

Tee-Ball Clinic Coaching Guide



Baseball Positive

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Tee Ball Coaching Clinic

Overview

- Baseball???
- Tee Ball is an Adult-Child Activity
- 6 v 6 is ideal (or 5 v 5 with no catcher; the coach working the tee takes any throws to home plate)
- Skill Building (and constant movement/activity) is our priority

Teaching

- Communicate to their mental, emotional and physical perspective
- Teaching and feedback: focus talk on Actions, not Results
- Realistic expectations (three day rule)

Receiving Throws

1. Ready Position ([p.4](#)) - “Ribbit”
2. Move Your FEET to Catch / Catch the ball with your FEET ([p.7](#))
3. Reach Forward (to Catch) - [p.7](#)

Throwing

- Power Position
 - Drills
 - 1a) Pull - glove elbow ([p.5](#))
 - 1b) Snap (‘wave’)
 - 2a) Shuffle (‘Push’ with Feet)
 - 2b) Shuffle- Shuffle, Pull, Snap ...momentum
- ...Move Your FEET to Throw / Follow Your Head / Head is your steering wheel

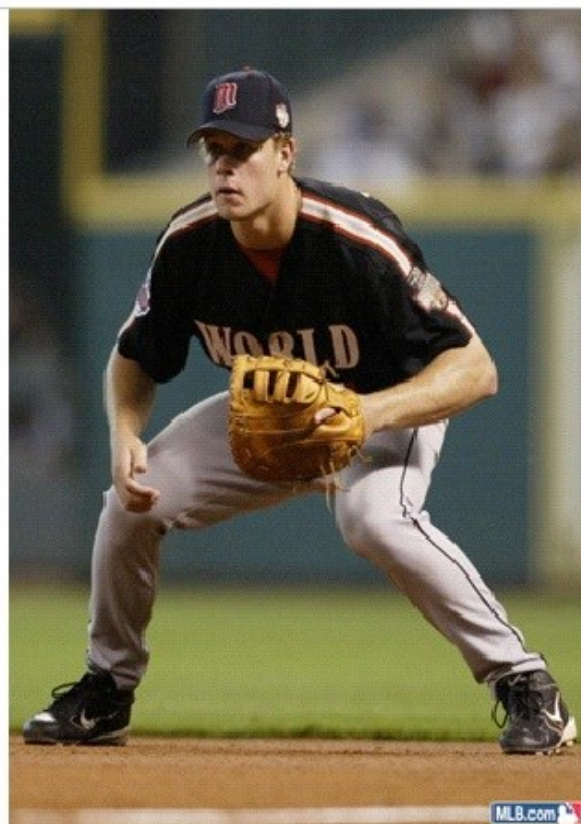
Underhand Toss ([p.6](#))

- Arm action; reach out level (“Gimme Five”)
- Feet Throw the ball; arm **guides** the ball
- Follow your head (keep running towards target after tossing the ball)
- ♦ [Video #1](#) - Pro player during practice (**Watch: 1:38 - 2:05**)
- ♦ [Video #2](#) - Pro player in a game (**0:00 - 0:10**)

The Base

- Base is for the runner; ball is for the defense
- Ready Position next to the base; prepared for a throw
- Ball first, Base second ([p.7](#))
- The ball is the key to the base
- Players are not allowed to touch the base until they have the ball - Stomp

READY POSITION



Throwing Action - Position Player

Pull Glove Elbow



UNDERHAND TOSS

In each picture we can clearly see that these players are running towards their target, "Move Your Feet to Throw", powering their throws with their legs. The use of the arm is primarily to 'guide the ball'. The arm action in the pic of the kids is not ideal, though the player is obviously running. The act of really extending the arm takes more strength than we, as adults, might realize. With repetitions the kids' technique in the release aspect of the action will improve quite a bit.



