



Baserunning Skills and Drills

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Form Running Drills

Line your players up at one side of the field and take them through the following progression. These drills will help your players learn to run more efficiently, and also provide a valuable warm-up before your baseball-specific baserunning drills.

- **High knees:** Lean slightly forward, pump the arms, and run, driving the knees high while keeping the toes flexed upward. Drive the hands and arms to counter-balance the body and only contact the ground with the ball of the foot.
- **Hell to Buttocks (Buttkickers):** Run forward while trying to kick yourself in the glute with your heel on each stride. Focus on keeping the rest of your body still and simply flicking your lower leg backward.
- **Grapevines:** Standing upright with your head and torso facing forward, move laterally in one direction by placing your trailing leg in front of the lead leg. Then move the lead leg in that same lateral direction and place the trailing leg in front of the lead leg. Maintain a fluid motion with your arms rotating in the opposite direction from the legs.
- **Bounding:** Use an exaggerated skipping motion to thrust your body into the air off one leg, then the other. The focus should be on a powerful leap into the air and a quick (but not super fast) cadence. Your arm motion should be synced to the opposite leg's action, holding steady for the brief moment while you're off the ground.
- **Running Backwards:** Although it will seem awkward at first, try to replicate your forward running motion while moving backward. You'll still be pushing off of your forefoot and swinging your arms, but you'll be lunging backward with your hamstrings and using core muscles to stabilize differently than you're used to while moving forward. Focus on form, not on speed.



Heels to Buttocks Drill



High Knee Drill

Lead Drill

Setup

Create 3 or 4 lines of players in the outfield, facing the coach.

Execution

On the coaches signal, the first row of players will get into the lead-off position facing home plate. On a second signal, the players will take two lateral shuffle steps, then make a crossover step, bringing the left foot in front of the right foot, turn the torso and shoulders and sprint for about 60 yards. Once they reach the other end the next group of players can go.

Coaching Tips

- In the lead position, the player should be down in an athletic stance with the feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart, the weight on the insides of the feet, and hands hanging loose between this knees. Balance is important - you should be able to bolt for the next base or dive back if necessary.
- As you extend your lead away from the base, use small shuffle steps. Taking long steps or crossing your legs over can put you momentarily off-balance, and therefore makes you vulnerable to a pick-off. Only make the crossover when you've made the decision to run at full speed toward the next base.
- Avoid taking a "false step" with the right foot before making the crossover step. Keep the right foot planted and push off to gain momentum
- After the crossover, stay low for the first 3 or 4 steps, then explode upwards and forward while extending the stride length



Turn to the Base Drill

Setup

Create 3 or 4 lines of players in the outfield, facing the coach.

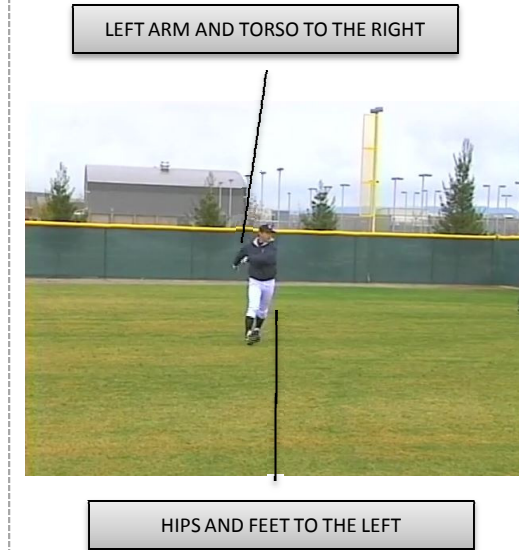
Execution

The goal of this drill is to help train players to turn the shoulders away from the next base and get the left arm across the body. This provides more leverage to turn the hips and feet in the opposite direction and get a faster, more efficient turn to the next base.

Going half-speed, the first player in each line will take five steps toward the coach. then turn quickly rotate his shoulders to the right and bring his left arm across his body, while simultaneously turning his hips and feet to the left. He will then continue at half speed for five more steps, then go to the back of the line.

Coaching Tips

- Keep the arms pumping with each step to maintain balance, and make the turn in rhythm
- Throwing the arm across the chest and turning the shoulder is done to help make a sharp turn, but if it creates a break in rhythm, it will be counter productive
- This movement will feel awkward and unnatural for some kids. Exaggerate it in practice to help develop muscle memory.



Sequence Drill

Setup

Divide your team into 4 groups. Station each group at a point halfway down each baseline.

- Group 1 halfway between home and first
- Group 2 halfway between first and second
- Group 3 halfway between second and third
- Group 4 halfway between third and home

Execution

The drill begins with the player at the front of each line proceeding to the next base, then executing a turn using the proper fundamentals. He then advances to the next line, going from first base, to second base, to third base to home.

