

ELCO Baseball: Hitting from the Ground Up

Stance

- * **Toes** - pointed parallel to slightly inward
- * **Feet** - shoulder width to slightly wider than shoulder width apart - weight should be slightly on the balls and inside of the feet
- * **Knees** - flexed and inside the feet - bent in an athletic position
- * **Upper Body** - athletic position
- * **Arms** - relaxed with elbows pointed downward - "spaghetti arms"
- * **Hands** - Bat lays across the calluses of both hands so the door-knocker knuckles line up when gripping the bat. **LOOSE HANDS!** (wiggle fingers) Hands should be held high enough so that you can grab your ear prior to the load position. It is better to start the hands closer the the final load position - lesser movement = quicker reaction time
- * **Head** - "TV Face" - facing the pitcher so that both eyes see the pitcher and are parallel to the ground

To get in the proper stance:

- * Stand in an athletic position (basketball foul shooting position, football 2-point stance) - **CHECK FOR PLATE COVERAGE & BAT SIZE**
- * **Grip** - extend the arms and lay the bat head on the ground and the grip of the bat across the calluses of the palms of the hands so that when holding the bat the door-knocker knuckles line up - Loose Hands
- * **Power-V** - lift and extend the bat in front of you so that your arms form a "V"
- * **On the shoulder** - bend the arms (relaxed) and lay the bat head on the back shoulder
- * **Off the shoulder** - lift the bat head off the shoulder so that your hands are high enough to grab your back ear - the bat head should be between a 45-90 degree angle

Load

- * Weight shifts back so that 60% is over the back leg and 40% is over the front.
- * Knees are still inside the feet and the weight should still be slightly on the balls and inside of the feet.
- * Front knee should slightly cock inward.
- * Front hip should slightly cock inward.
- * Hands should move back in a linear motion so that they are slightly behind the back knee. Knob of the bat should be pointed toward the catcher cocking the wrists.
- * Chin should be touching or nearly touching the front shoulder.

Swing

- * **SLOW FEET - QUICK HANDS**
- * **Front Foot** - stride should be short and soft - weight should still be slightly on the balls and inside of the foot - final check point for the load occurs when the front foot lands
- * **Back Foot** - pivot on the ball of the foot and the heel is off of the ground - "Heel to the sky..." "Squish the bug" "Drive the nail"
- * **Back Knee** - drives down and through toward the pitcher - Power-L Position
- * **Front Leg** - knee bends initially then recoils at contact - "Hit against a stiff front leg."
- * **Hips** - rotate parallel to the ground - back hip is connected to the back knee and hands
- * **Hands** - fire in connection with the back hip and back knee - linear motion - "Keep the hands on track." "Knob of the bat leads the swing." Palm Up-Palm Down Position at contact
- * **Arms** - flexed throughout the swing even at contact - Front Elbow drives downward - Back Elbow drives to the slot position (against the side of the stomach)
- * **Shoulders** - should remain parallel to the ground throughout the swing
- * **Upper Body** - should remain centered throughout the swing - behind the belt buckle
- * **Head** - should remain in the same position (centered) throughout the swing - follow the ball with the eyes to contact

Finish

- * **BALANCE THROUGHOUT THE SWING**
 - * **Front Foot** - swing causes weight to shift on the outside of the foot and slightly open
 - * **Upper Body** - rotates so that chest and belly button are facing the direction the ball was hit and chest is behind the belt buckle
 - * **Hands & Arms** - extend through contact - finish high - preferably with both hands still on the bat - "Heel to the sky & say Goodbye"
 - * **Head** - chin starts near the front shoulder and finishes near the back shoulder "Shoulder to Shoulder"
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ELCO Baseball: Hitting Drills

Dry Swings

- * Have the hitter find two lines that form the letter "T" in the gym floor or have them draw a letter "T" in the dirt
- * Have the hitter stand athletically so that their body is centered over the bottom of the letter "T", their feet are pointed toward the top of the letter "T", and their hands are on line with the top of the letter "T"
- * Have the hitter go through the steps of getting in the proper stance, load, swing, and finish visualizing hitting various pitches at various contact points - slow & deliberate - QUALITY NOT QUANTITY!
- * The hitter's body should stay centered over the bottom of the letter "T"
- * Hitter should start BALANCED and finish BALANCED

