CORNERSTONE
coaching academy

GENERATING OFFENSE AND HITTING

Introduction

At Cornerstone, we recognize that there are many different hitting philosophies and many different mechanical approaches to hitting. Also, there are many different styles of hitting, and we do not want to influence anyone's style. We are presenting what we believe to be the best philosophies and mechanics based on our experiences, studies, and video analysis. The goal for this course is to show you an approach at the plate that has been successful, explain some mechanical absolutes to take back to your team, give you drills that can be implemented right away to help the hitters on your team improve, and

Module 1 - Hitting Philosophy

The goal for any at bat should be to get on base by any means possible. While many events leading to getting on base are out of the hitter's control, having a quality approach at the plate will give them the best chance to reach base.

Part 1 - The Count is the Game

The phrase "the count is the game" will help you remind your players (especially those over the age of 13) that their approach on a given pitch will change based on the count they are hitting in.

0-0, 1-0, 2-0, 3-1 counts - These should be look at as hitters counts. Teach your hitters to only swing at pitches in their optimal hitting zone in these counts. There is no need to swing at a pitch just because it is a strike. Eventually, your hitters will be able to identify pitches as either good pitches to hit or not good pitches to hit, not simply if a pitch is a strike or a ball.   Unless a hitter is a particularly good breaking ball hitter, there is no need to swing at breaking balls in these counts.

Coaches often become frustrated by their players taking fastballs for strikes and abandon this approach. As with any new skill or technique, there will be a learning curve, and it will take time for hitters to learn what pitches are good pitches to hit and which pitches are not.

Teaching cue - Refer to these counts as "double counts." In other words, the hitters get a pitch they believe they can hit a double on. The swing they take in these counts should be very aggressive, and they should only swing at pitches can take aggressive healthy swings at.

Figure 1 - Double Count Zone

0-1, 1-1, 2-1 counts - These counts are neutral counts, but the hitter is not at such a disadvantage that they need to swing at a pitcher's pitch. The swing zone will be expanded slightly, but the hitter should lay off pitches on the black of the plate and at the top and bottom of the strike zone.

Teaching cue - Refer to these counts as "barrel counts." In other words, the hitters only swing at pitches they can put on the barrel of the bat.

Figure 2 - Barrel Count Zone

2 Strike Counts
The approach with two strikes is very simple. Look away.   Most pitchers will try to pitch away with two strikes to get the batter out. Combat this by waiting longer to allow the ball to travel deeper in the hitting zone when there are two strikes. It is likely the pitcher will either throw a fastball away, or off-speed pitch, especially when they are ahead with two strikes. Either of the two pitches require the hitter to wait a fraction of a second longer to be able to hit.

Teaching Cue: Remind your players to "let the ball get deep." The phrases "stay back," and "wait on it," don't give the players the visualization they need to hit properly with two strikes.

When prescribing drills for your hitters, make sure they work on hitting the ball to the opposite field about half of the time. To work on the outer half, make sure the pitch/flip/tee is on the outer half of the plate and back toward the middle of their body. The key to the outside pitch is to let the ball get deep to the middle of the body and to encourage them to take their normal swing. If they extend their arms away from the their body, they will have little to no chance to make solid contact with an outside pitch (See the outside pitch drill progression).

How to practice working counts
Coaches should only require their athletes to perform skills and tactics they have worked on in practice. Because of this, a coach should not ask that their players take quality at bats if they have not been coached on how to take them in practice. When your team is taking batting practice or hitting in the cage, have a specific plan for which counts you want to emphasize that day. You can also have sessions where you are working on entire at bats, or start the at bat in a

certain count. During those sessions, take the emphasis off of mechanics and emphasize the approach instead.

Part 2 - Taking Quality At Bats
It is a misconception held by many young players that offense is only hitting. There are many different ways to create offense, and only some of them involve hitting. In order to impress upon your athletes the importance of quality at bats, keep track of the percentage of quality at bats each of your athletes. Below is a suggested list of outcomes that would be considered quality at bats:

1.) Base hit
2.) Hard hit ball
3.) Hit By Pitch (HBP)
4.) Walk
5.) Move runner from 2nd to 3rd with no outs (play may result in the 1st out)
6.) Score runner from third with less than 2 outs
7.) 6 or more pitch at bat that doesn't end in a strike out
8.) 9 pitch or more at bat, any result including strike out
9.) Sacrifice bunt (called by coach)

Use the quality at bat chart (Appendix A) to keep track of the player and team's quality at bat percentage. Shoot for a goal of 60% quality at bats. If that mark seems unrealistic for the team's skill level, you may decrease or increase it as necessary.   This allows players to see their performance without the element of luck, and allows a player who goes 0-4 to have a successful day if they hit two balls hard right at a fielder, grounded out to second in a seven pitch at bat, and moved a runner from 2nd to 3rd with a ground ball to the second basemen.

Module 2 - Hitting Mechanics
If someone described the act of hitting a baseball as "trying to strike a 5-oz, rock hard sphere thrown at you at up to 100 miles per hour, moving in a variety of directions, with a spherical object," you wouldn't believe it was possible unless you had seen it happen in person. While we all know that hitting a baseball is not impossible, we also know it is probably the most difficult single skill to master in all of sports. There is almost no other sport where a player can succeed three out of ten times and be considered one of the best in his craft.

It is because of this that hitting a baseball is the most coached, and in some instances, over-coached skill in baseball. One of the keys to coaching hitting is to keep it as simple as possible, especially at the younger ages. The specifics of hitting mechanics can get very complicated, but the absolutes translate to all age groups. This manual intends to give you both the absolutes and finer points

of hitting mechanics, as well as tactics you can implement on your team to generate offense.

Part 1 - Lower half set-up

There are many different set-ups or stances that a hitter can start with. Some hitters start squared, some begin closed, and yet others start with an open stance. Each hitter will have his individual style. Your job as a coach is to blend the hitter's style with the mechanical absolutes that must occur during the setup and swing to give a hitter their best chance to succeed.

Regardless of how a hitter sets up in relationships to the pitcher (squared, open, closed) they should have a few check points in common:

1.) Feet should be at a comfortable distance apart to get to hitting position (see Hitting Position in Part 3)
2.) Weight should be on the inside of the feet (balls of feet)
3.) Back knee should be inside the back knee
4.) Weight should be 60/40 distributed back to front

The lower half setup, while simpler than the upper half setup, should be emphasized more. The lower half setup is truly the foundation of the swing and should be one of the first topics attacked with a hitter. If a player meets these four lower half setup mechanical absolutes, coaches should only make sure they put themselves in a good starting spot to get into hitting position. It is not advised to take away a player's style.

Part 2 - Upper Half Set-up

After the hitter has a solid foundation by setting up in a comfortable position with their lower half, they can begin to develop the upper half setup. The upper half setup can be broken into three main parts: grip, hand positioning, and back elbow positioning.

The grip - The bat should be held loosely in the fingers (not the palm) to allow the hands to move quickly through the zone. A good cue for young hitters to use is to line up the knocking knuckles (middle knuckles) on both hands. Do not spend too much time on getting the knuckles exactly in line. Simply make sure that the bat is in the fingers and is held with a loose grip.

Hand positioning - The hands only need to be in a comfortable position so the batter can easily get into the hitting position (described in part 3). A good rule of thumb for starting position of the hands is near the hitter's back shoulder. Some

players may be comfortable with higher hands and some with lower hands. This is a batter's individual style and should not be changed unless it is causing timing problems or they have trouble reaching the proper hitting position.

Back elbow positioning - Go to any little league field in the country and you will hear someone yelling "Get your back elbow up!" from the stands or dugout. This seems to be the fix-all solution to any hitting problem. While it will not fix most of the problems hitters have, the initial positioning (and subsequent movement) of the back elbow is very important to maximizing a hitter's power.

The rear elbow should be pointed somewhere between perpendicular to the ground and parallel to the ground in a comfortable position. Proper back elbow positioning ensures that a player will be able to pinch the scapula during the loading phase of the swing. A rear elbow that is too low will make pinching the shoulder blade almost impossible during the load, and one that is too high will be uncomfortable and will cause timing issues in the load.

Movement - It is best to keep any movement in the stance small and rhythmical. Small circles with the hands or wiggling the toes and fingers will help keep the hitter relaxed and release some pre-pitch tension. Keeping the theme with the overall stance, any movement should be left up to the individual, but should not distract or prevent the hitter from getting into proper hitting position on time.

Part 3 - Hitting Position (load)
Hitters will have a variety of different starting spots, but they should be in virtually the same position when their front stride foot hits. The hitting position describes the position the hitter's entire body is in when his front foot hits after the stride.

The hitting position is the foundation for the entire swing. It is very difficult to swing the bat properly without being in a good hitting position. The hitting position should be considered the foundation of a good swing, and very little mechanical work should be done until the hitting position is solidified.

Movement of the load
The act of getting to the proper hitting position should consist of movement. As Sir Isaac Newton said "Objects at rest stay at rest, and objects in motion stay in motion." When preparing to hit, it is best if your hands and body are in motion. The movement should consist of a stride with the front foot, moving the top hand over the bottom hand, and pinching or loading the scapula.

The stride
As with stances, there are many different strides that a hitter will use. Some will use the traditional straight forward step, some will use the toe tap, some will use a leg kick, and some will choose to go with no stride at all. Hitting coaches should recognize that these differences are a matter of style and should not be changed unless they are interfering with the hitters ability to get into the hitting position on time.

The key to coaching the stride is not to worry about stride length, but to worry about the weight distribution at the end of the stride. At the end of the stride, the weight should be roughly 50/50 back to front. Additionally, when the front foot is down, the weight should be to the inside of the feet. A good way to check to see if the weight is on the inside of the feet is to check the position of the knees. If the knees are inside the feet, the weight is on the inside of the feet. If either knee (usually the back knee) is positioned over the foot, then the weight is to the outside of the foot. This will result in poor weight transfer during the swing phase.

Many coaches worry about keeping the stride short, but in reality, some of the best hitters in baseball history have had very long strides (Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle, Ichiro). The length of the stride is more a function of the width of the stance since most hitters will get to a position that is slightly wider than shoulder width after their stride.

The hands
As the stride is happening, the hitter should "walk their hands away" from their feet. Assuming that the hitter begins from a relatively normal stance, the hands will move slightly up and back to a position between the hitter's rear shoulder and elbow. If they were to take the bottom hand off the bat, the top hand should be in a good position to punch a heavy bag. The best cue to use for this movement is to take the knob of the bat from perpendicular to the ground to facing the catcher's feet.   Have the players make a small "j" with their hands to reach this point.

The scapula and back hip
While the stride is happening and the hands are moving up and back away from the front foot, the hitter should also load or "pinch" his scapula. At the same time.

Timing of the load
The stride, hands, and scapula load should happen simultaneously, and should finish at the instant the swing would being. Again borrowing from Sir Isaac Newton, we don't want to stop at the load position because we are not stopping

the swing and then would have to overcome inertia to start it again. The stride and load sequence should finish at the time when the hitter has to decide if he is going to swing at the pitch or not. For most hitters at most levels, this is slightly after the pitcher releases the ball. This process may need to begin slightly sooner if the hitter has slower hands, or if they pitcher throws with high velocity.

Part 4 - Sequencing the swing
Once the hitter decides to swing at a pitch, the sequence in which the swing takes place is very important. The swing is basically the act of generating force from the ground with the lower body and transferring it to the hands and bat.

First movement
The first movement of the swing should be to push off the inside ball of the rear foot driving the back knee toward the front knee. The back heel will start to come off the ground and turn the hips. During this movement, the upper half of the body should remain in the same position (closed to the pitcher) creating separation between the upper and lower half. The player should feel a stretch between their front hip and front shoulder. Use the term "coil" to help hitters visualize what should happen with their body in this phase.

This separation is the biggest mechanical key to being able to drive the baseball. A common mistake among hitters is to be a "one piece" hitter, meaning their lower bodies and upper bodies come through at the same time. This type of a swing will generally not maximize a player's ability to drive the baseball.

Moving up the chain
To create maximum separation and torque between the upper and lower half, the hitter should try to keep their upper half closed as long as physically possible. Flexibility in the hitter's mid-section will increase their ability to create separation between upper and lower half **(see physical fitness section)**.

The action of driving the back knee toward the pitcher will start to turn the rear hip, creating a stretch between the lower and upper half through the abdominal region. Again, during this action, the hitter should try to keep the top half as closed as possible.

Upper half movement
During the initial part of the swing, the upper half should resist the lower half's rotation for as long as possible. As the upper half starts to rotate, the hitter's rear elbow should begin to drop into the slot right next to hitters ribcage. This action will help get the bat on plane with the ball as quickly as possible. At this

point, the hips should be near finished rotating and the upper half should begin its rotation.

<u>Bat path</u>
Slotting the back elbow will help put the bat on plane with the ball as quickly as possible. Regardless of the pitch being thrown, every ball is coming to the hitter on a slightly downward plane. The hitter will want to match the plane of the ball by having a swing that is slightly upward. The longer the hitter can keep the bat moving on plane with the ball, the more margin of error he has.

A common bat path mistake is to take the bat directly down to the baseball. If the path of the bat is straight down, and the plane of the ball is slightly down, the bat will be on plane with the ball for a very short period of time. This type of swing produces very little margin for error in contact timing.

<u>The hands</u>
Even thought it appears as though the hands are doing most of the work when a hitter connects with the ball, the hands should really just be an extension of the energy created by the body's rotation during the swing. Many hitting coaches over-coach the hands in the swing. If the rest of the swing is in sequence, the hands should be in a good position to hit.   The hands should only be a focus once the remainder of the swing is executed with some proficiency.

The phrase "keep your hands inside the ball" is a favorite of many hitting coaches, and it is not without its merit. This phrase is simply telling the hitter not to let their hands drift away from their body during the swing. The cue "keep the hands inside the ball" does not give the hitter a course of action to correct the mistake. To fix the hands drifting away from the body, teach the back arm to slot correctly. If the back arm slots correctly, the hitter cannot physically get his hands any further than the length of the forearm from the body.

The other mechanical adjustment a hitting coach may need to make with a young hitter's hands is to make sure he is not rolling his wrists too soon. The hands should stay palm-up/palm-down until well after contact.

<u>Follow through</u>
The follow through is more of a style issue than mechanical issue. Some hitters will finish low, some will finish higher, some will finish with one hand on the bat, and some will finish with two hands on the bat. As long as the other mechanical cues of the swing are met, the follow through is simply a result of the swing and does not need to be coached in any way.
The follow through can be useful to identify some mechanical issues that may be occurring earlier in the swing. For example, if you notice that the hitter's belt

is not facing the pitcher during the follow through, it may be a sign that he is not using the lower half properly in the swing. If the batter falls backward during the swing, this is probably a sign that they are pulling out his front side during the swing.

Try to avoid coaching the follow through since it is simply the result of the swing. Fixing the follow through is like treating the symptoms without fixing the disease. There is no assurance that by fixing the end of the swing, they have fixed the beginning or middle.

