

# Hitting Part 4: The Stride

## Skills: The Hitter's Stride

*Although strides vary (including the “no-stride”), the “Pick-Up-&-Set-Back-Down-In-The-Same-Spot” stride is a great one to master.*



- Begin with the pre-load stance that has your front foot in the spot where you want it to land with your stride;
- Pick up front leg with preferred knee-high lift (*slight to exaggerated*);
- Leg lift begins during load;
- During leg lift, slight inward turn (*or coil*) with front-side toes, knee, hip & shoulder (*like showing front leg's back pocket to pitcher*)
- Keep weight, hands and head back, while slowly and gently (*with control & timing*), setting down front foot in same spot where it started (*like stepping on thin ice*);
  - Front foot “walks away” from hands
  - Stride feels more like a “reach” than a “step”
- While landing softly, front leg is firm to stop forward momentum (*acting like a brake*);
- Front foot lands pointing toward plate (*NOT toward pitcher*) to keep front-side closed and hips coiled;
- Recommended:* Land on front big toe with heel off ground at 45° angle, rather than flat-footed:
  - Flexible bend at big toe, ankle, knee & hip joints (*like shock absorbers*) allows for softer landing;
- Push off big toe to keep weight loaded back to allow hands & hips to “fire” on swing;
- Should feel resistance between legs, providing the leverage needed to:
  - Throw hands aggressively during swing;
  - Explode with a powerful back hip, knee & foot rotation;
  - End up with back foot heel over toes, and 2 knees & a belly button facing pitcher.

**Drills: The Hitter's Stride** (*These drills help develop both the load & stride together*)

### Drill #1 – The High-Knee-Lift Tee Drill:

Get into your best pre-load stance, using a hitting tee. Set up tee to drive balls through the middle (*into a catch net, batting cage or on a field*). Take front leg and lift it high (*thigh parallel to ground; knee across from belly button; toes pointing toward ground*). This position causes your front-side toes, knee, hip and shoulder to turn inward or coil during the load. Hold this pose for 2 seconds, keeping steady balance (*like a pitcher's balance point drill*). Keep your weight, hands and head back, while slowly and gently setting down front foot in same spot where it started, using the mechanics of the stride as mentioned above in the “Skills” section. When the foot lands, you should be in the proper “launch” position. Complete the swing and follow-through with proper swing mechanics. To develop timing & rhythm, a coach, partner or yourself can say the following before each swing: “Stance; Up; 1000 & 1; 1000 & 2; Land; Fire Hands.” This tee drill helps develop a controlled load; soft stride-foot landing; quick hands; and explosive hips.

### Drill #2 – The Toe-Touch Tee Drill:

Begin this drill in same starting position as the “High-Knee-Lift” drill. Instead of lifting up front leg, take front foot and move it all the way back to your back foot, touching the ground with your toes. As you go back, turn (*coil*) front-side toes, knee, hip and shoulder slightly inward. As soon as you touch the ground, keep your weight, hands and head back and “reach” slowly & gently back to the same spot where your front foot started, using the mechanics of the stride as mentioned above in the “Skills” section. When the foot lands, you should be in the proper “launch” position. Shortly after landing your front foot, complete the swing and follow-through with proper swing mechanics, driving the ball up the middle. To develop timing & rhythm, a coach, partner or yourself can say the following drill commands (*first word means “go back & touch toes on ground near back foot”; second word means “step or reach front foot back to original starting position and swing”*): Load, Launch / Load, Explode / Sway, Swing / Sway, Spin / Back, Attack. This drill also helps develop a smooth load, proper stride, and hips & hands that “fire” through the ball during the swing.

### Drill #3 – The Lift, Load & Land Drill: {Part 3 of a 4-part drill called The Lift, Load, Land & Launch Drill}

Perform both “the lift” and “the load” parts of this drill as explained in the previous “Hitting Part 3: Load To Launch” lesson. Simply, add your preferred knee-high leg lift (*slight to exaggerated*) during the load. Then, “land” your front foot slowly and gently in the same spot where it started, using the mechanics of the stride as mentioned above in the “Skills” section. Pause for two seconds to “feel” your launch position (*which now includes the landed stride foot*). Then slowly reverse everything back to where you started in the pre-load position. Continue to do this several times to develop a controlled, consistent, and natural load movement with your stride.

## Life Lessons: Our Life Stride

In baseball, the proper hitting stride takes the front foot and firmly places it on the ground, enabling the hitter to stay back and hit the ball correctly & safely to all parts of the field. A consistent stride step is essential in keeping a hitter on the right path to a productive swing. However, if the stride veers to the left or right and does not stay on a straight path, the hitter can get into all kinds of trouble with his swing. Similarly, our stride or steps **in life** are extremely important for consistent, right living. Read **Proverbs 4:26 & 27** and evaluate your life stride: “Mark out a straight path for your feet; then stick to the path and stay safe. Don't get sidetracked (to the left or right); keep your feet from following evil.” NLT