we stay on balance. Balance is one of the most important things of hitting. So, when **you're watching young hitters, you want to watch what we call "touchdown": when the front foot hits the ground, if there's balance. Your weight should never be forward, it should be either middle or a little bit back.** If you find that you're over-striding and getting out to your front side, out here when your weight's out here, that's too far. You'll see some major league hitters that do that, but they have the ability to keep their hands back. **But for young hitters, we want to make sure when we stride, we stay on balance with our weight at least 60% on the back knee.**



Contact Point (1 of 2)

- **Once the front foot has completed the stride, the swing can begin.**
 - The swing begins as the back hip rotates to drive the hands through the zone.
 - As the back hip is rotating toward the ball, the back foot will pivot.
 - The front foot should remain stationary as a brace for the swing, but allows the hips to rotate.
 - The hands are pulled through the zone to hit the ball on a level plane.
 - The hands and bat should go straight to the ball, creating a short swing. A short swing allows for quicker bat speed and better control of the bat.
 - The hitter's weight should transfer from back foot to middle of the body.



Contact Point (2 of 2)

- **The contact point is the location in the swing in which the ball is hit.**
- The hitter's head should remain fixed with eyes on the ball at all times.
- In general, the contact point is in front of the plate for maximum impact on the ball.
- **There are three main contact points:**
 - **Inside:** In general, a pitch in this location should be hit to the pull-side of the field for the hitter or back up the middle of the field.
 - **Middle:** In general, a pitch in this location should be hit back up the middle of the field.
 - **Outside:** In general, a pitch in this location should be hit to the opposite field for the hitter.

Contact point

- **Coach Derek Shelton (Tampa Bay Rays):**

Okay, now we're going to talk about contact point. One of the main things I want to talk about **with contact point is it should happen in front of the plate**. And what I mean by in front of the plate is in front of the white part. We will drill the ball being back on the plate for different things, but we want to make sure that when we contact the ball, regardless of where it's at, it's out in front of the plate. **The one thing you have to be very careful with when you're doing swing stuff off of a tee is that you don't continually, for young kids, move the tee back on the plate because you're creating a bad contact point.** If we're going to get maximum impact on the ball, we're going to want to make sure we contact the ball out in front of us so we can get the ball in the right spot. So, we can drill it where the ball comes back, but **in the game we're going to watch for that contact point to be in front of the plate for maximum impact.**



The Finish

- The finish of the swing allows for all of the force generated to be used.
- Once the hitter has made contact with the ball, they should **finish their swing**.
- The **hands** should continue around the front side of the body with arms extended.
 - This can be achieved with both hands remaining on the bat or the top hand coming off of the bat after contact has been made.
- **The hips and torso** should continue to rotate to allow the hands to follow through.
- **The head and eyes** should still be focused on the point of contact.
 - If the hitter is looking at where they hit the ball, have them refocus on the point of contact for their next swing.
- The hitter should **be balanced** throughout the entire finish.
 - If they are unbalanced, check their stride direction.

The Finish

- **Coach Derek Shelton (Tampa Bay Rays):**

Okay, the last thing we're going to talk about is the finish of the swing. Now the **finish of the swing should happen naturally**. Some people are going to tell you to do it with one hand; some people are going to tell you to do it with two hands. It's kind of a personal preference or what your swing feels best with. **The one thing, and the most important thing just like everything throughout the swing, is that when we finish the swing, we want to make sure we're balanced.** If we're in that good, strong, balanced position, everything else that's happened before that probably happened in the right succession. If we find ourselves off-balance this way or coming towards the plate, something broke down in the timing of the swing. So, we just need to make sure when we finish that swing, we stay in a good, balanced position. A really good way to do this is drill it and hold the trophy stance to make sure the finish is good.

Pre Pitch Preparation for Hitters

Mental Routines

BEFORE THE GAME

- Find out who will be pitching
- Visualize hitting their pitches
- Watch the pitcher warming up to look for movement and point of pitch

IN THE DUGOUT

- Watch the pitcher
- Talk to the previous batters
- Look for patterns
- Look for signals and anything the pitcher does when throwing different pitches

ON DECK

- Formulate a plan for the at-bat
- Know the situation
- Anticipate the pitches
- Keep emotions under control

ON THE WAY TO THE PLATE

- Have a positive attitude
- Believe your preparation will pay off
- Have no doubts in your abilities

Physical Routines

• ON DECK

- Relax
- Achieve synchronization with the pitcher
- See the point of release and follow the ball
- Focus on the early load (start before the point of release)
- Breathe

• BATTER'S BOX

- Use the same routine for every pitch
- Clear the mind (clear all thoughts after each pitch)
- Automatic Pilot (let the eyes take over)
- Trust yourself
- Remember to breathe

As a coach, you should recognize the alert signs of each batter and help them focus on positive thoughts if they begin to doubt themselves.

In-game teaching is about positive reinforcement, never more so than with your hitters.