Module 3 - Methods of teaching hitting mechanics

Understanding the mechanics of the swing are only a small part of coaching hitting. Just like not all great mathematicians make great math teachers, not all great hitters make great hitting coaching. The ability to coach hitting really boils down to the ability to relate the concepts to the athletes.

One of the biggest struggles for coaches who have a wealth of hitting knowledge is to keep their lesson plans age appropriate. There is little sense in teaching a 10 year old how to hit behind a runner at 2nd base does little good if they struggle to control the bat and don't know how to hit a pitch to the opposite field. While this may be viewed as "good baseball" it is not something that most youth players (and many high school players for that matter) are physically capable of doing.

Part 1 - Hitting Drills

Using drills

Drill work is a very popular method of teaching hitting. They can simplify and isolate a particular aspect of the swing, or teach a new mechanical concept to the hitter. If used properly, drills can be a very beneficial learning tool. However, if they are not used correctly, they can be frustrating and detrimental to young hitters. The following are some useful tips for selecting and prescribing drills:

1.) Make sure the drills are age appropriate, but still challenge the hitter
2.) Describe the drill in detail including the purpose of the drill
3.) Emphasize any safety points before the drill begins
    i.) Spacing
    ii.) Timing
    iii.) Who should be swinging and when
4.) Don't choose drills that deviate greatly from a regular swing
    i.) This is especially true for younger, more inexperienced players
    ii.) Drills that vary wildly from a regular swing can confuse younger hitters
       or lose their purpose for younger hitters.

5.) Choose a player to demonstrate or use a video to demonstrate the drill prior do doing it
6.) Don't be afraid to modify or change the drill if it is too advanced for a specific player or the entire team.

Hitting Drills
Stance, Stride, Load
Age: All ages (In crease specificity and requirements as age increases)

Purpose: To execute the proper loading sequence, and get to a the correct hitting position.

Progression: This should be one of the very first drills/skills that young hitters work to master.

Equipment: Bat, open space, mirror (if working alone)

Procedure:
1.) Have the player get in their regular batting stance (make adjustments as necessary)
2.) Coach says "Stride"
3.) Players will stride and load their bodies
4.) Coaches check their hitting position

Teaching Cues:
1.) Weight doesn't shift more than 50/50
2.) Knees inside feet (weight on the inside of the feet)
3.) Head stays still
4.) Hands go slightly up and back
5.) Knob of bat toward catcher's feet
6.) Back hip pocket toward the pitcher
7.) Eyes level and straight ahead

Stance, Stride, Load with Resistance Band
Ages: All ages

Purpose: To feel the stretch across the midsection of the loading sequence

Progression: This drill should be done with a hitter who is struggling to move walk their hands away from their front foot during their load.

Equipment: Bat, open space, resistance band

Procedure:
1.) Wrap the resistance band around the front foot and hold it in the hans with the bat.
2.) Do the "Stance, Stride, Load" drill stretching the band.

Teaching Cues:
1.) Use the phrase "walk the hands away" from the front foot.
2.) The band should stretch as the distance between the hands and front foot separate.
3.) Focus on getting into a good hitting position.

Stance, Stride, Load with wall/fence
Age: All ages (In crease specificity and requirements as age increases)

Purpose: To control stride length while working on getting into proper hitting position.

Progression: This drill can be used as an extension of the first drill for players who are having a difficult time controlling their stride length and keeping their weight from shifting forward during the stride and load phase.

Equipment: Bat, open space, wall or fence

Procedure:
1.) Have the player get in their regular batting stance with a wall or fence in front of their lead foot at the desired stride length.
2.) Coach says "Stride," and the player strides their front foot up agains the wall or fence.
3.) Players will stride and load their bodies
4.) Coaches check their hitting position

Teaching Cues:
1.) Weight doesn't shift more than 50/50
2.) Knees inside feet (weight on the inside of the feet)
3.) Head stays still
4.) Hands go slightly up and back
5.) Knob of bat toward catcher's feet
6.) Back hip pocket toward the pitcher
7.) Eyes level and straight ahead

Stance, Stride, Load, Separate
Age: 8 and up

Purpose: To learn to get in proper hitting position, and to learn to initiate the swing with the lower half.

Progression: To be done after Stance, Stride, Load drill is mastered

Equipment: Bat, open space, mirror (if working alone)

Procedure:
1.) Have the player get in their regular batting stance (make adjustments as necessary)
2.) Coach says "Stride"
3.) Players will stride and load their bodies
4.) Coach checks hitting position
5.) Coach says "separate"
6.) Player keeps upper body still while turning lower body

Teaching Cues:
1.) Same hitting position cues as in "Stance, Stride, Load" drill
2.) Players need to keep their upper halves still, while their lower halves begin to rotate.
3.) The back knee should gain ground toward the front knee on hip rotation
4.) Work to build speed with the lower half

1-2-3 Fire
Age: 10 and up

Purpose: Adding the swing to the Stride, Load, Separate sequence. This drill teaches hitters to swing with their mid-sections.

Progression: This drill can be done after the "Stance, Stride/Load, Separate" drill has been mastered.

Equipment: Bat, Baseballs, Tee, Hitting Net

Procedure:
1.) Set up a tee simulating the ball down the middle and a net to hit into.
2.) The coach says "one." On this cue, the hitter will get in his stance.
3.) The coach says "two." On this cue, the hitter will stride and load.
4.) The coach says "three." On this cue, the hitter will begin the swing with the lower half, keeping the upper half still.
5.) The coach says "fire!" On this cue, the hitter will fire their mid section to swing and hit the ball off the tee.

Teaching Cues:
1.) Coaches should emphasize the separation between the upper and lower half on "three"
2.) Do not allow them to move their upper half on "three."
3.) Emphasize they should be swinging the bat with their core, not their arms.
4.) Make sure the hitter knows, they will not be able to create as much force with this swing because you are stopping the progression.

Hit/Take Drill
Age: 5 and up

Purpose: To develop the proper hitting position

Progression: This drill can be done after the hitter has a good understanding of the hitting position.

Equipment: Bat, Baseballs, Tee, Hitting Net

Procedure:
1.) Set up a tee down the middle and a net to hit into.
2.) The hitter assumes their normal stance.
3.) The hitter begins their normal loading sequence.
4.) When the coach or partner sees the hitter make their first movement they will say either "hit" or "take."
5.) If the coach says "hit," the hitter hits the ball off the tee.
6.) If the coach says "take," the hitter simulates taking a pitch by stopping in hitting position.

Teaching Cues:
1.) The hitter should freeze in a good hitting position when the coach says "take."
2.) If there is any movement toward the pitch on "take," it should be with the player's lower half. Their upper half should stay in closed.
3.) If they are unable to hold their hitting position on "take," it may be a good idea to back up to the "Stance, Stride, Load, (Separate)" drill.

Babe Ruth Drill
Age: 10 and up

Purpose: To develop a proper weight distribution and hitting position

Progression: This drill can be done after the hitter has a good understanding of hitting position.

Equipment: Bat, Baseballs, Tee, Hitting Net

Procedure:
1.) Set up a tee simulating the ball down the middle and a net to hit into.
2.) The hitter starts with their feet together and the bat centered in front of their body centered on their chest.
3.) They will slowly stride forward with their front foot controlling their weight distribution while their hands go up and back to the proper hitting position.
4.) The front foot should land when the feet are at the hitter's regular hitting position width. At this point the player should be in hitting position.
5.) After checking hitting position, the hitter returns to the Babe Ruth position.
6.) The hitter then goes through the same process, but when their front foot strikes the ground in hitting position, the hitter swings and hits the ball off the tee.

Teaching Cues:
1.) Check that they are getting to a proper hitting position with their weight about 50/50 front to back.
2.) As hitters get better at this drill, encourage them to step out more slowly with their front foot to learn to control their weight during the swing.
3.) Continue to emphasize that the swing starts with the lower half of the body.
4.) Watch them closely the second time they get to hitting position before they swing. Make sure their hitting position is as good as it was the first time when they stopped.

Babe Ruth, Hit/Take Combo
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To emphasize proper hitting position, weight distribution, and sequencing of the swing.

Equipment: Bat, Baseballs, Tees, Hitting Net

Procedure:
This is a combination of the "Babe Ruth" drill and the "Hit/Take" drill
1.) Set up a tee simulating the ball down the middle and a net to hit into.
2.) Run the "Babe Ruth" drill
3.) Right before the hitter's front foot hits the coach will say either "Hit" or "Take."

Coaching Cues:
1.) Check that they are getting to a proper hitting position with their weight about 50/50 front to back.
2.) As hitters get better at this drill, encourage them to step out more slowly with their front foot to learn to control their weight during the swing.
3.) Continue to emphasize that the swing starts with the lower half of the body.
4.) Watch them closely the second time they get to hitting position before they swing. Make sure their hitting position is as good as it was the first time when they stopped.
5.) When the coach says "Take," ensure the only movement to the ball is with the lower half.

Pitcher Leg Kick Drill
Ages: 14 and up

Purpose: To teach the hitter to keep their weight back, get to a proper hitting position, and to separate their lower bodies during the swing.

Progression: This is an advanced drill that should only be done by athletes who can perform the "Babe Ruth" drill well, and have very good body control and kinesthetic awareness.

Equipment: Bat, Baseballs, Tees, Hitting Net

Procedure:
This drill is an extension of the "Babe Ruth" drill.
1.) Set up a tee simulating the ball down the middle and a net to hit into.
2.) The hitter starts in Babe Ruth position.
3.) Have them lift their front leg similar to a pitcher.
4.) As their leg comes down and slowly out, their hands will move up and back into hitting position.
5.) Have them land in hitting position.
6.) Check hitting position.
7.) From hitting position, they will lift their legs back into the leg lift
8.) They will repeat moving from pitching leg lift to hitting position.
9.) The second time they get to hitting position, they will swing and hit the ball.

Coaching Cues:
The slower the hitter can move their leg from pitching leg lift to hitting position, the more it will teach them to control their lower halves during loading phase of the swing.

Long Tee
Ages: 8 and up

Purpose: To teach an inside/out hand path and to eliminate the outside/in swing path.

Progression: This drill can be done as an introduction to bat path. Once hitters

Equipment: Long batting cage, tee, bat, baseballs

Procedure:
1.) Set up a tee and baseball at one end of the cage
2.) The hitter takes a stride, load, and attempts to hit the ball off the back of the net

Coaching Cues:
1.) The most common mistake will be players hitting the ball to the pull side.
2.) The second most common mistake will be players dipping the barrel under the ball hitting it
2.) If they do this, they are hitting the ball from the outside/in.
3.) Use the verbal cue "keep your hands inside the ball."
4.) Dropping the back elbow into the slot will help keep the hands inside the ball.

Wall/Net Drill
Ages: 8 and up

Purpose: To simulate the proper path to an inside pitch, and teach the hitter to keep their hands inside the baseball.

Progression: This drill should be done only after the hitter has a good understanding of hitting position and the proper sequencing of the swing from the ground up.

Equipment: Bat, Net

Procedure:
1.) Stand a bat's length from the net (knob of the bat in your stomach and the barrel end on the net)
2.) Take a normal load and swing missing the net to the inside by keeping the hands close to the body and extending the arms in front of the body.

Coaching Cues:
It is very easy to cheat on this drill by striding away from the net, or pulling out the front side. Watch closely to ensure that they do not step away from the net or pull out their front side.

This is a drill that is easily adjustable for different skill levels. Start by adding a few inches to the distance between the player and the net. As they get better, have them move closer than a bat's length from the net.

Wall/Net Drill with inside tee
Ages: 10 and up

Purpose: To simulate the proper path to an inside pitch, and teach the hitter to keep their hands inside the baseball. This drill will fix hitters who cast their hands away from their bodies during the swing.

Progression: This drill should be done as an extension of the "wall/net" drill.

Equipment: Bat, 2 Nets or batting cage, Tee, Baseballs

Procedure:
1.) Stand a bat's length from the net (knob of the bat in your stomach and the barrel end on the net)
2.) Set a tee with a baseball in front of the front foot of the hitter. The tee and ball should be at a good contact point for an inside pitch.
3.) Take a normal load and swing missing the net to the inside by keeping the hands close to the body and extending the arms in front of the body, and hitting the ball off the tee.

Coaching Cues:
1.) As with the "Wall/Net" drill, do not allow them to cheat by stepping out or pulling their front side out.
2.) Also check to see that they are staying inside the ball by watching the path of the ball after they hit it. If you are in a batting cage, they should try to hit the ball to the back of the cage on the opposite side. If they are hitting the ball against the opposite side of the cage, they are still able to get their hands around the ball. Give them an opportunity to correct their hands, or move them closer to the net to correct this problem.

Outside Tee
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To learn how to hit the pitch on the outside of the plate

Progression: This drill should only be done after the player is able to repeat a solid fundamental swing on pitches down the middle.

Equipment: Bat, Tee, Baseballs, Net

Procedure:
1.) Set up the tee on the outside corner of the plate on the middle of the hitter's body.
2.) The hitter will swing and drive the pitch to the opposite field.

Coaching Cues:
1.) Do not allow them to step into the pitch on the outside corner.
2.) Make sure they are "driving" the ball, not trying to guide it to the opposite field.
3.) The only difference between a swing on a ball down the middle and an outside pitch is the depth the ball is on the hitter.

Inside/Outside Tee Drill
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To learn how adjust to inside and outside pitches.

Progression: This drill should only be done after the player is able to repeat a solid fundamental swing on pitches down the middle.

Equipment: Bat, Two Tees, Net, Baseballs

Procedure:
1.) Set up one tee on the inside corner out in front of the plate, and one tee on the outside corner toward the middle of the hitter's body.
2.) On the hitter's stride, the coach says either "inside" or "outside."
3.) The hitter hits the ball indicated by the coach.

Coaching Cues:
1.) On the inside pitch make sure the hitter isn't pulling off the ball with their front side.
2.) On the outside pitch make sure the hitter is driving, not guiding, the ball to the opposite field.

Inside/Outside w/Hit/Take
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To work on hitting inside an outside pitches while still maintaining proper balance and getting to a proper hitting position.

Progression: After they are able to successfully complete the "Inside/Outside" drill and have mastery of getting into proper hitting position.

Equipment: Bat, Two Tees, Net, Baseballs

Procedure:
This drill is an extension of the "Inside/Outside" drill. It combines it with the "Hit/Take" drill.
1.) Set up one tee on the inside corner out in front of the plate, and one tee on the outside corner toward the middle of the hitter's body.
2.) On the hitter's stride, the coach says either "inside," "outside," or "take."
3.) The hitter hits the ball indicated by the coach, or if the coach says "take," the hitter freezes in hitting position.

Coaching Cues:
In addition to the cues for the "Inside/Outside" drill, the coach needs to ensure that the hitter is freezing in a good hitting position on "take."

Miss the Helmet
Ages: 10 and older

Purpose: To learn to transfer weight during the swing, and to correct a hitter who is leaning back on their swing.

