

# 14 Tips for Building Mental Toughness in Baseball

If anybody has ever told you that baseball is easy, they are a liar. Unless you are playing a pickup game with a tennis ball in the backyard with a few friends, success in baseball is more challenging than in any other sport. That makes mental toughness critical for every player. We all start with some, but it is always helpful to build up more.

Keep reading to learn plenty of tips for building mental toughness that can make you a cold-blooded ace on the field.

## Preparation Always Comes First

Think back to your days in school, or maybe you are still in school. Do you remember a time when you had to take a test and you did not study or learn the topic? What happened? Surely you looked down at the test and were terrified. Maybe you made a few lucky educated guesses at managed a passing grade, but that was not easy.

On the other hand, what would have happened if you learned the material and studied hard for the test? Most likely, you would enter the classroom feeling confident and proceed to do very well. That is the difference preparation makes: confidence is easy when you do your “homework.”

To be tough and resilient in baseball, there are a few things you should do before you ever step foot on the field:

- **Study film**
- **Practice well**
- **Listen to your manager and position coach**
- **Get a good night's rest and proper nutrition**

## Study Film

The best thing you can do in any sport to be confident during a game is to study your opponent's film. There is a good chance your manager will do some of this during practice, but it never hurts to take a look on your own time as well. Depending on what level you play at, acquiring film can be difficult, but never skip an opportunity when one presents itself.

If you do get your hands on an opponent's film, you can study it for certain tells such as:

- **Pitching tendencies**
- **Pitches that a specific batter likes**
- **When runners are advanced or steal**

As a batter, watching the patterns of an upcoming opposing starting pitcher can be huge. Does he like to throw a fastball during an 0-2 count? Maybe you notice he always likes to work a knuckleball into every at-bat. Picking up on patterns like this will give you a better idea of what to expect so you can focus on getting more hits without fear of the unknown.

If you are a pitcher, you might notice, for example, that Opponent A loves to swing at curveballs. In that case, you now know to avoid that throw if you can against that batter. Or if a runner likes to attempt a steal when the count is full, you can anticipate that and throw him out.

## Practice Well

Obviously, if you are on a baseball team you have to go to practice; it is part of the job. But how are you treating practice? If you are just going through the motions, you will not be prepared when the lights come on at night.

Go hard during every single practice, and you will know you have the strength to succeed during the game. No need to second-guess your physical strength.

## Listen to Your Managers

During practice and before you step on the field, people will have a lot to say, namely your:

- **Manager**
- **Position coach**
- **Team captain**

They have been here before and have the knowledge to succeed. They did not reach those positions by accident, so you need to trust them and their teachings and do as they say.

Listening up during the game is especially important. Preparation can also be right before you step up to the plate too. If your manager gives you advice, you should follow it instead of being wildly confused about what pitch could be coming next.

## Take Care of Yourself

A lot of people tend to take proper eating and sleep for granted. That is a shame because they are relatively easy things to fix. A poor diet and not enough sleep can contribute to feelings on gameday of:

- **Elevated stress and anxiety**
- **Erratic temperament**
- **Hunger**

Lack of sleep does not just make us physically tired, although that can certainly be an additional hindrance. It affects our mental sharpness too. One of the main results is a slow reaction time, not exactly ideal when you are watching a pitch that may or may not be heading towards the strike zone. How can you focus up when you are consistently slow to react?

You cannot, and that will, in turn, cause you a lot of anxiety. If you are consistently nervous, you cannot be on your A-Game mentally. Also, your emotions may be extra affected, which inevitably results in poorer performance.

On a funnier but still true note, make sure you eat a healthy meal a couple of hours before first pitch. It is tough to stay in the zone on the pitcher's mound when you keep smelling the chili dogs at the concession stand and getting hunger pains.

Additionally, try to avoid that chili dog altogether: unhealthy food does not do much for you besides weighing you down and contributing to a sluggish performance.

