



How To Coach Hitters

20 Tips For Better Contact

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How To Coach Hitters

20 Tips For Better Contact

This report is designed to provide you - the coach - with specific coaching tips and pointers you can use with your players to develop proper hitting fundamentals, and build a smoother, more powerful swing. You can use these coaching tips during batting practice, one on one workout sessions, or for quick in-game reminders.

1. Use the power line within your swing

A lot of people confuse a level swing with having the bat level out with the ball. To do this you would need to go up for a high pitch and bend down for a low pitch, which we've already established we don't want to do. A level swing is one where the shoulders are level, the waist is level, and the knees are level – if you can keep these, and your eye level consistent, you'll be able to hit through the ball more consistently.

2. Swing as fast as you can

But don't force it! Don't muscle up, let your swing come smooth and natural.

3. Swing within your axis of rotation

After your stride, imagine a pole going straight down to the ground from the top of your head – this is the axis of rotation. The more you can stay on this axis of rotation, the more powerful your swing will be. Also, you need to make sure your back knee stays behind the axis of rotation – bending it past that point will result in a loss of balance and a weakening in your swing.

4. Use a bat you can stop and accelerate at will

If you have a hard time stopping the bat, you'll have a hard time executing a check swing. Even in the majors now the trend has been moving towards lighter bats to improve bat speed and control – so follow suit!

5. Use your hands properly

To do this, make sure your hands are over your back knee, and under the chin. You want to start off by pulling your hands down hard, as if there were a rope holding tugging on the top of the bat. Next you need to bring the back elbow in front of your chest, and your front elbow in tight, to help with having proper arm extension in front of you. The farther your elbows are from your body, the slower your rotation will be, and the tighter in, the faster your rotation will be – like when a figure skater is spinning on the ice.

6. Stay inside the ball

One of the best tricks to do this is to imagine that the outside half of the ball disappears, and you can only see the inside half of the ball. To help keep your hands inside and your swing short, imagine a line parallel to your stance just a couple inches in front of your toes, that your hands can't go over. Then come down tight and quick from the beginning of your swing to the ball, like the first half of a V, with the rest of your swing after contact more like the second half of a U.

7. Bat awareness

The key to hitting is getting the ball on the barrel, or the sweet spot. It doesn't matter how good your mechanics are if you're not making a conscious effort to make contact with the sweet spot on the bat, you won't get solid contact. Don't just swing, and hope – have a purpose!

8. Hit the ball as you are turning

You want to hit the ball *as* you're turning – not after you've turned. If you're hitting the ball after your turn, your arms are just going to be hanging there, your head is going to be coming away, and you're not going to be able to transfer all the power you generated through your rotation.

9. Have a strong grip on contact

It doesn't matter how much bat speed you can generate if when the fastball comes the bat bounces backwards. A great test to see if you've got a strong enough grip at contact is to pause your swing and have a partner push back on the bat with some pressure – if it's too loose, he'll be able to push it back easily.

10. Palm Up Palm Down hand position

No matter the location of the pitch, your top hand should always be looking up, and your bottom hand looking down. All that changes for a high or low pitch is the angle of the bat relative to the ground – not your hand position.

11. Hit the ball at an angle

You don't want the bat to be straight across the plate when making contact with the ball. It should be at a slight angle, with the hands out in front and the bat head lagging behind just a bit, to create a kind of spring action and send the ball out with power, pushing away from yourself.

12. Hit through the ball

As you make contact you need to continue transferring all of your power through the ball to maximize results. With your bat at an angle as you make contact, continue through the ball and straighten out. This extension of your arms and the bat through the ball is called the 'Power V'. It's a lot like punching a punching bag – you don't want your arm extended as you hit the bag, you want to be in your power position as you make contact, then continue your swing through the bag to deliver all the power you generated at the beginning of your swing.

13. Follow the 3 sounds of the swing

There are three sounds that should occur at the exact same time in every swing. Two of them are imaginary, and the third is the bat making contact with the ball. The first two are your chin hitting your back shoulder as your swing through the ball, and your back knee hitting a punching bag that's been placed between your legs. By synchronizing these movements we generate the maximum amount of power at the point of impact.

14. Turn first, then push through the ball

Think of it like throwing a medicine ball – you rotate your body to get the momentum going, then extend and throw, and your swing should be no different.

15. You have to have a complete pivot of the back foot

Another way you can generate a little extra oomph on your swing is by really exploding with the rotation on the back foot. If you can imagine a sandbag in front of your back foot, try hitting it as hard as you can with your ankle as you finish your swing. Another great technique is to imagine squishing the bug with your big toe. Focus on your big toe specifically, because sometimes players will squish with their whole foot, and end up leaning back during the swing. Focusing on the big toe helps the players focus on pushing forward and staying upright and level.

16. Flex the back knee

Whether you bend your knee down to around a 90 degree angle, or something more obtuse, you need to make sure you keep your back knee flexed as you rotate through your swing.

17. Your front leg must be firm

Regardless of your batting stance, your front leg needs to be firm. It's a lot like when you make a circle with a compass – that needle in the middle needs to be firm and

stationary, or you won't get a good rotation. After you've made contact you can do what you want, as moving it earlier would result in what is called spinning, when both your back and front foot move and you slide out of your power position.

18. The back leg turns as one unit

Think of your leg from your knee down as one solid unit that you will rotate quickly all in unison – you want to avoid any movement of your knee forwards towards your other knee before your foot has begun to pivot and rotate. This way you can maintain a strong flex throughout the swing.

19. Accelerate through the ball

After you've hit the ball, your job is not done. The difference between power hitters and others is that power hitters hit the ball and keep going and let the bat finish around on its own. Think of yourself as a samurai attempting to cut the ball in half with your bat – you need to keep accelerating through.

20. Finish your swing

Keep rotating your bat through your swing, rotating back as far as you possibly can. It should feel almost like you're throwing your bat over your front shoulder. It's also important to maintain balance – you should be able to hold your end position momentarily, as if you're posing for a baseball card! If you're falling all over the place, it's likely that there is something in your swing that's throwing off your balance. The other thing with the follow through is that it is the one place other than your stance that you can individualize to the fullest. You can do whatever you like to finish of your swing – as long as you follow the tenets from this tip!

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