

Hitting Mechanics 101



BAT SELECTION & GRIPPING THE BAT

When selecting a bat:

- Find a bat you can handle. Too many players use bats that are too big for them.
- Select a bat that you can choke up on a little.

When gripping a bat:

- Hold the bat in your fingers
- Line up the middle knuckles

NOTE: Holding the bat too far in the palm of the hand will prevent you from maximizing the wrist snap during your swing.

PREPARATION:

1. Take practice swings by swinging the bat down to the contact point and then bring it back to the shoulder.
2. Take eyes from mound to plate as you practice swing.
3. Make sure you bring hands back before going forward on swing.
4. Take short, quick swings while pitcher is getting the sign from the catcher.
5. Once pitcher starts wind up bring hands back up to top of the zone and get them still.
6. Don't wiggle bat. Get your hands still when pitcher throws the ball so you can go right into Trigger Stride position.

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STANCE

1. Maintain a wide base – set up with your feet more than shoulder-width apart to gain balance and to avoid over-striding.
2. Knees should be inside ankles. Weight should be on the balls of the feet.
3. Bend at the knees and the waist.
4. Hands should be at the top of the strike zone.
5. Elbows should point toward the ground. (Holding the back elbow up can lead to a loop in the swing.)
6. Look at pitcher with both eyes. Tuck chin behind front shoulder.
7. Shoulders should be level.
8. You should have a 60-40 weight split with 60 percent over back leg.



Proper Batter Stance

BAT ANGLE:

1. If bat is straight up and down there is a tendency to loop the swing.
2. Holding bat flat leads to flatter swing and allows you to go right to the baseball.
3. Aim to hold bat somewhere between a 45 degree angle and flat over the shoulder for best results.

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3 TYPES OF STANCES



Open Stance.



Closed Stance



Square Stance

- Open Stance – Here the back foot is a little closer to the plate than the front foot. Players who use this stance may like the ball on the inside part of the plate or may feel like they get a better view of the pitcher standing this way. This stance may also be used by players with slower hands.
- Closed Stance – Here the front foot is closer to the plate than the back foot. With this stance the player may find it easier to hit the outside pitch but may have difficulty turning on the inside pitch.
- Square Stance – This stance allows the batter to hit all three zones. It also makes it more difficult for the pitcher to determine where the hitter likes the ball.

UP IN THE BOX OR BACK IN THE BOX:

1. If you stand up in the box, you have to be quicker on the fastball but you may get the breaking ball before it is at the bottom of its break.
2. If you stand back in the box, you get more time on the fastball but the breaking ball will be deeper in its break.

Ultimately, you may want to base box position off of the pitcher and whether he is a hard thrower or more of a breaking ball pitcher.

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LOAD:

1. The load phase begins when the pitcher goes to throw and he separates his hands and brings the ball to the apex.
2. Batter shifts weight back laterally. The body moves the hands back but the hands themselves don't move independently.

Common errors to look for and correct:

- Wrapping: the upper torso turns and the batter wraps the bat behind his back shoulder
- Loading down: the hands drop. Both moves elongate the swing and make it more difficult to hit the ball.



Load phase.

SEE THE BALL:

- For consistent success, batter must watch the ball all the way to contact.
- See the ball coming out of the pitcher's hand
- Head must be kept still through the swing

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POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE MOVES:

- The load phase of the swing is a negative move in that the batter is moving back away from the pitcher.
- The negative load move is then followed by the positive stride and swing which pushes the batter forward toward the target.
- Batter must be making a positive move forward to hit with success. He should not be swinging “from his heels” with his momentum going backward.



Negative load move.



Positive stride and swing moves.

MENTAL APPROACH:

1. A positive mental approach is essential to hitting success.
2. Batter should always have a goal in mind when hitting.
3. Batters should be focused on being aggressive, being fast with their swing and taking a full swing.

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STRIDE:

1. The stride is the most important part of batting. It enables you to get into position to hit the ball. You can have a great stance, you can have a great swing but unless you are able to get the front foot down, the hands back and cocked in a ready position you are not going to hit the ball.
2. All good hitters must have a trigger (an action where their hands go back)
3. It's important in your stance to have your hands near your trigger - you want your trigger to be "slow and short." Trigger should only be 2-3 inches.
4. In windup, as pitcher gets ball up into the ready to release position, hitter should go into trigger stride. Ankle bone goes straight toward target. Front foot hits the ground and hands go up and back so you are ready to hit.
5. In Trigger Stride Position, hands should be at top of strike zone, front shoulder should be tucked, front knee should be tucked in as well and front heel should be slightly off the ground.
6. Batters should keep the stride as short as possible.
7. Common mistake to avoid is stepping out with front foot. Batter should step straight forward.



Batter takes a short stride step forward.

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SWING:

1. The swing should be quick, short and directly to the baseball.
2. Swing should be on the same plane as the baseball for as long as possible.
3. 90 percent of baseballs that are missed are missed because the bat is swung under ball – so aim for the top half of the baseball.
4. From trigger position, hands should start inside the baseball on the swing. Barrel of the bat should be above the hands.
5. Both eyes should be on the ball. The front foot should be closed.
6. 3 body parts rotate on the swing – back foot turns so shoelaces are toward pitcher; hips rotate so belly button points toward the pitcher; and then shoulders rotate as bat is swung through the zone.
7. Pop the hips to generate power. Use the big muscles in legs to push the bat forward through the zone.
8. Bring the bat directly to the ball with the wrists and hit the ball with the barrel of the bat.
9. At contact, front arm is slightly bent then you lock it out as you drive through the ball.
10. Hands (holding the bat) finish up on the follow-through at the opposite shoulder.
11. Batter should finish high (but not too high – between shoulder and ear is good) – this leads to more line drives and fly balls. Finishing low leads to more ground balls.

PREPARE POSITION:

1. Take practice swings by swinging the bat down to the contact point and then bring it back to the shoulder.
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The back foot, hips and shoulders all rotate on a good swing.

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THREE TYPES OF SWINGS

1. Swing underneath the ball – leads to pop ups.
 2. Swing on top of the ball – leads to ground balls.
 3. Swing through the ball – leads to line drives.
- Players should aim to swing through the ball. It can help to visualize three baseballs. The balls are traveling one behind the other on the same plane. You want to hit all three balls with your swing.
 - Failing to drive through the ball can lead to the batter rolling the ball over (ground ball) or popping it up.
 - Drive through the ball and then follow through and finish with the knob of the bat pointing up and barrel of the bat pointing down.
 - It's up to the batter's personal preference whether they take the top hand off the bat during the follow-through or keep both hands on it.

HITTING PITCH LOCATIONS:

1. Inside pitch – Right-hander's belly button should be pointed toward left field as he makes contact.
2. Pitch Down the Middle – Batter's belly button should be pointed into center field.
3. Outside pitch – Right-hander's belly button should be pointed toward right field as he makes contact.