

Leading Off

This is the best drill that I found so far to get my girls to learn to get a good lead off of 1st base. I have a pitcher, catcher, 1st and 2nd base person. All of these girls play their position as they normally would. This gives the pitcher and catcher a good work out and also gives the 1st and 2nd base also work on their position. One player starts on first and I put a piece of wrapped candy a few feet away from 1st base and once the pitcher pitches they must grab the candy and be able to get back to 1st base before the catcher can throw them out. I move the candy out farther so that they can see how far they can actually lead off without getting thrown out. All the girls take turns and the only way they get to keep the candy is if they can grab the candy and dive back to 1st without getting thrown out. We work on the 2nd base coming around the back also to try to pick off the girls. We also work on if the catcher misses the ball they have to be able to read that also. This really works well and it doesn't seem to matter what age the girls are they love the competition and the candy.

Use this as the last base-running drill. The goal is for speed and running under pressure.

Have all your players line up at home plate. Place a glove 8 feet up the first base line. Have your first player start sprinting around all the bases. When she reached the glove, the next player starts sprinting and tries to pass her on the bases. This continues with all the players. If a player gets passed or misses a base, she must do 10 push-ups. I realize in softball you can't pass runners, but it gets the kids to run hard and cut the angles on the base paths. KIDS LOVE THIS. Place kids with equal speed back to back in the line and watch them fly...

Wildcat

I'm sure there are many variations. We start with a line of girl's on first base and a line of girls at home. The girls at the plate hit a pitch that the coach has soft tossed to her as hard as she can, she takes off running and touches as many bases as she can before the girl in line at first can run and pick up the ball. The way you score is by how many bases you touch before the ball is picked up. Great conditioning drill and the players don't even realize it. This is a fun way to end practice. Give incentives for the winner.

Sliding Drill

I follow up every practice with 5 quick minutes of sliding practice. I have found in our league that girls are hesitant to slide. My team does not hesitate because they become so proficient at it. They all line their gloves up along the left field foul line in the outfield spaced about 4 feet apart. They line up about 60 feet from their respective gloves and I begin at one end of the line and say "Go!" The first girl runs full speed toward her glove and slides. I stand near the gloves and watch each girl execute her slide saying "Go!" in 1 to 2 second intervals as each girl begins. This way the girls go in order and I can see each girl slide in about a half a minute. After they complete their slide they reset and get ready to go again. I repeat and walk the line again. In less than 5 minutes each girl has executed 5 slides and I have been able to watch each one. When teaching sliding I have learned the best way to get them to properly execute a slide is for them to hold a fist full of grass in each hand and as they begin to drop into their slide they throw the grass into the air above their heads and keep their hands up.

Aggressive Base Running

This drill is designed to teach the runners to be aggressive on pitches that the catcher has to block or has trouble handling. Place a runner on first and second. Have a coach throw pitches and have the catcher in all of their gear. The runners take their leads and react according to how the pitch is thrown. If the catcher has to go to her knees to block the pitch, the runner on first advances automatically to second without hesitation. The runner on second sees where the ball is at and then makes a decision to go or not. The runners are taught to time their secondary lead in such a way as they are moving toward the next base when the catcher receives the pitch. If the catcher receives the pitch cleanly, the runners have plenty of time to return to the base. By timing their lead, this makes sure the runners do not have to stop and then start again should it be a passed ball or a blocked ball. At our age group, this has allowed us to move base runners into scoring position and to score more runs.

Cardboard Slide

To help players build confidence in their sliding abilities, have them run in their socks and slide on a large piece of cardboard covered with baby powder. The girls have fun, get used to sliding and really get to work on their techniques given the extra slick surface due to the baby powder.

Run Full Out

Set up two players on second base, one headed towards first and the other towards third. I try to match them up based on similar athletic talent. Basically, have them race to home plate, break the other girls up evenly and assign a runner to each team, if their runner wins nothing happens but for the runner that comes in second, her team runs the bases and I continue this through out the rest of the girls. This sets up a lot of cheering on of each girl and leads towards overall team camaraderie. Kind of a fun end of practice drill that you can relate back to in game situations, for instance a runners is on second and you can tell her, “run as hard as you do in the base running drill, just beat the ball to home plate”

Timed Running Drill

Base Running drill – Need a stopwatch – Put a pitcher on the mound to throw, Work with the runners to get jump on the release, also have them go from first to third. Really focus on their 1) jump from first 2) body lean into second inside foot contacting corner of base and cut the angle as close to 90 degree angle as possible toward third 3) Round third practice the same. Purpose of stopwatch is 6 seconds from 1st to 3rd and it keeps the girls competing.

Speed

Some of my less athletic kids never run properly. They run heel first, and standing straight up. To show them how momentum can help them run faster, I have a coach put his hands on their shoulders and have them lean forward, when the coach lets them go, their weight pulls them forward. When they lean more forward and run on their toes instead of their heels, they of course run a good bit faster.

Every year I get comments from parents of how much this has helped their child have more confidence in themselves and actually run faster.

Simple but very, very effective.

Warm Ups

I know this might sound stupid & easy but I do repetitive drill at the beginning of every practice. After stretching & throwing warm-ups instead having my girls softball team do wind sprints or run to the outfield fence & back, we simply work on running the bases correctly as a cardio & lower body warm up.

Line everyone up single file from behind home plate to backstop. 1st time around the bases go 1/2 speed with a coach leading for example on how you want them to cut & round the bases. Then line-em back up & have the team do it full speed with every player doing it 100% correctly and with 100% effort, or they run it again. I have had the kids run it numerous times upon coming to practice unfocused, to hitting right on the 1st lap. It kind of sets the tone for practice and it pays off at game time. Not to mention it's a little bit of warm up for the coach on that 1st lap.

