

Get Up & Go Baseball
**Drills and
Instruction
for Coaching
Youth
Baseball**



by former Major League players Erik Johnson, Joe Millette and Ron Wotus

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Drills and Instruction for Coaching Youth Baseball

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This is a partial sample of the Hitting segment of Get Up and Go Baseball's Drills and Instruction for Coaching Youth Baseball Program. Please feel free to read and use the valuable knowlegde to teach and educate your children, coach or yourself.

Please visit

WWW.GETUPANDGOBASEBALL.COM to purchase your FULL copy of this book or

Include mailing address, email address, credit card information or enclose a check for \$19.95 (\$16.95 + \$3.00 for shipping & handling). California residents please add 8.25% sales tax.

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Introduction

Managers, coaches and parents, Get Up and Go Baseball would like to welcome you to our instructional program. Preseason training has become an integral part of youth baseball, and we are honored to help you provide that experience for your players. Our staff has worked closely with numerous youth leagues to make the game of baseball an enjoyable and educational experience.

In addition to more than 44 years of combined professional experience, we bring to our program a deep love of the game and a keen desire to improve the experience for all youth participants. Our goal is to educate and refresh your knowledge of the game. Our philosophy is to motivate and build players' self-esteem while developing their skills in a positive environment.

This manual is designed to guide you at practice and enhance your knowledge. It is also intended to give you a simplified and fun way to teach. The manual is organized to be user-friendly. Each specific subject includes an introduction, basic fundamentals, drills and games. The fundamentals are the foundation for skill development, while the drills are designed to reinforce those fundamentals. Games are included to help you teach in an effective and fun manner.

Being aware of the proper fundamentals is a key component of the process. However, we believe learning how to instruct and how to communicate with the player is a critical asset. Our goal is to help give you all the tools necessary to help you coach and teach the game of baseball in an encouraging way so all players can enjoy their baseball experience to the fullest. We believe this is the true essence and spirit of baseball. Thank you for participating in our program.

Get Up and Go Baseball Staff

A Brief Background of Get Up & Go Baseball

Get Up and Go Baseball has been providing player and coaching clinics since the late 1980s. After providing clinics just for Erik Johnson's hometown Little League, San Ramon Valley, Get Up and Go is now conducting coaching clinics throughout Northern California. Through many years of research from player clinics, coaching clinics and private instruction with youth players and coaches, Get Up and Go has created a program that is designed specifically to teach those who are involved with players between the ages of 6 through 16 (although the program is applicable to players above the age of 16). We believe we provide a unique instructional program and hope you enjoy your experience with Get Up and Go Baseball.



To purchase *Drills and Instruction for Coaching Youth Baseball*, call (925) 296-0628 or order at www.getupandgobaseball.com.



Authors

ERIK JOHNSON

Erik is one of the original founders of Get Up and Go Baseball and has been an active member of the organization since the late 1980s. Erik grew up in Northern California and played Little League baseball in the San Ramon Valley area where his teams qualified for the Little League and Senior League World Series. His teams reached the championship game both times. Erik attended De La Salle High School in Concord where he lettered in basketball and baseball. He received an athletic scholarship to UC Santa Barbara and was named to All Pacific Coast Athletic Association baseball team his last three seasons and a preseason All-American his junior and senior years. Erik was an 18th-round pick of the San Francisco Giants in 1987 and played professionally for 10 years, including two seasons with the Giants in 1993-94. In 1995, Erik played in the Triple-A All-Star Game and started at shortstop. Erik was inducted into the UC Santa Barbara Intercollegiate Athletics Hall of Fame in 1998. He is currently the Director of Baseball Instruction for E.J. Sports. He also manages the Pacific Coast Stars, a traveling team that plays in international baseball competitions around the world. Erik resides in the San Francisco Bay area with his wife Suzette.



