The Pre-At-Bat Routine

A Simple Mental and Physical System to Slow the Game Down and Compete with Confidence



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A complete system for slowing the game down and competing with confidence — every at-bat, every time.

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THE PROBLEM

Why Most Hitters Feel Rushed

Most hitters have a **routine problem.** Without a real system in place, your brain just fills that void with mental clutter—crowd noise, past slumps, or simple fear. This head trash creates physical tension, leading to a tight grip, a rushed load, and an early commitment to the swing. You feel like the pitcher is speeding up the game, but in reality, your nervous system is just getting overwhelmed by input that you haven't learned to filter yet.

A lot of hitters make the mistake of thinking "being ready" is just an emotional state rather than a mechanical sequence. They try to "will" themselves into feeling calm, but that kind of effort just adds more noise to the workspace. What actually slows the game down is a **repeatable pre-at-bat routine**—a set of physical and mental triggers that act as a barrier between the chaos of the game and your focus. It sends a signal to your nervous system: *I am in control.*

What Hitters Do Wrong

- React emotionally to the outcome of the last at-bat
- Walk into the box with zero mental reset button
- Rely on erratic adrenaline spikes instead of a process
- Think about future results rather than the present pitch
- Change their approach based on the count rather than their plan
- Allow external pressures to dictate their physical tempo

What Elite Hitters Do Instead

- Execute the exact same routine for every single at-bat
- Perform a deliberate mental reset before crossing the chalk
- Anchor their focus with consistent physical and verbal cues
- Compete one pitch at a time—the past and future do not exist
- Use specific breathing patterns to manage heart rate
- Identify their "win" condition before even taking a stance

The Neuroscience of the Reset

Your brain uses patterns to "hack" the nervous system. By sticking to a consistent sequence, you shift yourself out of fight-or-flight and into a flow state. This settles your heart rate and moves your brain's focus from worrying about what might happen to tracking the movement in front of you, which helps you see the ball better and react with more time.

Calm is just a skill you build by repeating a system until it becomes second nature. With a reliable routine, you stop worrying about "trying to stay calm" because your body already knows the sequence that produces it, turning the box into a familiar, controlled environment.

Building this takes real discipline. Even on the days when your timing is off or the pressure feels heavy, you have to commit to the same breaths, steps, and mental cues. Repetition is what breeds the confidence that you cannot be rattled, no matter who happens to be standing on the mound.

That system starts the second your name hits the lineup card and stays with you until you step out of the box. This guide will break down every phase, giving you the tools you need to move from "trying to hit" to "consistently competing."

PHASE 1

Dugout & On-Deck Preparation

Your at-bat doesn't start when you step into the box; it kicks off the second the guy two spots ahead of you heads to the plate. **This is your activation window.** Most hitters blow it by messing with their phones, killing time in the dugout, or just spacing out and ignoring what the pitcher is actually doing. The best hitters treat this period like a job. They know that if they aren't actively processing the pitcher's tendencies and getting their body ready before crossing the chalk, they're already losing the battle.

1

Mental Review

In the dugout, take 30 seconds to mentally review your approach for this pitcher. What's his best pitch? What sequence does he lean on? What zone is yours? You don't need a scouting report — just one clear game plan before you leave the dugout. Visualize the specific pitch location you are hunting and commit to refusing anything else until you have two strikes.

2

Mini Visualization

Close your eyes for 20–30 seconds in the on-deck circle. See yourself driving the ball. Not a perfect swing — a *confident* swing. Feel what it feels like to put a good at-bat together. Your brain cannot distinguish between vivid visualization and real execution. Use that by rehearsing your trigger movement and feeling the barrel path hit the sweet spot of the ball.

3

Breathing Reset

Inhale slowly for 4 counts. Hold for 2. Exhale for 6. Do this twice. This isn't a relaxation technique — it's a physiological reset that drops your heart rate and sharpens visual focus. Do it every at-bat, every game, without exception. This pattern overrides the adrenaline spike, ensuring you stay centered and composed when the pitcher tries to speed you up.

4

Observe the Pitcher

Watch at least two pitches in the on-deck circle. Look for arm slot, release point, and pitch movement. You're gathering real-time data, not guessing. This information belongs to you before you ever step in the box. Take note of how his release point shifts on off-speed pitches so you can identify the spin early.