Move Feet to Catch | Ball First, Base Second

We want to instruct our players in the concept of **'Move Your Feet to Catch'**. Kids tend to stand in place and reach to the side in the hope they will catch the ball. Baseball/Softball players **'Catch the Ball with Their Feet'**. When a player is receiving a throw at a base, we teach them to prioritize: **'Ball First, Base Second'**. In this picture, David Wright of the Mets, was at the base preparing for the throw. When he saw the throw was offline, he Moved His Feet to the point where the ball was going to



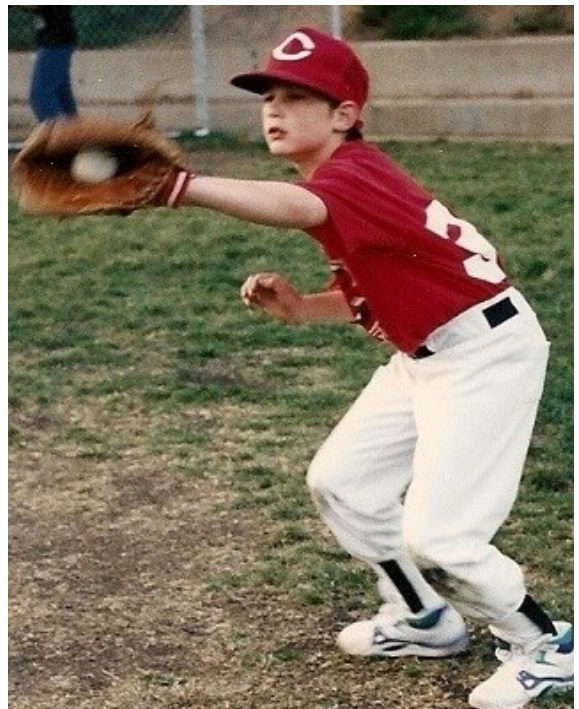
Reach Forward to Catch

Most young ballplayers could do a better job of extending their arms to catch thrown balls.

The tendency is to hold their glove too close to their body (the reason is their lack of shoulder strength, making it difficult to support the weight of their arms)

When the ball is off line (which it often is), they reach out to the side to catch, rather than moving to the ball and getting in a position where they can Reach Forward to Catch.

When reaching forward, a player gets their glove and the ball in their line of sight. This significantly increases the percentage of balls caught.



Fielding

- Fast-Slow-Fast (run *Fast* to the ball, *Slow* down to catch, move feet *Fast* to throw)
- Feet Wide to Catch (**p.9 & p.10**)
- [VIDEO](#) - Feet 'Wide to Catch' and 'Move Feet to Throw' (shuffle) - 0:00-1:30 - regular speed | 1:30-3:20 - slow-mo
- Don't get in front of the ball?? (stay on the side of the ball when approaching; step in front to catch)

Running Drills Effectively

- Make the objective clear
- Compact drill space
- Throw, roll or toss balls (no bat)

Drills

- 'No Ball' Drills
- 'No Bat' Drills
- [20' Ground balls](#) ...throw using underhand toss
- 40' Ground balls ...same as 20' Gb's, but with players throwing overhand
- [Ball or Base Drill](#)
- [Ranging laterally for ground balls](#)
- [Perpendicular Toss](#) (fly balls)
- [Double Plays](#) (later in the season; 5th or 6th week)

Delivering Balls in Drills

In the process skill development of baseball/softball players, **one of the most important concepts** for a youth coach to understand:

Consistently delivering balls in drills, to the right/same spot and at the right pace (med-slow), is an absolute must

Consistently batting a ball where and how a coach intends, rarely happens. This inconsistency keeps us from developing a good rhythm and flow in drill work. Developing skills and muscle memory requires **massive and consistent repetition** throughout each drill session. ...this is why **professional coaches** run many drills by rolling, tossing and throwing balls instead of using a bat.

Below are several videos illustrating this concept.

