



### Batting/Hitting

Batting/Hitting skills allow a team to get runners on base and get in position to score runs. The ability to visually track a pitched ball (hand-eye coordination) while also demonstrating correct timing of swinging the bat, will hopefully result in good contact between bat and ball.

For right-handed batters: the left hand will be gripping the bat near the knob, with the right hand immediately above (stacked on top) the left hand.

For left-handed batters: the right hand will be gripping the bat near the knob, with the left hand immediately above (stacked on top) the right hand.

Before proper grip, stance, and swing can be achieved, it's important to know some basic bat facts. As a coach, you need to make sure that your athletes are using bats that are the appropriate size and weight for their ability.

#### Bat Types:

- **Barrel Bat**
- **Bottle Bat**

A Barrel bat is the shape of a traditional baseball bat, while the Bottle bat is the more traditional softball bat. Both types are used in the game of softball, but beginners usually do better with the Bottle bat because it has a larger hitting area.



#### Bat parts:

- **Knob** – The knob is designed to keep the athlete's hand from slipping off the end of the bat
- **Handle** – This is the area where the athlete grips the bat
- **Barrel** – This is the "fat" part of the bat. This is the part of the bat designed for hitting the ball.
- **Sweet spot** – This is the area on the barrel that is the ideal part for hitting the ball. It is usually a few inches from the end of the bat
- **End** – This is the end of the barrel. It is not designed for hitting the ball, sometimes if a batter swings too early, they may contact the ball with the end of the bat.

#### Grip and Stance

##### Grip

- Grip the bat just above the knob, wrapping fingers and thumbs around the handle.
- Right-handed batter-grip the bat with right hand above the left hand (hands touching)
- Left-handed batter-grip the bat with left hand above the right hand (hands touching)
- Line up knuckles, adjust slightly for a comfortable grip
- Hands and wrists are relaxed in stance; the grip will tighten slightly as the swing starts



#### Stance

- Batter's Box- identify the batter's box to your athletes on both sides of home plate.
- Right-handed batter will line up in the Batter's Box on the left side of home plate
- Left-handed batter will line up in the Batter's Box on the right side of home plate
- Stand in batter's box with feet pointing at the plate with feet *about* shoulder-width apart
- Initial position – stand even with the center of home plate
- To make sure you are proper distance away from the plate, reach out with bat and tap the outside corner of the plate with holding only with the bottom hand on the bat
- Bend knees slightly, with knees inside of feet
- Slight bend at waist. Hips and shoulders face the plate.
- Proper stance will allow the hitter to have a two-eyed look at the pitcher
- Hold bat upright and positioned at the back shoulder, away from the body with the hands chest high
- Keep rear elbow away from the body
- Note: Proper stance will vary slightly from athlete to athlete. Some may prefer a little wider stance, or some may like to hold the bat a little higher or a little lower. Allow for personal adjustments
- Weight should be on the inside balls of feet, and centered in the stance



**Batting/Hitting Stance**

**Skill Progression – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting stance**

<b>Your Athlete Can</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>
Hold the bat in the base of your fingers and not in your palm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The bat should be held in a relaxed position in an area near the back shoulder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The batter’s elbows should be relaxed and down. If a batter’s elbows are up it will cause the hitter to have a slow and upper cut swing thus making it almost impossible to hit the ball.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Both feet should be in the batter’s box. The feet should be comfortably spread apart with good body balance. The feet should be pointed toward home plate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The knees should be slightly bent and the player’s weight should be on the balls of both feet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The shoulders should be level and parallel to home plate and the head should be facing the pitcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The batter’s elbows should be relaxed and pointing downward.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The bat should be held in a relaxed and tension free position, near the back shoulder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The wrists should be cocked.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Totals</b>			

**Teaching Points – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting stance**

1. The batter does not have to “line up the knuckles” when gripping the bat, but if he/she decides to do this; the knuckles that should be lined up are the knocking knuckles (the knuckles that a player would use to knock on a door). Lining up the knuckles is a personal preference and should not be insisted on by the coach.
2. The strength to which the athlete grips the bat should not be any tighter than a comfortable handshake.
3. Make sure the batter is not using too heavy or too long of a bat. To check this, have your batter swing the bat first with his/her top hand keeping the elbow at 90 degrees against his/her body. Then check the bottom hand, again keeping the elbow close to the body. If he/she can’t keep the bat level when swinging one handed like this then the bat is too heavy.
4. To ensure good plate coverage with the swing, have the player reach across the plate with their bat. There should be at least two inches of the bat extended over the plate.
5. If a player’s elbows are up it will cause the hitter to have a slow and upper cut swing thus making it almost impossible to hit the ball.



