

Baseball  
**HITTING DRILLS**

For a  
**Batting Tee**

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An instructional video  
for each drill!

**Doug Bernier**  
Former  
Major League  
Baseball player &  
Founder of PBI





# Baseball Hitting Drills for a Batting Tee

**Practice Drills for Baseball, Book 1**

**By Doug Bernier**

*Baseball Hitting Drills for a Batting Tee: Practice Drills for Baseball, Book 1*

*4<sup>th</sup> Edition*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT FREE VIDEOS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>FOREWARD</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>PART 1 - INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>9</b>
WHY ARE BATTING TEE DRILLS IMPORTANT?	9
TIPS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HITTING DRILL PRACTICE	12
SKILL LEVEL / AGE GUIDELINES	14
EQUIPMENT USED IN THIS BOOK:	14
<b>PART 2 - YOUR PERSONAL DRILL HELPER</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PART 3 – DRILLS</b>	<b>16</b>
1 - REGULAR TEE DRILL	16
2 - TOP HAND, SHORT BAT DRILL	19
3 - BOTTOM-HAND, SHORT BAT DRILL	22
4 - HIGH TEE DRILL	24
5 - NET TEE DRILL	26
6 -STEP THROUGH DRILL	29
7 - WEIGHTED BASEBALL OR SOFTBALL DRILL	31
8 – TWO BALL, TWO TEE DRILL	33
9 – 45 DEGREE ANGLE DRILL	35
10 – SEPARATION DRILL	37
11 - INSIDE TEE DRILL	40
12 - LOW TEE DRILL	43
13 - INSIDE AND OUTSIDE TEE DRILL	45
14 - INVERTED TOP HAND DRILL	47
15 - KICK BACK DRILL	49
16 - ALTERNATING FUNGO AND HEAVY BAT DRILL	50
17 - ONE KNEE DRILL	53
18 - STEP BACK DRILL	55
19 - No ROTATION DRILL	57
20 - SOCCER BALL DRILL	60
<b>PART 4 – FINAL THOUGHTS</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR: DOUG BERNIER</b>	<b>63</b>

<b>APPENDIX A – BASEBALL TERMS</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2 – ANATOMY OF A BASEBALL BAT</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>LEGAL NOTICE</b>	<b>69</b>

### **DEDICATION:**

This book is dedicated to every person who respects the game of baseball and plays hard.

## ***IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT FREE VIDEOS***

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By purchasing this book, you are now qualified to receive free access to the videos that were created to accompany it – one short video for each drill in the book.... PLUS some surprise bonuses!

We know that video can be very helpful when communicating how to perform a physical action. In these free videos, author and former Major League baseball player Doug Bernier demonstrates the proper mechanics for each drill, and briefly describes benefits, correct form, and common mistakes to avoid.

➤ The code to unlock your free videos is: **BattingTeeDrills**

➤ Where to enter the code: <http://probaseballinsider.com/freevideo1>

There is no cost beyond the initial purchase price of the book. In order to receive these videos, simply sign up at <http://probaseballinsider.com/freevideo1> to receive email updates and include this code **BattingTeeDrills**. Once you subscribe, you will receive instant access to all 20 videos – one for each drill in this book.

# FOREWARD

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*Forward by Albie Pearson, former MLB Rookie-of-the-Year & MLB ALL-Star*

As I watch the game of baseball evolve, I see the speed of the game and the proficiency of the players growing exponentially. To make it to the highest levels of baseball, players have to be more prepared and work harder than ever before in history.

Baseball drills, especially drills off a tee, are a critical part of self-improvement for baseball players. It takes time and many thousands of swings to craft an effective baseball swing, and to make that swing so second-nature that your body will react with good mechanics when you face live pitching and split-second timing in a game.

In my experience, the difference between those who make it in baseball and those who don't is consistency... repeating your swing with drills is an important part of being consistent. Working on a tee is essential to understanding the nuances of your swing so that you can remain consistent, even when you are having an off day at the plate.

This book contains great drills that will help you develop your swing into a tool that can take you to the next level in baseball. Doug has been privileged to play professional baseball with and learn from some of the best hitters in the Major Leagues. He is also a smart player who understands the game of baseball and can break it down in ways that are easy to understand and duplicate. I highly recommend this book of drills as a tool to help yourself, your team, or your child develop into a highly effective hitter.

– **Albie Pearson**, 1958 American League Rookie of the Year, 1963 American League All-star, Former Scout New York Yankees. Currently, Albie and his wife are full-time ministers who, among other projects, founded the Father's Heart Ranch for abused, neglected and abandoned 6 – 12 year old boys in Desert Hot Springs, California.

# PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

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## WHY ARE BATTING TEE DRILLS IMPORTANT?

**Reason #1 - It is one of the few ways – maybe even the only way – to deliberately change a baseball swing.**

In my 30 years of playing baseball, I have had many different coaches who have tried to teach me something new - and this is what I've learned: A game situation is NOT the time to try to get your body to do something different than what it's been trained to do.

It simply won't work.

Here's what really happens... When a high-velocity pitch comes your way, reflexes take over.

That means your body will revert to its comfort zone... it will do what you've trained it to do and NOT whatever your conscious mind wishes it would.

Translated, that means if you go up to the plate thinking “fire your hips first” or “keep your elbow closed,” you're in trouble.

Not only is that type of mechanical thinking at the plate useless, but it's also likely your at-bat will go far worse than if you faced the pitcher thinking nothing at all!

While mental approach at the plate is another issue entirely, my point here is that there is only one way to make deliberately make mechanical changes to a baseball swing... and it's not during a game.

I have 2 words for you... quality repetition.

Since what happens at the plate is 99% physical reaction, baseball players use quality repetition to train the body so that the natural reaction is the correct one.

In order to do that, we must practice the proper mechanics over and over again until it becomes our body's natural habit. I like to call that “grooving your swing” (others might call it “muscle memory”). When you can repeat your “A” baseball swing in the games as well as practice, you have successfully grooved your swing.

It is for this reason that quality repetition is a baseball player's best friend, and it is for this reason



that baseball drills (even a the simple, Regular Tee Drill) are still used EVERY DAY by hitting legends such as Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez, Albert Pujols, and many more.

## **Reason #2 - One thing at a time**

There is another reason that practicing with a batting tee is very important. Even in a controlled environment – such as using a batting tee at 50% speed – you can't focus on changing 10 things at one time.

This is the most important reason to use a tee. Using a batting tee allows you to isolate the aspect of your swing that you want to work on.

Each drill is designed to train your body to something very specific. It takes time and many repetitions to work on one aspect of your swing until it becomes natural, and then you can build on that by moving to the next aspect of your swing that needs work.

With live pitching, or even flips, you have little control over the location, the velocity, the timing, and many other factors. Using a tee removes those distractions so you can focus on the one thing you are working on at that moment.

You can work on hitting a pitch in a specific location (you can also take a large number of swings in a relatively short amount of time). A tee allows you to swing at 20% or 100% effort level.

You are in total control, which is important for working on weaknesses that make hitting a live pitcher difficult.

## **Reason #3 - Developing a “feel”**

Have you ever heard the phrase “paralysis by analysis”? This is one of the most common problems when someone tries to adjust their swing. I know because I've been there many times. This is where you have filled your head with so many mechanical thoughts that you begin to approach each plate appearance mechanically locked up.

Another aspect of “paralysis by analysis” is when you have head knowledge but no “feel”. Sometimes the only way to learn what proper mechanics feels like is to see the results and then you'll know you are doing it the right way.

When I was young I taped a square on the garage door of my house and I threw baseballs and tennis balls into that square. I learned to throw accurately by having a feel of what it felt like to throw the ball in that square. I was never taught anything other than basic mechanics for throwing, but because I could throw the ball accurately the mechanics took care of themselves.

I try to apply this same idea to hitting. Hitting can get over analyzed and too mechanical. Many hitters, including myself, have fallen into the trap of “paralysis by analysis.” A solid understanding of which drills can help your swing will make you a better hitter while skipping the paralysis.

Hitting drills allow you to isolate an aspect of your swing and then when you hit a line drive to the back of the cage, you know you accomplished what you were trying to do – and you know what it

feels like to do it the right way. Then you do it over and over until your body does it naturally. That is the unique thing about a drill... it slows the game down, removing all the extraneous factors and allowing you to isolate exactly what you need to work on.

When you can FEEL what you need to do and see instant feedback (by if you hit a line drive or not), it translates into solid mechanics that will show up at each plate appearance.

#### **Reason #4 - It allows you to practice on your own time, without a partner or coach**

You're welcome, Mom & Dad.

Now when Johnny wants to take a couple hundred more swings, your arm doesn't have to fall off from the exhaustion of throwing a couple hundred more times!

Of course, it's great for a coach to watch and critique as you hit off the tee, or to have someone reload the tee for you as you swing, but there's a lot of freedom in being able to also go to a cage (or use a sock net) and practice on your own. It's a beautiful thing.

Since baseball is a game of repetition, having the freedom to practice on your own time – without being dependent on friends, parents, instructors, etc. - will help you achieve your perfect swing through hard work and quality repetition.

#### **Reason #5 – A tee is one of the easiest to use and least expensive pieces of sports equipment out there**

A good batting tee will run you between \$80 and \$120, and should last for several years (I have some that are more than 10 years old and still in great shape). Considering you may spend that much on cleats alone every year, or three times that on a decent metal bat, a batting tee is giving you a lot of bang for your buck.

Since most batting tees are portable, it's easy to bring with you to the baseball field, batting cage, or backyard net, you will have more opportunities to practice and perfect your game.

# TIPS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HITTING DRILL PRACTICE

## Tip #1 – The ideal contact zone and tee placement.

According to *The Mike Schmidt Study*, you should make contact somewhere between “the toe of your striding foot and the center line<sup>7</sup> of your body” (Schmidt & Ellis, 1994, p. 76). In my 16 years of experience playing professional baseball, including conversations with many other professional players and coaches, I have found this to be true.

If you start getting outside of this zone you will lose power, have less time to see the baseball, or end up hitting foul balls or getting jammed<sup>14</sup>.

So what does this mean for batting drills? You should place your batting tee somewhere in this zone for all your drills. The tee will be closer to the center line of your body<sup>7</sup> when hitting an outside pitch, and closer to your front toe on an inside pitch.



Figure 1

## Tip #2 – Put a weight on your tee.

I prefer to use a batting tee with a weighted base, in which case the extra weight is not needed (see figure 1). However, if your tee does not already have a weighted base, use a 5 or 10 pound barbell weight to slide over the shaft of the tee (figure 2). This weight will help keep the tee in place and will keep it from falling over every swing.

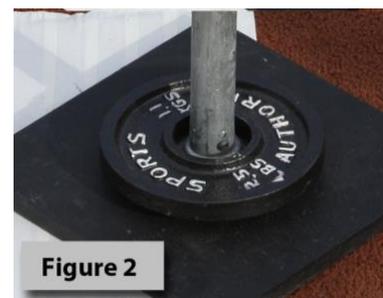


Figure 2

## Tip #3 – If possible, always do hitting drills in a batting cage or baseball field.

I like to do drills in a batting tunnel or cage that is at least 40 feet long.

When hitting into a net it can feel like every ball is hit well. In reality, if you can't see where you hit the ball, you don't really know if you are hitting properly. On a field or in a cage, you get to really see how the ball comes off the bat.

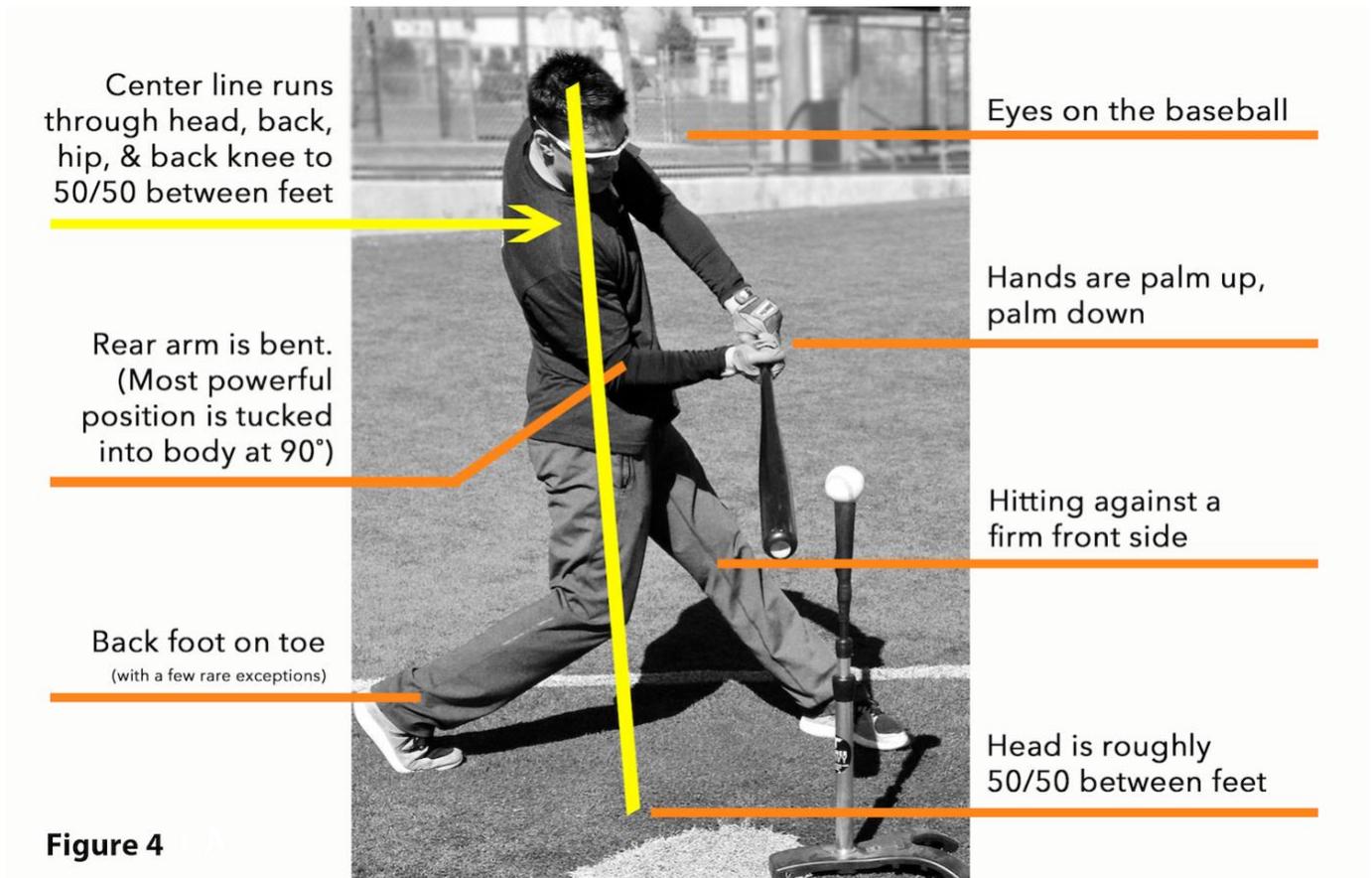
You gain a lot of knowledge just by watching the ball come off your bat. When you hit line drives up the middle, you will know you are doing them correctly. Doing these drills on the field is also a good way to see how well and where you are hitting the ball.