[Orioles DP Feeds](#) - watch: 3:42 - 4:37

[Trey Mancini 1b Drills](#) - watch: 1:35 - 2:10

[Yankees - DP Turn](#) - using a machine (same concept: Accurate delivery, Quick pace, Massive Reps) - **Watch:** 0:15-0:35

[Cardinals OF - low liners](#) - **Watch:** 0:00 – 0:20

[Rangers](#) - **Watch:** 1:00-1:07 (can't see coach; based on pace of ball and accuracy, can tell its being rolled)

2:58-3:11 - tossing fly balls

3:45-4:00 - batting off a knee from pitchers mound (same concept: Compact Space, Accuracy and Reps)

[Twins - Sano footwork for OF](#) - **Watch:** 3:50-4:15; 4:55-5:10

[Fielding Clinic](#) **Watch:**

2:25 – 2:40

3:50 – 4:10

4:55 – 5:05

5:25 – 5:40

7:10 – 7:25

[Cal Ripken Jr. - Move Feet, Follow Your Head](#): **Watch** 3:47- 5:21

(this doesn't involve the ball being delivered to the fielder; does address Moving Feet)

Don't deliver the ball straight to a fielder

Ground Balls - 'Feet Wide to Catch'



Strong, grown-up body:
teen, college, pro

Kid body:
smaller muscles;
less body strength



Get in Front of the Ball ...to Catch the Ball

See in the pictures below, the Right foot of the players has just been planted, and the Left foot is in the process of completing the action of stepping 'in front of the ball to catch the ball'.

A commonly misused cliché in youth baseball/softball coaching is, "**Get in Front of the Ball**". This leads kids to believe *that* is the most important factor in fielding. The key factor for consistent success in catching ground balls is keeping *the feet moving throughout the action*. The tendency, when following the instruction, "Get in Front of the Ball", is a player getting in front of the ball *too soon*. The result is their feet stop moving. Their rhythm is disrupted.

Train kids to stay a bit to the side of the ball while preparing to field the ball. Then use a rhythmic, Right-Left action to 'get in front of the ball to catch the ball'. The rhythm of their footwork in fielding the ball flows into the rhythm of their throwing footwork: Shuffle Shuffle, Pull-Snap.

When players get older and stronger, we cut their throwing footwork down to one shuffle. Then the 'field and throw' rhythm becomes, Right-Left catch, Right-Left throw.



BATTING

Introduction

Our objective is to train kids to generate the maximum amount of energy in the swing while minimizing body movement.

This takes time when working with young players; weeks or months. However, when following a structured approach to swing work, each player can significantly improve their skills during the season

Maximizing energy starts with the mindset of 'No Careful Swings'. We want our players executing each swing with 100% effort; **Full Speed** every time. The more a player practices their swing at full speed the more comfortable they become with swinging at full effort. It doesn't take long for them to develop a sense of 'control'. When using 100% effort in each swing, a player learns quicker because each swing is at the same speed. The muscles better 'recognize' the actions they are working to master when the pace of the actions is consistent. They develop Muscle Memory.

Developing body control starts with the 'No-bat Drills' we put the players through each practice. By executing drills properly each time, the habit of executing the fundamental actions of the swing correctly is established. These habits are taken to Tee Work where, over time, this familiarity with each aspect of the swing melds into a fluid swing.

We help our players develop proper movements during the No-Bat Drills by assisting them to have greater awareness of what their body is doing during drill work. Three ways to assist our batters in No-Bat Drills are found on [\(p.16\)](#).

Coaching Mindset and Approach

Teaching Phrases

During the program we will attach a specific term or phrase to key aspects of the swing. These will be used repeatedly. Soon you and the players will become familiar with the language used; most of it is very literal and easy to follow. It is critical that there is consistency in the terminology the players are hearing from the adults/coaches working with them.

The following page as short list of Teaching Phrases and Terms. After using them in a few workouts they will be familiar and flow naturally in your instruction. Soon, the players will be able to quickly attach these phrases to a specific action or concept related to the swing.

When a player is working, the role of the coach is to 'remind', using language that is clear, known and understood. We introduce new information **prior** to a practice session. Limit info **during** a workout to 'reminders' of previously taught concepts. If a **new** point that requires instruction is identified, make a mental note, then teach it prior to the **next** practice session.

Actions, not Results

Listen to any accomplished batter talk and you will rarely, if ever, hear them refer to results of their play. They talk about how well they executed the actions of their swing.

