

Hitting Tips

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1. Some expert's call hitting a baseball the most difficult thing to do in all of sports. (You have a round ball with a round bat and try to hit a 40-90-mile an hour fast ball squarely on the sweet spot of the bat. Tough task, huh?).
2. Great hitters look at hitting as a well-planned reaction, versus a well-planned out skill. (There are a number of outstanding-looking hitters in batting practices and off pitching machines, but there are just a select few that can hit at the Major League level).
3. Besides seeing the ball, some of the best hitters have exceptional hand eye coordination, superb timing, bat speed, balance, plate discipline, and confidence.
4. Ways to train a hitter:
 - 1) **Physical Aspect**- Get into condition by swinging the bat and spending active time in the weight room. I would also highly recommend swinging a wooden bat in practice. This will teach hitters how to find the sweet spot of the bat. Another good way to get stronger is by swinging a leaded bat 30 minutes a day. Exceptional hitters are strong from the forearms down.
 - 2) **Mechanical or technical aspects**- Students should think of hitting as one swing, but made up of little things all working together. This will make it easier for them to understand and improve their hitting skills.
 - 3) **The Mental Game**- Mental toughness and smartness is essential at the plate. Much of the game is played from the neck up. Great hitters are constantly thinking at the plate and making adjustments - their mental approach to hitting will change in different game situations. Remember to always stay aggressive at the plate!
5. The fear of getting hit by the baseball is definitely a part of one's success or failure as a hitter. Hitters have to accept the possibility of getting hit as part of the game, and need to be tough mentally to get over this fear factor.
6. Hitting is one of the most under-trained and over-coached skills in sports. Hitters do not hit enough, and many times are taught incorrect hitting methods. To be a great hitter, you need to swing the bat at least 100 times a day. This means tee work, side toss, short screen, machine, and lots of live batting practice.
7. Individuals who lack strength should concentrate on being a bat handler versus a power hitter. Some of the great hitters like Tony Gwynn and Wade Boggs seldom missed or struck out. Both Boggs and Gwynn used relatively light bats by major league standards. It is essential that players find a bat that fits their strength and size. It is critical that a hitter finds a bat that he can handle!
8. Bunting and mastering the short game will make you a better hitter. Bunting is placement-try to bunt the ball two feet from the foul line, and 20-25 ft from home plate. To surprise the defense, turn to bunt the ball at the pitcher's release.
9. Hitting the ball up the middle and keeping the front shoulder closed is the number one prerequisite that all young hitters must master. Once this is accomplished, pulling the ball can be taught. Pulling the baseball is an advanced technique at either the college or professional level.

10. Six basic hitting problems and ways to correct them:
 - 1) **Lunging or over striding:** The term lunging refers to when your hands leak forward with your stride. This results in loss of power and timing. The stride is a great timing mechanism, but individuals have to realize that they need to keep their hands back while they stride. Long stride equals a slow bat. For very young hitters (ages 7 and 8 years old) I would recommend the no stride hitting approach.
 - 2) **Wrapping the bat:** A long backswing will complicate a short hitting stroke. Have the feeling you are walking away from your hands in the power position. Having the body and its extremities feel like they are connected will help shorten up the hitting stroke and reduce wrapping.
 - 3) **Hitching or dropping the hands:** Lack of strength and awareness of body control many times cause this problem and cause hitters to swing underneath the ball. Hitters need to have the sensation of a slight downward arch or level plane to the ball.
 - 4) **Fear of the baseball:** This is a hard one to correct for individuals who are afraid of the baseball. Live batting practice from a shorter distance will improve a hitter's confidence as well as help him understand how to properly react to different pitches and locations and types of pitches.
 - 5) **Casting, barring out, or sweeping the bat:** As in the golf swing, individuals need to feel like they are swinging the handle or pulling the knob of the bat down versus sweeping the barrel through the zone. As pitching gets faster, individuals need to concentrate on starting the downswing with their lower half, keeping their hands in close. Try to think of swinging the bat fast with a proper grip versus tensing up and over-swinging with poor balance. Once this skill is understood, bat speed will be dramatically improved.
 - 6) **Rolling-** Is a term used by coaches when the hitter makes contact with the ball as their forearms start to cross. Poor weak ground balls are hit. Even good hitters can get fooled on off-speed pitches. Let the ball come to you and keep your hands back in the power position. Good hitters are constantly making adjustments at the plate.
11. Getting back to the basics in batting practice can reduce hitting slumps. During batting practice, shorten up your stroke, hit the ball back to the middle of the field or the opposite way, and try to watch the ball hit the bat at contact. The above information will aid hitters in reducing batting slumps.
12. If you want to simplify hitting, use the term "See the ball, hit the ball." Some of the best all-time hitters used their athletic ability, instincts, and experience to become some of the all-time great's of the game. In other words, over-emphasizing mechanics can sometimes be overrated to athletes who are blessed with outstanding tools.
13. Once players become efficient hitters, I think it's important that they develop their own "signature swing", one that fits their body type, strength, and athletic ability. I think we can all visualize former players such as Ted Williams, Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron, and Mark McGuire's swings. They all had very different swings, but all were outstanding hitters. As coaches, be careful not to clone all your hitters into one particular hitting style.
14. Good hitters will:
 - Know the strike zone. Do not swing at bad pitches.
 - Get a good pitch to hit; that is, a pitch that doesn't fool you. Especially with men on base, get a pitch that you can drive. Most likely, that will be a pitch up in the zone.
 - Set themselves for the fast ball and is able to watch and adjust for the spin of a breaking ball.
 - Be able to adjust at the plate to different pitches and game situations.
 - Keep their hands back and take a short stride.
 - Know the umpire and his strike zone.

Practice does not make perfect- Practicing the correct manner makes perfect!
The only way you will get better as a hitter is learning by doing!
Repetitions, Repetitions, Repetitions!