

**MENTAL IMAGERY - HITTING****INTRODUCTION**

These scripts are designed to provide imaging practice of a perfect swing, resulting in successful hitting. There are four sessions, progressing from the basic swing, to hitting random breaking pitches. Coaches, review the entire four sessions before planning your implementation strategy.

Squirt players should focus on sessions 1 and 2, while Pee Wee and Bantams can progress to the final two sessions.

Sessions require about 15 to 20 minutes each and can be completed on the field during any practice. Some players find the sessions most helpful when performed just prior to an actual batting practice.

**SESSION 1**

- A) RELAXATION
- B) IMAGERY - SWING MECHANICS
- C) IMAGERY - SLOW MOTION SWINGS

**SESSION 2**

- A) RELAXATION
- B) IMAGERY - SWING MECHANICS
- C) IMAGERY - HITTING HIGH PITCHES
- D) IMAGERY - HITTING LOW PITCHES

**SESSION 3**

- A) RELAXATION
- B) IMAGERY - SWING MECHANICS
- C) IMAGERY - HITTING RANDOM PITCHES

**SESSION 4**

- A) RELAXATION
- B) IMAGERY - HITTING UP BREAKING PITCHES
- C) IMAGERY - HITTING DOWN BREAKING PITCHES
- D) IMAGERY - HITTING RANDOM BREAKING PITCHES

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

**NOTE: All sessions start with a period of relaxation, which is important for creating clear images.**

1. Review each session before starting, by reading through the entire script to get a feel for the flow and sequencing of the information.
2. If possible, make a tape recording, by reading the script slowly and clearly.
3. If you can not make a tape, plan for someone to read the script as the player's image. After a few repetitions they will have memorized the script and will probably be able to guide themselves through the session.

**NOTE** A string of dots.....in the script, indicates a brief pause in the dialogue.

4. All sessions should start with a brief period of relaxation. For help with this skill, review Part 2 Unit 10 of this series.
5. At the end of the session, it would be helpful to record the results on the "Imagery Assessment Form", page 39.

**MENTAL IMAGERY - HITTING****SESSION 1**

PLAYERS AND COACHES: Read the following script before you start imaging, or if you are doing the imaging, have someone read it to you as you image. Alternately you might prefer to record the imagery script on audio tape and play it back to yourself as you visualize.

To start with, try to practice in the same spot and at the same time each session. This will help reinforce the learning.

**A) RELAXATION**

Use any relaxation technique you prefer, just ensure you are completely relaxed before you start to image. If you have difficulty relaxing at will, refer to Unit 10 in Part 2, to learn this skill.

**B) IMAGERY - SWING MECHANICS****SCRIPT**

"Visualize yourself in the batter's box, with your favourite bat in hand. Get comfortable.... relax as you see yourself move to the "ready" position.

Check these main points:

Your body is relaxed, the bat is held firmly in the fingers with the bottom hand at about the top of the strike zone...

The hands are in the area of the back shoulder, with the arms extended about 6 to 10 inches from the body. The arms and shoulders form a square....

The bat is sloped back about 45 degrees from straight up.....Your head and eyes are level, facing the pitcher as you await the pitch.....

Now, consciously relax the shoulders, chest, arms and legs.....ensure they are completely relaxed...

(10 SECOND PAUSE)

**SESSION 1 cont'd.**

Now execute the proper swing mechanics at normal speed without a ball; just the swing.

The action starts with the weight shifting to the back leg, followed by a short, controlled gliding step or reach, directly at the ball. The inside part of the stride foot lands lightly on the ground and rolls over....At the same time, the hands are loading up, by moving slightly back and up for maximum power....

Once the foot is planted, feel the hips rotate forward with a hard drive off the back foot....All this time your head has remained steady, centered over your base of support.....

The front shoulder is down and in, still pointing at the pitcher. Now the front elbow moves forward to start the swing. The hands go straight to the ball, as you pull the bat hard with your front arm. Your back arm is guiding the direction of the swing.....

As the bat approaches the contact point, the arms extend and the front leg braces and straightens to accelerate the hip rotation.....

The bat is now at the contact point, moving at maximum velocity as the wrists snap for that last ounce of speed and power.....

You allow the bat to continue through an arch, around behind you in a smooth, complete follow-through.....

