

LESSON 6: BASE RUNNING

Grade-Level Outcomes

Primary Outcome

Reducing space: Selects the correct defensive play based on the situation (e.g., number of outs). (S2.M11.7) Note: Use this outcome to address offensive play.

Embedded Outcome

Fitness knowledge: Describes how muscles pull on bones to create movement in pairs by relaxing and contracting. (S3.M14.7)

Lesson Objectives

The learner will:

- demonstrate proper technique in running through first base on a batted ball during practice tasks or small-sided game play.
- demonstrate proper technique in rounding a base during practice tasks or small-sided game play.
- demonstrate proper technique in stopping at a base during base running practice tasks or small-sided game play.

Equipment and Materials

- Ball options: tennis balls, Wiffle balls, racquetballs, foam balls, etc.
- Bat options: Wiffle bats of different sizes, tennis rackets, wooden paddles
- Home plates and bases
- Pedometers

Introduction

With students in partners, have them write down as many base running rules as possible. Possible answers include running in baseline, forced-to-run situations, not-forced-to-run situations, tagging up on a fly ball, and over-running first base. Discuss students' responses and demonstrate, if necessary. Briefly discuss the homework assignment. Give an individual step-count goal.

Instructional Task: Tactical Base Running Game

■ PRACTICE TASK

2 v 2 Wiffle ball:

Create teams of two players. Two teams of players use only home, first, and third bases.

Offense

- Batter has a choice to run to first or third base. The batter can run only to an unoccupied base.
- Runners may not run directly from first base to third base.
- Runners must run on each hit.

Defense

- A ball caught in the air is an out.
- Outs also are made by tagging the base before the runner arrives, or by tagging the runner.

Set up playing areas so that they radiate out from a central open space.

Guiding questions for students:

- What did you do as a batter to help you reach a base? (Possible answers: look at where my partner was, hit to an open area, run to the closer base if it was open)

- Did those strategies work? Why or why not?
- What did you do to reach the base quickly? (Possible answers: sprint out of the batter's box, run hard, run in a straight line, run through the base)
- Why don't you want to stop at the base? (Answer: have to slow down)
- What part of the base did you try to touch to be sure that you were safe? (Answer: the front edge)
- How did you stand on the base when your partner was hitting? (Answer: like a runner in a race)

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Allow students to set up the bases at a distance they choose. One base must be half the distance of the other.
- Allow individual choices for the type of bat and ball used.
- Batter can throw, fungo hit, hit off a tee, hit a soft toss, or have the ball pitched.
- Teams switch after three outs or after each batter hits three times.

What to Look For

Critical elements for base running:

1. Drop the bat after the swing.
2. Sprint out of the box.
3. Run on the outside of the imaginary first-base line.
4. Step on the front edge of the base.
5. Run through first base.

Instructional Task: Base Running Practice Tasks

■ PRACTICE TASK

Make groups of four students, and have them set up two bases about 30 feet (9 m) apart.

Base running progression:

Explain and demonstrate each technique. Have students practice after each demonstration.

- Running through first base
- Rounding first base and returning to the base
- Leadoff position
- Stopping on a base

Refinement

Make sure that students are exploding out of their lead-up stance.

EMBEDDED OUTCOME: S3.M14.7. Through guiding questions, discuss muscle groups and how they work in pairs to produce movement.

Guiding questions for students:

- What muscle groups are you using when you run?
- Which muscles help you straighten out your legs at the knees and at the hips?
- What muscles help you bend your legs at the knees and at the hips?
- What muscle groups are you using in the upper body?

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Students may vary distance.
- Students may choose who they work with.

What to Look For

Critical elements for sprinting out of the batter's box:

1. Drop bat down after follow-through rather than throwing the bat.
2. First step is with the back foot.

Critical elements for running through first base and home plate:

1. Run to the right side of an imaginary baseline (home to first or third to home).
2. Step on the front edge of the base.
3. Run past the base and straight through.

Critical elements for rounding a base:

1. Halfway to the base, angle out and then back in toward the base.
2. Step on the inside corner of the base.
3. Lean to the infield side of the base.

Critical elements for the leadoff position:

1. Use a runner's standing start, with the back foot pushing against the edge of the base.
2. Use a forward lean, with arms in position to sprint.

Critical elements for stopping at a base:

1. Run hard in a straight line to the base.
2. Step on the front edge of the base.
3. Keep the first foot on the base, step over the base with the other foot, and lower the body to stop momentum.

Instructional Task: Game Application of Base Running

■ PRACTICE TASK

4 v 4 Wiffle ball:

Combine teams of two to create teams of four players. Two teams of players use an entire grid of bases. Set up playing areas so they radiate out from a central open space.

Offense

- Runners run bases as in regulation softball or baseball.
- The runners are forced to run only by the batter or a runner behind them.

Defense

- A ball caught in the air is an out.
- Outs can also be made by tagging the base before the runner arrives, or by tagging the runner.
- Teams switch after three outs.

Extensions

- Have students perform a self-assessment on their base-running skills.
- Evaluate students using the Game Performance Assessment Instrument (GPAI) (Oslin et al.).

Refinements

- Runner on first: Run on a ground ball. Go part way on a fly ball.
- Unforced runner on second: Run on a ground ball to the right side. Tag up on a fly ball to the right side.
- Unforced runner on third: Run on a deep ground ball to the right. Tag up on any fly ball.

Student Choices/Differentiation

- Allow students to set up the bases at a distance they choose.
- Allow individual choices for the type of bat and ball used.
- Batter can throw, fungo hit, hit off a tee, hit a soft toss, or have the ball pitched.
- Teams switch after three outs or after each batter hits three times.

What to Look For**Critical elements for base running:**

1. Drop the bat after the swing.
2. Sprint out of the box.
3. Run on the outside of the imaginary first-base line.
4. Step on the front edge of the base.
5. Run through first base.
6. Make proper decisions about advancing to the next base.

Are team members cooperating to make the outs?

Formal and Informal Assessments

- Complete the GPAI for base-running decisions.
- Self-assessment: Have students rate themselves on a teacher-created rubric on the following:
 - Using all of the base-running aspects of sprinting out of the batter's box
 - Running through first base
 - Rounding a base
 - Leading off
 - Stopping on a base

Closure

Discuss base running:

- If you were on first base and the ball was hit on the ground (hit in the air), what would you do?
- If you were on second base and there was no runner on first and a ball was hit on the ground (hit in the air), what would you do?
- If you were on third base and not forced to go, where would the ball need to be hit for you to run?
- What would you do if the ball was hit in the air?

Reflection

- Are students using the correct base-running techniques?
- Are students making appropriate decisions about when to run?

Homework

Give students a worksheet that requires them to identify primary muscle groups used when a person runs the bases.

Resources

Docheff, D., & Hunkapiller, J. (1999). Two-on-two softball. *Strategies*, 13(4), 13-15.

Mitchell, S.A., Oslin, J.L., & Griffin, L.L. (2013). *Teaching sport concepts and skills: A tactical games approach*. 3rd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Internet keyword search: "softball base running," "baseball base running"