

Section: Hitting, Baserunning

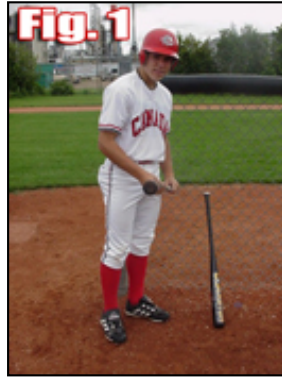
Hitting - Skill Outline

Bat Selection (Fig. 1)

Choosing a bat that feels comfortable is the key to developing a good, controlled swing. As a coach, you must ensure that all of your players choose a bat that they can handle.

Key Points

- The bat matches physical strength and ability.
- A bat that is too light is better than a bat that is too heavy.
- The bat handle feels comfortable in the players hands.
- Proper length.
- Proper weight.
- Proper handle thickness.
- Player handles the bat easily.



Method of Determining Proper Bat Size

Hold the bat out to the side (parallel to the ground) using one hand.

Grip (Fig. 2-4)

The grip is a key component in preparing to hit. A bat must be held with a firm but relaxed grip to ensure that hands and wrist are able to move freely, thus increasing the player's chance of developing a smooth, controlled swing.

Key Points

- Hold the bat at the base of the fingers.
- Have a firm but relaxed grip.
- Line up the middle knuckles of the top hand between the middle and last knuckles of the bottom hand.
- Choke up on the bat to increase bat control (choking up means that both hands are moved towards the big end of the bat).



Stance (Fig. 5-6)

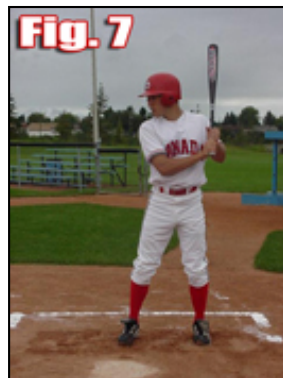
A proper stance enables the batter to hit pitches on both the outside and the inside half of the plate. An improper stance is usually a sign of fear in young players, so it is important that coaches are sensitive to the fear factor.



Key Points (Fig. 7)

- Young players should use a parallel or squared stance.
- Place both feet the same distance from the plate.
- Place feet slightly wider than shoulder width.
- Feet should be close enough to the plate to allow coverage of the whole plate.

**Fear and lack of confidence are reasons why players stand too far from the plate.



Ready Position (Fig. 7)

Pre-pitch preparation will improve the ability of the player to adjust to different pitches in different locations. The batter must be relaxed and balanced, which will enable good visual contact with the pitch and easy movement of

the hands and feet. Balance is the most important part of the ready position.

Key Points

- Place feet slightly wider than shoulder width.
- Weight equally balanced on both feet.
- Knees slightly bent and relaxed.
- Hips remain level and square to the plate with shoulders parallel to the ground.
- Hands even with the back shoulder and elbows relaxed.
- Angle of the bat is approximately 45°.
- Grip and legs relaxed.
- Hips and shoulders level.
- Eyes level.



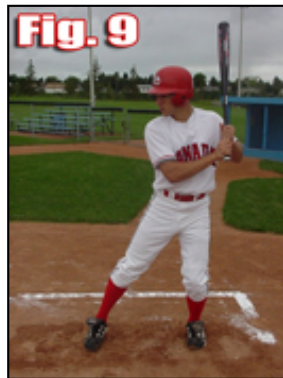
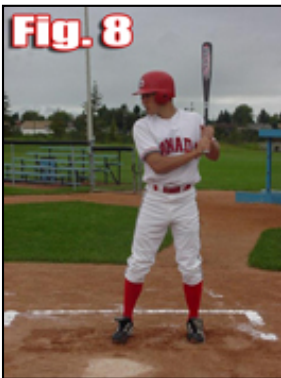
Swing (Fig. 8-16)

Before starting the swing, young players should be encouraged to be aggressive, selective and focused on the ball. Coaches must encourage players to swing the bat and not be afraid of missing the ball. Hitting is a skill of failure which is learned by swinging the bat.

**Initiate the swing phase by taking the hands back and up as the stride occurs (separate hands from stride).

Key Points

- Hands set and stride (separation).
- Stride towards pitcher.
- Short, quick swing.
- Front side strong (firm front leg).
- Eyes on ball.





Bunting (Fig. 17-19)

Bunting is a skill which can be perfected by all players. In addition to being an effective offensive weapon, bunting can help young batters overcome fear. In a sacrifice bunt situation, it is important that the batter bunts strikes, while taking balls that are out of the strike zone. This section discusses the pivot method of bunting.

Stance

- Place feet shoulder width apart.
- Move up in the box.
- Keep feet square to the plate.
- Pivot to a balanced position when the pitcher makes a positive movement towards the plate.
- Remain square to the pitcher.
- Keep your body comfortable with knees flexed.
- Keep arms relaxed and extended forward.
- Hold bat in front of the plate with the barrel angled slightly above the hands (bat at the top of the strike zone)

Grip

- Hold the bat with a relaxed, firm grip.
- Slide your top hand up the barrel.
- Hold the bat so that your thumb and index finger make a "V" shape, with the thumb on top and fingers underneath.
- Move the bat up and down the strike zone by bending and straightening the knees (catch the ball with the bat and avoid jabbing at the ball).



Avoiding the Inside Pitch

The largest factor in a young player's confidence when hitting is fear of being hit by a pitch. This is a genuine and realistic fear that can be reduced with some practice and teaching a repetition in practice will lead to more confidence when at bat.

It is important to teach player's how to avoid being hit by a pitch or protecting the body and reducing the chance of injury if in fact they are hit.

Key Points

- Take regular hitting stance
- Stride into the pitch as usual
- Recognize that a pitch is inside
- Tuck chin to chest and pivot on front foot toward backstop with back facing the pitcher
- Drop bat to avoid making contact with the ball
- If hit by the pitch, it will hit the large muscles of the legs or back and will provide the best protection of the head and face



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