Young kids are results-focused; few instinctively see the big picture or understand the concept of process. Our challenge is to teach them that in order to *consistently* get the desired result, they must *first master the actions* that lead to the results they want.

A major factor in them learning this, is the talk they hear from us. We want our talk to be actions-based. All swing work needs to be actions-focused. When guiding a young batter, or when giving feedback, we want to talk using *actions terminology*; and not reference results.

There *are* times when a player gets a great result and we want to acknowledge it; it is ok to do so, but then support the comment by *referencing a good action* that was used to get that result.

Teaching Phrases

Clear communication (and understanding by the players) is the bedrock of effective coaching. The following Teaching Phrases have a **specific** meaning for a given part of the swing and other aspects of the swing process. Consistency in terminology, that the kids understand to mean a specific action, speeds learning and development.

The most knowledgeable coach can have limited effectiveness if the players don't understand the instruction. A novice coach with minimal knowledge, can be effective when the kids understand the words they are hearing.

"It 's not what **we** know, it's what **they** understand"

Note: Good instruction is not limited to correcting flaws. We want to *acknowledge when we see something done right*.

Teaching Phrases & Terms

- Turn Back Preparation for the Leg Turn (commonly referred to as 'Load'). This is a relatively slow action.
- Turn Fast Reference to the LEGS. Turning the lower half of the body initiates, and powers, the swing.
- Head in Place Head remains centered between the feet, starting in the stance, throughout the swing.
- Face the Ball Same concept as 'keep your eye on the ball'. This phrase is preferred because it ties in with the concept of 'Head in Place'.
- Switch Heels Activates all the leg muscles for the Leg-Turn action.
- Feet in Place At the end of a swing, the batter wants their feet to remain in place with their torso and head centered between their feet. Initially, we want a batter to gain *awareness* of their feet at the conclusion of their swing; not necessarily be perfect at keeping their feet in place after each swing. Ultimately, a batter wants to complete each swing with their feet in place, in control of their body and be BALANCED.

Important Points

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| The Swing | Legs initiate the swing and generate energy |
| Three Keys | 1) Turn (LEGS) Fast 2) HEAD in Place 3) FEET in Place |
| Stance | Relationship of feet to the ball/tee stem ...see diagram p.17 |
| Feet Wide in Stance | Many young players tend to let their stance become too narrow.
...feet wider than the hips (3-4") in the stance. |
| Stride? p.18 | Most successful batters Do Not stride. We Do Not tell any batter to stride. If a batter incorporates a stride instinctively, we leave them alone unless we see it causing them problems. The links below show highlights of two 2017 World Baseball Classic games. Watch. Not a single batter strides. |

Overview of The Swing

- LEGS initiate and power the Swing ([picture p.22](#))
- Rubber Bands - The Leg Turn stretches the muscles through the torso. Those stretched muscles snap the bat to contact.
- Sideways Karate Chop - The action of the top-hand arm, moving the bat to contact point ([picture p.23](#))
- Head in Place (Face the Ball at Contact: [picture p.20](#)) - The body follows movement of the head. Head movement throws off the swing. Keeping the head in place is fundamental to an accurate swing.
- Feet in Place ([picture p.24](#)) - Bookends, along with the head, a controlled and accurate swing. Fundamental to maximizing leg strength in the swing.

Batting Drills (Drills Sheet [p.16](#))

Stance: Feet outside your knees | Face the Ball | Hand Position

1. Twist

2. Turn Back, Turn Fast (Switch Heels)

- Front knee turns back - Front heel up
- Turn Fast - Switch Heels (front heel pushes back and down - Fast)
- Head in Place (Face the Ball/Top of the Tee)
- Feet in Place

3. Sideways Karate Chop

Keys: 1. You Don't Swing the Bat with your Arms 2. **Legs** Power Swing 3. **Head** Controls Power

Helping Kids During No-Bat Drills

HELP: Hands on shoulders: **Touch** the shoulders to create Awareness of movement; don't grab or hold shoulders

Drills: #1) Twist

HELP: Hand on top of head: If their head moves, the kids Feel a change in the relationship of their head to your hand

Drills: #2) Switch Heels

#3) Sideways Karate Chop

HELP: Fist at 'Contact Point Even with the front foot, waist high, middle of home plate - approx. 2' from their stance. Your fist represents the ball

Drill: #2) Switch Heels: Be sure kids have their **FRONT FOOT 'FLAT'** on the ground in their stance ...the front heel comes up when they "Turn Back"

The back foot remains perpendicular to home plate when the batter "Turns Back"

Note: This is less of an issue as kids get bigger and stronger

#3) **Sideways Karate Chop** This helps them recognize the 'end point' of the drill action. We want them to stop at 'Contact Point'.