## Acknowledge Failure as Part of the Game

Being tough is not the same as being blind. We cannot just think we are going to win every single:

- **Matchup**
- **Game**
- **Season**

The fact of the matter is that loss happens. Part of being tough is accepting that inevitability and working to limit it as much as possible. One of our main statistics in the sport tells that story. If you are currently maintaining a .400 batting average, you are considered to be playing at an elite level, and it will surely be temporary. A player who consistently hits .350 is regarded as an MVP.

But think about that for a second. If you are batting a .400, that means you are only getting a hit 4 out of every 10 times you are at the plate. 6 out of 10 times (a majority of your appearances) you are missing! If you got a 40 percent on a quiz, how happy would your parents be?

Hitting a baseball, though, is one of the hardest things to do in sports. That is why we evaluate success here a little differently. **Instead of focusing on batting average, think about hitting in terms of quality at-bats.**

Your mind should not be a running batting average tabulation. If your thought process is, "Okay, I struck out the first time and then popped it up last time. If I screw up now, I will be 0-3 on the day." That mindset is not helping anyone except your opponent. The better things to think about are:

- **"I was more aggressive at the plate that time. I made contact and just need to focus on keeping the ball fair."**
- **"That was a strong hit. A little more swing on that one, and I can get the ball over the outfield's hand for sure."**
- **"That ball was over the plate. I can surely hit that next time."**

As a pitcher or any other defensive position, the standards of success are, conversely, a little higher than other sports. An error is more frowned upon than an incomplete pass in football or a missed 3-pointer in basketball.

But still, nobody is perfect. They list errors on the scoreboard because they are bound to happen every so often. Just do not let the ball drop out of your glove next time.

Source: [Ultimate Baseball Training](#)

## Stay Positive

That all being said, do not focus on failure. Embrace positivity. As the great philosopher Tom Hanks once said, “Are you crying? There’s no crying in baseball!” You can be real and honest about plays not working out, sure. But focus more on what you can do to improve and turn that busted throw into something special next time. Here are some good tips to stay positive:

- **Have short-term memory loss.** If you committed an error, clear it from your mind and get ready for the next pitch.
- **Pitch a bad inning?** How are you going to avoid that guy getting on base next time?
- **I am down 0-2 in the count. One more chance to get the ball in play. (Not one more pitch from striking out.)**

## Play Through Adversity

While so far, we have mostly discussed overcoming our own mistakes, the fact of the matter is that many things that hurt our level of play have nothing to do with us at all. Even if you internalize all the tips for mental toughness listed so far, things will not always be perfect. Be prepared for other types of adversity such as:

- **Your opponent just being plain better**
- **Injury**
- **Bad weather**

## Superior Opponent

It does not really matter how good you are at driveway basketball against your friends. If you play 1 on 1 against Stephen Curry, you are going to lose. No amount of positivity can help you as he drills another three. In baseball, you have to accept that some opponents are just going to be better than you. That is life.

But that does not mean you should just accept every single loss either. Accept that your opponent had a better day and learn from it so that you can emerge victorious in the future. Remembering an opponent’s abilities can help you just as much as watching film.

## Injury

Baseball is a physical sport. No one has played every game in their career with a clean bill of health. If you have some soreness or a small amount of pain, see if you can fight through it. Remember, mind over matter.

That being said, listen to your body. There is the sort of workout pain you can fight through, but sometimes pain can indicate a more serious underlying problem. **If you are not sure, talk to a doctor or the manager.**

## Bad Weather

Not every day will be a warm and beaming day of sunshine, either. While baseball games are generally called off if the weather becomes bad enough, that is not always true. You might encounter:

- **Light rain**
- **Wet, muddy field**
- **Wind**

Every opponent is not the same; you know that. But neither is the weather. If it is raining but not heavy enough for a rainout, do not let it distract you. Keep your focus on the ball and wear a hat so it does not obstruct your vision.

