

Fundamentals of Base Running

V3.0 February 2018



© Copyright Palo Alto Girls Softball 2016-18. All Rights Reserved.

Author/Person to Blame: Tom Kemp

Agenda

Best practices for running from

- Home
- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd

Sliding

Misc.



Running from Home

If going to 1st via a Walk

- Carefully throw bat towards on-deck circle
- Jog towards 1st, touch 1st base and begin to position yourself in rocker start (see next section for description of rocker start) for next pitch to the next batter

If going from home to 1st via a Hit

As is the case for any base running to/from any base, always ...

- Run hard and take quick strides
- Pump your arms while running
- See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqcDG9_oni0 (0:20 to 1:00)

Going to 1st via a Hit where the Fielders will try to make the out at 1st Base

- After hitting the ball, the player should run as fast as possible per the prior slide and touch the orange (and right) half of 1st base
- Don't lunge when you touch the base, just do normal running / quick strides, and touch the base closest to home plate
- Break down after you cross 1st, i.e. rapid stutter steps to slow down, and be aware of the coach telling you to go to 2nd if there is an overthrow
 - Note video on prior page at 2:10 has the player positioning their body to the right (ie breaking down and positioned their body towards foul territory), I prefer the player to have body forward/positioned down 1st base line but player is looking with the head to the right/foul territory for overthrow and also listening for the 1B coach to detect over throw and say go to 2nd
- Do not enter field after break down, i.e. walk down 1st base line or slightly in foul territory back to 1st. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PAHk1ok4sE> (:45 to :55)
- Do not make fake/attempt to go to 2nd, just walk back to 1st
- Keep at least one foot on the base when you get to 1st base
- Then position yourself in rocking start on 1st base (see "rocking start" formation later in this deck)

Going to 1st via a Hit → Double (or more)

- If player sees they can clearly get extra bases with their hit (e.g. hit into gap in outfield for a double or triple) and/or 1st Base Coach clearly signals to runner to take an extra base, the runner should not run straight to 1st but slightly curve towards the base
- Path towards 1st base is more of a slightly curved Banana vs. a Question Mark
 - Key point is the runner should not go “point to point” in a straight line
- Touch inner corner of 1st base as a push off to 2nd
 - i.e. the corner that is closest to pitching mound
 - Tag bag in stride
 - See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy5eE4Ac2mk> (:55 to 1:30)



Advanced: Extending a Single to a Possible Double

Appropriate for:
12U+

- Say the hitter gets a clear hit that goes to outfield but the runner is not sure they can cleanly go to 2nd base based on fielding of ball in the outfield
- As discussed in prior slide, the runner should banana to 1st base, touch inside corner of base and do so in stride
- Then a few feet from 1st base the runner should slow down (ie break down) and stop in ready position and have their body face where the ball is being fielded in the outfield to determine if they can stretch the hit to a double
 - If ball is in left or center field they should face that way
 - If ball in right they should face towards right
 - If the ball in outfield is not cleanly fielded, the runner should advanced to 2nd base
 - If cleanly fielded and thrown towards 2nd base, the runner should retreat back to 1st base to preserve their single
 - See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awBfD3Fm-y4> (3:50 to 5:10)



Role of 1st Base Coach

- When runner heads to 1st base they should know the signal of 1st base coach of when the runner should continue on to 2nd base, usually a hand pointing to 2nd base (verbal cue could be the obvious “2 2 2 2 2”)
- 1st base coach should also instruct runner to go to 2nd if there is an overthrow on the play at 1st, or an overthrow on a pickoff attempt
- 1st base coach should also be looking at 3rd base coach for signal to steal or for continuation

Advanced:

Appropriate for:
10U+

Drop Third Strike (“DTS”) – the Rule

- “When the third strike is dropped by the catcher, the batter is not automatically out ... The ruling depends on the number of outs, the location of the base runners, and the batter's recognition of the situation and her ability to react to the play.”
- The rule itself: "When the catcher fails to catch the third strike before the ball touches the ground and there are fewer than two outs and first base is not occupied at the time of the pitch or any time there are two outs." Which means if the batter does run, the catcher must throw her out at first to complete the out.

Source: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/95620-rules-dropped-third-strike-softball/>

More on DTS – Explaining What it Means

- Fewer than Two Outs

“The batter can try to run to first if there's no runner there and her team has less than two outs. If a runner is on first, and the batting team has no outs, or only one out, a dropped third strike is automatically an out.”

- Two Outs

“With two outs, the batter can run to first on a dropped third strike even if a teammate is already on first base. That's because the dropped ball is considered live, and the defensive team can try to force an out at any base.”

The Point Regarding DTS is ...