## Tip #4 – 7 Absolutes at the point of contact.

There are many different styles of hitting. From batting stance<sup>26</sup> to leg kick, there are many variations of the baseball swing.

However, if you spend enough time watching good hitters, you will notice that there are 7 things which nearly all of them have in common.

These 7 things are the absolutes of hitting mechanics which will provide you with the most powerful and consistent hitting success. As you work to develop your baseball swing through these hitting drills on the batting tee, be mindful and try to achieve these 7 absolutes at contact (Figure 4).



## SKILL LEVEL / AGE GUIDELINES

<i>Age/Level</i>	<i>Recommended Drills</i>
Beginner (under 10 years)	Drill #'s 1, 4, 8, 12, 13,
Intermediate	Drill #'s 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20
Advanced (high school/ college/ professional)	Drill #'s 1 – 20; All the drills in this book are useful for advanced-level players

### EQUIPMENT USED IN THIS BOOK:

The following chart identifies items you will need to complete these hitting drills. Many of the drills use only a batting tee, while a few others use hitting aids to accomplish specific goals.

<i>Equipment</i>	<i># of drills where this item is used</i>
Baseball bat	20
Batting tee	20
Youth size batting tee (optional)	2 [Low Tee Drill and One Knee Drill]
Extra batting tee (youth or regular size)	3
Baseballs	20
Batting Gloves	20
5 lb. or 10 lb. Barbell weight	20
Short bat	2
Weighted baseball or softball	1
Heavy Bat (2 to 7 oz heavier than normal bat)	1
Fungo Bat	1
Basketball or soccer ball	1

**Note** – We provide tips, recommendations and reviews for batting tees and equipment for

- 5 Best batting tees - <http://probaseballinsider.com/best-batting-tee/>
- Training aids for Hitting Drills - <http://probaseballinsider.com/hitting-aids/>

## ***PART 2 - YOUR PERSONAL DRILL HELPER***

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**The drills in this book were created to address specific problems or to develop certain skills.** If you have any of these common swing problems, there may be a particular drill more helpful to you.

<b>Common Problem</b>	<b>Drills that will help</b>
Front shoulder opens up too quickly <sup>9</sup> (trouble reaching the outside pitch)	See drill #2, 3, 8, and 15
Uppercut	4, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14
Wrists roll over <sup>19</sup> too quickly (Hitting too many weak ground balls to pull side)	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 20
Inconsistent hand path (Not hitting many balls on the barrel)	1, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 19
Backside <sup>1</sup> collapses <sup>8</sup> or not getting on back toe at contact (Fouling good pitches straight back); not getting to 50/50 weight distribution	3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 14
Weak swing (i.e. Looking to hit with more power/bat speed)	2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 16, 20
Too stiff (no rhythm)	6, 9, 10, 18, 19
Strike zone judgment	1, 12, 13
Too many swing and misses	1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 15, 17, 19
No separation <sup>20</sup> at contact. Your hands come with you when you stride. They don't stay back. (Weak pop flies to the opposite field)	3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 17, 19
Upper body dominant (Have trouble with low pitch, don't rotate back foot, or can't stay balanced at follow through. Not using legs properly)	5, 7, 9, 11, 16, 20
Getting around the baseball or not staying inside the ball <sup>11</sup> . (Hooking or top spin line drives <sup>32</sup> )	3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15
Too many pop-ups (may be caused by uppercut or losing the barrel)	3, 4, 6, 9, 10
Unknown problem (these drills either isolate or give instant feedback, which is helpful for diagnosing a swing problem)	2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 19, 20

# PART 3 – DRILLS

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**\*\*\*Companion Videos:** For instant access to the streaming videos that accompany this book, simply go to <http://probabesballinsider.com/freevideo1> and include this code **BattingTeeDrills**. Once the form is submitted, you will receive instant access to all 20 videos – one for each drill in this book.

## 1 - REGULAR TEE DRILL

Why did I include the Regular Tee Drill in this book? Obviously it's not going to be new to anyone. There are 3 reasons I felt it was important to include in this book:

- (1) A reminder to not underestimate the importance of this drill. Too many players and coaches are always look for the latest hitting drill, thinking there is a “magic bullet” out there if only they can find it. However, the reality is that simple, classic drills like this one are used every day by Major League players such as Derek Jeter and Albert Pujols. The reason legendary hitters like these guys still use drills like the Regular Tee Drill is because **THEY WORK** – if done properly.
- (2) This is a batting drill you will likely use for the entire length of your baseball career, so I wanted to provide a few tips for getting the most out of this drill.
- (3) To lay out some foundational ideas that apply to ALL the drills in this book.

### Summary

As we discussed earlier, being able to repeat your swing is what separates good from great hitters. It seems like an easy concept but it is very difficult to do. The purpose of this drill is to perfect your swing and repeat it over and over, until you can take your adjustments into live batting practice and eventually the game.

Hitting off a tee can be used as a warm up, or as a drill in itself. Either way, it is important to always have a plan when using a tee. It's a great way to get your swing grooved<sup>10</sup> and ready for batting practice or a game.

### Purpose:

I love hitting off a tee because it allows me to control the pace of my swing. Even though this is always our goal when you face a pitcher he can sometimes dictate the effort level and pace of our swing.

A tee allows us to slow things down, get back to basics and *focus on making every swing perfect every time*. We can work on pulling a baseball, hitting it the other way. Practice hitting high and low

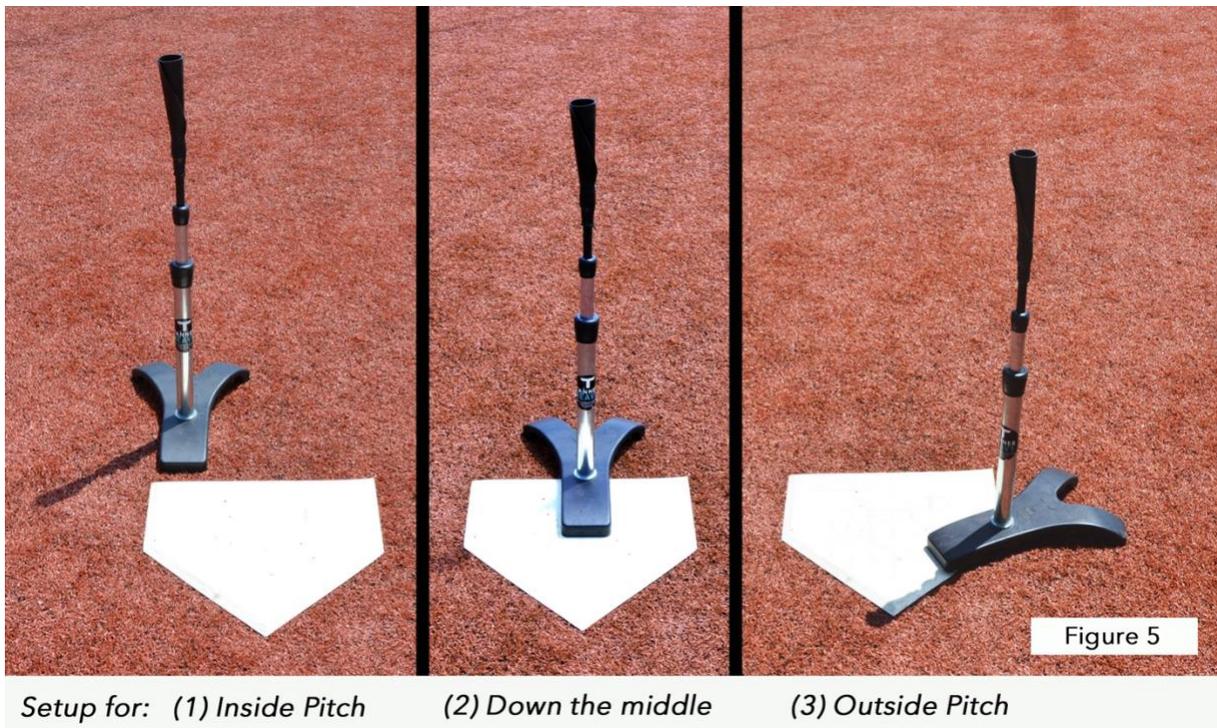
pitches as well as focus on mechanics. Using a tee is a great way to see the spin of the ball off the bat. You can practice your strengths and work to improve on your weaknesses.

### Equipment:

- Batting Tee

### How to Execute this Drill:

- 1) **Setup.** Always start by addressing home plate where you feel comfortable. Keep the same distance away from the plate so when you move the tee around you will be able to work on pitches you need to be able to hit in games.
- 2) **Practice hitting the outside pitch, 2A.** When working on hitting the outside pitch you want the ball to travel deeper in the hitting zone so you can take the same swing on an outside pitch as you would an inside pitch. Place the tee a little further back from where you would place it on a pitch down the middle. See how deep you can place the tee to hit the ball the other way. You can start by putting the tee in line with your stomach and then back it up so it's even with your back foot. This is an exaggerated depth, which is helpful because it will act as an indicator to show you how depth affects your swing.
- 3) **Practice for pitches down the middle, 2B.** Usually for a pitch down the middle the tee should be placed somewhere between where your front foot and stomach end up after you stride. This depth is where you would like to try to hit every pitch that comes down the middle of the plate.



- 4) *Practice hitting the inside pitch, 2C.* On inside pitches, move the tee in and toward the pitcher by a few inches. You want to make contact with the ball inside a little earlier so your barrel can make contact with the ball without compromising your hands and body positioning. If the inside pitch gets too deep, that's when you get jammed<sup>14</sup> and you won't be able to put your strongest swing on the ball.

## Checkpoints

Checkpoints for the regular tee drill is to:

- (1) Have a plan. You are working on whatever it is that you need to work on.
- (2) Be sure the result is that you are hitting line drives.

Let's talk more about line drives, because this is important.

If you are hitting in a cage, your goal is to hit the ball between 8 and 15 feet off the ground at the back of a 60 foot cage.

If hitting on a baseball field, keep the same 8 to 15 feet range off the ground as it flies.

The angle of that particular ball flight is a result of a barrel path that swings along the natural trajectory of the pitch.

Why don't we want to hit fly balls off a batting tee?

The natural result when we start to add game velocity is the bat gets under the ball and we start to hit fly balls. Of course we want to drive the ball, but there is a difference between hitting routine fly balls that get you out and driving balls in the air that go the distance.

***The more line drives we can hit off a tee, the better bat path we are creating to drive balls in the game.***

It's pretty simple. The tee can be one of the greatest hitting aids you will ever use, if you learn to use it properly.

## 2 - TOP HAND, SHORT BAT DRILL

### Summary

This drill can help you discover a weakness in your swing you didn't know about by showing if the top hand is working like it should; or help to fix a swing that is bottom-hand dominant. If you are bottom-hand dominant, this drill will help you (1) develop more power / bat speed; and (2) develop a better bat path resulting in fewer swing-and-misses.

To be able to hit a line drive, you must be in a strong palm-up position at contact. If you are not doing this successfully, then you will not be able to hit line drives during this exercise. (Note: One handed drills are not recommended for young players, as they may develop bad habits due to lack of strength needed to maintain proper form.)

### Purpose

Isolating your top hand<sup>1</sup> uncovers weaknesses that you may not recognize when using two hands. Just like lifting weights, if we always use the barbell to bench press our strong arm takes control. Using dumbbells will make both arms strong. It is the same with hitting.

Your strong hand often takes over during your swing. When you isolate your top hand you will be able to find the strongest spot from which to fire; exactly how your swing path tracks; and how strong or weak you are compared to your other hand. Being the **power hand**, your top hand should work as long as possible facing up and not rolling over<sup>19</sup> until it releases.

The top-hand drill can be humbling at first. But over time you will notice the ball jumping off your bat better and better. Feeling the top hand work individually and getting more proficient with it will definitely



Figure 6

make your normal swing better, seem easier, and definitely more powerful. Just by doing this drill your top hand will get stronger.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee
- Short Bat

## How to Execute this Drill

- 1) Set up the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate and place a ball on the tee. Start with both hands on the bat and get in your stance<sup>26</sup>.
- 2) Take your bottom hand<sup>5</sup> off the bat and keep it close to your body, positioned against your chest bone.
- 3) Don't move your top hand's place on the bat. Stay choked up, since this is where your hand is normally on a baseball bat. In this drill use your top hand and legs.
- 4) Feel your top hand working through the baseball while you work to hit line drives to the back of the cage. Thinking "through" the baseball keeps the barrel on line with the trajectory of the pitch as long as possible.

## Checkpoints for Top-Hand, Short Bat Drill

You know you are doing this drill properly if you can...

- 1) **Figure 8:** Keep your back elbow tucked close to your body or "in the slot"<sup>12</sup>
- 2) **Common mistake – Figure 9:** Don't allow your wrist to roll over<sup>19</sup> too quickly, which will result in a ground ball to the pull side. This drill works well to help you fight that negative tendency.
- 3) The closer the top hand is to the body at contact, the stronger position you are in. Practice making contact between body midline and front foot (refer back to Figure 1 if needed).
- 4) **Common mistake – Figure 10, Incorrect A:** Use your legs to get under the ball and drive through it (don't be lazy and reach for the ball).



Figure 8

Keep the barrel moving through (not around) the ball. Pay extra attention to the spin that the ball takes off the bat. Backspin is good - top or side spin is bad.

- 5) **Common mistake – Figure 10, Incorrect B:** If you are dipping back and or swinging up, you should be able to feel this movement during the drill and you will definitely see it by where the ball ends up. Isolating your rear hand will help you feel how your body works together with your swing.
- 6) **Common mistake – Figure 10, Incorrect C:** You may notice a tendency to swing your free arm for momentum. This is a no-no. Let your top hand do all the work.
- 7) Hit line drives! The biggest indicator as to whether you are doing this drill properly is RESULTS. When you start to see line drives up the middle, it indicates that you are successfully hitting with



your top-hand palm up through the hitting zone. Once you get that feel and see those line drives your swing is getting grooved<sup>10</sup>.

### **3 - BOTTOM-HAND, SHORT BAT DRILL**

#### **Summary**

The purpose of the bottom-hand, short-bat drill (figure 11) is to isolate your bottom hand<sup>5</sup> so you can have an understanding how it should work in your swing. Using the bottom hand<sup>5</sup> independently will make it stronger and will make your two handed swing more efficient and powerful.

If you have difficulty with this drill at first, it means this is exactly the drill you should be working on. The top hand is your power hand, while the bottom hand is more of the directional/guiding hand. This means that strengthening the role of your bottom hand in your swing can potentially fix a number of problems... ranging from rolling your wrists over too early (which causes you to hit ground balls or pull foul too often) to having too many swings-and-misses (if they are being caused an over-active top hand pulling the bat out of the zone too soon).

#### **Purpose**

As I talked about in the previous drill, when you lift weights it is important to isolate individual limbs so they can independently get strong. The same idea is true with the baseball swing.

