



Zionsville Eagles Select 8U Individual Hitting Plan

Plan Description: At 8U we will be starting with the very basics. This plan gives the hitter a solid foundation to build upon. Once the foundation is set, each training block progresses in difficulty. Each block contains hitting drills suggested for tee work and some with a moving ball. For the moving ball portion, you can do short toss/soft toss, throw full length batting practice, or do a combination of both. If you have access to a pitching machine, that can be used as well.

Suggested Informational Videos: Coaches will have watched these videos and likely relayed this information to the players. These videos are not required for parents, but if you want to understand more about a specific block or topic, you are welcome to watch the videos as well.

Training Blocks: Training blocks vary with each age group. The coaches have some leeway here and can determine when it is time to move on to the next training block based on the benchmarks listed within each block. Coaches are directed to be in Training Block Three by at least 2 weeks prior to the beginning of games. You can ask your coach which block they are in or ask your player what drills they are currently doing to determine which block to work in.

Benchmarks: These are the goals for each block of training. While we would love for every hitter to pass all benchmarks before moving on to the next block of training, the reality is some hitters will still need to work on a benchmark or two after the team has moved on to the next block. This is where **YOU CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE!** Adding an extra day of hitting practice and to perfect the prior benchmarks can do wonders to help get your player up to speed!

Training Volume: Each training block is based on 1 team practice per week & 1-2 parent led sessions per week. Please try to take advantage of your access to the facility as much as you can and/or have some sort of set up at home that allows for additional hitting. . Target rep counts throughout the plan are at least **10-15 swings for every drill**. It is understood that practice times and available resources can vary. Feel free to adjust by skipping a drill or two, or by adjusting rep counts as needed. Also, you may add in as many regular, non-drill swings as you would like.

Important Reminders:

- **Keep it fun!!!** - Your job is to create an environment and dynamic that is enjoyable and encourages the player to WANT TO COME BACK FOR MORE practice. Please be as positive and encouraging as possible.

- **Keep the coaching to a *MINIMUM*!!!** - This is the time that players should be able to explore and learn to self-coach. You can remind them of what they are trying to accomplish, but try to give them ample space and freedom to work without much direction.
- **Don't feel like you need to do EVERY SINGLE DRILL!!!** - There are a lot of drills listed. If you find that there are some that help better than others, spend more time on those and skip ones that do not seem to help as much. Every hitter has different needs!

TRAINING BLOCK ONE

Suggested Dates: October & January

Block One Benchmarks:

- **Consistency in batting stance** - Young hitters often are unaware of their body positioning in their stance. By the end of this training block we would like them to be consistent with their feet positioning, hand and arm positioning and their weight distribution within their stance.
- **Consistency in posture** - We would like to see the hitter having proper hip hinge and maintaining a good spine angle into their launch position (moment stride foot lands and swing begins). Checkpoints include that they are consistently landing their stride and swinging from a position in which their torso and femur are at roughly the same angle, and their center of gravity (chest and head) is over their toes.



Example Launch Position Posture

- **Consistent balance** - Hitters should be able to control their body through the entire swing, and when attempted, they should be able to hold a balanced finish for 2 seconds after a completed swing. (This is not necessary on every swing, but is a good benchmark for testing balance, body awareness and control.)
- **Consistent Grip** - Hitters should have big and little knuckles aligned. Their wrists should have some slight inward bend. This will take constant reinforcement.

Block One Suggested Informational Videos:

1. Grip
2. Stance
3. Stride Tips
4. Hitting Position Tips for Beginners

Block One Routines

Team Practice Hitting Routine

★ Movement Prep Drills:

These are non-hitting movement exercises that help prepare a hitter to move fundamentally better. Begin hitting sessions with these exercises. These are to be done slowly, while focusing on quality, control, and full range of motion. They will try to go fast, but encourage them to slow down and do it slower and better!

1 set of 12 slow reps each

1. Pelvic Control Drills (1 set rotation, 1 set tilt)
2. One Knee Hinge Drill (1 set each side)
3. Hip Advancement Drill (PVC or a Bat can be used)
4. Side-Bend/Shoulder-Tilt Drill (PVC or a Bat can be used)

★ Hitting Drills:

☐ **Tee Drills**

Have hitters warm up with some or all of these tee drills. It is up to you to determine whether it's best to have them all do the same drill at once or have them rotate through different drills at each station.

1. Get-Up Drill
2. Crossover Drill
3. Stride, Pause, Hit Drill
4. High Tee Drill COMBINE w/ Hold Your Finish Drill
5. Low Tee Drill COMBINE w/ Hold Your Finish Drill

☐ **Moving Ball Drills**

1. Rolled Ball Drill COMBINE w/ Weight Transfer Bucket Drill
2. Over the Screen Drill COMBINE w/ Weight Transfer Bucket Drill
3. Hold Your Finish Drill
4. 3 Time Rhythm Drill
5. Hip Hinge Chair Drill &/or Regular Swings
6. Hold Your Finish Drill
7. Barrel/Line Drive Count Hitting (no video)- Have hitters keep track of how many balls they hit on the sweet spot and how many they hit for a line drive. Can assign point values to each if desired.