Key principle: Phase 1 is about information and intention. When you leave the on-deck circle, you should know your plan, your breath, and your mindset. Walk to the plate with purpose — not hope. This intentionality acts as a bridge, ensuring that by the time you step into the box, your mind is completely clear and your body is ready to react.

PHASE 2

Walking to the Plate & Stepping Into the Box

That 10-to-15-second walk from the on-deck circle to the box is your most important transition. Most guys treat it like it's nothing—walking with their heads down, checking the dirt, or rushing out there like the game is breathing down their necks. **Top-tier hitters own those steps.** They treat the walk like a tactical move, stepping with purpose and keeping their eyes locked on the prize. This is where your routine actually counts, where you cut out the noise and get your mind and body perfectly synced up.



Take Your Final Breath

As you walk to the plate, take one long, deliberate exhale. This is your last physiological reset before competition begins. Don't rush it; let your shoulders drop and your grip loosen as you process the air. You're telling your body: we're ready, not panicked. This breath acts as a final barrier, shutting out any lingering frustration from your previous at-bat or the inning's events.



Say One Affirmation

One word or one short phrase. Something you've chosen in advance — not invented under pressure. *"See it, hit it." "Stay short." "Attack the zone."* It doesn't need to be poetic; it needs to be **yours**, and it needs to be consistent. Repeat it internally or under your breath as you approach the chalk to anchor your intent. The same phrase, every at-bat, signals to your subconscious: execution mode is on.



Step In With Presence

Step in deliberately. Take your time setting your feet into your preferred stance, ensuring your foundation is stable and balanced. Don't just rush to look ready — actually *be* ready by feeling the dirt beneath your cleats. Do a quick scan of the field — where are the gaps, where are the infielders positioned? One sharp, tactical glance. Then, bring your focus back to the mound with total conviction.



Fire Your Physical Trigger

A glove tap, a bat waggle, or a jersey adjustment. Whatever it is, **pick one and own it**. Your physical trigger is the final signal that the preparation routine is complete and the competition has begun. Execute this movement with aggression to snap your nervous system into full alert. This anchor closes the preparation loop and shifts your brain instantly from thought mode into pure, instinctive reaction mode.

PHASE 3

Pre-Pitch Focus

You're locked in the box. Feet are set. Trigger is fired. Now, there's only one mission: **compete on this pitch.** Forget the last one. Forget the count or what the dugout is buzzing about. Just this pitch. When your focus drifts during an at-bat, the game feels like it's speeding up, your heart rate climbs, and you stop reacting athletically, turning your swing into a guessing game. This mental framework is your safety net; it clears out the internal chatter and ensures your eyes and brain are dialed into the pitcher's tempo before he even starts his move.

The Pre-Pitch Mental Stack

1 Pick One Visual Focus Point

Lock your eyes on the pitcher's release point or his front hip—just one anchor, not the whole mound. A narrow focus window speeds up your reaction and kills the mental clutter. By tuning out the noise from the defense or the dugout, you create a laser-like tunnel that forces your brain to hone in only on the info that actually matters for your swing.

2 One Cue Only

Your lone swing thought goes here: *"Stay back," "Short path,"* or *"Hands first."* Just one. If you're juggling two thoughts, you're already overthinking. Sticking to one technical trigger keeps your mechanics fluid, whereas trying to manage a laundry list of adjustments will almost always make you tighten up and lose your rhythm.

3 Trust Your Preparation

You've already put in the work. The tee sessions, the cage rounds, the film study. This isn't the moment to rebuild your swing—let your training take the wheel. Your only job is to react to the baseball. When you quit analyzing your mechanics and start trusting the muscle memory you've built, you unlock the freedom to swing at full intensity with total conviction.

4 Compete One Pitch at a Time

Whether you just ripped a double or went down swinging, that pitch is history. Every new delivery is a complete reset—don't let the last one bleed into this one. Holding onto frustration from a bad call or a missed fastball is the fastest way to lose the next battle; leave the last result behind so you can put 100% of your focus on the opportunity right in front of you.

Between-Pitch Reset Protocol

After every pitch—whether you put it in play or take it—step out of the box and run through your reset:

1. Step back with your back foot
2. Look down at the ground or the knob of the bat — break eye contact with the result
3. One breath. Short and deliberate
4. One word — your affirmation or your cue
5. Step back in. Start fresh

This routine is built to surgically detach you from the outcome of the last pitch so you don't carry any lingering baggage into your next swing. Hitters who cut corners here often end up "chasing the last pitch," leading to over-adjusting and emotional frustration. If you don't reset, you aren't just battling the guy on the mound; you're battling your own head.



