

# FASTPITCH SOFTBALL - BATTING TIPS

By Michele Smith

## 1. CHOOSING THE PROPER BAT.

It is important to swing a bat that is the right length and weight for you. A bat that is too short or too heavy will make it more difficult to hit the ball. To find the right length, stand in the middle of the batter's box and touch the head of the bat on the inside corner of home plate. The handle or the knob of the bat should be somewhere in the middle of the palm of your hand as your arm is angled slightly toward the inside corner. If the knob is down by your fingers, the bat is too short. If the knob is above your wrist, it is too long.

To find the right weight, hold the bat out straight with your arm extended at shoulder height. If the bat is too heavy it will be hard to keep it up. Most bats are 8 to 10 ounces less than the length of the bat. So, a 30-inch bat that is "10 ounces less than length" will weigh 20 ounces. (30" - 10oz=20oz)

## 2. GRIP.

The proper grip on the bat will have a major impact on your swing. You should try to keep your "knocking knuckles" lined up to get the most out of your swing. The "knocking knuckles" are the ones you use when knocking on a door. If your grip is not lined up correctly, the bat will have a tendency to jump as your wrists try to roll after contact. Keeping the "knocking knuckles" lined up will prevent this and give you a smooth swing from start to finish.

## 3. SETTING YOUR FEET IN THE BATTER'S BOX & YOUR STANCE.

Having the proper stance in the batter's box is necessary to start off the swing. You should enter the batter's box in the middle and make sure that your bat is able to cover all corners of the plate. If you can lean slightly forward and touch the "outside corner" of the plate with the bat head, you are probably in a good area of the box. Your feet should be shoulder width apart, and your weight should be balanced and on the balls of your feet. A slight bend in the knees and waist with the bat resting on your shoulder will keep you relaxed as you wait for the pitcher and umpire to get ready. As the pitcher starts the first movement of the ir motion, lift the bat from your shoulder keeping your hands close to your body. If your hands get too far from your body, you will lose power in your swing.

## 4. THE STRIDE AS THE PITCH IS COMING.

Now that the pitcher is into their motion, stride out after the ball is released. The direction of the

stride should be slightly toward the area in front of home plate, never step over the chalk line of the batter's box or on home plate, as you will be called out. If you step to the pitcher or "in the bucket" it will be hard to hit the outside pitch. Remember to keep your hands back, or still, until after you have strode out. If your hands move forward too early, it will be hard to hit change-ups or off-speed pitches.

## 5. THE SWING.

Once your front foot is on the ground and you have decided the pitch is a strike, you should move your hands to the ball. This is where the saying "throw your hands to the ball" comes from. Your hands move to the ball and this will help you get the bat head into the ball at the contact point. The swing should be level and straight into the ball. A swing with a loop in it will produce many pop-ups, which are easy outs.