

# ANATOMY OF A HITTER

The introduction and basic knowledge  
to build your foundation and become  
the best hitter possible!

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HITTING IS SIMPLE

## RIGHT?

Hitting is one of the hardest athletic moves to master, in any sport! In terms of physics, we are hitting a round object with another round object. Because there is a lack of surface area, it should be down right impossible to accomplish, right?

Then why are guys making a living if this is suppose to be near impossible? Is it because of luck? Were they born with a gift? Or did they just work at it throughout their life? I'm starting to think that the third one might be the better answer \*cough cough\*. When you look at how advanced we are in the tech industry, it's becoming easier to understanding the anatomy of us as hitters. But, looking at the best hitters that came before us, I see there are many similarities they possess that today's hitters still display. So I ask you this, is hitting complex or simple?

We hear about the new terms like launch angle and now we focus more on the degree at which the ball comes off the bat. Exit velocity and barrel speed become intertwined and hitters get confused about what that means. We are now hearing about time to impact, momentum impact, etc. Now, many young hitters' heads start to spin because they focus more on a data driven swing rather than how a swing feels.

To me, if guys like Williams, Ruth, Gehrig, Aaron, Robinson were able to be successful without this technology, hitting shouldn't be too complex.

Please note that I too use some numbers as a gauge to how my hitters develop, but I don't base my instruction solely on the numbers themselves. Good coaches and instructors know when to use data in combination with the naked eye as well as the knowledge they possess to help hitters improve their craft!

When you look at the hitter, you will notice many differences from start to finish. Then you will see an abundance of similarities that every hitter possesses, or at least close to. That's what the book will show you; more about the similarities, while discussing some of the differences that hitters go through.

This book is designed to get you into the right mode about how your body and swing should operate together in order to maximize your potential and help reach that next level, in simple terms! One thing I tell hitters is that, "hitting is so complex, it's simple!" Almost every single hitter from youth to collegiate look at me with crazy eyes like something ain't right with me. You almost have to be a little off when you're a coach or an instructor. Creativity and uniqueness can come out at anytime.

# STARTING POSITION

*Getting your mind and body in the right stance,  
ready to hit!*

When you look at every hitter from youth ball all the way up to professional, you'll notice there is something different about them. Some might have the same stance, but their feet may be in a different spot in the box, or their knees might bend a little more. Other hitters might have their hands back or higher than others. No matter what, hitters need to understand this: 'Your stance is who YOU are!'

Just because your arms are starting in the load position already, or you start with your feet wider apart, which leaves little room for a stride. This does NOT mean your swing is trash or you won't be able to hit the ball. It's the movements after that will make or break your swing! The stance you possess in the box is something that makes you who you are, but also makes you feel comfortable in the box. Sure, you hear about guys having a different stance than the past season, that's also because they felt a change was needed to help clear their mind. Not to mention they worked on it over the off-season in order for it to feel natural, that's the key.

Getting into your stance should feel natural, but in a position to allow BOTH of your eyes to stay relaxed on the pitcher. As well as allowing your hips and shoulders to get and stay in a position that will give you athleticism and power to generate when striking the ball. Make sure you go through the checklist that allows you to feel confident and develop a natural feel when you step in the box and ready to battle!

Some of the similarities in the stance itself should come from the following areas:

**Eyes:** Are both eyes on the pitcher and in a relaxed position? If so, great! If not, then make a change with the body so you're not having to strain the eyes or the head/neck area by overturning to look.

**Shoulders:** Are the shoulders in line? Open? Closed? Not to mention, how do the shoulders themselves look? Are they level, tilted downhill towards your front foot, or tilted towards your back foot? The general rule I feel hitters need to have is they shouldn't have their shoulders open past the front hip. Hips and Shoulders should be in the same general relationship when you're in your stance. If they start inside the hips or a smidge outside the hips, that's ok, but try not to have an open chest at the pitcher in your stance. With the tilt, being level is always a gauge, but I like hitters to stay away from tilting the shoulder towards their back foot. As you'll learn later, the way our shoulders and hands move can dictate the outcome. Our hands could create more drop and lag of the barrel if the shoulder start in a tilted position towards the back foot.