The rule: You are only allowed to think about one thing at a time in the box. Pick your cue before the pitch. Execute it. Reset after. Repeat every single pitch — no exceptions. If you allow multiple thoughts to clutter your mind, you lose your ability to react instinctively. The moment you start overthinking is the moment the pitcher has already won.

PHASE 4

The On-Deck Circle Routine

The on-deck circle isn't just a place to wait; it's your final prep zone—the last 60 seconds before you step onto the stage. Too many hitters treat this time like a break, just chatting or taking lazy practice swings. But if you want to play at an elite level, you have to treat this as the moment you flip the switch from observer to competitor. This is where you lock in your game plan and get your body in sync with the pitcher's rhythm.



Observe the Pitcher

Use this time to really scout the guy on the mound. Watch his arm slot, where he lets the ball go, and how much movement he's getting on his stuff. Pay close attention to what he's throwing in specific counts—does he go to his breaking ball when he's ahead? What's his go-to pitch to put guys away? This kind of homework will give you a major edge when you step into the box.



Time the Delivery

Don't just swing at air—take practice hacks that match the pitcher's actual tempo. Your body needs to feel his cadence, from that first move to the point of explosion. Building that sensory connection is the only way to make sure your timing is game-ready, so when you actually get up there, your swing is already synced to his delivery.



Visualize Your Swing

Get into a real mental rehearsal. See yourself crushing a specific pitch in a specific spot—like a heater right down the middle or a slider hanging over the plate. Don't just imagine a "good at-bat"; actually feel the barrel hitting the ball. This kind of vivid visualization primes your brain to execute that exact swing when you get the green light.



Lock In Your Plan

Have your approach set before you even start the walk to the plate. What are you hunting early in the count? How are you going to adjust if you get two strikes on you? Walk in with a clear, aggressive game plan, not just a hope that things work out. You need to own your strategy before you even dig into the dirt.

The on-deck circle is where your at-bat really begins. By the time you step into the box, the work of scouting, timing, visualizing, and planning should already be done. This lets you walk up with a clear mind and a locked-in body, ready to just react and let your training take over.

That walk from the circle to the plate is about more than just moving your feet; it's the final transition from intense prep to pure focus. When you handle this routine the right way, you aren't just getting into position—you're mentally and emotionally ready to compete. This kind of disciplined preparation is where real confidence comes from, giving you the freedom to trust your work and swing with everything you've got, no matter what the scoreboard says.

PHASE 5

Between-Pitch Focus

What you do between pitches is just as critical as your actual swing. Most guys waste that time either dwelling on what just happened or getting hyped up about what's coming next. The best hitters use that gap as a legit reset—a dialed-in system to clear their heads and get ready to compete for every single pitch. This mindset lets you walk up to the dish with a clean slate, free from the baggage of the last pitch or the nerves of what's to come, so you can just react and play.

Staying Locked In

- Maintain a **process-focused mindset**, concentrating solely on your established routine and execution rather than dwelling on the outcome of the last swing or anticipating the next.
- Exhibit **strong body language** at all times, regardless of the previous pitch. Your posture, facial expressions, and overall demeanor project confidence and control, influencing both your own psychology and the perception of the pitcher.
- Avoid **scoreboard watching** or obsessing over statistics. Your role is to compete in the present moment, making micro-adjustments and executing your plan, not to be distracted by external factors.
- Anchor yourself in the **present moment** by actively observing the game, your teammates, and the pitcher's reactions without judgment. This active engagement prevents mental wandering.
- Utilize a **physical anchor**—a specific focal point (like the bill of your helmet) or a subtle gesture—to pull your attention back and center your focus whenever you feel your mind drifting.

The hitters who really own that reset get a huge edge over everyone else. They don't carry any baggage from a bad call or a missed swing into the next at-bat. Instead, they treat every pitch like it's its own game, which keeps their mind clear, their body loose, and their focus pinned on exactly what they need to see to drive the ball.

