Run Game™

PLAY THE RUN GAME

Free from Coach

5 DRILLS THAT STEAL OUTS

The defensive half of the Run Game. Pickoffs, tags, cutoffs and first-and-third, the way a former Red Sox draft pick teaches them. Ready to run at your next practice.

1. **Pickoff to First Base**
2. **Pickoff to Second Base**
3. **Tag Technique**
4. **Cutoffs and Relays: Plays at the Plate**
5. **First and Third Defense**

Make them earn it. · playtherungame.com · @playrungame

Play offense on
DEFENSE.

Most youth teams give runs away. Walks, lazy throws, free stolen bases. We don't. A Run Game team defends the run game better than anyone on the schedule, and steals outs the other team never saw coming.

STEAL AN OUT

Pickoffs, tags and cutoffs take outs the other team handed you.

NO FREE BASES

Runners go station to station. Make them earn every 90 feet.

MINIMIZE DAMAGE

A two- or three-run inning, not a six. That's how you stay in games.

HOW TO USE THIS

- Pick one or two drills per practice. Don't run all five at once.
- Read the goal and setup before practice. Say the cues out loud during it.
- Watch for the common mistakes. That's where the reps pay off.
- Rep them a lot. The goal is the same clean play every time.

LEAGUE RULES

- **Any league:** Tag Technique, Cutoffs and Relays.
- **Leagues with leads and steals:** both pickoffs and First and Third Defense.

The question to ask after every game: "If we lose today, how can I live with a loss?" If they beat us, they had to earn it.

1

Steal an out

PICKOFF TO FIRST BASE

Use when: your league allows leads | **Players:** pitchers and a first baseman | **Time:** 10–15 min

Goal: A quick, accurate pickoff to first that steals outs and keeps runners close.

SETUP

Pitchers take turns on the mound. The first baseman holds the runner, ready to tag on every throw. Each pitcher gets 20–30 throws. Runners optional.

RIGHT-HANDED PITCHERS: THE HOP TURN

1. Start with the right foot on the rubber.
2. Both feet leave the ground at the same time.
3. Quarter turn toward first base.
4. Both feet land at the same time. Don't gain ground toward first. Just turn.
5. Throw to the spot where the first baseman makes his tag.

LEFT-HANDED PITCHERS: A VARIETY OF PICKS

- Step off the back of the rubber and throw.
- **The setup pick:** an obvious step to first, to show the runner a simple move.
- **The deception pick:** come set looking at the runner. When the leg lifts, head and eyes go to the plate. Then step to first.

WHY THE DECEPTION PICK WORKS

The runner sees the pitcher's eyes go to the plate and starts his secondary lead. Looking at the runner during the set makes the switch to the plate believable.

COACHING CUES

"HOP TURN. BOTH FEET TOGETHER."

"QUARTER TURN. NO GROUND."

"HIT THE TAG SPOT."

"MAKE THEM EARN IT."

COMMON MISTAKES

- Stepping off behind the rubber instead of the hop turn
- Feet landing at different times
- Gaining ground toward first instead of just turning
- Throws that miss the first baseman's tag spot

COACH: Rep it a lot. The goal is an efficient, accurate throw every time.

2

Steal an out

PICKOFF TO SECOND BASE

Use when: your league allows leads | **Players:** pitcher, middle infielders, a runner | **Time:** 10–15 min

Goal: Steal outs at second base. The infielders set it up, and the pitcher spins and throws.

SETUP

Pitcher on the mound, a runner at second, and both middle infielders in position.

THE PITCHER: SPIN AND THROW

- No inside move at this age. Just spin and throw.
- Spin to your glove side: righties spin toward first base, lefties toward third base.
- Many pitchers spin the wrong way, so practice it.

THE INFIELDERS: ONE HOLDS, ONE PLAYS THE HITTER

- Only one infielder holds the runner. The other plays the hitter.
- Get close enough to pick him off: about 6–8 feet from the base.
- Hands on knees, or whatever is comfortable. Then sit still.

ROCK HIM TO SLEEP

No patting the glove, kicking the dirt or bouncing around. Stay quiet and let the runner get big. Other teams pat their gloves because they haven't practiced pickoffs. We have. We're a threat.

THE SIGN AND THE BREAK

1. The second baseman calls the pick with his bare hand. The shortstop calls it with his glove.
2. Stick the arm or glove all the way out, hand or mitt wide open.
3. Run full speed to the base.
4. Get there early. If you arrive at the same time as the ball, the runner won't look out.

COACHING CUES

"ROCK HIM TO SLEEP."
"BIG SIGN."
"SPRINT TO THE BAG."
"BEAT THE BALL THERE."
"MAKE THEM EARN IT."

COMMON MISTAKES

- Pitcher spinning to the wrong side
- Both infielders holding the runner
- Patting the glove or bouncing around
- Barely sticking the hand or glove out
- Running to the base at half speed
- Arriving at the same time as the ball

WHY IT MATTERS: The pitcher is thinking about his grip and the hitter. A half-hearted sign won't get his attention.

3

Win the call

TAG TECHNIQUE

Players: middle infielders and a catcher | **Time:** 10–15 min

Goal: Clean, quick tags that win the call. Get there early, straddle, stay low, pop the tag, and show the umpire.

SETUP

The catcher throws to second. Put a cone on the back side of the base (right field side), where the runner slides. Fielders hold a ball in their throwing hand so they tag with one hand.

