**Four Simple Principles for Successful Hitting**

**If you learn only four things as a batter – these are what you need to learn**

**Remember:** This is hitting training not mindless time wastingswing training.

Learning and using these four basic and simple timing principles in every practice and, in games, players will find their mechanics will improve quickly and substantially. These four timing principles actually correct most hitting “issues”. Players will be more confident in their ability to hit about any pitcher and will hit the ball with more power and consistent solid contact. The fact is, attempting to perfect hitting mechanics by training with a batting tee or soft toss won't prepare a player for a real game (see the *“Batting Tee Report*” and video). Despite how "functional" they may seem, batting tees and soft toss do the complete opposite. Never spend countless hours practicing time wasting, functionally incorrect batting tee or soft toss drills ever again.

**Batter’s Box Mindset - timing of the swing - technique 1**

* “I’m am swinging at every pitch.” You are going to the plate expecting to swing at every pitch. Why? If you decide to swing after the pitch is thrown – you’re too late. The approach is you decide not to swing vs. to swing. It’s easier to check your swing vs. starting it. Research shows if a player hasn’t already started to initiate their swing BEFORE the ball is ½ way to home plate, they will be late. (See video *“Batter’s Box Mindset”* for more details)

**Hand Break – Ball Release – timing the pitcher - technique 2**

 **The one constant that a pitcher cannot change is the time from when he removes the ball from his glove to the time he releases the pitch. That will never vary. This is how you get on time with the pitcher and the pitched ball.** (Watch 3 part video for more details)

* As the pitcher removes the ball from his glove starting his delivery (*hand break*), start your load.
* Right around the time the ball is being released from his throwing hand (*ball release*), begin your stride toward the pitcher beginning to initiate your swing.
* Hand Break-Ball Release slows the game down and keeps a batter from “rushing” their swing. Rushing the swing is a major cause for the majority of mechanical breakdowns.

(Please note: The timing doesn’t have to be absolutely perfect. Just as long as you are close to each one.)

**Righttttttt……Now! - timing the pitched ball - technique 3**

Start with saying the word *”Right”* out loud at hand break. Then just before bat to ball contact say “Now”. Draw out the word “Right” until you have to say “Now”. (EX: *Rigghhhhttt….Now!”* ).

* Once you seem to have this down saying out loud, start saying it to yourself in your head. *You can do this in the game too if you want to keep your timing*.
* This routine will also keep you focused on the ball and nothing else. It will allow you to start identifying pitches (like fast balls, change-ups and curve balls). The three most predominate pitches most pitchers throw. You can have the best hitting mechanics in the world, but if your timing is off, you’ll struggle hitting the ball solid consistently…if at all. BUT, if you have good timing, you will hit the ball more frequently even if your mechanics aren’t the best.
* Do this when in the on-deck circle or in-the-hole to prepare for the pitcher.
* Why do you say *“Now”* right before bat to ball contact? Watch the *“Right….Now”* video for the factual scientific reasons why.

**Hunting Pitches -** **timing which pitch to swing at - technique 4**

Fact: The pitch a batter chooses to swing at has everything to do with how well they hit regardless of their mechanics. A player can have the best swing mechanics, but if they are choosing the wrong pitches to swing at, they still will hit poorly. (see *“Hunting Pitches”* doc and video)

* With *no strikes*, a batter should only swing at pitches they know they can hit hard about every time. Only swing at pitches a player knows they can crush. (aka. their “hot zone”)
* With *one strike*, expand to swinging at pitches a player knows they can consistently crush AND to pitches they can routinely hit well.
* With *two strikes*, a player has to protect so now the entire strike zone is open.
* With no strikes, why swing at a pitch in the strike zone if a player can’t hit that location well? No player is “hot” in the entire strike zone. There are many areas in the strike zone that a player cannot hit well. So, with no strikes, it makes no sense to swing at every pitched ball in the strike zone.
* A player’s best hitting mechanics, contact and power occurs when they swing at pitches in their “hot zone”/ “crush the ball” zone.
* There are times when this approach isn’t used. Such as a called hit-and-run, bunt, etc. But those situations are few and far between.

As Hall of Famer Warren Spahn said, *“Hitting is timing and pitching is upsetting timing”*. To be a great hitter, timing is the most important aspect for hitting consistently and well. Secondly, every aspect of hitting mechanics are influenced by timing. The best mechanics will not better a players timing but good timing will correct most hitting mechanics.

**Bottom line:**

A player with average mechanics but good timing will outperform a player with good mechanics and average timing. Period.

Coach Helke works with individual athletes, coaches, teams and organizations.

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