Fence Drill

- * Have the hitter face a wall or fence
- * Have the hitter hold their bat parallel to the ground so that the knob of the bat is against their belt buckle and the end of the bat is touching the fence or wall
- * Have the hitter swing the bat slowly using proper swing mechanics trying not to make contact with the fence or wall - "Knob of the bat leads the swing"
- * It is ok if the bat brushes the fence or wall at the belt buckle or in front
- * CAUTION: be sure the hitter leads the swing with the hands and does not pull off with the front shoulder or step in the bucket with the front foot

Tracking

- * Have the hitter stand in the batter's box against a live pitcher during batting practice, a bull pen session, or when hitting in the cage and track the ball from the pitcher's release point with his eyes all the way to the catcher's glove or where the catcher normally sets up
- * Variation #1 Have the hitter call out "BALL" or "STRIKE" as the ball crosses the plate and confirm it with the catcher or coach
- * Variation #2 Have the hitter call out the location, "IN", "MIDDLE", "AWAY", as the ball crosses the plate and confirm it with the catcher or coach
- * Variation #3 Take 10 baseballs and number them 1-10 with a marker. Have the hitter call out the number on the ball as soon as he sees it being thrown from the pitcher or coach. This may also be done while actually taking full swings during batting practice or short toss.
- * Variation #4 Take baseballs and paint or color them various colors and have the hitter call out the color of the ball as soon as he sees it being thrown from the pitcher or coach. This may also be done while actually taking full swings during batting practice or short toss.

Batting Tee

- * Vary Tee heights (low, middle, high)
- * Vary Tee location to the 3 contact points (away, middle, inside)
- * Have the hitter "Go to contact" slow and deliberate so that proper swing mechanics take place (BALANCED) prior to full swing at full speed
- * Have the hitter swing at full speed - starting BALANCED & finishing BALANCED - then pause at the finish so that proper mechanics and balance occur "Hold your pose"

2-Tee Drill

- * Place 2 Batting Tee's back to back so that the stems of each Tee are as close together as possible and the Front Tee is at the middle contact point
- * Raise the Back Tee so that it is at equal height or slightly higher than the Front Tee
- * Place a ball on the Front Tee, have the hitter "Go to contact" using proper mechanics, then swing at full speed down and through the ball
- * Variation - place one tee with a ball at the middle contact point and the 2nd tee with a ball at the outside contact point then have the hitter swing at the middle tee without making contact with the outside ball and then swing at the outside ball driving it to the opposite field

Soft Toss

- * TOSSER IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE HITTER
- * Tosser should face the hitter on one knee or sitting on a bucket
- * Tosser can vary distance away from the hitter and speed and height of the toss
- * LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION - tosser should toss the ball to one of the 3 specific contact points that the hitter is working on at that time
- * Tosser should toss the ball with a stiff wrist and little ball rotation - makes it easier to control the location of the toss
- * QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

Soft Toss with Holds

- * Same as Soft Toss but the tosser holds the ball occasionally instead of tossing it simulating an off speed pitch
- * Hitter should remain in the load position - watch to see that the hitter does not break the front knee or the upper body drifts forward

Short Toss

- * Coach stands or kneels 15-20 feet in front of the hitter behind an L-screen
- * Coach can toss overhand or underhand from behind the screen working the hitter by tossing to various contact points (inside, middle, away)
- * By better controlling the location of the pitches, coach may also work on various situational hitting scenarios
- * Variation #1 Have the hitter say "HIT" when making contact with the baseball so he feels, sees, and hears the various contact points
- * Variation #2 Have the hitter begin with his eyes closed prior to the pitch, when the coach is about to pitch the ball he says "BALL", the hitter opens his eyes and takes a normal swing. This works the hitter's eyes and his fine focus as well as bat speed
- * Variation #3 Place a tee with a ball at the away contact point then toss pitches to the middle and inside contact points working the hitter middle and in with the hitter taking full swings without making contact with the ball on the tee. Then when the coach fakes a toss the hitter drives the ball off the tee to the opposite field. This works on the hitter's balance and not flying open as well as control of hitting the ball at various contact points
- * Variation #4 Have the hitter set up inside the cage like you would do for the Fence Drill then the coach tosses the ball along the side of the cage working the hitter with live swings using the Fence Drill concept

