

# Hitter's Guide to the Curveball



The Deuce. The Hammer. The Hook. Uncle Charlie. Lord Charles. All nicknames for the curveball: the pitch that keeps youth hitters up at night. Sure, pure heat can be intimidating, but something about seeing that first curveball in game action can be a difficult experience.

That being said, you can learn to hit the deuce--and any off-speed pitch for that matter as the approach is the same. With the following approach and some good old fashioned hard work, you can hit curveballs consistently and with authority.

## Tip No. 1: Hit Off the Fastball

So how does looking for a fastball help me hit the off-speed pitch? Simple really: if you are looking curveball and the pitcher throws a fastball, you've got absolutely no chance. The ball will be in the catcher's mitt before you know it. Look fastball, adjust to off-speed.

## Tip No. 2: Have a Plan at the Plate

This goes for all hitting, not just the off-speed pitch. You should have an idea of what you want to do BEFORE you step into the batter's box. What pitch are you looking for? What does the game situation call for? There's nothing worse than a hitter getting himself out. Great hitters rarely do this; average and below average hitters do this frequently. This simple adjustment can increase your average over 100 points easily, even in good hitters.

## Tip No. 3: Early Recognition

This is huge. In order to hit the off-speed pitch, you must recognize the pitch early on. Great hitters can even tell by a pitcher's arm angle before he lets go of the ball. Learn to pick up the ball as early as possible, preferably before he lets it go. Since you only have about .4 seconds from when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand to when it hits the catcher's mitt, this is critical. Every single pitch you see in practice you should be working very hard to improve this. Don't simply go through the motions -- get and stay focused and it will become second nature.

## Tip No. 4: Put a Good Swing on the Ball

A common misconception is that a swing on a curveball needs to be different than a fastball. This couldn't be further from the truth. Next ballgame you watch on TV, watch any hard hit ball off of an off speed pitch and you will see the batter swung the bat with authority. Put the ball in play and put the ball in play with some sting!

## Tip No. 5: Practice

No secret here. The only way to get better at hitting curve ball is to hit curve balls. So put your helmet on and have someone throw to you. Be sure to have them mix it up and not just throw curve ball after curve ball. You want to replicate game action as best you can.