

TEACHING ADVANCED HITTERS

This is an effective sequence for more advanced players who have received some prior instruction on hitting. It provides more attention to detail with a focus on generating power. The main teaching tool will be the Swing Checklist, which should be provided to all players.

STEP 1. REVIEW THE BASIC MECHANICS.

EXPLAIN EMPHASIS WILL BE ON FINE TUNING THE SWING TO DEVELOP MORE CONTROL AND POWER.

ACTION All players assume the "Ready" position. Check for stability, strength and balance. Review each item on the Checklist on page 14.

STEP 2. SET - LAUNCH - SWING.

EXPLAIN THE KEY FEATURES OF THE "SET" POSITION. (CHECKLIST)

ACTION Players start in the "ready" position and on your command, "SET", they move to the "set" position, ready to launch a swing. Ensure all players have their weight and hands back. The stride should be a short "reach" with the front foot. Repeat several times.

EXPLAIN LAUNCH MECHANICS - FAST PIVOT AND STRAIGHTEN THE FRONT LEG TO ACCELERATE HIP TURN. (CHECKLIST)

ACTION Add the "launch" to the previous drill. i.e. start in the ready position, give the command, set.....launch, with a brief pause to check the position. Watch for a full pivot and the straight front leg.

EXPLAIN SWING TECHNIQUE - HANDS TAKE THE SHORTEST PATH TO THE BALL, HEAD STAYS DOWN AND STILL, EMPHASIZE COMPLETE FOLLOW-THROUGH.

ACTION Add the swing command to the sequence. Gradually reduce the pause time until the sequence is one smooth action. Players do 20 repetitions on their own time.

SEQUENCE 2.**STEP 3. SELF COACHING - FOCUS ON POWER.**

EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAYERS WORKING TOGETHER TO PERFECT THEIR OWN TECHNIQUE.

ACTION Pair the players up with a checklist and have them work together to help each other. One swings while the other watches for technique that could be improved. 15 to 25 swings each.

STEP 4. (OPTIONAL) 100 TECHNICAL SWINGS PROGRAM.

EXPLAIN THE REQUIREMENT FOR REGULAR PRACTICE AT HOME AWAY FROM THE BALL PARK. THIS IS A BALANCED PROGRAM WHICH COVERS ALL THE PRINCIPLE SKILLS REQUIRED TO PERFECT THE SWING. ENSURE ALL PLAYERS HAVE A COPY OF THE PROGRAM. (Page 30)

ACTION Demonstrate each set of swings in turn, then practice the technique described. This can be done in two sessions of 5 sets each for young players or straight through the 10 sets with an older group.

STEP 5. HITTING BALLS.

EXPLAIN EVERY TIME PLAYERS SWING THE BAT, THEY SHOULD BE WORKING ON SOMETHING SPECIFIC TO THEIR SKILL. THERE IS LITTLE VALUE IN SIMPLY FLAILING AWAY AT THE BALL. PICK SOMETHING THAT WILL HELP THEM IMPROVE AND WORK ON IT.

ACTION Set up a circuit of hitting stations and have the players work on something specific at each one. Two players at each station are the most efficient.

EXPLAIN REVIEW THE PROBLEMS OBSERVED WHILE PLAYERS WERE HITTING. ASK FOR QUESTIONS AND CLARIFY ANY DIFFICULT AREAS.

END OF SESSION

The illustrated check list on the next page is a quick reference on the key points of the basic swing.