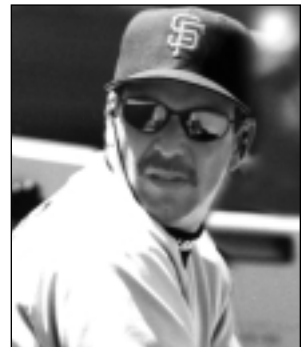
JOE MILLETTE

Joe is one of the original founders of Get Up and Go Baseball and has been an active member of the organization since the late 1980s. Joe grew up in Lafayette, Calif., and he played in Lafayette Little League and continued through Pony, Colt and American Legion. He attended Acalanes High School where he lettered in baseball, basketball, soccer and football. Joe attended Diablo Valley College where he was an all-conference player and part of the most successful baseball team in school history. He received an athletic scholarship to St. Mary's College of California, where he finished his collegiate career. Joe was elected captain as a senior and received the Bill Fischer Award for overall commitment and dedication to St. Mary's baseball. He graduated with a degree in Business Administration. After college, Joe signed a free-agent contract with the Philadelphia Phillies in 1988 and played professionally for 10 years. He played shortstop in the major leagues in 1992-93 with the '93 team losing to the Toronto Blue Jays in the World Series. Joe played with four other organizations — the Florida Marlins, Pittsburgh Pirates, Seattle Mariners and Chicago Cubs.. He retired in 1998 after shoulder surgery. In 1999-2000, Joe served as an assistant baseball coach at his alma mater. Joe resides in the San Francisco Bay area with his wife Jennifer and daughter Lauren.



RON WOTUS

Ron has been a member of Get Up and Go Baseball since the late 1980s. Beginning in 1979, Ron played professionally for 11 years, spending parts of the 1983-85 seasons as an infielder with the Pittsburgh Pirates. After retiring, he became a manager in the San Francisco Giants minor-league system. In seven years, Ron's teams finished 555-411 for a .575 winning percentage. During the 1991-92 seasons, Ron managed at Single-A San Jose, and his 1991 club posted a 92-44 record, the best in all of professional baseball. He was voted California League Manager of the Year and Baseball America's Class-A Manager of the Year. From 1993-95, Ron managed at Double-A Shreveport and led the team to three consecutive playoff berths. The 1995 team won the Texas League championship with an 88-47 record, the best in all of minor-league baseball. In 1996-97, Ron managed the Triple-A Phoenix club, and the team won back-to-back Pacific Coast League Southern Division titles. The 1997 team finished 88-55, the best record in Triple-A baseball, and Ron was voted Best Manager Prospect by his peers. In 1998, Ron was the San Francisco Giants' third-base coach and is currently the bench coach and infield coach for the big-league team. Ron resides in the San Francisco Bay area with his wife Laurie.



Get Up & Go Baseball

Drills & Instruction for Coaching Youth Baseball

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With more than 44 years of combined professional experience and over 14 years of Youth League experience, Get Up and Go Baseball has blended this knowledge into a unique instructional program. If you are a parent, player, or youth league coach, this book is a must! Learn how to communicate and teach the game of baseball with a positive approach to build players' confidence and self-esteem.

Coaches, learn how to organize practices and choose from more than 150 drills to teach players the proper fundamentals. Pick from unique games to maintain their focus and keep practice enjoyable. Hear what these professionals have to say about teaching your kids the game of baseball.

Included are tips from the following Major League players:

Rich Aurilia, on Hitting

Giants shortstop and Silver Slugger winner

Mike Lieberthal, on Catching

Phillies catcher and Gold Glove winner

Bill Mueller, on Infield Play

Cubs third baseman

Calvin Murray, on Outfield Play

Giants center fielder and Olympic team member

Russ Ortiz, on Pitching

Giants starting pitcher and 18-game winner

J.T. Snow, on Infield Play

Giants first baseman and six-time Gold Glove winner

Tony Womack, on Baserunning and Bunting

Diamondbacks shortstop and N.L. three-time stolen base champion

"We have just completed a year where we won our league's championship, and the previous year we came in dead last, winning only 3 games. We attribute a great deal of our success to Get Up and Go's book, Drills and Instruction for Coaching Youth Baseball. Every member of our coaching staff had a copy. We relied on just about every aspect of it to assist us in bringing the game to our players. It allowed us to have practices that were extremely effective, productive and most of all fun! Just follow the book to a tee. There is absolutely no reason to do it any different."