When you develop the proper feel for your bottom hand<sup>5</sup> and can hit line drives, it will be easier to do with two hands. The pulling action of your bottom hand is what starts your pull to the baseball. Since most people are top hand dominant (since it is usually the throwing hand), we tend to take over our swing too early with that top hand.

Being familiar with the role of your bottom hand will help you better understand your swing as a whole, and will help you recognize when adjustments are needed.

This drill takes out all the unnecessary movements of your swing. With one hand you are not strong enough to be anything but efficient, so it will help shorten your swing<sup>22</sup>. Once you can feel strong with one hand, swinging with two should be no problem.

#### **Equipment:**

- Batting Tee
- Short Bat



### How to Execute this Drill:

- 1) Set up the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate. Place a ball on the tee. Start with both hands on the bat and get in your stance.
- 2) Take your top hand off the bat and keep it close to your body positioned against your chest bone.
- 3) Swing using your bottom hand<sup>5</sup> and legs. Keep your top hand still.

Figure 11 The key is to swing your arm  
momentum. Avoid

this tendency and be deliberate about making your bottom hand do all the work.



Figure 12

### Checkpoints:

- 1) Swing through the ball, focusing using your leg and hip to drive the bottom hand through the ball. This engages the legs properly & delivers the barrel to the hitting zone. Dipping the backside takes the barrel in and out of the zone too quickly.

- 2) Don't lift your front elbow dragging your barrel trying to get lift (figure 12). You will feel the difference. Remember you need to feel that you are swinging *through* baseball. The goal is to stay linear through the zone as long as possible. The "chicken wing" tends to happen when you muscle up the bottom hand and it ends up taking over (as opposed to using your legs to generate the power).
- 3) Feel the front side pulling to start your swing and feel the torque you can create with your front side.
- 4) As I said before, the biggest indicator of doing this drill properly is RESULTS, so an important checkpoint is to hit line drives back up the middle.

## 4 - HIGH TEE DRILL

### Summary

Hitting too many pop flies? Want to hit more powerful line drives? Trouble with pitches up in the zone? Try one of Mike Trout's favorite drills.

In an MLB Network interview with Sean Casey, Mike Trout talks about his game preparation and how he uses this drill to help him get on top of the ball.

Trout explains, "With the tee, I like to set it up high and get on top of the ball. For me, you know, when you drop the [rear] shoulder down and you're lifting the [lead] elbow up, dropping the bat and the barrel goes everywhere. So, it's [working on] getting on top of the ball, getting in the cage and hitting 10 to 20 ground balls back up the middle."

Statistically, most swing and misses are below the ball on fastballs, so this is an important drill for helping us to make contact more consistently and with better outcomes.

Overall, this is a feel drill. It's not that we want to always swing at this pitch (we don't), but if you are constantly losing your barrel in a game (fouling balls straight back or hitting weak pop flies) this drill will help by exaggerating the feeling you need recognize in order to get your barrel working properly through the hitting plane in a game.

In other words, it will help you make contact in the middle of the ball rather than clipping the bottom of it. This is one you'll want to keep in your tool box throughout your baseball career.

### Purpose

As you start facing pitchers that have good velocity (90 mph +) staying strong and not compromising your posture is very important. It is easy to get by with sub-par mechanics when a pitcher isn't throwing hard, but as the velocity kicks up, you need to have better mechanics.

It can be particularly difficult to hit the middle of the baseball on a high pitch. It's easy to get underneath the high fastball, which can result in a pop-up or a miss. If you normally collapse<sup>8</sup> your backside<sup>1</sup>, this drill will force you to keep a strong posture.

This drill is also great for working on putting proper backspin on the baseball, which makes the ball travel further. This is much more difficult to do on a high pitch. This drill forces good habits on a tough pitch, making you less likely to miss those few good pitches you get in the games.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee

## How to Execute this Drill

- 1) Set the tee up for a pitch down the middle of the plate. Now raise the tee to its highest point. You want it to be somewhere between your chest and chin height. If the tee doesn't allow you to raise it this high, place the tee on a bucket or chair to get the ideal height for this drill.
- 2) Swing - Take this high pitch and hit a line drive head height to the back of the cage.

## Checkpoints

If you can get the ball to travel 40-70 feet in the air at the same height it was set up on the tee, you accomplished the goal of the drill. Being able to do this makes you get on top of the baseball and to create the perfect line drive you need to get great backspin<sup>2</sup>.



Figure 13

## 5 - NET TEE DRILL

### Summary

This drill will eliminate casting your barrel<sup>6</sup> and force you to stay tight<sup>27</sup> and compact, which makes for a more efficient, more accurate and more powerful swing. In other words, this drill will help develop both power and barrel accuracy. Barrel accuracy helps if you are experiencing too many swings-and-misses or fouling good pitches back.

### Benefits of this drill

1.) *More Power.* This drill helps develop a more powerful swing for several reasons.

First of all, bat speed and launch angle are important for power, but none of that matters if your barrel is off target. If you are not hitting hard line drives as consistently as you would like (such as too many hooking line drives that don't have the distance they should<sup>32</sup>), it is probably because you are not getting the proper backspin on the baseball.

Solid contact increases your odds of creating backspin, and the benefit putting proper backspin on the baseball is that it will travel further. This drill will help you get the barrel to the ball if you having trouble controlling the barrel.

Another benefit of this drill is increased bat speed, which is another critical aspect of power. The shorter the distance of your hand path, the tighter the axis of rotation will be.

This results in greater leverage and acceleration of the bat (i.e. bat speed). It's similar to the figure skater who spins much faster as they pull in their arms and legs tight to their body.

A long, inefficient swing loses bat speed and therefore results in less power. This drill causes you to shorten your hand path to the baseball for maximum bat speed.

2.) *Better bat path.* Weak ground balls or choppers to the pull side are usually caused by a poor path to the baseball.



Note: The fence above is for visual purpose only. We recommend using a batting cage net or batting tee, so you don't hurt your bat or your wrist if you hit it.

There is a tendency to swing around the baseball instead of staying inside it and driving through it. This drill is needed because it will shorten your swing<sup>22</sup> by helping you stay tight<sup>27</sup> with your hands to your body and removing unnecessary movement. All of this benefits you by making your rotation to the ball shorter and more direct, which will give you that better path to the ball.

**3.) *More time to see the pitch.*** Another benefit of a good bat path is that you gain a few more precious milliseconds to see the ball before starting your swing. If your swing is shorter, faster, more efficient, then you will have a little more time to see the ball – giving you more time to identify the pitch and react appropriately.

**4.) *Teaches Pulling the ball correctly.*** This drill is also great for teaching players to pull the ball correctly. Many hitters when pulling a baseball get their hands away from their body and get around the ball with their barrel, this promotes ground balls and hooking fly balls<sup>32</sup>, both of which are not ideal.

This drill shows you how to stay inside and drive the ball to the pull side with backspin (If you remember from Tip 4, backspin makes the ball go farther). As you will find out, staying tight<sup>27</sup> with your swing is what you are trying to accomplish every time. This drill will help you accomplish that feel.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee
- Batting cage net or extra tee (The fence in the images is only for demonstration purposes. When you hit something hard like a fence it will ding up your bat and it may hurt wrists depending on how hard you hit it, so we recommend using a net or extra batting tee.)

## How to execute this drill:

1. From your normal spot in the batting cage, walk forward until you're 30-35 inches from the net. You can measure by placing the knob of your bat so its touching your stomach and the end of your bat is barely grazing the net (see Figure 14.A).
2. Once you have set your distance from the net, place the tee where it feels comfortable - without backing up from the net.
3. Swing without hitting the net. It's ok if you lightly graze the net, but if the net starts interfering with the swing, you know you need get your hands more linear and inside (Figure 14.B).

## Checkpoints

Use these checkpoints to make sure you are getting the most benefit from this drill.

- 1) If you are hitting the net, work to keep your hands close to your body and finish your swing. Once again, it's ok if you brush the net, but if you get too much of the net during your swing, it will stop your bat.

- 2) You are trying to take a good quality swing (start at 50% effort level if you find this drill difficult) by taking your normal stride and using your backside<sup>1</sup> to start your swing.
- 3) It is important not to cheat. Check your stride to ensure you are not stepping away from the plate.
- 4) After you swing check to make sure you are not falling away from the net. If you find yourself off balance after contact, it probably means you were cheating to avoid the net by leaning away during your swing.
- 5) Hit line drives up the middle to the pull side of the cage without hitting the net. When you are doing this consistently you know your bat path is correct.

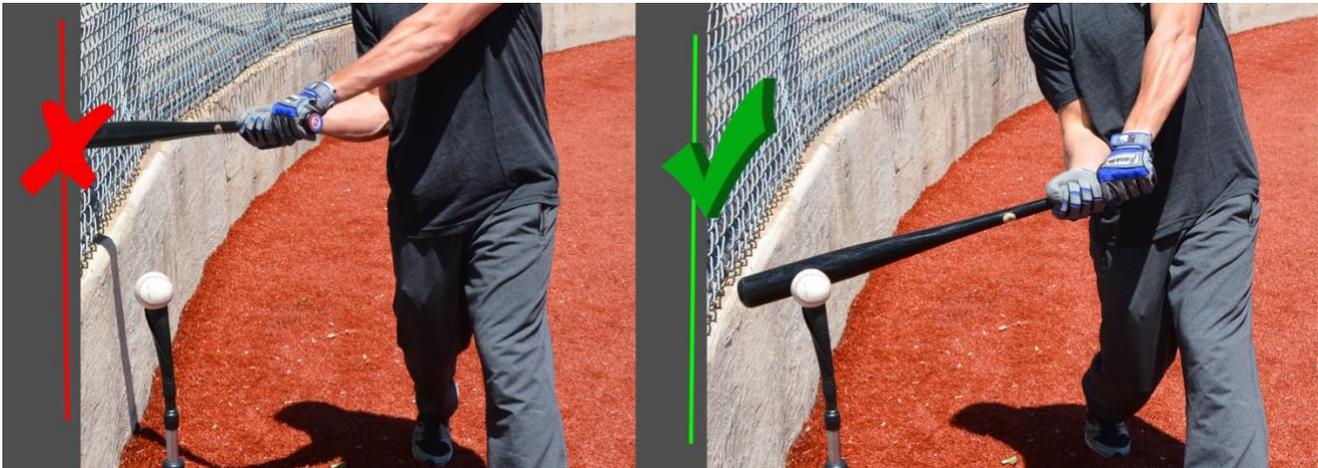


Figure 15 – Keep your swing tight so you don't hit the net / tee

# 6 -STEP THROUGH DRILL

## Summary

The Step Through Drill (Figure 15) is useful if you feel stuck on your backside<sup>1</sup>. Like many other drills, the Step Through Drill is creating an exaggerated motion so you can develop a feel for something specific. In this case, the drill will help you feel the linear movement you need in your swing. It forces you to use your backside and legs together to finish on your back toe (or even slightly off the ground).

This drill also helps you get to separation<sup>20</sup> (important for power) and feeling your hands work. You will feel your body step away from your hands thus getting into a strong separation when your front foot hits the ground. Your hands will be back and you will feel tension in your front side.

Obviously, you won't hit like this in the game, but doing this exercise will help you get off your backside (if you collapse or sink and spin) or at least get your weight to 50/50 before you start your rotation.

Once you have grasped the feel of separation, linear movement, using your legs, and proper weight distribution, you can incorporate these important aspects into your real swing in a more subtle (but powerful) way.

## Purpose

(1.) This drill is important because we hear many coaches say, “stay back.” Many people have a hard time explaining or understanding what that even means, but it can get interpreted as “squash the bug<sup>25</sup>” (spinning on the back leg without any linear forward motion<sup>16</sup>). We want to rotate on our back leg and finish on our toe, while getting through or even off of our backside<sup>1</sup>. This is where our power comes from, and this drill helps us feel the proper linear movement<sup>16</sup> we need during our swing (which keeps our bat in the zone longer and improves our odds of making quality contact with the pitch).

(2.) This drill also helps with developing rhythm. Hitting needs a rhythm to keep us in motion. It is easier to start a swing if we have a little movement than from a dead stand still. If we get too mechanical our rhythm is the first thing to leave our swing. Having rhythm keeps us relaxed longer, and when we are relaxed longer we can whip the bat<sup>31</sup> quicker.

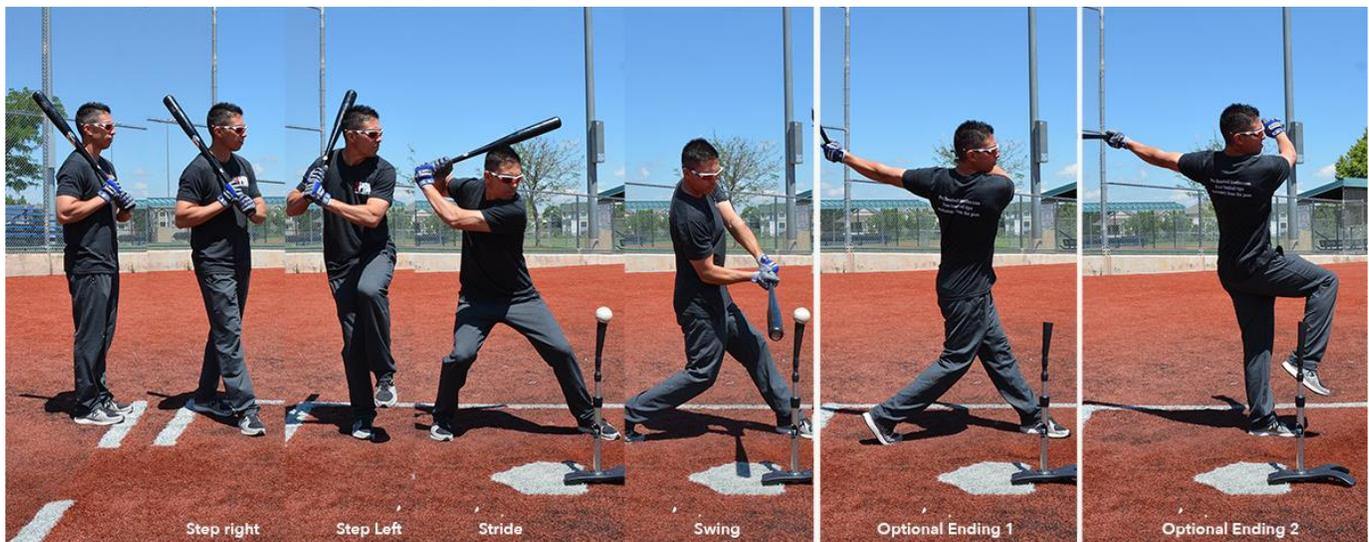
Keeping your muscles tension-free prevents putting your body into a “crisis management mode that forces the bulkier muscles to take over. Though the bulkier muscles are important in a motion, if they dominate, the motion will look, and be, forced and awkward.” (Yellin and Biancalana, 2010, p.16). The bottom line is, tense muscles are slower – slower to react to the pitch, and slower in overall bat speed (i.e. less whip = less power).

