

## HITTING WITH TWO STRIKES

To be productive, hitters must take a slightly different approach with two strikes. Indeed, hitting with two strikes should be considered a situational hitting skill.

Two Strike hitting requires an attitude of not 'giving in' to the pitcher. The hitter should 'shorten' his swing; i.e. less inertia movement with his hands. (In the development of hitters a short and compact swing is desirable anyway. Two strike hitting is a good way to approach the teaching of the compact swing.)

We recommend coaches spend time with their players distinguishing between the two swings. Reassure them that you want them to hit the ball hard but with two strikes trying to pull the ball can be counter-productive. With less than two strikes a hitter may look for a pitch in his "comfort zone"- one which he knows he can drive. With two strikes he does not have that luxury and he must be prepared to hit in all areas of the strike zone.

Hitters should practice these during tee, soft toss, batting cage and field BP sessions. Simply tell them to show you their two strike swing, and then throw the pitch. Praise or correct them not based on whether or not they get a base hit but rather on their mechanics and contact with the ball.

During games when they get two strikes you should calmly prompt them to be "short and quick" when they have two strikes and switch to their two strike swing. In time they will not need to be reminded. They will understand that it's no longer a time to think home run, but a time to think put the ball in play.

Because hitters do not have the luxury of looking for their pitch with two strikes, they must react to what the pitcher throws. We like our hitters to look for pitches middle-away. Look away and react and fight off inside pitches.

Another advantage of the two strike swing is that it will be easier for them to hold up on bad pitches and off-speed or breaking stuff.

The following are the mechanics of the two strike swing:

- Shorten stride. To shorten the stride, widen the stance. Some hitters have a no-stride approach or they simply have an up and down 'stride'.
- Choke up an inch.
- Expand the strike zone; do not take anything close that's low.
- Look middle -away (lay off of high heat).
- Shorten swing.
- Expand your strike zone to a ball width on either side of the plate.
- Battle.

Two-strike hitting increases your odds of contact and puts pressure on the defense. Also it makes pitchers throw more pitches. On the high school level and beyond, two strike swings exemplify coachable and smart ball players. It's yet another skill that adds up to make a player to stand out as a prospect. Teams that do this well will frustrate the opposing pitchers that can't routinely get hitters out with their "out pitches". They will also put added pressure on the defense. Fighting off two-strike pitches is a sign of a quality at-bat.