— Kevin Sweeney, San Ramon Valley Little League



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HITTING

To be a successful hitter, it takes dedication, confidence, proper swing mechanics and a good sense of timing. Teaching the physical side of hitting will be easier with a good understanding of the swing mechanics. Practicing correctly – whether it’s dry swings, tee work, short toss or live hitting – is crucial.

Correct swing mechanics are essential, because muscle memory is being developed with every swing a player takes. Mechanics can be taught easier without using a ball. In order to have players perform the correct fundamental swing, they must practice their swing outside of team practices. Give players drills they can work on at home.

Timing is unique to each individual. This is usually a more difficult area to teach than proper swing mechanics. All good hitters have a trigger that initiates their stride and the swing. This is an area that is not often taught but needs to be addressed if a hitter is going to reach his potential.

Every good hitter has aggressive patience. Aggressive hitters anticipate that every ball is coming down the middle of the plate, and they are ready to hit every pitch. Teach players to be aggressive in the strike zone; there has not been one great hitter who has developed by looking for a walk.

If a player does not see the ball well, he will not hit no matter how good the swing fundamentals are. All hitters must know a pitcher’s release point and track the ball from the pitcher’s hand until contact with the bat. During games, players should not think about mechanics. All their concentration should be on seeing the ball.

Players should have a bat they can swing comfortably. Bat speed produces power in a swing, not bat size. The bat should be a size the player can handle and control easily. If a bat is too big, encourage the player to choke up on the bat.

Remember, hitting a pitched baseball is one of the hardest single feats to do in sports. It can be a fragile skill to develop. Be patient, understanding, and instill confidence in each hitter’s abilities. Be positive with your hitters at all times. Negative thoughts can destroy a player’s mental psyche and confidence. It takes time for players to fulfill their talents as hitters.

Coaches and parents must understand that many players experience anxiety during games. Players need to learn how to relax in the on-deck circle and in the batter’s box. It is much more difficult to hit when tense.

All-Star Rich Aurilia on becoming a good hitter:

“The first, and probably the most important thing is to be open to learning new things. Not all theories are going to work for each player. Each individual should take what he thinks can help him and work with that.

It may not happen right away. That is why this game is so hard.

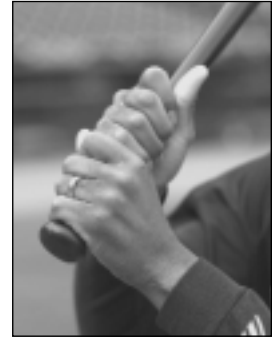
Secondly, there is the area of balance. In our every day lives we need good balance to function correctly. The same goes for hitting.

Balance is the key”.



FUNDAMENTALS

A. Grip: The bat is gripped in the callous part of the hand, not in the palms. The grip is relaxed but firm. Grip the bat as if holding a bird without letting it escape. (If you squeeze too tight you kill the bird. If too loose, the bird will fly away.) The “door knocker” knuckles are lined up, or the knuckles can be lined up as shown in the picture. Notice how the top hand’s small knuckles are lined up between the bottom hand’s big knuckles small knuckles. This promotes better hand action. If the grip is within these areas, it is a sound grip. **(picture 6-1)**

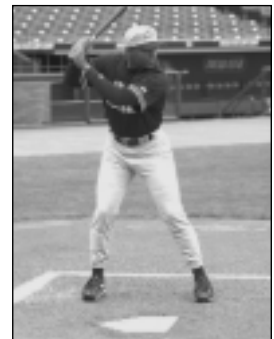


6-1: Grip

B. Stance and Set Up: The hitter should be in a good athletic position with the body relaxed and comfortable. A player should not stand frozen in the batter’s box waiting for the pitcher to deliver the ball. Weight should be distributed comfortably on the balls of the feet with the feet at least shoulders’ width apart. The feet and shoulders should be squared to the pitcher. The hands are relaxed and start in a comfortable position at least shoulder height. The arms are bent with the lead elbow never fully extending. The head is level and turned toward the pitcher with both eyes focused on him. Knees are flexed in this athletic position with the waist bent slightly forward. We call this the “Henry position.”



