



Hitting Fundamentals and Techniques

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Dry Run Hitting

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Setup

Spread the hitters out across the field with at least 5 strides of space in every direction. Each player has a bat and faces the coach.

Execution

Lead the players through the phases of the swing one at a time (relax - ready position - stride - swing) ensuring each player is using the proper sequence. Call each phase out one at a time. Demonstrate the different mechanics and swing path for different types of pitches. Complete 5-10 swings for each type of pitch.

Coaching Tips

- To make the proper stride, try telling your players to "walk away from the hands." The hands stay back while the front foot makes a small step forward. The stride should be a "soft stride" - with 80% of the weight on the back foot
- Outside pitch: keep the hips slightly closed, try to make contact deeper in the hitting zone, and hit the ball to the opposite field. Middle pitch: open the hips slightly, try to make contact in the middle of the plate, and hit the ball to center field. Inside pitch: open the hips even more, try to make contact out in front of the plate, and pull the ball on contact
- The back hip always goes to the target. Practice placing one hand on the back hip, taking the stride and pointing the finger (and hip) in the direction you would hit the ball
- Always stride to the same spot regardless of the pitch location
- Use visualization to help players picture how they will swing on different types of pitches
- Low pitch: take the same stride and keep the hips at the same level. Adjust the hands lower to make contact. High pitch: take the same stride and keep the hips at the same level. Adjust the hands higher to make contact
- Keep the hands inside the ball to create a shorter, more compact swing. Avoid looping or casting the bat around the plate.
- Be short to the ball and long after you hit it to generate more power. Extend the hands outward and make a long follow through after contact.



Stick Drill

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Setup

Cut a 3/4" dowel to the length of a long bat. The hitter will set up over the plate in his normal stance.

Execution

The goal is to take the hitter through a series of swings. Each time he swings, he should try to make the "whooshing" sound go in the direction he's trying to hit the ball.

To practice an outside pitch, he should try to make the "whoosh" go towards the opposite field. To hit an middle pitch, he should try to make the "whoosh" go to center field. To hit an inside pitch, he should try to make the "whoosh" go to left field (for a right handed hitter).

Take 5-10 swings for each type of pitch you are working on.

Coaching Tips

This is a great drill a hitter can perform at home since the whooshing sound provides instant feedback on the direction of the swing. The hitter can make adjustments to his swing path to generate the sound he is looking for



Bag Drill

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Setup

Take a large punching bag and position it at a height that approximates the strike zone for your hitter. Secure it against a fence or a pole with duct tape, velcro straps or rope. The hitter should set up in his normal stance facing the punching bag.

Execution

Hitter will go through his normal swing sequence (relax - ready position - stride - swing) and make contact by swinging the bat into the punching bag.

Practice hitting the middle pitch by setting up with the front foot lined up with the middle of the bag. Practice hitting the outside pitch by moving forward, so the bat makes contact with the bag at back part of the hitting zone. Work on the inside pitch by moving backwards slightly, making contact with the bag in the front of the hitting zone.

Also practice hitting high, middle, and low pitches by adjusting the hands to the pitch location. Take 5-10 swings for each type of pitch you are working on.

Coaching Tips

- On contact, the bottom hand should be palm down while the top hand is palm down.



Batting T Drill

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Setup

You'll need a bucket of balls, a home plate, a tee, and a net to hit into. The hitter will set up over the plate in his normal stance.

Execution

Take 5-10 swings with the ball in the middle of the plate, practicing hitting to center field. Take 5-10 swings with the ball on the outside of the plate, moving the tee further back in the hitting zone.

Take 5-10 swings with the ball on the inside of the plate, moving the tee forward in the hitting zone.

Coaching Tips

- Make sure the hitter separates the stride and swing. This will allow them to sit back on off-speed pitches without committing early.
- Tell the hitter to try and hit the "outside" of the ball to pull it. Hit the "inside" of the ball to go opposite field.
- Regardless of the pitch location, the stance should be square to the plate. Instead of opening or closing the stance, open or close the hips during the swing to adjust to the location of the pitch.
- Try "working the fingers" during the relaxation stage of the swing. This will keep the players grip loose and avoid strangling the bat and stiffening up.



Two Hand Ball Toss Drill

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Setup

The coach will be kneeling or sitting around 10-12 feet away from the hitter on a 45 degree angle with a bucket of balls. The coach will start with one ball in each hand. The hitter will be set up in his normal stance facing a net. For safety reasons, you may want to use whiffle balls for this drill. Even better, have the coach sit behind a screen for protection.

Execution

The goal of this drill to work on the sequence of the swing - separating the stride and the swing especially.

