

BASERUNNING

Getting out of the box

A key factor when getting out of the box is realizing that, when the ball comes off the barrel of the bat, the at-bat is over and the batter now becomes a base runner. When the ball leaves the barrel, the batter then becomes the most selfish person on the field. He will always want to accomplish more. Getting out of the box makes one a base runner and a potential scorer for the team. Therefore, mechanics become a big part in baserunning, and it starts with the first step out of the batter's box.

Out of the box (Right-Hander): A right-handed batter will take a full swing and put the ball in play. To get out of the box properly, the batter/runner should take his right foot and use a drop step. This drop step will put the first step of the batter/runner in a straight line with first base. The step needs to be big and quick. As always in baseball, the first step is the most essential, therefore, it needs to be quick and efficient.

Out of the box (Left-Hander): A left-hander will also take a quick and proficient step out of the box. The first step out of the box needs to be one that gains a relatively large amount of ground.

*** It is very important that the batter realizes that, once contact is made, the at-bat is over. Whether he hits a pop-up or a ground ball, the at-bat is over and his mission is now to get to first as efficiently as possible.

After the batter has taken his swing, has taken a great first step out of the box, and is running on a straight path to first base, he must run with his eyes up to gather information. On his third step out of the box, the runner should turn his head towards the field and, with a quick glance, find the baseball.

Routine ground ball

If the batter/runner hits the ball directly to an infielder, running with his eyes up, he should pick up first base again immediately and must run inside the forty-five-foot box. When approaching first base, the batter/runner should not slow down, lunge, or jump for the base. This can result in a player's injury. The proper technique is to run through first base, touching the front part of the bag and breaking down after first base. When breaking down, the runner should start to widen his feet and sink his hips. This is very important because, as the runner is breaking down, he should turn his head to the right, looking for an over-throw. If there happens to be an over-throw (and the runner should always expect there to be one), then by widening out and sinking his hips, he is now in position to run to second base.

Routine base hit

Once the batter/runner has gathered mental information, out of the box, and knows that the ball has gone through the infield, he then needs to properly round first base to put himself in the best position to advance to second base. We call it the straight-line cut. We teach the players to run in a straight line to a single point that will allow the base runner to dip his left shoulder and round first base and be in a relatively straight line with second base. If the line is too narrow to first, then the batter/runner will have to slow down to make his cut towards second; yet if the line is too wide, then the batter/runner will have a straight line towards second, taking him too long to get there. No two players will have the exact same straight line cut. However, it is important that they all use the same mechanics to get the quickest and most efficient path to second base.

Finally at first base

Once at first, the batter/runner should have a routine. The typical routine should be:

1. Find the baseball (be aware of where the ball is before deciding to leave base).
2. Get the signs from the coach.
3. Check the outfielders (know who has a good arm and who does not).
4. Take your lead.

Taking your lead-off of first base (Right-Handed Pitcher)

The runner should start with both heels on first base. The runner will then take a big step with his left foot and square up to home plate with his right foot. This technique insures that the runner will not cross his feet when coming off of first base. The runner will then take three shuffle steps. At the end of the shuffle steps, the runner is then out to his measured lead. He should then be able to cross over and dive back to first and be safe. This is the most standard lead to take.

Taking your lead-off of first base (Left-Handed Pitcher)

The runner uses the exact same technique as above for a left-handed pitcher, with the exception that his lead will be approximately one step larger. This is because when a lefty lifts his leg to pitch, the runner will take a jab step back to first, to insure that he will not be picked off by the left-handed pitcher.

Extensions

After the runner knows that the pitcher is going to the plate, he then wants to take a healthy secondary lead or extension. Off of a right-handed pitcher, the base runner will take two large shuffles towards second base. The shuffles should be low and long to gain as much ground towards second base as possible. One mistake that youngsters tend to make is jumping too high. This covers ground vertically but not horizontally.

Off of a left-handed pitcher, the runner has a larger lead and is jabbing back towards first base. Therefore, to have the correct timing with the batter, the runner should only take one shuffle for his extension. In either case, the runner wants to time his extension so that he has both feet planted and his thoughts going towards second base when the ball is crossing the hitting zone.

Lead offs of second base

Once on second base, the runner should go through the same routine that he went through at first base:

1. Find the baseball (be aware of where the ball is before deciding to leave base).
2. Get the signs from the coach.
3. Check the outfielders (know who has a good arm and who does not).
4. Take your lead.

There are two leads at second base. The first lead is with zero or one out. The runner will take his lead in a straight line towards third base. Again, the runner will start with both heels on the base and take his lead making sure not to cross his feet. He will then get to his "safe point." A safe point is a spot between second and third base that the runner should always be able to get back to second base safely. The pitcher, with the best move in the nation, and the catcher, with the best arm, should not be able to pick the runner off from his safe point. Once the runner gets to his safe point the runner will listen to the third base coach on whether he should extend his lead or not.

Once the runner is sure the pitcher is going to the plate, he will then go into his extension. Again, it is two shuffles. Again, the runner wants to make sure he is gaining ground with his extension and not air. When the ball is crossing the hitting zone, the runner should have both feet on the ground with his thoughts on third base. The runner should always be greedy and want more than what he has. He already has second base so his mind should be on third.

With two outs, the runner wants to take a two-out lead. A two-out lead is a deeper lead. A two-out lead will give the base runner a better angle to round third base on a base hit. The runner should have both heels on second, looking at third, and take his lead at a forty five degree angle from second base, getting to his safe point. Again, the runner wants to take two shuffles for his extension, momentum and mind set going to third and both feet on the ground when the ball is crossing the hitting zone.

Rules at Second Base

Ball hit on the ground to the runner's left will advance the runner to third
Ball hit on the ground to the runner's right-see the ball through the infield

Tag with 0 outs

Part way with 1 out

Expect to be sent with 2 outs.

Lead offs of Third Base

The base runner will go through the same routine that they went through at first and second base:

1. Find the baseball (be aware of where the ball is before deciding to leave base).
2. Get the signs from the coach.
3. Check the outfielders (know who has a good arm and who does not).
4. Take your lead.

When the runner takes his lead off of third, he should take his lead in foul territory. The reasoning behind this thinking is, if the batter hits the ball and the ball hits the runner, then the runner will not be out. The runner will then come back in fair territory to get in line with the throw back from the catcher.

Lead off of a right-hander

The runner should take his lead with his shoulders square to the pitcher. The runner's lead should be equidistant to third as the third baseman. If the third baseman is playing back, the base runners lead should be far enough so that on his extension he is still committed to going to the plate and not trying to get back to third.

The runner will take his lead. Once the pitcher lifts his leg, the runner will jab step back to third, making sure the pitcher goes to the plate. Once he is sure the pitcher is going to the plate; he crosses his left foot over his right foot and is now square to the plate. He takes a walking lead towards home. When the ball is in the hitting zone, the runner should have his shoulders square to the plate, right foot in front of left foot, anticipating a pass ball or ground ball. If the catcher catches the ball, the runner will return to third base in fair territory.

Lead off of a left-hander

The lead will be the exact same as a right-hander's, except for the jab step. The runner will not jab-step back to third. When the pitcher lifts his knee, he will take the exact same walking lead as off of a right-hander and will be committed to going to the plate. Again, the runner will return to third base, in fair territory.

Rules at Third Base

- ** Freeze on a line drive. Tag when the ball is in the air.
- *** As a base runner, you always want more than what you have.
- *** It is all about mentality.