

Basics of Batting

Lesson 2



2: Timing

So you are seeing the ball out of the pitchers hand, it looks like a basketball coming down, halfway down you think to yourself, self I think I should hit this pitch! You start your load, step and swi The ball is already past you, strike!

Timing is a “dance” with the pitcher and this starts in the “On Deck Circle”, not when you get to the plate. Far too often I see hitters watch the first pitch which is a big fat strike (pie) down the middle and then they nod to say, that was a good pitch, should have hit that one! Chances are you wont see it again during that at bat.

The Dance:

#1 While in the “hole” take your warm-up swings and loosen up.

#2 When in the “On Deck Circle” start your timing with the pitcher (Note: Always set up your timing with a fast ball pitch, it is easier to hang back on a breaking ball then trying to speed up to catch a fast ball), to start with, when the pitcher starts his motion, you start your load motion, the pitcher lifts his front leg, you lift your front leg (full load), the pitcher steps towards the plate, you step towards the pitcher, the ball is released, you start your swing.

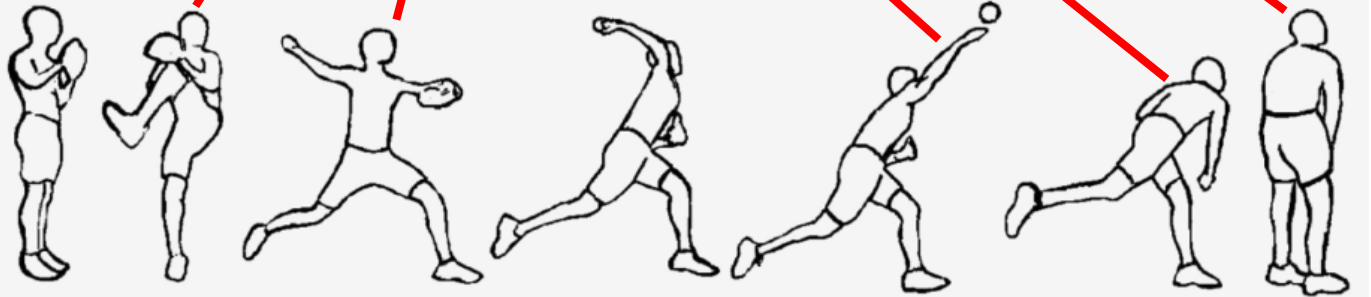
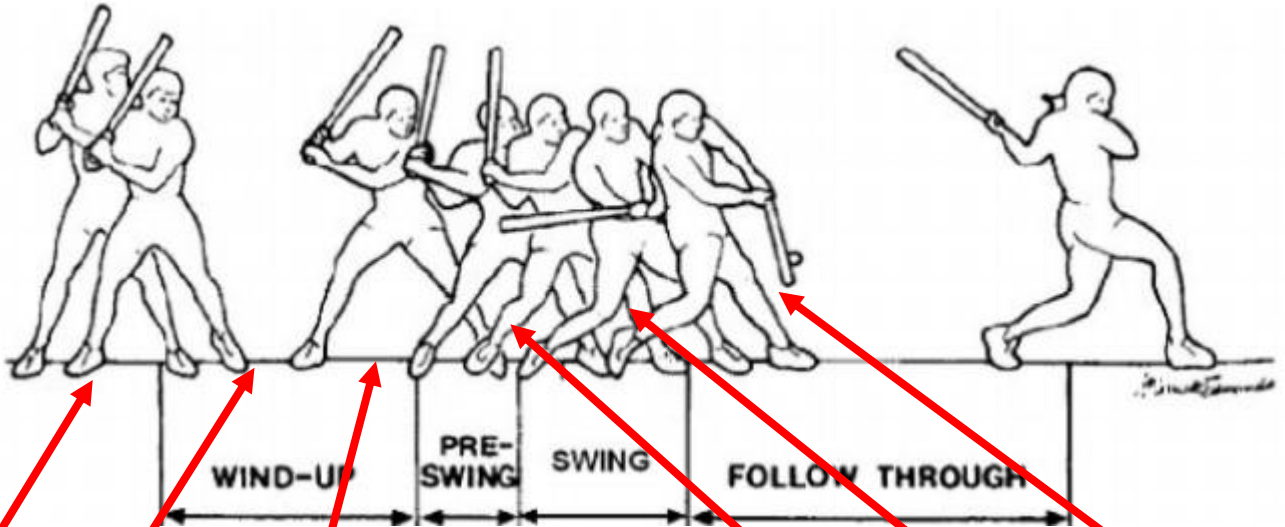
See where you end up, were you really early? Start the motion later, for example when the pitcher is stepping to the plate, you get into a full load, by the time the ball is halfway down you are stepping to the pitcher and starting your swing.

Were you really late (facing a fast pitcher) now you need to start your motion a little before the pitcher.

If you see 2, 3 ,5 pitches while in the “On Deck Circle” when you go up to the batters box your timing is should be good. Setup for a fast ball right down the middle and if it is there, crush it!

The KEY is to keep your tempo and match it to the pitcher, don’t speed up or slow down your swing, adjust your timing.

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The wind-up

Hitter attempts to get first insight on the type of pitch by watching the pitcher's hand as he releases the ball.

75-100 milliseconds

After the pitcher releases his pitch, the ball travels about 9 feet before the batter is able to process the entire image of the pitcher's wind-up and release.

175

Hitter assesses the type of pitch, extracting meaningful information about velocity, spin and trajectory.

225

Decision time—to swing or not to swing? It takes around 150 milliseconds from the start of a swing to the time it makes contact with the ball, but the decision must be made around 25 milliseconds earlier, to allow time for the brain signals to reach the various muscles involved.

350

At this point only exceptional hitters can make small adjustments. The bat is traveling at about three-fourths of its final velocity.

400

The ball crosses the front of home plate.

Experience helps the hitter 'pattern' the type of throw the pitcher is known for to speed up his thought process. Is the pitcher a known fireballer? If yes, the fastball will be at the top of the list when the batter gets his first visual clue from the ball.

Having decided the character of pitch, the hitter selects a swing pattern that was established through countless hours of practice and experience. For this pitch he may choose 'upward swing to send the ball over the fence.'

If the swing is as little as seven milliseconds late, his squarely hit ball will go foul.

Source: 'The Physics of Baseball,' by Robert K. Adair; 2002 edition

Mike Socol/The Wall Street Journal

YOU CAN'T HIT WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE

Remember:
Every pitch is a YES until it is a NO!