**Legs:** This part is pretty tricky in the way we have our stance. Obviously, this is where we have very different patterns in the way we stand in the box. Some hitters start in an open stance while others start in line or even closed in. You are trying to feel comfortable, but a couple things need to take place. 1) Knees need to be bent or softened to where they're inside of the feet.



The legs will give hitters the upmost athletic position and help them get into a strong position to crush the ball, because after all, that's our objective! 2) Feet need to be at least shoulder width apart and pointing straight ahead. When they are shoulder width or wider, as well as staying straight ahead, this helps keep our weight centered inside of the feet. Being athletic and mobile is very important to our hitters. If the knees get outside the feet, because the feet are pointing away, that could cause too much weight on a side leading to poor balance, which could lead to weaker, slower swings.

So, now that we've discussed certain parts of the stance or "starting point", go ahead and try out and create your own hitter checklist to go through while you practice with your team. Shoot, even the greatest hitters are made outside of practice. Go home and check out your stance, see how you feel and determine if there's anything that feels off. Remember, this is who YOU are and how you feel before you battle the person on mound or circle!

# LOAD POSITION

Gotta go back to go forward

Now that you've gotten into a comfortable position and we feel like you're ready to battle, go ahead and swing! Wait, no that's not right.... I feel like there's something that happens before the swing occurs, at least that's what I see EVERY single hitter do when they hit. Have you ever noticed that, too??

Well, this part of the swing is called the loading phase, or the coiling phase (baseball and softball have a LOT of terms for one topic). This is the motion that gets our body, mainly legs, hips, and hands, engaged early in order to crush the ball. But it's important for a couple reasons:

- 1) It helps our body start the swing, by moving and gaining momentum instead of just standing flat footed.
- 2) It helps you gain more power as you start to engage your legs, hips, and upper body into a rotation that can generate a lot of force into your swing.

But most of all.....

- 3) It is such a good timing mechanism that allows you to get "on time" with the pitcher.

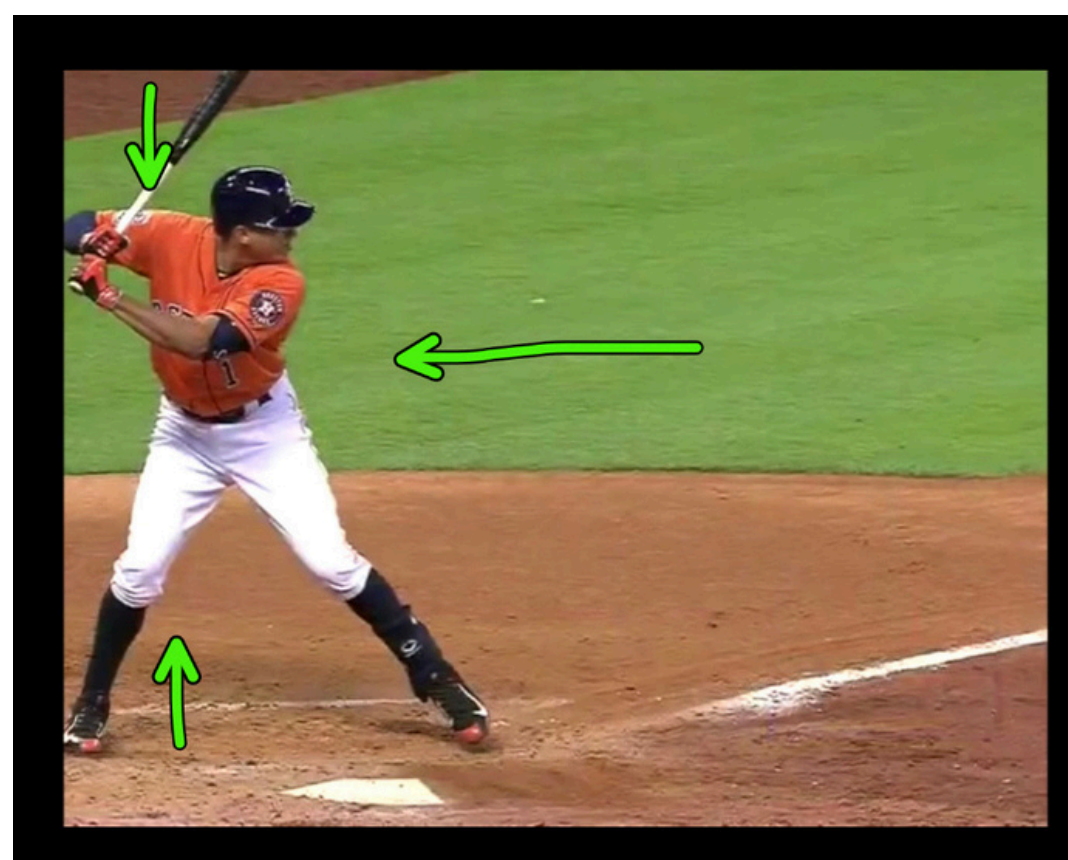
Think about when you watch pole vaulters, high and long jumpers, and even gymnasts when they perform on the vault. If you notice, they get a running start in order to gain momentum and power into their jumps. We all should know the legs are responsible for delivering a lot of our power, but we have to get them activated through some type of motion. Whether it's squatting down to jump or running a