HITTING CHECKLIST

1. ***Establish a comfortable stance.*** For shorter stride and better balance, start with the feet spread several inches wider than the shoulders.
2. ***Keep the hands up.*** They should be placed comfortably near the back shoulder, for a downward path to the ball. The back is straight and the weight forward, on the front part of the foot.
3. ***Hips level, front shoulder down.*** Keeping the head down and in prevents the batter from pulling off the ball.
4. ***Batter "sets" with weight shift back.*** Weight shifts to back leg with slight counter rotation of upper body.
5. ***Stride is short and soft.*** Stride is towards pitcher's belt buckle. Stride toe points in. Eyes remain level.
6. ***Hands and weight stay back.*** In coil position until the swing starts.
7. ***Spin from the ground up.*** The knees and hips pivot first, followed in rapid succession by shoulders, arms, hands and finally the wrists. Eyes, hips and shoulders must stay level.
8. ***Front leg straightens and back foot pivots as bat approaches contact.*** Use both legs to spin. This accelerates the pivot for maximum power.
9. ***Track the ball right to the bat.*** Head must remain still and eyes steady.
10. ***Full arm extension at contact.*** Wrists snap to produce maximum bat speed. Like throwing the bat at the ball.
11. ***Follow through.*** Allow the bat, hands and arms to complete the arc to a point well behind the body.

COACHING CHECK POINTS

Use these six basic check points to verify the application of sound hitting mechanics. They will help you determine if players are executing the swing with maximum power.

Players should also use these check points to monitor their own swing from time to time. These checks apply *at the point of contact*.

FRONT FOOT	Should be pointing in, towards the ball or opposite base line.
FRONT LEG	Must be braced, firm and straight.
FRONT ARM	Must be straight and fully extended at point of contact.
HEAD POSITION	Must be aligned with the back hip and knee.
BACK KNEE	Should be bent to form a slight "L" shape. Batters hit off the "L".
BACK FOOT	Heel raised, toe pointing forward, pushing forward.

USEFUL VIDEOS

Most of the following video tapes are available at the local library or through a softball or baseball office. They have been selected for their proven teaching effectiveness, and are listed in order of the author's preference, but all are useful.

VIDEO TAPES

- A) HITTING BASICS; BRAGG STOCTON.
- B) THE FUNDAMENTALS OF HITTING; JIM LEFEBVRE.
- C) THE ART OF HITTING 300; CHARLIE LAU.
- D) GARVEY'S SYSTEM OF HITTING; STEVE GARVEY.
- E) CYBERVISION WITH ROD CAREW.
- F) DEVELOPING THE HITTER - JIM LEFEBVRE **

** The last tape listed, "Developing the Hitter", is for more skilled players who already have an effective basic swing, and are looking for more advanced ideas and instruction.

For more detailed information on teaching hitters, see, "GOLD MEDAL HITTING – PART 1 & 2.

DAVE PEARCE
GOLD MEDAL SOFTBALL

HITTING PROGRAM - 100 TECHNICAL SWINGS

<u>SET</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	
1. STRIDE	Moderate speed, work on stride. Consistent, short, soft step.	10 swings
2. HIP PIVOT	Moderate speed, work on strong hip rotation. Belly-button the ball. Spin back foot, lift heel.	10 swings
3. FRONT SIDE	Moderate speed, front leg snaps straight as hips spin.	10 swings
4. QUICK HANDS	Moderate speed, hands move straight to the ball.	10 swings
5. STILL HEAD	Moderate speed, keep head still. Bring chin downward with swing.	10 swings
6. OUTSIDE-IN	Fast speed. Throw bat head out in front. Image an inside pitch.	10 swings
7. INSIDE-OUT	Fast speed. Lead with the hands; go to the opposite field; Image an outside pitch.	10 swings
8. BODY REHEARSAL	5 swings at 3/4 speed and 5 swings, slow motion, eyes closed throughout. Focus on power points and leverage.	10 swings
9. COORDINATION	Full speed. Swing light bat or hold big end of normal bat. Focus on smoothness, rhythm, timing. Let the coordination happen.	10 swings
10. STRENGTH	Maximum speed. Snap-backs using concentric/eccentric movement. Two directional swings.	10 swings

NOTES

1. Use this program daily to maintain swing mechanics.
2. On all swings, focus on technique, form and smoothness.
3. Practice proper breathing on every swing.
4. Practice mental skills with each set of swings.
 - i.e. a) Center before each set of swings,
 - b) Image (see the ball) on each swing,
 - c) Focus, concentrate only on the ball.
 - d) Relax - especially your arms and shoulders.