Short Bat - Top/Bottom Hand

- * Have the hitter swing a short bat (may also use a shorter bat than normally used and choke up) with either the top hand or the bottom hand while placing the hand that is not being used on their chest
- * Swings should be short, quick, and sharp and at about 60% of the effort of a normal swing with a normal bat
- * Always begin with the bottom hand first - top hand is more difficult and more advanced
- * This drill may be done using wiffle balls, tennis balls, small baseballs, and normal baseballs
- * CAUTION: be sure the hitter does not cast the hands - make sure the hitter's arms are still bent at contact and then extended through the ball

Wiffle Ball BP

- * Same as Short Toss but with wiffle balls and without an L-screen

Pencil Drill

- * Have the hitter place a pencil, towel, or any other small item under the front armpit holding it in place so that it does not fall to the ground
- * Have the hitter take a normal Short Toss BP making sure the item under the armpit does not fall to the ground
- * This drill forces the hitter to stay down and through the baseball and is to prevent or cure the uppercut

Fungo Self Toss BP

- * Have the hitter swing a fungo bat and hit the ball at various contact points while tossing the ball up to himself
- * Tossing the ball at the appropriate contact points are the key to this drill
- * This drill develops hand-eye coordination and the hitter's ability to better understand the contact points when trying to drive the ball to various locations
- * Tossing the ball with the top hand forces the hitter to stay back and be more balanced throughout the swing

Important Points for Proper Sacrifice Bunting Technique the ELCO Way

1. Move to the front of the Batter's Box and in towards home plate to make sure you get plate coverage.
2. To "square" around, pivot on the balls of your feet from your normal batting stance.
3. Square your hips and shoulders towards the pitcher.
4. Make sure you are balanced and that your knees are bent.
5. Let the bat slide through your hands so that your bottom hand is at the top of the grip and your top hand is pinching the bat just below the sweet spot of the barrel.
6. Extend, but not lock out, your arms so that contact is made in front of the plate.
7. The barrel of the bat should be slightly above parallel at the top of the strike zone, just below chin level.
8. When bunting, maintain the angle of the barrel of the bat by moving up and down with your knees.
9. Keep your eyes on the same plane as the barrel so that you can track the ball to the point of contact.
10. Focus on "catching" the ball with the bat using the bottom half of the barrel to make contact with the top half of the ball.
11. To put the ball in the 3rd base channel, point the barrel towards first base. (for a right-handed hitter)
12. To put the ball in the 1st base channel, point the knob towards third base. (for a right-handed hitter)

Important Points for Proper Technique when Bunting for a Hit

Right-handed Hitter Drag Bunt Technique (Bunt to 3B side)

1. Take the normal hitting stance
 2. When the pitcher reaches the "goal post" position, let the bat fall down through the hands so that the top hand is just below the "sweet spot" on the barrel and the bottom hand is at the top of the grip
 3. Drop the back foot so that you are in the proper running position to 1B
 4. Point the barrel to 1B so that you bunt the ball to the left side of the 3B channel - location, location, location
 5. When bunting the ball, try to create backspin and deaden the ball by "catching" the ball with the bat
- * CAUTION: be sure the hitter does not run out of the batter's box before bunting the ball

Right-handed Hitter Push Bunt Technique (Bunt to 1B side)

1. Take the normal hitting stance
2. When the pitcher reaches the "goal post" position, let the bat fall down through the hands so that the top hand is just below the "sweet spot" on the barrel and the bottom hand is at the top of the grip
3. Drop the back foot so that you are in the proper running position to 1B
4. Point the knob of the bat to 3B so that you bunt the ball to the right side past the pitcher toward the second baseman - location, location, location
5. When bunting the ball, try to create topspin by bunting through the baseball firmly

Left-handed Hitter Drag/Push Bunt Techniques

- * Steps 1, 2, & 5: Same as right-handed hitter technique
- * Step 3: Do not drop the back foot. Instead, after making contact with the baseball, either cross over the front side with the back foot when running out of the box or jab step with the front foot toward 1B when running out of the box
- * Step 4: Opposite of right-handed hitter technique