Now execute five more swings at full speed focusing on these points.

- A) A RELAXED, BALANCED READY POSITION.
- B) WEIGHT SHIFT BACK, FOLLOWED BY WITH A SHORT CONTROLLED STRIDE STRAIGHT AT THE BALL.
- C) A HARD DRIVE OFF THE BACK FOOT AGAINST A PLANTED FRONT LEG.
- D) A FULL HIP PIVOT LEADING THE BAT THROUGH THE SWING.
- E) THE HANDS MOVING STRAIGHT TO THE BALL WHERE ARMS EXTEND. -240
- F) A FIRM WRIST SNAP JUST PRIOR TO CONTACT, WITH A FULL FOLLOW-THROUGH TO COMPLETE THE SWING.

**SESSION 1 cont'd.****C) IMAGERY - SLOW MOTION SWINGS**

Now execute the same perfect swing, but in slow motion. Do five repetitions, concentrating on the power points of the swing.....

- A) FEEL THE POWER FROM THE LOWER BODY ROTATION, AS THE HIPS PIVOT AGAINST THE PLANTED FRONT LEG....
- B) FEEL THE POWER FROM THE SHOULDERS AND ARMS AS THE HANDS MOVE DIRECTLY TO THE BALL.....
- C) FEEL THE ROTATIONAL POWER IN THE UPPER BODY AS THE ARMS EXTEND AND THE BAT REACHES THE CONTACT POINT.
- D) FEEL THE POWER GENERATED BY THE HARD WRIST SNAP...

(60 SECOND PAUSE)

To end this session, count backward slowly from 5 to 1 with me. 5... enjoy the feeling of relaxation, you are completely calm and focused.... 4....feel the energy from the successful images, you know you can succeed any time you want to, you just have to see it happen in your head.... 3....You feel positive about your swing....You know you can be the best, you can hit anything any pitcher can throw.... 2... you feel great, you feel energized....you have championship potential, and... 1.... You are now alert, positive, energized and ready to go!

END OF SESSION 1.

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**SESSION 2**

PLAYERS AND COACHES: Read the following script before you start imaging, or if you are doing the imaging, have someone read it to you as you image. Alternately you might prefer to record the imagery script on audio tape and play it back to yourself as you visualize.

**A) RELAXATION**

Get yourself completely relaxed, the same way you did in Session 1. Use any relaxation technique you prefer, just ensure you are completely relaxed before you start to image.

**B) IMAGERY - SWING MECHANICS****SCRIPT**

Use the same script as in Session 1. Omit the slow motion swings.

**C) HITTING HIGH PITCHES**

Now, see the pitcher on the mound. You are looking for high pitches, first on the inside corner, then outside.

Here's the first pitch, high and inside. Execute the swing and make solid contact with the ball....

Hit the ball out in front of the plate to your strong field.....Feel the outside-in swing....Your body position is straight, the swing is slightly downward on the pitch.....

Execute five swings hitting high inside pitches.....

(30 SECONDS PAUSE)

**SESSION 2 cont'd.**

The next sequence of pitches will be high and outside. Contact these pitches farther back over the plate and hit them to the opposite field..... Again, you must stay up straight and swing down on the high pitch....

Hit five pitches on the high outside corner. All swings are successful, hitting every pitch hard to the opposite field.....

**D) HITTING LOW PITCHES**

Now, see the pitcher on the mound. You are looking for low pitches, first on the inside corner.

You hit the ball out in front of the plate to your strong field.....Feel the outside-in swing....Feel the back knee bending to get down on the low pitch....

Here's the first pitch, low and inside. Execute the swing and make solid contact with the ball....

Execute five swings hitting low inside pitches.....

(30 SECONDS PAUSE)

The next sequence of pitches will be low and outside. Contact these pitches farther back in the strike zone and hit them to the opposite field..... Again, bend the back knee enough to hit the low pitch....

See yourself hitting five pitches on the low outside corner. All swings are successful, hitting every pitch hard to the opposite field.....

(60 SECOND PAUSE)

To end this session, count backward slowly from 5 to 1 with me. 5... enjoy the feeling of relaxation, you are completely calm and focused.... 4....feel the energy from the successful images, you know you can succeed any time you want to, you just have to see it happen in your head.... 3....You feel positive about your swing....You know you can be the best, you can hit anything any pitcher can throw.... 2... you feel great, you feel energized....you have championship potential, and... 1.... You are now alert, positive, energized and ready to go!

