

# Hitting: The Outside Pitch

It is said that the most important part of the plate to learn to hit is the outside zone. A large majority of the pitches a hitter sees are on the outside part of the plate or off the plate away. Most breaking balls and change ups are away from the hitter. Every hitter should work hard and get accustomed in looking for the outside pitch!

The contact point for the hitter on an outside pitch is much closer to the catcher, or deeper in the zone, than the other pitches. Contact for the low-and-away pitch is opposite the back knee. The middle-away pitch is contacted opposite the mid-line of our body. The up-and-away zone is met even with our front shoulder. The lower the pitch, the deeper you let it get. The more the pitch is away, the deeper you let it get; more so than based on the pitch's height. If the hitter gets too far out front, the angle of the bat causes the outside pitch to be pulled. Unless the hitter is very strong physically, he ends up pulling many weak ground balls and fly balls to the left side.

Hitting the outside pitch out front means the hitter has used most of his power by the time contact is made. Hitting the ball deeper in the zone enables the hitter to drive the ball toward the opposite field. The bat is angled toward the opposite field when contact is made at the proper point. When contact is made the hands are ahead of the barrel. The low-and-away pitch has the bat angle of approximately a 45-degree angle to the ground. The middle-away pitch has the bat horizontal to the ground. The up and away zone is contacted with the barrel about 15 degrees above the hands.

Most hitters stride about the time the pitcher is releasing the ball. They do this because they have no idea what type or speed the pitch is at that point. When the hitter strides, the weight is starting to transfer from his back foot to the front foot. To compensate for slower pitches (curve ball, change up) there is a pause or separation between the stride and swing. Otherwise, the hitter has completed his swing and here comes the change up! There is a longer pause or separation on pitches that are outside or low, because they are hit deeper in the zone and have to travel farther.

One major key to hitting the outside pitch effectively and to keep from pulling off the pitch is to keep the front side of the body closed. When the front hip, shoulder, and then the head pulls off the ball, chances of hitting it solidly are remote. The hitter either pulls the outside pitch, hits it off the end, or swings and misses.

A good coaching point when teaching hitters is to get them to stride toward the opposite middle infielder with a closed front toe. The right-handed hitter strides toward the second baseman. If the hitter strides with an open front toe, toward the pitcher, or in the bucket, the front side of the body opens up too early. This "closed" method of striding not only helps on pitches away, but also keeps the head on the ball longer. The low pitch and outside pitch are the least watched zones because they are farther from the eyes.

The back hip is the important hip when hitting the outside pitch. The front hip stays closed. Then the hitter really drives the back hip into the outside pitch. Driving the back hip into the ball provides the power to hit the ball hard to the opposite field.

Every swing starts inside out. This means the arms do not extend too early behind the hitter. Getting outside or around the ball makes the hitter pull and/or "roll over" the outside pitch. Staying inside the ball allows the hitter to drive the ball to the opposite field. At the point of contact on the outside pitch the arms are extended.

Your mental approach is to look for the outside pitch first. If you start to look for the inside pitch initially, you open up too early in the front side. Look away first, where you stay closed in the front hip, shoulder and the head/eyes stay on the ball. Then if the ball stays inside you can easily adjust to the pitch and turn on it as it's easier to speed up than slow down. The key is to look outside-in but swing inside-out!

If you have questions or need help with your game, email me or contact Hit & Run Baseball and we will be more than happy to assist you in any of your baseball needs.

Yours in Baseball,

Coach Jackson