certain distance or speed to reach higher than the world record in high jump. The same goes for hitting, we've got to engage in some type of movement backwards in order to go forward and drive through the ball! So is there a right way or wrong way? Yes and no...

The main way that the word no is involved is if you don't load, at all. Now, there are some points in the loading part that we don't want to exaggerate, but that's a basic point to discuss later on as there's no need to get fixated on it.

So what does the load look like? When you start your stance with weight in middle of your feet (chapter 2) this allows you to "sway" your body from front foot to back foot, and vice versa. This is a way to engage the hips and hands so you're ready to strike. You're in a 50-50 position to start. After that you want to get a small shift into our back foot to where we feel movement going back, but remembering one thing. Do NOT put your back knee, hip, or shoulder OVER the back foot as that can create an unbalanced swing.

As you can see from this picture, the hitter is gathering his body into the load position, but keeping his weight inside the back foot. This allows him to drive forward with momentum to drive through the ball when the front foot touches down and the ball reaches the strike zone.



So, remember this simple sequence to build off of in order to form some type of rhythm with your body.

Start 50/50: Weight in middle of feet

Load 60/40: Body shifted to inside of back foot

Swing 50/50: Weight transfers from back to front for power

As we get into the swinging part, just know the load has to be a movement that you feel comfortable with. Make sure the weight doesn't go past the back foot, the hands don't go past the back foot when separating from the front foot (stride), and stay within your legs with your back shoulder slightly taller than the front shoulder, allowing you to stay coiled before swinging.

This chapter is the most important part and cannot be successful if you don't have the first two chapters down!