Location Tee

Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1-2 athletes and 1 coach, or 2 athletes as partners

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Tee, baseballs, net or screen to hit into

Goal: Hit the ball up the middle, pull side, and opposite field based on contact point

Description of the Drill:

- Tee set up in front of the middle of the plate
- Hitter sets up even with the plate, while partner places a ball on the tee
- Hitter hits the ball at the middle contact point for 3 swings, then moves the tee to the inside contact point
- Hitter hits the ball at the inside contact point for 3 swings, then moves the tee to the outside contact point
- Hitter hits the ball at the outside contact point for 3 swings, then the partners switch
- Focus should be on hitting the middle ball up the middle, the inside ball to the pull side, and the outside ball to the opposite field
- Partners switch after 9 swings

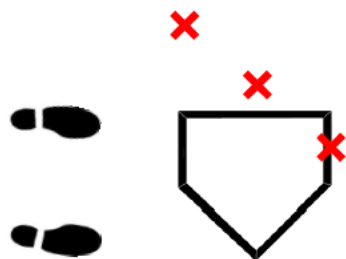
Add Difficulty:

- To add a degree of difficulty, the hitter can also move the tee to different contact point heights (low, middle, high)

Layout of Drill:



Contact Points for a Right Handed Hitter: (Flip for Left Handed Hitters)



1-2-3 Drill

Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1-2 athletes and 1 coach, or 2 athletes as partners

Average Time to Complete: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Tee, baseballs, net or screen to hit into

Goal: Load so that weight is shifted mostly to back foot, stride while staying balanced

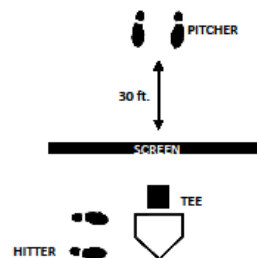
Description of the Drill:

- Tee set up slightly in front of the middle of the plate
- Hitter sets up even with the plate, while other partner puts a ball on the tee
- Hitter gets ready, looks forward to visualize a pitcher
- Partner then calls out "1, 2, 3" pausing after each number, on each number hitter will:
 - 1: Hitter loads shifting weight to back foot
 - 2: Hitter strides while staying balanced, hands separate to move back from the shoulder
 - 3: Hitter swings and hits the ball
- Hitter tries to hit the ball back up the middle
- Partners switch after 5 swings

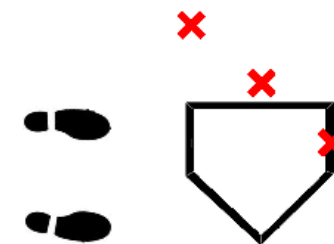
Add Difficulty:

- To add a degree of difficulty, one of the partners can stand 30 feet away on the other side of the net the players are hitting into (shown below) and go through a dry pitch like a pitcher (without a ball), this gives the hitter a real visual of a pitcher (1, 2, 3 should still be separated motions)
- The hitter can also move the tee to different contact points (inside, middle, outside) as shown for a right handed hitter below

Layout of Drill (pitcher is optional):



Contact Points for a Right Handed Hitter: (Flip for Left Handed Hitters)





Tees with Timing

Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1-2 athletes and 1 coach, or 2 athletes as partners

Average Time to Complete: 5 minutes

Equipment Required: Tee, baseballs, net or screen to hit into

Goal: Focus on rhythm of the hitter with the pitcher and driving the ball up the middle

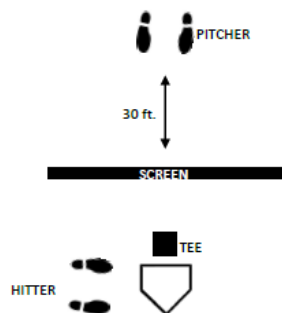
Description of the Drill:

- Tee set up slightly in front of the middle of the plate
- Hitter sets up even with the plate, while other partner puts a ball on the tee
- Hitter gets ready, looks forward to visualize a pitcher
- Hitter visualizes the pitcher throwing the ball, then focuses on the ball on the tee
- Hitter then tries to hit the ball back up the middle
- Partners switch after 5 swings

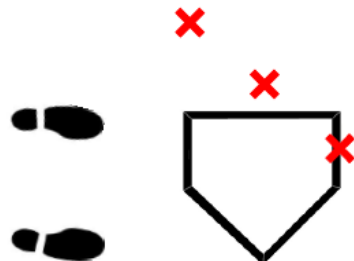
Add Difficulty:

- To add a degree of difficulty, one of the partners can stand 30 feet away on the other side of the net the players are hitting into (shown below) and go through a dry pitch like a pitcher (without a ball), this gives the hitter a real visual of a pitcher
- The pitcher can go through dry motions for a full wind-up, side-step, and the stretch positions
- The hitter can also move the tee to different contact points (inside, middle, outside) as shown for a right handed hitter below

Layout of Drill (pitcher is optional):



Contact Points for a Right Handed Hitter: (Flip for Left Handed Hitters)



BEGINNER BATTING PRACTICE EXAMPLE

It is ideal to have at least one coach at each station during BP. However, some stations such as the tee and cage stations can be managed by players feeding the other players in their group. For maximum productivity, try to keep the groups small, perhaps 4 - 5 players each. Each station rotates to the next numerical station. Station 3 will rotate to station 1.

