Moorhead Baseball

Hitting Mechanics (Hands, Shoulder, Knees, and Toes)

Feet

The feet are the foundation for maintaining balance throughout your swing. Balance from the beginning through the finish of the swing is crucial for your ability to track the ball accurately.

The stance should be comfortable. You should stand approximately a bat plus an arm's length away from the opposite side of the plate. To ensure you're in the right position, stand in the box and reach the bat to see if you can touch the opposite side of the plate. If you can, you'll be in a position that provides complete plate coverage.

The load is when the hitter shifts at least 60% of his weight to his back foot while his entire body moves together. The load is like the hammer on a revolver being cocked—it's done slowly and comes to a subtle stop before the trigger is pulled. It's the same thing in hitting: the load should happen in a slow and controlled manner before the swing is initiated.

The stride happens next. The shorter stride the better while keeping their weight on the back foot. The front foot strides in line with the back foot toward the pitcher.

After a nice load and a soft stride, you should be in a balanced position and can begin to move your hands to the ball. We want to teach our hitters (regardless of age) to hit the ball where it's pitched and hit it into the outfield. That means that if the ball is on the outside part of the plate, you should try to take it to the opposite field. If it's on the inside part of the plate, you should try to pull the ball.

Hands

Grip: Knocking Knuckles aligned or comfortably close. Bat should be held loosely in the fingertips (no “white knuckles). Loose is fast tight is slow. Many kids will squeeze the bat as tight as they can, this is slowing down their bat speed.

Movement: When moving your hands toward the ball, don't immediately extend your arms or push your hands forward. Keeping your hands back at the start of your swing will allow you to generate a lot of energy with your legs and core before bringing your hands through. As you make contact, your eyes should see the bat hit the ball. You should hit through the baseball, meaning your bat speed should be at its peak just before contact. This is a huge step in having a better hitting technique and driving the ball. For older players facing off speed pitches: keep the hand back so you can react to a slower pitch, even if you get fooled.
**Head**

Your head **should be still** throughout the swing. An easy mental note to enforce keeping your head still is to think "Ike to Mike." Especially for younger players, it is easier to remember "Ike" is on your front shoulder and "Mike" is on your back shoulder. You should say hello to "Ike" at the beginning of your swing and say hello to "Mike" after you hit the ball. In other words your chin should go from shoulder to shoulder while you swing the bat. You're not actually moving your chin, but your swing is rotating your shoulders. If you can control your head throughout the swing, hitting becomes easier.

**Hitting Drills**

**Dry Cut Drill**
Developing a hitting technique is as easy as counting to four—1. load, 2. stride, 3. see the ball all the way, and 4. hit the ball.

The Dry Cut Drill involves verbal commands from a coach, where he or she counts out loud 1, 2, 3 and 4. The key is to remain **balanced** throughout all of the steps.

* The hitter should be in his stance to begin the drill.
* On the coach’s 1 count, the hitter loads. The back knee and back hip should be aligned, and the knob of the bat should be pointed at the opposite batter's box.
* On the coach’s 2 count, the hitter strides. The nose and belt buckle should be aligned within the middle of the feet.
* On the coach's 3 count, the hitter listens for the pitch location. The bat head should be directed to that location, and the eyes should focus on that location.
* On the coach's 4 count, the hitter swings. The hitter's back foot should pivot, the bat head should travel directly to the location, the hitter's back shoelace should face the pitcher to ensure he got his hips through, and his head should remain still.
* The coach should have the hitter perform this simple drill **on air** before adding a ball.
* The hitter should learn how to swing and understand the checkpoints in this drill, which will enable him to make pitch-by-pitch adjustments in a game scenario.

**Tee Drill**
The outside pitch should be hit to the opposite field gap, middle pitch over the center fielder's head, and inside pitch should be smoked down the pull side foul line. The **coach should move the tee all over the plate** so the hitter has to adjust his swing to ensure the flight of the ball is toward the proper field.

**Flip Drill**
The Flip Drill is the next step in our fundamental hitting drills. The flipper **moves according to the location the hitter is working**. For an inside pitch, the ball should be tossed at the hitter's front hip, allowing him to work on pulling the ball. For a middle pitch, the ball should be tossed from a 45-degree angle in front of the hitter. The ball
should head toward the hitter’s belt buckle, forcing the hitter to get his hands through a middle pitch and hit a line drive up the middle.

For an outside pitch, the flipper will be behind the hitter and the ball will travel through the contact zone on a line. This will encourage the hitter to focus on the ball all the way from the hand and to work on bat speed to drive the ball to the opposite field gap.

**Batting Practice (Front Toss)**
We throw to different locations (at a consistent speed) to allow the hitter to work on **taking the ball to all fields** as well as the complete swing (remember 1-2-3-4.) The coach can count out loud to get the hitter in a rhythm and allow him to take that approach to a game scenario. Evolve this into “live” at bats with balls, strikes, and varying speeds to work on a game like mentality.

**Bunting:** Understand the situation.
**Sacrifice:** The goal is to move the runners over, not get yourself on base.

- **Stance:** Square as pitcher comes set. Pivot on toes and bend the knees. Bat is pinched by the top hand in the middle of the bat, bottom hand slides up for support. Move the **entire bat’s height** according to pitch location (do not angle the bat up or down). Be prepared to “pull back” if the pitch is a ball.
- **Location:**
  - *Man on 1st:* Bunt should go to first, can go to third as well. **Never** bunt it hard back to the pitcher.
  - *Man on 1st & 2nd/2nd:* Bunt needs to go to third base. Make him field the ball so the runners can move up.
  - *Squeeze:* JUST GET IT DOWN

**For a hit:** Trying to get on base, bunt good pitches.

- **Stance:** Same idea as with a sacrifice but start squaring as the pitch is in the middle of/towards the end of his pitch. You are trying to catch the defense off guard.
- **Location:** (This is worded for a right-handed batter)
  - *Drag:* If the 3rd baseman is playing deep, or a slower player, place the bunt down the third base line so he, the catcher, and the pitcher all have roughly the same distance to go field the ball.
  - *Push:* especially against left handed/slower pitchers or if the first baseman is playing deep. The goal is to push the ball past the pitcher, taking him out of the play and forcing the 1st baseman to come field the ball. It is a footrace from there verses the first baseman.
Bunting Drills

Repeated Exposure: Easiest way to get bunting reps is to mix them in with batting practice. Have players bunt according to a situation you give them prior to, during, or following a round of batting practice.

Make it a fun a competition: The best bunt from batting practice stays on the field until someone else beats it. Reward that player accordingly.

Target Practice: Mark circles/boxes in the dirt near where you want the bunts to lay. Give points to players (or teams) that place a bunt in the designated locations.

This can be run in 4 or more stations on the field using each of the bases as a home plate and drawing boxes accordingly.

*Get the point across to players that bunting is a very valuable play in baseball and a successful one should be celebrated. Players should not pout/be upset if they are called upon to bunt, it is for the benefit of the team.