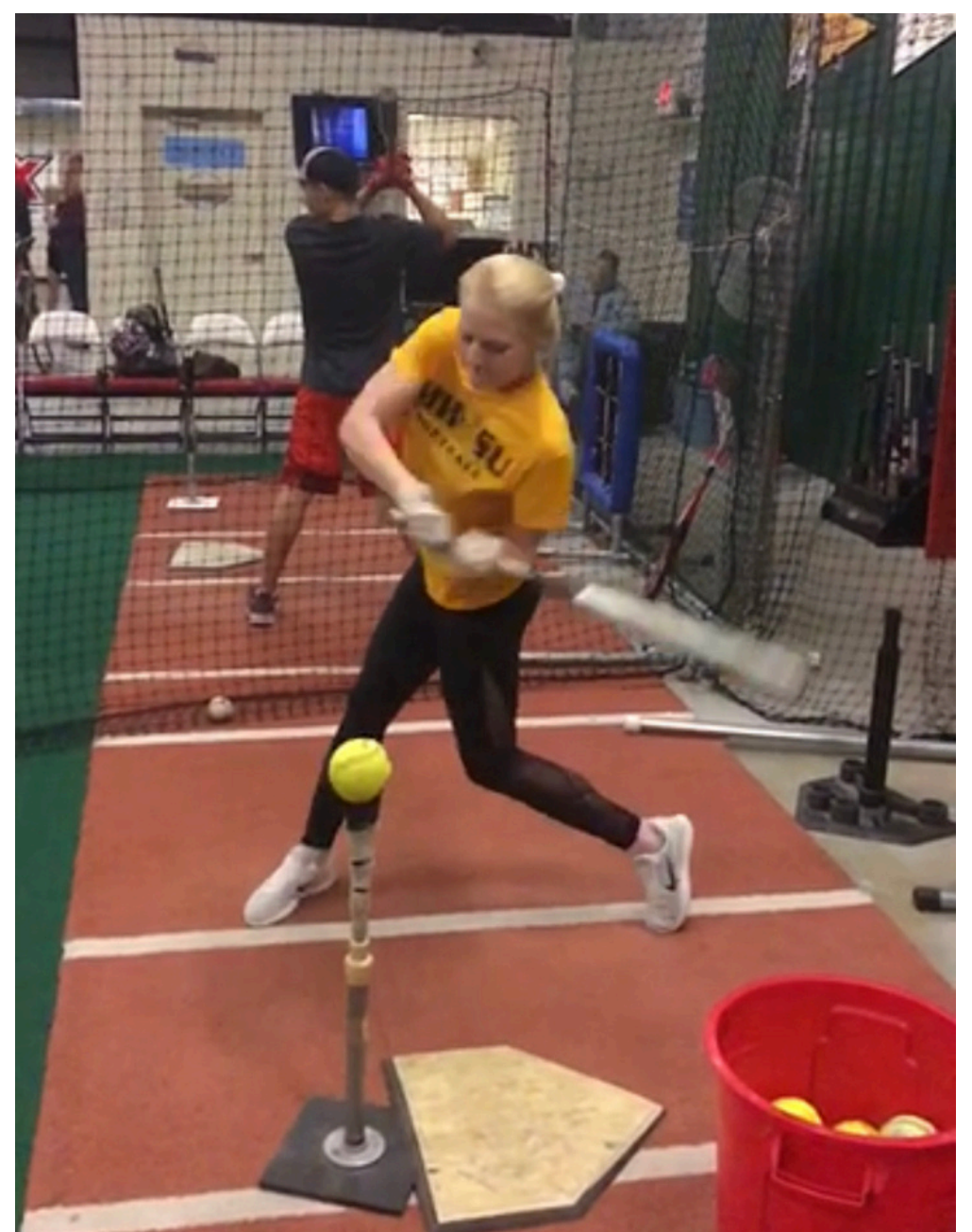
# THE SWING

This is the most saturated part of hitting because it's the one that creates the most arguments. It's where the launch angle comes in, how hard the ball jumps off the barrel, and even the location of contact when the ball meets the bat... But the thing is, there's not a set style that works for every hitter or as other analysts and coaches say "you can't create a cookie cutter hitter." This means that there are multiple ways of reaching to a hitter that can help him/her develop the swing that suits them to be successful at the plate.

First and foremost, hitters have to understand the back side plays a HUGE role in the way we swing a bat. Being connected when we swing can help drive through any pitch, at any location. When I talk about connection, I'm talking the process in which the back elbow and back knee begin to sink and rotate, getting the hips and hands activated to swing the bat with authority.

