

On-field Teaching Outline for Fastpitch Coaching Hitting Video #5 Practice Drills

Teaching the Team

Line up your team members -- with helmets and bats, in three rows, staggered. Call out instructions as you demonstrate the movements. Use the words in bold print very often, usually by themselves.

The Short Punch Drill

Set Up using good posture and the Handshake Grip. Maintain your posture and grip throughout the Short Punch Drill.

Lean in over the plate, keep your **elbows down**, and your **arms and shoulders relaxed** throughout the drill.

Say “**Load, Step, Lift**” while doing this drill.

Do the **Load and Step**.

- As you **Load**, press your hips very slightly (an inch) toward the catcher to keep your front shoulder down. Keep your hips and shoulders in this position as you Step.
- As you **Step**, press your elbows and bat very slightly (an inch or two) toward the catcher.

As your weight shift finishes at **toe touch**, make your **elbows slide** forward an inch or two, not fast and not slow.

At the same time your **elbows slide** forward the inch or two, **Lift** your back heel.

Then immediately stop all motion, ending the drill.

Bring the whole bat forward an inch or two as your **elbows slide**. Be sure the bat head moves forward with the rest of the bat and your elbows.

After your players initially learn the Short Punch Drill:

- Have them keep their eyes on their front elbow to be sure it bends inward a little as it slides forward during the drill.
- Every player should use this drill very often, almost every time they are preparing for a swing at practice.
- Every player should use this drill often during games, every time they are on deck, and often while at bat, between pitches.
- Use this drill in combination with the Long Punch Drill, doing the Short Punch just before doing the Long Punch.

SPECIAL NOTE:

Be sure your players understand that the Short Punch is exactly and precisely the start of their game swing. If they start their game swing exactly like their good Short Punch, they will have fast success.

The Karate Drill

This is a Long Punch Drill with no bat, using your right hand only (for righties).

Set up as for a Hip Turn Drill, with your hands in front of your shoulders.

Then drop your left arm to your side and leave it there.

Then execute a Hip Turn Drill, letting your right elbow and hand slide straight ahead.

Turn your hand over after it has moved forward a few inches, so the back of your hand faces the ground.

Keep your elbow **connected** with your back hip as your hips turn.

The right hand should stop abruptly, making it feel like finishing a punch, but with no swoop or upward motion.

Your elbow should still be bent at the end of the drill.

SPECIAL NOTES:

Be sure your players understand that the Karate Drill's purpose is to help them feel and understand that our swing is more like a karate punch than the kind of swing they might be used to. Our swing and the Karate Drill feel like they start slow but feel powerful.

The Karate Drill should be used sparingly, early on when you are first teaching the swing.

The Basic Soft Toss Drill.

The purpose of this drill is the same as the basic tee drills -- to practice hitting the ball at precise locations in the strike zone. (Hold a ball in a volunteer's strike zone to demonstrate a couple of contact points, like an outside low strike and an inside high one.)

The tosser should set up so the ball will be tossed in at an angle of about 30 degrees.

The toss should travel only about 3 or 4 feet from the tosser's hand to contact.

The tosser should use a big, slow motion to deliver a slow, low-arched toss to a specific location.

The batter should make contact just after the ball turns down from its peak height.

The tosser may use a target such as the front of the batter's left hip to help toss accurately.*

Normally, the tosser should toss carefully to one of the four corners of the strike zone.

If the batter is struggling with her swing, the tosser should try to place the ball in the center of the strike zone, a few inches in front of the batter's front foot after her step.

You should use excellent fundamental motions on each swing, thinking specifically about at least one fundamental, but no more than two. Every swing at practice should have a purpose. A coach should normally be there telling the batter what fundamental motion(s) to think about on each swing.

*SPECIAL NOTE (on next page)

If the tosser can't get the ball to the right spot, the batter should swing properly anyway and deliberately miss the ball. That is, take a dry swing, or do not swing, rather than swing incorrectly. Alternatively, the batter can change where she is standing so the next toss will be closer to where it should be.

The Basic Front Toss Drill

The purpose of this drill is the same as soft toss -- to practice hitting the ball at precise locations in the strike zone -- but it is more realistic. Additionally, it can be used for practicing bunts and slaps as well as swings.

A coach stands behind a screen about 15 to 20 feet in front of the batter and pitches the ball underhand, typically at a speed which appropriately challenges the batter.

The pitcher should use a big, medium speed motion, but the motion does not have to look like a good pitcher's motion. It just should be consistent from pitch to pitch so the batter can time the start of her Load.

Use front toss to practice hitting strikes pitched to selected corners of the strike zone, or down the middle for beginners or for trying out an adjustment to the batter's swing. The batter should swing at strikes only, unless the coach instructs her otherwise.