**Grip**



**Stance**



**Faults & Fixes Chart – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting stance**

<b>Error</b>	<b>Correction</b>	<b>Drill Reference</b>
Athlete stands on home plate.	Draw line in dirt in front of plate and have athlete place their toes on the line	No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic
Athlete has hands in the wrong position on the bat.	Switch the top hand to the bottom, and the bottom hand to the top	No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic
Athlete has the bat in the wrong position.	Demonstrate correct bat position. Physically move the athlete's bat into the proper position	No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic
Athlete's feet are in the wrong position.	Draw a reference point in the dirt to help with proper foot placement Physically adjust athlete's feet to the desired position	No Drill References just demonstration of proper form and athlete can mimic



### **Batting/Hitting Swing**

Assume proper batting stance

#### **Loading or Triggering Phase – slight movement away from the pitcher as batter prepares for pitch**

- Slight weight shift to inside of back leg (knee inside of feet)
- Hand movement slow and continuous (on time with the pitcher)
- No twisting of upper body

#### **Stride – movement toward the pitcher to establish a strong hitting position**

- Small step toward pitcher with front foot

#### **Swing**

- Rotate hips and shoulders in same direction
- Lead the swing with the forward elbow
- As lead elbow passes the body, hands are leading the bat
- End of the bat arcs down and around to a point where the bat is parallel to the ground, directly over the plate, pointing across the plate
- Finish the swing by rolling hands and following through with the bat.
- Focus eyes on point of contact
- As back foot pivots, toes stay on ground and heel finishes up

**Trigger**



**Point of Contact**



**Finish**





**Skill Progression – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting swing**

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Assume proper Batting/ Hitting stance and grip	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To begin swing, start with weight evenly placed on both feet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The initial movements in hitting are the gather or coil of the hands in a slight backward motion (staying in-line with the starting point of the hands) and a small stride step toward the pitcher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The backside hip starts to rotate as the hands come forward.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As the bat comes through the hitting zone the backside hip starts to rotate. As this rotation starts, the rear heel must leave the ground. The heel leaving the ground is called a pivot or turn. This back foot pivot has to happen in order for the rear hip to finish its turn and give the player maximum power in the swing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When the swing is completed, the player’s belly button should be facing in the direction of where the ball would be hit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The hitter’s chin goes from the front shoulder to the rear shoulder during the swing by the movement of the arms and shoulders and not by rotating the head.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The player should swing through the hitting zone and finish high. The bat should finish across near the hitter’s back shoulder – this is called the follow-through.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Totals</b>			

**Teaching Points – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting swing**

1. The hands are kept relaxed and should bring the bat into the hitting area in the fastest and most direct route. This will happen by the hitter pulling the bat across his/her chest with his/her bottom hand and the top hand driving the bat forward. The handle of the bat should stay out of the strike zone.
2. Demonstrate the proper swing.
3. Suggest the athlete use a count of four to keep a rhythm to the swing: one, step; two, lead with elbow; three, extend arms and roll hands at point of contact; four, swing all the way through. Following swing, batter should not be off balance.
4. Have athlete practice swing all the way through.
5. Have athlete practice swing in front of a mirror, without the bat.
6. For training purposes you may have your athlete swing a legal weighted training softball bat to strengthen arm, shoulder and torso muscles.





