

## Finding the Correct Swing Plane

A frequent question asked of me: “what exactly is the correct swing plane”? I do understand there are a number of swing plane teachings out there; some work but many don't. I would like to present the “elliptical swing” plane; a straight forward and efficient swing plane for seniors that will make them better hitters.

Let's first cover what is commonly understood to be improper swing planes. The ever-present “uppercut swing” is considered by experts as not an effective plane for hitters. However, it is used by many of our seniors playing the game today thinking it's an easy way to launch a softball over the 300 foot barrier.

The “uppercut swing” requires the bat-head dropping down below the hands during the swing which requires a lifting of the bat-barrel to the ball working against the force of gravity thus reducing bat speed. Take advantage of nature's gravitational force for greater bat speed. Swinging with an “uppercut swing” for the ordinary senior, typically results in reaching the warning track for a fly-out at best.

Another common improper swing plane is the extreme “down swing” at the ball. This swing plane has the shape of a ‘V’ usually resulting in weak infield popups and lazy outfield fly balls. Employing a steep downward swing does take advantage of gravity but requires perfect timing leaving little room for error at the contact point. The downswing approach is susceptible to a cleaving of the bottom of the ball resulting in weak fly balls to the infield and outfield.

What then is a good swing plane? The correct swing plane in my estimation is a swing plane that begins with taking the bat directly to meet the ball from your back shoulder area; hands are leading the bat with the barrel-head always above your hands to meet the incoming pitch. The lead arm straightens and the rear elbow tucks into your side oblique muscles, then striking the bottom of the ball with a level angle of attack or with a slight upswing.

After the bat leaves the hitter's rear shoulder area, the swing plane should take on the appearance of an elongated “U” shape rather than a radical “V” shape or a drastic uppercut as discussed above in this article.

The preferred “elliptical swing” arc allows for the bat to stay on a flat plane for a longer period of time for a more forceful and direct striking of the ball. Contact with the ball is ideally made at the very end of the “U's” flat spot just before the swing begins to

turn upwards into the follow-through making contact out in front of your body. Don't let the ball travel too deep into your stance or you'll find yourself fighting the ball off and with reduced bat speed

The "elliptical swing" plane is not unlike a golfer's swing arc except that the plane is more horizontal around the body in contrast to the vertical or upright in golf. Many professional golfers hit their drivers similarly to this swing path by teeing the ball high and making contact just as the clubhead is turning upward.

This may lead you to think this is "swinging up" at the ball but quite the contrary. Catching the ball on the upswing at the bottom of the ball allows for the bat-barrel to hit through more of the ball's center of mass, thereby, creating a more robust hit with greater ball-exit-speed. Contacting the ball with a slightly upward swing while striking the bottom area of the ball will also create the necessary underspin for longer carry (see the "Magnus" effect).

I also recommend contacting the incoming pitch between your knees and belt area letting the ball drop into your power zone for maximum power. This may require the batter to stand a bit deeper in the box if you're an upfront guy now. It's more difficult to put your best swing on a ball catching it up around the neck and shoulders or down around mid-thigh to the knee area. These two contact points use mostly arms to hit the ball and don't utilize the larger muscle groups about the torso for more power.

Summarizing our swing plane discussion:

- 1) don't swing the bat with a steep descending blow to the ball,
- 2) don't swing up trying to lift the ball with an extreme uppercut arc,
- 3) the ideal swing plane should resemble an "ellipse" moving horizontally around the center of your torso.

Remember to be quick to the ball and then leisurely on the follow-through after contact.

**(See the picture sequence attachment for a visual of the concepts discussed in this article).**

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