

A photograph of a baseball player in a white uniform running on a field. The player is wearing a white jersey with a dark number on the front, white pants, and a dark cap. He is captured in a dynamic running pose, leaning forward with his arms pumping. The background shows a green field and a dark outfield fence with some yellow lettering. The entire image is framed by a red border.

LJYB Player Development

Base-Running

January 2010

Key Points

- 1) There are four major types of base-running situations when the ball is in-play:
 - a) groundball when need to advance, b) groundball when don't need to advance, c) pop-fly that is unclear whether it will be caught, and so runner needs to be positioned to either advance or go back, and d) tagging-up.
- 2) The key for the emerging youth baseball player is to understand these four situations and get in the habit of being mentally prepared to react to the situation. Good base-running judgment develops with experience. The more experience provided by the coach, the faster good judgment will develop.
- 3) For the emerging youth baseball player with a pop-fly, we recommend initially creating a hard rule such as “three-step shuffle and freeze.” Once the player becomes proficient they can then independently evaluate the individual situation.
- 4) The base coaches play a crucial role in reminding the emerging youth player of the situation and potential scenarios.
- 5) For running to first-base, work on both rounding the base and running through.
- 6) Given the need in baseball to accelerate and quickly stop on the next base, learning correct sliding technique is crucial to successful base-running.

Correct Sliding Technique



The top picture shows major leaguers working on basic sliding technique during spring training. They do this every year and they are professionals. I am always shocked at how little time is spent in youth baseball working on sliding, given the important of aggressive base-running and the injury-risk of doing it incorrectly.

INITIATION

Hands: should be up close to shoulders, ideally in a fist – to minimize potential injury to hands and fingers.

Legs: The slide should be initiated about 1.5 body lengths from the base. Most players prefer to slide with their strong leg (right-leg for right-handed) reaching out to touch the base. As such, the opposite leg will make the last ground contact. The lead-leg heel extends directly out towards the base, as the player begins to sit down (running at full speed). Think about throwing center of gravity out in front to knee-high level. As this happens upper body naturally starts to recline. During this “sitting” process, the back-leg folds under body weight – with goal of having back-leg ankle under the lead-leg knee. Think of making a figure-4 with legs during slide. During this “sitting” process, goal is to have buttox be first and majority part of ground contact.

FINISH

- Hands – still finish around shoulder-head height.
- Lower back and buttox should be flat on ground.
- Lead foot should have heel into base, while back-leg is folded underneath, with back-leg ankle under knee – forming figure-4.
- The goal of slide is to have majority of contact with ground occur on buttox. As such, the “quality” of a slide can be seen if majority of dirt from slide on buttox, instead of knee, leg, side. Ideally dirt should be evenly covered on buttox (not on one side).

3 Biggest concerns: 1) sliding too late into base (timing), 2) hands/ fingers jammed because down near slide, 3) back-leg knee injury from improper slide technique.