

Base Running Fundamentals

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One of the most important aspects of the game coaches need to stress to their players is base running. A mistake on the base paths can be the difference in a win or loss for a team. The following are 50 base running rules I put together during my time as a fastpitch softball coach.

1. On every pitch, lead off like you are stealing the next base. Make the players on the opposing team's bench think you are stealing whether you are or not.
2. Freeze on line drives with less than two outs.
3. Run through first base.
4. Tag up on foul flies.
5. Run out all hit balls.
6. Stay in a run-down as long as you can until you see an opportunity to advance or return to the previous base safely.
7. Look at the base when you tag it.
8. If by chance you miss a base, go back and tag it.
9. When touching a base and driving to the next base, hit the inside corner of the bag and push off.
10. When coming off second in a non-bunting situation, come off the base slightly to the outfield side so you can cut the corner at third and score on a base hit.
11. When on base and being bunted over, watch and make sure the bunt makes it to the ground.
12. When on first base, run like you will try to make it to third base on a base hit to the outfield. The ideal is to plan to take third base. You can always change your mind and hold up at second if necessary.
13. When on second base, run like you are going to score on a base hit to the outfield. Plan on scoring. The coach will hold up at third if necessary.
14. On all singles to left or center, make an aggressive turn at first base and decide for yourself if you can safely make it to second.
15. Know where the ball is. If you do not know where it is, find it. Always run with your eyes looking ahead of you and not on the ground in front of you.
16. When coming off first base in a double play situation, do not run into the tag.
17. When you are on deck and there is a play at the plate, coach home. Tell the advancing base runner to slide and which side to slide on, verbally and with the use of hand motions.
18. Keep your helmet on and your helmet strap snapped.
19. Go as far as you can on a fly ball and still make it bask safely. More often than not, you should have to dive back.
20. When rounding first base on an extra-base hit, pick up the third base coach.
21. When leading off second base with a runner on first, do not return to the base too quickly. If there is a play at first, you may have the opportunity to advance to third.
22. When on third with less than two outs, tag up on all fly balls. If it is a long hit and you can score easily, make sure you start a half second after the ball is touched by the fielder. If it is going to be close at the next base, push it to the maximum and get the best break you can.
23. You are not out until the umpire calls you out. Do not call yourself out by leaving the field, straying from a base or stopping in the middle of a run-down. You are safe until you see the umpire call you out or your coach tells you that you are out.
24. After tagging up on a fly ball, break hard like you are going to try to make it to the next base. Even if you do not go, you want to draw the throw.

25. Tag up on all foul fly balls.
26. When you are on second and on one is on first base, do not run into the tag between second and third.
27. When diving into a bag, turn your head away from the incoming ball.
28. Lead off third base in foul territory to avoid being hit by a batted ball.
29. Go back to third base in fair territory to hinder the catcher's throw to third base.
30. Know the situation at all times, which includes the score, the count and the number of outs. As a general rule, the more outs the more risk you should be willing to take, and the less outs the less risk. We do not want to run ourselves out of a big inning.
31. Run all the way through first base. Keep your stride even and don't jump at the bag. As your foot touches first, thrust your chest forward as if you were breaking the finish line tape in a race.
32. When running through first base on a ground ball, look to the right after touching the base to see if there was an overthrow you can advance on.
33. Run through first. Do not dive into it unless you are trying to avoid a tag.
34. When the count is full and you are on base in a force situation with two outs, run on the pitch. Run hard and plan on scoring.
35. When you can see the ball in front of you, make your own decisions using the coach as your advisor.
36. When the ball is behind you, let the coach make the decisions.
37. Watch the opponent outfielders' arms during warm-ups and pre-game drills. Many times you have to make your own decision as to whether to take the next base or not.
38. Slide unless you will be safe by 15 feet or unless the coach tells you or signals you not to.
39. When on first base and the batter executes a sacrifice bunt, keep in your mind the possibility of advancing to third base if it is not covered.
40. Run hard through home if the on-deck batter tells you to go in standing up.
41. Watch for fakes. Watch for the release of the ball. If the defensive player checks you by looking at you but has her body facing another direction, then don't retreat. Take the next base on the throw if the situation calls for it.
42. Watch for uncovered bases. If no one is there, take the base.
43. When leading off third base, go no further than the third baseman allows you to. Don't let her get behind you.
44. When on third base and there is a passed ball or a wild pitch, make your own decision as to whether to attempt to score or not. If you wait for the coach, you have lost valuable time. With a short backstop, you can usually score. If it comes cleanly to the backstop without the catcher touching it, you probably can't.
45. When you hit the ball, run! Don't watch the ball. Even if the ball comes off your foot or body after you hit it, run anyway.
46. Know the signals and pay attention to the coach. There is no excuse for missing a signal.
47. When running to first base, especially on a bunt, get in the runner's lane before you arrive at the base.
48. If a defensive player without the ball gets in your way when you are in a rundown, make contact with her. Obstruction may be called.
49. When running to first base, never back up. If the situation calls for it and the first baseman has the ball, stop and let her come up and tag you.
50. You run and let the umpire make the calls. Don't argue or embarrass the umpire. Let your coach do the arguing if there is any arguing to be done.