

# ★ CADETS

## PLAYER DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

### TWO STRIKE HITTING

There has been a lot made of two strike hitting over the last 10 years or so. Strikeouts have been climbing for hitters which is a result of trying to drive the ball for extra bases. Many hitters that have potential to hit the ball out of the park would rather take a chance to drive the ball and strikeout on a good swing than choke up and take a good pitch and hit a ground ball to the second baseman. I understand not wanting to completely change who you are as a hitter, but I also believe we can cut our swing down, make more consistent contact and still drive the baseball.

So much has changed with the two strike hitting and it differs with every hitter. But just remember a pitcher would rather pitch to a free swinging hitter with homerun potential rather than a pesky line drive hitter that doesn't strike out much, in big situations.

After a baseball season is over with and you look at hitters offensive numbers, its hard not to look at the strike outs and think what could have been. If a hitter struck out 150 times during a season, but was able to put 50 of those in play, he may have been able to squeak out 5 more hits, maybe more. If you add 5 extra hits into 500 at bats, your average goes up 10 points. That is a big difference, it goes up even more if you don't have that many at bats.

Baseball is a numbers game and anytime you can increase your offensive numbers a little will help you down the road.

Effective two strike hitters use a **physical or mental adjustment** at the plate, or a combination of the two.

There are 3 common physical adjustments that can be used at the plate when hitting with 2 strikes.

#### Physical Adjustments

##### 1. Choke up on the bat.

- This will increase your bat control, by making the bat feel lighter in your hands, your bat will feel more balanced, but you will give up a little whip.
- It will give you a shorter swing. The distance from your hands to the barrel is closer, thus making the distance your bat has to cover a little shorter.
- It will give you a quicker swing. This is because your bat path and the distance your bat has to cover a little shorter, making your swing time a little quicker.

**Note:** Choking up on the bat will make the bat easier to handle but you will lose a little whip that can create a little more pop off the bat.

## **2. Spread out your stance.**

- This will give you less body movement. Which is good when trying to make contact, the less moving parts in your swing the easier it is to hit the baseball.
- It will give you less head movement. Anytime you can limit the movement in your head the better hitter you will become. You can't hit it if you can't see it, and the more your head moves the harder it is to see the baseball.

## **3. Moving closer to the plate.**

Will help you cover the outside part of the plate better. This can be a good approach because most of the pitches that a pitcher uses to get you out, are on the outer part of the plate.

Being closer to the plate will give the pitcher less room for error on an inside pitch. Standing closer to the plate will force the pitcher to make a good pitch if he tries to come inside. If he makes a mistake, you may get a good pitch to hit, or the ball may hit you and you will be awarded 1st base.

### **A few negatives to moving closer to the plate.**

- Moving closer to the plate can make it more difficult on the pitcher but it can also make it more difficult on the hitter.
- You get comfortable with where you are at in the batters box and you get familiar with how pitches look out of the pitchers hand. Your eyes get used to seeing and identifying pitches early as being balls or strikes.
- If you move closer to the plate, pitches that may have looked earlier in the count inside (in relation to how far it is away from your body), may now be a strike because you brought the plate closer to you.
- Moving closer to the plate opens up a potential hole for the hitter, because now if the pitcher can throw the ball inside for a strike, it may tie up the hitter and make it more difficult to hit.

## **Mental Adjustments**

Making a mental adjustment can be just as helpful as a physical adjustment. Mental adjustments can be a thought that can alter a hitters approach so he doesn't have to be uncomfortable with a physical adjustment that he hadn't worked on.

Typical mental adjustments:

- Hit the ball up the middle.
- Hit the ball to the opposite field.
- Let the ball get deep in the strike zone.
- See the ball as long as possible.
- Put the ball on the barrel.
- Short and quick.
- Slow it down.

Just pick one, you can pick any of these or use one of your own that works best for you to help with a 2 strike approach. If you have more than one mental adjustment, your body will not react to either of them properly because it will be trying to do both, and it is proven that too much information can be problematic.

## **A few notes on two strike hitting approach:**

It is important to not change your baseball swing with two strikes. You work on your swing in the cage, in practice and every time you swing the bat. Change your set up and approach, but not your swing. Your swing is your swing, and if it differs with 2 strikes you are making the art of hitting even more difficult.

Practice your two strike physical changes, if you plan on using them in the game. If you normally stand upright and have your bottom hand on the knob of the bat and with 2 strikes you spread out your stance and choke up, you will feel uncomfortable and will only be hurting yourself. Don't play with something you don't practice.

Some hitters use their 2 strike approach their whole at bat. If a hitter has been successful with these adjustments some hitters choose to use their two strike approach every swing.

*I hope you find this article on two strike hitting to be helpful. If so, I hope you'll share it with your friends and help us spread the word about PBI's great free resources. If you have questions or additional thoughts, I invite you to comment below. Play hard! – Doug*