

# You Should Be Throwing More Glove-Side Sinkers

Jackson Hicks · 2025 MLB Statcast Data, All Qualifying Sinkers

Conventionally, pitchers are taught to start their sinker down the middle and let it run to the arm side. And they're told to avoid throwing it to opposite-handed hitters. But I dove into the data to see if this thinking is actually supported, and it's not. Glove-side sinkers outperform sinkers in any other location in the strike zone, in all four batter and pitcher handedness combinations.

## Methodology

Every sinker thrown in the 2025 MLB season was pulled from Statcast and split into three in-zone location buckets — glove-side, middle, and arm-side, defined relative to the pitcher's own throwing hand — then further split across all four pitcher/batter handedness combinations. Value is measured as context-neutral run value per 100 pitches (pitcher perspective, so higher is better for the pitcher), which strips out the influence of the count the pitch was thrown in so that location effects aren't confounded with situational usage.

## Results

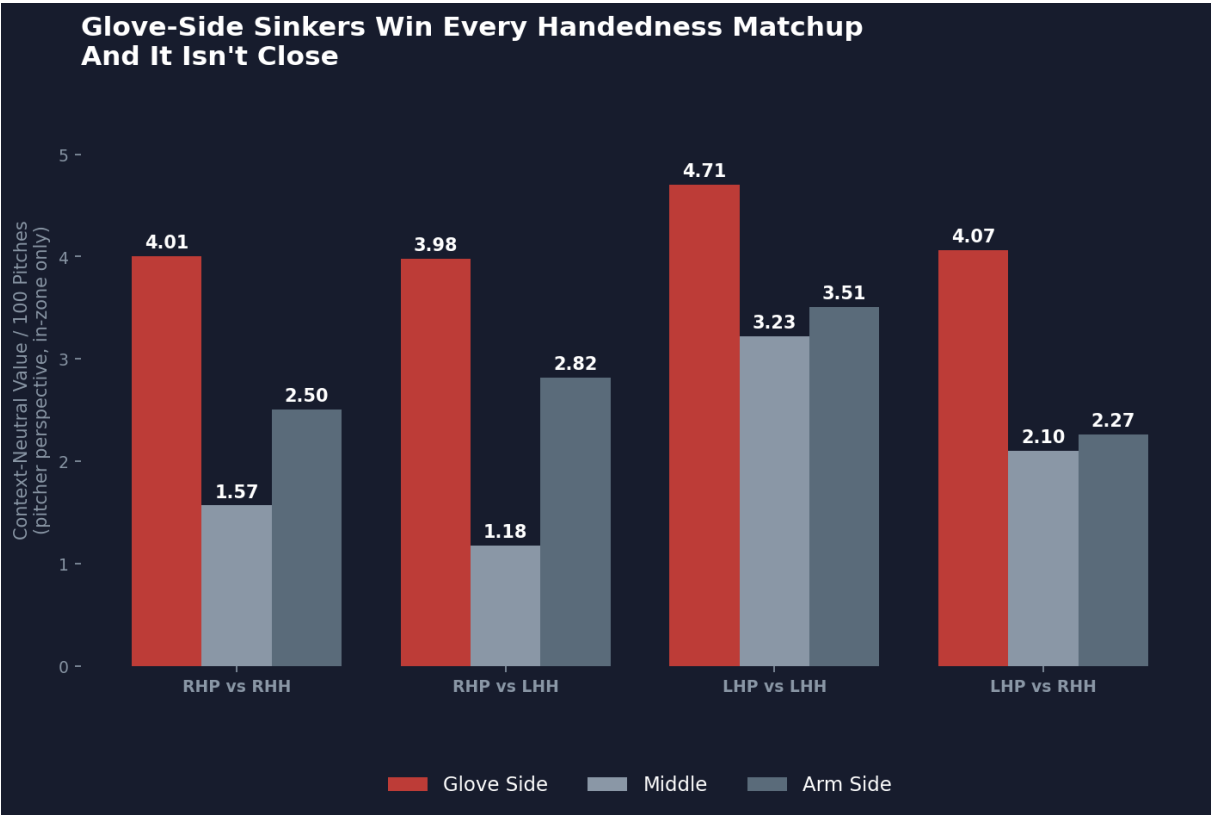


Figure 1. Context-neutral value per 100 pitches, in-zone sinkers only, 2025 MLB season.

| Matchup     | Glove Side | Middle | Arm Side |
|-------------|------------|--------|----------|
| RHP vs. RHH | 4.01       | 1.57   | 2.50     |
| RHP vs. LHH | 3.98       | 1.18   | 2.82     |
| LHP vs. LHH | 4.71       | 3.23   | 3.51     |
| LHP vs. RHH | 4.07       | 2.10   | 2.27     |

The gap isn't subtle. In righty-vs-righty matchups, a glove-side sinker in the zone was worth 4.01 runs per 100 pitches to the pitcher, versus 1.57 for middle and 2.50 for arm-side. Every other handedness combination — including the two “opposite-handed” matchups pitchers are typically told to avoid sinkers in altogether — shows the same shape: glove-side on top, middle consistently the worst location, arm-side in between.

## The Mechanism

A sinker runs arm-side as it travels, so a sinker that ends up glove-side had to start out of your hand looking like a ball — well off the plate. The hitter reads “ball” and takes it. If the movement brings it back for a strike, that's a free strike: no swing, no risk of contact.

Flip it: a sinker that ends up arm-side in the zone looked hittable out of your hand — closer to middle — so the hitter reads strike and swings, and if it doesn't move enough to get off the barrel, that's exactly the contact that turns into a hard-hit ball.

## Supporting Movement Data

A related sinker movement study (same 2025 dataset) found that induced vertical break (IVB) predicts ground-ball rate ( $r = -0.31$  with VAA, consistent direction) but is nearly uncorrelated with whiff rate ( $r = 0.08$ ) — IVB and whiffs are simply answering different questions for this pitch type. Horizontal break (arm-side run) was the strongest correlate of whiff% in that same study ( $r = -0.31$ ), though in a counterintuitive direction: less arm-side run associates with more whiffs, likely tied to velocity rather than shape alone. League-average arm-side run for a qualifying sinker sits at 15.3 inches; the top 10% of pitchers reach 17.7 inches — a comparatively narrow gap between “average” and “elite” run compared to other pitch types.

**To be clear, arm-side sinkers that finish off the plate still play fine — that part of the traditional approach works as advertised. But glove-side sinkers are an under-utilized pitch that most guys never even work on. It's low-hanging fruit that can steal strikes and keep hitters off balance, just by changing the sights.**