(3.) If you are having problems achieving proper separation<sup>20</sup> or getting your hands back, this drill helps. You will feel your hands get back into a strong position, once your front foot hits the ground you will feel tension in your front oblique. From this position you are ready to swing.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee

## How to execute this drill



- 1) **Setup** - Set the tee up for a pitch down the middle of the plate. Instead of getting in your normal stance<sup>26</sup> back up a foot or so (in the direction<sup>26</sup> of the catcher). Face home plate.
- 2) **Step right** – (If you are a left-handed hitter, you’ll start by stepping with your left foot). Start by taking a step with your back foot and place it in the batter’s box in the same place you would dig in for an at bat. Make sure your back foot is square<sup>24</sup> to home plate.
- 3) **Step left** - Now take your other leg and stride into a hitting position.
- 4) **Swing** - Use the rhythm you have created with your legs to finish your swing.
- 5) **Follow-through** - After you swing your follow through should allow for your back foot to either be off the ground or on its toe (**Optional Ending 1**). Make sure you finished balanced with your chest finishing towards the pitcher.

Step while thinking about your bottom half<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, keep your hands relaxed and once you take your stride you should be able to feel your hands get back into a strong position.

**Variation of the drill:** For hitters that are still having trouble feeling the linear movement<sup>16</sup> that is necessary in a swing, or can’t get away from “squashing the bug<sup>25</sup>,” add this extra movement to the end of this drill. This will force you to over exaggerate getting off of your back toe, forcing you to throw your back leg at the baseball.

Once you have made contact and are starting your follow through, take your back knee and drive it up towards the pitcher (**Optional Ending 2**). Get the knee up to waist height.

This over exaggerated movement will force you to use your back leg with a linear movement<sup>16</sup> and learn to stay balanced while driving into your front leg.

## Goal Checkpoints:

1. Hit line drives up the middle.
2. After you finished your swing, see if your back foot was in the air or on its toe at contact.
3. Make sure you finish with your chest towards the pitcher; this will show you are getting off of your backside<sup>1</sup> properly.
4. As you are striding, your hands are getting into the strong position. This should happen automatically during this drill. You want to feel your hands working together with your lower half, just remember to keep them relaxed.

## 7 - WEIGHTED BASEBALL OR SOFTBALL DRILL

### Summary

This drill will help you hit through the baseball by using strong hip rotation and lower body power. It will ensure you are in a strong position at contact and will help increase strength in your hands and forearms.

### Purpose

It is very important to groove your swing<sup>10</sup> not to just hit the baseball but to drive **through** the baseball. Driving through the ball with this drill encourages strong hip rotation and lower body explosion to hit the ball. This drill will help increase your power and explosion during your swing. It's a good drill for getting your legs involved.

This drill also makes sure you are in a strong hitting position at contact. When hitting a heavier object than a baseball you will begin to feel the bat slow down or even recoil once you make contact.

Through repetition you will begin to find where you feel strongest with your base<sup>3</sup> and hands, as well as finding out your strongest position in your swing. You will also get quite a workout with your forearms and hands. Once you go back to hitting a baseball it will feel like a whiffle ball.

### Equipment

1. Batting Tee
2. Weighted Baseballs or Softballs (they range from 9 oz. to 32 oz. A regular baseball is 5 oz.)

## How to Execute this Drill

Set up the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate. Place the weighted softball or basketball on the tee and hit normally.

Don't try to do too much with the ball. Just focus on hitting it back up the middle.

### Checkpoints:

- 1) Concentrate on hitting *through* the ball. Over time you will feel stronger and will be able to see the results when you go back to hitting a baseball.
- 2) The beauty of this drill is it can teach you a lot about your swing. If you feel like you aren't able to power through the ball, it's an indication that you are leaking power somewhere in the mechanics of your swing. If that's the case, check the following:
  - Hand position - This is a good time to check if your hands are in the strongest possible position at contact. Just before you hit the ball, stop and check that your hands are in the palm up, palm down<sup>18</sup> position (see figure 16).
  - Back elbow & hands are close to your body
  - You are hitting against a firm front side
  - See if you need to get lower into your legs

If none of that helps, it may be a swing sequence issue. Checking for proper separation<sup>20</sup> is the first place to start. Work on drill 10 – The Separation Drill – for a while and then come back and try this one again.

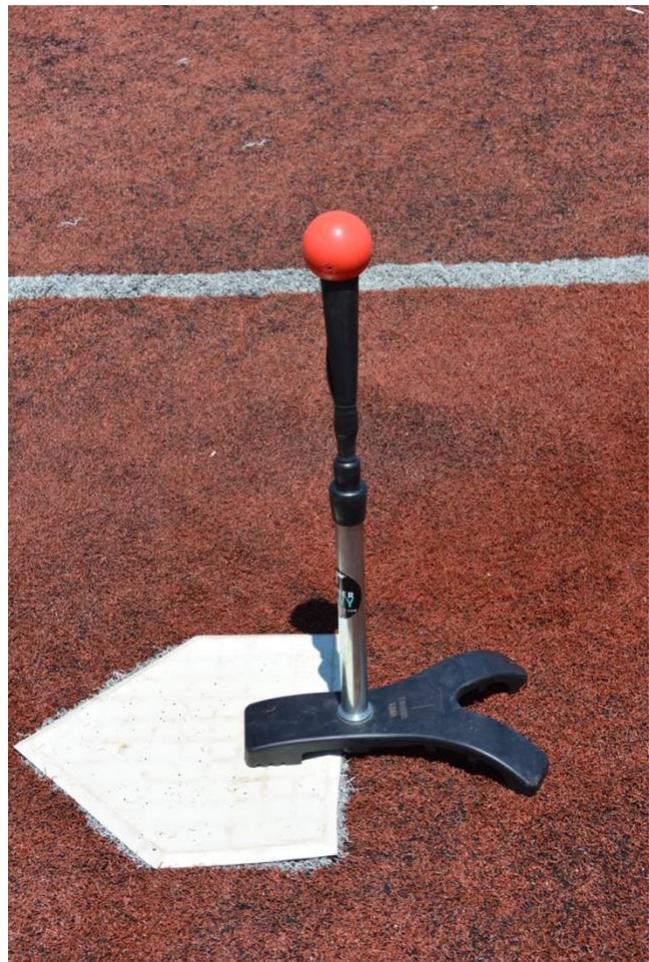


Figure 16

Checkpoint #3: Stop mid-swing to check your hand position. We always want to be palm up, palm down at contact.

## 8 – TWO BALL, TWO TEE DRILL

### Summary

This drill is helpful for hitters who are having trouble getting off their back side, spinning off the ball instead of driving through it, or pulling most pitches. If you swing and miss a lot or have trouble with the outside pitch, this is a great drill.

### Purpose

This drill helps with the problems I just mentioned because it teaches the following two things (1) Hitting through the baseball; and (2) Keeping the bat in the zone longer.

Once you make contact, you need to hit “through” the baseball (see Figure 18). There are many hitters that start their finish as soon as they make contact. This makes your bat quick in and quick out of the hitting zone, which makes hitting even more difficult than it already is.

This drill will force you to not only hit the ball but focus on hitting two more invisible ones behind it. This drill makes it visible so you can try to hit both baseballs. This bat action and thought helps you to stay on pitches when they have late movement as well as get optimal backspin<sup>2</sup> by hitting through the pitch.

### Equipment

- Two Batting Tees

### How to Execute this Drill

- 1) Address home plate how you normally would in a game. Place the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate.
- 2) Take the next tee and place it as close as possible to the first tee so the 1<sup>st</sup> tee (in order of contact) is slightly below the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee. This promotes the preferred swing path.
- 3) Place a ball on both tees. As a hitter you are looking at the first tee with a ball on top. There will be a gap between the two tees that would be close to the diameter of a baseball (see Figure 18). Now you are set up properly for this drill.





- 4) Swing. When you swing, you will hit both baseballs (hopefully up the middle, but they are going to scatter once they hit each other). Having the visual of hitting the balls on the tee will help you develop a better swing path by working the bat “long through the baseball.”

## Checkpoints

Feel is a very important part of this drill. The idea is to swing the bat and not only hit the first ball, but take the barrel through the first ball, through the gap, and through the second ball. This is the feel we want when hitting the baseball during a regular at-bat.

# 9 – 45 DEGREE ANGLE DRILL

## Summary

This drill helps to achieve optimal bat path and swing plane by getting the barrel of the bat in the zone early and properly. The earlier the bat can get into the hitting zone and on plane with the pitch the better chance you will hit the baseball squarely with your barrel. Once you get better with this drill you will see a noticeable difference in the way the ball jumps off the bat.

## Purpose

This drill helps with three key elements in relation to bat path and swing plane.

- 1) Getting the bat in the hitting zone as early as possible.
- 2) Gaining barrel velocity behind the ball and hitting through it.
- 3) Proper balance and being athletic in your legs.

Most of my life, I was taught to chop down on the baseball and use my top hand. This type of hitting makes for a collision hitter which is difficult to find any sort of consistency. Getting the bat in the hitting zone early and learning how to gain barrel velocity by swinging on plane with the pitch (instead of swinging level, up, or down) will increase your chances of hitting a baseball.

The third element in finding proper balance and being athletic will happen naturally the more you do this drill. Not only will you not lose balance after a swing but you will be able to swing harder. Once you feel like you can swing 100%, your legs are working correctly.

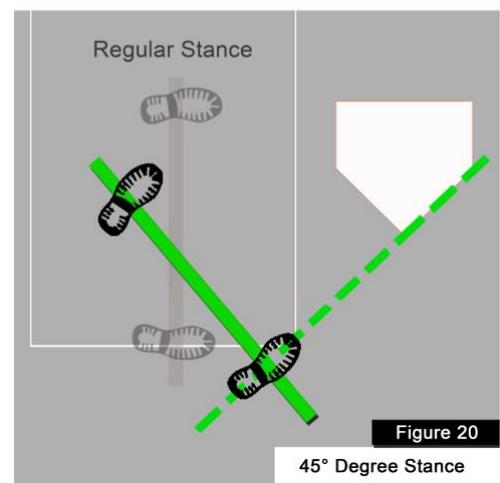
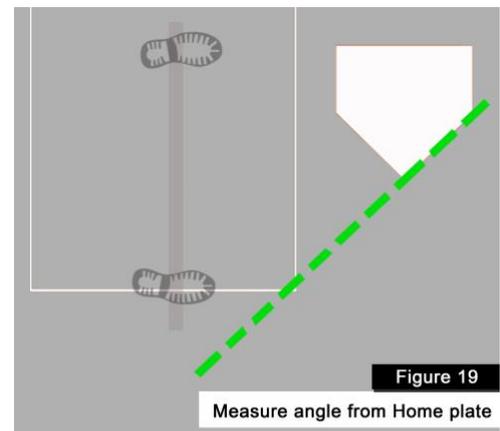
## Equipment

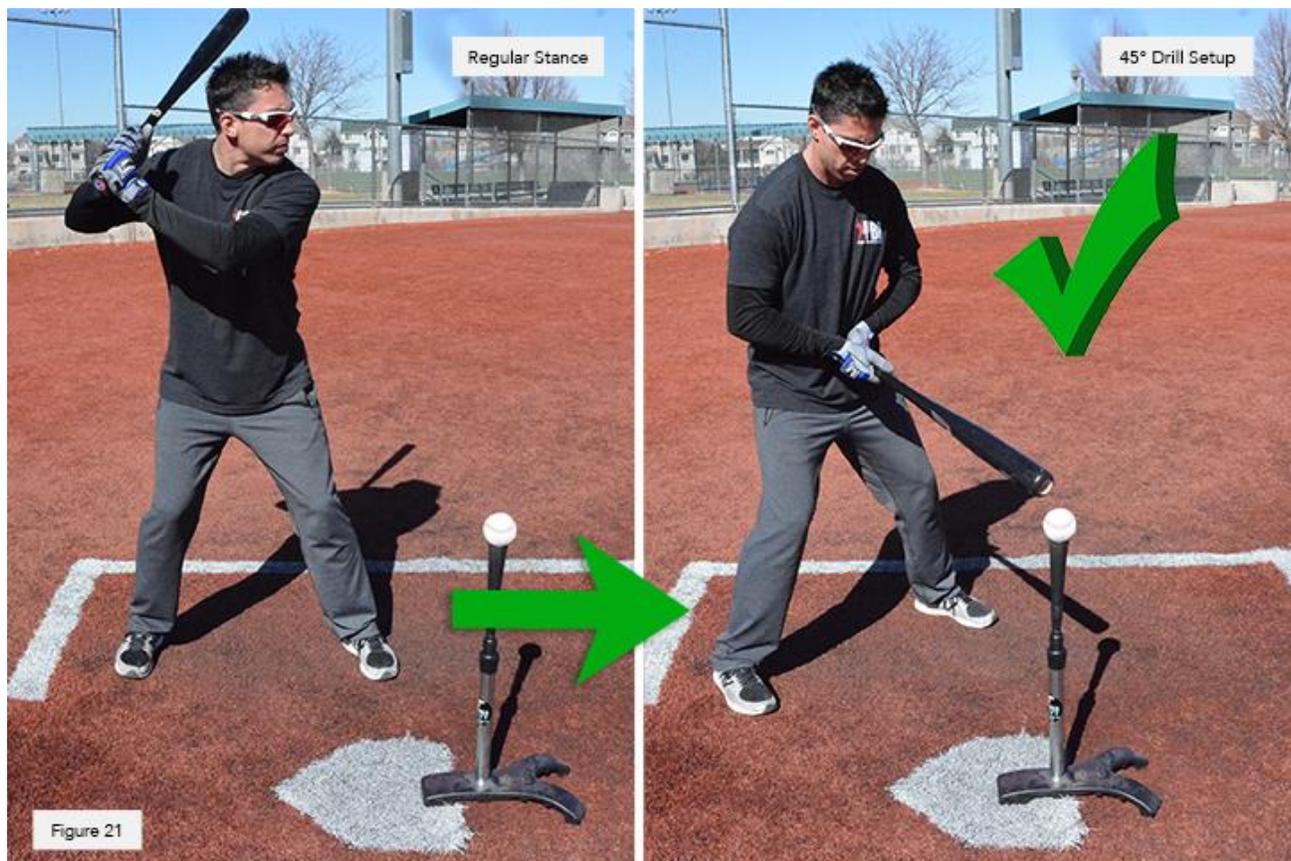
- Batting Tee

## How To Execute This Drill

1. *Tee placement.* Put the tee on top and right in the middle of home plate.

To make the drill easier move the tee a few inches closer to the pitcher, and to make it more difficult move the tee back towards the point of home plate.





2. *Stance.* Place your bat on the ground so it is lined up with the angle of home plate from the outside corner to the point (Fig 19). This imaginary line is where your back foot should be. Make sure the angle of your foot is fully on this imaginary line.

Now take your front foot and be square to your back foot. This angle should put you at a 45 degree angle to home plate (Fig 20). Instead of being squared up to the pitcher you would be squared up to the shortstop (if you are right handed).

From this position you will notice how your bat *must enter the hitting zone early* in order to drive the baseball.

3. *No stride.* In this drill you are not going to stride. So widen up your stance if you need to find your athletic base.
4. *Athletic base.* To help find this position with your legs you want to have flex in your front leg (about 60% of your body weight) as you start your swing.

