

2 Strike Drill

One of the drills my kids love is what we call the two strike drill. Divide the kids into 3 equal teams. 1's, 2's and 3's. The 1's bat first. The 2's and 3's assume position in the field. One of the coaches pitches and I generally catch. Players in the field play a position they would generally play in the game whenever possible. The batter comes to the plate with a 3 - 2 count. No walks allowed. They either hit the ball or strike out. Each team gets three outs. Once the 1's get 3 outs, we rotate. 1's go into the field and the 2's come to bat. Team with the most runs after the final inning wins. Usually do this for the last 30 minutes of practice. We also use this drill as an incentive to the players. If they really pay attention during practice and do all the drills correctly we will do the 2 Strike Drill at the end. It really motivates them. It really moves quickly and I have found that it really helps the players that want to look at strikes during games. They see the other kids hitting the ball and having fun running bases so they want to get involved. Also helps players be more aggressive at the plate.

Line Drive or Hard Grounders

I always explain to the kids how important line drives are versus pop ups that typically are fielded for an out. This is about hitting line drives and hard ground ball into the gaps in the infield.

This is how the practice drill goes:

Divide the team up evenly into two teams. Only field the infield positions including the pitcher and catcher. If you don't have enough for the catcher, a coach can field this position. Each batter starts with a 0-1 count. A batter can strike out even if her 3rd strike is a foul ball. The batter must either hit a line drive or a ground ball. If she hits a fly ball she is automatically out. The coaches make a determination if it is a line drive or fly ball. Batters can only advance 1 base on line drives to the outfield or 1 base if an infield error occurs. I want runners on base so we can practice defense as well. No walks or bunts are permitted- we want them swinging. Batters run the bases just like a regular game. Three outs and you switch out as a regular game. I insist that this game moves along quickly as we usually play this at the end of practice and time is limited. Everyone must run on and off the field. No stealing and leadoffs are only allowed to be a few feet.

Stop Under Cutting

I found at the squirt level there were a lot of kids under cutting the ball and never getting a hit. I came up with a drill that was quite effective and they all started hitting quite well. Placing the ball on the "T" I explained to them to come down onto the back/top of the ball much like you are chopping wood. After a few sessions of this and moving the "T" up and down their batting improved greatly and they were able to hit better ground balls.

Hitting a Large Ball

One drill that we sometimes use that I don't recall seeing in other texts is having the girls (younger girls) practice swinging through a larger, somewhat heavier, ball (i.e. soccer ball, dodgeball, etc...) which helps them to learn to swing through the ball.

Progression Hitting Practice

The best batting drill we have used is a progression from hitting off a tee w/o a ball (just clipping the top of the tee w/o knocking it down), then hitting off the tee with a softball, then a soft toss using a whiffle ball, then a soft toss using a whiffle golf ball. Then we get behind a net, about 5 yards away from the hitter, and toss 20 softballs down the pipe. This really helps build confidence in our hitters.

Balance

While standing in the batters box. Have the batter swing the bat as normal. However at the end of the normal swing then reverse and swing the bat back to the starting position. Repeat this 4, 5, 10 times until that batter gets a balance or feel for his weight shifting from back to front and then front to back. Do this before the first pitch of batting practice and as needed during practice. Simple but effective

Quick Swing

Start with your player facing some sort of soft backstop that a whiffle ball can be hit against. The coach should stand an arms length beyond the hitters swing area, facing the hitter, and slightly ahead of the hitter. The coach then should hold the ball above shoulder height over the hitters swing area and when ready drop the ball... the hitter then tries to hit the ball. The amount of time involved to make contact is approximately the same as the amount of time the hitter has to decide on whether or not to swing at a pitched ball, and complete the swing. If the hitter cannot hit the dropped ball, she will not catch up with a fast pitched softball either.

Hitting Machine

Hitting Drill - Pitching Machine required

Coaches / Parents in outfield

Players across infield - 1 on deck - 1 at bat

10 hits - get your glove - go to 1st

Rotate across infield

On deck bats - 3rd goes to on deck

10 hits - 7 hits - 5 hits - turn up pitch speed

3 pitches - 1 pitch

Keep the pace fast - creates game time pressure

We use this last drill last practice before a game or tourney

Guaranteed to help them hit

Rope Drill

Hitting Drill/ Advanced: To really teach "throwing your hands to the ball", we like to use a piece of 3/8"-1/2" rope approximately 32" long, the length of bat. We set up small whiffle balls on a tee and have the girls throw their hands/ rope to the ball. If done correctly the rope snaps straight out and makes contact with the whiffle ball.

