

The following is an excerpt from "The Superstars HITTERS BIBLE"
by Bernardo Leonard, Zen Master and Peter Golenbock

The Right Bat

You must choose a bat that is comfortable and well balanced.

The balance of a bat comes from the proportion of weight to length. When you find the correct balance, the result will be a quick, controlled swing!

There is NO REAL DEFINITE formula for selecting the right bat. Use the charts to get a basic starting point of a bat for your age, weight and height - then find THE BAT that feels RIGHT! It MUST be light enough, and you must feel quick enough to use it!!!!

TIP: Select a bat as long and heavy as you can CONTROL!

There is a balancing point - *a trade off* - to be made between the weight of the bat (which gives it momentum) and the length of the bat (which controls the elapsed time of the swing).

A bat that is too heavy will result in a slow swing, loss of balance during the swing, loss of optical vision, and a bad path as you swing at the ball.

If the bat is too light you may not be able to feel the bat head. If you can't feel where the bat head is, you will suffer a loss of control. In addition, when you do swing - your lead shoulder will always open too soon.

Choose your bat based on your physical strength and your hand size. The stronger you are, the bigger and longer the bat you can handle. NEVER use a bat that feels too heavy or is weighted too much at the end.

Often on youth league teams the only bats available are too heavy. If this is the case hitters should experiment with each bat by choking it at different points to find the "balance point," the position where the bat feels comfortable in the hitter's hand. By varying the position of the hands on the bat handle, a hitter can find and mark the balance point with a piece of tape where the bottom part of the lower hand is positioned on the bat. The tape will remind the hitter where to hold the bat each time, thus increasing bat control. A bat is not always controlled best by holding it down on the knob.

Picking the Right Bat

A coach (parent) grips the bat at the barrel end and extends it toward the hitter. The hitter places the bat across the palm of his bottom hand with the palm facing upward and then wraps fingers and thumb around the grip in a comfortable position. The coach (parent) then releases the bat.

If the hitter cannot control the barrel end of the bat - If it drops more than one inch or two - It is too heavy, too long, or both

The grip of the bottom hand should be firm, with most of the grip strength coming from the middle two fingers.

TIP: If you have large hands, you will be able to swing any bat, thin-handled or thick. If you have small hands, it is wise to stick to a bat with a thin handle.

If you are a hitter with slow hands, choose a bat with a thick handle. You will get jammed often and with a thick-handled bat those balls might go over the infield rather than splinter the bat.

If you are a long-ball hitter or a batter with quick hands, opt for a thin-handled bat because you can generate better bat speed.

For the contact hitter, choose a thick-handled bat.

If you choose a thin-handled bat: Decrease the weight of the bat so it does not feel top-heavy.

If you choose a thick-handled bat: Increase the weight so it will not feel out of balance.

Whatever bat you do choose, you will find there will be days when it doesn't feel comfortable. The reason is that during the course of the season, some days you will feel strong and on other days your body and hands will feel heavy and weak.

As a result, it is mandatory during the course of the season to change BOTH the weight and handle of your bat.

This should only be temporary. Once you get your feel back, return to your original bat.

Aluminum or Wood?

For the amateur player, aluminum bats come as long and light as you can handle. As a result, any batter can generate bat speed! Unfortunately for those of you with ideas of becoming a pro player, the aluminum bat gives a false sense of accomplishment.

An amateur batter with an aluminum bat who becomes a professional and is forced to switch to a wood bat, he or she will need months to adapt to the different feel of the wood bat.

We recommend using the wood bat as much as possible in batting practice. The wood bat is dead weight; aluminum bats are metal weight. Good bat speed is harder to attain with a wood bat, so by practicing with the wood bat you will strengthen your swing for the game when you do use the aluminum bat!