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'No Bat' Drills - Tee Ball

DRILLS

1 - Twist

Feet outside shoulder width; turn feet and lower half, back and forth while keeping upper body (shoulders and head) still. Continue for 5 seconds; rest, repeat.

2 - Switch Heels

Batting Stance with hands on hips - Player 'Turns Back' by turning their front knee slightly back towards the catcher (the front shoulder may also turn back a bit). The batter's head position must remain, so to still be able to look at the pitcher and contact point while turning back. When turning back the front heel comes off the ground. The player then 'Turns Fast', driving their front heel, quickly, down and back. At the same time their back heel turns up.

3 - Sideways Karate Chop

Top hand, w/palm open, in the position where the bat is held in the stance. Head looking down toward 'Contact Point'. Switch Heels to power lower half turn; snap the top hand to 'Contact Point'. 'Funny Bone' leads the action of the top hand arm. Finish with elbow bent, fairly closed to the body and palm facing up.



Switch Heels

Head in Place / Face the Ball at Contact

Sideways Karate Chop

Head & Torso Centered Between Feet

Switch Heels

Head in Place / Face the Ball at Contact

Sideways Karate Chop

Switch Heels

The first videos show pro players executing the Switch Heels action. The third video shows a US Soldier using the same action. We are teaching/learning Body Mechanics, not 'secret' baseball/softball stuff.

Videos: Pujols, Zunino, About Face

A fundamental action in the swing is to 'Switch Heels'. All batters, when initiating their swing, drive their front heel back and down. While this takes place, their back heel turns up.

The result of these combined actions is energy from the legs pressing against the hip girdle, forcing rotation of the Lower Half of the body (legs). Many of us have heard the phrase 'turn the hips' in relation to the batting swing. The turning the hips begins with this action of the heels.

There are a few batters where it may be difficult to see this action in the front foot/heel. Some have a more- subtle movement. In those swings the rotation and driving back against the front hip takes place in ankle and knee joints (which have some laxity and capability to rotate).

Regarding the small percentage of batters who stride, there are two ways they execute the 'heel drop' in the front foot. Some rotate the heel back just before landing the stride; others finish their stride on their big toe, then drive the front heel back and down from there.

The first two videos below illustrate the 'Switch Heels' action used by Albert Pujols and Mike Zunino. The third video shows a soldier doing an 'About Face'. The soldier employs the same technique as the batters to turn his legs and body. The purpose of including the third video is point out that this action is not something unique to swinging a baseball or softball bat; this action is basic body mechanics.

[Albert Pujols](#) - Front Heel / Switching Heels - **Three examples: 0:00, 0:38, 1:35**

- Up to load ("Turn Back") Back and Down ("Turn Fast")
- Front heel (foot) initiates lower half turn

Note that Mr. Pujols has little or no stride; and minimal upper body movement until after the conclusion of the turn of his legs.

[Mike Zunino](#) - 2 HRs - **Three examples: 0:00-0:13, 0:14-0:20, 0:30-0:35**

Watch front heel; same as Pujols (and every batter to some degree ...and our soldier)

'About Face'

