

Clinic Plan: Batting 101

Time: 1.5 hrs

Participants: up to 20

Equipment list:

- 10 cones
- 2 buckets of balls
- As many bats as available
- Dowels (provided)
- 2 tees
- Mixed sport balls (provided)
- Bases (pegged preferred if outside)

Goals

- (Re)introduce softball movements;
- Practice swinging for consistency;
- Gain confidence making contact with stationary and moving balls;
- Apply baserunning fundamentals.

Warm-Up (15 minutes):

1. 2 minutes of very slow jogging, one lap of field or to a destination and back
2. 5-8 minutes of dynamic stretches, including:
 - Shoulder and arm: arm circles, 90 degree shoulder rotations (see pic 1)
 - Legs: walking leg swings (“Frankensteins”), hip openers/closers, walking on toes, walking on heels
 - Lunges with upright twists (see pic 2), trunk rotations while reaching to the ground (see pic 3)
3. 5-8 minutes of footwork focusing on common movements.
 - **Shuffle-shuffle-go:** line up on the outfield foul line with players’ right side toward the field of play, as though they are a runner at first base.
 - Coach gives verbal cues of “pitch” and “go” to practice taking a base on a ball past the catcher.
 - On “pitch”, runners take big shuffles to their right
 - On “go”, runners turn and run as though stealing second base
 - **First to third:** line up on the outfield foul line with players’ right side toward the field of play.
 - Coach gives verbal cues of “pitch” and “hit” to practice rounding bases after a base hit.
 - Round second base in stride (looking at third base coach) and stop at third.

Teaching points:

- Shuffling keeps the eyes toward the play and lets you see where the ball is - you know best if you can go or not
- Maintain momentum rather than stopping once completing the initial leadoff
- Pivoting from moving laterally to forward is very common in softball. The more practice we have at changing directions, the easier it will be to prevent our feet from getting tangled.
- Look up for the third base coach on the way to second base for instructions to stop or continue.
- We run “through” first base but must stay connected to the base when we stop at second or third.

----- Water break -----

As a group, practice:

Setting up a relaxed, balanced stance

- feet slightly wider than shoulders, slight knee bend
- orientation with home plate

Light grip

- knocking knuckles aligned, bat held comfortably (not squeezed tightly).

Bat starts resting on the back shoulder

- moves into the hitting position during the pitcher’s windup.

Eyes level and focused on the pitcher or tee

- eyes to contact

Drill: Players step in (use whatever available materials for “plates”), set their stance, and check grip. Coaches give individual feedback. Then, they take 10 slow-motion dry swings to practice the movement.

Split group in half – send one half to the tee stations and the other half to the live ball, hand-eye stations. Participants will spend 30 minutes on each side and then switch for another 30 minutes.

Tee Stations (30 minutes):

- Set up in the infield

1. Single tee with game balls (into fence or net)

- a. Quality over quantity! Slow and intentional is the goal.
- b. Aim to watch the bat hitting the ball every time.
- c. Aim to keep your balance as best as possible - you know you're in control when you're not falling away from the plate after you swing.
- d. Follow through with the bat to maintain its momentum. Let it wrap around your body as much as is comfortable.
- e. Can progress by moving tee inside/outside, up/down

2. Dry swings with basketball between elbows

Goal: Feel the way the upper body moves more as a unit through the first half, then the momentum allows arms to “explode” through contact.

- a. Hold a small basketball between your bat and shoulder while swinging to help maintain tension until the upper body rotates and arms fire toward the ball.
- b. The biggest mistake in a swing is “disconnecting” the arms from the body during the swing, losing power and ability to control the bat.
- c. Expect the basketball to fall during the back half of the swing.

3. Top hand/bottom hand (with mini bat and wiffles)

Goal: Understand the role of both hands when swinging the bat, keep eyes at contact point, maintain compact swing

- a. Hold a mini bat in the bottom hand and set up in a normal batting stance
- b. Swing to hit the ball off the tee and follow through as normal
- c. Repeat with top hand, ~5 swings per side

Teaching points:

- Stay compact and direct to the ball during the swing (missing is normal)
- Bat speed is not the same as swing quality; slowing down and meeting the ball is always a great option

Live Ball Stations (30 minutes):

- Set up in the outfield

1. Heavy ball front toss (into field)

Goal: Power through the ball and finish the swing

- a. Light front toss with mixed balls
- b. Swing through the ball, feeling the follow-through needed to come all the way around
- c. Finishing the swing with intention creates good contact off the bat

2. Two-hand tennis ball toss (in pairs or threes)

Goal: Practice hand-eye coordination with both hands

- a. Partner 1 stands in a batting-like stance, not holding a bat
- b. Partner 2 stands ~10 feet away and tosses 2 tennis balls into the strike zone area
- c. Partner 1 sends their lower body like they would while swinging and attempts to catch both balls.
- d. Repeat, switching partners

3. Front toss with wiffle balls (into net or field)

Goal: Take game-like swings with a moving target

- a. Leader tosses a wiffle ball (flat or only slightly arcing) over the plate
- b. Player swings, looking at the point of contact, and following through
- c. 7ish swings per player

Teaching points:

- Eyes to contact point
- Send belly button toward the pitcher (“lighthouse”) to fire hips
- Maintain strong connection between arms and torso while hips fire, then allow arms to explode through the ball
- Let the ball travel to you

Wrap-Up (5 minutes):

1. Q&A
2. Remind group that practice plans and teaching points will be available on the Mabel website for them to use

Picture examples

1.

Shoulder Rotations

With arms out to side and elbows bent to 90 degrees, slowly rotate the hands down then back up while maintaining shoulder position



2.

Lunges with Rotation

Stand up tall with hands straight above head. Lunge forward with right leg. Bend both knees and keep torso in a vertical line. While you are in the down position, rotate your torso towards your right side. Pause then rotate back and stand up tall. Lunge forward with left foot and rotate to the left side. Continue for 20 yards. Now, take a step backwards with left foot and rotate torso to the right. Continue alternating backward lunges until you reach the starting point.



3.

"World's Greatest Stretch"

Step forward into an exaggerated lunge. Place palms on the ground on the inside of the foot in front of you. Drop the hips toward the ground. Rotate the torso toward the side you stepped with and send the same sided arm toward the sky, following it with your eyes. Return the hand to the ground and walk both hands backward, shifting weight toward the back foot and letting the hips rise. Stand up and switch sides.

