

BULLDOG Baseball/Softball

“OFFENSE”

Offense puts pressure on the defense. The more balls that are put into play regardless of hits or errors the more often runs will be scored and defenses will break down.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

Hitting Steps

- Set-up
- Rhythm
- Stride & Load
- Swing down & Squish the bug
- Follow thru, Knob to the outfield

Hitting a baseball may be the most difficult skill to master in all of sports. The best of the best are those who are successful only 1 out of 3 tries. In no other sport would you be good enough to play. Hitting is not only physical but it is equally a mental skill that is difficult to master.

The following are foundational qualities that all good hitters will have:

- ✓ *Excellent tracking skills*
- ✓ *Motion (bodies in motion stay in motion)*
- ✓ *“Trigger” action with hands*
- ✓ *Hip action, weight transfer, upper body rotation*
- ✓ *Bat control*
- ✓ *Short compact swing – with flat low finish*
- ✓ *Follow thru to finish*
- ✓ *Knowledge of the strike zone*
- ✓ *Ability to hit in all situations*
- ✓ *Excellent bunting technique*
- ✓ *Able to pull, go up the middle, and hit to opposite field on command*
- ✓ *Ability to adjust*

Understanding there is no substitution for hard work

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

LEVEL STANDARDS:

Hitting skills are universal at all levels, but ultimately come down to hard work. Hitting is the one skill you can almost always count on players to practice on their own, but if their skills sets are incorrect they are only reinforcing poor skills which will become bad habits that are very, very difficult to break. Taking time to train all athletes on your team in the basics of hitting will provide them with the skill sets to be great hitters on their own. All levels have the obligation to reach all points listed above.

8U player:

- ✓ Have a working knowledge of hitting steps
- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine contact with the ball
- ✓ Begin to practice hitting pitches to all fields

10U player:

- ✓ Can easily demonstrate a solid knowledge of hitting steps
- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine contact with the ball
- ✓ Have an understanding of the strike zone
- ✓ Ability to hit pitches to all fields consistently – PMO Chart
- ✓ Begin to understand bunting techniques and be able with confidence to put a bunt down

12U/14U player:

- ✓ Can easily demonstrate a solid knowledge of hitting steps
- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine contact with the ball
- ✓ Know the strike zone
- ✓ Ability to hit pitches to all fields consistently – PMO Chart
- ✓ Understand situational hitting and able to accomplish it frequently
- ✓ Achieve with a high degree of routine all parts of bunting techniques and be able to consistently put a bunt down.

TERMS & VOCABULARY:

Setup: Much like athlete position, feet are slightly wider than shoulder width. Both feet are in parallel to each other and perpendicular to plate. Weight is evenly distributed on balls of feet. Knocking knuckles are lined up on bat grip (pointer fingers to check). Hands are back (to shoulder), up (to shoulder height), and in (towards shoulder). Bat should be at a 45 degree angle behind head (NOT WRAPPED). Tall body with head centered and vertical.

Rhythm: The gentle movement of the body in a rocking cyclical motion to keep the body loose and ready to strike. In all parts of the game there is gentle movement and hitting is NO DIFFERENT.

Stride and Load: The act of getting the body ready to strike at the ball. Generally started when the pitcher breaks motion towards plate. Timing of rhythm should put the hands and weight toward the back side of the hitter (load). Generally an accepted toe touch (stride) at the front to begin the loading action of the body.

Swing Down: A downward angle of the hands at the location of the ball with the whipping action of the bat head to follow. Hands should be to the inside of the ball and tight with the body, exploding out and away on contact. Contact ideally with the ball is through the middle to effectively hit more line drives than any other type of hit.

Squish Bug: The act of rotating the back leg, hip and shoulders through the point of contact on the "Swing down". This unleashes the concentrated centripetal force that is generated by the body in the swing motion.

Follow Thru, knob to the outfield: At the point of contact when the squish bug action has occurred, a complete two handed follow thru is critical for finishing the swing. What actually occurs is the wrists snap and rotate the barrel of the bat on contact with the ball, if contact is made in the middle/down portion of the ball the action of the wrist snap and follow thru will drive the ball harder and farther in return. The hands should then finish the swing with a flat low follow through with the bat head ending up behind the shoulders of the hitter and the knob of the bat pointing into the OF.