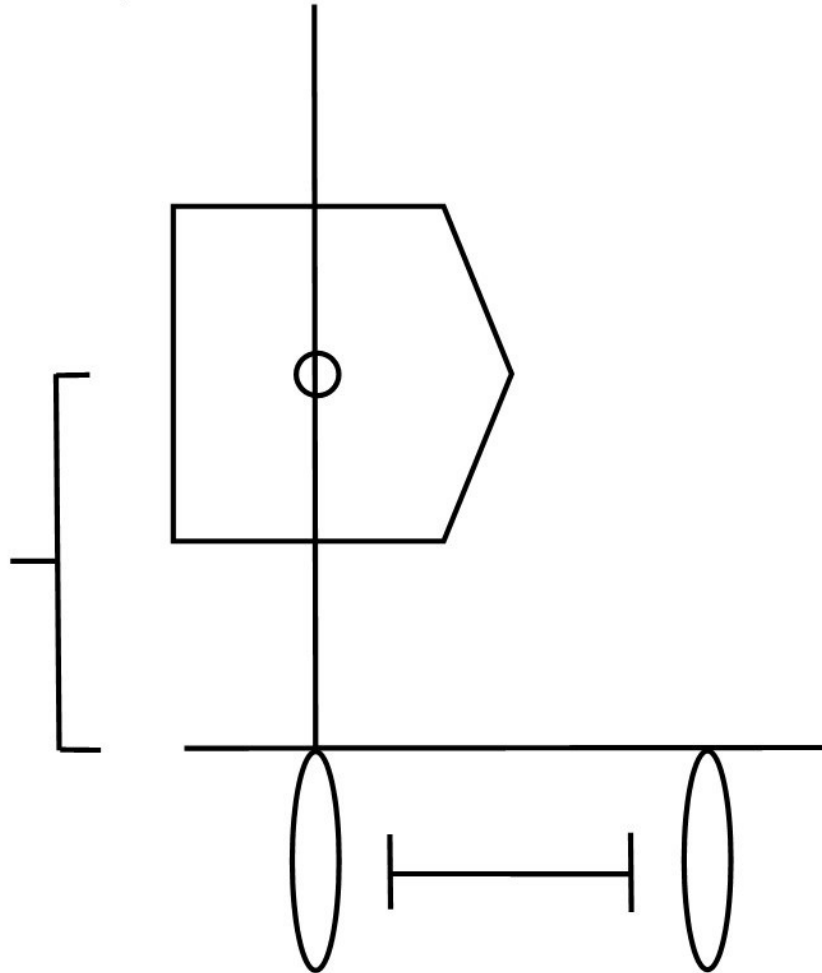
Example of a soldier using the same technique as Pujols and Zunino to turn his legs. This video is included to point out that what we are teaching isn't some 'secret' action exclusive to the baseball/softball swing. We want the coaches and players to gain an awareness of how the human body moves to initiate the action of the swing and most efficiently generates power in the swing. The soldier, Albert and Mike are each using the same technique to turn their lower body as effectively as possible ...they "Switch Heels".

...only need to watch the **first 10 seconds** of the video.

Stance at a Tee

Have a perpendicular line running across both batter's boxes and intersecting the Tee Stem and ball. The batter's front foot must be lined up with the ball. THIS POSITIONING IS CRITICAL and must be correct prior to EACH swing. The back foot, as noted below, is spread out so that the feet are slightly Wider Than The Batter's Shoulders. A good way to create a visual for the kids is telling them 'Your Feet Must Be Wider Than Your Knees'. It is easy for them to see the difference between their feet wider than their knees versus their feet directly under their knees (the spot where kids tend to want to position their feet. The problem is it is hard to generate power and be balanced when the feet are not wider than the knees/shoulders).

Batter stands one bat length from the ball. Measure from the ball to the batter's hip. NOTE: kids often measure distance with their arms extended - this is incorrect and we MUST prevent this mistake.



We want a straight line from the back toe to the front toe to the 'pitcher'

The figure drawn above represents the child's shoulders.

The ovals are their feet. The feet need to be wider than the shoulders.

