

Home to First - Running Through

5-6 min

EQUIPMENT

First base, home plate, bats (optional for simulation)

SETUP & EXECUTION

Line players up at home plate. On "Go!" (or simulate swing), player sprints to first base and runs THROUGH the bag. Emphasize not slowing down until past the base. Run through to the right (foul territory) and look over right shoulder for overthrow.

COACHING POINTS

- Run in a straight line - don't arc toward first
- Hit the front of the base, not the top
- Run THROUGH the base - full speed past it
- After passing base, look right to check for overthrow
- No diving or sliding into first on a routine grounder

KEY PHRASE

"The base is not the finish line - run through it!"

Home to First - Turning for Two

5-6 min

EQUIPMENT

First base, second base, home plate, coach at first base position

SETUP & EXECUTION

Same start as above, but now simulating a ball hit to outfield. Player runs to first, touches inside corner of base, and turns toward second. Coach waves them on or holds them. If held, take a few steps toward second, then return to first.

COACHING POINTS

- Start curving toward first base at about 2/3 of the way there
- Touch the inside corner of first base (toward pitcher)
- Lean into the turn - don't run wide
- Eyes find coach/ball while rounding
- Aggressive turn, but under control to stop if needed

SKILLS FOCUS

Rounding bases Reading coaches Aggressive base running

Steal Timing - Release on the Pitch

6-8 min

EQUIPMENT

First base, second base, coach acting as pitcher, catcher (optional)

SETUP & EXECUTION

Player starts on first base with foot on the bag. Coach simulates a pitch. The moment the ball crosses the plate, player explodes toward second. Key: stay on the base until the pitch crosses, then GO. Practice the timing repeatedly - "watch... watch... GO!"

COACHING POINTS

- Stay on the base until the pitch crosses the plate (league rule!)
- Athletic stance: knees bent, weight forward, ready to explode
- Eyes track the pitch - the moment it crosses, you're gone
- First 3 steps are EXPLOSIVE - this is where steals are won
- Run in a straight line to second - don't arc

KEY PHRASE

"Coiled and ready - explode when it crosses!"

EQUIPMENT

Bases, coach as pitcher, coach or player as catcher, tennis balls or baseballs

SETUP & EXECUTION

Player on first (or second). Coach pitches - sometimes clean, sometimes in the dirt or past the catcher. Runner must READ the ball: if it gets past the catcher or bounces away, GO! If caught cleanly, stay. Make it random so runners learn to watch and react.

COACHING POINTS

- Watch the ball all the way to the catcher - don't guess
- Ball in the dirt = be ready, it might get past
- Ball clearly past the catcher = GO immediately
- Hesitation kills - trust what you see
- From third: ball must go FAR back to risk going home

PRO TIP

At this age, catchers often struggle with balls in the dirt. Runners who are watching and ready will get LOTS of free bases. Train them to always be hunting for this opportunity.

SKILLS FOCUS

Reading the ball Quick decisions Situational awareness

First to Third on a Single**EQUIPMENT**

All bases, coach in outfield with ball

SETUP & EXECUTION

Player starts on first base. Coach tosses ball into outfield (simulating single). Player reads the ball, rounds second aggressively, picks up third base coach, and either stops at third or goes home based on coach's signal. Rotate through team.

COACHING POINTS

- Read the ball first - make sure it's through
- Touch inside of second base, don't run wide
- Pick up third base coach about 15 feet before reaching third
- Trust the coach - don't second-guess the signal
- If waved home, don't slow down at third

KEY PHRASE

"Find your coach before you need them - not at the base!"

Sliding Practice**EQUIPMENT**

Loose base or sliding mat, grass area (NOT dirt), optional: cardboard for slick surface

SETUP & EXECUTION

Start on grass. Players practice the bent-leg slide position sitting down first. Then take 2-3 jogging steps and slide. Gradually increase speed. One leg bent underneath, one leg extended toward base, hands up in the air.

COACHING POINTS

- Slide on your butt and thigh, NOT on your knee or ankle
- Bottom leg forms a "4" - bent underneath the straight leg
- HANDS UP - most sliding injuries are jammed fingers/wrists
- Start the slide early enough - don't slide INTO the base
- Commit! Half-slides cause injuries

VARIATION

Practice pop-up slides: same technique but momentum carries you back to your feet. Good for close plays where they might try for the next base.

EQUIPMENT

Third base, home plate, coach with balls in outfield

SETUP & EXECUTION

Player starts on third base. Coach lofts fly ball to outfield. Player goes back to third, watches the catch, and sprints home the moment the ball touches the glove. Time them or make it competitive.

COACHING POINTS

- Get back to the base early - don't wait until the last second
- One foot on base, other foot toward home (ready to go)
- Watch the ball - leave when it touches the glove, not before
- Explode off the base - this is where games are won
- Listen for coach - they might hold you on shallow flies

PRO TIP

Have the outfielder actually throw home sometimes. Teaches runners to read the arm and decide whether to slide or stand up.

Full Diamond - Situational Running

10-12 min

EQUIPMENT

Full set of bases, coach at home plate

SETUP & EXECUTION

Start runners at home. Coach calls out the situation: "Ground ball to short!" "Single to right!" "Deep fly to center!" Runners react appropriately and run the bases. Keep calling situations as runners progress around. Run continuous groups.

COACHING POINTS

- Grounder = run hard, watch the play develop
- Single = round first, look for extra base
- Fly ball with less than 2 outs = tag up
- Fly ball with 2 outs = run on contact, go halfway on anything deep
- Always know the situation before the pitch

SKILLS FOCUS

Game situations Decision making Base path discipline