



Bunting

Types of bunts

- Sacrifice Bunt
- Squeeze Bunt
- Fake Bunt
- Drop Step Bunt (right handed)
- Drag Bunt (left handed)



Sacrifice Bunt

The purpose of a sacrifice bunt is to advance the runner or runners to the next base with the expectation that the bunter will be out. Basically, the coach is making a decision that they are willing to take an out in order to move a runner into scoring position.

The sacrifice bunt is usually used with runners on first or second or both with less than two outs. When given the bunt sign, the batter should bunt the next strike. Do not attempt to sacrifice bunt a pitch that is not a strike.

The sacrifice bunt requires the least movement of any bunt. The basic position of the bunter is at the front of the box so that the possibility of bunting the ball into fair territory is maximized and so that the ball will not bounce off the plate. Because the defense is anticipating most sacrifice bunts, the batter does not need to worry about turning early and giving it away. The bunter turns as the pitcher separates her hands so that as she is not moving when she is actually attempting to bunt the ball. Generally speaking, the bunter should attempt to bunt the ball into the soft spot between the pitcher and first baseman. This placement will minimize the possibility that the defense will be able to make a play on the lead runner.

Sometimes the sacrifice bunt can be used in combination with the base runner(s) stealing. When used in the bunt-steal manner, the runner will be going on the pitch and the batter bunts the ball. The batter's goal is still just to advance the runner. The advantage is that the batter does not have to worry as much about where the bunt goes because the runner has a head start on the defense. The disadvantage is that the batter must protect the runner even if the pitch is bad. The bunt-steal combination should only be used when the batter is ahead in the count and there is a reasonable expectation that the batter will be thrown a good pitch to bunt.

Stance

The batter must be sure to keep her feet in the batter's box when she pivots to bunt. The bunter should have her weight is on the balls of the feet with the knees slightly bent and a slight bend at the waist. A good balanced position with her weight forward will give the bunter the ability adjust to the pitch and even to get out of the way of a wild pitch.



When the pitcher breaks her hands, the batter pivots on the balls of both feet turning her belly button toward the pitcher. The bunter's shoulders and hips are open to the pitcher. The feet stay in basic open hitting position (forward-back) with the back foot moving a couple of inches closer to the plate for better balance so that she can cover a strike over the outside part of the plate.

Hand Position and Grip

As the bunter pivots, she has two options for holding the bat. Some players prefer to use the **“Hand’s Apart”** grip and some players believe they have more control with a **“Hands Together”** grip. Players should try both hand position methods and decide which is more comfortable for them. The more skilled players should be encouraged to become proficient with the **“Hands Together”** grip.

As players become more skilled, they should move their hands together and try the pivot stance. The most important thing is for players to be comfortable and find out what works best for them.

In the **“Hands Together”** grip, the hands are together at the top of the bat grip with the top hand holding the bat loosely. This is the preferred grip for more capable players because it will allow the bunt to adjust to a slug, slap, or push bunt.

In the **“Hands Apart”** grip, the bottom hand grips the bat mid way up the bat tape with the knuckles up and the palm toward the ground. The top hand moves up the barrel to grip the bat above the tape as if to be shaking hands with the bat. The top hand grips the bat in the fingertips, away from the palm of the hand. This should leave a V-shaped space between the thumb and forefinger. The top hand serves to deaden the impact as the ball hits the bat and the hand acts as a cushion. The bottom hand acts as the directional control for the bunter.



Bat Angle

The most important thing about bunting is to keep the bat at an angle and to strike the top half of the ball with the bottom half of the bat. If the bat is kept at an angle, it is almost impossible to pop-up a bunt as balls miss-hit to the top part of the bat will foul off to the side and not up where a fielder or catcher can make the catch. The bat head is angled upward at about a 45-degree angle, and the bat head is pointed slightly toward the pitcher.



Good Bat Angle



Poor Bat Angle

Body Position at Contact

The bat is held in front of the bunter's chest and out in front of home plate. The elbows are bent, pointed downward at an angle, and slightly outside the body. The arms and shoulders are relaxed and free of tension. The batter must be careful not to reach and strike at the ball. Her chest and head are directly facing the pitcher with her eyes level at the top of the strike zone. When sacrifice bunting, the batter must never try to attempt to bunt a ball that is above her eyes which are at the top of the strike zone. At contact, visualize catching the ball with the bat, giving slightly with the bat and arms to soften the impact. Make contact with the ball in a manner that will help to deaden the ball.

To bunt a low pitch (that is still in the strike zone), the batter sinks at the knees to lower the entire body while maintaining the same bat angle as much as possible. She uses her knees to move the bat, and her body, up and down. As she lowers her hands and the bat, she makes sure that the bat head never drops below the hands.

Control the Bunt Direction

The position of the bat when the ball contacts the bat will determine where the ball goes. Generally speaking, we would prefer that the ball be put into play on the ground to the first base side of the pitcher. This bunt positioning helps to minimize the possibility that the defense will be able to make a play on the lead runner.

If the bat is square to the pitcher, the ball will rebound directly back to her. The bottom hand is the control hand. By pushing the bottom hand forward (right handed bunts) slightly the bunter can direct the ball to the soft spot between the pitcher and the first baseman. When a right-handed batter pulls the bottom hand back, the bunt will go to the third base side. When the bottom hand is pushed forward, the ball will go to first base side.

The adjustment of bat angle is not really that critical at the younger levels. Right-handed batters who are just learning to bunt will find it much easier to bunt an outside pitch toward first and an inside pitch toward third base. For the best chance of success, younger players who are just learning to bunt should bunt the ball where it is pitched.

Key Points for successful Sacrifice Bunting

- The bunter should set up in the front of the batter's box
- Pivot on the balls of your feet pointing your belly button toward the pitcher while moving your back foot slightly toward the plate.
- Keep your shoulders and hips open to the pitcher.
- Bend your knees slightly so that your eyes are at the top of the strike zone.
- Stay relaxed with your elbows outside the body with the elbows bent and pointed slightly downward.
- Keep the bat at an angle lowering your body to get to low pitches.
- Never let the bat head drop below your hands.
- Only bunt strikes.
- Try to get the Sacrifice bunt down in the area between the pitcher and the first baseman.
- When you see that the bunt is down and that ball is out of your running path, then run!
- Don't drop your bat on the ball. Make sure your bat ends up well clear of the ball.
- If the first baseman fields the bunt in front of you and is waiting to tag you, stop and force her to come to you to apply the tag, giving the base runner more time to advance. Do not back up! If you back up, the umpire will call the ball dead, will call an automatic out, and the runner(s) have to return to the bases they occupied before the bunt.
- Focus on running in the running lane in foul territory to avoid an interference call.