Relationship of Feet to the Tee (Ball)

1. Make a line across home plate, perpendicular to, and through, batter's boxes
2. Stem of tee on the line
3. Front foot on the line
4. One bat length from tee stem to player's front hip
5. Straight line: from back toe → front toe → pitcher

Focus Points for Tee Work

1. Legs - 'Turn back, Turn fast' Gain familiarity with the leg action in the swing.
2. Switch Heels Establish mastery in the use of the Heel Switch action to activate the Leg/Lower Half Turn. [p.17](#)
3. Head in Place/Face the Ball Face the ball prior to swing. Full Effort Swing. Success is when still facing contact point (top of the tee) at the conclusion of the swing. (picture [p.20](#))
4. Sideways Karate Chop Be sure a player is accomplished and consistent in the leg-turn action before adding this aspect to their training. Even with the Leg Turn established, initially, some kids will forget their legs when the Karate Chop is the focus. Alternating Switch Heels and the Sideways Karate Chop, as focus points, can help them learn to always initiate the Karate Chop with their legs. (pic [p.23](#))
5. Feet in Place At the conclusion of the swing. (picture [p.24](#))
6. No 'Careful' Swings We want each swing executed with 100% effort. Assuming a batter keeps their Head in Place, a swing at full speed is more accurate. Additionally, the muscles learn quicker if each movement is repeated at the same speed. Full speed (100% effort) is the only way sure way to have each swing executed at the same speed. (picture [p.25](#))

Is The Stride Needed in the Swing?

Most successful batters Do Not stride. We will not tell any batter to stride. If a batter chooses to stride we leave them alone unless we see the stride causing them problems.

Striding is an individual thing, mostly in relation to an individual's instinctive timing mechanism. It is OK to stride if it feels natural to a batter, HOWEVER...

I encourage young batters to work **without using a stride**. Striding is additional movement for a batter to learn to execute with body control and balance. More movements in the swing; more chances for mistakes. A solution for eliminating or reducing a problematic stride is to widen the stance.

The videos below; WATCH: None of the batters stride. A few pick up their front foot and set it back down; an action called a 'Step' or 'Toe Tap' (timing mechanisms like a stride, but with less movement). Many (older and stronger) players today use this type of an action in place of a stride. These actions require quite a bit of leg strength, which players gain in their teen years. Younger kids are fine by simply 'Turning Back'.

Canada v Italy	1 min 57 sec	Aug 3, 2013
Orioles v Blue Jays	1 min 9 sec	Sept 26, 2022
M's v Blue Jays	4 mins	Sept 2022

(watch: 0:25 | 1:01 | 1:30 | 1:51 | 2:20 | 2:37 | 3:03)

Santana in the first clip, and the Jays batter in the last clip, Do lift their front foot. However, they set their foot back down, pretty much right where the foot started. Note that they do so slowly and with control of their bodies. These are grown men with tremendous body strength. Very few kids could execute this action.

Head in Place - Face the Ball at Contact



Batting - Turn Back (Load)



Legs Start the Swing - Stretch Rubber Bands

...Turn Fast!



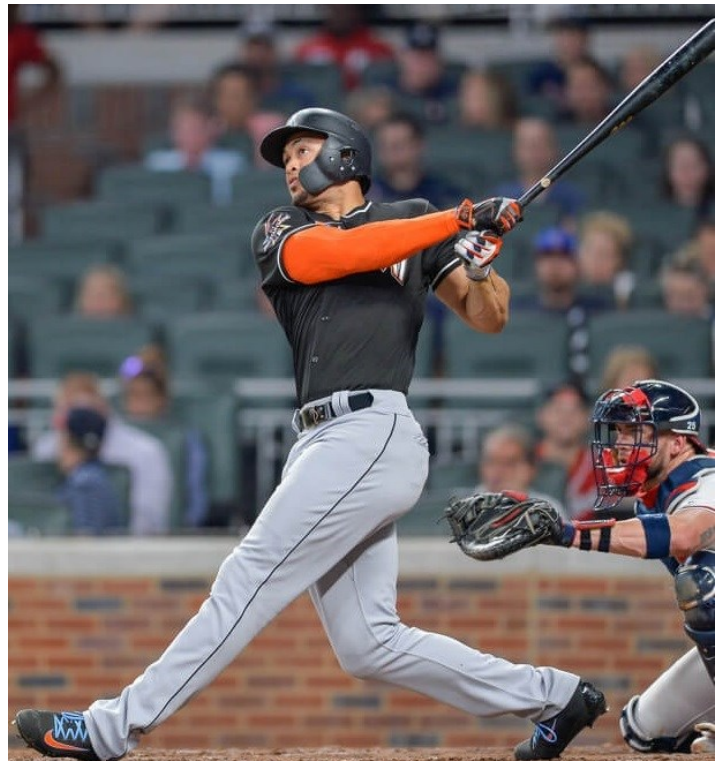
Sideways Karate Chop - snap rubber bands