END OF SESSION 2

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**MENTAL IMAGERY - HITTING****SESSION 3**

**PLAYERS AND COACHES:** Read the following script before you start imaging, or if you are doing the imaging, have someone read it to you as you image. Alternately you might prefer to record the imagery script on audio tape and play it back to yourself as you visualize.

**A) RELAXATION**

Get yourself completely relaxed, the same way you did in Session 2. Use any relaxation technique you prefer, just ensure you are completely relaxed before you start to image.

**B) IMAGERY - SWING MECHANICS****SCRIPT**

Use the same script as in Session 1. Omit the slow motion pitches.

**C) HITTING RANDOM PITCHES**

Now, you will hit an assortment of low and high pitches on the inside and outside corners at random.

On the low pitches, remember to bend your back knee to get down on the pitch.

When the pitch is high, stay up straight and swing down to the ball.

If the pitch is inside, use an outside-in swing and hit the ball to the strong field. On outside pitches the swing will be inside-out, directing the ball to the opposite field. Here come the pitches:

**SESSION 3 cont'd.**

1.     **High and Inside**     Stay up, bat out in front, swing outside-in. Hit to the strong field. See the ball explode off the bat!
2.     **Low and Outside**     Bend the back knee, accelerate the hips, swing inside-out and go to the opposite field. Contact The ball in its center and see the line drive.
3.     **Low and Inside**     Get down on the ball, bat out in front, swing outside-in. It's a hard ground ball through the infield.
4.     **High and Outside**     Stay tall, fast hip rotation, inside-out swing, hands in front, drive the ball to the off field. See it find the gap for extra bases.

Continue hitting random pitches. See yourself in a typical at bat, and visualize the sequence of pitches that pitcher might throw. Feel the sensation of each swing, and hit each ball where it is pitched.

(60 SECOND PAUSE FOR RANDOM HITTING)

To end this session, count backward slowly from 5 to 1 with me. 5... enjoy the feeling of relaxation, you are completely calm and focused.... 4....feel the energy from the successful images, you know you can succeed any time you want to, you just have to see it happen in your head.... 3....You feel positive about your swing....You know you can be the best, you can hit anything any pitcher can throw.... 2... you feel great, you feel energized....you have championship potential, and... 1.... You are now alert, positive, energized and ready to go!

END OF SESSION 3

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**MENTAL IMAGERY - HITTING****SESSION 4**

PLAYERS AND COACHES: Read the following script before you start imaging, or if you are doing the imaging, have someone read it to you as you image. Alternately you might prefer to record the imagery script on audio tape and play it back to yourself as you visualize.

**A) RELAXATION**

Get yourself completely relaxed, the same way you did in Session 3. Use any relaxation technique you prefer, just ensure you are completely relaxed before you start to image.

**B) HITTING UP-BREAKING PITCHES****SCRIPT**

"Visualize yourself about to step into the batter's box, with your favourite bat in hand. Feel the situation. You are ready, relaxed but energized. You have all the skills to hit this pitcher and are completely confident you will.

You know from watching this pitcher that every pitch will be a breaking pitch. All you have to do is pick up the pitch, confirm the rotation, see it in the strike zone and execute the perfect swing to hit it.

First you must get completely relaxed and focused..... You center....control your breathing....clear your mind....focus all attention on the task at hand....You are now totally relaxed and ready.

Now, complete your pre-hit routine.....do whatever you like to do to get comfortable.....Take the signal from the coach.....hit away....

You step into the batters box and get comfortable.... Take a few practice swings and assume the ready position.....Feel the position, sense your weight distribution.....balance.....feel relaxed as you await the pitch.

**SESSION 4 cont'd.****UP-BREAKING PITCHES**

Everything has been turned over to your eyes....Your body is on automatic pilot....you concentrate completely on seeing the ball....Soft center on the pitcher....

Notice the position of the center fielder, the shortstop and second baseman....Feel how relaxed you are....you have a broad focus..... Now you see the pitcher in the pitching position..... Things seem to be moving in slow motion now.