As you swing your front leg will straighten out and be fully locked out at contact. If you have too much weight on your back leg as you start your swing you will lose your athletic base as well as lose balance.

I noticed that syncing hand rhythm and settling into my front leg to start my swing made this drill easier and helped me find the ideal athletic base with my legs.

5. *The swing.* As the swing happens, gain barrel velocity behind the ball and swing at the plane of a normal fastball coming into the hitting zone. This is your ideal swing path.

6. *Results.* Try to hit the ball to the back of the batting cage. Make sure your effort level is low. Repeating this drill will help to feel your body and how to get the most out of your body throughout your swing.

## **Checkpoints**

1. You should be able to hit a line drive in the center back of the batting cage. If the ball is going to the opposite field side of the cage you are not getting the barrel of your bat in the hitting zone early enough.
2. Staying balanced after you take a full swing means that you had proper weight distribution throughout the swing.

This is a great drill because in order to stay balanced your legs have to do many things correctly. I always felt it was easier to feel your way through a swing than to get to mechanical.

If you are not balanced try getting more weight into your front leg as you start your swing, but make sure your front leg locks out at contact.

# **10 – SEPARATION DRILL**

## **Purpose**

This drill helps with three key elements that easily become common problems to any hitter: (1) balance, (2) separation<sup>20</sup>, and (3) a level swing. The purpose of this drill is to slow your swing down into these 3 different stages, focusing on each stage.

A couple seasons ago, I wasn't feeling good at the plate and my results showed it. This drill helped me get back on track. I actually used it in the games for a couple weeks until I started feeling good again.

The Separation Drill is also helpful when trying to slow your body down and build rhythm throughout your swing. In other words, until the explosion part of your swing, you want to be as slow (i.e. relaxed, smooth, rhythmic, etc.) as possible. When you get tense, your body will be slower to react, your bat speed will suffer, and you will have more trouble reading the pitch because your head is moving around too much.

I love this drill because I feel so locked in when I do it and I feel I can hit a line drive every time. Your lower half is your base and the foundation for your swing. If it is working properly, then it allows your hands and everything else to work properly as well.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee

## How to Execute this Drill

1. Set up the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate. To properly execute this drill you need to put emphasis on three stages of this drill.
2. **Stage 1 – Balance.** Start in your normal batting stance, addressing home plate. Take your front foot and place it so it's touching your back foot, both are square to home plate<sup>24</sup>.
3. With your bat resting on your back shoulder and your hands relaxed, gently lift your front knee like a pitcher and hold this position when the knee gets parallel with the ground. Hold this position for a second or two.
4. **Stage 2 – Separation.** Take your leg that is raised and make a controlled stride to your normal stride length. At the same time take your bat from resting on your back shoulder and move hands back away from your body. This should happen at the same time as you take your stride. This movement should feel like you are striding away from your hands, as a result your head and body shouldn't move forward much if at all.
5. Once your front foot lands, make sure that your weight is evenly distributed 50/50 at this point. Hold this position for a second or two. You should be able to feel tightness in your front side creating a rubber band type effect.

This stretch (the result of correct separation<sup>20</sup>) is important for a powerful explosion that results in good bat speed during the next stage of your swing. If your separation<sup>20</sup> is correct, it will be a BIG help for stage 3 – a level swing.

6. **Stage 3 – Swing through the ball.** The great thing about this stage is that once you are in a perfect 50/50 stance with your hands back in a strong hitting position (from stage 2), the level swing happens naturally. The 3<sup>rd</sup> stage is a direct result of the first two being done correctly.

It is important when you start your swing that you don't recoil to get a little extra on your swing. Just swing from the position you are in. It should almost feel like your hands are just swinging because your base is already in a good position.



## Checkpoints

The goal is to be able to hit line drives and have the swing feel almost effortless. This should be the result after stage 3.

- 1) Check yourself after the “balance” stage so that you aren’t falling all over the place when you pick your knee up.
- 2) Check yourself once you get to the “separation<sup>20</sup>” stage to make sure your hands are back and your weight distribution is 50/50. The even weight distribution at this point of the swing allows for an easier level swing. If we have too much weight on our back side at this point we will be forced to swing “up hill” too much, which causes us to use our hands to compensate for poor leg positioning. Getting to a good 50/50 weight distribution will allow for an effortless swing. Once you feel that and can hit line drives to all fields, you know this drill is working.

# 11 - INSIDE TEE DRILL

## Summary

Contrary to what you might assume, this drill is not just meant to help you hit the inside pitch.

The Inside Tee drill helps players develop the proper form and bat path that will make you a better hitter for ANY type of pitch. It is designed to keep you inside the baseball<sup>11</sup> and keep your hands close to your body by emphasizing the first movement of the swing.

- This drill is perfect for those who are constantly out in front of off-speed pitches and hit most balls to the pull side.
- Also, this drill will help players who swing and miss more than they should, because it's designed to keep your barrel in the hitting zone longer.

You will start driving more balls in the opposite field gap as well as be able to pull off speed pitches the correct way with authority.

## Purpose

The Inside Tee Drill is needed because our initial move to the baseball needs to be the same every time, no matter the pitch or location. This first movement is often called “getting your elbow in the slot<sup>12</sup>.”

This is a drill that many professionals use before batting practice to warm up. Being able to do this helps in many ways.

1. You can aggressively hit fastballs to the opposite gap and at the same time have established the position necessary to pull an off speed pitch.
2. More ground balls are hit to the pull side than to the opposite field, so being able to stay inside the baseball<sup>11</sup> will cut down on rolling over<sup>19</sup> to the pull side and get more line drives that get through the infield.
3. You will get better backspin<sup>2</sup> on the baseball. If you lose your barrel<sup>17</sup> too early and get around the ball you are creating a hooking (or topspin<sup>29</sup>) action. Staying inside the baseball<sup>11</sup> will get you better backspin allowing you to hit the ball further.
4. When you can stay inside the baseball<sup>11</sup>, you will be in position to hit the pitch at any location. The 1<sup>st</sup> move is so vital for this. The more in line this 1<sup>st</sup> move is with the pitcher, the more plate coverage you will have. That pitch away where you may have swung and missed or rolled over before is now a line drive the other way.
5. Your mental approach is much better, which gets more important as you move up levels and the pitchers get better. You may only get one good pitch to hit every at bat. You must give yourself every opportunity not to miss it.

- Now because your swing is tighter if you see the inside fastball early it is easier to get the barrel to the pitch the right way and pull the ball with backspin<sup>2</sup>.

This move starts by pulling the knob of the bat to the inside part of the baseball. As this is happening your back elbow is getting close to your body (in the slot<sup>12</sup>) keeping your hands close.

To attack an inside pitch, you must keep your hands and barrel inside the ball<sup>11</sup> until the barrel reaches the hitting zone.

For this drill, your goal is to hit the ball off the inside tee up the middle or to the opposite field. To accomplish this, you will have to keep your hands very tight to your body. While this drill forces you to stay slightly more inside than you would in a game, it is very helpful to correct the tendency of casting your barrel<sup>6</sup>.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee

## How to Execute this Drill

- Setup – See Figure 23A for tee placement
- Move the tee further in and further back (towards the catcher) to make this drill more difficult.



Figure 23A  
Inside Tee Setup



Figure 23 | B - E

3) Take a normal swing and hit a line drive up the middle or to the opposite field.

## Checkpoints

1. Fight to stay inside the baseball<sup>11</sup>. By over exaggerating and fighting to stay inside the ball<sup>11</sup>, you are teaching your body many good movements towards a perfect swing without having to think too hard about your swing mechanics.
2. A common mistake to watch out for is seen in Figure 23D - Hands are ahead of body and wrists are starting to roll over.
3. It is common to try to create more space<sup>23</sup> by recoiling your upper body so you are pulling away from the ball (Fig 23E). Fight against this and use your hands, even if you are hitting the ball closer to your hands than want. Keep working without cheating and the swing will start to tighten up.

# 12 - LOW TEE DRILL

## Summary

This drill is helpful for the person that hits choppers and weak ground balls to the infielders. I know everyone does this but if you feel you do this too much this drill may be helpful.

Also, if you are a hitter with a flat bat<sup>13</sup> at the launch position<sup>15</sup> or have a narrow stance<sup>26</sup> it can be difficult to handle low pitches. Even though you want to hit to your strength, since every pitcher is trying to keep the ball down, it is helpful to be able to handle low pitches in the game.

## Purpose

There are two reasons why the Low Tee Drill is helpful.

*Reason #1* - Working on hitting a low pitch off a tee really makes you use your legs in your swing and stay through the baseball.

Sometimes it is difficult to explain exactly how to use your legs, but when you can find a drill that forces you to do it, it will allow you to know exactly what it should feel like.

When hitters start thinking a lot about mechanics it can cause “paralysis by analysis.” When this occurs, it is very common for the hitter to stop using their legs in their swing and get very upper body dominate. Why? I don’t know, but I know that this drill will force you to use your base and understand how important it is for your swing.

*Reason #2* - It forces you to hit the low pitch the right way. Once your legs get you into an optimal position, you want to drop the barrel to the baseball. Without these two pieces working together, our heads end up being a long distance from the contact point.

We need to use our legs to get into our stance and drive through the ball, not just hit choppers into the ground. As I stated before that hitters with a flat bat<sup>13</sup> at the launch position<sup>15</sup> or have a narrow stance may handle the high pitch better than the low one. Working off a low tee will help you feel how your body needs to work to handle this pitch.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee (one that can get to about knee height)

## How to Execute this Drill

- 1) Address home plate as you would in a game. Take the batting tee and set it up for a pitch down the middle of the plate.
- 2) Make the tee as low as possible. Use a youth/short tee if you have one.
- 3) Place a ball on the tee and swing. When you swing, feel like you are driving through the low pitch with your back knee. This will help create a good swing path.
- 4) You can move the tee around to simulate pitches away, in, and down the middle but make sure to focus and be able to handle the pitch down the middle.

## Checkpoints

The Low Tee drill takes some time to get used to. When I struggle with this drill, I hit ground balls. Then, trying to compensate, I usually hit underneath the ball and pop it up.

Once you get the feel of not just hitting but blasting a line drive up the middle you will really be able to feel your legs work and understand how to hit that pitch in games.

- ✓ Don't just reach your arms for the baseball. Get your head and legs low and attack it. Your arms should be bent and your elbow in the slot<sup>12</sup> (tight against your side). If you have straightened your elbow and find yourself reaching, you may as well go eat some potato chips because the drill isn't doing anything for you.
- ✓ Hit a line drive head height to the back of the cage.



Figure 25

# 13 - INSIDE AND OUTSIDE TEE DRILL

## Summary

This drill can help with strike zone awareness and gives us confidence that we can handle the pitch in and away. It helps expand your “happy zone” so that you can not only cover but do more damage with more locations in the strike zone.

If you struggle with your plate coverage and knowing exactly what you can and can't hit, this drill will help you to lock in on the strike zone.

## Purpose

Every hitter will have at bats where you see a pitch out of the pitchers hand and you know it is too far away and will be called a ball... until the ball gets closer and hits the outside corner for a strike. You feel helpless because it seemed too far away for you to hit.

This drill gives you the visual of the outside and inside pitch at the same time, improving strike zone awareness. This drill will also give you confidence that by being able to hit the inside and outside strike off the tee, it will be able to transfer in the game. Once you know you have proper plate coverage no pitch should haunt you. Now you just need to swing at strikes, because this drill shows you that you can handle any strike.



## Equipment

- Two Batting Tees

## Setup & Execution

- 1) **Position yourself.** To set up for this drill first address home plate as you would in a game.
- 2) **1st tee.** Take the first tee and place it on the inside corner of the zone and just outside where your front foot lands after your stride (see Figure 25).
- 3) **2nd tee.** Take the second tee and place it on the outside corner and have it somewhere between your stomach and front knee after you stride. Also, make sure the outside tee is a bit higher than

the inside tee. (If it were the other way around you would make contact with the inside tee trying to hit the outside tee).

- 4) **Helper or alternate.** Ideally, it's best to have someone help you out with this drill. You would take your stride and pause, your helper would say "inside" or "outside" and then you would hit that corresponding ball. If you don't have a helper, take your stride, pause, then alternate between pitches. Make sure that after you swing that your stride foot is in the same place every time.

**Know your place.** Move around in the batter's box until you feel perfect plate coverage for the inside and outside pitch. Once you find this spot, make sure you can get to this spot every time either by measuring with your bat from the plate, tap the outside part of the plate or whatever helps you.

Your spot in the batter's box may be different than the "community hole" every person uses in the batter's box. Know where your spot is every time, get there and then trust yourself.

## Checkpoints

- 1) Don't cheat by stepping towards the outside pitch and away from the inside pitch. The pause in this drill helps to stop the unwanted "cheating" in this drill.
- 2) During your pause you can also look to the ball you are not going to hit. Make sure in your mind that you could hit it before you swing at the other tee location. Seeing the ball on the tee will give you a good visual of the strike zone and you will see how well you can handle each pitch.
- 3) Make sure that after you swing that your stride foot is in the same place every time.



Figure 26B - Check that you can reach either tee without changing your stance

# 14 - INVERTED TOP HAND DRILL

## Summary

This drill is helpful to the hitter that has an overactive top hand<sup>30</sup>. If you pull a lot of hard foul balls, it can mean your top hand takes over too quickly. This drill will help your bottom hand<sup>5</sup> take control until it is time for the top hand to get involved. It will give you just enough top hand at certain points in your swing.

You will learn to push through the baseball with the top hand<sup>30</sup> but pull with your bottom hand<sup>5</sup> all the way to your one-handed finish. This drill is good for isolating your bottom hand and teaching it how to work together with an overactive top hand.

## Purpose

This drill is useful for people that hook line drives<sup>32</sup>, roll over ground balls, or pull a lot of hard foul balls. Even though you are hitting the ball hard and keep telling yourself it's just your timing, it may be more than that. In this case, you are seeing the ball well enough to hit it hard but if you get a good pitch to handle and crush it foul, there is a mechanical flaw. Most times it is from a top hand<sup>30</sup> that kicks in too quickly.

If you have this problem, you probably handle the high pitch well and occasionally you will take a low pitch and hit it off of your shin. This is common and this drill gets your bottom hand<sup>5</sup> to become more aggressive so your top hand<sup>30</sup> can wait just a split second longer to take over. We get our power from our top hand and we need it, but it has to work at the right time or we waste the power it provides.

This drill also keeps us linear<sup>16</sup> with our upper body making us work up the middle and hopefully turning our hard hit foul line drives into rockets up the middle.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee



## How to Execute this Drill

- 1) **Position tee.** Set up the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate. Address home plate the same way you would in a game.
- 2) **Narrow stance.** Leave your back foot where it is and move your front foot so your stance<sup>26</sup> is shoulder width (narrower than normal for most people) and your feet are square to home plate<sup>24</sup>.
- 3) **Invert your top hand.** Take your grip on the bat and now take your top hand<sup>30</sup> off and turn it upside down so your thumbs from your bottom and top hand are now touching.
- 4) **Ready position – Top hand loose, elbow high.** Your back elbow will be high and your top hand is not fully wrapped around the handle. It should feel like you can throw the bat with your top hand while you are still holding on with your bottom hand.
- 5) **Swing and let your top hand compliment your bottom hand.** Don't grab the bat when you swing – see Figure 28.