Progression: This drill can be done by a hitter who has a good understanding of the basic fundamental swing, but is struggling with weight transfer. The hitter may be "spinning" on the swing instead of driving the weight forward during the swing.

Equipment: Bat, ball, tee, batting helmet, hitting net

Procedure:
1.) Set a ball on a tee simulating a pitch down the middle.
2.) Set a helmet on the ground outside of the back foot
3.) Have the hitter swing and hit the ball off the tee
4.) The hitter's back foot should miss the helmet sitting on the ground

Coaching Cues:
1.) If the hitter hits the helmet on his swing, it means his weight is not transferring forward during the swing

Back Knee Pick Up
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To learn how to transfer weight during the swing, and to correct a hitter who is leaning back on their swing.

Progression: This drill is good as a prescription to fix a hitter who is leaving their weight on the back side during the swing.

Equipment: Bat, Tee (optional), balls (optional), hitting net (optional)

Procedure:
This drill can be done as dry swings with no ball and tee, with a ball and tee, or off soft front toss.

1.) Have the hitter take their swing as usual (for all variations of the drill)
2.) Immediately after completion of the swing, the hitter should kick their back knee forward toward the pitcher and remain balanced.

Coaching Cues:
1.) Make sure the players only lift their back knee after they complete their swing.
2.) If they are unable to lift their back knee after their swing and they fall backward, they are not transferring their weight properly.

Walk Through
Ages: 14 and up

Purpose: To teach a proper weight transfer during the swing.

Progression: This drill should only be done by hitters who have a good understanding of the swing and are able to repeat a fundamental swing. Similar to the "Back Knee Pick Up" drill, the "Walk Through" drill works as a prescription for hitters who struggling to transfer weight from their backside during the swing.

Equipment: Bat, tee, balls, hitting net

Procedure:
1.) The hitter will stand behind their batter's box with their toes and chest facing where the pitcher would be.
2.) The hitter will step with their dominant hitting foot (right for RHH, left for LHH), turning it and planting it the position it would be in for their hitting stance.

3.) They will then take their non-dominant foot (front foot), and swing it around so it lands where their front foot would land on the stride.

4.) As their front foot comes forward, their hands should begin to move toward the loaded position.

5.) When their front foot comes down, their entire body should be in hitting position.

6.) As soon as the body gets into hitting position, the player swings hitting the ball off the tee.

7.) After they hit the ball off the tee, they will take their back leg and "walk through" toward the direction they hit.

Coaching Cues:
1.) Be sure they are getting their feet stopped in the correct position for hitting.
2.) Do not let them walk through until after they complete their swing.
3.) They should not have to do a major weight shift in order to walk through. If they do, they are leaving their weight on the back side during their swing.

Walk through w/hitting position stop
Ages: 14 and up

Purpose: To learn how to transfer weight during the swing, to correct a hitter who is leaning back on their swing, and to ensure that the hitter is getting to the correct hitting position.

Progression: This drill can be done before, after, or instead of the "Walk Through" drill.

Equipment: Bat, tee, balls, hitting net

Procedure:
The procedure for this drill is the same as for the "Walk Through" drill with one exception. When the hitter gets to hitting position the first time, he freezes to check hitting position. Then he returns to the beginning of the drill, and runs through it exactly like the "Walk Through" drill.

Coaching Cues:
1.) In addition to the cues for walkthrough, the coach must check to ensure that the hitting position is correct.
2.) Coaches should also watch carefully the second time through the drill to ensure they are getting to a good hitting position when performing the drill completely.

Balance Beam Swings
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To remain balanced at the finish of the swing.

Progression: This drill works as a prescription for hitters who constantly pull their front side out of the swing, and hitters who are struggling keeping their balance during the swing.

Equipment: 2 x 4 to be used as a balance beam, balls (optional), tee (optional), hitting net (optional)
Procedure:
1.) Set up a tee and hitting net with a 2 x 4 laid on the ground the same distance from the tee as the hitter would stand.
2.) Have the hitter stand on the 2 x 4 with the balls of their feet on the board in their hitting stance
3.) The hitter will swing, hitting the ball off the tee (drill can also be done dry with no tee).
3.) After finishing the swing, the hitter should remain balanced on the board (or fall toward the plate). If the hitter is falling off the beam away from the plate they are pulling out their front side when they are swinging.

Coaching Cues:
1.) Correct them pulling their front side out by emphasizing driving their back elbow into the slot.
2.) This is a very advanced
Index:

Rotation Drill
Ages: 5 to 10

Purpose: To teach hip rotation and proper weight shift from front to back during the swing.

Progression: This drill can be done after a player has learned to get into good hitting position. Be certain to explain the purpose of this drill to young players because it does not very closely resemble hitting.

Equipment: Bat, tee, ball, hitting net

Procedure:
1.) Set up the tee and baseball very close, to the players belt buckle. Getting the proper set up will take time as you will want the player to have to shift their weight forward during the swing to hit the ball.
2.) The player will put the bat behind their back, parallel to the ground, resting in on their lower back.
3.) The player will grip the bat on each side of their body. Their bottom hand will be flush up against the knob of the bat and their top hand will be about a third to half way up the bat.
4.) The hitter will take their normal stance with their lower body
5.) The coach will say "stride" and the hitter will stride and load their lower body.
6.) The coach will say "swing" and the hitter will rotate their hips knocking the ball off the tee.

Coaching Cues:
1.) It may take a while to get the tee positioning set correctly so the hitter must transfer their weight forward.
2.) Make sure the hitters know that they will not be able to hit the ball very hard off the tee in this drill.
3.) Watch to see that the hitter is starting the swing with their lower half, creating separation with their upper half.

Angle tee
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To learn how to hit the pitch on the outside of the plate

Progression: This drill should only be done after the player is able to repeat a solid fundamental swing on pitches down the middle.

Equipment: Bat, tee, baseball, long batting cage

Procedure:
1.) Angle the tee so that if the hitter hits the ball to the opposite field, they will hit the ball off the back of the cage.
2.) Have the player get set up in their normal stance aligned with the tee. The tee should be situated away from them and back deep in their stance. If they hit the ball straight up the middle, they would hit it into the side of the net.
3.) The hitter will stride and load and hit the ball off the back of the cage (opposite field).

Coaching Cues:
1.) Make sure the tee is set up correctly to hit the outside pitch.

2.) If the hitter is hitting the ball off the side of the net, this means they are coming around the ball with their hands.

3.) Correct this mistake by emphasizing driving the back elbow into the slot (back elbow against the ribs).

4.) This drill can be extended as "angle front toss" and the "angle tee, back of net" tactical game.

Angle front toss
Ages: 14 and up (Advanced players only)

Purpose: To learn how to drive the ball to the opposite field

Progression: This is a very advanced and difficult drill. It should be done only by advanced hitters who have solid fundamental swings and can differentiate drills from game hitting.

Equipment: Bat, baseballs, home plate, L-screen

Procedure:
1.) Set up a home plate and L-Screen with a feeder behind it. Turn home plate up to 45 degrees toward the hitters pull side (the more the angle the harder the drill will be).

2.) Have the hitter line up with the plate, not the L-screen and pitcher.

3.) The feeder flips the ball to the outside and back of home plate.

4.) The hitter lets the ball get deep on the plate, and drives the ball back at the L-screen.

Coaching Cues:
1.) It is very difficult to determine success in this drill, because players can crush the ball easily and do the drill wrong.

2.) The way to correctly define success is a ball hit right back at the L-screen

3.) Also watch for the hitter to drop their back side and guide the ball back at the L-screen

4.) Use the verbal cue "let it get back and attack" to emphasize the ball needs to get deep on the hitter's body and they still need to be aggressive.

Two strike drill
Ages: 12 and up (increase difficulty as the hitters get older)

Purpose: To teach hitters to hit with 2 strikes

Progression: Even though some hitters may not mechanically be ready to hit well with two strikes, they still need practice at it because they will need to do it during the game.

Equipment: Bat, balls, L-Screen, batting helmet, coach with can locate pitches

Procedure:
1.) Set up the L-screen at a comfortable distance for the coach to be able to locate a fastball at a realistic velocity to the outside corner and throw breaking pitches as needed.
2.) Each at bat for the hitter starts with a 1-2 count.
3.) Have the coach try to challenge them with fastballs on the outside corners (but not with a velocity that is too high for the hitter), and off speed pitches.
4.) Keep the count and finish the at bat.

Coaching Cues:
1.) Emphasize that with two strikes the goal is to put the ball in play and to see as many pitches as possible.
2.) To do this hitters should look away and wait on the ball to hit both the outside fastball and breaking ball.
3.) Keep an eye on mechanics, but the emphasis of this drill is simply competing and putting the ball in play.

Fastball/Curveball Recognition Verbal
Ages: 15 and up

Purpose: To help hitters recognize fastball and curveball spin.

Progression: This drill should be done by players who are having trouble recognizing off speed pitches. It will also help players who are struggling getting into a proper hitting position.

Equipment: Balls, bat, coach who can throw curveball, or pitcher throwing a bullpen, catcher

Procedure:
1.) Have the batter take their normal spot in the batter's box with either a coach throwing or during a pitcher's bullpen session.
2.) The batter will take their normal stride and load (this is a good time to work on the load)
3.) As soon as the better recognizes the pitch, he will say either "fastball" or "curveball."

Coaching Cues:
1.) This is a good drill to check hitting position
2.) Make sure the hitter is correctly identifying pitches
3.) Encourage them to identify the pitch sooner
4.) Fastballs spin bottom to top, while curveballs will spin top to bottom.
5.) Fastballs come out of the hand level or down, while curveballs generally come out of the hand up first.
6.) For advanced hitters, pitchers can add a slider to the mix. A properly thrown slider will have a red dot on the front of the ball as it comes toward the hitter.

Hard in/Soft away
Ages: 14 and up

Purpose: To teach hitters how to be quick on the inside pitch and to wait on the outside pitch.

Progression: This drill can be done after hitters are able to complete the "inside/outside tee" drill and are able to hit outside pitches to the opposite field on a regular basis.

Equipment: L-Screen, bat, balls

Procedure:
1.) The coach sits behind the L-Screen and flips balls underhand
2.) When the coach flips inside pitches, he will flip them quickly.
3.) When the coach flips outside pitches, he will flip them slowly.
4.) The hitter will attempt to hit inside pitches to the pull field, and outside pitches to the opposite field.

Coaching Cues:
1.) Emphasize that hitters need to be quick on the inside pitch and hit it in front of home plate
2.) Emphasize that hitters need to wait on the outside pitch and let it get deep in the hitting zone.

Short toss w/fake throws
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To check a player's hitting position when a ball is coming toward them

Progression: This drill can be done after a hitter has established a good hitting position, or if a hitter is trying to make the transition from having a good hitting

position when hitting off a tee to having a good hitting position in batting practice.

Equipment: L-Screen, balls, bat

Procedure:
1.) Coach will throw overhand form a shorter distance than the pitchers mound
2.) The hitter will be selective at the plate only swinging at good pitches to hit and hitting the ball where it is pitched
3.) Every few pitches the coach will fake a throw.
4.) Hitter should be in hitting position on the coach's fake throw.

Coaching Cues:
1.) Emphasize that players hit the ball where it is it if they are at that point in their development.
2.) When the coach fakes the pitch, the player should stop in their hitting position. At first have the coach check hitting position, then have the hitter learn how to check their own hitting position.

Top Hand Ball Toss
Ages: 14 and up

Purpose: To teach an inside/out wing path

Progression: This drill should only be done after hitters are comfortable getting into a good hitting position and learn to use their core to swing the bat.

Equipment: Baseball, target (screen, back of batting cage, other player with a glove)

Procedure:
1.) Have a hitter get in their stance with no bat and a ball in their top hand.
2.) The hitter will load and swing as if they had a bat.
3.) They release the ball as they swing throwing it to their target
4.) Make sure they follow through

Coaching Cues:
1.) Watch to ensure that hitter is sticking close to their normal swing.
2.) If they deviate greatly from their stance, load, and swing,

Two Tee Extension Drill
Ages: 14 and up

Purpose: To keep the bat in the hitting zone as long as possible.

Progression: This drill should is for players who have solid hitting positions, but struggle with keeping the bat in the hitting zone. You will see this common mistake because they will pull their front shoulder out at soon as contact is made.

Equipment: Bat, two tees, baseballs

Procedure:
1.) Set up one tee at the player's front foot and a second one about six inches in directly in front of the other one.
2.) The player will take his normal stride and load, but will try to hit both of the balls with his bat.

Coaching Cues:
1.) If they are pulling the first ball and missing the second one, that is a sign that they are either coming from outside/in with with their swing (casting the hands), or they are pulling the bat out of the hitting zone immediately after they hit the ball.
2.) Watch their back elbow to ensure that it is getting into the slot. This will help eliminate the outside/in swing path.
3.) Encourage them to extend their hands forward instead of pulling their hands out (really it's their front shoulder)

Underhand Front toss w/L-Screen stop
Ages: 12 and up

Purpose: To check hitting position

Progression: This drill is similar to the "short toss w/fake throws" drill. This drill can be done after a hitter has established a good hitting position, or if a hitter is trying to make the transition from having a good hitting position when hitting off a tee to having a good hitting position in batting practice.

Equipment: L-Screen (or flat screen), baseballs, bat

Procedure:
1.) Set up an L-screen, or flat screen about 1/3 of the way between the coach and hitter (closer to the coach)
2.) The coach throws underhand tosses (from a standing position) to the hitter.
3.) Instead of faking a throw, the coach will occasionally throw one off the L-screen

4.) When he hits the L-screen, the hitter should freeze in hitting position

Coaching Cues:
1.) Still monitor the player's swing on balls that miss the L-screen
2.) Emphasize proper hitting position
3.) On balls that hit the L-screen, have the hitter freeze in hitting position and check it
4.) Start with the coach checking hitting position, then have the hitter (or other players) check it

Part 2 - Tactical Games for Hitters

Key for tactical games set up diagrams

T = Batting Tee	1B = Sinlge
H = Hitter	2B = Double
N = Target net	3B = Triple
C = Cone	HR = Homerun
S = Shagger	B = Base
N = Net or Target	P = Picther (or coach)
-------> = Direction the ball will be hit	HOG = Ball hit hard on the ground

Up the middle
Ages: 6 and up

Equipment: Baseballs, 2 cones, tee

Set up:
The distance the cones are from the tee will vary greatly by age group. Set up a tee with two cones "up the middle." You will want to have other players as "shaggers" well behind the cones.

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                          C
H                                             S
T      ------------------>                    S

                          C
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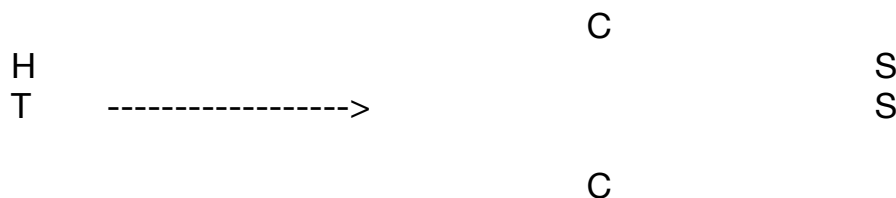
Procedure:
1.) Each player gets a specified number of swings

2.) They are trying to hit a line drive or a ball hard on the ground (HOG) between the cones

3.) Count each successful swing (line drive or HOG between the cones) out of the total number of swings.