High/Low

Hi-Lo toss- 2 softballs soft tossed from the side to the batter, when balls are thrown coach calls out Hi or Low, batter then locates and hits correct ball. (Develops good listening skills, focus and hand eye coordination)

Fence Drill

Batter stands facing or parallel to the backstop and move 1 bat length away from the fence. Then the batter swings without hitting the fence. Then we turned the batter so that she was perpendicular to the fence. We put her back foot 2-3 inches from the fence. The batter has to swing without hitting the fence. The idea of both is to get those hips turned & to take the end of the bat to the ball. We had been striking out a lot and we were swinging late. This drill or instruction helped out a lot since it got the bat to the hitting area a lot quicker.

Bunt Drill

This drill teaches girls to bunt and to work on bunts with a large number of girls.

Each girls needs a bat or they can rotate in small groups
Coach needs lots of softballs, possible helper or assistant coach

Line the girls up in a circle with their bats. Demonstrate the proper technique of bunting. Start with the girls you know can bunt. Toss each girl 3 or 4 balls having them bunt them correctly (this is when the assistant can help). Quickly move around the circle. I usually do this drill until I get tired. You can mix it up with directing them where to bunt it. The key is to make sure they are not jabbing at it, but allowing the ball to simply hit the bat. You can get a lot of repetitions in and the girls can see how each other is doing.

Towel Drill

For Players who tend to have long swings...

Place a Bath Towel across their chest and have them hold the bath towel under their arm pits. They then take a swing with full extension through the ball only letting the towel fall after impact and extension through the ball. Promotes a compact swing and a proper wrist release...

You can do this during any single tee or two tee drill, to help with inside and outside pitches, soft-toss or any batting drill period ... This is a cheap and easy way to promote a more compact swing ...

Plunger

Here is a drill that can be used at all ages to get kids to drive through the ball. You need a tee, a toilet plunger and a half flat basketball or kickball. Place the plunger upside down in the tee and put a flattened ball in place. Have the kids drive the ball straight ahead using their hips arms. Looks funny, works great.

Whiffle Ball

I have a favorite drill that has proven very effective for preparing for pre-game practice or if one of your players is having a hard time seeing the ball at bat.

You will need a few baseball size wiffles. The batter stands approx. 20 - 25' feet from the coach. The idea is to pitch the wiffles to them and have the batter take a nice slow swing. Just making contact with the ball. Reach out and touch the ball with the bat, this will force them to keep their eyes glued to the ball. The idea is not to kill the ball but just take an easy swing and make contact. I used this on my daughter at home for practice just to give it a trial run to see the improvement. It worked so well I started using it during pre-game warm-ups. Have the rest of the team behind you about 5 feet or so to catch the wiffles and cheer on the batter.

Rotate each player for about 10 to 15 balls

See the ball

I put colored numbers on whiffle golf balls and have them toss and hit. The tosser keeps the ball hidden from sight before the toss - the hitter must say the color before or as they are hitting the ball. As they get the hang of it and improve they then call out the number, not just the color.

Bunt/Fielding Drill

Here's how it works.

- 1) Line about 5-7 girls up in a semi circle with gloves on their hands, give one player a ball.
 - 2) Have their feet shoulders with apart, and touching their teammates foot to the right & left side of them.
 - 3) One teammate will be the batter and be about 7- 10 feet in front of them in the center of the semi circle of girls.
 - 4) Next the batter will take the position as if they were going to slap bunt or bunt the ball toward the group, and that's your choice or have them work on one or the other or both if you want.
 - 5) The batter-The object is for the batter to work on bunting, or slap bunting the ball on the ground toward the players, they need to make contact with the ball even if the ball that is tossed to them is bad or good! This will help them keep their eye on the pitch and work on moving the bat up land down, in or out.
 - 6) The Players are to stay in the down and ready position at all times for the ball. The object for the defensive player is to not let the ball get past them and work together as a team to keep the ball in front of them. Now, whom ever the ball is bunted to will catch it and then they will then quickly toss the ball back to the offensive bunter, and the bunter hits the ball again back to the defensive girls, again and again. This will continue until someone misses the ball and it gets past them.
 - 7) Now you can make a game of it. Once the girls get the idea of what they have to do, you can make it a bit more challenging for them by doing this:
If the defensive player/s that go for the ball and touches the ball and it gets past them they are out of the drill, and then they will wait for the drill to end, and when the last defensive player standing wins they now become the batter.
- I hope you have fun with this drill!!