To begin each repetition, the coach will bring his left hand forward and his right hand back. This is the cue for the hitter to take his stride. Then, the coach reverses the position of his hands (bringing the left hand back and right hand forward) and soft tosses the ball to the hitter with his right hand. The batter will then swing and make contact into the net. Complete 25 reps.

Coaching Tips

- Start by bringing the right hand back very slowly and deliberately, waiting for the stride, then coming forward and releasing the ball. This will separate the stride and swing dramatically , into two separate motions
- As the hitter gets the hang of it, you can speed up the transition and make the entire swing sequence more fluid.



Pepper Drill

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Setup

With a group of 4 players, set up one hitter approximately 20 feet away from 3 fielders in ready position. One of the fielders has the ball, while the batter assumes his normal stance.

Execution

The fielders form a line facing the batter with around 5 feet of space between them. One end of the line is the "front" and the other end is the "back."

One of the fielders throws the ball to the batter, who attempts to hit grounders to the fielders standing in the line. When a fielder cleanly plays the ball, he throws it back to the batter, generally as quickly as possible, who tries to hit the ball again to the fielders. If the fielder makes an error fielding the ball, he must move to the back of the line. If the batter hits a foul ball (generally, hits it behind him) or strikes swinging at the ball, he is retired as batter, becomes a fielder, and moves to the end of the line. The fielder at the front of the line then becomes the batter.

If the batter hits a line drive or pop-up to the fielders, whoever catches the ball, regardless of their position in the line, becomes the new batter; the batter moves to the end of the line.

You can also play a "points" version of this game, where a swing and miss is 5 points, a foul ball 5 points, and a pop-up or "too-hard" ball is 5 points. Once the batter reaches 20 points, he rotates to the back of the fielding line.

You can play this game for about 10 minutes during practice, or use it as a pre-game warmup. Make sure all the players get a chance to hit.

Coaching Tips

- The goal of this drill is to help hitters improve their hand eye coordination and make better contact, while helping fielders work on their fielding fundamentals as well.
- With younger players, encourage them to choke up on the bat and make a short, compact swing, focusing on contact instead of power
- More experienced players can move towards making something close to a full swing
- Try to keep the groups to 4 or less with this drill to get the most amount of reps, but you can also play with 2 or 3 players
- For a variation, try having players bunt the ball instead of swinging



Target Hitting Drill

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Setup

You'll need a bucket of balls, a hitter, and a coach for this drill. If you have a pitching screen, the coach will stand behind the screen and feed soft toss pitches to him using real baseballs. If you don't have a screen, use soft training balls.

Set up four cones in a semi-circle approximately 15-20 feet from the hitter and 10-15 feet apart (depending on how much space you have available).

Execution

The coach will start by soft tossing pitches down the middle of the plate. The hitter will try to hit them through the middle gap in the cones (or center field).

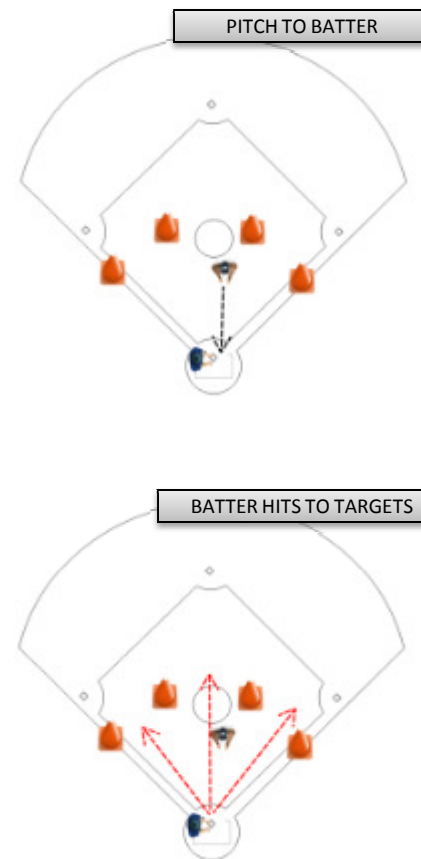
Next, the pitcher will throw to the outside of the plate. The hitter will allow the ball to get deep in the hitting zone and hit it through the gap in the cones on the right (for a right handed hitter).

Finally, the coach will throw to the inside of the plate. The hitter will make contact out in front and try to pull the ball through the gap in the cones on the left (for a right handed hitter).

Allow each player 20-30 total pitches and count the number of successful hits to the intended target.

Coaching Tips

- Once the hitter gets the concept, mix up the pitch locations and force them to react with the appropriate swing
- On middle pitches, batters should aim to hit the back half of the ball
- On outside pitches, batters should aim to hit the inside of the ball
- On inside pitches, batters should aim to hit the outside of the ball



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