The 5-Second Reset

1. **Step out:** Physically remove yourself from the batter's box, taking a deliberate step or two away. This physically breaks the connection to the previous pitch, signaling a fresh start.
2. **Exhale fully:** Take a deep, cleansing breath and completely exhale, releasing any residual tension, frustration, or negative energy from the last play or pitch.
3. **Look down at knob:** Redirect your gaze to a neutral, non-distracting object, typically the knob of your bat. This provides a mental "home base" for your eyes, preventing them from fixating on the pitcher or defensive alignment prematurely.
4. **Say your cue word:** Mentally or verbally repeat your chosen cue word (e.g., "Attack," "See Ball," "Relax," "Trust"). This single word acts as a rapid re-focusing mechanism, bringing your mental game back to your core intention.
5. **Step back in with eyes up:** Re-enter the batter's box, re-establishing your stance with your eyes immediately locked onto the pitcher's release point, ready for the next delivery.

The power of this 5-second reset lies in its unwavering consistency. By performing the exact same sequence of actions every single time, you program your nervous system for automaticity. This conditioning allows you to clear your mind and prepare for the next pitch without conscious effort, even under the most intense pressure.

GAME DAY

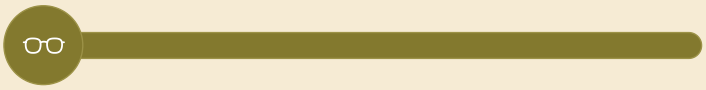
Game Day Mental Preparation

The mental grind doesn't just kick in once you're standing in the box; it starts way before the first pitch is even thrown. High-level hitters look at game day as a full performance, not just another game, and they know that every minute before the first inning is a chance to dial in their focus and lock in that confidence. The work you put into your head space hours before the game directly dictates how relaxed, sharp, and ready you'll feel when the pressure's on, clearing the way for you to execute when it really counts.



Morning Visualization

Dedicate 5-10 minutes to vividly visualizing successful at-bats. See specific pitches in specific locations, and imagine your best swing connecting perfectly. Make this mental rehearsal as detailed and sensory as possible, feeling the contact, hearing the crack of the bat, and watching the ball fly.



Review Your Scouting Report

Before stepping on the field, know the opposing pitcher. Familiarize yourself with their tendencies, pitch mix, velocity, and go-to out pitches. This knowledge empowers you with information, eliminating guesswork and allowing you to step into the box with a strategic advantage.



Build Your Hitting Plan

Develop a clear approach for the game. Decide what pitch you're hunting early in the count, and what your two-strike strategy will be if you fall behind. A well-defined plan eliminates hesitation, allowing you to react instinctively and aggressively when your pitch arrives.



Pre-Game Routine Lock-In

In the final 30 minutes before first pitch, go through your full mental routine. Incorporate deep breathing exercises, positive affirmations, and your focus cue. This primes your nervous system, ensuring you are in an optimal state of readiness, calm, and concentration.

The best hitters in the world don't leave their mental preparation to chance; they treat it with the same discipline as their physical training. They schedule dedicated time for it, diligently practice their techniques, and fiercely protect this crucial phase of their game-day routine.

Once you've put in that detailed mental work before the game, you can finally cut loose and just play without second-guessing yourself. This kind of prep clears out all the noise and anxiety, letting you step into the box with a clean slate and react to whatever the game throws at you, knowing for a fact that you've done everything possible to put yourself in the win column.

THE FOUNDATION

Building a Repeatable Routine

The real gap between a hitter who rakes in BP and one who actually performs in games comes down to one thing: repeatability. Elite hitters don't wait around to "feel" good or hope they're locked in—they lean on a system that produces results regardless of how they're feeling that day. A solid routine is the bridge that turns all your hard work into consistent, high-level execution no matter the situation.

Consistency Builds Confidence

When you run the same routine every single at-bat, your brain stops guessing and starts trusting. True confidence isn't some fleeting emotion; it's the direct result of rigorous repetition and absolute belief in your prep.

Routine Creates Automaticity

The more you drill your routine, the less mental energy you'll have to burn during the actual at-bat. This efficiency clears your head, letting you lock in on the only thing that matters: picking up the ball and reacting.

It Works Under Pressure

A routine that you've burned into your muscle memory in the cage is the only thing that holds up when the game is on the line. If you only try to use a routine in games, it's going to fail you when you need it most. Train it everywhere.