Figure 28

Take your stride and start your swing at the ball. You should feel the bottom hand<sup>5</sup> in control since your top hand<sup>30</sup> is in an awkward and weak position.

As you get closer to the ball you should feel like your top hand can push your bottom hand into the baseball.

Your bottom hand is still guiding the bat and will hold on past contact because once you make contact with the ball your top hand will have to come off of the handle of the bat because of the inverted grip.

## Checkpoints

- You should feel the bottom hand<sup>5</sup> doing most of the work - pulling through keeping a nice bat path through the middle of the field. This drill gives you feel of how much your bottom hand needs to work and when it's time for the top hand<sup>30</sup> to kick in.
- Your top hand<sup>30</sup> is very loosely on the bat, and it's only job is to stride and compliment the bottom hand.

- As always, hitting line drives is good evidence that you are doing the drill properly. By hitting line drives up the middle using this technique, your hands are getting used to their role in the swing.

## 15 - KICK BACK DRILL

### Summary

The Kickback Drill has been included in this book since the 1<sup>st</sup> edition was published in 2012. However, as I was working on this newest edition, I came across a fantastic interview with 7 time All Star and current Seattle Mariners' hitting coach Edgar Martinez, which was aired in June 2018 by the MLB Network.

In this interview, Eric Byrnes comments on how he has studied Edgar's impressive ability to drive the baseball to the opposite field, and the conclusion he came to was the back foot played a major role in his ability to this.

Jose Altuve learned the same move from watching Miguel Cabrera. Finally, Martinez grabs a bat and proceeds to demonstrate this very drill, saying that Mariner's catcher Mike Zunino uses it in his batting tee work (Martinez, 2018).

So what does the Kickback Drill do? It focuses on maintaining proper upper body posture and working inside the ball through the opposite field gap. You can handle more pitches and keep the barrel in the zone longer when your posture and bat path are dialed in.

This drill also gets your weight shifted in an unorthodox way to your front side. If you are struggling with the problem of sitting and spinning on your back leg this drill may be helpful, because these two issues usually go hand in hand.

### Purpose

(1) *Proper upper body position:* If your front shoulder opens up too quickly you have a more upper body dominant swing, that means your sequences aren't synced up properly. This will severely limit the power of your swing, and I'll explain more about that in #2 (below). This drill also teaches you that even if your base<sup>3</sup> is in a bad position, you still have a fighting chance as long as you keep your upper body slightly bent towards home plate and your rear end is pushed back slightly past your heels. If you do those two things well, you can still deliver the barrel to the zone with some accuracy even if you are off-balance or your timing is off.

(2) *Transferring power from back leg into the rest of your swing:* In addition to staying in line with your shoulders, you want to feel that you are transferring your power from your back leg into your front leg. Remember we squat more than we can bench press, because our legs are much stronger than our arms. In terms of the baseball swing, that means power comes from your legs. The only way to transfer that power from your legs and into the baseball is to have the swing sequence in proper order and working from the ground up.

(3) *Better batting average, more solid contact, & dealing with tricky changes in velocity.* A hitter who collapses on his backside too much, or isn't using the back leg properly, ends up an overly rotational swing. In other words, he can't do much more than spin, which creates a poor bat path. This sort of "sit and spin" bat path causes the barrel of your bat to be too quickly in and out of the zone, which results in difficulty handling a wide velocity variance between pitches. Spinning will also result in more swings and misses, or if contact is made it may end being more of a glancing or slicing contact instead of a solid, powerful hit.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee

## How to Execute this Drill

- 1) Set the tee up for a pitch down the middle of the plate. Take your stride as if you were going to hit the baseball.
- 2) After a slight pause start your swing towards the baseball. At the same time take your back leg and kick it back (away from home plate).

Kicking your back leg away from the plate will force your front side to stay in longer than normal to make up for the awkward feet position. Also, by kicking your leg back you are naturally transferring your weight to your front side. Keep your head looking at the contact point and really focus on keeping your upper half as square to home plate<sup>24</sup> as possible.

## Checkpoints

The goal of this drill is to hit line drives up the middle and to the opposite field. By doing this you are over exaggerating the movement you want in the game. This will help keep your front shoulder from opening up too quickly and will help you transfer your weight to your front side properly.

# 16 - ALTERNATING FUNGO AND HEAVY BAT DRILL

## Purpose

This isn't for fixing mechanical flaws in a swing like most drills. The combination of using a heavy and light bat will help your overall strength and bat speed.

## Why this drill is needed

Sprinters will train by running up hills (strength phase) and then by ALSO running down slight inclines (fast twitch and power phase). This drill takes this same concept and uses it for increased bat

speed.

Think of it this way, you lift weight so you can get stronger, but you still need to turn this new strength into functional power for your baseball swing. This concept is why you want to use the heavy and light bat.

Using a heavy bat (a bat that is 2 to 7 ounces heavier than your normal bat.) will build overall strength for your hands, forearms, and just for the overall feel of the bat. If you use a heavy bat often your game bat will feel lighter in your hands and it will give you confidence that you will be able to whip the bat<sup>31</sup> through the zone. However, without using a fungo bat in conjunction with your heavy bat training all you will feel is confidence without any extra bat speed.

This drill is meant for bat speed. This is where the fungo bat comes into play. A fungo bat is a specifically designed bat used by coaches for practice. This bat is not meant to hit any sort of pitching (it is not strong enough and will break).

Typical fungo bats are 35-37 inches long and 17-22 ounces. When you put one of these in your hands you will definitely be able to swing it fast. You want your body and fast twitch muscles to feel how quickly you can swing this bat.

## Equipment

- 1) Batting Tee
- 2) Heavy bat – use a bat that is 2 to 7 oz heavier than your normal bat
- 3) Fungo bat (i.e. light weight bat)

## How to Execute this Drill



- 1) Set the tee up for a pitch down the middle of the plate. You can move the tee around but for this drill it isn't necessary.
- 2) Start off by using the heavy bat and swing. Be sure to warm up before swinging the heavy bat at full speed. It will be more demanding on your joints, muscles, and hands, so it is *highly recommended* to begin by swinging a few times at 50% effort.
- 3) After you've taken 25 swings with the heavy bat, switch to the fungo bat. Swing full speed about 25 repetitions and get the feel of bat speed. Work on swinging quick, not hard.

Variations of this drill: There are many ways to do the Fungo bat/Heavy bat Drill. You can alternate the bats - swing 10 times then swing the fungo 10 times, then repeat. Another option is to use the heavy bat one day as a warm up to your normal bat, and on another day, warm up using the fungo bat.

A note about using bat weights: In previous editions of this book, I said adding a weight to your bat was also a good way to do this drill. I am now going to recommend just using an actual bat that is 2 to 7 ounces heavier than your normal game bat, and here's why... There are so many different types of bat weights on the market now, and each one is placed on a different spot on the bat. This is important: The location of the additional weight has a big impact on the weight distribution of the bat, including how heavy the additional weight will feel to you, and could impact the mechanics of your swing. For example, 5 ounces placed on the far end of your bat will feel much heavier than 5 ounces in the middle of the bat. If you are going to use a bat weight, definitely stick with a weight that goes on the middle of the bat (not on either end). However, I recommend getting an actual bat so that the additional weight will be distributed similarly to your normal bat.

## Checkpoints

- 1) Don't worry so much about where the ball is going, concentrate on making every swing count *with proper form*. You'll know if the bat you're using is too heavy if you can't swing with your normal mechanics.
- 2) Work on swinging quick, not hard. Stay relaxed and don't try to "muscle up" during these swings. You want to feel like the extra weight of the heavy bat is working for you, not against you.
- 3) Make sure to not overdo this drill. Start with 10 heavy bat swings and 10 fungo bat swings in addition to your normal bat. Gradually work up to taking more swings, but don't go past 50 for the heavy bat and 50 for the fungo. This puts extra strain on the hands, forearms and shoulders so if done too often or too heavy (again, don't go more than 7 ounces heavier than your normal bat), could lead to injury. **IMPORTANT** – Be sure to consult a licensed physician before beginning this or any other strength training regimen.
- 4) Try this drill a couple times a week and then take notice of how your body feels. This drill can be very valuable when done in moderation.

# 17 - ONE KNEE DRILL

## Summary

This drill focuses on barrel control and swing path.

## Purpose

As hitters, timing is everything. Pitchers are trying to disrupt our timing, to get us away from our “A” swing.

What separates good hitters from everyone else is that they can still barrel up baseballs, even when they are forced to take their “B” or “C” swings.

This is a great drill for working on your upper half (everything above your waist) and swing path.

Why does this matter so much? If your swing starts to fall apart, as long as your hands are in a good spot, you still have a chance to make good contact.

When your lower half gets out of sync or it puts you in a weak position, your hands are your last hope for a productive swing. You might get fooled by an off-speed pitch or the ball makes a last second move. When this happens, your arms and hands are your last chance to make adjustments mid-swing. No matter what happens, as long as you can control your barrel, you have a chance to hit.

This is why it is so important to be intimately acquainted your upper body’s role in your baseball swing - the feel of the bat in your hands (a feel of where the barrel is at all times) and how to change the speed and direction of the bat as needed.

Isolating your hands and taking your lower half completely out of the drill can help you see how the hands need to work. It will also help you develop your hand/eye coordination. Hand/eye coordination – the ability to put the barrel on the ball - trumps good mechanics every day of the week, and this drill can help you develop that important skill.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee



## How to Execute this Drill

1. Set up the tee as low as possible.
2. Get on your back knee and straighten your front leg. Check and see that your front foot and back knee are in line with the pitcher.
3. Tee positioning - To start with, set up the tee in line with your front knee (See Figure 31). Move the tee around as desired to practice different types of pitches (If it helps, you can look back at Figure 5).

Keeping correct posture through this drill is **VERY IMPORTANT**. As you swing, the tendency is to fall backward onto your back knee. Fight against this momentum shift by keeping your weight on the inside part of your back knee as you swing.

At first you may feel like you are fighting to not tip over, but if you keep working on it you will start to feel your balance point. The only way to swing and not fall over is to have a good hand path. The goal is to get your barrel working on a line with the incoming pitch trajectory, and, as always, completely through the ball.

## Checkpoints

There are a few things you want to accomplish from this drill.

- 1) First, you want to hit a line drive up the middle with gradual elevation so the ball hits 5 to 15 feet off the ground as it hits the back of the cage. You don't want any loopy weak line drives or pop ups when doing this drill. Being able to hit a line drive with backspin shows you are doing this properly.
- 2) There can be a tendency to want to cheat by collapsing<sup>8</sup> on the back knee and swinging up at the baseball (Figure 32). Move the tee around different locations in the hitting zone to create better body and bat control.



# 18 - STEP BACK DRILL

## Summary

The Step Back Drill helps with two things:

(1) Developing a feel for the proper weight shift during the load phase of the baseball swing. Specifically, it will be helpful for those who tend to let their weight get too far over the back foot (see Figure 34). This drill will help you develop a feel for good weight shift. It naturally gets you into an athletic base and lower ½ load without having to think about it. This drill helps create athletic hitters – not robots.

(2) The Step Back Drill also helps with rhythm. As mentioned earlier, rhythm is a critical part of a good baseball swing. You need to have some easy, tension-free movement before your explosive movement. If you don't, your reaction times and bat speed (i.e. power) will not be optimal. This drill helps you to create rhythm and sync between your base<sup>3</sup> and your hands.

## Purpose

A good baseball swing will always have a weight shift phase.

Think of punching a heavy bag. For more power, you will draw your fist back before it strikes forward. Another example is a coil or spring, such as a pogo stick. The coil must be compressed before there is any explosive power. You might also think of a snake that coils before it strikes.

The shift of weight to your back leg is how you coil into position of power for the strike. This is a part of rhythm that can store your power in your back leg and use it to explode on the baseball.

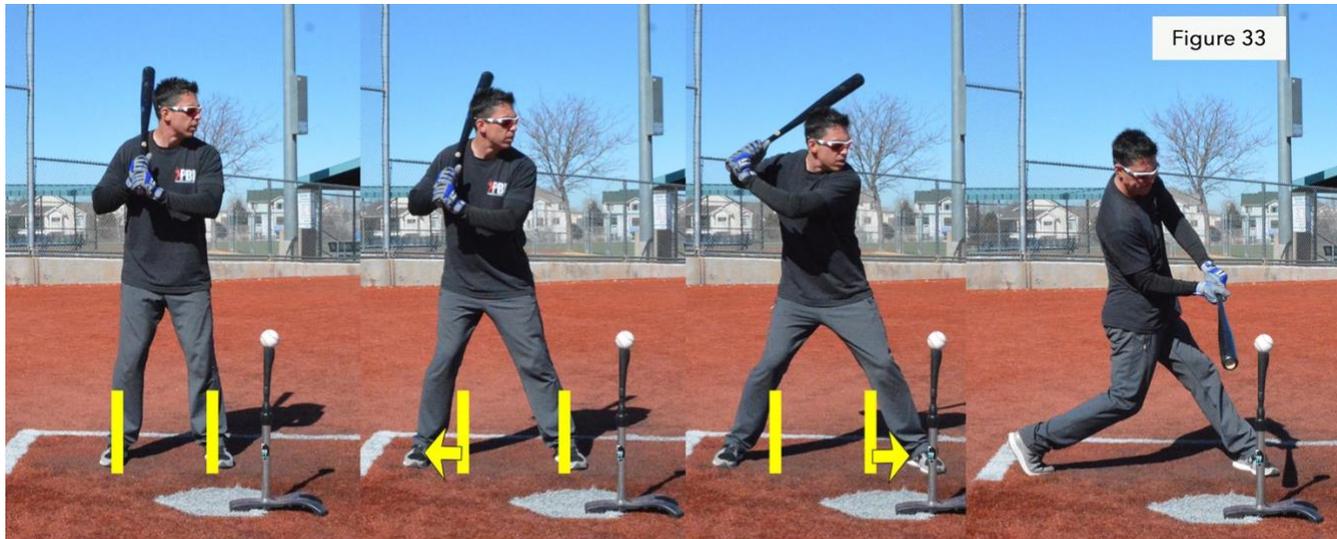
If this movement isn't done properly your rhythm and weight shift will be ineffective, causing your power and bat speed to greatly suffer. This drill can help you get this movement right.

This drill is useful to the hitter whose back knee goes beyond their back foot (see Figure 34). Once this happens we lose all of the power that is stored in our legs, putting us in a weak position.

This weak position also interrupts your rhythm, since being too far over your back foot puts you in a poor balance position. You will end up feeling “stuck,” which is exactly what rhythm is meant to avoid.