6-2: Stance



6-3: Stance (side view)

(pictures 6-2 & 6-3)

C. Bat Position: The bat should start at least shoulder height, and back in line with the back foot. An easy reference point: Grip the bat correctly and rest it on the back shoulder. Lift the hands up to chin level and back in line with the back foot.

(pictures 6-4 & 6-5)

D. Loading (getting ready to hit): As the pitcher goes into the wind-up, a hitter must prepare to swing. All good hitters have some type of trigger before the stride and rotation into the ball, when the swing actually starts forward. To create force, a hitter must go backward before he goes forward. The whole body works together to do this, not just the arms and hands and it will vary slightly with each individual. Successful hitters have rhythm and can time their load to the pitcher. The hitter gets ready sometime when the pitcher turns towards the hitter and starts forward with his arm. The load initiates the stride forward.

(pictures 6-6 & 6-7)



6-4: Rest bat on shoulder



6-5: Lift hands up and back



6-6: Stance



6-7: Load



HITTING PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Watch the Opposing Pitcher: This is where players first prepare to hit. They need to watch the opposing pitcher as much as possible. Watch him warm up before the game in the bullpen. Watch his warm-up pitches before each inning. Ideally, hitters should attempt to watch every pitch in the game. At the very least, when on-deck the batter should be observing the pitcher's speed, control, and what types of pitches are being thrown. Figure out what pitches are being thrown for strikes and decide on a plan against that particular pitcher.

On-deck Preparation: This is where a hitter gets prepared both mentally and physically. Once on deck, focused concentration begins. The player must believe he can hit the pitcher and look forward to getting into the batter's box. He should concentrate on timing the pitches. Take some swings on deck as if they were actually facing the pitcher. If there is not an on-deck circle the same preparation can be done without a bat. After leaving the on-deck circle, have a plan and be prepared to hit the first pitch.

San Francisco Giant Rich Aurilia on mental preparation:

“The moment right before I get into the batter's box is a very important time for me. I try to envision the situation I will be in and try to come up with a way to either get on base, move a runner over, drive in a run from third, and a number of other things. This is the time to prepare for your at bat. I also try to remember how the pitcher on the mound pitched me in the previous at bats. Odds are if a pitcher has had a certain way with you, he will continue that way until you beat him”.

Batter's Thought Process: A hitter's mentality should be hit, hit, hit, not take, take, take. Expect every pitch to be a strike and be prepared to swing at every pitch. That way, a hitter is never unprepared to swing the bat. Prepare to swing, then if it's a ball, take the pitch. Hitters want this aggressive approach. When ahead in the count 2-0 or 3-1, that is the time the hitter has an advantage, because the pitcher needs to throw a strike. Look to hit those pitchers, don't look for a walk.

Tracking the Ball: The longer a hitter watches the ball, the better chance he has to hit it. A hitter should focus on the pitcher's release point to pick up the pitch. The release point is where the ball leaves the pitcher's hand. These vary — some pitchers throw from over the top; others throw side-armed. The hitter should shift his eyes from a soft focus of the pitcher in general to a fine focus of the release point to look for the ball. This is often overlooked, assuming hitters pick up the ball as soon as possible. Do not take this for granted. Make sure the players understand what a release point is and when to focus on it. From there, track the ball all the way in and attempt to see the ball hit the bat. Maintain concentration on the ball until contact with the bat.

Expert Advice on the Batter's Approach

A hitter's mentality should be hit, hit, hit, not take, take, take. Expect every pitch to be a strike and be prepared to swing at every pitch.



Adjusting in the Batter's Box: The hitter's initial stance should be close enough to home plate so the player has total plate coverage when he strides. How deep a hitter stands in the box can be determined by the pitcher. A normal depth position is where the front foot is in line with the front to middle of the plate. When a pitcher is throwing extremely hard and the hitter is late on his swing from the normal depth position, he should move to the back of the box to allow more reaction time. Conversely, when a pitcher isn't throwing hard, he should move up in the batter's box. Other adjustments a hitter can make to a hard thrower is to start their load sooner or choke up on the bat. **(pictures 6-14 to 6-16)**



6-14: Normal depth



6-15: Hard thrower



6-16: Soft thrower

DRY HITTING DRILLS

The dry drills can be done together as a team, in smaller groups, or with an individual. Players should practice these drills at home. The drills are recommended for ages 6-16.