Rain can also degrade the field conditions, so keep your feet planted firm and move deliberately. Even a slight slip can throw off your concentration and confidence when that next popup heads your way.

A windy day can also throw off the ball's trajectory more than you might think, especially if it goes deep. As an outfielder, do not let a wild ball throw you off. Stay focused, and you can still catch it.

Source: [Spider's Elite](#)

## Control What You Can, But Lean on Your Team

The thing about baseball is that it is a team sport. You cannot be too hard on yourself when you lose. Yes, take note of your mistakes and acknowledge them, but it is wrong to put all of the blame on yourself. You win as a team and lose as a team. Lean on each other for support to make the bad times more manageable and to help each other better polish their skills.

Specifically, focus on your role as a player. If you are a shortstop, make sure you keep working on your reaction time and catching skills. And always try to keep having quality at-bats.

You can encourage your pitcher to play better, but do not beat yourself up when he cannot strike somebody out. You should stay focused on catching the ball when it rockets off the bat; that is the best way to help the pitcher.

Source: [Dan Blewett](#)

## Learn How to Handle Losing

Long time Met fans need not read this section; they are well-versed in this art. All kidding aside, one of the most important ways to build up your mental toughness in baseball is to learn how to handle losing. As we have said, you will not win every game, so accept that and learn what to do. The best advice for dealing with a loss is:

- **Learn from it.** What could I have done better?

- **Be honest about your pain that night.** It is okay to be upset. But when you get up the next morning, change that frown into determination for the next game.
- **Always practice good sportsmanship and treat your opponent with respect.**

Losing, unfortunately, is not always a surprise. You can see it coming during a blowout in later innings. When this happens, keep your mindset on playing your best game rather than become aggravated and making further mistakes.

## Learn How to Handle Winning

On the other side of the coin, there is such a thing as a sore winner. Winning feels great, but you should not rub it in your opponents' faces.

Toughness is not the same as overconfidence. If your team is putting a nice win streak together, the worst thing that can happen is getting too cocky. That attitude can propel you to a good streak but result in a crushing postseason loss. Why? **Because overconfidence will not allow you to acknowledge your mistakes and correct them before the big game.**

Being tough means learning from your mistakes, even in victory. Celebrate a win the night after, but in the morning, you should still get to work. What could you have done to extend that lead even further? How come you could not strike that guy out? What can I do next time to get a hit off that pitcher?

## Quiet the Mind

We have already spoken extensively on the relationship between mental toughness and focus. Focus does not just refer to certain aspects of the game. No, it has to do with keeping your mind on the game itself. How can you lock in at the plate when you are too busy thinking about issues at home? Or tomorrow's game for that matter?

**Keep your eyes on this game, right here, right now.** Now obviously, family issues matter and we are not here to trivialize them. But putting them aside just for a couple of hours and being in your baseball element, your passion, can be just what the doctor ordered for your mental health sometimes. That escape can be a beautiful thing.

Quieting the mind is even more important for pitchers. Your singular focus should be on getting that guy out and nothing else. Easier said than done, of course. But here are some tips for pitchers and other baseball players to keep their mind on the task at hand:

- **Deep breaths.** In through the nose, out through the mouth. Such a simple thing that pays dividends to your concentration.
- **Keep a journal so it is easier to remember your thoughts and advice to yourself for your next matchup with that opponent.**
- **Talk to yourself.** Not too loudly, but talking to yourself about your plan for each play can help you shove out any other thoughts.

Source: [Jeff Forney's Baseball Player University](#)

## Develop A Routine

On the same page of habits are routines. If you approach every game the same way, it helps cultivate a mindset of success. The important thing is to find practices that make you comfortable and really settle into the game itself. These can be both before the game and during.

### Routines Before the Game

The most successful athletes have been creatures of habit, so try to do that yourself. Wake up at the same time every day. Workout at the same time. Arrive at practice a few minutes early. Even take your shower and brush your teeth at the same time. Little things like that can go a long way: minimizes your surprises to your opponents' actions on the baseball field.

