



# TEACHING BATTING SKILLS

*When teaching young hitters, it's important to keep one fundamental thought in mind: consistent, solid contact make hitting fun and leads to success. Coaches should emphasize the importance of hitting the ball hard, rather than hitting the ball far. Here are some basic fundamentals to help young players become better hitters:*

**1.** Select the “right” size bat. The “right” bat is the one with which hitters can generate good bat speed. It's neither too long nor too heavy. Refer to the Bat Selection chart for guidelines based on a player's height and weight. The bat that feels comfortable and easiest to swing is the bat that should be selected. Bat speed, not bat size, is important in hitting the ball.

**2.** Hitter's hands will automatically tighten up when they start to swing, so it's essential to keep them relaxed in the stance. This will allow hitters to take smooth, quick swings.

**3.** For the best look at the strike zone, hitters should stand in the batter's box with the plate in the middle of their stance. They may find it helpful to move deeper in the box when facing a good fast ball pitcher, and up in the box for a junk ball pitcher.

**4.** Hitter's stances should be balanced with the feet spaced shoulder-width apart and weight evenly distributed on the balls of the feet.

**5.** Hitter's heads should be turned toward the pitcher, so that both eyes can focus on the pitched ball. This will allow for a better view of the pitch. Remember, too, that the most successful hitters keep their heads and eyes level.

**6.** Hitters must look for good pitches to hit. They should be comfortable with the strike zone and swing at strikes. With two strikes, hitters should consider choking up on the bat, expanding the strike zone and protecting the plate.

**7.** Hitters should take a short stride toward the pitcher. This will allow them to stay balanced and generate greater power. If hitters finish their swings off balance, try shortening their stride.

**8.** Good hitters accelerate the bat through the hitting zone. Their bats are always moving full speed at contact.

**9.** Hitters need to keep their head on the ball through the swing. This helps them track the ball into the hitting zone, as well as maintain balance. REMEMBER - hitters can't hit what they can't see.

**10.** After contact, hitters should focus on getting out of the batter's box quickly and running straight to the base. The first few steps out of the box can be the determining factor as to whether the hitter, now the runner, is safe or out.

**11.** Be positive. Hitters must believe in their ability to hit the ball.

## DRILLS

*A problem most young players face is that they don't get enough swings in the course of a practice. Most practices use one drill for hitting: pitching to the batter, one hitter at a time. The following drills will allow hitters to isolate key fundamentals of their swings and take enough swings to improve their hitting:*

### 1. TEE DRILL

In the Tee Drill, a player sets up to the tee in the normal batting stance. The tee should be placed so that the ball is in the hitting zone. Sharp line drives are the desired result. This is a good indication that the player is taking the proper swing path to the ball. Hitting off the tee simulates all aspects of the swing, which makes it an ideal drill for young players. The coach can then evaluate each player and make the proper adjustments before bad habits are formed.

### 2. SOFT-TOSS DRILL

The Soft-Toss Drill requires two players – a tosser and a hitter. The tosser sets up next to a net at a 45° angle to the hitter, who stands about 15 feet from the net. The hitter assumes a normal batting stance and waits for the tosser to underhand the ball into the hitting zone. The same as when hitting off the tee, the desired result is a sharp line drive. This drill works on all aspects of the swing with the added benefit of tracking a moving ball.