1. **Stance:** Have hitters get into a hitting stance displaying the correct "Henry position" with hands on hips. Go around and lightly push players to see if they are balanced. They should have a sturdy foundation and should not fall off balance on your push. **(picture 6-17)**
2. **Stride:** With hands on hips, players take a stride to a balanced position on coach's verbal command, "Stride." Stride distance will vary for each player. The stride should land soft, and the majority of the player's weight should not come forward. The head should be steady and still. When players stride, they should step as if there is an egg under their lead foot and they do not want to crack the egg. Players hold stride position for coach's critique. **Repeat 10 times or until players are performing stride correctly. (picture 6-18)**



6-17: Henry position



6-18: Stride



3. **Pivot:** Players do not start in their stance but begin this drill in the post-stride position. They pivot the back foot on coach's verbal command, "Pivot." The pivot is on the ball of the foot. The back foot's toes should be facing the pitcher while head and shoulders remain behind the lead knee. Players hold pivot position for coach's critique. **Repeat 10 times or until players are performing pivot correctly. (picture 6-19)**
4. **Step and Pivot:** Players are in the same start position as Stride Drill. On coaches verbal command, "Step," players stride straight with front foot closed. Once the stride foot is down, coach yells, "Pivot," and players pivot the back foot correctly. The pivot should be explosive with players maintaining balance as coach checks for proper positions. **Repeat 10 times or until players are performing step and pivot correctly.**
5. **Forward and Down to Level:** Start players in their batting stance. On coach's verbal command, "Swing," players go through their stride, pivot and swing. Coach watches for correct swing path of hands moving forward and down then finishing all the way around near their back shoulder. **Repeat 10 times or until players are performing the swing path correctly and hands are finishing in the proper location. (pictures 6-20 to 6-22)**



6-19: Pivot



6-20: Stance



6-21: Forward & down to level



6-22: Finish with balance



HITTING GAMES

1. **Line Drive Game:** This game can be played with your hitters during Soft Toss or Batting Practice. The player is told to hit line drives and ground balls or he will lose his turn at bat. The player hits until he hits a fly ball, pop-up or swings and misses. When he does the next hitter takes his turn. Set a limit for the maximum number of swings in one round so your good hitters do not stay at bat all day. **This drill forces the hitter to concentrate on hitting the ball on a line, which is a swing plane all hitters should attempt to develop. It is a good drill for players who uppercut and hit a lot of fly balls.**

Recommended ages 8-16

2. **Contact Game:** During batting practice the hitter is told he can stay at bat as long as he does not swing and miss or foul a ball off. You may want to set a maximum number of swings per round to make sure everyone gets a turn at bat. **This is a good drill for all players to help them concentrate on seeing the ball. The game adds the same pressure hitters feel when they have 2 strikes on them, but even makes it tougher since they cannot even foul a ball off.**

Recommended ages 8-16

3. **Situation Hitting Game:** During batting practice the coach calls out four different situations for the hitter to execute. The hitter gets an added “free” swing for every situation he executes correctly. The four situations are: sacrifice bunt, (batter must get the bunt down on that pitch) Hit and Run play, (player must hit a ground ball on that pitch) move the runner to third, (player is to hit a ground ball to the right side of second base) and man on third with the infield in and less than 2 outs. (The hitter is to try to hit a fly ball to the outfield so the runner can tag up and score) **This game simulates game situations and teaches players how to execute when these situations arise in the game. Also it’s a very good routine to use for players during their second round of batting practice.**

Recommended ages 13-16

4. **Base Hit Game:** During batting practice, make the hitter’s last swing in each round a base-hit swing. This means the hitter gets to stay up at bat for another swing if he gets a base hit. The coach throwing BP is the judge. If it is ruled a hit, the player gets another base-hit swing, and keeps hitting until he does not hit a ball ruled to be a hit by the coach. **This is a fun drill for players to compete with one another to see who can stay up the longest by getting the most base hits.**

Recommended ages 10-16

Expert Advice on the Line Drive Game

The Line Drive Game will force players to stay on top of the baseball. This is a fun and effective way to help develop the hitters proper swing plane.