Competition:
Have each player take five swings off the tee. Give them two points for a line drive through the cones, one point for a HOG through the cones, zero points for a ball that goes outside of the cones, and minus one point for a pop-up (even if it goes through the cones).
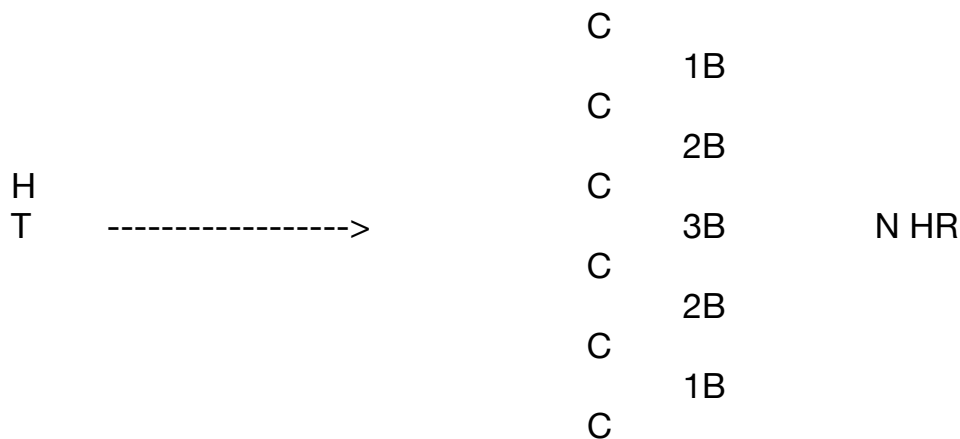
4 Base hitting
Ages: 5 and up

Equipment: Baseballs, 6 cones, batting tee, net (not necessary)

 Set up:
The distance the cones are from the tee will vary greatly by age group. Set up a tee with six cones "up the middle." You will want to have other players as "shaggers" well behind the cones.