If you strike out, and you see the pitch has gone past the catcher and/or dropped, just run to first no matter what

The coaches or ump may tell you that you are out anyway, but let them worry about the rules – just head to 1st base if the third strike is not caught

Advanced: Going to 1st Base via Walk and 3B Coach has Previously Signaled “Continuation” to You

Appropriate for:
12U+

- But first, what is “Continuation”?
 - “It's when you make a turn at first base and continue running to second base after being walked. Coaches usually tell their fastest players to do so. However, it can also be a good way to draw attention to someone else if there's a runner at third and you want to get her home.”
source: http://www.answers.com/Q/What_is_a_continuation_after_being_walked_in_softball
 - “With a runner on third, the batter draws a walk, trots to first and then continues to second. If the ball gets thrown to second, the runner from third breaks for home and usually scores. If the defensive team is lucky, the runner at second is out and the trade has been made - a run for an out. More often, the defensive team just lets the batter/runner go to second. Sometimes the defense completely breaks down, throwing to second and then before the batter/runner is out at second, the throw comes too late to home. The result is a run plus a runner on second with nobody out. This can completely unnerve the defensive team.”
source: <http://girls-softball.com/2007/04/defending-against-continuation.html>

Advanced: Running to 1st After Walk and Continuation Has Been Signaled

- The 3rd base coach will signal to the batter to do a Continuation if in the next pitch they get a ball four
- Player should first jog from home to 1st, then about half way, start running faster, then “banana” to 1st base and head to 2nd
- Do no stop/hesitate when passing 1st and keep heading to 2nd unless a play is made to get the player out
- Goal is to distract defense so runner on 3rd can score, and the best situation is defense tries to make a play at 2nd but misplays ball and runner is safe at 2nd or heads back safely to 1st while runner on 3rd scores
- Again the runner who headed to 2nd can also head back to 1st (i.e. get into a pickle) if a play is tried to made to get the runner out at 2nd

Final Thing to Remember While Runner is at Home Plate as a Batter

Appropriate for:
10U+

- If a runner is at 3rd and you are the hitter at Home plate, and a pass ball or a wild pitch occurs, the hitter at home should get out of the way to allow the runner at 3rd to steal home, i.e. back away and don't interfere with the play

Running from 1st Base

Rocking (or Rocker) Start

- For all bases, Palo Alto does the rocking start with front foot on top of bag and back foot on dirt
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AON2qbkp3tI> (:15 to :40)
- Also known as “rocker start”



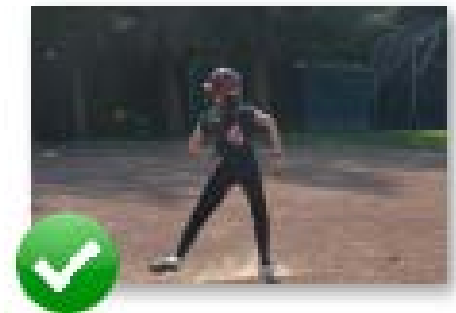
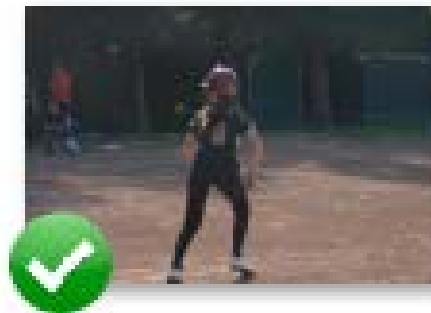
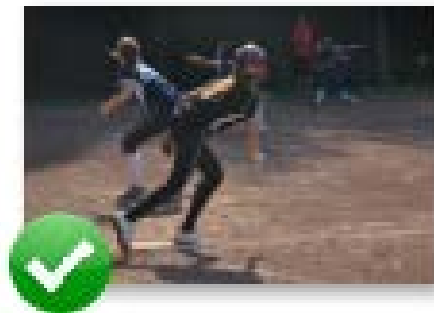
Timing Your Start

- Time your lead off to start running when the pitchers hand is up in the windup
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDGW8yymfiE> (1:40 to 2:30)
- Do NOT leave before ball has been released from pitcher – you will be called out



The Lead Off

- Take off as if you are sprinting to next bag
- Sprint 3 or 4 steps then “break down” and face entire body towards home
- If ball is not in play, then side shuffle back to 1st while keeping eyes on ball
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDGW8yymfiE> (2:30 to 3:00) to see what I mean



Advanced: Once at 1st Base and Before Pitch, Runners Should Look to 3rd Base Coach for Steal Signals

Appropriate for:
10U+

- Coaches should have taught players what the signal is to steal
- Reminder the runner cannot leave 1st base until after the ball is released

