

Hitting Part 5: Head & Eyes



Skills: The Hitter's Head & Eyes

Steady Head & Level Eyes. To Hit The Ball, You Gotta See The Ball.

- Head in middle of body, somewhat centered between legs during pre-load stance;
- Head moves to inside back thigh or slightly over the knee during the load (*DO NOT move your head outside of back knee*);
- Chin remains on or just above front shoulder throughout the load:
 - Back shoulder rotates to chin during the swing;
 - Ike (*front shoulder*) To Mike (*back shoulder*)
- Head may turn slightly during follow-through due to the force of the swing (*DO NOT pull or jerk head out during swing*);
- Eyes remain level throughout swing to see ball clearly with both eyes (*DO NOT lower back ear down toward ground*);
- Keep head back with eyes tracking ball into hitting zone when firing hands & hips during swing (*see bat hit the ball, looking down barrel of bat at contact*);
- Head over inside part of back leg at contact.

Key Phrases

- Quiet Head, Quick Hands
- Steady Head, Level Eyes
- See The Ball ... Hit The Ball
- See The Bat Hit The Ball
- Ike To Mike
- Eyes Down Barrel At Contact

Drills: The Hitter's Head & Eyes

Drill #1 – Golf Ball Tracking Drill:

Stand at a plate (*if available*) or just start in your loaded position after the stride (*the launch position*) and “freeze”. Place front arm across chest with hand on inside of back shoulder; Hold back hand in air as if bat was in hand. From close distance in front of hitter, coach or player throws plastic golf balls (*like a dart*) at various locations in the strike zone. Batter throws “karate chop” part of hand at ball (*as if throwing knob of bat to ball*) and catches it, watching the ball all the way into hand with level eyes and a steady head. After catching the ball, drop it and assume the original starting position of the drill. Repeat until out of golf balls. *[Make sure hitter is catching the balls deeper over the plate as they are thrown further outside and away from the body. For example, the outside corner pitch should be caught across from the belly button to work on letting the ball travel deeper and driving the ball to the opposite field.]*

Drill # 2 – Steady Head Swings:

From a batting tee, visualize a pitch from an imaginary pitcher, and then take a proper swing, keeping your eyes in the hitting zone (*top of the tee*), AFTER the ball leaves the tee or hitting zone. The head may turn slightly & naturally from the force of the swing, but focus on keeping the head steady and the eyes level as you are going to the ball with the bat. Do not tilt or jerk head during swing. Make sure chin starts on front shoulder and ends on back shoulder. See the ball; hit the ball! Decide number of swings based on hitting stations and batting practice plan. This drill can be done with soft toss or short-screen BP, as well.

Drill #3 – Bullpen Tracking Drill

While a pitcher is throwing in the bullpen or at a pitching station, a hitter (*with a helmet on*) stands in the batter's box and tracks pitches from the release point ALL THE WAY into to the catcher's mitt. When the ball hits the mitt, hitter calls out pitch (*fastball, curveball, change-up, etc.*); Catcher lets hitter know if he was correct. In this drill, the hitter goes from pre-load stance, to load, to stride, to launch position, working on staying back & tracking the ball, and then “*TAKING*” on all pitches. **DO NOT SWING ON THIS DRILL!** Besides assisting the hitter with developing a steady head and a “good eye”, this drill helps the hitter to consistently get into a position to “*put a good swing on the ball*” on every pitch. If a hitter trains this way, assuming every pitch will be a strike, and being ready to swing at every pitch, it will be easier for him to NOT SWING (*or “take a pitch”*) when they are “balls”.

Life Lessons: Focus Your Eyes On The Right Target

Coaches often yell out to hitters, “*keep your eye on the ball*”, especially when the batter's head keeps “*pulling off the ball*”. So, it's pretty obvious **in baseball**, both the head and the eyes need to stay in a steady, straight & ready, focused position to be able to hit the ball well. In order to be a good hitter, your eyes need to be fixed on the target – the ball. When it comes to **our life as Christians**, the Bible has much to say about our eyes. They are the windows into our mind. If we want our minds to focus on the things that God would have us focus on, then we must train our eyes to focus on the right target – heavenly & godly things. **Colossians 3:1-3** says: “*Since you have been raised to new life in Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits at God's right hand in the place of honor and power. Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not only think about things down here on earth. For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.*” NLT