Concentration Hitting – PMO Chart

<u>Type of Concentration</u>	<u>When to do it</u>	<u>What type of Pitch</u>	<u>Things to think about</u>
Pull hitting	Depends	Middle in, out in front	Drive the ball, good hip action, contact out in front
Up the middle	Depends	Middle, on	WAIT, snap the wrists, and spin his cap, contact on the plate, SCARE THE PITCHER!!!
Opposite field hitting	Depends	Middle out, back	LONG Wait, keep hands and hips from going early, contact back and out

Situational Hitting - Chart

<u>Type of Situation</u>	<u>When to do it</u>	<u>What type of Pitch</u>	<u>Things to think about</u>
Behind the runner	Runner on >2 outs	R – middle out, WAIT L – middle in, PULL	Move the runner along, give up your self
Sacrifice Fly	Runner on 3b >2 outs	Something you can lift and drive	Score the run, lift & drive the ball to the outfield
Hit and Run	When signaled in	Any pitch	Contact, to the hole, drive the ball, protect the runner, SWING!!!
Two Strikes	With two strikes	ANYTHING CLOSE	Shorten swing, choke up, and protect the plate, anything that is close, WIN THE BATTLE!!!
Two Outs	With two outs	A pitch you can hit	Make solid contact, keep the inning going, protect the plate

Situational Bunting - Chart

<u>Type of Bunt</u>	<u>When to Square</u>	<u>What type of Pitch</u>	<u>Things to think about</u>
Sacrifice	Square early	STRIKES only	Angles, past the pitcher, move the runner, give up yourself (two-for)
Suicides	Square late	Any pitch	Get it down, timing, angles, score the runner, must get a piece
For a Hit	Square late	Strikes only	Angles, make them work, force a middle infielder to make the play (2B!!!), get on base, open your hitting lanes

Slap	Square early	Good pitch to hit	Draw in the fielders, rip it past their heads, and SCARE them!!!
Fake	Depends on situation	A ball, or 1 st strike	Draw in the fielders, get them thinking!!! Open up your hitting lanes

DRILLS:

Coach Controlled groups – Smallest groups relating to # of Coaches able to work. All drills can be used for all levels, however they should be qualified for the skill level. Do not be afraid to challenge the athletes, but be conscious that if they experience consistent failure the drill will be counter productive. One player hitting while eleven shag is what is killing the engagement factor and making baseball all the more boring. LIMIT THESE ACTIONS!!!!!!!

Hitting Drill Goals:

1. Get in and get out
2. Repetitions
3. Quality over Quantity
4. No bad habits
5. CONCENTRATION

Drills can be modified dependent on indoor/outdoor, facilities, and equipment

Live BP in cage w/short toss

- ✓ Cage can be divided into two stations - with hitters in the middle back to back with square screen separating and L-screened pitchers throwing from the ends
- ✓ Helmets, Throw down Plates, Baseballs, Bats
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs
- ✓ Reps w/ simulated speed focusing on Hitting situations or Pull/Middle/Opposite. BP pitcher calls situation or P.M.O. and hitter attempts to hit accordingly.

Simulated game in cage w/ pitchers (can substitute a machine)

- ✓ Cage is setup with portable mound on one end with L-screen
- ✓ Helmets, Throw down Plate, Baseballs, Bats
- ✓ Hitting groups with catcher/pitcher pairs staying in cage. Catchers in full gear.
- ✓ Game situation with extra hitters calling balls and strikes
- ✓ At bats in game scenarios. Catcher calls pitches, pitcher throws accordingly. Hitter is aware of situation based on game scenario.

Soft toss with mini whiffles

- ✓ Screen or area to hit in
- ✓ Throw down Plates, mini whiffles, Bats (hit stick (broom handles) may be substituted for better hand/eye)
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs
- ✓ Reps focusing on going up the middle and opposite field. Partner should flip ball toward front hip landing either in the middle (hit up the middle) of the plate or front outside corner (hit oppo).

DRILLS (continued):

Top/bottom Soft toss with whiffles (colored balls can be substituted)

- ✓ Screen or area to hit in
- ✓ Throw down Plates, whiffles (colored balls), Bats
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs
- ✓ Reps focusing on hand eye coordination. Partner should flip two balls toward front hip landing in the middle (hit up the middle) of the plate. As partner tosses balls he calls “top” or “bottom” hitter attempts to hit whatever ball is called

Soft toss with whiffles

- ✓ Screen or area to hit in
- ✓ Throw down Plates, whiffles, Bats
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs
- ✓ Reps focusing on Pull/Middle/Opposite field hitting. Partner should flip ball toward front hip landing in the middle of the plate (the hitter is working on spray hitting with any pitch). As partner tosses balls he calls “pull”, “middle”, or “oppo” hitter attempts to hit the ball in the direction called.