Advanced: If You See the Pitch Going Past the Catcher

Appropriate for:
10U+

aka what to do if a runner at 1st sees a wild pitch or pass ball

- If the runner on 1st base sees after taking their lead off that the pitch has gotten past the catcher, and that the backstop is deep and/or that the ball will not be easily fielded by the catcher, they should immediately head to 2nd base – no need to wait for the coach at 1st or 3rd base to yell steal
- The player stealing 2nd should listen to the 3rd base coach to say “Up” (for arrive standing into 2nd base) or “Down” (which means to slide)
- If you steal you need to run hard – no jogging!
- Don’t over run the base ... you can be tagged out if you are off the base (i.e. 2nd and 3rd base are not “run through” bases like 1st base and Home)

What to Do When Ball is Hit While Runner is on 1st Base

For every pitch you of course take your lead etc. then ...

If you see that the ball is hit on the ground

- You must run to 2nd base
- Watch where the ball is going while running to 2nd base to determine if you can make it safely to 3B (e.g. it's a ball hit in the gap in the outfield) while also listening to 3rd base Coach telling you if you should go to 3rd
- If you do go on to 3rd from 1st base via 2nd, do banana, touch inside corner of base in stride etc. – no slowing down

If you see that the ball is in the air and may be caught

- Freeze in your “break down” position
- If ball is caught, spring back to 1st and get in lead off / rocking start position
(see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvK8yymtkmQ> (2:18 to 2:28))
- If ball is dropped, immediately run to 2nd



Appropriate for:
10U+

Advanced: Retreating Back to Bag

- Again always spring 3 or 4 steps then break down facing home
- If ball is not in play (or you are not stealing) and catcher does not make play to throw runner out, then shuffle back facing home, keeping eyes on ball
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvK8yymtkmQ> (:15 to :53)
- If catcher tries to throw out runner at 1B, then dive head first and reach for corner of base facing the outfield with your right hand and your head away from infield
- See same video (1:00 to 2:20)
- If throw to 1B is well overthrown, consider stealing 2nd



Running from 2nd Base

Key Reminders

- A runner going from 1st to 2nd base should not over-run 2nd or 3rd base
 - 1st and Home base allows the runner to run through the base, but not the case for 2nd and 3rd base
 - Infielders can tag the runner out if they are off 2nd or 3rd base
- For a play in which the infield is trying to force out the runner heading to 2nd base, for 10U+ the preferred method for reaching base is a slide (see sliding section)

And Same Concepts

- Same general concepts you followed as a runner on 1st base apply when on 2nd base ...
 - Rocker start
 - Lead off 3-4 steps and breakdown while waiting to see if ball in play, if not, shuffle back, etc.
 - Advanced: Based on position of SS and 2B, and strength of arm of catcher, the lead off on 2nd base could even be 4-6 steps, as it is much harder to throw out runner leading off from 2nd base
 - Don't leave 2nd base early! Begin the lead off while the pitcher's hand is up
 - Same concepts about running when ball is hit
 - If you see you can score (i.e. run to home) from 2nd based on your eyes following the ball being hit in a gap in the outfield or if 3rd base coach is signaling you home, remember to banana; touch inside corner and in stride; and that home plate is a run through base
 - When running to 3rd base, and play is made at 1st base, the runner should look to head home when they reach 3rd if there is a significant overthrow and/or the 3B coach tells them to continue to home

Role of 3rd Base Coach

- Coach should teach players certain signals for running from 2nd to 3rd base, so as not to “shout out” to fielders what runners are doing, e.g.
 - Windmill motion – means continuous running from 2nd on to home, so runner needs to do banana, step inside corner of stride through 3B, etc. (if verbal instructions are needed, coach should yell “go go go go go”)
 - Both hands raised – means run to 3rd and no sliding (verbal cue is “Up up up up”)
 - Both hands down – slide into base

Runners Must Know Concept of Force Plays

- If runner is on 2nd, and there is no runner on 1st, the runner is not “force”d to run from 2nd to 3rd base if the ball is hit in play
- A general rule of thumb is if runner on 2nd and no runner on 1st, and less than 2 outs ...
 - if ball is hit on ground to right side of infield, the runner on 2nd should be taught or told by 3B coach to immediately run to 3rd, as it is more difficult to make play from right side of infield to 3rd base plus the runner must be tagged
 - if the ball is hit on ground to left side of infield (e.g. to SS or 3B), then the runner on 2nd should freeze and then runs when the SS/3B throws to 1B
 - If 2 outs the runner on 2nd should run no matter what
- This concept is best taught in drills in which runners are constantly put on different bases and the coach hits grounders to infielders while calling out # of outs

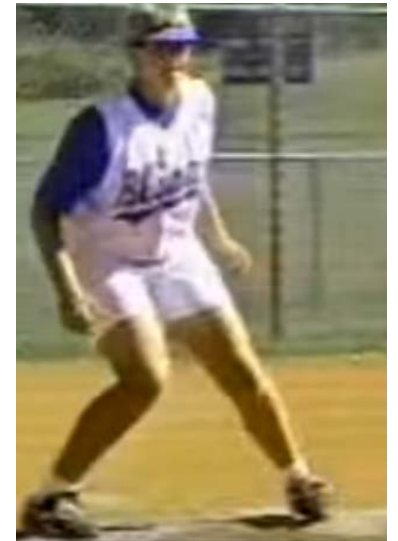
Running from 3rd Base

Same Concepts But ..