OPTIONAL: Set up a net behind the middle two cones directly in line with the batting tee.

```
                                    C
                                        1B
                                    C
                                        2B
    H                               C
    T      ------------------>          3B          N HR
                                    C
                                        2B
                                    C
                                        1B
                                    C
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Procedure:
1.) Divide the players up into teams of 2-4 players each.
2.) Teams get to hit one at a time and rotate hitters like a batting order.
3.) The hitter will hit the ball off the tee
4.) If they hit a line drive or HOG between the middle two cones, they get a triple.
5.) If they hit a line drive or HOG between the next set of cones out, they get a double

6.) If they hit a line drive or HOG between the outside cones, they get a single.

7.) Anything hit outside of the cones, or a pop-up (even if it is between the cones) is an out.

8.) If you set up a net behind the middle cones, a line drive that hits the net on the fly would be a home run.

Competition:

1.) The coach determines the number of innings they will play (2 or 3 tends to be a good number)

2.) Each team of 2-4 is competing against each other

3.) The coach will keep track of outs, and where the base runners are

4.) Base runners advance as far as the batter

5.) Clear the bases after every 3 outs

6.) The score is the number of runs they score

Get em over, Get em in
Ages: 13 and up

Equipment: Baseball field, baseball, bats

Set up:
This drill can be done on the full field with or without a defense. It can also be done against a coach throwing from behind an L-screen, or with a live pitcher on the mound.

Start each repetition with a runner on 2nd and 0 out.

Procedure:
1.) Divide your team into each teams of 3-5 players.

2.) Start with a runner on 2nd and nobody out

3.) Each player gets one chance to move the runner to third and knock them in

4.) The hitter has to bunt the runner to 3rd base

5.) If they are successful, they get a chance to knock the runner in by any means (squeeze bunt, ground ball, base hit, sacrifice fly).

6.) If they are unsuccessful moving the runner, they do not get a chance to knock him in.

Competition:
1.) If they successfully move the runner to third, they get a point

2.) If they get the runner in, after moving the runner to third, they get two points

3.) Each team gets the same number of opportunities

Opposite field scrimmage

Ages: 15 and up

Equipment: L-Screen, baseballs, full field

Set up:
1.) Set up an L-screen at a short distance
2.) Set up a full defensive infield
3.) Set up two outfielders, one in CF and one to the opposite field (RF for

Procedure:
1.) The coach throws pitches to the outside half of the plate
2.) Any ball hit o the opposite field side of second base gets played live
3.) Any ball hit to the pull side of second base is an automatic out
4.) For practice, allow infielders to play any ball hit to the pull side live
5.) If the coach throws a ball to inside half of the plate and the hitter pulls the ball, they get a "redo"

Competition:
1.) Divide the team into teams of 4-5 and have them rotate through offensively.
2.) The team that scores the most runs wins

Winning Run on 3rd
Ages: 10 and older

Equipment: Baseballs, L-Screen (if coach pitching), full field

Set up:
1.) Set up an entire infield and outfield
2.) Start with a runner at 3rd and 1 out
3.) If the coach is pitching, set up an L-screen, no L-screen is needed if pitcher is throwing live

Procedure:
1.) Either off a coach pitching, or off live pitching, the batter has to get the runner in from third base with less than two outs

Competition:
1.) Pair up your team (hitter and runner) and give them a specified number of times to try the game
2.) The team that converts the most times wins

Hit and Run Game
Ages: 15 and up

Equipment: L-screen, baseballs, 2 cones

Set up:
1.) Set up an L-screen at a short distance
2.) Set up 2 cones about 30 feet apart on the opposite field side of the infield (SS for LHH, 2B for RHH)

Procedure:
1.) The coach throws pitches anywhere in the strike zone (or just out of the strike zone)
2.) The hitter simulates a hit and run by hitting trying to hit the pitch between the cones on the ground in the infield

Competition:
1.) Give each hitter eight swings to try to hit the ball between the cones
2.) The player who has the most successful HOGs or line drives between the cones wins

Middle Wins BP
Ages: 10 and up

Equipment:

Set up:
1.) Set up 4 cones about 20 feet in the outfield
2.) The cones should be mainly in centerfield, but the coach can determine how far apart they should be
3.) The closer they are, the tougher the game, the farther apart, the more difficult
4.) A batting practice pitcher (or coach) sets up behind an L-screen

C 2 C 5 C 2 C

B

B   P   B

H
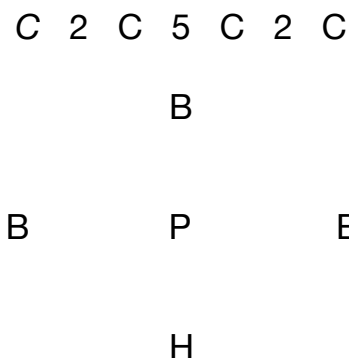
Procedure:
1.) Each player gets 8 swings to try to hit the ball between the cones up the middle of the field
2.) If a player hits a foul ball, their round is over

Competition:
1.) Divide the players into equal sized teams of 2-4
2.) Each player gets 8 swings to try to score as many points as possible
3.) Any line drive or HOG that goes between the middle two cones is worth 5 points
4.) Any line drive or HOG that goes between the outside set of cones is worth 2 points
5.) Any ball that is hit outside the cones, is a weak ground ball, fly ball or popup is worth 0
6.) Any foul ball is ends the player's round
7.) Feel free to add more cones and adjust the point value as you see necessary

HOG and Hard 90
Ages: 10 and up

Equipment: Baseballs, L-screen, bats

Set up:
1.) Set up a full infield (make sure infielders start at normal depth)
2.) Set up an L-screen at a short distance

Procedure:
This game is as much for infielders as it is for hitters and base runners

1.) The coach delivers pitches to any part of the strike zone
2.) Hitter's goal is to hit the ball hard on the ground and try to beat it out
3.) Fielder's goal is to try to throw the runner out at first

Competition:
1.) Any ground ball that is beat out, the offense gets 3 points
2.) Any ground ball where the batter is thrown out, the defense gets 1 point
3.) Any ball hit in the air to the outfield, the defense gets 1 point
4.) Any purposeful half swing or check swing, the defense gets 1 point
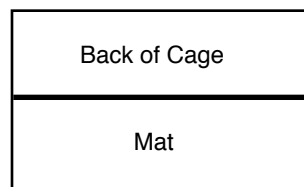5.) If the runner doesn't hustle all the way through the bag the offense loses 5 points

Middle Wins Tee
Ages: 5 and up

Equipment: Baseballs, 2 batting tees, batting cage, gymnastics (or other) portable mat

Set up:
1.) Set up similar to the "long tee" drill with a batting tee at one end of the cage
2.) On the other end of the cage, prop up the mat so it stretches lengthwise across the bottom half of the back of the cage
3.) Set up a baseball on a tee in front of the mat

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+---------------------------+
|                           |
|        Back of Cage       |
|                           |
+---------------------------+
|                           |
|           Mat             |
|                           |
+---------------------------+
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Procedure:
1.) The player tries to hit a line drive off the back of the cage

Competition:
1.) Each player gets 8 swings off the tee
2.) Any ball that hits the back of the cage on the line is worth 5 points
3.) Any ball that his the mat on the fly is worth 3 points
4.) Any ball that hits the back of the cage or mat on a bounce is worth 1 point
5.) Any ball that hits the sides of the cage, or the top of the cage is worth 0 points
6.) Any ball that knocks the ball off the tee on the fly is worth 10 points

Middle Wins Flips
Ages: 10 and up

Equipment: Baseballs, batting tee, batting cage, gymnastics (or other) portable mat

Set up:
The set up is exactly the same as "middle wins tee" except there is no tee needed at the end of the cage where the hitter is.

Procedure:
1.) A coach flips a ball into the hitting zone and the hitter tries to hit a line drive off the back of the cage

Competition:
Scoring is the same as for "middle wins tee"

Angle tee, back of net
Ages: 15 and up

Equipment: Baseballs, 2 batting tees, batting cage, gymnastics (or other) portable mat

Set up:
1.) Same set up as the "middle wins" tee game
2.) Angle the hitter so the tee and their body face the "pull side of the cage"
3.) Move the tee to the outside corner and back on their body

Procedure:
1.) The hitter simulates hitting an outside pitch on the tee and tries to drive a line drive at the back of the net

Competition:
Same scoring as the "middle wins tee" game

Scripted BP (advanced)
Ages: 16 and up

Equipment: Baseballs, several cones (depends on your hit zones), L-screen

Set up:
1.) Set up an L-screen for a coach to throw behind
2.) Determine what hit zones you'd like to see
      a.) Hit and run zone (between 1st and 2nd for RHH and 2nd and 3rd for LHH)
      b.) Middle zone
      c.) Bunting zones

Procedure:
1.) Prior to each pitch or series of pitch, the coach will set up a situation and tell the hitter what their "zone" is for the next pitch or series of pitches
2.) EXAMPLE: 2 hit and run zone, 1 bunt for hit zone, 2 middle zone, 2 runner on 3rd less than two outs (ground ball or deep fly ball) 1 sacrifice bunt zone

Competition:

1.) Each player gets the same number of swings on the same script
2.) The player who completes the highest percentage of their scripted swings wins

Module 4 - Small ball
The following baserunning and small ball unit is designed for players and teams in leagues with leadoffs and on a 60/90 field. Some of the techniques described here may be too advanced for younger players to master, however introducing them to younger players will set the groundwork for the skills to be mastered when the player gets older.

Many of the same principals carry over to leagues without leadoffs or on smaller fields. Remember the ultimate job of a youth coach is to get the your players ready to play on the big field. Even though some of the techniques may not be what work best on a smaller field, it is best if the players are taught the larger field techniques younger so they have less of an adjustment phase.

Part 1 - Baserunning
Coaches spend a great deal of time working on a player's swing, pitching or throwing mechanics, fielding technique, but it is often overlooked that a mistake or smart aggressive play can cost the team the same amount as an out at the plate, and an intelligent aggressive play can give the team the equivalent of a hit at the plate.

Base running is not as glamorous as striking out a hitter or getting a game winning hit, but it can be just as responsible for a win or loss as any other aspect of the game. Baserunning should not be overlooked and should be given as much time as pitching, hitting, and fielding are given during practice.

Part 1.1 - Baserunning philosophy
Baseball is unlike most other team sports because there isn't a time clock. Games can continue forever until a team reaches the specified number of outs. Because of this, it is important to realize that outs are the clock and should be treated as such. Making senseless outs on the bases in the name of "aggressiveness" is reckless and gives away outs unnecessarily.

A coach must realize that making outs on the bases is a part of the game. Sometimes player will get thrown out stealing or trying to take an extra base. Sometimes a player will make an aggressive play that doesn't work. This is ok. Try to minimize mental mistakes on the base paths and err on the side of caution in situations of uncertainty. If a player fail to advance a base when you might

have been safe, they can still score. If they make an overly aggressive play and get thrown out, they can no longer score.

The phrase that helps sum up this baserunning philosophy is "smart aggressive." Knowing the situation will give players a better understanding of when to be aggressive and when to be cautious. This can help minimize unnecessary outs on the base paths and maximize the aggressive plays to help your team score runs.

Part 1.2 - Knowing the situation
In order to carry out this philosophy of "smart aggressive" baserunning, there is a number of things a baserunner must know and be aware of:

Score
Generally speaking teams will be more willing to take chances if they are ahead in a game (especially in the later innings). When you are leading, making an out because of taking a chance is not as big of a loss. If your are behind in the game, you can try to generate offense with aggressive baserunning, but be careful not to take unnecessary outs.

An example of an unnecessary risk would be tryout to steal a base in the last inning down three runs. That particular run does not mean anything in that situation. Your team will need at least two more.

Outs
Knowing the number of outs while on the bases is a must. Not only does this determine how a player will react immediately when the ball is hit, it also helps you determine how valuable advancing one base is. This will help determine if the risk of getting thrown out is worth the possible reward of advancing a base. To help ensure players know the number of outs, the coach should give the outs to the runner and the runner should give them back, prior to the coach giving signs.

Here are a few rules to live by when on the bases to help players know when to try to advance and when not to:

1.) Never make the first or third out at third base. This means when trying to stretch a double into a triple or trying to steal third base with zero or two outs, the runner and coach must be 100% sure they can make it. Steal attempts of third in these out situations will be very few and far between. The same can be said for trying to advance to third with zero or two outs on a passed ball/wild pitch.

2.) Runners should generally be more aggressive as there are more outs in the inning. An out on the base paths with zero outs can take the team out of a big inning. With two outs (the exception being going to third base) runners should be more aggressive at taking extra bases. Be especially aggressive trying to move a runner into scoring position with two outs and trying to move a runner to third with one out. There are several different ways a runner can score from third with one out as opposed to being on second with one out. Here is a small list

a.) A balk.
b.) Wild Pitch
c.) Passed ball.
d.) Ground ball at a middle infielder
e.) Soft ground ball to the corner infielders
f.) Sacrifice Fly
g.) A soft line drive that falls between the OF and IF
h.) Hard hit line drive single directly at an outfielder
i.) Squeeze
j.) Double Steal (if 1st and 3rd)

Inning
Knowing the score/out/inning combination will give base runners a complete view of how aggressive they should be and which bases are the most important to advance to. As a general rule, they should be more willing to take chances early in a game, late in a game when area ahead by more than one run, or late in games trailing by only one run.

Who is hitting and who is coming to bat
Knowing where their team is in the order will also determine how aggressive they should be on the bases. If the middle of the order, or a particularly hot hitter on deck or coming to the plate, take fewer chances. It is never a good idea to take the bat out of the hands of the best or hottest hitters by making unnecessary outs on the bases. On the flip side, if the bottom of the order, or someone who has been struggling due up, be more aggressive on the bases and try to create runs on the base paths.

Close and Late
When behind late in the game (specifically the 7th or last inning) knowing who is the tying and who is the go ahead run is critical to making comebacks. For example if you are down three runs, the first two runners on base should take absolutely zero chances. The third person on the bases will take slightly more chances especially in an effort to move the third runner into scoring position.

The go ahead run will be very aggressive (again keeping in mind who is coming up to the plate) because in this scenario, the risk reward is very low. If he makes an out on the bases, you go into extra innings, if you are able to create a run, you can win the game.

Part 1.3 - Pre-game responsibilities
While the other team is taking infield/outfield is a great time to get a read on the other team and what you might be able to take advantage of. Here is a short list of what players and coaches should be looking at pre-game.

1.) Outfield arm strength – Find out who their starters are and determine their arm strength. Also look at the angle they throw the ball at and if they often over throw cut men. Weak arms and overthrowing cut men can be good opportunities to take an extra base.
2.) Infielders – Again, find the starters in the infield and determine what their arm strength is, how athletic they are, how accurate their throws are, and how quickly they transfer the ball.
3.) Catcher– If possible get a POP time for the catcher (catcher's glove to fielder's glove at 2nd base). Also watch the general athleticism of the starting. This can help you determine if you are going to try to advance on a ball in the dirt.
4.) Third Basemen - Watch the third basemen to see if you will be able to take advantage of them by bunting.

Part 1.4 - Baserunning technique
Again, these techniques are specifically written for a team in a league with leadoffs playing on a 60/90 field however, many of them transfer to younger teams who play on smaller fields.

Part 1.4.1- Baserunning home to first
1.) Home to first – There is no excuse to not run hard for 90 feet regardless of the situation. There are several reasons for running as hard as you can, or "like your hair is on fire" on every ground ball. You want to put as much pressure on the opponents possible. Even if the player is not that fast, giving the illusion of speed may create panic in the defender.

2.) Sure single - On a sure single, use the banana technique not the question mark technique. This means that the turn will begin right out of the box and the runner will get very wide on the turn. The runner should try to hit the second base side of 2nd base and should be directly in line with 2nd base. After hitting 1st base and making the turn evaluate to see if you can take

another base. If not, see the ball to the cut man (less so if the ball is hit   to right field) and hustle back to the bag.

Part 1.4.2 - Baserunning on first base
On first base- When on first base, a runner's responsibilities begin with knowing the situation (score, outs, inning, where their team is in the line-up). After the coach gives the number of outs and the player gives them back, look to him for the sign. After getting the sign, a normal lead will be left foot step toward 2nd base shuffle, shuffle and a half shuffle. This should put you about a step and a dive away from first base.   This lead may be adjusted depending upon the move of the pitcher, and the player's general athleticism.

1.) Secondary lead off first – After they know the pitcher is going home, take a secondary lead. This lead will be 2-3 shuffles while staying in balance and low to the ground. It may be a good idea to use two shuffles with a catcher who has a strong arm and likes to back-pick. Stay in balance and read the baseball off the bat.

2.) Straight steals of second vs. RHP - The straight steal can be an effective weapon to score runs if used at the proper time and with the correct technique. Here are a brief list of times when stealing second base is advisable:
> a.) The pitcher is very slow to home plate
> b.) The catcher has poor arm strength, an inaccurate arm, or slow release
> c.) Curveball counts (0-1, 1-1, 1-2, 0-2, especially after fastballs for strikes)
> d.) You have a fast runner who gets good jumps
> e.) You know when the pitcher is going to deliver home
> f.) There are two outs and you are trying to move a runner into scoring position
> g.) There are two outs and two strikes with the middle of the order up (if they get caught, the count goes back to 0-0)
> h.) There is also a runner on third base
> i.) There is a full count, a hitter who usually makes contact and you are trying to stay out of a double play

When attempting a straight steal of second base, the runner should get the same lead he would have when nothing is on. Slightly opening the front foot will help the runner get going faster. He then needs to focus on the pitcher's front knee. If the front knee bends, he is delivering home. If he picks up his back heel first, he is coming to first base.

3.) Straight steals of second vs. LHP - Generally, there are two types of left handed pitchers (some would say weird and weirder), book lefties, and lefties who have good moves. A book lefty will look at the runner at first when delivering home, and will look home when coming to first. A lefty with a good move will be able to hang their front leg and will vary the direction their head looks during their leg lift.

