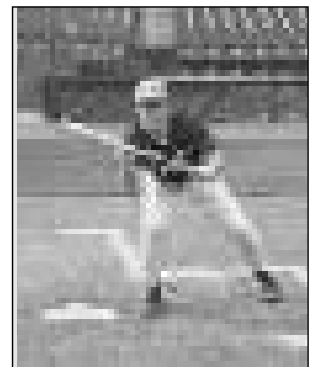

FUNDAMENTALS

Sacrifice Bunt:

This bunt is used to advance a runner to second base, or multiple runners to second and third base. The purpose is to move the runners into scoring position for the following batters to drive in. It's most commonly done with no outs and in a close game. There are two acceptable ways to sacrifice: the squaring-around method, and the pivot method. Regardless of which approach is used, the batter should be forward in the batter's box to improve the percentage of a fair bunt. The squaring or pivot action generally begins when the pitcher breaks his hands to start his throwing motion.

A. Turning to Bunt

1. **Square-around method:** First, step back roughly 12 inches with the front foot. Then, bring the back foot forward beyond the front foot. The initial step clears space, allowing the back foot to come forward without stepping on home plate. Stepping on home plate is an automatic out. More weight should be distributed on the leg closest to the plate with a slight lean toward the plate. This will give the player total plate coverage and balance. **(picture 7-1)**
- (Preferred) 2. **Pivot method:** Set up close to the plate to assure plate coverage on the pivot. This method is nothing more than rotating the back foot as if a swing has already occurred. This rotation allows for the hips and shoulders to face the pitcher and still maintain balance throughout the body. **(picture 7-2)**



7-1: Squaring to bunt

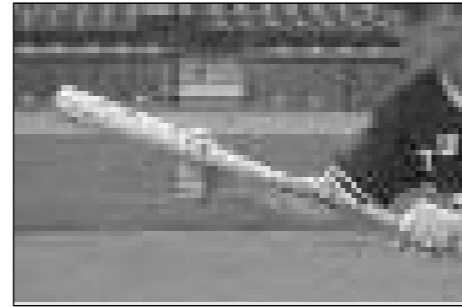


7-2: Pivoting to bunt



B. Balance and Weight Distribution: Feet should be shoulder width or wider, and knees should be bent and ready to flex. The legs are very important in bunting. Adjust to the height of the pitch by bending the knees. This way, the bunter keeps body control, proper bat position and form while adjusting to different pitches.

C. Grip: Keep the bottom hand on the bat choked up slightly, and slide the top hand up the barrel just past halfway. The top hand must pinch the bat at this point. To do this, the player should make a fist with the thumb extended and pinch the bat between the thumb and index finger. Make sure no fingers are exposed to the bunting surface. (picture 7-3)



7-3: Grip

D. Arms: The arms should be extended in front of the body, and the bat should cover home plate, at least to the outside black. The elbows should be pointing in with a slight bend to maintain proper athletic positioning. Very seldom is an athlete in a good reaction position when a joint is fully extended.

E. Barrel Above the Knob (top of strike zone): The bat should be angled slightly upward, keeping the barrel above the knob. This will allow for the bunted ball to travel downward – and hopefully fair. The bat starts at the top of the strike zone where the bunter has vision of both the bat and the incoming ball. The eyes should be almost on the same plane as bat, focusing on the pitch. To maintain proper bat position and vision, the bunter must bend at the knees to adjust to lower strikes. This will allow the eyes and the bat to stay at the same level and the barrel to stay above the knob.



7-4: Sacrificing bunt to 1B

F. Bat Angle: Pre-setting the bat angle toward first or third base will eliminate unnecessary bat movement when the pitch is in flight. Ideally, bunt toward first base with a runner only on first; bunt toward third base with runners on first and second. (picture 7-4)

Bunting for a Base Hit

The fundamentals don't change much between a sacrifice bunt and bunting for a base hit. A batter wants to use the element of surprise, however proper time still must be allowed to get into bunting position. Good placement of the ball is just as important as the element of surprise.

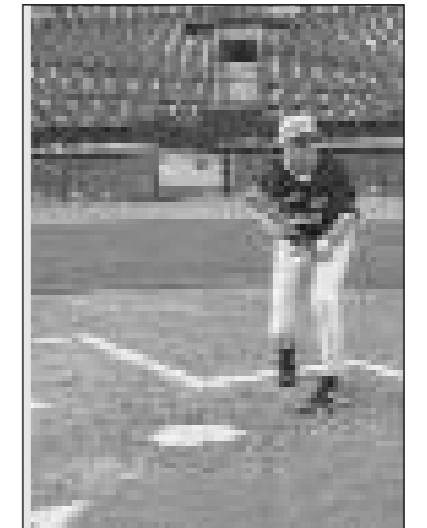
A. Right-handed Drag: Take a short jab step back with the right leg. Drop the knob of the bat toward the left hip while bringing the barrel over the top of the strike zone and in front of the plate. In this process, create a bat angle toward the third-base line. Try to keep the ball just fair, and if it goes foul, the only harm is a strike. (pictures 7-5 to 7-7)



7-5: Jab step back



7-6: Barrel over the top



7-7: Contact position

B. Right-handed Push: A stride is taken just as if swinging, but the bat is brought around with the hands in bunting position. Bunt the ball with both hands pushing the bat toward the second baseman. The object is to just get the ball past the pitcher and have the first baseman commit to the ball. Don't bunt it too hard, allowing the second baseman a chance to make the play. This is attempted more frequently with left-handed pitchers since their follow-through takes them towards third base. (picture 7-8)

C. Left-handed Push: First, take a short jab step toward home plate with the left foot. This creates balance and a better direction line to bunt. Bunt the ball down the third-base line. (picture 7-9)



7-8: Right-handed push bunt



7-9: Left-handed push bunt



D. Left-handed drag: The bat leads the way with the hands in bunting position and aim between the first and the second baseman. Bunt the ball while bringing the left leg up into a crossover step, initiating the run to first base. **This is a good offensive weapon against left-handed pitchers since their follow-through takes them toward third base. (pictures 7-10 & 7-11)**



7-10: Bring bat out front



7-11: Crossover step to bunt

Squeeze Bunt: The element of surprise makes the squeeze bunt an effective tool. If executed properly, the defense will not have enough time to tag the runner at home plate. As the pitcher releases the ball, the batter turns to bunt and the runner on third base breaks toward home. The ball is bunted anywhere on the field. Most importantly, the batter must do whatever it takes to at least make contact with the ball, otherwise the runner will be an easy out.