Feet In Place - Balance



No Careful Swings - Full Speed (100% effort)



Bat Safety - Carry the Bat by the Barrel

The only time a batter holds a bat by the handle is at home plate in a game/scrimmage, or after getting their feet in position to swing during a drill, under the supervision of a coach.

Each year thousands of kids are seriously injured when a teammate is swinging a bat randomly on the field, unaware of other kids walking near by.

It is challenging to train kids to not hold the bat by the handle when they are walking around. For many, the handle is the only part of the bat where they have placed their hands.

Keep after them. Your efforts can save a child, on the receiving end of a misplaced swing, from an unnecessary injury.



50/50 Practice

—> 50% of the time: skill building; 50% of the time: scrimmage

Warm up: Base Running and Skill Building Exercises

5 min

Three group rotation

1. **Playing Catch:** Drills for Receiving throws and throwing; underhand toss; playing catch 25 min
2. **Fielding:** Drills
3. **Batting:** No Bat Drills; hitting off Tees

<break>

5 min

Scrimmage

25 min

Games/Scrimmage

- Coaches behind the infield. Toss/roll balls to players between batters/during down times ...keep the kids active
- Start each inning with runners on 1st & 2nd base

Offense

- **Two** players on base
- **One** Batter (coach/parent)
- **Two** Players in the dugout (coach/parent)
- **Other Player(s)** doing skill building drills; off to the side (coach/parent)
- If an out is made on a runner, allow them to remain as a baserunner (**build** baserunning **skills**)
- Players left on base at the end of an inning: have them run around bases and **Touch Home Plate** (a really big deal to kids!!)
- Reverse the batting order each inning

Defense

- Positioning
 - > **5 Giant Steps** from the base
- “Rotation” (each inning)
 - > Switch Corner infielder and Middle Infielder on each side of the infield
(moving from one side of the field to the other makes for a very different perspective of the game; can be confusing)
 - > Switch Pitcher and Catcher
 - > Switch players to the opposite side of the field in the next game. Avoid putting players on opposite sides of the field in the same game. The change of perspective can be confusing for young kids.

Note: it is understood that many teams have more than six players. Use the above points as a guideline

Routine for each batted ball

1. One player fields the ball
2. Other infielders (and catcher) cover a base (don’t worry about the Pitcher)
3. Underhand toss to a base
 - > Not always to first base; any base, even if no runner is going to the base (this isn’t baseball ...its **skill building**)
4. Shuffle (Move FEET) to **throw in to coach at the Tee** (maximize opportunities for kids to **build their skills**)

Objectives for the Season

- > Kids understand: **Legs** power body movements; **Head** controls body movements
- > Basics of positional responsibilities (Ball or Base: **movement**)
- > Have **FUN** - we want all the kids to sign up to **play again next year** (**FUN** = Active and Moving)

MOVEMENT

Limit Standing & Waitingall adults doing stuff with kids; ***not watching***

Fielding (Feet) and Base Coverage (Run!)

Batting (Legs Turn FAST!)

Constant Activity during games and scrimmages

- Down time between batters
- Extra kids on batting team ...skills play off to the side

Fielding

- Catch Ball with Feet
- Feet wide to catch

Throw Ball with Feet

- Overhand ...shuffle
- Underhand ...run!!

Feet & Legs Power Athletic Actions

Repetitions impact skill development

...'Instruction' is to **guide** actions; less so to 'teach'

Catching

- Reach Forward

Throwing

- Pull (elbow, elbow)
- Wrist Snap ('wave')
- Shuffle, shuffle, Pull, Snap ...momentum
- Underhand Toss: