

The key to a successful 8U batting order strategy is **identifying your good hitters** and strategically placing them in your line up. Let's start with the premise that there are 12 players on your fastpitch softball team and that 6 are good hitters and 6 are weak hitters. Of course, by the end of the year they will all be great hitters, but for now we'll assume you haven't had enough time to fully develop them. Let's also assume that these games typically only last about 3 innings.

### **The Winning 8U Batting Order Strategy**

The goal is to **conservatively maximize your run production** without creating too much downside risk. Essentially, you want to load up the top of your batting order **while sprinkling in a weak hitter** from time to time. The theory is that you will score big in the 1st and 3rd innings and sacrifice the 2<sup>nd</sup> inning. Here is how my line up looks:

1. Good Hitter (and fast on the bases)
2. Good Hitter (also needs to be fast)
3. Weak Hitter
4. Good Hitter (Strongest Hitter)
5. Good Hitter
6. Weak Hitter
7. Good Hitter
8. Good Hitter
9. Weak Hitter
10. Weak Hitter
11. Weak Hitter
12. Weakest Hitter

If all goes as planned, this batting order should produce the maximum number of runs in the 1<sup>st</sup> inning, while mixing in a couple of outs along the way to push you through your line up a little farther. This 8U batting order strategy also allows for one of your good hitters to make an out without killing the inning.

### **The Losing 8U Batting Order Strategy**

You might be wondering why not take that strategy and push it a little further by staggering the entire line up good, bad, good, bad, etc.? I'm glad you asked. The problem with this order is that you will get **three hits in an inning and three outs**. That may not score any runs and if it does produce any results it will probably only be **one run per inning**. Compare this result to the result in **the Winning 8U batting order strategy that should produce 4 or 5 runs every other inning**. In a 3 inning game, that would make the score **8-3**.

Of the 4 losses recorded in 8U, I distinctly remember one of them that I attributed to a batting order blunder. We lost 2-1 **and left the bases loaded in 2 innings**. It was the first game of the season and we used this Losing 8U batting order strategy by alternating between good and weak hitters. Had we done a better job of bunching our good hitters we would have won the game easily. **The coaches lost** that game.

### **Most Common Losing 8U Batting Order Strategy**

The most common mistake **is bunching all of your good hitters** to the top of the batting order and leaving the weakest hitters at the bottom. Again, with the premise there are 6 good hitters and 6 weak hitters, it certainly puts your team in a great position to score in the 1<sup>st</sup> inning, but it could weaken your chances in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning. If one or two of those good hitters get out in the 1<sup>st</sup> inning, you may not get to the top of your line up with less than a couple of outs in the 3<sup>rd</sup>inning.

**Good things happen when runners are on base.** In the Winning 8U Batting Order Strategy, at least three of your weak hitters should come to bat with runners on base. As any coach knows, there is a certain amount of confusion and pressure on the defense when runners are on base. This **extra sense of pressure on the defense** could be **the little edge** your weak hitter needs to beat out a ground ball.

### **One Final Advantage**

Have you ever noticed how **hitting can be contagious**? The opposite is true as well. So, if you are able to place a weak hitter in the line up after a couple of good hitters, she is in a position of positive momentum having just seen other girls hit. You might be surprised at how well she reacts to being in the middle of a scoring rally. **The mental aspect of hitting** is enormous and probably more pronounced with younger players that are just learning the game.