

THE GRIP

IT STARTS WITH THE HANDS

The hands are the one and only physical link to the bat. You don't hold it with your arms, your shoulders, your legs, feet or your mind. The only body part which touches the bat is your hands. You may use those other body parts to swing the bat properly, but your hands are the only physical connection to the bat.

It stands to reason then, that if you intend to develop yourself into a good hitter, that you start with a fundamentally sound grip on the bat. One that will allow your other body parts, once they are introduced, to work properly and efficiently with your hands to produce a powerful, effective, controlled and repeatable swing.

A good grip is one where the handle of the bat is held primarily in the fingers of the hand. To do this, lay the handle of the bat across the lower base of the fingers of each hand. Then, simply close your hands around the handle.



Do not squeeze the bat. Hold it lightly in your fingers. Pretend as though you are holding a small bird in your hands. You want to hold the bird firmly enough to prevent it from flying away, yet not so tightly that you harm the bird.

A light grip such as this keeps the muscles of the hands, wrists and forearms loose and prepared for action. Loose muscles are fast muscles. Tight muscles are slow. The tightness inhibits other muscles, that you don't even realize you are using, from helping you during the swing.

The easiest way to ensure that you are keeping the bat up in the fingers is to rotate your hands so that the second row of knuckles on each hand line up with each other.



Never hold the bat back in the palms of the hands! Holding the bat in this manner inhibits the flexion of the wrists during the swing and robs you of natural quickness and power. Holding the bat in the palms can also be very painful. I have seen many batters, of all levels, strike the ball while holding the bat incorrectly and receive a terrible bruise near the web of the top hand. These bruises seem to linger with hitters for several days or even weeks. Believe me, it only takes one of these bruises to make a believer out of you about the importance of holding the bat in the fingers.



If you are uncomfortable with aligning your knuckles as described earlier, try rotating the hands until the second and third knuckles line up with each other. This is known as a "box grip" and is used by quite a few Major League players.



I have found that most kids are comfortable somewhere in between these two grips with the top hand (second knuckle) aligned between the second and third knuckle of the bottom hand.

Either way, it is important to be comfortable. So, pick the one that feels the best for the size and shape of a player's hand and stick with it. Soon it will become second nature to hold it in your fingers automatically. When that happens, you will have laid the foundation for all of the other parts of the swing to work effectively.

* An easy way to remind the kids of a proper grip is to simply say "fingers" during BP or a game and have them extend their pointer fingers straight up in the air (while holding the bat). Both fingers should be pointed pretty close to straight up in the air, if they are pointing more sideways, the grip has rotated into a "too strong" position that will limit the hand action of the swing.