## Equipment

- Batting Tee



1. Narrow Stance

2. Step back

3. Stride forward

4. Swing

### How to Execute this Drill:

- 1) *Setup* - Set up the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate. Address home plate in your normal hitting stance<sup>26</sup>. Next, bring both feet to shoulder width.
- 2) *Rear foot steps back* - To start this drill take your back foot and put it in the spot you just moved it in from (a couple inches back toward the catcher).
- 3) *Front foot strides forward* - Next, take your normal stride with your front foot while using a slight inward coil of the front hip. The action lifting your front creates a weight shift to your back leg. This small move helps control the stride so we don't just fall and land hard on our front foot. Controlling the stride becomes extremely important as you face pitchers that command their off-speed pitches with regularity.
- 4) *Swing* – As always, work to hit line drives.

### Checkpoints

- 1) **IMPORTANT** – As you shift your weight backward, pay attention to your back knee. Keep it inside of your back foot (see Figure 34). **This is a power position.** Once you get outside your foot and your weight shifts from your big toe to the outside edge of your foot, you have lost this power position.
- 2) **Checkpoint #2** – Rhythm. Once you can repeat this action with your back knee in the proper position, be sure to keep



the rhythm I described in your hands and finish your swing. If it gets choppy, your weight has probably shifted too far toward the catcher. Keeping your back knee inside your back foot (Figure 34) will help maintain rhythm.

- 3) Checkpoint #3 - As always, try to hit a line drive back up the middle to the back of the cage.

## **19 - NO ROTATION DRILL**

### **Summary**

With so many moving pieces in a baseball swing, sometimes it's difficult to tell which motion is causing which problem. This drill isolates your upper half so you can work on making it better without the movement of your legs and lower body to interfere.

### **Purpose**

Typically, when the lower half of the body works properly, the rest of the baseball swing follows. The challenge comes when the pitcher manages to mess with your timing or balance.

This is where our plan B comes into play. Even when our base<sup>3</sup> is not perfect, if we have a good idea of how to use our hands we can still hit.

This drill allows you to feel your hands work in your swing. By taking out any lower body action you will notice right away how simple a swing can be. If the lower body action is not perfect it will affect your hands. This drill makes the hands a priority and helps develop a correct hand path without being influenced by other swing variables.

This is a good time to focus on things like the feel of the bat in your hands and where the barrel is, a level bat path, being direct to the baseball, rhythm, having relaxed hands, and other upper body concerns. Without using our lower half you will learn how small changes, such as relaxed hands, affect how hard you can actually hit a ball.

This is a good drill to work on developing rhythm. As we've already discussed, the idea of "swing quick not hard" is essential to achieving maximum bat speed. Trying to swing hard causes your body to become tense which causes your big muscles to take over the entire swing and slow your bat speed down. Thinking "quick" allows your body to stay relaxed and function correctly during the swing. The big muscles start the bat then the smaller muscles (forearms, wrists, hands) take over to finish off a whipping action that helps create the best bat speed your body will allow.

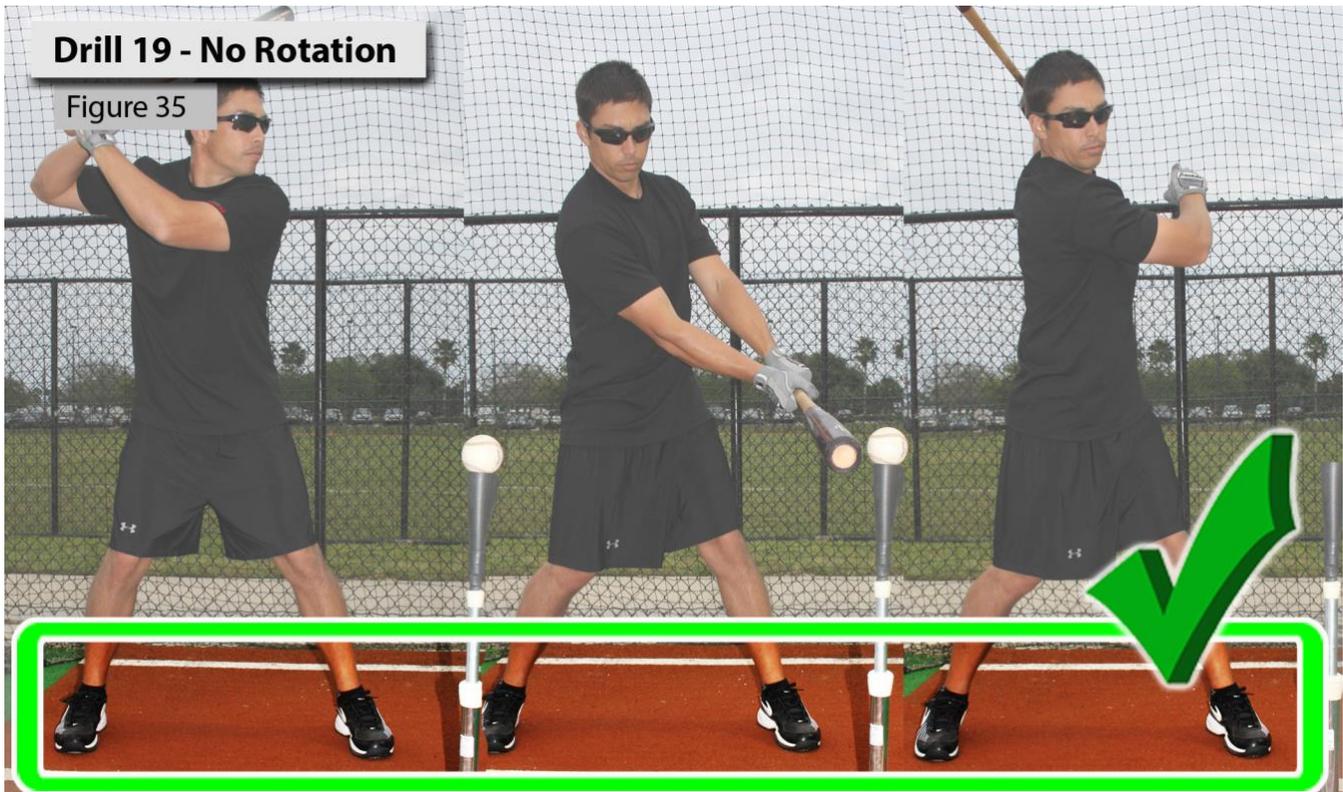
Rhythm is the going to allow you to achieve this goal. It is the slow moving motion that keeps your body relaxed and quick.

### **Equipment**

□ Batting Tee

## How to Execute this Drill

- 1) *Setup* - Set up the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate and address home plate in your normal stance.



- 2) *Feet position* - Take your normal stride without swinging. In other words, stride like you are about to swing but keep your hands back. Wherever your stride takes you, that is the spot where your feet will stay throughout this entire drill.
- 3) *Weight distribution* - Get your lower half to a good 50/50 weight distribution between both feet. Once you get into this stance, your legs should stay put. Your back foot will NOT rotate (See Figure 35). This is 100% upper body.
- 4) *Rhythm* - Have your hands in a comfortable position. Keep them relaxed and moving.
- 5) *Load* - To get bat speed, you will need to load your hands properly. They may start in a different place than they would in the game and that's ok. Often we load our hands by taking them back, and we stop, before we move forward to hit. Rather than doing that, try this instead... work to have continual movement in your hands as you load and all the way through until hitting the ball. Think of it almost like a sprinter getting a running start instead starting still out of the blocks.

- 6) *Swing and follow-through* - Once you make contact with the baseball, keep your feet still. Your follow through will be cut off compared to your normal “long through” follow through. It will be easier to finish with one hand.

### **Checkpoints:**

- 1) Focus on keeping rhythm with your relaxed hands as you start your swing. Feel your hands work freely throughout your swing.
- 2) Check for a proper, level bat path. Let the ball flight off the bat be your feedback.
- 3) Focus on the feel of the bat in your hands, particularly as you move the tee around to simulate different pitches. See how your bat path feels when hitting the pitch inside as compared to the pitch outside, etc. Even though we are only using our upper body, try to let the barrel run through the zone as long as possible. Be aware if you are arcing through the zone and getting around the ball, as that swing cuts down what should be feet of adjustability to mere inches.

This simple approach should make it easier to hit every ball on the barrel. It is important to stay relaxed with your upper body and not try to hit the ball too hard. There needs to be a rhythm, a quickness, and relaxed easiness to your swing during this drill. If done properly, this can translate into increased bat speed and more impressive results in games.

## 20 - SOCCER BALL DRILL

### Summary

The purpose of this drill is to keep all of your weight inside/between your feet. When you get outside of your knees/feet, you will see a significant loss of power and inconsistent balance. This drill is similar to the Step Back Drill with what it is trying to accomplish, but it does it in a much different way.

This drill will help cut down on head movement. If your head moves during your swing, it keeps you from seeing the ball clearly. If you can't see the ball, you can't hit it.

Another benefit from this drill is that it will not only help you keep your weight on the inside part of your back foot or big toe, it will also help you create power without taking a big stride.

The best hitters keep all their moves of rhythm, balance and sequencing between their legs. Once the upper body gets outside the legs, power and balance are lost.

### Purpose

This drill helps control your stride, which has several important benefits. Firstly, when you control your stride you will naturally cut down your head movement, allowing you to better see the movement and location of the pitch. As I said already, if you can't see the baseball, then you can't hit it. It may sound crazy, but *seeing the baseball* is probably the most overlooked step in hitting – even though it may be one of the most important.

Secondly, if you look at the best hitters in the game, the stride is used for timing and is not just a fall forward onto the front leg. Even those who have leg kicks, have the ability to control their stride and can vary the speed at which their front foot touches down. This not only helps with timing, but also helps to keep the eyes still (it's tough to see the ball if your head is bouncing around).

Being able to control the stride seems simple, but for many people it is a very difficult body control move. I can tell you as a long time player and now as a pro scout, one major mechanical separator between Major League hitters and those who are still trying to make it is the ability to control the stride.

This drill keeps your weight shift in between your feet. It is common for hitters to get too far back on their back leg so the weight gets outside of their back foot. One way to tell if this is happening to you is to see if your weight is on the outside edge of your foot. This creates balance problems as well as decreased power with your legs. Instead, you want to feel your weight on the inside of your back foot – which is one of the things this drill will help you work on.

When your base is tight, centered and balanced you can put yourself in a position to really fire your hips at the ball with more intensity while keeping balance and control over your body.

### Equipment

- Batting Tee
- Soccer Ball, tether ball, basketball, or foursquare ball

## How to Execute this Drill

- 1) Set up the tee for a pitch down the middle of the plate and address home plate as you would in a game.
- 2) Take the soccer ball (tether ball, kick ball, etc.) and place it between your legs above your knees. Keep the ball secure by applying pressure with both legs. This will ensure your weight is distributed correctly, since it is impossible to hold the ball and make the common mistakes we discussed earlier.
- 3) With the ball between your legs, grip the bat normally and swing.

## Checkpoints

Keep the soccer ball from falling out when you load or stride. If it happens to fall out after you make contact, that's ok.

By applying pressure to the ball between your legs it will be impossible to have your weight too far back in your stance, have too long of a stride and have a lot of head movement. This drill addresses 3 common problems many hitters deal with.



## PART 4 – FINAL THOUGHTS

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What do Joe Mauer, Brian Dozier, and Joey Gallo have in common? They all use a batting tee to groove their baseball swing. On many occasions I've seen these extremely talented hitters - and many others - use a batting tee regularly. I hope this book has confirmed for you that the batting tee is not just for Little Leaguers but is actually a critical piece of equipment for even the most accomplished big leaguers.

If these guys use a tee to fine tune and improve their swings, then it's probably a good thing for the rest of us.

The batting tee has been a very important piece of baseball equipment in my own career. Preparation is what separates the good from the great players and, as I said before, I've personally observed that even the best players in the world consistently use a tee as one of the two most common daily preparations that ball players use (the other is underhand soft toss).

These drills are the culmination of what other professional players and I are doing on the tee. Sessions off a batting tee are where adjustments start to take place in your swing. It's a much easier progression to make changes off a tee and start implementing them into your soft toss then carrying into batting practice and eventually into the game.

I made reference to a hitting book which was made mandatory reading by the head coach at my junior college, and I am glad it was. *The Mike Schmidt Study* is a great book about the evolution of the baseball swing and what is most useful today. If you want to continue your education on hitting, this book is a must read.

Another book on my recommended reading list, and which fueled my enthusiasm about using a batting tee, is *The Way of Baseball: Finding Stillness at 95 mph* by two-time All-Star Shawn Green. He explains how using a batting tee allowed him to slow things down in the batter's box. This book has other facets of course but it primarily talks about how the batting tee allowed him to change his swing and it gave him the confidence to be an incredible Major League hitter.

I hope that this book on batting tee drills has been helpful and informative. I strive to give the best information from my experience as well as from other professional players, coaches, and scouts that I have met during my professional playing career. I am available for questions through my website, ProBaseballinsider.com, where you can also find extensive (and free) baseball tips and instruction from the pros.

Play hard!

Doug Bernier

Founder of Probaseballinsider.com – Free baseball tips and instruction from professional baseball players, coaches, trainers, and scouts



# *ABOUT THE AUTHOR: DOUG BERNIER*

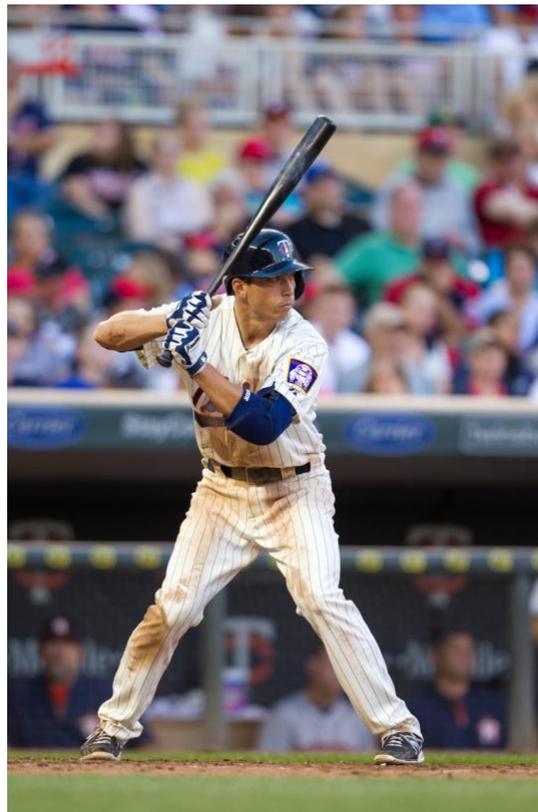
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## **Founder of Pro Baseball Insider.com**

Doug Bernier debuted in the Major Leagues in 2008 with the Colorado Rockies and has played professional baseball for 16 years, including the Colorado Rockies, Minnesota Twins, New York Yankees, Pittsburgh Pirates, and Texas Rangers organizations.

- ❑ Doug is a veteran utility infielder with Major League experience at every infield position.
- ❑ Career fielding percentage at all levels after 16 years of professional baseball is .976.
- ❑ 2016 – Hit for the cycle, 1st player ever to hit for the cycle in Round Rock Express 17 year franchise history
- ❑ Pacific Coast League Player of the Week in 2016
- ❑ 2016 Co-MVP for TX Rangers AAA affiliate Round Rock Express
- ❑ 2013 MN Twins Minor League Defensive Player of the Year
- ❑ 2014 Defensive Player of the Year for Rochester Redwings

Bernier is also the founder of Pro Baseball Insider.com (PBI), which has 100's of pages of free baseball tips & instruction – exclusively from professional baseball players, coaches, trainers, and scouts.



