

CURVE-BALL HITTING

MASTERY

Wise advice!

The key to hitting a curve is knowing where the ball is heading and being patient to let it get there.

-Rod Carew



WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU CRUSHED THE CURVE?

I hated hitting the curve-ball until I learned these simple secrets!

There are a few approaches to hitting the curve-ball. All serve their own challenges but your decision to incorporate them into your approach will depend on what type of hitter you are as well as the game's situation.

THE BEST APPROACH

For some hitters the best way to hit the curve-ball is to hit the fast-ball. It's important to understand that one aspect of being a great hitter is becoming a very good fast-ball hitter. I don't mean being able to hit **100 mph** with ease but instead-being able to hit an average fast-ball consistently when it's in a location that you can handle. When you get "your pitch", you don't swing and miss, foul it off, or take it for a strike because you weren't being aggressive enough when you get that fast-ball.



You're selectively aggressive to the MAX! When I was playing division one baseball, my weekday game schedule was very tough. I would find myself playing the **Florida Gators** on a tuesday, and the **Miami Hurricanes** by thursday. The general consensus was that their pitching staff was essentially the same as hitting pitching at the Double A level. The average fast-ball was about 90-94 and their secondary pitches were unbelievable. Which is why I never even bothered to hit them.

It was easier for me because I was a smaller guy and they weren't afraid of challenging me with their fast-ball. My job was to balance being selective but not allowing the pitcher to take control of the at-bat simply because their breaking pitches were so advanced.

For me- in this situation, the best way to hit the curve-ball was to never put myself in the situation to face it in the first place. Or if I was forced to, I would take the pitch until I had two strikes.

I was mostly aggressive early in the count. If I got a fast-ball I could handle, I didn't miss it.

Remember, there will be times when you will be forced to hit the curve-ball such as when you have two strikes or when a pitcher is pitching backwards.

READING WRIST ANGLES

Depending on the pitcher, there could be a chance that he may be tipping his pitches just before his release by the angle of his wrists. Some pitchers will show this immediately when taking the pitch out of the glove and rearing back to throw the ball.

Some pitchers will have the **fingers facing the ground**, or having the wrist locked when separating the hands while with others, you may notice the index or pinky finger sticking out during their forward motion.

These are great ways to adjust to breaking pitches and could have a great impact on your overall approach to hitting deeper in the count.

Few things you need to understand. Picking up these queues needs to be functioning on a subconscious level. You can't be worried about wrist angles, the game situation, what the count is, and a dozen mechanical check points all at the same time.

This will take some practice but eventually becoming aware of these queues have to happen without you being completely aware.

RECOGNIZING ARM SLOTS

Similar to wrist angles, picking up different arm slots is another effective way to picking up the pitch when a curve-ball will be thrown. A lot of pitchers that showcase a “slurve”(a mix of a slider and a curve-ball) or a knuckle-curve, will throw this pitch at a three quarter angle. If a player has a more over the top motion this will be less difficult to pick up.

Also similar to the wrist angles, observing arm slots needs to be instinctual as well.

REACTING TO THE ILLUSION

Now this is quite possibly the most effective way to pick up a curve-ball simply because it has everything to do with reading the pitch itself as well as your depth-perception capabilities.

When a curve-ball is thrown, almost every time when you have executed picking the pitch immediately out of the hand, you'll notice that the ball will seem to **POP** out of the pitcher's fingers. This is an illusion that is less dramatic than it sounds.

What's really happening is the pitch is simply on a different course than every other pitch in regards to the plane of fast-balls and off-speed pitches.

What's great about "reacting to the illusion" is that it gives you extra time to recalibrate to the pitch so in certain cases the better the curve-ball the more of a chance you have of making an adjustment as you become better at recognizing the "**popping out**" of the pitch.

FIND THE SLOT!



THE ILLUSION

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HOW'S YOUR DEPTH PERCEPTION?



Discover the illusion!

What's great about "reacting to the illusion" is that it gives you the chance to recalibrate to the pitch so in certain cases, the better the curve-ball, the more of a chance you have of making an adjustment as you become better at recognizing the "popping out" of the pitch.

BEST PRACTICES

There are two effective ways that you can create a platform for the physical application of hitting the curve-ball apart from developing your visual acuity and overall depth perception.

Here they are as followed.

STAYING CLOSED SOFT TOSS

An effective drill for staying back, and attacking the inner half on a curve-ball rhythm is a simple soft-toss drill that mimics this timing.

Have a partner throw you a series of soft-toss in rounds of 10. It's important that the tosser creates a rhythm by pulling the hand down toward the ground before bringing it up to release the ball. Down toward the ground then up to release. This will give you time to perform your pre-swing and mimics the stride of the pitcher.

Randomly have the tosser hesitate just before releasing then releasing a half second later. This off-timing is to induce you to be out in front and force you to stay back. It mimics the timing of the curve-ball.

It's a great drill that you can do with waffle balls as well.



SIMULATION TEE DRILLS

This drill can be done without a partner. All you'll need is a tee, a bucket of balls, a cage, and a little bit of imagination.

The point of this drill is to be able to effectively visualize a curve-ball being released out of a pitcher's hand and breaking into the hitter's zone to the point of contact which is where you have set your tee.

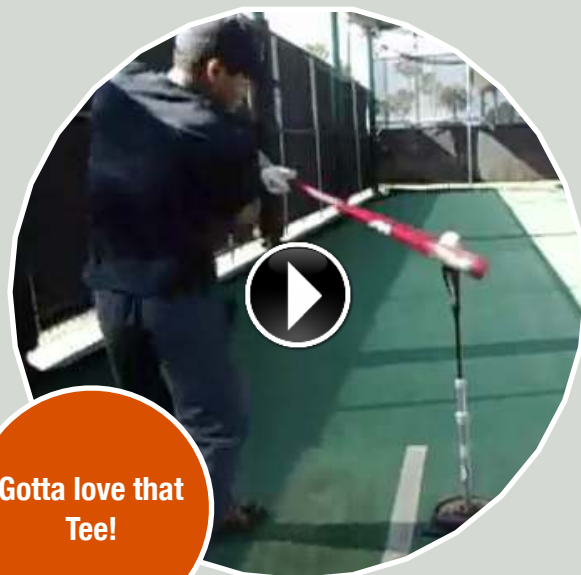
Begin to take swings of the tee. Prior to each swing, look into the direction at the end of the hitting cage to where the pitcher's mound would be.

Do everything at game speed in regards to rhythm, pre-swing movements, and

practicing visualizing picking up wrist angles, arm slots and the "popping out" of the breaking ball just before you take each swing.

Take note of how you're front shoulder is staying closed and how aggressively you're attacking the inner half of the baseball.

What I love about this drill is that as you get more and more specific and detailed with your visualization of the pitch and pitcher's movements, the more realistic it will feel.



Gotta love that Tee!

Your'e brain doesn't know from what it sees in it's mind's eye and what it sees in external reality. As you continuer to practice you will begin to feel that you've been spending hours crushing the most advanced breaking ball pitches you've ever seen!

You'll feel confident, prepared and ready to face the toughest pitchers in the league!

TO RECAP

- 🏆 Practice reading **wrist angles**
- 🏆 Exercise recognizing the **“popping out”** of the curve-ball
- 🏆 Use the **two simple curve ball hitting drills** 3x a week until you feel comfortable with doing it at game speed