TRAINING BLOCK TWO

Suggested Dates: February

Block Two Benchmarks:

Loading & maintaining upper body tension - Before moving on to the next block, the hitter should be properly loading the upper body, and maintaining that load into their launch position on a consistent basis. A couple checkpoints from the pitcher's point of view are that the hitter's back elbow becomes slightly visible behind their back and their top/back hand becomes hidden behind their head. Be sure they avoid over-rotating their shoulders to do this. Notice in the example below, the hitter's front shoulder has only slightly rotated back and down toward the catcher during the load. Excessive rotation of shoulders during the load can negatively affect bat path.



Example Upper Body Load

Rotating fully & efficiently - When hitting off of the tee or when properly timed up with a moving pitch, the hitter should be consistently finishing their swing with full rotation, meaning their upper body should be rotated significantly beyond their lower body.

A few checkpoints to look for in the hitter's finish include:

- Hitter's belt buckle should be pointing toward their opposite field gap, but not have gone past the pitcher.
- Hitter's shoulders should have nearly replaced each other, meaning the back shoulder is now where the front shoulder began and vice versa.
- Hitter's back should almost be facing toward home plate.



Example of Full Rotation Finish

Block Two Suggested Informational Videos:

1. Explaining Upper Body Load to Beginners
2. Twist vs Spin

Block Two Routines

★ Movement Prep Drills:

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1 set of 12 slow reps each

1. Single Leg Dissociation Drill (each side)
2. Full Turn Drill
3. Walk Down Drill
4. Scap Load Drill

★ **Hitting Drills:**

Be sure to thoroughly explain all drills. Watch each hitter closely, especially their first time to make sure they are setting up and performing the drill properly. It may work best to begin with several tee stations spread out among the cages. Have the hitters perform all tee drills at the tee stations while you watch closely. Then move onto front toss and live batting practice.

☐ **Tee Drills**

Have hitters warm up with some or all of these tee drills. It is up to you to determine whether it's best to have them all do the same drill at once or have them rotate through different drills at each station.

1. Forward Facing Drill COMBINED w/ Target Drill (LINE DRIVE UP THE MIDDLE)
2. Posted Front Leg & Closed Stance Drill COMBINED w/ Target Drill (LINE DRIVE UP THE MIDDLE)
3. Contact Points Tee Drill COMBINED w/ Efficient Rotation Drills

☐ **Moving Ball Drills**

1. Freeze at Contact Drill
2. Connection Ball Anti-Cast Drill
3. Wrap & Bounce Drill
4. Efficient Rotation Drills
5. Mixed Speeds Front Toss Drill COMBINED w/ Check Flips Drills
6. Efficient Rotation Drills
7. 3 Plate Timing Drill
8. Barrel/Line Drive Count Hitting (no video)- Have hitters keep track of how many balls they hit on the sweet spot and how many they hit for a line drive. Can make it competitive among players or groups and assign point values to each if desired.

TRAINING BLOCK THREE

Suggested Dates: March

Block Three Benchmarks:

Ability to time up different pitch speeds - The hitter should now be able to quickly and seamlessly adjust their timing to various pitch speeds. No matter the level of development, there will always be occasions when timing is slightly off, but at this point we would hope that they are on time the majority of the time.

Adjustability when out front - When the hitter does happen to be fooled by a pitch and is early or out in front, we would like them to have the ability to still successfully barrel the ball up. If they are still hitting nearly all of those pitches off the end of the bat, swinging and missing, or slowing their swing down in order to make contact with them, continue to work on the drills in this training block.

This is going to require some judgment on the coach's end. Regardless of the level of development, there will still be some balls that the hitter pulls off of and swings and misses or hits it off the end of the bat. We just hope that at the completion of this block, that the hitter can occasionally be fooled by a pitch and be out in front, and still create a positive result by hitting it hard on the barrel of the bat.

Adjustability to difficult pitch locations - The prior training block on bat path should have helped the hitter be consistently barreling up balls in the middle of the plate. By the end of this block, we would like the hitter to be able to regularly barrel up pitches that are on all edges of the strike zone (up, down, out and in).

Block Three Suggested Informational Videos:

1. Adjustability Intro
2. Easily Adjusting Timing

BLOCK THREE ROUTINES

Team Practice Hitting Routine

★ Movement Prep Drills:

These are non-hitting movement exercises that help prepare a hitter to move fundamentally better. Begin hitting sessions with these exercises. These are to be done slowly, while focusing on quality, control, and full range of motion. They will try to go fast, but encourage them to slow down and do it slower and better!

1 set of 12 slow reps each

1. Single Leg Dissociation Drill (each side)
2. PVC Strides & Turns Drills
3. Efficient Launch Drill
4. Top Hand Catch Drill

Hitting Drills

☐ Tee Drills

Have hitters warm up with some or all of these tee drills. It is up to you to determine whether it's best to have them all do the same drill at once or have them rotate through different drills at each station.

