

The Science of Hitting

THREE RULES TO HIT BY:

GET A GOOD BALL TO HIT. Lay off those bad, high or outside pitches. Know which pitches you can hit well.

PROPER THINKING. Make the pitcher pitch. Make him throw you several pitches. Know the ball and strike count. Learn the strike zone. Watch the pitcher. What does this pitcher usually throw? Fastballs? Guess what pitch is coming. Don't think you have to swing at the first pitch. Don't swing at a pitch you haven't seen. With two strikes, protect the plate!! Don't assume you'll get walked.

BE QUICK WITH THE BAT. Practice the **perfect** swing. Don't "Just Practice"

Systematic Approach to Hitting

1. Bat Selection - Lighter is better than heavy. 30" Length, 20 oz max for 5th & 6th Grade House is a good starting point.
2. Depth and Distance at the plate. Know how far the bat reaches. Hitting off the handle isn't much fun.
3. Stance and Balance. Balance is very, very important.
4. Grip. Bat should be held with the fingers, not in the palms.
5. Box and Bat Angle. Hands 3 to 8 inches away from the body. Shoulders and elbows level with the ground. (Box) Bat at less than a 45 angle.
6. Inward turn, The hips must rotate inward, rock backward.
7. Stride. 3 to 8 inches slightly towards the plate. Slow feet = fast hands
8. Swing.
 - a. Focus the eyes, watch the ball release from the pitchers hand.
 - b. Rotate the hips, "Squish the bug"
 - c. "Slap the hands down" Swing level, or slightly upward (T. Williams)
 - d. **Keep your head motionless.** Your chin touches your shoulders.
 - e. Follow Through. Power all the way. Hit through the ball.

Great Hitters Develop

Confidence

Concentration

Consistency

From Ted Williams "The Science of Hitting" And Dusty Baker "You Can Teach Hitting"

Other resources:

www.area728youthbaseball website. An outstanding reference location for coaches. Be sure to check out the e-teamz website for drills and coaching tips.

The ER High School Baseball Play book

Ted Williams “The Science of Hitting”

Dusty Baker “You Can Teach Hitting”

Joe McFarland “Coaching Pitchers”

Bob Cluck “Play Better Baseball”

Coaching Kids for Dummies (just so I don’t make dumb mistakes)

National Federation of High Schools “The High School Baseball Rules Book”

The 59 Minute Baseball Practice - Video by Marty Schupak * The best resource for practices.**

Some other books I’ve found, not as good as the ones I listed above, but still offer some valuable advice.

John P McCarthy Jr “Youth Baseball the Guide for Coaches and Parents”

John Stewart “The Baseball Clinic”

Jerry Kasoff “Baseball just for Kids”

It is important that you come to every practice with a written practice plan. It shows the players and parents that you are organized, smart and in control of the situation. Just as important that you arrive at games early, and with your batting order and fielding lineup prepared. You can always make last minute changes “on the fly” This will also help you when you get players coming up to you 5 minutes before game time and asking “Coach I want to play first base.. today”

Example practice plan attached. I modify this as the season goes on to increase the difficulty of the drills and add more competition. Most important! Make the drills and practice fun!

Be sure to get in “Station Work” as a part of your practice. This requires that you get your parents and any extra help you can find involved. For hitting, stations might include tee hitting, soft toss, live pitching. Fielding might include Outfield fly balls and return to infield, Outfield ground balls and relay, Infield grounders and throw to base. Infield pop flies, (I got it - you take it) Grounders to SS and flip or toss to second. The wide receiver drill (like in football)

I also change my practice plan to fit what works, and what the team needs to work on. Easy games like 500 are always popular, and I like to work in a scrimmage at every practice. Get your players to become great fielders, work hard at defense practice and stress the importance of it to the entire team.

Practice Plan No. 1
April 25, 2002 Weather - Cold
Parker 1
6:30 pm to 7:30
Missing _____ - Hockey Player

1. Warm up's 6:30 - 6:40 Eight Ball Drill (throwing) Two lines of players
2. Introductions 6:40 - 6:45 Ground balls (or fly balls)
3. 6:45 - 7:05 Pitching 4 Teams of players. 46 feet. Have kids catch. Pitch from stretch. Stress fundamentals of balance, Stride and delivery. Note the players with above average ability.
4. Around the bases 7:05 - 7:10 Four Teams & put on bases. Stress Backup, Break & Throw. Timed
5. End Practice Game 7:10 - 7:25
 (3) player "Teams" Team 1 bats while Team 2 takes infield, Team 3 takes outfield.
 Players Pitch from 46 feet, players get 2 swings then hits from tee. Player runs the bases on any hit. Using Signs, players steal.

	Batting	Infield	Outfield	
	Team No. 1	Team No. 2	Team No. 3	Team No. 4
1st	Tyler	Calvin	Joey	Dennis
2nd	Colin	Casey	Jacob	Dan
3rd	Josh	Nick	David	Peter
H	(Dennis)	(Dan)	(Peter)	Coach

End practice with team meeting. Thank players for participating.

This works even better if you take an actual game lineup and use your bench players as hitters! Even if they strike out, put them on a base for their effort, and let them practice baserunning.

Notes on "goofing off." Its important to explain to the team that you only have a few hours a week to practice and we need to make that time productive. We want the kids to have fun, so carefully set your limits. I always get their attention when I tell them that after a practice I go home and make out the lineup for the next game. I reward the players who respect the team and work hard at practice by putting them in the game where they want to play. (pitcher, first base) The players who are best at goofing off or not paying attention can help the team by making sure the bench stays clean and warm.

Practice Plan No. 2
June 7, 2001
Handke 1

1. Warm up's

2. Pitching.

2 or 3 lines of players 45 feet. Have a parent or coach catch. Stress fundamentals of balance, windup and delivery. Note the players with above average ability.

3. Hitting

Group 1 Explain overview of hitting and stress grip, stance/balance swing fundamentals

Group 2 Tee Hitting. Tennis balls from Tee 10 per player

Group 3 Rope Hitting.

Group 4 Coach Pitches from 45 feet. One player hitting, one player on deck. Give each player 5 cuts, then send to outfield

4. Fielding. Walk through positions. Practice force outs, ex. ss to second base, 2nd to first.

5. Baserunning

6. End Practice Game

(3) player "Teams" Team 1 bats while Team 2 takes infield, Team 3 takes outfield.

Coach Pitches from 45 feet, players get 2 swings then hits from tee. Player runs the bases on any hit.

End practice with team meeting. Thank players for participating.

Note: Rewarding players and team efforts. This is by far the most effective coaching tool you have. Be prepared to reward each and every player just for showing up. Don't let them leave a game or practice with out saying something positive to each individual. Phrases like "thanks for coming, you gave a great effort today" "You're getting better each time" "Good practice tonight" "You're really becoming a great baseball player, keep it up." Be sincere and be generous with your praise. When the team isn't playing well, I still thank them for their efforts, and I simply remind them that they are all great ballplayers and can play better next time.