a.) Stealing vs. book lefty - Read the head and shoulders. If the pitcher is looking home, he is coming to first base. If he is looking at you, take off, he is going home.

b.) Stealing vs. lefty with a good move - Stealing off a lefty with a good move is actually an easier decision than stealing off a book lefty. Have the runner shorten their lead by a half step, put their hands on their knees (looking disinterested and trying not to draw a throw), and take off to second base on the pitcher's first movement. If they get picked off, they should move to the inside of the baseline and keep going straight into second base. Make the first baseman throw you out with a tough angle.

4.) Delayed steal of second - To execute a delayed steal, the runner will take their normal secondary lead and take off to second when the ball crossed the plate. A delayed steal is only advised under the following situations:

a.) The opponent's middle infielders don't pinch toward second base after the pitch.

b.) The opponent's catcher drops to he knees right after receiving the ball to throw it back to the pitcher.

c.) You are trying to catch your opponent off guard in a first and third situation.

5.) Dirt balls - With few exceptions, runners should try to advance to second on any ball in the dirt. As soon as they see a down angle on the baseball, get an extra shuffle and take off as soon as the ball hits the dirt. Realize that it is very difficult for a catcher to block a ball, scramble to their feet and throw a strike 127 feet to second base. The runner on first should be even more aggressive if there is a runner on 3rd base also.

6.) Tag play – Tagging from first is often a difficult play. If there is a high, deep fly ball to an outfielder with a subpar arm, the runner may look to tag and move up to second. In most cases, on deep fly balls, the runner should go as far as we can and still get back safely if the ball is caught. If the ball is a deep gap shot, and they are not sure if it will be caught or get down, the runner should go as far as 2nd base and put their foot on it. Do not pass 2nd base in

this instance. This allows you to continue on the 3rd, or return to 2nd without having to retag the bag.

7.) Going first to third - Base runners who have the ability to go first to third of huge value to their team. Base runners who go first to third generally...
>   a.) Know the positioning of the outfielders prior to the pitch
>   b.) Know the inning, outs, score, batting order situation prior to each pitch
>   c.) Expect to go first to third on every single to the outfield
>   d.) Pick up the coach three steps before and three steps after every single to the outfield

Part 1.4.3 - Baserunning from second base
Baserunning from second base is where most of the baserunning decisions take place. Before getting your sign at second base, you should check the depth and positioning of the outfielders, the wind and the positioning of the middle infielders. This will help you determine if a gap shot or a "tweener" is likely to get caught or if will get down.

1.) Leads from second -There are two types of leads you will take off of second base, the direct line lead and the deep lead. The direct lead will be used   when there is a force at third with less than two outs or when sacrifice   bunting or stealing. Use the deep lead (which is just two steps directly back   toward left-center field then your regular lead) if there is no force at third, or if   there is a force at third, but there are two outs.

2.) Secondary lead from second - There are two types of secondary leads from second base. The first is very similar to the secondary lead from first base. The runner will take two or three shuffles without crossing their feet, staying low to the ground and in balance. The second is a walking secondary lead where the runner turns their body and takes creeps toward third base. In either case, as soon as the ball hits the catcher's glove, the runner needs to retreat immediately to the bag. It is not advised to use the walking lead when facing a catcher with a good arm who likes to throw behind runners.

3.) The golden rule - With no force at third the player can advance on a ball that is hit to their left or directly at them (after their secondary lead) and they hold on a ground ball to their right. The one exception to this rule is on softly hit balls to the base runner's left that take them away from third base. The runner can advance on these plays because nobody is covering third.

4.) Tag play – Base runners will try to tag a little more often from second than they would from first. Runners should be more aggressive with no outs, than with one out (remember moving the runner to 3rd with one out is a huge bonus). This is where knowing the outfielder's arm strength will be particularly important. They should tag on any fly ball where you see any outfielder's back, if the center fielder goes backward, or any ball at least as deep as   the right fielder. One way to get a cheap base is by watching the outfielders feet on a medium depth fly ball to center or right. If the outfielder catches the   ball with his weight going back, it may be a good time to take a chance (especially if the catch is the first out of the inning).

5.) Picking up coach – Base runners should always be thinking they will score on a single from second base. Runners should pick up coach two steps before and two steps after the bag. As a coach, you should be down the line toward home plate. This gives you more time to judge the play and make a decision. On singles to left field, you must stop the runner sooner, and the runner must get back to the bag quicker. The relay throw will be going into the third baseman and good teams will loop their shortstop around to cover third base and look for a back pick.

6.) Stealing third base - Stealing third base can actually be easier than stealing second even though most catchers will be .3 seconds quicker to third than second. The only way you should let your runner steal third is if they have a good read on the pitcher and are able to get a great jump. Below are some of the situations where it would be beneficial to steal third base:
> a.) With one out. Moving a runner to third with less than two outs
>   greatly increases the number of ways that runner can score.
> b.) The pitcher uses the same rhythm for each pitch (i.e., looks at
>   the runner once then delivers home)
> c.) The middle infielders aren't holding the runner at second base

Part 1.4.4 - Baserunning from third base
By the time a runner reaches third, they should have a decent idea of how athletic the catcher is and how well he blocks pitches. They should also know the outs, inning, score, and where we are in the order. This will give you and the runner a good idea of how aggressive to are to be on passed balls and wild pitches.

1.) Leads from 3rd – Leadoffs from third should always be taken in foul territory so that if a batted ball hits the runner it will be a foul ball and not an out. The primary lead off of third should be about a step more than the third baseman is from the bag. Again this will vary depending on the runner's athleticism and ability to read the pitcher. There are two types leads secondary leads from third,

a two-step and four-step lead. Use the two step lead when the pitcher is in the stretch and a four step lead when the pitcher is in the windup. The goal of the lead is to have the right foot hit the ground on the second or fourth step of the lead as the ball crosses the plate.

2.) Reading down angles – When the runner sees a down angle on a pitch (a pitch that is going to hit the dirt), the runner should take an extra aggressive shuffle and read the kick of the ball. There are several determining factors on if they should try to score on a passed ball or wild pitch including the outs, innings, score, and who is up. Generally we will be less aggressive (have to be 100% sure they can make it) with no outs and they should get more aggressive as the outs increase. If there are two outs, the runner should take more chances on passed balls and wild pitches. The runner should be especially aggressive when there are two outs and two strikes on the hitter.

3.) Tag plays – From third base, the runner should tag on any ball in the air to the outfield with less than two outs. If they tag and the ball falls, they will score. If they get caught off base on a play where the outfielder makes a great play, you may get doubled off, or at least will not be able to tag up and score in enough time.

4.) Infield positioning – The coach should always let the runner know if the infield is playing corners in, all in or back and what their strategy is on a ground ball. If there is no force at home, you should always be sure the ball gets past the pitcher.   Here are a few of the other infield situations and the proper strategy for attaching them at third base:
   a.) Infield back - The runner goes on any ground ball not to the pitcher.
   b.) Corner infielders in - The runner goes on any ground ball not to the pitcher or corner infielders. The runner can go on ground balls that take either corner infielders away from home plate, or on a chopper in front of the plate where they get a good jump.
   c.) Infield in at all four positions - The runner should freeze on anything hit. If the ball is on the ground, it has to go through the infield for the runner to go. On a line drive, the ball has to be seen down to advance. On a fly ball the runner has to go back and tag.
      i.) The runner can still break on a ball that is not hit right at an infielder or a chopper hit in front of the plate.

Part 1.5 - Special plays and situations
The following section contains special plays and situations that may happen on the base paths. It would be impossible to cover every permutation of offense and baserunning that could happen however, there are several that occur more

often than others. Some of them can be put on by the coach and others must be taught in practice executed on the fly in the game.

1.) Hit and Run –Hit and run is an offensive play where the runner takes off toward the next base (usually first to second) and the hitter tries to put the ball in play on the ground taking advantage of infielders who are covering second base. On hit and run, runners cannot get picked off because the goal is not to steal second, the goal is to get the infielders moving and take advantage of the an open infield, and to have the runner go first to third. On the runner's third step, they need to check inside their left shoulder to find the baseball. There are a lot of things that can go wrong with hit and run if the runner can't find the baseball.

    Below are some situations where a hit and run might be a good idea:
    a.) One out in a fastball count
        i.) 1-1 count after a curveball strike
        ii.) 1-0 count after any pitch
        iii.) 2-1 count after any pitch
        iv.) Try to avoid hit and run when the count heavily favors the hitter
            (2-0, 3-1, 3-0). Hitters should be looking to drive the ball in
            those counts, not trying to hit the ball on the ground.
    b.) You have a subpar runner on first and a hitter who has good bat control
    c.) There is one out and you are trying to get the runner to third base
    d.) Both of the defense's middle infielders break to the bag on straight steals
    e.) Runners on 1st and 3rd with one out
    f.) A pitcher your team is struggling to hit who throws a lot of strikes

2.) 1st and 3rd plays - There are few situations that strike fear into the hearts of coaches and catchers like a well run 1st and 3rd play. Below are some of the special plays that could be run in a 1st and 3rd situation:
    a.) Straight steal/double steal - The runner from first base straight steals to second. The runner from third base reads the angle of the ball and the middle infielders. If the ball gets over the pitcher's head and neither middle infielder breaks in front of the bag to cut it off, the runner from third can try to score.
    b.) Delayed steal/double steal - The runner at first executes a delayed steal. The runner at third has the same read as he does during a straight steal. Use this play when middle infielders don't pinch toward the bag after each pitch, or when the catcher drops to his knees to throw the ball back to the pitcher. This play is also effective when you know a team has a set 1st and 3rd defensive play and you want to try to take them out of it.
    c.) 1st move break vs. LHP - With a left handed pitcher on the mound, the runner at first extends his lead by one or one and a half steps trying to

draw a pickoff throw from the pitcher. On the pitcher's first movement, both runners straight steal. If the pitcher throws to first, the runner from third will likely be able to score (especially if the first baseman is left handed also). If the pitcher delivers home, the hitter will need to bunt like a suicide squeeze play. This last part is particularly important for safety reasons so it is important that all players on the team know their roles in this play.

d.) Fake squeeze straight steal - The runner at first performs a straight steal. The runner at third takes two or three hard steps faking a suicide squeeze. The hitter shows bunt as soon as the pitcher separate his hands and pulls the bunt back. This play is an attempt to divert attention away from the runner stealing second base. If the defense does throw the ball through to second, the runner at third has the same read as they do during a straight steal. The biggest risk for this play is if the runner at third base gets caught too far off on his break. It is important that they only take two or three steps and are prepared to get back.

e.) Walk off (forced balk) - As the pitcher begins to come set, the runner from first base either walks off toward second or starts running toward second. They are trying to get in a rundown long enough for the runner from third base to score. The best time for the runner from third to break for home is when the ball is released from a fielder in the rundown. The ideal time is when the ball is released from a fielder on the first base side of the rundown to a fielder on the second base side of the rundown.

f.) Runner on 2nd, ball four passed ball to the backstop - This may not seem like a 1st and 3rd situation initially however, when the runner from second takes third on the passed ball/wild pitch, and the hitter gets to first base, you are now in an impromptu 1st and 3rd situation with the catcher more than the normal 127 feet from second base. If the hitter sprints to first base, they can continue right on to second and try to challenge the catcher.

Part 1.6 - Methods of teaching base running

The best way to teach base running is by choosing a single topic or two that you are going to introduce during practice. A good strategy is to introduce one new topic and working to improve upon a familiar concept. Unlike hitting, fielding, or pitching where players can work on a series of drills to build up to the skill, baserunning is simply a matter of the player reading and reacting to the situation. When teaching baserunning, simply put players in the situation and simulate it to the best of your abilities.

Key for tactical games set up diagrams
R = Runner
P = Pitcher

C = Cone
H = Hitter

Methods of simulating topics
Below is just a small list of ways a coach can simulate baserunning in practice.

1.) Outfield lines - To work on leads, secondary leads, straight steals, and hit and runs, line all players (or half or a third) on the outfield line. Position a coach on at the appropriate angle to simulate a pitcher. Have the coach tell the players what base they are running to and what they are doing (steal, regular secondary lead, hit and run, etc) by giving signs.

Coach (Simulating pitcher)

R

R

R

R   -------------> toward 2nd base

R

R

R

R

2.) Second and third, less than two outs - Set up half of the runners at second base and half of the runners at third base along with a full defensive infield. The coach will be situated at home plate with a bucket of balls and a fungo. You can choose to have the runners work independently or together. Having them work independently (as if they were the only runner on) gives the coach more flexibility with situations to work on. Below are some situations a sampling of the situations that could be covered in this drill:
   a.) Reading ground balls on the infield from third base
   b.) Reading ground balls on the infield from second base
   c.) When to tag up from third base
       i.) Tag and go
       ii.) Tag and stay
       iii.) Tag and draw a throw
   d.) When to tag up from second base
   e.) Safety squeeze plays

f.) Reading choppers in front of the plate

3.) Four base drills – Start with a small line at each base, and at least two runners at home. On the coach's command, the first runner at home plate runs straight through first base, the second one runs a double. The runner at first gets their secondary lead and goes 1st to 3rd. The runner at 2nd gets their secondary lead then goes 2nd to home. The runner at 3rd scores from third . All of this happens simultaneously and rotates runners through each of the bases. Running simultaneously should keep a runner at each base.

4.) Bases loaded bunting - Set up a runner at each base, a pitcher on the mound, and a hitter at the plate. Each runner is working independently of the other (they pretend they are the only ones on base). The batter bunts the ball and the runners react as they would in the game. They go on the ground, retreat on a missed bunt or pullback, and hold on a ball bunted in the air.

5.) Pitchers/catchers vs. baserunners - This game is exactly they way it sounds. Runners at first (or second) try to get a jump and steal against a pitcher and catcher. If you have a pitcher that needs to throw a bullpen, this is a great team drill where they can get their bullpens in at the same time.

6.) Along with a "topic of the day" for practice, select a base and simulate as many different situations at that base as possible during the practice. Baserunning can be done as a en entire team, or can be done as a rotation in smaller groups, or as stations in a station workout.

7.) Another great time to work on baserunning is during controlled scrimmages, first and third defensive practice, cutoffs and relay practice, or bunt defense practice. While coaches generally focus on the defense during these sessions, it is an ideal time to work on your baserunning as well. If you have the luxury of having another coach who can focus on the baserunning aspect of the drill, you will find that many of the situations explained above show up in those situations where you are focusing on defense.

Part 2 - Bunting
With the introduction of advanced metrics to the game of baseball, the realization that a sacrifice bunt is usually not a smart move (unless the pitcher is up) has come to the forefront of the baseball world. Giving up an out via bunt to move a runner 90 feet is a nostalgic thought, but in reality it usually isn't the best strategy.

However, there are many differences between Major League Baseball and youth or high school baseball. One of the major differences is that when a hitter bunts

in Major League Baseball, the result is usually the hitters is out and the runner moves up a base. In youth or high school baseball, a well executed bunt can often result in chaos, where the nobody is out and runner advance several bases. It is this difference in talent that may make the "sacrifice" bunt a smarter play in high school and youth baseball than it is in the Major Leagues.

With that being said, bunting is a difficult technique to perform in games, and it should not be taken for granted that players can simply do it because it looks easy. It is also not a good idea to ask younger players (under 14 or less skilled players) to bunt.

Part 2.1 - The value of bunting
In high school and college baseball, the introduction of BBCOR bats has made the ability to bunt and the ability defend the bunt a difference maker in many games. Even though giving up an out is not ideal in baseball since you only have 18, 21, or 27 of them, bunting can still be a valuable part of an offense if it is framed in the correct manner.

Bunting can accomplish:
1.) Advancing runners
2.) Score runners
3.) Putting pressure on the defense
4.) Helps develop a team make-up and identity
5.) Changes defensive positioning (moves 1B/3B in, 2B closer to first base)
6.) Makes players throw from awkward angles
7.) Allows you to pick on a weak defensive player
8.) Gets runners on base

Below is the list of acceptable outcomes from best to worst when bunting:
1.) Forces an error, runners and hitter advance multiple bases
2.) Hitter beats the throw to first, all runners are safe
3.) Make an out but advance the runner
4.) Lead runner gets thrown out
5.) Strikeout, no runners advance
6.) Double play