It's Always In Your Control

You can't do anything about the pitcher's stuff, a bad call by the ump, or what the scoreboard says. But you own your routine. That level of personal control is your greatest weapon.

Your Daily Commitment

- Practice your routine in every cage session, making it second nature.
- Use it consistently in batting practice (BP) to ingrain the sequence.
- Apply it during scrimmages, simulating game-day pressure.
- Review it mentally before bed, reinforcing the steps through visualization.
- Refine it over time based on feedback, but never abandon it under pressure.

Your routine is only as good as your willingness to stick to it every time. If you build it the right way in the off-season, you'll have an unshakeable foundation for your performance that won't let you down when the regular season rolls around.

What You Now Have

- Phase 1: Your Dugout & On-Deck Mindset
- Phase 2: The Walk to the Plate & Box Setup
- Phase 3: Pre-Pitch Focus & Readiness
- Phase 4: On Deck Circle Routine
- Phase 5: The 5-Second Reset (Between Pitches)
- Game Day: Your Game Day Mental Preparation

You now have a complete, locked-in system built to maximize your performance at every turn. The only thing left is to own every part of this routine and commit to running it every time you step into the box. This system is your roadmap to getting the job done.

In this game, the guys who consistently rise to the top aren't always the most naturally gifted; they're just the ones who are ready for anything. They know that a meticulously crafted, non-negotiable routine isn't just a strategy—it's how you separate yourself from the rest of the pack. Get after it, build your routine, and go show them what you've got.

BUILD YOUR SYSTEM

Your Personal Pre-At-Bat Routine

Every elite hitter has a routine that's uniquely their own. Trying to copy a pro's sequence from YouTube is just a shortcut that ignores how your own nervous system, rhythm, and swing actually work. "Owning" your process means finding the exact sequence that puts you in a flow state, no matter what the scoreboard says or what the count is. When you build this with intention and stick to it with total discipline, it becomes a mental trigger—a clear signal for your brain to stop thinking and start competing.

My Breathing Cue

Write out your exact breath pattern — inhale count, hold, exhale count. Use it before every at-bat, in every practice rep, in every cage session. **Example:** *4 count in, 2 hold, 6 count out — twice before I step in.* To develop this, focus on belly breathing rather than shallow chest breaths, as this physically triggers the parasympathetic nervous system to lower your heart rate and calm your eyes for better tracking.

My Affirmation

One phrase. 1–5 words max. Choose something that reflects your identity as a hitter — not what you want to happen, but who you are when you compete. **Example:** *"See it. Attack it."* When selecting your phrase, ensure it focuses on an action rather than a result; you cannot control a hit, but you can always control your aggression, so make your affirmation a reminder of your intent to dominate the zone.

My Focus Point

Where are your eyes going before the pitch? Release window, front hip, or another specific anchor? Lock it in before you compete so your eyes have a home base. **Example:** *"I lock onto his release window — right side of the glove."* Experiment with narrowing your focus during BP; if you find yourself drifting, choose a smaller target like the pitcher's logo or a specific seam to force your brain to filter out the noise of the defense.

My Physical Trigger

The final act before you're ready to compete. One consistent motion that tells your nervous system: routine complete, reaction mode on. **Example:** *Two bat waggles ↣ settle into stance ↣ eyes to release point.* This motion should be rhythmic and repetitive; it serves as your "switch" to move from internal preparation to external reaction, and it must look identical on every single pitch, regardless of whether you are facing a teammate or a rival ace.

My Between-Pitch Reset

What's your 5-second reset after every pitch? Step out, breathe, cue, step back in. Make it automatic so it works under pressure without thinking. **Example:** *Step out with back foot ↣ look down at knob ↣ one breath ↣ "attack" ↣ step in.* The key here is the "non-negotiable" nature of the physical reset; by performing the exact same movement every time, you create a conditioned response that allows you to erase a mistake before your brain has time to start overthinking the next delivery.

Ready to Take the Next Step?

Serious hitters don't rely on generic internet advice. We work together to build a personalized, repeatable system that actually aligns with your nervous system and the way you swing.

- A professional swing progression
- Elite mental routines built for YOUR nervous system
- Personalized video swing analysis
- A structured MLB-level hitting system
- In-season adjustment protocols

Inside the Program

- Structured weekly development plan
- Video swing breakdowns with detailed feedback
- Mental performance coaching
- In-season adjustment systems
- Direct access to Devan Bade

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