

DEVELOP MORE POWER WITH A FLAIL ACTION

The “flail” swing, represents a hitter's ability to achieve greater bat-speed into the hitting zone while exerting the same amount of effort. The flail process controls the release of stored elastic energy within the body and improves the mechanical output of the total system. The word flail originates from the Latin word flagellum which means to whip. I understood the word flail as a youngster to mean: to wave or swing wildly. The word “flail” in this article is used to indicate a controlled swing action that is executed with the purpose of increasing power by taking advantage of physics. When performed correctly, the flail segment of the swing produces a freewheeling explosive action.

The “flail” apparatus is a historical agricultural tool that was used for threshing grain. Flailing is the process of separating grain from their husks by striking them with the flail. A flail tool is typically made from two sticks, one long and the other much shorter and are attached by a rope or chain. When employed the long stick is held and swung causing the other stick, the swipple, to accelerate and separate the husks. The swipple is the part of a flail that strikes the grain and for our purposes represents the bat which strikes the ball (see insert).

To execute the “flail” action, the bat is held near to the rear shoulder ~6 inches away when you begin your swing with the barrel pointing toward the pitcher. As youths, most of us were taught to push the knob early in the swing forward thereby, disconnecting the bat from the upper body and killing power. I recommend “turning the barrel” instead of pushing the knob forward which rotates the barrel immediately rearward into the path of the ball. This creates early bat-speed without pushing the knob which generates little early bat-speed.

The hitter should accelerate the bat behind the back shoulder to begin the swing. The swing advances until the bat lines up with lead arm. The unhinging action of the wrists releases bat-lag stored up energy producing swing speed. The whole action is the “quick to the ball” concept. Remember to hinge the wrists before they are released to the ball rather than “rolling the wrists”.

The batter’s hitting flail is made up of the following parts:

1. A nearly-straight left arm at contact is the first segment of the hitting “flail”,
2. the other segment is the bat itself which must be lagged to work as a flail,
3. connecting the two flail segments are the wrists that transfer energy to the bat.

The lead arm should start your swing and then comes the rear arm which supplies most of the power. It’s imperative not to straighten your right arm (for a right-handed batter) too early in the swing, as it can kill all the flail action. Your right arm and hand should remain passive for the majority of your swing to the ball. If you want to hit the ball for greater distance you need to extend your right arm fully after the striking of the ball and then release the top hand for your follow-through.

Summary: Do not extend the right arm too early or you may cast the bat outwards killing the flail action. Your arms become totally straight at only one moment during your swing and that is right after you hit the ball. Some players rely on the left arm to generate the bat speed and some rely on the right arm; neither of these approaches will maximize your power as they must work in coordination. As mention above your left arm should begin the swing and then the right arm comes into play delivering the power blow.

Demonstration of flailing grain; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5kXm4sa0p4>

Barrel-Turn swing by the Teacherman86: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jQOVVsYIQ>

Happy hitting,

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