- Same concepts apply in terms of rocking start, lead off, etc. and knowledge that Home plate is a run through base
- Couple of key differences
 - Be a bit more conservative on when leadoff motion is begun (e.g. at bottom of pitcher's circular motion vs at top) as runner is already in scoring position to avoid getting called out for leaving early
 - Have the lead be outside of the field line in case if runner is hit by a hit ball, they won't be out, as ball is dead in foul territory

Tagging Up

- If a ball is hit in the air as a flyball, the runner should immediately head back to 3rd base and look to see if it is caught or dropped
- When the runner returns to 3rd base, they should not be in the rocker start, but having the left foot touching the edge of base and with the eyes of the runner watching the ball
- Once the ball is caught, the runner can leave. If they leave early, they will be called out
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWkJzVotUIU>
(2:30 to 3:30)



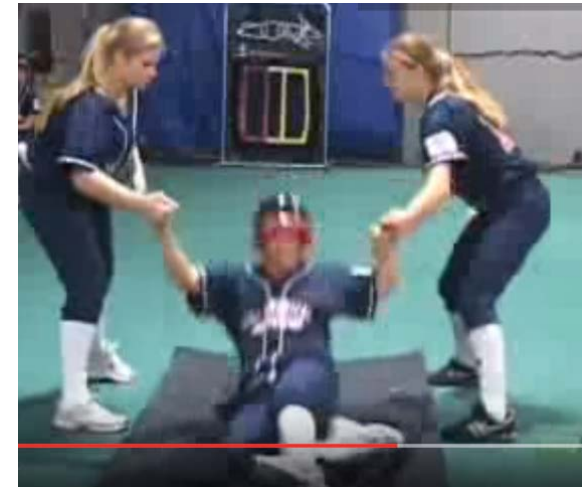
Force Plays

- If runner is on 3rd and there is no runner forcing them to advance (i.e. runner on 1st or a runner is on 2nd, but not on 1st and 2nd base) the runner is not “force”d to run from 3rd base to home if the ball is hit in play
- A general rule of thumb for a runner on 3rd base, and less than 2 outs ...
 - if ball is hit on ground to right side of infield, the runner on 3rd base should be taught or told by 3B coach to immediately run to Home, as it is more difficult to make play from right side of infield to Home base plus the runner must be tagged
 - if the ball is hit on ground to left side of infield (e.g. to SS or 3B), or if a bunt occurs to either side, then the runner on 3rd should freeze and then runs when the SS/3B throws to 1B
 - If 2 outs the runner on 3rd should run no matter what
- This concept is best taught in drills in which runners are constantly put on different bases and the coach hits grounders to infielders while calling out # of outs

Sliding

Basics

- Have players sit on the ground and do a criss-cross applesauce. Whichever leg is above the other should determine which leg is the more natural for being the lead leg in sliding
- Players should have sliding shorts underneath their pants as well as long socks
- Highly recommend that players practice using the PAGES slip and slide mat for at least a half dozen practices before doing it on a dirt field
- Run drills such as this (not wearing cleats)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3oyOBgUbtQ>
- Keep hands up <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bY6eKq6eW8g>
- When you practice live sliding, remind runners to keep cleats a bit up so they don't get caught in the dirt when sliding
- Slide 3-4 feet before base



Misc.

Advanced: On-Deck Circle

- Player on on-deck circle should be warming up and timing their practice swing
- If a play is at home the player on the on-deck circle can assist the base runner by moving closer to the play, watch what is happening in the field and signal to the runner heading home if they need to slide or they can stand up
 - Raising both hands up with the bat horizontal is a signal for the runner they can stand and not slide
 - Raising both hands down with the bat being horizontal and near the ground is a signal for the runner to slide
- But the player on the on-deck circle cannot interfere with the play and/or touch the ball

Rule Reminder

Rule reminder: at no time should the runner and 1st base coach touch (e.g. 1st base coach nudges the player as a reminder to run to 2nd) also true of 3rd base coach too (e.g. 3rd base coach cannot grab the runner to get them to stop from going home)