Soft Toss Change.

We all know about soft tossing to batters for batting practice. Here's a change. Use different colored golf sized waffle balls; put three of different colors in your hand and toss at the same time, call a color and the batter must hit the color you called. You can change it up by making a game; the one who misses will be out until you have a winner who has hit all the colors you called.

Bunt Bowling

Set up cones to the left and right of home plate; try to score points by knocking down cones.

Pre-game Batting Practice Long Beach Style.

With limited space and time, we have our player take 10 to 15 swings from live pitching.

The set up:

Three batters are spaced about 10 feet apart.

One coach with a bucket of whiffle balls pitching 20 feet away.

The coach alternates between the three players.

(With the coach on one knee (small players), he pitches to each with a slight pivot.)

The rest of the players shag balls behind the coach.

We have 12 players on our teams and we can get through this drill in 15 to 20 minutes.

Also you do not have to have all your players shagging ball .You can have the three batters shag the ball after their turn while the rest players are going thru pre-game warm ups.

Pre-Game Hitting

Explanation:

Using a four station approach, effective pre-game batting practice can be completed in about 20 minutes. The stations can be spread out along a foul line in the outfield. One coach, plus 12 golf ball size and 24 softball size yellow whiffle balls are required.

Divide the team into four groups of three or four players. In each group, the players will rotate from pitcher to catcher to batter to shagger (if there are only three players in a group, eliminate the catcher). The balls are thrown underhanded from a short distance (approximately 20 feet). Balls are thrown with speed to simulate the pitches of the game. Little time is given between pitches so batters concentration must be maintained and the drill moves along rapidly.

Station 1- bunting. The 12 golf ball size whiffle balls are used here so that batters must concentrate to be successful. Players are to execute the various bunts the team employs. Execution is an absolute must here. If a player does not successfully bunt eight out of 12 pitches, she remains at this station and bunts again. The coach should remain close to this station and see that concentration is at a maximum.

Station 2 -inside part of the plate. Eight softball size whiffle balls are used. Pitches are thrown to the inside part of the plate. Hitters using good mechanics and a short compact

swing concentrating to locate the contact point in front of the lead shoulder. The coach should look for a short and soft stride, a closed front side, staying back on the ball and a strong rear foot pivot. It is essential that the hitters are not pulling off the ball to make contact. Crisp, firm line drives are the goal.

Station 3 — middle third of the plate. Eight softball size whiffle balls are used. Pitches are thrown toward the middle of the plate. Again, using good mechanics, the goal is to drive the ball back toward the pitcher, toward the middle of the diamond. Stress line drives or ground balls and not long lazy flies. Hitters concentrate on the contact point, which is closer to the front shoulder than for the inside pitch.

Station 4 — outside part of the plate. Eight softball size whiffle balls are used. Contact point is now deeper in the strike zone. The coach should be sure that the batter's front side stays closed longer and the hitter stays on the ball, that good mechanics are maintained and she lets the ball get deep into the strike zone. The aim is to hit the ball on a line or on the ground to the opposite field. To accomplish this, hitters must hit down on the ball. Hitters should aim at the second base position if they are right handed and the shortstop position if they hit from the left side of the plate.

At least three balls should be grounded to the right side by right handed hitters (a necessary technique to score runs). Concentrate on the contact point! Keeping the concentration of the players high and moving them rapidly from one station to the other, coaches can make better use of the 20 minutes for pre game batting practice. Give this method a try. I think you will like it.

Contact

I coach high school JV and Varsity softball. My girls love to play Contact. We pull a screen close to the plate and a coach pitching one pitch to each girl. If she makes "Contact" she is still in the game and goes to the back of the line. If she misses, she is out and goes out into the field to help round up balls. This is the girls' favorite drill.

Batting Coordination Drill.

Using a catching net, have two different colored small (golf ball size) whiffle balls. Toss up one of each color at the same time, call out one color and the batter has to hit that color ball.

The girls get a kick out of it and they learn at the same time.

Golf Ball

I have half dozen 1/2" dowels of wood or PVC pipe that are taped at one end for a good grip. We place the kids in a big circle and have a coach pitch plastic golf balls to each kid. In no time the kids are destroying the balls, sure makes it easy to hit the sweet spot on the bat during batting practice. This is guaranteed to bring every kid's BAVG up a few points. For batting practice we do the soft toss drill only with a twist. We use golf ball-sized whiffle balls and miniature marshmallows to swing at instead. (If you freeze the marshmallows they will last longer.)