Short toss with whiffles (colored situation balls may be substituted)

- ✓ Area to hit in (L-screen, Square screen if available)
- ✓ Throw down Plates, whiffles, Bats, Bucket
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs (can be done in groups)
- ✓ Reps focusing on situational hitting (behind runner, sac fly, hit and run, two strikes, two outs – PLEASE SEE SITUATION CHART). Partner sitting on bucket should either short toss the ball (if L-screen or no screen) or underhand pitch the ball (if square screen) over the plate, as a simulated pitch. Before partner throws the balls he calls out the situation, hitter attempts to hit the ball accordingly.

Opposite Field Short toss with whiffles

- ✓ Area to hit in (L-screen, Square screen if available)
- ✓ Throw down Plates, whiffles, Bats, Bucket
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs (can be done in groups)
- ✓ Reps focusing on opposite field hitting. Partner will be set up to the right side of where the pitcher would usually be (to the left with left handed batter). Partner sitting on bucket should either short toss the ball (if L-screen or no screen) or underhand pitch the ball (if square screen) over the outer half of the plate, as a simulated pitch. Hitter does not alter his stance, focus on driving the ball back where it came from

“T” work with whiffles

- ✓ Screen or area to hit in
- ✓ Throw down Plates, whiffles, “T”, Bats
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs
- ✓ Reps w/ focusing on Pull/Middle/Opposite. Partners loads “T” and calls for Pull/Middle/Opposite hitter attempts to hit accordingly.

DRILLS (continued):

HIGH/LOW “T” work with whiffles

- ✓ Screen or area to hit in
- ✓ Throw down Plates, whiffles, 2 “T’s”, Bats
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs
- ✓ Reps w/ focusing on Pull & Middle or Middle & Opposite. Partners loads “T” and calls for

High or Low.

DOUBLE “T” swing down work with whiffles

- ✓ Screen or area to hit in
- ✓ Throw down Plates, whiffles, 2 “T’s”, Bats
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs
- ✓ Reps w/ focusing on downward swing with/out upper cut. “T’s” are lined up directly behind one another with back ball one ball height below front. Partner loads both “T’s” while hitter attempts to hit front ball without contacting back ball.

Hitting Sticks

- ✓ Area to hit in
- ✓ Throw down Plates, Hitting stick, Bats
- ✓ Partners- trade jobs
- ✓ Reps w/ focusing on various locations and Pull/Middle/Opposite. A partner holds hitting stick in various positions for Hitter to hit. May call out pull/middle/opposite.

Hitting circle

- ✓ Area to hit in
- ✓ Bats
- ✓ Have Hitters gather in a large circle with enough room to swing bats with out hitting others
- ✓ Coach led commands (see hitting steps). Emphasis on hitting steps and proper mechanics.

GAMES:

For "FUN" but should increase skill level, NOT decrease skill to win at all costs!

Bulldog Derby:

Supplies needed Baseball backstop, Whiffle balls, and bats, throw down base, cones. Divide groups into two smaller teams. Athletes will be put into batting orders. One team will play on defense while the other is on offense. Set up a base just in front of the pitcher's mound to "Reverse" the field. This base will be home plate with the backstop as the outfield fence. Using cones or bats layout foul lines from the home plate. Pitcher and catcher should be coaches. Defensive players can take any position behind the pitcher. Pitcher throws to batter who has one at-bat to score points. Players can strikeout, but cannot walk, everyone hits and then the teams rotate! Divide the backstop into point levels. Award higher points for hard line drives/ground balls, lesser points for fly balls/pop-ups. Play a set number of innings. Team with the highest points at the end wins!

Two Base game:

Supplies needed Whiffle balls, bats, throw down bases, cones. Divide groups into two smaller teams. Athletes will be put into batting orders. One team will play on defense while the other is on offense. Set up a two bases about 15 feet apart. One base will be home while the other represents the scoring base. Using cones layout foul lines from the home plate. Pitcher and catcher should be coaches. Defensive players can take any position behind the pitcher, OUTSIDE OF RUNNING LANE BETWEEN HOME AND SCORING BASE. Pitcher throws to batter who has one at-bat to score points. Players can strikeout, but cannot walk, everyone hits and then the teams rotate! Players will attempt to hit the ball and travel to the 2nd base and return home to score a point before the ball is returned to the pitcher. Players can stay on the 2nd base if they do not believe they can make it home before the pitcher gets the ball back. The offensive team can have as many players on the 2nd base as they want (remember that everyone only hits once so the last man to hit must go for home plate, and no one can remain on the 2nd base). Team with the highest points at the end wins!