**In, Out, Up the Middle**

**Purpose:**
Helps hitters work on hitting the ball to all fields and recognizing pitch location.

**Equipment:**
Batting practice equipment; L-screen or other type of screen; two cones; colored tape

**Setup:**
This drill can be used during practice or as an individual or team competition. Place 2 cones on the edge of the outfield grass, 1 behind the shortstop and 1 behind the second baseman. This divides the field into 3 areas. See diagram below. Place 2 strips of tape from the front of the plate to the back to divide home plate into 3 equal sections. Place a pitching screen close enough to home plate that you can control the location of the pitch.

**Execution:**
As each pitch approaches the plate, the hitter must call out the location as he starts his swing (in, out, or middle) and hit the ball to the appropriate part of the field.

Example: Right-handed hitter: Inside pitch; hitter should call out "in" and pull the ball to the left side of the infield. Outside pitch; hitter should call "out" and hit the ball to the opposite field. Pitch down the middle; hitter calls out middle and hits the ball back up the middle.

As you pitch, you're in a great position to see if the hitter is aware of the strike zone and able to hit the ball to all fields based on where the ball is pitched. The tape on the plate will help you to analyze whether the correct location was called out by the hitter.



Contest: I love making contests and games out of drills. This can be made into a contest in many different ways. One way is just keeping track of points during batting practice. Let's say each kid gets 10 swings. Properly calling out location and hitting it in the right direction results in a point. Best total after batting practice is the "King of BP" or whatever you want to call it.

Another fun game to play right after batting practice: Get a team in the field and the rest of the kids up to bat. Each player gets up to bat with a 2 strike count. They have to call the pitch and hit it to the correct area. If they're successful they go to the end of the batting line and wait for their next turn. If they're not successful, they grab a glove and go out in the field. Next player in the field comes up to hit. I don't have a pitcher or catcher with this game and we rotate from: left > center > right > first > second > short > third > hit - Unless you're short of kids have them run the bases. Keep track of who has the longest streak of staying up to bat.

Hint: If a couple of kids really do well, have them start out in the field to give the other kids more chances to make it through at least a couple of times.

You can also run a scrimmage using this drill. I've used this for a variety of different games. Be creative and the kids will love it.