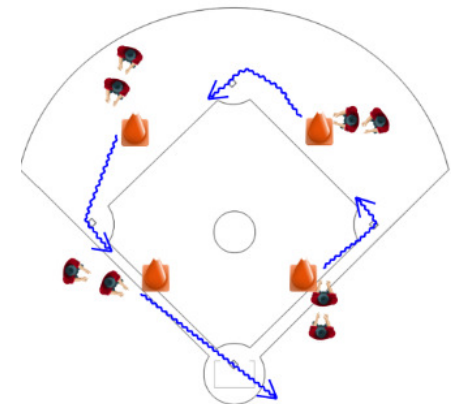
There are four phases to this drill:

1. Walk through
2. Jog through (approximately half speed)
3. Run through at three quarter speed
4. Run through at full speed

Note: start at phase 1 and do not proceed to the next phase until the players have demonstrated the proper fundamentals.

Coaching Tips

- Try to tag the inside corner of the base with the left foot. But don't change your running rhythm in order to do this. (over time the left foot tag will become more natural)
- To make the turn, throw the left arm across the chest and turn the shoulders to the right, while the hips and feet turn to the left (the direction of the next base)
- To help your players remember to this, place a coach behind the bag, and have them reach across their bodies with the left arm and touch his chest as they make the turn
- Try to "run in a square" and cut towards each base on the sharpest possible angle



Turning for the Double Drill

Setup

Line up your players behind home plate. Place a cone about half of the way between first and second.

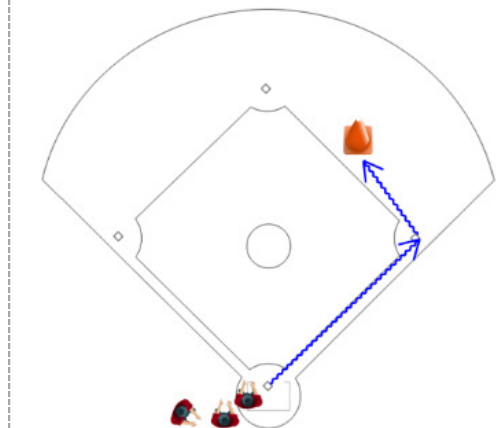
Execution

On the coach's signal the first player in line will sprint from the batter's box to first at full speed. He will make an aggressive turn towards second base and continue to the cone, then break down into a position where he can return to first or continue to second if he chooses.

As soon as the first player touches the bag, the second player will start running, and so on.

Coaching Tips

- The goal of this drill is to train your players to run aggressively to first base, then make an aggressive turn towards second.
- At the youth level, fielding errors are common. The aggressive turn will give your players the opportunity to turn singles into doubles if the ball is slow coming in from the outfield.
- To "break down" at the cone, lower your base, get your butt toward the ground, keep the feet moving and your head on a swivel.



Bent Leg Sliding Drill

Setup

Have your players spread out on a patch of soft grass with around 5-6 feet of space between them.

Execution

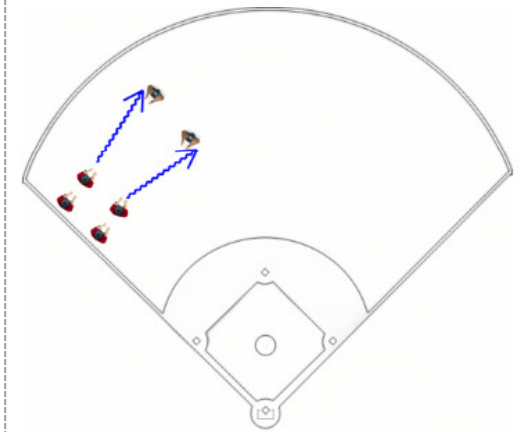
The coach should get on the ground and demonstrate the proper technique for a bent leg slide, with your players following along. Sit down on your butt, keeping one leg straight (with a slight flex in the knee) and the other leg bent underneath into a "figure 4" position. The hands should be thrown back and up, with the head up, watching the target.

Walk through the group of players and make adjustments, ensuring all players have the basic technique down.

In phase 2, we will work on sliding into a base while running. Line the players up and have them run 10-15 feet, break down, then slide into a base. As the player approaches the base, he should begin to squat and shift his body weight down toward the grass. With one leg straight and one leg bent, roll back the rear end, and sit on the grass with your momentum going forward.

Coaching Tips

- This drill is performed with the shoes off to help players get comfortable with the technique without the risk of their cleats snagging on the grass
- The faster you go into the slide, the easier it is on your body. If you slow down, you have a tendency to stick in the ground and there's more risk for injury
- The player should be sliding on his rear end, not his side
- The straight leg should have a slight bend in it and not be completely locked out. This will prevent it from "sticking" in the grass and prevent injury
- Make sure to practice this drill in the soft grass to start. Players can wear sliding shorts or an extra pair of sweat pants while they are learning the technique
- To simulate more of a game situation, hold a glove and ball on one side of the base, and ask the player to slide to the opposite side to avoid being tagged
- To make a pop-up slide, keep the front foot up slightly and catch the base with your heel as you slide in. Your momentum will push you up toward and allow you to stand.



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