Quick Bat

Here's a hitting drill. This works better on an even flat surface, or cement surface. Have the player face a high chain link fence, stand about 10 to 15 feet from the fence. Stand behind the batter enough not to get hit with the bat and bounce a tennis ball into her strike zone. She spots the ball as it comes into her strike zone and hits the ball forward into the fence. She is to always look forward as normal and wait till the ball gets into her strike zone before she hits it. Quick bat hits the ball.

Bunt

This is a simple drill that we do to keep the batters aware of the importance of putting the ball in play on a squeeze play call. We place a player on 3rd base and a batter in the batters box. We intentionally throw a variety of high, low, inside, and outside pitches to the batter to get them used to bunting bad pitches. We have the third base runner complete the play also to simulate all of the action taking place on the field that can be a distraction to the batter. Like I said, this is a simple drill that we do that can pay dividends in a tight game.

Small Ball

All you need is a broom or rake handle cut it in half (size of a bat), a bunch of plastic golf balls (I have over 150) and maybe a back stop saves time on chasing balls

I will just kneel to side of player and just toss the ball in front of them. Great drill and the kids seem to have fun with it.

Rapid Fire Bunting

This drill will help you work on bunt and run, suicide squeeze, and hand and eye coordination.

Groups of 3-5. 1 bat for each group.

The other players have a ball and their mitts. These players are spread out in front of the batter. Have the batter place the ball in the direction from where the pitch came from.

Pitch the ball in order or a random order.

Batting Stations

One of the things that I have found successful in my softball practices is to incorporate a hitting cycle/stations into everyday practice.

Below are the drills that we do, I realize that many of them are listed in your drills pages. Here are the stations: (can use in any order, I usually use 6-10 per day and time the players, 2 minutes hitting per station, 30sec to change hitters, 2 min for 2nd hitter and 1 min to change to next station)

1. Ball bounce – bounce tennis ball from 45 deg angle, trigger/load on the bounce
2. Overhead drop – tosser stands on chair and drops ball into the hitting zone, player must be triggered before ball is dropped
3. Rear toss – tosser squats at 45 degree angle behind (off of back leg) hitter and tosses ball into the hitting zone
4. Soft toss – tosser squats at 45 degree angle in front of hitter, toss to left hip, belly button and right hip to emphasize hitting to all fields
5. Rapid toss – tosser tosses 5 balls in rapid succession, 5 sec break and 5 more balls
6. 2 color ball toss – tosser holds 2 different color balls in same hand and tosses both into hitting area while calling out a color to hit when tossing
7. Whiffle golf ball toss – use a whiffer stick (large dowel or broom handle) toss rapid fire or one at a time, can use 2 colors as well
8. Tee swings – use regular tee and work on fundamentals, I have players say out loud the swing progression, trigger-stride-swing
9. Double tee – use a double tee to emphasize follow through and keeping the bat on plane through the zone (can use 2 tees if no double is available)
10. Inside outside tee – set up 2 tees, one in front of plate on inside corner and one at rear of plate on outside corner – have players hit both balls in rapid succession
11. High tee – place tee on bucket to work on high pitches (ie rise ball) – hitter must keep hands high through the zone
12. Knee tee – use short bat or choke up on reg bat, utilize left hand swings only then right hand swings (important to keep opposite hand out of the way, right hand behind back when swinging with left hand and left hand across chest when swinging with right hand).
13. Instructo swing – we use the Griffey instructo swing everyday – helps players work on taking hands to ball without dropping their hands

14. Stay back tee – use the stay back tee to work on keeping the weight back and prevent hitter from lunging forward and losing power
15. Pitching machine – set speed at appropriate level, have hitter take 5 swings from the plate, move up one step (replace front foot with back foot) 5 more swings, continue until player is 20 feet away and then back track – works on bat speed
16. Net/wall swings – place nub of bat against stomach and end of bat against net, make full swings keeping hands inside
17. Pitch recognition – have hitter stand in batter’s box while pitchers work on all pitches, hitter triggers and watches ball into catcher’s mitt, hitter attempts to call out what pitch is thrown before catcher catches it – will help with timing and identifying spins
18. Short toss – coach pitch from 20 feet behind screen, work on swinging at good pitches and hitting to all fields.

I have incorporated weighted bats into several of our hitting drills, specifically #'s 1,2,3,4,5,8,9,10 – I use the weights that attach to the nub of the bat and the wraps that go around the handle, do not use weighted sleeves or donuts.