Slash: A slash is when a batter fakes as if he's going to bunt, then pulls the bat back and takes a compact swing. The batter is attempting to hit a ground ball and is not worried about power. This is done when defenders are charging hard or to create movement in the defense. **This play will typically open holes in the defense because players should react to the bunt.**

BUNTING DRY DRILLS

These dry drills can be done with or without a bat. Allow plenty of space between players if bats are used. Repeat all drills 5 times or until all players can perform correctly.

- 1. Stance to Turning to Bunt:** Players line up and face the coach. On the command, *Hitting stance*, players get into their batting stance. On the command, *Pivot* or *Square* (depending on the method being taught), players turn to bunt. Make sure players are in the proper bunting position as spelled out in the fundamentals. Physically make adjustments where needed.
- 2. Low Pitch and High Pitch:** From the squared or pivot position, the next commands are, *Low pitch* or *Take a high pitch*. On *Low pitch*, the players bend their knees to lower the bat. On *Take a high pitch*, players remove the bat from the strike zone. The coach should vary the commands to get the players familiar with the fundamentals of bunting and to make the necessary adjustments.
- 3. When to Turn:** Finally, the coach should simulate a pitcher throwing from the stretch (or a full wind-up) and tell the players to turn to bunt when he breaks his hands to start his throwing motion.

DRILLS

- 1. Bunting to Targets:** Place bats as targets about one-third of the way down each baseline. With the coach pitching from a close distance, have players (one at a time) bunt toward the bats. Each player bunts three times down each foul line. The rest of the players fan out to pick up the bunted balls and wait their turn. This drill is for a sacrifice bunt, and players should turn to bunt when the coach breaks hands to start the pitch. The coach should throw mostly strikes, but mix in a ball or two to see if the player pulls the bat back correctly.

Recommended ages 8-16.

- 2. Fair or Foul:** Place a bat parallel to the third-base line about three feet into fair territory. The goal is to bunt balls between the bat and baseline. Emphasize if the player misses the mark, it should be into foul territory and not to the right of the bat, because that's an easy play for the pitcher in a real game. This drill emphasizes the importance of placing the bunted ball very close to the foul line when bunting for a base hit toward third base. Since batters are trying to reach base safely, they should turn to bunt later than a sacrifice, but still soon enough to get into proper position.

Recommended ages 8-16.

Expert Advice on Bunting to Targets

The "Bunting to Targets" drill is for a sacrifice bunt, and players should turn to bunt when the coach breaks hands to start the pitch.



3. Bunt Hit Between Pitcher and First Base: Place a bat in no man's land between first and second base on the infield grass. Have right-handed hitters work on their push bunt and lefties on their drag. Again, batters are trying to reach base safely, so they should turn to bunt later than a sacrifice, but still soon enough to get into proper position.

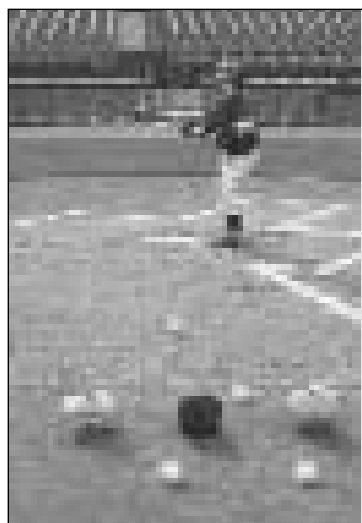
Recommended ages 8-16.

4. Squeeze Bunt: Incorporate the squeeze bunt into Drill 1. At any time during the bunting drill, the coach will call out *Squeeze bunt*. On that pitch, the player should turn to bunt later than they would for a sacrifice and can bunt the ball anywhere on the field. When working on the squeeze, the coach should vary pitch locations to simulate what can happen in a game. The player must still bunt a bad pitch.

Recommended ages 13-16.

GAMES

1. Hats as Target. Have players fan out from the pitching mound to the foul lines. Set three hats upside down with brims facing home plate as targets. Place them one-third of the way down each foul line. Each player gets six bunts, three in each direction. Award 10 points for a ball that rolls up the brim and stays in the hat, five for contact with the hat and one for a near miss. Have the players rotate around two times each and see who gets the most points. (pictures 7-12 & 7-13)



7-12: Hats as targets



7-13: 10 points

2. Bats as Targets. Follow the same set up in Game 1, but use one bat near each foul line. Pick two captains to choose teams. Each player on each team gets four bunts. Award 100 points for every bunt that hits a bat. Award 25 points for balls that bounce over the bats. The winning team's players get five extra swings during batting practice. Or play the best-of-five bunting world series by continuing the game at the next four practices. Whichever team wins three bunting competitions first is the world champion of "Bats as Targets."



3. Bunt for Swings. During batting practice, have players bunt the first three pitches they see. For every quality bunt the player gets down, an additional swing will be given. This will help them concentrate on bunting by giving them a reward for a bunt successfully executed.

