

Be Aggressive on the Bases

Players love to be aggressive on the bases. They love to put pressure on the defense without saying a word. Teaching your players to be aggressive on the bases really does create team unity, team spirit and team cohesiveness. It elevates the game for them and puts mental pressure on your opponents.

First though, a coach **must teach** them how to do it and the fundamentals involved. **Teach** them how to break off the base. I preferred the rocker start but others may prefer other methods. Choose what is comfortable for the player to get the results wanted. What I wanted was an aggressive break off of the bases. If the defensive team says "Going" and she wasn't, that was great because the player's break off is taking away their focus on the hitter and making the pitcher and catcher think more about who is on the bases than the batter. It a double win for the offense-creating havoc on the bases makes the hitter's job easier. Missed spots or walks to the hitter, both will rake away a pitcher's effectiveness.

I like players to take three steps on the breakoff and pivot to face the catcher:

- right, left, right is the sequence on the breakoff. That allows a natural turn toward the catcher. Starting with the left foot means either a 2 step turn or a 4 step turn. 2 step is not far enough and 4 step is too far sometimes. If they are using a 4 step breakoff, call a pick off.
- her feet should never stop moving even when facing the catcher
- if an opponent stops her feet, call a pick off
- a player will be slower in her reaction time if her feet are stopped on the ground
- if the feet are still moving, the runner can go to the next base if the ball is dropped by the catcher or on a passed ball-that's being aggressive
- if a pick off is attempted, the runner can get back to the base quickly
- continue to take a bigger lead off if the catcher doesn't do anything about the lead off after each pitch.
- with a bigger lead off, if the runner keeps the feet moving, she can dive back into the base if the catcher attempts a pick off
- if she is a fast runner taking a big lead off, she could even take off for second on a pick off play attempt at first

Now the fun starts!!! After they learn that skill of breaking off the bases, here's more they can do:

- with runners on 1st and 2nd, tell the runner on first to take a huge leadoff and keep telling her by hand signals to go a little farther each pitch. You can start off by just having the runner on first take the huge leadoff which will take the catcher's focus off the runner on second
- if the catcher throws to second, runner on second can go to 3rd and the runner on first goes back to first. Now you are at 1st and 3rd.

- runner on first can now steal second and force to the defense to make a play. Now there are runners on second and third or an out at second and runner on third scores
- Same thing with bases loaded, runners on first and second take big leadoffs and runner on third stays closer
- the defenders still have to decide what to do and at that point many pitchers will get more nervous on every pitch.

The players love to put pressure on the defense! The coach needs to teach the aggressive leadoffs and especially the strategy behind it. Practice, practice, practice. When practicing with your own team, it gives your defense the practice in stopping the runners if another team tries this against your team.

A team will never steal second keeping their foot on first