



Developing Today's Players
into Tomorrow's Leaders

COACHING ACADEMY

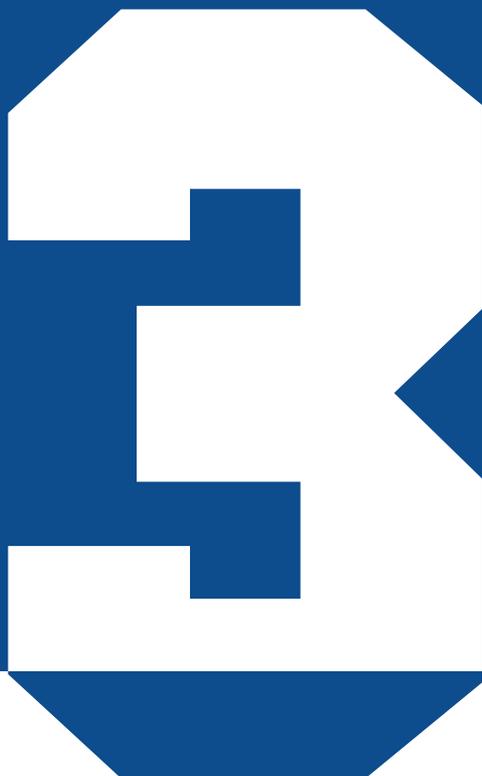
HITTING BASICS





Hitting is the hardest thing to do in baseball! Great hitter's fail 7 out of 10 times. Hitting is even harder to coach and help players. We wanted to create a Coaching Academy guide solely on hitting basics so that we can establish common language and concepts regarding hitting basics.

The great thing for you is that Steve Nicollerat has been immersed in hitting for about 15 years in private instruction, hitting clinics, and presenting at organizations throughout the U.S., and is only 1 of 6 Nationally Certified Epstein Master Hitting Instructors. Through his experiences both as a nationally certified hitting instructor and as a teacher, he created this guide to hitting basics he uses to teach across the country.



PRINCIPLES OF HITTING

The first principle in hitting basics are understanding the 3 principles of hitting. Every coach and parent needs to know and expect these principles out of their players and kids regardless of age or skill level. **The 3 principles of hitting are:**

1. Plane the Pitch
2. Hips Lead the Hands
3. Hands stay Inside the Ball

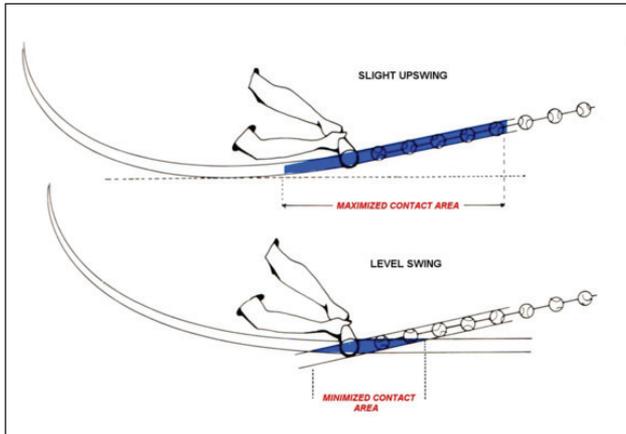
1.

PLANE THE PITCH

In the perfect swing, a hitter should be swinging slightly upwards. This is called **"planing the pitch."**

The hitter wants to keep their bat in the same plane as the ball for the longest possible time. By doing so, the hitter has a greater chance of making contact.

Note: Planing the pitch contradicts the "swing down" hitting concept.

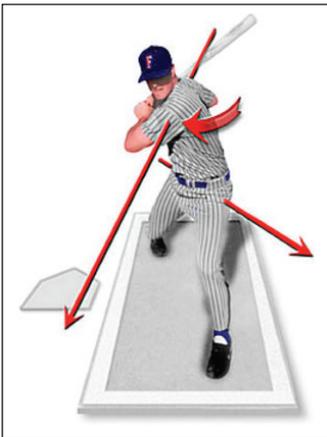


2.

HIPS LEAD THE HANDS (CREATING TORQUE)

In these pictures below, the swing, in a single frame, reveals that the hips pop (not by squishing the bug) from the front side. As the hips pop and begin to rotate toward the pitcher, the upper body moves very little. Separation occurs between the top half and the bottom half of the body.

This separation is called torque and is the source of power in a baseball swing.



3.

HANDS STAY INSIDE THE BALL

Keeping the hands inside the ball means that the elbow gets to a spot near the ribs as the hitter gets into the approach or short 3 position.

At this point, as the hands begin to move they move in a circular path rotating with the upper body.

Many youth hitters throw their hands out to the ball, but this causes their hands to work against the upper body and not with it.

When done correctly, the hitter who keeps his hands inside the ball will be able to keep more balls fair, and he will have a short compact swing.

Compact swings are the most powerful type of swing, and they allow hitters to wait for the ball a split second longer than players that have long and slow swings.

LINEAR VS. ROTATIONAL HITTERS

There are two kinds of hitting styles: linear hitting and rotational hitting

LINEAR HITTING

A linear hitter is a hitter who transfers their weight/balance from back to front. The front leg does not lock and the energy flow is toward the pitcher.

Linear hitting can result in great hall of fame caliber players. Ichiro, for example, is a linear hitter. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the way Ichiro hits. In fact, linear hitting is a great way to produce a lot of singles and a high batting average. Most lead off hitters, as well as your 7, 8, 9 hitters will be linear hitters.

Linear hitting is great for players that can run like the wind, but for the rest of us, and for your heart of the order players, you may need to think about teaching rotational mechanics that generate long gap shots and extra base hits.

The biggest concern in teaching linear mechanics to young players is what happens when these players grow up and do not have the characteristics of a linear hitter (great speed, lots of good contact). There are not many places in baseball for a slow right handed hitter who hits balls on the ground.

But a young hitter who is taught rotational mechanics can easily be used as a lead off type of hitter by just putting the hitter more on his axis rather than behind his axis.

ROTATIONAL HITTING

Now let's take a look at some of the key rotational hitting mechanics of the most powerful swings in baseball over the years. Notice how these guys use rotational hitting mechanics. It's important to talk about these three terms when teaching rotational hitting:

- Torque
- Long Three or Contact
- The Finish

TORQUE

Torque generates the power behind hitter's swings as the "hips lead the hands."

- Hitter's bottom half is going to pitcher
- Hitter's top half of the body stays back
- Back foot does not squish the bug--when back foot does rotate around it rotates as a result of other actions--not the cause and therefore should not be taught. On high pitches the back foot will actually come off the ground!
- This is known as torque
- Torque is responsible for rotation of upper body which happens just after these frames
- Torque is a very important component of a powerful swing

LONG THREE OR CONTACT

Long Three or Contact in a perfect swing has these characteristics:

- Back elbow in
- Shoulders dipped
- Bat head below hands
- Back knee hinged
- Front leg locked
- Front elbow up

THE FINISH

When a hitter finishes their swing, there are several key features to look for:

- Back knee hinged
- Front leg locked
- Front foot may flop
- Hitter still behind axis
- Lower pitch higher finish



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