



Berlin Youth Baseball – Bunting

Goal of this document: Provide coaches, parents, and players with an explanation of bunting and when youth should or shouldn't use this skill.

What is bunting?

Bunting is where a player purposely does not swing, but instead places the bat in direct line of the pitch and attempts to get the ball to bounce forward in fair territory.

Why would a player bunt?

There are 2 general reasons why a youth player would bunt 1) For a base hit 2.) To sacrifice themselves and move a runner over to the next base. When trying to get a base hit, this is usually called a drag/slap bunt, and involves the batter starting to run as they are bunting and beating out the throw for a single. When trying to do a sacrifice, there would be a runner already on base, and the batter is trying to trade getting their teammate to the next base (usually into scoring position) by purposely hitting it short and getting out.

Who should bunt?

Bunts typically aren't used at most young age groups. Not until the youth get older, such as in leagues where leading off is allowed, does bunting become a little more common. Most commonly, a person bunting is a player that is small and fast, as they have a more likely chance of running fast and beating out a throw to first. Sometimes you will also let a struggling hitter, someone who strikes out often or rarely makes contact, perform a bunt so that their at-bat is made worthwhile by putting the ball into play to either sacrifice or to hope that a fielding mistake is made.

How to hold the bat during a bunt?

Holding the bat proper is very important during a bunt situation. Never use all 5 fingers and never have any fingers exposed on the front of the bat (pitcher's side). Instead pinch the bat between your thumb and index fingers, curling the rest of the fingers in behind the bat. Your bottom hand stays near the barrel of the bat in a normal grip, and the pinching hand is in the middle of the bat where the bat starts to get thick.



Bunting safety

Bunts can be dangerous for a youth that is not familiar with proper bunting techniques, thus bunting is a highly technical skill that should not be used by inexperienced hitters. As previously mentioned, a youth should never do a 5 finger grip because their fingers will get hit by the pitch. A youth should never have any fingers exposed on the front side (pitcher's side) of the bat for the same reason. Also a bunt means that a batter is turning and exposing their face, chest, and torso to the ball and pitcher which means a larger area and chance for the batter's body getting hit with the ball, so if the pitcher pitches and inside pitch the batter has to be aware and ready to back up out of the way to avoid getting hit.

Pulling the bat back on a bad pitch

One critical thing, if you're teaching youth how to bunt, is reminding them that showing a bunt (e.g. putting the bat out across the plate) is the equivalent of a swing. This means that if the pitcher's throws a bad pitch (high, low, outside, etc.) but your batter has is still showing bunt, the umpire will call a strike. Therefore you need to teach your youth that if they see a bad pitch, and are not going to bunt, they need to pull their bat back in order for it to be called a ball.



Bunting on 2 strikes

It is important to teach youth that bunting is ok with 0 strikes or 1 strikes, but almost never done with 2 strikes in the count. The reason is that typically a “foul ball” on 2 strikes means that a batter gets another chance, but a “foul bunt” on 2 strikes is a 3rd strike and the batter has struck out, therefore when teaching and telling youth to bunt, you have to remind them that if they get 2 strikes they must “swing”.

Bunting with 2 outs

Another important thing to remind youth is that batters in most situations do not bunt with 2 outs. Of course, with a sacrifice bunt, it makes no sense to bunt because you’d be automatically giving the defense the 3rd out. But also drag/slap bunting with 2 outs is high risk and rarely done unless you have a skilled batter.

Bunt down

It is important to teach your youth that during a bunt situation it is always best to have the bat slightly above the ball. If you mistakenly have the bat below the trajectory of the ball it will cause a popup situation, something where a pitcher or catcher can easily get the batter out and may end up in a double play if the runner was moving.

How and where to bunt the ball

Sacrifice Bunt: When a bunt is purposely being done to sacrifice yourself and advance your teammate to the next base you typically show the bunt early on, even before the pitcher has started their throw. This will cause defense to move in and concede the fact that you are simply trying to advance your teammate runner to the next base. With this type of bunt, the batter’s feet stationary (although at a young age it’s for the youth’s back foot to come out even with the front foot, just as long as they don’t step on home plate which is automatic out). With a sacrifice bunt, you want to make sure it’s a slow rolling bunt, down one of the baselines (1st or 3rd, do not bunt directly back at the pitcher) because if you hit it hard the defense may have enough time to turn and



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throw out your teammate instead of getting you at first. With a sacrifice bunt you usually also move up in the batter's box to ensure the ball is hit fair.

Drag/Slap Bunt: When a bunt is intended to get you a base hit, it is typically done by a fast runner who can fly down the first base line. With a drag/slap bunt, it's always done down a baseline (1st or 3rd, do not bunt directly back at the pitcher). A drag/slap bunt is harder to do than a sacrifice bunt, and is usually reserved for older youth, as the batter starts their running motion towards first just slightly before the ball gets to the plate.

Drag/Slap bunts are most common with left-handed hitters since they are already on the first base side of the plate and will have to take a few less steps than a right-handed batter would to get to first base.



Advanced: DO NOT Fake Bunt (pulling-back and swing)

Just so coaches are aware, in most leagues and tournaments there are rules against fake bunting (meaning you cannot show bunt, then pull back and full swing). The reason for this is safety of the defense. Often when you show a bunt, the 3rd baseman will start running towards home, and if a batter were to full swing the 3rd baseman would be in direct line to get hit, thus ensure your youth know that fake bunting is not allowed at the youth levels.

Advanced: When to show bunt

Showing bunt is defined as when you let the defense know you're bunting (e.g. when do you turn your bat horizontal). When you "show bunt" often depends on the situation and what you're trying to accomplish. Are you trying to surprise the defense? Or are you purposely trying to lure them in so your runner can advance on a sacrifice?

Sacrifice Bunt: At most ages, a batter will show the bunt for a sacrifice immediately once the pitcher starts their windup as the intent of a sacrifice is not to surprise anyone but just to advance the runner.

Drag/Slap Bunt: With a drag/slap bunt, you are trying to get a base hit and it is advantageous of the batter to delay showing bunt until the absolute last second before the ball arrives at home. This way the defense has very little time to react and must run quite a distance to actually get the ball before throwing it.