In the above list, numbers 1 and 2 are the positive outcomes. This is the reason we bunt, to create chaos, to put defensive players in difficult positions and to create big innings. Number 3 is considered a neutral outcome and is the last of the "acceptable" outcomes from a bunt. Numbers 4, 5, and 6 are all negative outcomes and are considered "unacceptable."

Part 2.3 - Reasons for an unsuccessful bunt
As positive as a well executed bunt can be for a big inning, a poorly executed bunt can kill a really just as fast as it started. There are several reasons why hitters are unsuccessful bunters. As a coach it is your job to determine what went wrong and how to correct it.

1.) Failure to commit to the bunt (failure of attitude)
2.) Poor mechanics (could be linked to #1 or a lack of understanding)
3.) Player does not understand the situation they are in and what they are trying to accomplish
4.) Hitter does not observe the strike zone
5.) Too quick out of the box or tries to take the defense by surprise
6.) Lack of concentration (could be linked to #1)

Part 2.4 - Bunting philosophy
When the coach calls a bunt with a runner on first base, just simply getting the ball down in fair territory is not always enough to create the kind of havoc that is intended. In order to create the most havoc, the hitter should attempt to put his first bunt close to the third base line. It is very important that they still show bunt at the appropriate time (to be discussed later), but they are trying to put the ball in as difficult of a place as possible for the fielders.

If the first bunt attempt is not successful, the hitter should try to put the ball down in a safer zone that would be further away from the foul lines, but still away from the pitcher. A bunt directly back to the pitcher is almost certainly an out, and may result in the lead runner getting thrown out.

If the bunt sign is given with two strikes (this is not a recommended strategy), the hitter should do anything to get it down in fair territory, even if it means there bunting it right back to the pitcher.

Part 2.5 - Bunting technique (sacrifice)
One of the ways a bunt can fail is a lack of technique. Many people simplify the technique too much and miss critical components which causes bunting failures. Whenever the bunt is on, the hitter should move up slightly in the batter's box, but not so much that they give away that they are bunting.

Timing of showing bunt
1.) Sacrifice - show bunt when pitcher separates hand
2.) Bunt for a hit - show bunt when pitcher's front foot hits the ground
3.) Squeeze bunt - Show bunt when pitcher's front foot hits the ground

Upper body technique
1.) Bat comes over the top
2.) Elbows tight to the body
3.) Hands on the bat
    a.) Top hand half way up the bat
    b.) Bottom hand toward the top of the bat handle
4.) Bat out in front of body
5.) Bat flat

Lower body technique
1.) Widen base
2.) Stay balanced
3.) Keep back heel on the ground
4.) Get low to the ground
5.) Move down with knees to get lower pitches

Example of good bunting technique:

Part - 2.6 - Bunting technique (bunt for a hit)
The ability to bunt for a hit can add another dimension to a young player's game. There is a common misconception that a player has to be fast for them to successfully bunt for a hit. The hitter should have the mentality that they don't need to "take the other team by surprise." The key for success is to either make the third basemen field the ball or bunt it foul.

Bunt for a hit technique right handed hitter
1.) The batter will show bunt when the pitcher's front foot hits the ground
2.) The hitter will drop their right leg and get into sprinter's stance toward first base
3.) Hand position on the bat will be the same as for a sacrifice bunt

4.) The hitter will pull the knob of the bat toward their belly button and point the end cap of the bat directly at first base
5.) Once the batter bunts the ball, they will take off with their right foot directly toward first base and sprint hard through the bag
6.) Pointing the bat cap directly at first base should help get the ball right one the third base line

Bunt for a hit technique left handed hitter
1.) Left handed hitters have an advantage when bunting for a hit because they are a step closer to the bag
2.) The hitter will show bunt when the pitcher's front foot hits the ground
3.) The hitter will step their back foot (left) toward the plate without stepping on it
4.) They angle the bat parallel to the first base line
5.) The hitter will push the ball down the third base line and simultaneously take off to first base

Part 2.7 - Squeeze bunting
There are two types of squeeze bunting, the suicide squeeze and the safety squeeze. As the names would suggest, the suicide squeeze is much riskier, whereas the safety squeeze has less of a risk.

Suicide squeeze
1.) When the coach puts the suicide squeeze on, there needs to be some kind of acknowledgment from the batter that the play is on. If the better misses the sign, it creates a potentially dangerous situations where the hitter is swinging and the runner from third is running home.
2.) The runner from third will break toward the plate when the pitcher's front foot hits the ground. If he takes off before this, he gives the play away and the pitcher can pitch out, or throw a pitch high and in
3.) The batter must try bunt any pitched ball

The suicide squeeze is a very risky play and it takes a lot of practice to be able to pull it off. If the batter is able to bunt the ball anywhere on the ground in fair territory, the runner will certainly score. However, there are many, many things that can go wrong during a suicide squeeze and potentially ruin a big inning. Much of what could go wrong is out of the control of the offense.

Times when a suicide might work
1.) Weak hitter at the plate who is also a good bunter
2.) A pitcher on the mound who has been throwing a lot of strikes
3.) In a fastball count, but not a power count (1-0, 1-1 after curveball for a ball, 2-1)

What can go wrong on a suicide squeeze
1.) Batter misses the ball and the runner gets caught in a rundown
2.) Pitcher throws an unbuntable pitch and the runner gets caught in a rundown
3.) The batter bunts the ball up in the air resulting in a double play
4.) The runner breaks early and the pitcher throws an unbuntable pitch

In any of these situations, the team will be taken out of a potentially big inning, which is why suicide squeezes must be practiced and put on in the right situation.

Safety squeeze
The safety squeeze is a much more conservative play that has the same possible reward without the same risk. A properly run safety squeeze can be just as effective as the suicide squeeze.

1.) The runner at third takes a normal secondary lead (maybe a step more) and waits to see the ball bunted down away from the pitcher
2.) The batter bunts the ball to the first base line similar to a sacrifice bunt
3.) The batter DOES NOT have to bunt the ball if it is out of the strike zone
4.) The runner DOES NOT have to go home if the batter does not offer at the pitch, or if the ball is bunted hard back to the pitcher

Times when a safety squeeze may be in order
1.) Runners at first and third and no body out
2.) Hitter at the plate who has good plate discipline and is a good bunter
3.) Runner who is average or above average at third base
4.) Weak hitter at the plate who can bunt well
5.) First baseman is playing back
6.) Pitcher is difficult to hit, strikes out a lot of hitters

A safety squeeze is a much lower risk play with the same reward. Whenever you are considering putting the suicide squeeze on, first ask yourself if the safety squeeze might work just as well without the risk of ending the possibility of a big inning.

Part 3 - Tactical offensive games
Pitchers and catchers vs. base runners
Ages: 13 and up

Equipment: Catcher's gear, baseballs, infield, helmets

Setup:
Set up a first baseman, second baseman, short stop, pitcher, catcher and base runners at first base

Procedure:
1.) The pitcher can either pick off to first base, or throw a pitch home
2.) Pitchers should work on varying timing to first base, and should work on all of their moves
3.) Base runners are trying to get a jump to steal second base
4.) Catchers try to throw out the stealing runner
5.) Vary who covers second base between the shortstop and second baseman

Competition:
Keep score of how many time the runner is safe, and how many times they get thrown out. After you have done this game a few times, you should get an idea of what a reasonable percentage of success is. For example, if you find that runners on your team are successfully stealing second base about 70% of the time, the runner's goal is to steal at higher rate than a 70%, and the pitchers and catchers are trying to throw out more than 30% of the base runners.

Dirt ball reads
Ages: 14 and up (or whenever the catcher on your team can adequately block balls in the dirt)

Equipment: Catcher's gear, baseballs, infield, helmets

Setup:
Set up a first baseman, second baseman, short stop, catcher, base runners at first base and a coach between the pitcher's mound and catcher

Procedure:
1.) The coach will come set as a pitcher and deliver either a ball that the catcher can catch or a ball in the dirt that he has to block
2.) The runner at first base will take a normal secondary lead as the pitcher delivers the ball home
3.) If the catcher catches the ball, he will snap throw behind the runner at   first base
4.) If the coach throws the ball in the dirt, the runner at first base will take off as soon as the ball hits the dirt
5.) If the coach throws the ball in the dirt, the catcher will block the ball, scramble to collect it and attempt to throw the runner out advancing to second

Competition:
If the coach wanted, they could keep track of the number of balls the catcher successfully blocks out of a given number of attempts however, the real point of this game is to show runners that if they read the angle of the ball correctly and take off right away, it is nearly impossible to throw them out.

Bunting for points
Ages: 12 and up

Equipment: Baseball bats, cones, home plate(s), helmets

Setup:
Set up a coach as a pitcher, a batter at home plate, a cone a six feet off the third base line about 15 feet from home plate, and a cone at the same spot on the first base side.

The coach can also set up two cones about 8 feet apart half way between the pitcher's mound and home plate. This is considered the "no bunt zone."

Procedure:
1.) Each hitter will have an attempt to have an at bat trying to sacrifice bunt
2.) The first bunt attempt (with zero strikes) the hitter is trying to bunt the ball down the third base line
3.) The second bunt attempt (with one strike) the hitter is trying to bunt the ball anywhere except the "no bunt zone."
4.) The hitter's at bat ends when the he either bunts the ball in fair territory or gets to a two strike count

Competition:
This game can be done as an individual competition or in small teams of 2-4. Each hitter gets an at bat to get sacrifice bunt down, and one to get safety squeeze down. Each player will earn points for their at bat as follows:

Bunt between 3rd base line and cone	+4
Bunt outside 3rd base line and cone w/ 0 strikes	+1
Bunt outside "no bunt zone" w/ 1 strike	+2
Bunt in "no bunt zone"	-2
Pop-up bunt any count	-4
Count gets to 2 strikes	-3
Bunt through pitch	-2
Bunt between 1st base line and cone on "safety squeeze"	+4

Deer hunter bunting
Age: 14 and up

Equipment: Baseballs, baseball bats, helmets, home plate

Setup: One player is the hunter (bunter) another player is the deer. The bunter sets up at home plate, the deer jogs an arc from foul line to foul line about 15 feet from home plate.

Procedure:
1.) The deer jogs from foul line to foul line
2.) The coach says "stop" and the deer freezes
3.) The coach delivers a pitch home
4.) The batter tries to bunt the ball to wherever the deer is

Competition:
The coach should never call "stop" when the deer is in front of him (for safety and because he is in the "no bunt zone").

If the batter bunts the ball and the ball comes within two feet on either side of the deer, he gets a point. Count the total number of successful tries out of the total number of attempts.

Bunt for hit game
Ages: 14 and up

Set up:
Set up a pitcher, third baseman, first baseman, second baseman, and a hitter at the plate.

Procedure:
1.) The pitcher delivers live pitches to the hitter
2.) The batter is trying to bunt for a hit
3.) The corner infielders cannot come onto the infield grass until the batter shows bunt

Competition:
Count the number of successful bunt for hits (runner safe at first base) out of the total number of attempts.

Module 5 - Hitting lesson plans by age

A hitting coach who knows every detailed element of hitting but cannot create age appropriate hitting lesson plans and relate the material to the age of his players will not be a very successful hitting coach. The following module contains three hour long lesson plans (progressive) for varying age groups.

Date: Day #1   **Age:** 6-9 years old
Length of practice: 50 minutes (including warmup)   **Number of students:** 12
Practice objectives: Players will understand safety precautions, be able to grip the bat correctly, have an appropriate stance, step prior to swinging.
Number of Coaches : 2
Equipment: Baseball bats, cones, baseballs

Time	Name of Activity	Description	Key Teaching Points
		LESSON PLAN	
1:00-1:05	Safety talk	Coaches carefully explains safety rules of the practice	-Listen closely to all coaches -No swinging bats unless you are told to do so -Hold bat by barrel, knob to the floor when not in a drill
1:00-1:05	Warm-up	Active warm-up, trunk twists, high knees, butt kicks, twisting lunges and bat swings	-Turn upper body, keeping lower body as straight as possible -Practice swings (spacing is key)
1:05-1:10	Practice Grips	A coach explains the proper grip on the bat while players try the proper grip Coaches check each player's grip and correct as needed	-Line up knocking/middle knuckles -Bat held loosely in fingers (but not too loose) -Point index fingers while in grip, should point the same direction
1:10-1:20	Stance	A coach explains where to stand in the batters box and the proper stance. Set up as many home plates as you have coaches and let	-Stand even with the plate, so they can cover outside corner -Stance, athletic, slightly wider than shoulder width, bat on shoulder, lift slightly, eyes level and facing pitcher
1:20-1:30	Stance, Stride, Swing	Players get in circle with enough room to swing Coaches in the middle explain striding and slight hand movement back Coaches cue players to "stance, stride, swing" paying attention mostly to stride	-Hitters keep weight at 50/50 after stride, not forward -A little hand movement back on stride, advanced players get knob to catchers feet.

Time	Name of Activity	Description	Key Teaching Points
1:30-1:50	4 Base hitting game	Divide into 4 teams of four, set up two 4-base hitting games facing opposite directions. At end of the game, remember winners so they can play at the end of next hitting session	-Even while keeping track of the end score, coaches should emphasize the key teaching points during the game

End of Practice Announcements: Review key teaching points through questioning, give sneak peak at skills covered in next practice as well as date and time (remember to tell parents), give stance, stride, swing homework between practices.

Date: Day #2   **Age:** 6-9 years old
Length of practice: 1 hour   **Number of students:** 12
Practice objectives: Players will be able to stride and swing keeping balanced 50/50 weight with slight hand movement backward, and start the swing with their lower half finishing with their belt buckle to the pitcher and heel to the sky
Number of Coaches : 2
Equipment:

	LESSON PLAN		
Time	**Name of Activity**	**Description**	**Key Teaching Points**
1:00-1:05	Review	Coach reminds players of what was covered last practice and safety rules	-Proper grip on bat -Proper stance -Proper stride -Re-emphasize safety rules
1:05-1:10	Warm-up	Active warm-up, trunk twists, high knees, butt kicks, twisting lunges and bat swings	-Turn upper body, keeping lower body as straight as possible -Practice swings (spacing is key)
1:10-1:15	Hip Turns	Players get in circle with enough room to swing Coaches in the middle, have players put hands on hips (no bats) and work on turning the hips in the hitting direction with little upper half movement	-Emphasize lower half moves first -Heel to the sky on hip turn
1:15-1:25	Rotation Drill	Set up four tees with three players at each tee hitting into a net	-Rotate lower half first -Don't worry about how far the ball goes, just work on turing hips
1:25-1:40	Hit/Take Drill	Use same setup as above	-On hit, players should use their hips to swing the bat -On take, players should be in a good hitting position

Time	Name of Activity	Description	Key Teaching Points
1:40-2:00	Long Tee Drill	-Use one or two batting cages to have two teams compete against one another	-Still focus on hip rotation. -Feel free to give an extra point per swing if they use proper mechanics

End of Practice Announcements: Review of lesson, give homework, hip turn drill, rotation drill if they have a place to hit.

Date: Day #3   **Age:** 6-9 years old
Length of practice: 1 hour   **Number of students:** 12
Practice objectives: Players should refine their overall swing, while
Number of Coaches : 4
Equipment:

Time	Name of Activity	LESSON PLAN	
		Description	**Key Teaching Points**
1:00-1:05	Review	Coach reminds players of what was covered last practice and safety rules	-Proper grip on bat -Proper stance -Proper stride -Hip turn with the swing -Re-emphasize safety rules
1:05-1:10	Warm-up	Active warm-up, trunk twists, high knees, butt kicks, twisting lunges and bat swings	-Turn upper body, keeping lower body as straight as possible -Practice swings (spacing is key)
1:10-1:55	Stations (in pairs) 6-minutes each with 9 minutes for explanation	1.) Stance, Stride Swing 2.) Hip Turns 3.) Rotation Drills 4.) Tee Drill 5.) Long Tee Game 6.) Front flip hitting You will need at least four coaches to run this rotation. One coach runs stance, stride, swing, one runs hip turn and rotation, one runs long tee, and one runs front flip hitting	1.) Hitting position and hip turn 2.) Heel to the sky 3.) Start swing with hip 4.) Correct most glaring flaw 5.) Hitting the ball up the middle 6.) Let them put it all together!

End of Practice Announcements: Review all mechanics and drills. Give homework, stance, stride, swing and rotation/hip turn drills.

Date: Day #1   **Age:** 10-14 years old
Length of practice: 1 hour (including warmup)   **Number of students:** 12
Practice objectives: At the end of the session, players should be able execute the proper grip and stance, properly load their hands and body prior to the swing, take an appropriate stride length, and understand that they need to separate their hips from their shoulders during the initial part of the
Number of Coaches : 2
Equipment: Baseball bats, baseballs, light med balls 3-5 lbs, 6 tees, 2 cages

Time	Name of Activity	Description	Key Teaching Points
	LESSON PLAN		
1:00-1:05	Safety talk	Coaches carefully explains safety rules of the practice	-Listen closely to all coaches -No swinging bats unless you are told to do so -Hold bat by barrel, knob to the floor when not in a drill
1:05-1:10	Warm-up	Active warm-up, trunk twists, high knees, butt kicks, twisting lunges, medball tosses, and bat swings	-Turn upper body, keeping lower body as straight as possible -Emulate swinging with medball tosses (in pairs, don't let players catch med balls) -Practice swings
1:10-1:15	Practice Grips and Stance	A coach explains the proper grip on the bat while players try the proper grip Coaches check each player's grip and correct as needed Coaches then Explain proper stance, while players practice a good stance	-Line up knocking knuckles -Bat held loosely in fingers - -Stance, athletic, slightly wider than shoulder width, bat on shoulder, lift slightly, eyes level and facing pitcher
1:15-1:25	Stance, Stride, Load Drill	Players get a safe distance from one another, the coach says "Stance," "Stride," "Load." Coaches walk around and make corrections	-Weight doesn't shift more than 50/50 -Knees inside feet -Head stays still -Hands go slightly up and back -Knob of bat to catcher's feet -Back hip pocket tothe pitcher -Eyes level and straight ahead
1:25-1:40	1-2-3- Fire	Pair up players at tees. The player not hitting will give the "1" "2" "3" "Fire" Coaches circulate and make corrections	-Emphasize separation -No shoulder movement on "three" -Swing with the core -Proper hitting position
1:40-2:00	Middle Wins Front Flips	Divide players into two teams, use two cages if possible. Have two teams compete against one another	-Having fun and learning to hit the ball up the middle

End of Practice Announcements: Review key teaching points through questioning, give sneak peak at skills covered in next practice as well as date and time (remember to tell parents), give stance, stride, swing homework between practices.

Date: Session #2   **Age:** 10-14
Length of practice: 1 Hour 10 minutes (including warmup)   **Number of students:** 8-12
Practice objectives: At the end of the practice, players should be able to get into a proper hitting position, begin to separate their lower hips from their shoulders during the swing, g