As the pitcher initiates the pitching action, you switch to a narrow focus....shift your eyes to the release position to pick up the ball.....Here comes the pitch....

The ball looks as large as a pumpkin...You see it in sharp focus and detail.....The rotation is clearly upward.....it will rise as it nears the plate.....The ball will be right where you like it.... over the inside half of the plate.... this is the one to hit.

You respond automatically, almost before you know what's happening.....You shift, stride, pivot, brace and throw your hands to the ball.....Your front arm extends and you feel the wrist snap. Crack!!!....You meet the ball square and drive it hard, straight up the center.

See yourself hitting 10 more of the same pitch, but on the inside and outside edges. On every pitch, feel the sensations of your hitting routine, center., get set.. let the eyes take over., soft focus., hard focus., see the pitch in detail, track it to the bat, execute the perfect swing and make solid contact.

(20 SECONDS PAUSE TO HIT PITCHES)

**SESSION 4 cont'd.****C) HIT DOWN BREAKING PITCHES**

Now you will hit some down breaking pitches.

Visualize yourself about to step into the batter's box, with your favourite bat in hand. Feel the situation. You are ready, relaxed but energized. You have all the skills to hit this pitcher and are completely confident you will.

You have faced this pitcher before and expect low pitches that break downward. All you have to do is pick up the pitch, confirm the rotation, see it in the strike zone and execute the perfect swing to hit it.

First you must get completely relaxed and focused..... You center....control your breathing....clear your mind....focus all attention on the task at hand....You are now totally relaxed and ready.

Now, complete your pre-hit routine.....do whatever you like to do to get comfortable.....Take the signal from the coach.....hit away....

You step into the batters box and get comfortable.... Take a few practice swings and assume the ready position.....Feel the position, sense your weight distribution.....balance.....feel relaxed as you await the pitch.

Everything has been turned over to your eyes....Your body is on automatic pilot....you concentrate completely on seeing the ball....Soft center on the pitcher.....

Notice the center field stands, the position of the center fielder, the shortstop and second baseman.... Feel how relaxed you are....you have a broad focus..... Now you see the pitcher in the pitching position..... Things seem to be moving in slow motion now.

As the pitcher initiates the pitching action, you switch to a narrow focus....shift your eyes to the release position to pick up the ball.....Here comes the pitch....

See the ball large and clear...You see it in sharp focus and detail.....The rotation is clearly downward.....it will drop as it approaches, but it's right where you like it.... over the inside half of the plate.... this is the one to hit.

**SESSION 4 cont'd.****DOWN-BREAKING PITCHES**

You respond automatically, almost before you know what's happening.....You shift, stride, pivot, brace, and throw your hands to the ball.....Your front arm extends and you feel the wrists snap. Crack!!!.....You meet the ball square and drive it hard, it's in the gap.

Now, hit 10 more of the same pitch, but on the inside and outside edges. On every pitch, feel your hitting routine, center..., get set.. let the eyes take over..., soft focus..., hard focus..., see the pitch in detail, track it to the bat, execute the perfect swing and make solid contact.....

(20 SECONDS PAUSE TO HIT PITCHES)

**D) HITTING RANDOM PITCHES**

Finish this session by hitting at least ten more random pitches to all parts of the strike zone. Alternate up-breaking with down-breaking pitches, both inside and outside. Hit every pitch hard.

In each case, concentrate on seeing the ball clearly, picking up and reading the pitch, then executing a perfect swing. See the successful hit.

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(60 SECOND PAUSE FOR RANDOM HITTING)

To end this session, count backward slowly from 5 to 1 with me. 5... enjoy the feeling of relaxation, you are completely calm and focused.... 4....feel the energy from the successful images, you know you can succeed any time you want to, you just have to see it happen in your head.... 3....You feel positive about your swing....You know you can be the best, you can hit anything any pitcher can throw.... 2... you feel great, you feel energized....you have championship potential, and... 1.... You are now alert, positive, energized and ready to go!

END OF SESSION 4

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**USEFUL VIDEO**

This video is an excellent introduction to the skill and power of imagery. The presenter is Cal Botterill, one of Canada's leading sport psychologists, based on his experience with the Olympic hockey team and other athletes.

"WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET"  
COACHING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA,  
1600 JAMES NAISMITH DRIVE,  
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