1. And..."Go" Drill
2. Yes, Yes, No Walk Up Drill
3. Coil Rhythm Drill
4. Contact Points Tee Drill **EXTENDED** - When doing inside/outside, place the tee a little off the corners of the plate so it is slightly out of the strike zone. DO NOT allow the hitter to move closer or

farther from the tee, and DO NOT allow the hitter to adjust by striding toward or away from the tee. If necessary, do this without a stride so they cannot cheat!

☐ **Moving Ball Drills**

1. Bounce Drill
2. Swing at Everything Drill
3. Hot Pitch Drill
4. Colored Ball Drill
5. 2 Ball High/Low Drill
6. Load and Go Drill
7. Barrel/Line Drive Count Hitting (no video)- Have hitters keep track of how many balls they hit on the sweet spot and how many they hit for a line drive. Can assign point values to each if desired.

TRAINING BLOCK FOUR

Target Dates: April-July

Block Four Tips:

The goal is to continue a long-term upward trend of hitting development while the season progresses.. Use the drills your hitter enjoyed and benefited from the most, and create a routine they will want to work on week in and week out. Make it fun, but also challenging. Regularly try to make the training more difficult so the hitter continues to progress. Keep in mind though, hitters can often slide back into old habits. If this happens, return to the training block that will best suit your hitter's needs.

Block Four Suggested Informational Videos:

1. Common Hitting Coach Mistakes - In-game coaching

BLOCK FOUR ROUTINES

Create a Routine Based on Your Favorite Drills

Team Practice Hitting Routine

★ Movement Prep Drills:

These are non-hitting movement exercises that help prepare a hitter to move fundamentally better. Begin hitting sessions with these exercises. These are to be done slowly, while focusing on quality, control, and full range of motion. They will try to go fast, but encourage them to slow down and do it slower and better!

1 set of 12 slow reps each

Choose 3-4 favorites

1. Pelvic Control Drills
2. One Knee Hinge Drill
3. Side-Bend/Shoulder-Tilt Drill
4. Scap Load Drill

5. Hip Hinge Chair Drill
6. Platform Drill
7. Walk Down Drill
8. Wall Drill
9. PVC Hip Advancement Drill
10. Full Turn Drill
11. One Leg Disassociation Drill
12. PVC Strides & Turns Drills
13. Efficient Launch Drill
14. Hand & Wrist Action Drills
15. Throws Progression Drill
16. Band Arm Path Drills
17. Hop Down Swings Drill
18. Top Hand Catch Drill

★ **Hitting Drills:**

☐ **Tee Drills**

Have hitters warm up with a few of these drills.

Choose 2-4 favorites and end with FINISHER DRILL

1. Get-Up Drill
2. Crossover Drill
3. Stride, Pause, Hit Drill
4. High Tee Drill COMBINE w/ Hold Your Finish Drill
5. Low Tee Drill COMBINE w/ Hold Your Finish Drill
6. Forward Facing Drill COMBINED w/ Target Drill (LINE DRIVE UP THE MIDDLE)
7. Posted Front Leg & Closed Stance Drill COMBINED w/ Target Drill (LINE DRIVE UP THE MIDDLE)
8. Separation w/ "No" Drill
9. Belt Arm Tension Drill Just Right Drill
10. Inside-Outside Tee Command Drill
11. And..."Go" Drill
12. Yes, Yes, No Walk Up Drill
13. Coil Rhythm Drill

FINISHER DRILL: Contact Points Tee Drill COMBINED w/ Efficient Rotation Drills

☐ **Moving Ball Drills**

Choose 3-5 favorites and end with the twp FINISHER DRILLS

1. Rolled Ball Drill COMBINE w/ Weight Transfer Bucket Drill
2. Over the Screen Drill COMBINE w/ Weight Transfer Bucket Drill
3. Hold Your Finish Drill
4. 3 Time Rhythm Drill
5. Hip Hinge Chair Drill &/or Regular Swings
6. Freeze at Contact Drill
7. Connection Ball Anti-Cast Drill
8. Back & Front Arm Connection Ball Progression
9. Efficient Rotation Drills
10. Top Hand Point Drill
11. Floaters Drill
12. Extended Outside Drill
13. Pull Side Angle Flips Drill
14. Bounce Drill
15. Swing at Balls & Take Strikes
16. Hot Pitch Drill
17. Colored Ball Drill
18. 2 Ball High/Low Drill
19. Off the Hip Tracking Drill
20. Load and Go Drill
21. 3 Plate Timing Drill

FINISHER DRILL 1. Mixed Speeds Front Toss Drill COMBINED w/ Check Flips Drill

FINISHER DRILL 2. Barrel/Line Drive Count Hitting (no video)- Have hitters keep track of how many balls they hit on the sweet spot and how many they hit for a line drive. Can assign point values to each if desired.