Number of Coaches: 3
Equipment: Baseballs, 6 batting tees, nets, wiffle balls or soft balls, 2 batting cages

		LESSON PLAN	
Time	**Name of Activity**	**Description**	**Key Teaching Points**
1:00-1:10	Warm-up	Active warm-up, trunk twists, high knees, butt kicks, twisting lunges, medball tosses, and bat swings	-Turn upper body, keeping lower body as straight as possible -Emulate swinging with medball tosses (in pairs, don't let players catch med balls) -Practice swings (spacing is key)
1:10-1:15	Stance, Stride, Load Drill	Players get a safe distance from one another, the coach says "Stance," "Stride," "Load." Coaches walk around and make corrections	-Weight doesn't shift more than 50/50 -Knees inside feet -Head stays still -Hands go slightly up and back -Knob of bat to catcher's feet -Back hip pocket to pitcher -Eyes level and straight ahead
1:15-1:30	Babe Ruth Drill	Pair up players at tees. The players who are not hitting check hitting positions.	-Check hitting position on stop -Encourage hitters to move more slowly on the step to hitting position -Ensure the swing starts with the lower half
1:30-1:40	Miss the Helmet Drill	Pair up players at tees. Each hitter starts with a helmet behind the outside of their back foot. Coaches circulate and make corrections	-Player swings and misses helmet with their back foot -Emphasize the back knee gaining ground at the beginning of the swing
1:40-1:50	Hit/Take	Pair up players at tees. The player not hitting will give the "hit" or 'take' command Coaches circulate and make corrections	-Emphasize correct hitting position -No shoulder movement on "take" -Swing with the core

		Divide players up into two teams. One team hits in each cage	-Having fun and learning to hit the ball up the middle
1:50-2:10	Middle Wins BP	If you are on a field, hit on the field and in a cage	

End of Practice Announcements: Review key teaching points through questioning, give sneak peak at skills covered in next practice as well as date and time (remember to tell parents), give stance, stride, swing homework between practices.

Date: Session #3   **Age:** 10-14
Length of practice: 1 Hour 40 Minutes   **Number of students:** 8-12
Practice objectives: At the end of the practice, players should be able to get into a proper hitting position, begin to separate their lower hips from their shoulders during the swing, and have an up the middle swing path.
Number of Coaches: 3
Equipment: Baseballs, 6 batting tees, nets, wiffle balls or soft balls, 2 batting cages, or field and L-Screens

Time	Name of Activity	LESSON PLAN	
		Description	**Key Teaching Points**
1:00-1:10	Review Through Questioning	-Can someone describe the proper hitting position -What body part starts the swing? -Others to reflect hitting mechanics	-Ask different players, do not let the same player respond -Hitting position -First movement -Back elbow -Balance at finish
1:10-2:20	Stations in pairs 7 minutes each, with 11 minutes at the beginning to describe the drills	1.) Hit/Take 2.) Babe/Ruth 3.) 1-2-3-Fire 4.)Miss the helmet 5.) Long Tee Game 6.) Front flips with L-Screen stop or fake 7.) Live BP You should have at least three coaches in this rotation. One coach is responsible for supervising drills 1-5. One coach is responsible for drills 6 and 7	1.) Hitting position 2.) Hitting position 3.) Start swing with hip 4.) Back knee moves gains ground 5.) Hitting the ball up the middle 6.) Hitting position on fake or L-screen stop 7.) Let them put it all together!
2:20-2:40	Winning Run on Third Game	On the field or in two cages, have a coach or player throw live to the hitter. Challenge them by throwing with a challenging, but not impossible velocity and change speeds at older ages	Put pressure on players to come through in the clutch to put the ball in play with less than two outs and the winning run and third.

End of Practice Announcements: Review key teaching points through questioning, give sneak peak at skills covered in next practice as well as date and time (remember to tell parents).

Date: Session #1   **Age:** 15-18

Length of practice: 1 Hour 30 minutes (including warmup)   **Number of students:** 8-12

Practice objectives: At the end of the practice, players should be able to get into a proper hitting position, begin to separate their lower hips from their shoulders during the swing.

Number of Coaches: 2

Equipment: Baseballs, 6 batting tees, nets, wiffle balls or soft balls, 2 batting cages

Time	Name of Activity	Description	Key Teaching Points
		LESSON PLAN	
1:00-1:10	Warm-up	Active warm-up, trunk twists, high knees, butt kicks, twisting lunges, medball tosses, and bat swings	-Turn upper body, keeping lower body as straight as possible -Emulate swinging with medball tosses (in pairs, don't let players catch med balls) -Practice swings (spacing is key)
1:10-1:15	Stance, Stride, Load Drill	Players get a safe distance from one another, the coach says "Stance," "Stride," "Load." Coaches walk around and make corrections	-Weight shifts to 50/50 -Knees inside feet -Head stays still -Hands go slightly up and back -Knob of bat to catcher's feet -Back hip pocket to pitcher -Eyes level and straight ahead
1:15-1:30	Hit/Take	Pair up players at tees. The players who are not hitting say "hit" or "take."	-Emphasize correct hitting position on "take" -Start with lower half -Swing with the core
1:30-1:40	1-2-3-Fire	Pair up players at tees. The player not hitting will give the "1" "2" "3" "Fire" Coaches circulate and make corrections	-Emphasize separation -No shoulder movement on "three" -Swing with the core
1:40-1:50	Babe Ruth Drill	Pair up players at tees. The players who are not hitting check hitting positions.	-Check hitting position on stop -Encourage hitters to move more slowly on step -Swing starts with lower body
1:50-2:10	Miss the Helmet Drill	Pair up players at tees. Each hitter starts with a helmet behind the outside of their back foot. Coaches circulate and make corrections	-Player swings and misses helmet with their back foot -Emphasize back knee gaining ground at beginning of swing
2:10-2:30	Winning Run on Third Drill	On the field or in two cages, have a coach or player throw live to the hitter. Challenge them by throwing with a challenging, but not impossible velocity and change speeds at older ages	Put pressure on players to come through in the clutch to put the ball in play with less than two outs and the winning run and third.

End of Practice Announcements: Review key teaching points through questioning, give sneak peak at skills covered in next practice as well as date and time.

Date: Session #2   **Age:** 15-18
Length of practice: 1 Hour 30 minutes (including warmup)   **Number of students:** 8-12
Practice objectives: At the end of the practice, players should be able to start the swing with the lower half by separating the lower half from the upper half, feel the proper load on the back leg, and learn to hit the ball to the opposite field.
Number of Coaches: 2
Equipment: Baseballs, 12 batting tees, nets, wiffle balls or soft balls, 2 batting cages

Time	Name of Activity	Description	Key Teaching Points
		LESSON PLAN	
1:00-1:10	Warm-up	Active warm-up, trunk twists, high knees, butt kicks, twisting lunges, medball tosses, and bat swings	-Turn upper body, keeping lower body as straight as possible -Emulate swinging with medball tosses (in pairs, don't let players catch med balls) -Practice swings
1:10-1:20	Hit/Take Drill	Pair up players at tees. The players who are not hitting say "hit" or "take."	Emphasize correct hitting position on "take" -Start with lower half -Swing with the core
1:20-1:30	Babe Ruth, Hit/Take Combo	Pair up players at tees. The players who are not hitting check hitting positions and giving "hit" or "take" direction	Emphasize correct hitting position on "take" -Start with lower half
1:30-1:45	Pitcher Leg Kick Drill	Pair players up at tee. Player who is not hitting watching back knee (should be inside feet), weight distribution (50/50) and hitting position	-Move as slowly as possible through the leg kick -Control movement to hitting position -Feel load on back leg
1:45-1:55	Outside Tee	Pair up players at tees. Have the tee angled so they have to hit the ball to the opposite field to hit it into the net Hitters should line up with the plate, not the target.	-Set tee deep in the stance -Don't guide the ball to the opposite field -Attack and drive the ball
1:55-2:10	Inside/Outside (with hit/take optional)	Pair up players at tees. Set up two tees, one inside and one outside. The player who is not hitting says "inside," "outside," or "take." Hitter hits the appropriate ball to the appropriate field or takes in good hitting position	-Check hitting position on "take" -Hit ball to the appropriate field

2:10-2:30	Hit and Run Game or Opposite Field Competition	Hit and run game- set up L-screen and two cones 30 feet apart at 2nd base (or ss for LHH) Opposite Field Competition - Divide into two teams, one in each batting cage with a coach hitting behind the L-screen	-Let the ball get deep -Try to hit the ball to the vacated infielder's spot Count the total number of successful hits to the opposite field (don't count it if the pitch is middle/in)

End of Practice Announcements: Review key teaching points through questioning, give sneak peak at skills covered in next practice as well as date and time.

Date: Session #3   **Age:** 15-18
Length of practice: 1 Hour 55 minutes (including warmup)   **Number of students:** 8-12
Practice objectives: At the end of the practice, players should be able to start the swing with the lower half by separating the lower half from the upper half, feel the proper load on the back leg, and learn to hit the ball to the opposite field.
Number of Coaches: 3
Equipment: Baseballs, 12 batting tees, nets, wiffle balls or soft balls, 2 batting cages

Time	Name of Activity	Description	Key Teaching Points
		LESSON PLAN	
1:00-1:10	Review Through Questioning	-Can someone describe the proper hitting position -What body part starts the swing? -Others to reflect hitting mechanics	-Ask different players, do not let the same player respond -Hitting position -First movement -Back elbow -Balance at finish
1:10-1:20	Description of Hitting Philosophy	-0 Strike Approach -1 Strike Approach -2 Strike Approach	-Something they can drive -Something they can barrel up -Look away
1:20-2:35	Stations in pairs 7 minutes each, with 12 minutes at the beginning to describe the drills	1.) 1-2-3-Fire 2.) Miss the Helmet 3.) Hit/Take 4.) Babe Ruth 4.) Babe Ruth Hit/Take 5.) Outside Tee 6.) Inside/Outside Hit/Take 7.) Front flips with L-Screen stop or fake 8.) Live BP You should have at least three coaches in this rotation. One coach is responsible for supervising drills 1-5. One coach is responsible for drills 7 and 8	1.) Separation 2.) Back knee gain ground 3.) Hitting position 4.) Hitting position 5.) Ball deep, don't guide the ball 6.) Decision on inside/outside 7.) Front flips with L-Screen stop or fake, check hitting position on L-Screen stop 8.) Challenge them in at bats starting at a 1-1 count, focus on hitting philosophy

		On the field or in two cages, have a coach or player throw live to the hitter. Challenge them by throwing with a challenging, but not impossible velocity and change speeds at older ages	Put pressure on players to come through in the clutch to put the ball in play with less than two outs and the winning run and third.
2:35-2:55	Winning Run on Third Game		

End of Practice Announcements: Review key teaching points through questioning, give sneak peak at skills covered in next practice as well as date and time (remember to tell parents).

Module 6 - Physical conditioning for hitters

Before starting any conditioning program make sure your athletes are cleared to participate and are given a thorough orientation on weight room safety. The principals of weight training for baseball are much different than many other sports. The energy system that needs to be trained is one that supplies energy in quick bursts and mid distance sprints. Size is not as important as speed, strength, and explosiveness. It is also important that baseball hitters train their body using rotational movements, similar to the way they will use their body when they hit.

The first plan presented in this module is an offseason plan for post-puberty players. It involves using a whole weight room since most of them will have access to a weight room at their high school. The second plan is for younger players who have not yet entered puberty. This program can be done at your field after practices or games with only medicine balls and surgical tubing for equipment. This second program also works for post-puberty hitters as an in season workout plan, or a plan for them to follow if they do not have access for to a full weight room.

Part 1 - Physical Conditioning for Older Hitters (post-puberty)
<u>General Principals</u>
1.) Work larger muscle groups before smaller muscle groups
2.) Choose a weight that you can do with good form, but struggle with during the last few reps, if you don't struggle you will not improve
3.) Rest time between sets should be about 60-90 seconds
4.) Move the weight quickly on the concentric phase (primary direction) and slower on the eccentric phase (returning the weight to the starting position)
5.) Do not sacrifice speed and explosiveness for extra weight
6.) **Periodization**:
    Muscle hypertrophy (added size) reps 9-15 (4 weeks)
    Muscle strength reps 6-8 (4 weeks)
    Rest (1 week)
    Muscle power reps 3-5 (4 weeks)
    Superset weeks (1-2 weeks)

Rest (1 week before beginning of practice)

7.) Rest a minimum of 36 hours between working the same muscle group, muscle is built during rest periods

8.) Core lifts are most important, other lifts are just for beach muscles.

9.) Once you reach the top rep for each phase and you can complete them easily, increase your weight

10.) Select one or two of the exercises for each muscles groups to complete during each workout

11.) Change exercises every few workouts so you don't develop muscle familiarity

12.) Using dumbbell is better than machines, but machines are better than nothing

13.) 3 days of lifting per week, 1 or 2 days of agility/cardio

Exercises:

Upper Body/Chest (3 sets each workout)

-Dumbell bench

-Standard Pushups (max reps)

-Military pushups, narrow hands (max reps)

-Decline dumbell press (stay away from incline press or straight bar bench press)

Upper Body/Back (5 sets each workout)

-Pull ups (max reps)

-Lat Pulldowns

-Horizontal row

-Lawnmowers

-Heavy pants

-Back flys

-Straight arm pulldowns

Upper Body/Shoulders (3 sets each workout)

-Horizontal raises

-Scarecrowss (light weight at all reps)

-Dumbell front raises

-J-Band exercises http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_zilegpVwY

(Stay away from any exercise where you raise weight over your head, do not go heavy on any shoulder exercise)

Upper Body/Biceps (2 sets each workout)

-Concentration curls

-Suppination curls

-Hammer Curls

-Alternating front curls

-External curls (elbows in at side, weights out to side)

-Preacher curls

<u>Upper Body/Triceps (3 sets each workout)</u>
-Overhead triceps extension
-Triceps pulldown
-Skull crushers
-Diamond pushups (max reps)
(Stay away from dips of any kind)

<u>Lower Body (8 sets)</u>
-Squats Dead lift
-Romanian Dead Lift
-One leg squat (both legs = one set)
-Power Cleans (do this almost every workout max reps = 5 per set)
(Stay away from leg press, its better than nothing, but not much) (If you do calves, don't count them toward your 6 sets)

<u>Lower Body/Plyometrics (6 sets of 8-15 increasing each workout)</u>
-Box jumps Squat Jumps
-Double ankle jumps
-Split squat jumps
-Tuck jumps
-Lateral drive
-Box step off and lateral movement
-Step off and vertical jump
-One leg box jumps

<u>Core (8 sets, if done as a separate workout, do up to 16 sets)</u>
-V-ups
-Medball side toss
-Barbell hr press
-Barbell side to side
-Russian twist (with weights)
-Side V-ups
-Step behind medball side throw
-Medball hot feet toss
-Front plank
-Side plank
-Medball Rotational scoop
-Medball front slams Medball
-Rotational slams
(Aside from lower body, these are the most important for baseball players)

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Full Body Lift	Core/Plyo	Rest/ Stretch/ Agility	Full Body Lift	Core/Plyo	Full Body Lift	Rest

Part 2 - Physical Conditioning for Young Hitters

The following conditioning program is for younger hitters (pre-puberty). It can also be used as a in season conditioning program for older hitters, or for older hitters who have minimal available equipment.

These exercises should be done in an explosive manner. The reps given here are just suggestions. Some players will need more, some will need less. Do not sacrifice speed and explosiveness for reps (with the exception of J-Band routine). Doing 8 reps explosive and quick with good form is better than doing 15 reps where the last 7 are slow and lethargic.

You will know the appropriate medball weight because they will be able to do the exercises with good form and good velocity. As a general guideline:

8-10 years old	2-4 lbs
11-13 years old	3-5 lbs
14-15 years old	3-6 lbs
15-18 years old	6-10 lbs

Medball Workout
-Medball Side Throw 2 x 8-12 each side
-Rotational Scoop Toss 2 x 8-12 each side
-Step Behind Med ball Toss 2 x 8-12 each side
-Medball Hot feet Toss 2 x 8-12 each side

AB Workout
-2 x 30s front plank
-2 x 30s side planks (each side)
-V-Ups 2 x 15-20
-Russian Twists (w/medball) 2 x 20 (each side)

Cardiovascular
-6 – 30 yard sprints (or equivalent age appropriate distance)
-6 – 60 yard sprints (or equivalent age appropriate distance)

Leg workout
-Body weight squats 2 x 10-25

-Split squats jumps 2 x 8-15 each leg
-Jump squats 2 x 10 - 15
-Tuck jumps 2 x 10-15
-Side to side drive 2 x 10-15 each side

J-Band Routine
-External Rotations 2 x 10-15 each arm
-Internal Rotations 2 x 10-15 each arm
-Horizontal shoulder raises 2 x 15 each arm
-Straight arm front adduction 2 x 15 each arm
-90/90s 2 x 15

Remember, conditioning is an opportunity for improvement, not a punishment. If you treat it that way, your players will work harder during conditioning, not avoid it. If you punish athletes by making them condition, they will have a negative response to any form of conditioning and will be less likely to do it on their own.

Conclusion -
So many coaches and players only concentrate on hitting as a means of scoring runs. The reality scoring runs is much more than just hitting. If a team is good at hitting, but doesn't take good at bats, doesn't run the bases well, and can't execute a bunting game to take advantage of opponents weaknesses, they will not be maximizing their runs.

In order to maximize run production, adequate time must be paid to all aspects of offense, not just hitting. There are several opportunities to work on other aspects of offense that many coaches to not take advantage of. During pre game hitting, many teams have several players standing around waiting for their turn in the cage. Instead of having these players standing around, divide your team into thirds, and have one group hitting, one group bunting, and one group working on baserunning.

This manual should give you several tools to maximize run production, and be able to take advantage of your team's strength and your opponents weaknesses, as well as how to teach offense within a team setting.

As with any of our products, feel free to contact me with any questions at **kyle@cornerstonecoachingacademy.com**. Additionally, please take advantage of our other products offered by Cornerstone on the following page. They are an invaluable tool to any youth, travel, or high school coach.

Product	Price	Link	Description
Bronze Library	FREE	www.cornerstoneocachingacademy.com/bronze-library	Baseball coaching resources including games, video, and program building documents
Bronze Video Club	FREE	www.cornrestonecoachingacademy.bom/video-analysis	One time video analysis of any baseball skill
Silver Video Club	$19.99	www.cornrestonecoachingacademy.com/video-analysis	This club gets you two video analysis per month with a drill prescription for success.
Gold Video Club	$29.99	www.cornrestonecoachingacademy.com/video-analysis	This club gets you three video analysis per month with drill prescription for success.
Platinum Video Club	$37.99	www.cornrestonecoachingacademy.com/video-analysis	This club gets you five video analysis per month with a drill prescription for success.
Blog	FREE	www.cornerstonecoachingacademy.com/blog	Over 45 articles on virtually every baseball and coaching topic. New content being added constantly.
Athlete Centered Coaching eBook	FREE	www.cornerstonecoachingacademy.com/ebook	The guide to getting started developing an athlete centered coaching style
Top 10 Things Every Pitcher Must Do eBook	FREE	www.cornerstonecoachingacademy.com/ebook	A quick list of 10 ways to make your youth pitcher maximize their potential.
So You're a Coach… Now What? eBook	$9.99	www.cornerstonecoachingacademy.com/ebook	This eBook takes you from day one to the end of the season for first year coaches and gives at least 3 drills for each major component of the game.