# APPENDIXES & RESOURCES

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## APPENDIX A – BASEBALL TERMS

<sup>1</sup>**Backside** - Is the part of your swing that drives or pushes through the zone. It includes the back foot, back knee, back hip, butt, and back shoulder. All of these parts combine to make the backside of your swing.

<sup>2</sup>**Backspin** - When a ball has front to back spin. This spin will make the ball travel straighter and further. Similar spin to a pitchers fastball.

<sup>3</sup>**Base** – Is used interchangeably with “**bottom half**”. Everything beneath your waist: Both feet, both knees, both legs and hips.

<sup>4</sup>**Bottom half** – Is used interchangeably in this book with the term “base”. Is everything beneath your waist: Both feet, both knees, both legs, and hips. This is sometimes referred to as "lower half".

<sup>5</sup>**Bottom Hand** – This is the hand of your lead arm. It is also the closest hand to the knob of the bat. For a right-handed hitter, the bottom hand is his left hand; and for a lefty the bottom hand would be his right hand.

<sup>6</sup>**Cast barrel** - Also “casting your barrel;” Is when the barrel of your bat gets away from your body too quickly or enters the hitting zone too soon. The goal is to keep the barrel inside the baseball<sup>11</sup> as long as possible, if the barrel gets outside the baseball you are casting your barrel. This will slow your bat speed down considerably and you will see a lot of weak ground balls to the pull side.

<sup>7</sup>**Center line** – The center line is an ideal imaginary axis line which is drawn through the hitter’s body during the baseball swing *at the point of contact*. The line should be drawn through the hitter’s head, body and back knee, ending at the ground at the midpoint between your feet.

<sup>8</sup>**Collapsing backside** - This term describes what happens if any part of your back side (Back foot, back knee, back hip, butt, and back shoulder) fails to stay strong, tall and level. If one of these parts doesn't stay level, it will cause the batter to have an uppercut swing. If the shoulders remain level and the swing is level that is a good indicator that your backside is strong and is not collapsing.

<sup>9</sup>**Front shoulder in** or **Front shoulder closed** - This is keeping your front shoulder as still as possible as you start your swing. Hitters that over swing tend to assist their legs by pulling with their front shoulder, opening up their body too early making them susceptible to pitches on the outer half of the plate.

A good key is to start with your chin on your front shoulder and keep it there until you know the location of the pitch and start to swing (also see Drill #15 – the Kick Back Drill).

<sup>10</sup>**Groove the swing** - Is another way of saying a hitter can successfully repeat his swing in games as well as in practice. As former MLB All-Star Albie Pearson explained in his introduction, “it takes time and many thousands of swings to craft an effective baseball swing, and to make that swing so second-

nature that your body will react with good mechanics when you face live pitching and split-second timing in a game.” When you can regularly take your “A” swing into the games, you have successfully grooved your swing.

**<sup>11</sup>Inside the Ball** – This term can be used in either of the following two ways:

(1) to describe the place on the baseball where you ideally want to make contact. If you took a vertical axis and stuck it through a baseball, the half of the ball closest to you is the inside part of the ball. Hitting this area on a baseball gives you the best probability of hitting line drives and driving balls with the proper backspin; and

(2) “Inside the baseball” can also be used to describe the area between the baseball and your body. In a mechanically sound baseball swing, you want to keep your bat and hands inside the baseball. This means keep your hands and the entire bat in the space between the ball and your body as long as possible. This is the ideal path to the baseball, and it is the opposite of the term “casting your barrel.”

**<sup>12</sup>Elbow in the slot** – This is when your back elbow is tucked tightly into the side of your body. This is an important part of your swing for several reasons. It helps you keep your hands inside the baseball and it keeps the barrel of the bat on the proper bat path. If your elbow is “in the slot”, then it will keep your barrel above your hands until it reaches the hitting zone and then allows the barrel to level out as it goes through the zone. This is a better bat path to make contact with the baseball consistently and avoid the dreaded “swing and miss.”

**<sup>13</sup>Flat Bat** - This refers to when the bat is going through the hitting zone and your hands and the barrel of the bat are level. This should happen just before contact, at contact, and just after contact.

Note: Sometimes people use this to refer to your set up and holding your bat so its parallel to the ground.

**<sup>14</sup>Jammed** – From time to time, you may hear the common baseball phrase “getting jammed.” This happens when the baseball makes contact with the bat too close to the batter’s hands, or in other words, somewhere between the ideal contact on the barrel and the batter’s hands. It usually happens on a sinker or fastball in, or if the baseball swing was a little late. Often the result is a broken bat or vibrating stinging hands.

**<sup>15</sup>Launch position** – This is your body position after load and separation<sup>20</sup>; it is the moment you begin to fire your bat at the baseball. While separation<sup>20</sup> is getting into a strong position to hit, the launch position is the point where you start your swing. Your front foot is down, hands are back somewhere between your back shoulder and ear height.

**<sup>16</sup>Linear movement** – **This term should NOT be confused with the Linear Method of Hitting.** The word “linear” means in a line (as opposed to spinning or rotating), but this should not be confused with the Linear Method of Hitting, which takes the concept of linear motion to its extreme. It should be noted that even highly rotational swings often have some elements of linear movement in them. This book reflects the idea that the best baseball players use a combination of linear and rotational motion in their baseball swings.

In baseball, linear movement simply means moving toward or transferring the weight from your backside to your front side.

Linear movement is done with a firm front leg so your body can stay behind your front foot. This is done with your bottom half<sup>4</sup> so your head can stay still and see the ball clearly. Linear movement in a baseball swing is beneficial for several reasons: (1) It keeps the bat in the hitting zone longer and increases your chances of making solid contact with the baseball; (2) Keeps your body motion and bat path driving through the baseball instead of pulling off toward third base (or toward 1st base if you are left handed hitter).

**<sup>17</sup>Losing the barrel** - Is when the barrel of your bat dips below your hands. You want the barrel of the bat above your hands as long as possible until it levels out just before the point of contact. This is easier to see from a side view (ex. 1st base side when watching a right handed hitter). Losing the barrel creates extra length in your swing making it slower and less efficient.



**<sup>18</sup>Palm up / Palm down** - Is the strongest position you can be in with your hands and bat **at the point of contact**.

If you were to open your top hand<sup>30</sup> at contact it should be facing up. If you were to open up your bottom hand at contact it should be facing down towards the ground.

A common problem happens when hitters lose this power position because they roll the wrist over too early in the swing process.

**<sup>19</sup>Rolling over the wrist too early** - A common problem happens when hitters lose this power position because they roll the wrist over too early in the swing process. The ideal and most powerful hitting form is to be in the palm up/palm down<sup>18</sup> position at contact.

**<sup>20</sup>Separation** - Is a power position achieved when your front foot strides away from your hands and makes contact with the ground. When done correctly you will feel a tightness in your front side (oblique area). This position resembles a stretched rubber band before its let go. This stretching of your body produces bat speed and power. Separation is getting into a strong position to hit.

**<sup>21</sup>Short to the ball** - See **shortening your swing<sup>22</sup>** (below).

**<sup>22</sup>Shortening your swing** - Is taking out unnecessary movement in your swing up until the contact point. This never-ending project allows you to wait longer to swing. The goal is to make every move count in your swing from the setup to contact.

**<sup>23</sup>Space** – In this book, space refers to distance necessary for the bat to build up speed and make contact with the baseball in the optimal hitting zone/angle. The phrase “create space” or “creating space” refers to the bad habits a hitter can fall into when his timing is off and the ball gets too deep into the hitting zone.

When this happens, the natural tendency is to fall back onto our back leg to create more room to hit the ball without getting jammed<sup>14</sup>. These actions usually do more harm than good. If you are late with your swing and feel like the pitch is beating you, you should still hit through the ball even if it means you may get jammed.

<sup>24</sup>**Square to home plate** - This is when your feet and shoulders are in a straight line towards the pitcher. Your stance<sup>26</sup> is neither open nor closed. Your body, belt buckle, and knees are facing home plate. Also referred to as "square stance<sup>27</sup>".

<sup>25</sup>**Squash the bug** - This term has been used to teach hitters to rotate on their back foot. Rotation is good but when you spin on the ball of your back foot there is a negative tendency for your swing to produce an uppercut. Your bat will be in and out of the hitting zone too quickly. Instead of rotating on the ball of your foot, think of rotating by getting your back foot on its toe. This will help flatten and keep your bat in the zone longer which is ideal.

<sup>26</sup>**Stance** – also “**batting stance**” or “**hitting stance.**” This refers to your body position and feet placement when you are ready to hit and before your baseball swing begins.

Commonly used terms include “open,” “closed,” and “square<sup>24</sup>”. An open stance is when your front foot in your hitting stance is further away from home plate than your back foot. Alternatively, closed refers to when your front foot is closer to home plate than your back foot.

A stance may also be referred to as narrow or wide, which refers to the distance between your feet. Naturally, a wide stance will be a lower one. Click to read more about the pros and cons of different types of stances.

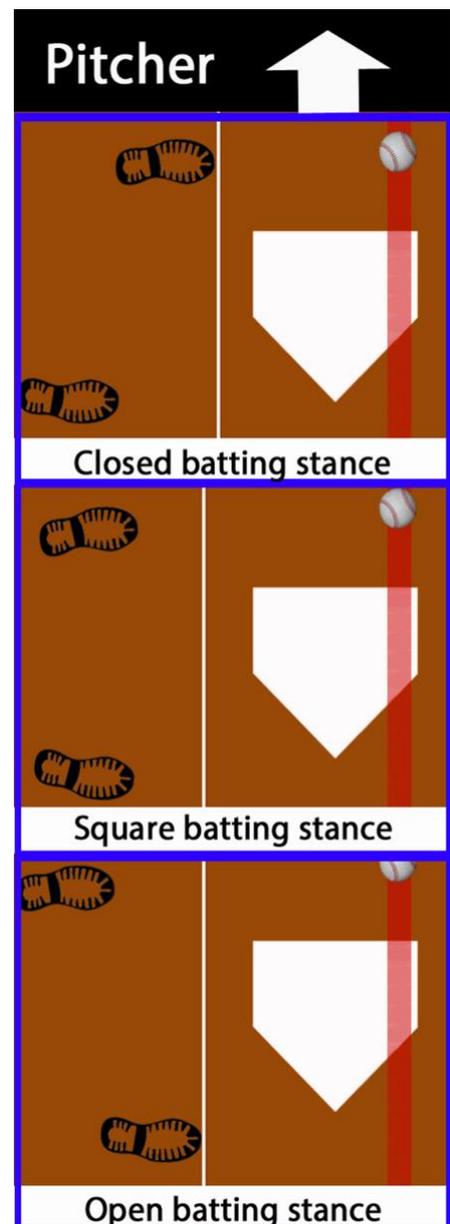
<sup>27</sup>**Tight** - Is the term used to describe your hands staying close to your body as you deliver the barrel of the bat to the baseball. Your hands will stay close to your body right up until contact where you will throw your hands in the direction of the ball.

<sup>28</sup>**Tightening up** - See **Tight**. It's not the opposite of staying loose and relaxed with your swing. This refers to eliminating unnecessary movement from your swing, keeping your hands close to your body as you bring the bat to contact. This is also known as making your swing more efficient.

<sup>29</sup>**Topspin** - When a ball has a back to front spin. This spin makes the ball fall to the ground quicker and it doesn't travel as far. Similar spin to a pitcher's curve ball.

<sup>30</sup>**Top Hand** – May also be called the rear arm. When you grip a bat it's the closes hand toward the trademark (the bottom hand would closest to the knob). A right-handed hitter's top hand would be his right hand. A lefty's top hand would be his left hand.

<sup>31</sup>**Whip the bat** - Is a term meaning quick bat speed. Don't swing hard - this uses big muscles, slowing your swing down. Instead, swing quick. This lets your big muscles start your swing but you will finish with your hands, quickening your swing.



<sup>32</sup>**Hooking line drive** – If you play golf, you may already be familiar with the terms “hook” and “slice.” These refer to balls hit in the air that are not flying straight. Rather, they are curving to the right or the left. A hook curves toward you, and a slice curves away from you. In other words, if you’re a right handed hitter, the hooked ball is curving to your left (toward you) and the sliced ball is curving toward your right (away from you). And before you stop reading because you thought this was a baseball book, just hang with me a bit longer.

A hooking line drive is a one that has topspin and ends up curving in the air toward you (as opposed to flying straight. If you’re a righty, that means it’s curving to left field).

Now why is this a problem?

When you hit the baseball and see it is often or consistently hooking, it should be a big red flag for several reasons:

- 1) Your bat path is off. You are getting around and outside of the pitch, which is a much weaker, slower bat path that does not spend as much time inside the strike zone as it could... which makes it much harder to hit the ball.
- 2) It means you hit the ball with top spin, and top spin will limit your power at the plate. With top spin, your hits will be weak ones that barely make it over the infielders’ heads, instead of the powerful line drive or homer you really wanted.
- 3) It’s a symptom that generally means you’ll have trouble hitting off speed pitches and pitches that are on the outer part of the zone.

So, if you want to hit homeruns or powerful line drives, and you want to have a good batting average, and you want to have good plate coverage... pay attention if you start to notice a pattern of hitting hooking line drives.

## APPENDIX 2 – ANATOMY OF A BASEBALL BAT

**Anatomy of the baseball bat** - This chart clarifies terminology relating to the baseball bat.



## RESOURCES

Schmidt, M. & Ellis, R. (1994). *The Mike Schmidt Study: Hitting theory, skills and technique*. Atlanta: McGriff & Bell.

Yellin, S. & Biancalana, B. (2010). *7 Secrets of World Class Athletes*.

MLB Network's Diamond Demos interview with Edgar Martinez. Published on MLB.com on June 20, 2018. <https://www.mlb.com/video/edgar-martinez-talks-hitting/c-2176406483>

## LEGAL NOTICE

THE INFORMATION IN THIS BOOK IS MEANT TO SUPPLEMENT, NOT REPLACE, PROPER BASEBALL TRAINING. LIKE ANY SPORT INVOLVING SPEED, EQUIPMENT, BALANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS, BASEBALL POSES SOME INHERENT RISK. CONSULT A PHYSICIAN BEFORE BEGINNING ANY NEW PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. READERS ARE ADVISED TO TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR SAFETY AND KNOW THEIR LIMITS. BEFORE PRACTICING THE SKILLS DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOK, BE SURE THAT YOUR EQUIPMENT IS WELL MAINTAINED, AND DO NOT TAKE RISKS BEYOND YOUR LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE, APTITUDE, TRAINING, AND COMFORT LEVEL. THE AUTHOR, PUBLISHER AND EDITORS OF THIS BOOK ASSUME NO LIABILITY FOR ACTIONS TAKEN ACCORDING TO THE ADVICE OF THIS BOOK, AND THE ACTIONS DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOK ARE PERFORMED AT THE READER'S OWN RISK.