\*Remember the rule that's been around for the ages, your hips need to start rotating before the hands begin the swing!\*

When the hands are connected, you will see here in this pic that the hands are in line with the back shoulder, back hip, and back knee when rotating. We need to understand that if the hands are behind, it can cause slow, long swings while being in front cause handsy, out in front swings. Both with NO power!



When we get our stride foot down, or we've started our load to begin the swing path, we have to be in a strong, powerful position that makes us confident. Confident that you can hit any pitch, at any location, in any count during your at-bat. Hitting and pitching is every bit of a chess match, except with a bat and ball. We have to react to different moves throughout the at-bat as well as being ready to make the move that wins the match. By doing so, we need to be in a strong and powerful position.

One thing that has to happen is both heels need to be on the ground for a split second before the back knee begins to travel downhill and rotate, followed by the back hip, and back shoulder. Heel to Heel connection is when we get both heels down as we begin the swing rotation, because that's when we are most powerful. Think about it in these terms, if I pick up something heavy and try to throw far with both hands, I have to connect the heels to ground as I drive up and rotate. If I'm on my toes, I lose balance when I try to lift and rotate to throw or swing. Yes, I get when the backside rotates, the back heel comes off the ground. BUT that's at contact and follow through, not when the body INITIALLY rotates.

Now let's talk about the contact position. Really just a couple points that I like my hitters to understand. First and foremost we need to have a palm up/palm down relationship at contact. When your top hand is facing the sky and bottom hand is facing the ground, it allows you to be firm through the ball after contact. When the hands go side to side, it can create the well known "roll over" and the barrel will go out of the hitting zone a lot quicker, losing a lot of length through the ball.



Front view of what contact point is looking like. When you "roll over" the knuckles are actually facing down towards the ground and the barrel is on top of the ball.



Side view of what the palm up/palm down position looks like in a swing action. Notice there's more bat hitting because the hitter is getting the barrel in zone early and staying palm up/palm down allows you to stay through the ball

One thing that can be overlooked at times is the concept of following through. The path can make a difference in how the ball travels. If you can get to a palm up/palm down contact point, you can allow your hands to stay in that relationship for as long as possible before rotating through and over your shoulder. Another part is the back shoulder needs to finish below the chin, or what I like to call "Ike to Mike". This means that we start with the chin on the front shoulder or "Ike" and when we finish our swing, the chin should finish on the back shoulder or "mike".

If we roll over in the swing, not only are we out of the strike zone quicker by pulling out, the hands will finish below the shoulders and the ball will be heading straight for the ground.

Last thing I leave you with is the way we visualize keeping the barrel through the zone. Picture hitting Baseballs/Softballs both before and after contact. For following through, focus on hitting at least 2 to 3 more Baseballs/Softballs after contact as if you're throwing your barrel to centerfield. Please know that pulling the ball isn't a rule breaker, but even though you can keep your barrel through the zone for as long as possible, even if you happen to pull the ball.

CLOSING

# THOUGHTS

This book was made to help you understand that we as hitters are different in many ways, but hitting a baseball has been the same since the creation of the game! The difference is we've created all of these theories and insights that have really enhanced our way of thinking as well as the hitter throughout the decades. So yes, this isn't rocket science and I'm sure you've heard similar verbiage before. But this book was made for you to create a foundation for you to build and add your own style and flavor to your swing.

I hope you've learned a little from this book as there will be a lot more books to come for more in-depth hitting, coaching, pitching, fielding, etc.

Feel free to visit my website at [www.echickcoaching.com](http://www.echickcoaching.com) for more tips, drills, as well as a blog for your reading experience. Doing lessons online is becoming a new set up for me, so if you'd like to set something up, please contact me directly at [ekchickbaseball@gmail.com](mailto:ekchickbaseball@gmail.com) to reserve a spot!

Thank you very much for the support and I wish you nothing but luck in your hitting career!!!

Ehrich