



Bunting Drill

Objective

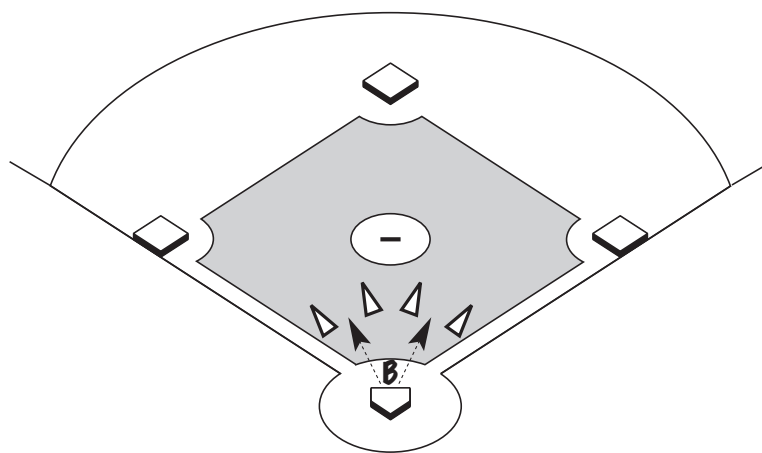
To work on keeping sacrifice bunts away from the pitcher

Setup

Four cones, bucket of balls, coach or player to pitch

Execution

Set up two cones down the first base line about halfway between home plate and the mound. One should be about 3 feet inside the baseline, the other about 8 to 10 feet inside the line toward the mound. The same thing should be done on the third base line. A coach can throw from a shortened distance with players taking turns bunting. The idea is to stop or push the ball between the cones. Try not to make the bunts too perfect. Make the pitcher come off the mound to field the ball. Stress that players pivot both feet instead of squaring to bunt. Have them



start with the bat at the top of the strike zone and the barrel of the bat above the hands at an angle, bending their knees for lower pitches and leaving pitches above the hands alone. Players should give with the pitch to deaden the ball and use the bottom hand to guide the bat and push the ball in the desired direction. Give the players five tries each; see how many each one can get between the cones.

Make It Fun

Turn this drill into a game or contest by giving each player a set number of bunts and creating a scoring system. A bunt that is fair and not popped up is awarded one point. A bunt that gets to the infield grass (if there is any) and is in between the cones gets two points. A player can try for a five-pointer by calling where the bunt will go (first or third base) and then pushing the bunt between the cones in that direction.

Multi-tasking

You can have your pitchers work on fielding bunts by letting them pitch to the batters who are bunting. Reading a bunt as a baserunner also is an important concept to understand. You can have a group running on first base. They take their secondary lead when the ball is delivered (or when it crosses the plate, depending on the age group) and they break hard for second only when they are positive that the bunt is on the ground and is not popped up.



Coaching Keys

If the ball is being popped up quite a bit the barrel of the bat probably is below the hands at the moment of contact. The player may be either bunting a pitch that's too high, starting the bat too low and then bringing it up to meet the ball, or not bending his or her knees to get to lower pitches. If the ball is being bunted consistently back to the pitcher, the batter is not using the lower hand to angle the bat correctly. If the batter is bunting a lot of foul balls, he or she is most likely not placing the bat in front of home plate.

Bunting

KEY POINTS

1. Pivot on both feet to provide full vision and bend the knees slightly.
2. Place feet shoulder-width apart with weight more on front foot.
3. Don't "square" around toward the pitcher; this makes it difficult to get out of the way of an inside pitch.
4. Slide top hand up to a point just below the label.
5. Hold bat in top hand between thumb and index finger to protect fingers.
6. Hold bat at top of strike zone in front of home plate.
7. Position bat head above the hands at pivot and contact.
8. Let the ball hit the bat; don't stab at the ball.
9. Use the bottom hand to guide the bat and push the ball in the desired direction.
10. Don't worry about showing too early in a sacrifice situation.
11. Follow same basic fundamentals when bunting for a hit, but show bunt later.