- 5. Focus Game:** Coach stands in front of players in a position where all players can see the coach. The coach extends his left arm palm up straight out in front of his body. He then extends his right arm palm down out to his right side. The object of the game is for the players to watch the coach's right arm and hand, and clap when it passes over the top of the left hand's palm. The coach is to do anything he wants to try and get the players to clap when he doesn't cross the bottom hand. Examples: He can move his right hand fast. He can start his right hand and stop it before he crosses the left palm. He can go fast back and forth. If the players clap when the coach did not cross the left hand with the right they sit down and are out of the competition. Coach continues to play until he has a winner. **This is a fun drill that teaches players to concentrate and focus their eyes on a target.**

Recommended ages 6-16

GUIDELINE WHEN TEACHING HITTING

Many coaches and parents have asked us over the years, "Where do I begin when teaching the fundamentals of hitting?" So, here are some thoughts to keep in mind when helping players learn to hit. Remember, there are no absolutes on what to teach first or last, but below is a general order or check-list to follow.

1. Before making changes with a hitter, make sure you have seen him hit enough to determine what changes he may need. Do not make evaluations on a few swings. Once you are sure of the changes needed and you have checked his bat size and grip, it is usually best to start from the ground up.
2. Start off by checking the bat. Make sure it is a size and weight the player can control and handle.
3. Check the player's grip.
4. Next get the player into a fundamentally sound stance that is comfortable to him. Everyone needs a sturdy foundation, so make sure the legs and feet are correct in the stance.
5. Check to make sure the hitter is using his feet properly focusing on the stride and pivot. Many problems can be corrected by fixing the feet. The feet control the stride, the pivot and the balance throughout the swing.
6. Check the hitter's head position. Make sure the head is staying in the hitting zone during contact.
7. Last – and usually the most difficult thing to correct – is the swing itself. If the player has a sound stance, the arms begin in a good position. But once the swing is initiated, the swing plane can have numerous problems.

BAT SIZE

There is no specific bat weight or bat length for a particular age group. The player should be using a bat they can control. If you are unsure what size bat a player should use, it is usually better to go lighter and smaller as opposed to bigger and heavier. If the proper sized bat is not available to a player and there are only bigger bats available make sure the hitter chokes up on the bat.



Batting Order

Knowing the team's make-up is important when making a batting order. Which players can run? Which players hit consistently? Who can handle pressure? Who can cope with failure? Who likes to hit? Who doesn't like to hit? For coaches teaching 6- to 12-year-old players, letting players hit in different spots in the batting order is healthy for team morale. This gives all players a chance to feel good about themselves and understand what it is like to hit in different spots in the order. Also, this is a way to let players know that one player is not bigger than the team.

CHARACTERISTICS OF BATTING ORDER POSITIONS

1. **Lead off Hitter:** Fast, good contact hitter, gets on base frequently, runs bases aggressively without hesitation, will take a walk and not afraid to steal at any time.
2. **Second Hitter:** Good contact hitter, above-average speed, good hitter, gets on base frequently, can bunt and steal.
3. **Third Hitter:** Best hitter on the team, can hit for average, clutch hitter who can drive in runs.
4. **Fourth Hitter:** Good hitter who can drive in runs, power and run producer.
5. **Fifth Hitter:** Your second-best hitter, can hit for average, same characteristics as third hitter but may lack one characteristic, good RBI man.
6. **Sixth Hitter:** Good hitter, picks up the RBIs that are missed by the heart of the order, surprise clutch hitter.
7. **Seventh Hitter:** Patient hitter who uses the skills they have.
8. **Eighth Hitter:** Your second clean-up hitter who can surprise the other team. Not a consistent hitter, but someone who is streaky.
9. **Ninth Hitter:** Second-best leadoff hitter, similar characteristics as the leadoff hitter, has to be a good hitter who can keep an inning alive, fast, bunts, aggressive player, a good clutch hitter, two-out hitter.