1 · WHO'S COVERING

Shortstop and second baseman cover their mouths with a glove or hand and look at each other. Open mouth means "you." Closed means "me."

2 · GET THERE EARLY

Set up 8–10 feet from the base. Be on the base by the time the ball leaves the catcher's hand. A moving target leads to a bad throw.

3 · STRADDLE AND GET LOW

Right foot toward the mound, left foot toward center field. Butt down, chest down, glove just over the ground. Work low to high. Never pop up out of the stance.

4 · POP THE TAG

1. Watch the ball into the glove.
2. Eyes find the runner's foot or hand (the cone in practice).
3. One-hand tag. Smack it like you're whipping a towel.
4. Don't leave the glove on him. Pop it up toward your chest.
5. Show the umpire the ball. Then move on.

PROGRESSION

No ball (footwork) → flip from 3 feet → full position distance → fungos in the air, on one hop and two hops.

COACHING CUES

"OPEN, YOU. CLOSED, ME."
"BE EARLY."
"STRADDLE AND GET LOW."
"LOW TO HIGH."
"POP IT. SHOW HIM."

COMMON MISTAKES

- Arriving late, so the catcher throws to a moving target
- Setting up in front of the base
- Tagging with two hands
- Popping up to catch a low throw
- Laying the glove on the runner
- Staring at the umpire instead of showing the ball

COACH: On a bang-bang play, the umpire calls what he sees. A popped tag with the ball shown looks like an out.

Everybody has a base

4 CUTOFFS AND RELAYS: PLAYS AT THE PLATE

Players: whole defense | **Time:** 10–15 min

Goal: When a ball is hit to the outfield with a runner trying to score, every player knows exactly where to go.

SETUP

Full defense in position. A runner on second base. The coach hits or throws the ball to the outfield.

THE RULE

There are three bases to cover besides home. The defense shifts based on who the cut man is, so every base is covered. The runner might be held at third, so third base always needs a fielder.

BALL TO LEFT FIELD

- **Cut man:** third baseman
- **Shortstop:** covers third
- **Second baseman:** covers second
- **First baseman:** trails the batter-runner. If he takes too big a turn, back-pick him at first.

BALL TO CENTER OR RIGHT FIELD

- **Cut man:** first baseman
- **Second baseman:** covers first
- **Shortstop:** covers second
- **Third baseman:** covers third

PITCHER AND CATCHER

- **Pitcher:** backs up home plate on every one of these.
- **Catcher:** receives the throw and calls "Cut," or lets it come through.
- When the ball comes through, the cut man fakes a catch and a throw toward first. The deke holds the batter-runner at first.

COACHING CUES

"WHO'S THE CUT?"
"EVERYBODY HAS A BASE."
"MAKE THEM EARN IT."

WATCH FOR

- Two players running to the same base
- Nobody at third when the runner is held
- Pitcher standing on the mound instead of backing up home
- Catcher staying quiet on the cut call
- Cut man not faking when the ball comes through

BIGGER FIELDS: Double cuts, with both middle infielders going out, are for fields where the ball can roll forever. Master single cuts first.

5

Name the priority

FIRST AND THIRD DEFENSE

Use when: your league allows stealing | **Players:** whole defense, runners on first and third | **Time:** 10–15 min

Goal: Keep it simple. Name the priority runner before the pitch, and don't give up a free run.

OUR APPROACH

Some teams run six different first-and-third plays. Those rarely work. Name one priority, the runner on third or the runner on first, then execute. If they score, they earn it with a hit.

CHOOSING THE PRIORITY

- **Close game:** runner on third. Let the runner from first take second, and hold the runner on third so he has to score on a hit.
- **Big lead, a team hitting hard, slow runner at first:** you might throw through to second and trade the run for the out.

PRIORITY: RUNNER ON THIRD

- Catcher picks the runner off third if he gets too big, pump-fakes to second, or simply holds the ball. Holding it is fine.
- Middle infielders play the hitter. Don't leave a hole by covering second.

PRIORITY: RUNNER ON FIRST

- Throw through to second and get the out. Forget the runner on third.
- The third baseman still plays the hitter, not just the runner.

EARLY BREAK (TRICK PLAY)

- **Priority on third:** don't chase him and let the run score. Hold the ball. If he walks into second, we can live with that.
- **Priority on first:** forget the runner on third. Get him in a rundown and make the play.

COACHING CUES

"NAME THE PRIORITY."

"PLAY THE HITTER."

"NO FREE RUNS."

"HOLD IT. WE CAN LIVE WITH THAT."

"MAKE THEM EARN IT."

COMMON MISTAKES

- Running too many trick plays that confuse your own team
- Middle infielders leaving their spot to cover second when the priority is third
- Chasing the early-breaking runner and letting the run score
- A fielder standing on second when the batter hits a routine grounder

That's the defense. Now meet the

WHOLE RUN GAME.



These five drills are the **Steal an Out** side of the system. The full Run Game adds **Pressure Ball** on offense, baserunning, double plays, practice plans, and the Rookies animating every drill.

THE PLAYBOOK

The full system as an ebook. Every drill, cue and practice framework.

RUN GAME COACH

An app that builds your practice plan, timed to the minute.

THE ACADEMY

Every animated Rookies drill, with new ones each month.

GET FIRST ACCESS

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Coach was drafted by the Red Sox out of high school and has coached players on to college and pro ball. He learned the game from his dad. Now he's in your dugout.