### Routines During the Game

Do little routines, or rituals, during the game help you, scientifically speaking? Maybe not. **But thinking it helps you does indeed help.** Fake it until you make it, as they say. Who cares if it is a superstition if it keeps your on-base percentage up? Try one of these routines and see if it helps you:

- **A twist of your cap before stepping on the mound**
- **Tapping the bat on the home plate when you step up**
- **Spitting on the ground before the inning starts** (if you really insist)
- **Chewing gum** (We see you Pete Carroll)

Source: [YouthPitching.com](http://YouthPitching.com)

## Make Adjustments

Just because you have routines does not mean you should be rigid either. Think of routines as foundations for success, not the end all be all. Baseball games never have a set outcome, so you need to be prepared for unpredictability if you want to stay confident and win.

As a hitter, do not be afraid to move around a little bit if you are getting beat inside. Just as you are learning about the pitcher, he is learning about you with each additional at-bat. What worked last time might not work this time. Like we said, always stay in the now.

As a pitcher, there is no need to accept losing as the walks and missed opportunities pile up. **Having a losing attitude will not cause you to win.** Try to get in your opponents' heads. What are they noticing about your habits? What can I adjust to mix them up? Can I play a little reverse psychology and catch up?

Source: [BaseballTutorials](http://BaseballTutorials.com)

## Observe the Pitcher

As a hitter, it can be awfully tough to settle in at the plate and confidently swing at pitches when you have no idea what is coming next. Sure, watching film ahead of time is great, but what if you have never faced this pitcher before?

Watch him during the game, even when you are not at-bat. Notice his tendencies and make mental notes. **If you do that as the game goes on, you can pick up on his patterns and use them to your advantage.** Throw him off his game. Be the tougher one in the matchup and the win is yours and your teams’.

## Feeding Off (Or Pulling Away From) Momentum

As we have said, baseball players rise and fall, ultimately, as a team. One of the most undeniable macro forces contributing to those happenings is momentum. We see it all the time in sports. A team “breaks a game open,” and then suddenly, all the hitters are piling on. Or, on the other hand, one player makes a bad mistake, and it haunts the team for the rest of the game.

Momentum is perhaps the most potent mental force on a team. Learning how to temper its effects can keep you in the zone. Positive momentum is something you want to feed into. Take its positive vibes and use it to fuel your confidence. Hey, we are winning; now it is my turn to build this lead.

Countering negative momentum is a little more complicated. For this, you will have to tune at the noise even more so. Do not worry about the downward slide. What can I do right now, at this at-bat, to change the tone and put us back on the right track?

Or, if you are a reliever, how can I make a statement to the batter that I will not let him get away with swings as the starter did?

## Commit to Doing Your Best on Every Play

Is this a 100 percent guarantee? Of course not. But like they say, shoot for the moon. If you miss, you will still land among the stars. 100 percent on every:

- **Throw**
- **Catch**
- **Swing**
- **Bunt**

Should always be the goal. Sometimes we mess up and throw a ball without that much energy. It happens. The key here is to notice it and come back harder on your next throw. If you feel like you cannot do 100 percent, make sure you redouble your efforts at the gym.

## Do Not Overthink

It feels a little strange to say this after giving all that advice, but it is true. **You need to internalize all of these habits and make them a part of who you are and how you act.** If you keep this post loaded on your phone and have to keep referring back to it all game, you will not be watching the actual game and are bound to make some mistakes.

So do not over-analyze every action you make on the field. That will set you off your balance and cause mistakes. Part of being mentally tough in baseball is knowing the most you can and making those skills stick with you. When the lights come on, clear your mind and watch the ball.



## Recap

There are plenty of things in baseball you cannot control. So, seize the things you can, like your mental toughness. Using the tips we have described above, you can channel mental success into physical success and achieve wins on the baseball field. If these ideas work for you, spread them throughout your organization and the wins will begin to stack themselves.