**Faults & Fixes Chart – Demonstrate the proper batting/hitting swing**

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Athlete does not maintain proper grip on the bat.	Make sure athlete is maintaining a grip equal to a handshake	Hitting off a Tee Drill
Involuntary release of bat on swing.	Have athlete grip the bat tighter	Hitting off a Tee Drill
Athlete loses balance during swing.	Have athlete distribute weight evenly in stance with weight more on the balls of the feet	Hitting off a Tee Drill
Athlete does not follow through with swing properly.	Have athlete practice swinging without the ball, encouraging a complete follow through	Hitting off a Tee Drill





**Hit a softball off a batting/hitting tee**

**Skill Progression – Hit a softball off a batting/hitting tee**

<b>Your Athlete Can</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>
Assume proper batting/ hitting stance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Perform the proper batting/ hitting swing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hit the ball from the tee into the playing area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep eyes focused on point of contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch the bat strike the ball	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bat is somewhat level to the ground at point of contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Totals</b>			

**Teaching Points – Hit a softball off a batting/hitting tee**

1. Start athlete with a bat which he/she can swing easily. Let the athlete swing at the tee which has no ball on it in order to figure out exactly where his/her swing should be.
2. Ask athlete to hit the ball using a controlled swing. Emphasize watching the bat hit the ball.
3. Gradually let the athlete progress to a bat size which will be always right for him/her.
4. Instruct the athlete to drop the bat after batting/ hitting the ball.
5. Discuss the possibilities for injury if the bat is thrown instead of dropped.





# Special Olympics Softball Coaching Guide

## Teaching Softball Skills



### Faults & Fixes Chart – Hit a softball off a batting/ hitting tee

Error	Correction	Drill Reference
Bat hits the tee below the ball.	Keep your eye on the ball. Lower tee if necessary	Hitting off a Tee Drill with Marked Softballs for striking reference
Bat hits the air above the ball.	Keep your eye on the ball. Raise tee if necessary	Hitting off a Tee Drill with Marked Softballs for striking reference



## Hit a pitched ball

### Skill Progression – Hit a pitched ball

Your Athlete Can	Never	Sometimes	Often
Assume correct batting/ hitting stance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Focus eyes on pitcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch the ball, even before it leaves the pitcher’s hand, all the way to the plate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
As ball approaches the plate, decide to hit it or let it pass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To hit the ball, perform batting/ hitting swing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch the ball hit the bat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact with the ball is made near the front of the plate, unless it’s an outside pitch and then the ball is contacted in line with the player’s back hip.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swing through the ball with the ‘follow through’ motion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Totals**

### Teaching Points – Hit a pitched ball

1. Begin practice of making contact by using a light bat and a large ball. Gradually change size of equipment as athlete progresses.
2. Emphasize the importance of making contact.
3. The player’s eyes should never leave the ball. He/she should track the ball from the pitcher to the bat and try and see the ball at contact.
4. Conduct Batting/ Hitting practice.
5. Instruct the athlete to swing through the ball, with smooth, even swing.
6. A good method for teaching an athlete to swing through the ball is to have the athlete swing at a pitched ball with a string less tennis racquet. The point is to make the ball pass cleanly through the racquet.



**Special Olympics Softball Coaching Guide**  
**Teaching Softball Skills**



**Faults & Fixes Chart – Hit a pitched ball**

<b>Error</b>	<b>Correction</b>	<b>Drill Reference</b>
Athlete misses the ball, too high.	Tracking the ball.	Soft Toss or Pitched Ball with Marked Softballs for striking reference
Athlete misses the ball, too low.	Tracking the ball.	Soft Toss or Pitched Ball with Marked Softballs for striking reference
Athlete does not time the ball correctly. (early or late swing)	Work on timing. Use soft rag balls and toss to athlete from a close distance. Have them tap the ball with the bat, reinforcing hand-eye coordination	Soft Toss or Pitched Ball with Marked Softballs for striking reference



**Learn the Batting/Hitting order**

**Skill Progression – Learn the Batting/Hitting order**

<b>Your Athlete Can</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>
Read line-up card	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognize position in Batting/ Hitting order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognize teammates' position in Batting/ Hitting order	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognize who is the Extra Player (EP) in the line-up is	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn rules for batter substitution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Totals</b>			

**Teaching Points – Learn the Batting/Hitting order**

1. Demonstrate filling out the line-up card.
2. Discuss the purpose for putting a player in a particular spot in the Batting/ Hitting order.

**Faults & Fixes Chart – Learn the Batting/Hitting order**

<b>Error</b>	<b>Correction</b>	<b>Drill Reference</b>
Athletes bats out of order	Coach must direct on-deck batters into the on-deck position in order to keep athlete batting/ hitting order.	No Drill References just demonstration of proper action and athlete can mimic