

Batting Tips

Frame of Mind

When you are ready to step into the batter's box, be confident! You should feel balanced and relaxed. As you step into the batters box, do it with a sense of determination and focus. Set yourself by digging in with your back foot to gain good footing and balance. Demonstrate to the pitcher that you are ready to play.



Depth in Box

To set your feet at the proper depth each time, place your right toe on the back corner of the plate, then your left toe behind your right heel. Finally, step back with your right foot to establish a proper distance and depth (for left-handed batters, do the opposite). How far back you stand in the box is a matter of personal preference. Standing deeper allows more time for pitchers who pitch fast, but it may be tougher to hit a breaking ball type of pitch that sinks out in front.



Position from Plate

The first thing to do when stepping into the batter's box is to find the proper place to place your feet. Make sure you are not too close to or too far from the plate. Touch your bat across the plate to find if you can cover an outside pitch.

Your bat should touch the same place each time you step into the box.

Batting Stance

The type of stance you use is up to you. Many successful batters have very different stances.

However, a balanced stance with your feet square to the plate provides you the best position to properly uncork a good swing. Allow enough room to take a good 6-8 inch step toward the pitcher as you begin swing.

Swing Finish



It is very difficult to analyze a batter's swing without somehow slowing the action down, or even stopping a swing in progress. One image that is easier to analyze is the last image seen - the swing's finish.

A lot can be seen from the finish. Obviously, if the batter's front foot is almost out of the batter's box, the batter has "stepped in the bucket" and overextended. Here are some things to look for in the swing finish that can be seen in the photograph at left.

Back Side Commitment

This is often called "squishing the bug", but the term implies that you must keep some weight on the ball of your back foot. This violates the tenants of hitting coaches who teach that you should hit with your weight on the front foot. Regardless of the batter's front/back foot weight distribution at contact, the point is that prior to the swing the rear foot should point toward the plate, and through the course of the swing twist and finish pointing toward the pitcher.

The knee should also be bent to near 90 degrees. This twisting action gets the hips into the swing. The hips are key to increasing bat speed and generating power from the legs. Unfortunately, a player with good reflexes, quick hands and good hand/eye coordination can survive through AAA without good back side commitment. However, the increase in pitching velocity at the majors level makes it difficult to catch up to the pitch without "squishing the bug."

Front Side Closure

While the back side is twisting, the front side should not. It should stay near the "closed" position.

Closed means that the front foot is pointed more toward the plate, than to left field. Once the front foot opens, hips and shoulders tend to follow. It's great if the hitter wants to pull every pitch, but as the player progresses up the ladder of competition, the pitchers will catch on and pitch to the hitter's weakness, the outside pitch.

Head on the Ball

I think we can still call this "Mike to Ike" without offending any hitting gurus. Like the front foot, the head does not twist as the back foot, hips and trunk. Mike refers to the front shoulder, or where your chin should be before the swing. Ike refers to the rear shoulder, the position of the chin at the finish of the swing.

Body Stays Centered

With the twisting and weight transfer, the body must stay centered. The body should not fly forward with the bat head and end up over the front foot.

Balance and Extension

The arms should be at (or at least near) full extension at contact; but not before then. Quite often, a hitter will extend their arms early. This is called casting. If the arms are extended too early, and the pitch is on the inside half of the plate, the batter must lean back on their heels to keep from hitting the ball on the bat handle. The result is a loss of balance backwards, which results in the batter catching his balance with a small step back, usually with the front foot

At the completion of a swing, the weight on the front foot should be centered on the ball of the foot, in a very wide stance, leaving the batter in a good balanced position. Also upon extension, and through contact with the ball, the bat head should be flying toward the pitcher, and not immediately whipping around the batter.

In order to stay balanced, extend properly, and swing through the ball, the elbows need to stay bent and close to the body. Keeping the hands "inside" the ball, the bat should be gripped with fingertips, not the palm, and the middle knuckles should be nearly aligned, which in turn keeps the wrists aligned and acting together to snap the bat at the ball.

Batting Drills

The Strike Zone Drill

The purpose of this drill is to teach the hitter "strike zone recognition".

Teams get 3 outs per at bat. A coach pitches the ball from about 40 feet in front of the plate. The hitter sets up at the plate with a bat, strides at the proper time, follows the ball with his head into the catcher's glove, and calls "ball" or "strike" as the ball hits the glove.



The Colored Ball Drill

The purpose of this drill is to improve reaction time and thinking at the plate.

Paint several baseballs with different bright colors, and place them in a bucket behind the mound. Have someone place one of the balls in the pitcher's glove without letting the batter see the color. The pitcher then calls out a color before pitching the ball. The batter can only swing if the ball matches the color the pitcher called out (and if the pitch is in the strike zone).

Backside Barrier Drill

This drill is used to shorten-up a hitter's swing.

The batter sets up with his hands 8 to 10 inches from the fence with the fence behind the batter. The fence should run parallel with the batters back foot. If the batter casts the hands backwards or loops the bat, he will hit the fence or barrier. The batter can hit a ball off the tee or one that is soft-tossed.

Bunt Pepper

This is a great drill to develop bunting skills.

The drill involves 5 players in each group. The players may use the pivot or square around bunt technique. The batter must bunt the ball to each of the four fielders. The hitter bunts one to each and then takes the left fielders (facing the batter) place. The right fielder comes to bat and the other move over one place. The coach should emphasize that the batters bunt the ball softly to the fielders. The bat should be keep at a 45 degree angle and the batter should change height by bending the knees.

Fielders should catch the ground ball, bare-handed, out front, then square the feet around and throw the next strike to the hitter. This makes a great warm-up drill for the beginning of practice. Defensive skills should also be stressed.