

# Signals: Are They Confusing?

I get a lot of questions from coaches and parents about problems their players or daughters are having in practices and games with signals.

## **What type of signals do you use during your games?**

It depends on the level of play the team is competing at and the teams they are playing. If your team is at the highest level in softball, your opponents probably have a sophisticated method of stealing signals or signs from the catcher and coaches.

Let's talk about the **other** 90% of teams.

**Indicators**-this means the coach has their designated signals that they go through but one signal is an indicator. Usually the next signal is the one the coach wants the hitter to use. Example: Coach touches shoulder, wrist, hat, ear, etc. The hat/visor is the indicator, so the next signal is the signal the coach really wants. So, coach touches shoulder to wrist to hat to ear to elbow to chin. Hat is the indicator and ear is next which is the signal for a bunt. So player is suppose to bunt. Remember the age of the player, the slower and more deliberate the coach should be when using signals.

**Counting touches**-this one could be confusing for a lot of players. The coach goes through the signals and designates a number of touches. Example: Coach touches ear, hat, shoulder, belt, wrist, chin, elbow, across front of shirt, other ear, nose. Sixth touch is the signal so the chin is the signal meaning hit and run. This can be confusing to a lot of players because they are busy counting and have to pick up the signal as well. Not recommended for younger players and personally I never used this one.

**Coach's positioning**-the coach could still be using touches which could mean nothing or they could still be a one touch signal with a

signal being given by their position in the box. Example: up in the box close to the line, back in the box close to the line, up in the box away from baseline, back of the box away to baseline, up and middle of the box, back and middle of the box.

Along with where they stand, the coach could add hands on knees, hips, arms crossed or clapping for signals.

**Wrist signal cards**-lots are using especially in the higher levels since they are playing teams good at stealing signals. Lots use this and like is but it does slow down the game some. Again, let guide be age and level appropriate.

I used the following signals for years and we were Nationally ranked for those years and played mostly Nationally ranked teams.

I would give skin to skin signals which meant absolutely nothing and I may or may not include the real signal in that sequence.

A lot of time I would not give a steal signal or a bunt signal in a sequence and most of those times I wasn't even looking at the player the signal was meant for at all.

I am constantly watching the defensive players to see they positioning and who watches until the ball is returned to the pitcher and who doesn't watch that. How the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher and if the pitcher is watching the runners at all.

**Steal**-hand on stomach or brushed across stomach or acting like I was brushing something off my shirt. No look at the runner and no sequence unless I needed to hitter to cover the runner.

**Steal if catcher goes to her knees**-sly touch of the side of the knee followed by a sly touch of the stomach. Runner takes her lead off and if she sees the catcher go to her knees to block a ball

especially on a low outside pitch, she takes off for the next base. No look at runner when giving signal.

**Delay steal**-left ear lob. Again, no look at runner and runner takes off on throw back to the pitcher.

**Bunt**-touch just below neckline or touch/adjust my necklace. Also, could be a verbal signal especially for a righthanded hitter who has already turned to face the pitcher. That might have been “be a bunny”, “come on rabbit”, let’s go (say uniform number), rabbit in French.

**Hit and Run** –sequence of skin to skin including across shoulders somewhere which is the hit and run.

**Squeeze Play**-Touch the nose in some way slyly with the hitter turning away from me and slyly touching nose as a signal that she got my signal. Runner picks this up and goes on pitch.

These are just examples to play around with. The whole idea is to adjust your signals to your player’s level of play. It doesn’t help if the kids cannot understand them. Plus, when you do unconventional signs especially with no looks to the players, the players have fun with that. And to me, playing the best softball your team can play and having fun doing it is what it is all about.