1. Defensive Station

1. Players should be in the infield and outfield positions fielding the balls being hit by the live hitting group
2. A bucket can be placed in the outfield for easy ball pick-up
3. Make sure your players pay attention and watch the hitter at all times. Avoid allowing your players to stand in groups

2. Skill Station

1. Skill stations should have tees and baseballs
2. Players should work on hitting the ball off of the tee and driving the ball back up the middle
3. Depending on the number of tees available, the group can be split into smaller tee groups
4. A coach should be present at this station to monitor for safety

3. Live Hitting Station

1. Set up a front toss screen on the field and have a coach throw front toss to the hitters
2. Players next in line to hit should be warming up in the on deck circle. All other players waiting their turn to hit should be in the dugout
3. Each hitter should get at least 10 swings off of front toss on the field
4. On the last swing of their turn, have the players run through first base, then rotate back into the dugout to wait for another turn to hit

OPTIONAL HITTING ROUTINES

The following hitting routine provides hitting situations that can be performed during batting practice, and the suggested repetition for each situation.

SITUATIONAL ROUTINE

1. Sacrifice bunt- 5
2. Hit and run- 3
3. Opposite field- 3
4. Up the middle- 3
5. Regular swings- 5

In instances where more coaches are available, additional stations can be created. Please reference the "Advanced BP Routine" document for adding more stations to your BP routine.

Ball-Hit Front Toss



Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1-2 athletes and 1 coach, or 2 athletes as partners

Average Time to Complete: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Screen for coach to throw behind, home plate, and a bucket of baseballs

Goal: Call out "ball" when see ball before the pitch, call out "hit" at contact with the ball

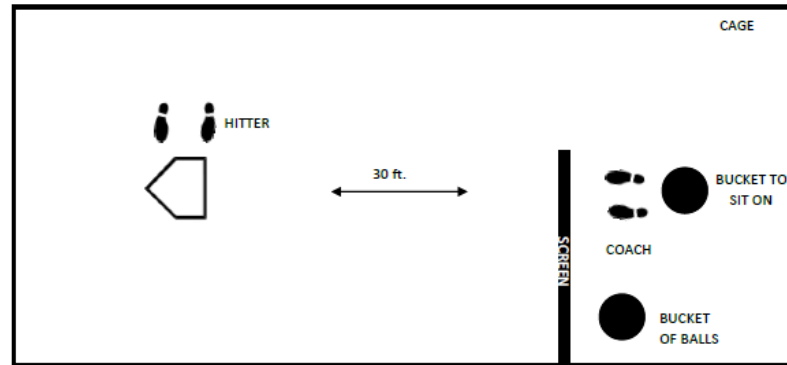
Description of the Drill:

- Screen set up 30 feet from the plate
- Hitter sets up even with the plate
- Coach throws overhand while seated on a chair or bucket, down the middle of the plate on a line at a slow to medium speed from behind the screen
- Hitter says "ball" when they first see the ball in the coach's hand, and "hit" when they make contact
- Focus should be on good quality swings, with hitters finishing their swing and staying balanced
- Partners switch after 10 swings

Add Difficulty:

- To add a degree of difficulty, coaches can throw pitches inside and outside
- Hitters should hit outside pitches to the opposite field (or opposite side in a cage)
- Hitters should try to hit inside pitches back up the middle or a little to the pull side of the middle

Layout of Drill (cage is optional, can be done on a field):



Fastball Front Toss



Skill Set: Hitting

Difficulty Level: Easy

Number of Athletes and Coaches: 1-2 athletes and 1 coach, or 2 athletes as partners

Average Time to Complete: 10 minutes

Equipment Required: Screen for coach to throw behind, home plate, and a bucket of baseballs

Goal: Focus on rhythm of the hitter with the pitcher and driving the ball up the middle

Description of the Drill:

- Screen set up 30 feet from the plate
- Hitter sets up even with the plate
- Coach underhand throws the ball down the middle of the plate on a line at a slow to medium speed from behind the screen
- Hitter tries to hit the ball back up the middle, working on timing with the coach's pitches
- Focus should be on good quality swings, with hitters finishing their swing and staying balanced
- Partners switch after 10 swings

Add Difficulty:

- To add a degree of difficulty, coaches can throw pitches inside and outside
- Hitters should hit outside pitches to the opposite field (or opposite side in a cage)
- Hitters should try to hit inside pitches back up the middle or a little to the pull side of the middle

Layout of Drill (cage is optional, can be done on a field):