It is important that you take the time to explain each drill to the players as to how they are to do the drill and what they are to accomplish from it.

One last drill series that I have found useful – I divide my team into outfielders, infielders & pitchers/catchers and I set up 3 hitting stations on the field, 1 at home plate, 1 on the 3rd base line and 1 on the 1st base line, I have a feeder and hitter at each station and the overflow in the outfield with a bucket in each field – this gives the girls an opportunity to see results instead of hitting into nets all of the time. I penalize them with push-ups for each ball that they hit into the air (pop ups) and reward them for multiple line drives. I create a competition between the 3 groups and the winners get to choose the conditioning for the day.

Soft Toss Hitting Drill

I think soft toss is a great way to work one on one with your youth hitters focusing on basics and mechanics. However, it can get a little redundant and boring. After a round of standard soft toss we go through it again using two balls. You take two balls in your hand (one on top of the other) and toss them calling out what ball you want them to hit, the top or bottom. This makes the hitter think and reacts quickly to focus on the right ball improving hand/eye coordination. We also from time to time use colored baseballs or colored whiffle balls. The hitter has to call out the color of the ball as he is hitting it. Even more fun is using colored golf size whiffle ball with a Thunder Stick bat...not much room for error!

Quick Swing

A drill we do with our 10-12 yr. olds, after soft toss & 2 ball soft toss, we have a coach stand on a bucket and drop balls, then the coach stands on the ground and drops the ball, we have found this very effective in increasing bat & hand speed through the hitting zone.

The 20 Point Hitting Drill

A drill I came up with is a bat control drill used on the field.

The first part of the drill has 3 bunting zones, 3B, Middle, and 1B. I use tees to divide the area on the field. Each batter gets 3 pitches to get 3 bunts down in each zone (possible 9 points).

Then we move the tees back to the start of the outfield grass. They each get three pitches to hit to the correct zone (stated ahead of the pitch by the coach). This is another 9 points if successful.

Then they get 2 hit and run swings to finish for a possible 20 points. I set a goal for the day like 12 points. If they get it, they get out of some part of conditioning or 5 extra BP cuts, etc.

If helps the coach and the players know who can control their bat in game situations.

Eye Patch

Here is a great drill that works for keeping your head down and your eyes on the ball. Use an eye patch and cover the front eye during soft toss drill or pitching machine drills then take it off and do the same drill over. The player's really learn to see and follow the ball.

Soft Toss Drill

Soft Toss drill to develop timing, weight transfer, hands back, and hitting off the back foot.

Seems like a lot but the drill is simple and will have immediate results.

Assuming grip is correct and stance is solid, have the hitter pick up lead foot and balance on back foot. Coach will present ball high and drop it low to toss. At the bottom of the toss hitter takes stride keeping weight back and head from moving. Swing away! Even beginning hitters will get immediate feedback.

Popcorn Bunt Drill

One of the hardest things for young players is to learn to "watch" the ball hit the bat rather than swinging or moving the bat to the ball. We like to start youngsters out with a soft toss involving popcorn seeds. Talk about concentration, it takes considerable effort to watch that kernel in mid-air and follow it to the bat. After a few dozen kernels, the softballs become huge targets that are much easier to follow to the bat.

Lacrosse Bunt

I use a Lacrosse stick to help teach the kids how to bunt. Instead of stabbing at the ball this teaches them to follow the ball and "catch" it instead pushing at it.

It worked wonders for my lead off hitters.

Have the batter in her regular batting stance. When the ball is pitched the batter squares up and "catches" the ball with the lacrosse stick. This helps them control the bat and not "stab" at the softball. Have the batter flip the ball in a bucket and repeat.

For more control for beginners use tennis balls and pitch closer to them.

Softball Knockout

One drill that we do is softball knockout. The girls stand in a line out towards third base. We have the first two players with bats. The coach pitches. The goal for the player is to hit the ball no matter where it is. You have one shot to hit it. If you hit it, you hand your bat to the next player in line and go to the back of the line; if you miss you are out in the field shagging balls. The last one still making contact is the winner. It is quick and really makes the girls focus on the ball and just make contact. Fun warm-up to get kids focused!

Tee Positions

I set up a hitting tee with a bucket of 15 to 20 balls. Batter gets in position to bat, they hit the balls just as fast as I can set them on the tee but during this I move the tee up and down to different levels. I have found that some can't hit certain balls, it seems to really help them with the balls they have problems hitting such as high or low, and they have fun doing it.