Thunder

We play a game called "Thunder" You split your squad up into two equal teams (randomly) one team hits first from a tee at home plate, the other team splits up half to 1B and half to 3B. The team at bat hits in order from the tee. They may hit anywhere on the field. Once they hit the ball, the hitter runs the bases. Once the ball is hit off of the tee, the team in the field sends 1 "runner" from both 1B and 3B to touch the ball as fast as they can. Once both players have touched the ball, the hitter stops and you count the total number of bases that she got to before both players touched the ball. Keep track of the total number of bases once everyone has hit and then bring in the fielding team to hit and send the hitters out to 1B and 3B to field. The team with the most total bases after a set # of innings is the winner. To get the coaches involved, assign a coach to each team and let them hit last for each team and run the bases. This is a fun and competitive game that the kids love!

Relay

I coach 6-8 year old instructional baseball and found that this is a fun drill to end each practice with. It gets the kids heart rate up while teaching them the right direction to run the bases.

- Divide the team into 2 groups.
- Place Group 1 at Home Plate and Group 2 at second base
- One player from each group will race around the bases, one starting at home, the other starting at second base
- Once the player make it back to their starting point, the next player in line will go, until the entire group has raced around the diamond
- Once that race is over, switch the groups, sending the second base group to home and the home plate group to second - race again

Base Running Drills

Divide the players equally among the four bases. One at a time from each base will be running, with the others waiting their turn. At 'go' from the coach, the four take off. Player at the plate: Simulates a swing, takes off as if hitting a double and possibly a triple and makes a good turn at first, picks up the 3rd base coach half way to 2nd. Rounds 2nd hard, 'picks up the ball' and returns to 2nd quickly. Player at first: From a lead, goes from 1st to 3rd. Picks up the 3rd base coach half way to 3rd. Makes a hard turn at 3rd then returns quickly. Player at 2nd: From a lead, goes from 2nd to home. Picks up the 3rd base coach and makes a good turn and runs hard through the plate. Player at 3rd: From a lead, goes back to the bag to tag. Takes off for home, rounds it, and then takes off for 1st as if beating out a single, looks inside towards the 1st base dugout as he crosses the bag for possible overthrow.

Base Running Drill

What I do is divide the players into two groups. Half of them line up at home plate and the other half line-up halfway between home and first. My assistant coach hits a ball into the backstop. At the crack of the bat the first player in line at home runs through first base trying to beat out a grounder while the first player in the other line rounds first and goes hard into second. They remain on those bases.

At the next crack of the bat the next two players in line do the same thing while the player on second takes off and scores while the runner on first rounds second and stops at third base. We now have the bases loaded. On the next crack of the bat the two runners at the front of the lines take off as do the runners from first and second. The runner at third must tag up. I will yell "go" when the runner coming from second is half way to third. The runner from third has to beat the runner coming from second to home. They usually have to hustle because the runner coming from second has a head of steam going.

Each time a player crosses the plate they go to the back of the opposite line they started from the previous time. We do this drill 5 minutes each practice as it is a great warm-up drill as well.

Base Running Drill

One of my newest ideas / drills is to work base running while our pitchers are working through warm ups at the mound. I have 4 pitchers on my softball team and after the whole team has gone through their warm up session; stretch, lap around the outside of the field, and then warm up with the whole team working on their throwing, I then bring my pitchers out to the mound. They have warmed up their arms for pitching while the others were just throwing.

I then have each pitcher throw 5 to 6 pitches and then go to the next pitcher. While doing this, I put 4 players on 1st, 2nd and 3rd base. I have taught my players to start their base running motion as the pitcher starts her wind up so that when her right foot comes over, contacts the ground and pushes forward to lift her left foot off the bag, it all happens simultaneously so that the player leaves the bag hard and has not left too early. We then rotate to the next player in line at that base. With young players this takes a few times through the drill so that they understand the advantage they have rather than waiting for the ball to be caught, and then leave. After each of the 4 players has run through this drill at the base, we rotate the groups to the next base. It is important that all go through each base because you leave each base a little differently and the players need to work this so they are aware of how far to come off each bag, why not to turn their backs to the catcher, why they should be in foul territory when taking a leave at 3rd and why they should be certain they can see both the 2nd baseman and know where the SS is when they break at 2nd.

This drill, although simple, is very useful for game situations. It makes the opposing defense become aware of the fact that you and your team are here to play aggressively when on offense and with one miscue by the defense, you are one more base around the block. This builds game savvy and confidence in all of your team players and coaches and quite often is the root cause for a lot of the wins we earn each year. Aggressive base running. It is an often overlooked and under coached part of the game. Me, I tell my girls at our 1st practice that we are going to be running, and then we start. And the pitchers get a great work out. This drill can take 15 to 30 minutes depending on the intensity that you drill in to this piece.

Grass Hill Drill

Sliding;

When first teaching a youth the proper mechanics of sliding into a base – I start them by using a grass hill. It doesn't have to be a big hill – just a grass incline of at least ten – twenty feet in length. By using a grass hill – both gravity and momentum will work in their favor as they work on the proper fundamentals of the slide.

Doubles

The team is divided into 3 equal groups; one at first base, one at second base, one at home. On "Go" the first person in each group goes two bases. As soon as they hit the first base, the next person in that line follows immediately. The first runner runs through her second base, the following person rounds that base and goes to her second base. Once each player does her first double, she walks back (cool down) to the previous base and continues from there until she has completed her "doubles" from all three bases and ends up where she started. (We don't start from third because we'd don't want runners rounding home plate.) Emphasis is on speed and proper rounding of bases. Anywhere from 2 to 4 of these circuits provides a good base running drill, as well as great conditioning.