

Hit-and-Run Drill/Game

Goal: To execute the hit-and-run play.

Setup: Set up an entire defense and place one runner on first base.

Description: A coach should pitch and control the velocity and location of pitches, asking the batters to try to hit toward the hole vacated by whomever is covering second in an attempt to advance the runner to the next base and avoid a double play (see figure 9.2). Remember to ask the batters to try to make contact no matter the location of the pitch. The runner should advance as far as possible without being thrown out. Let the group of offensive players have two at-bats each and then rotate in that many players from the defense. Award points to each hitting group this way:

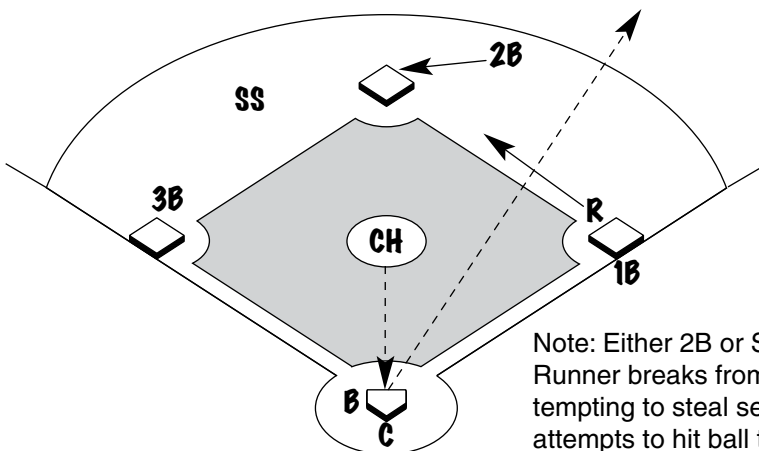
- Two points for a hit that advances a runner to third or home
- One point for a hit that advances a runner only to second
- Zero points for plays that do not advance the runner

To make the game easier, do the following:

- Have batters hit off a tee.
- Instruct infielders to let the ball go through to the outfield.
- Allow leadoffs.

To make the game harder, do the following:

- Throw faster pitches.
- Allow no leadoffs.
- Throw pitches outside the strike zone to make the hitters protect the runner.



Note: Either 2B or SS can cover. Runner breaks from first as if attempting to steal second. Batter attempts to hit ball through vacated hole. OF optional. If you use OF, runner should try to go to third and defense should set up cutoff to third.

Figure 9.2 Hit-and-Run Drill/Game.

A point to remember for the defense is that games have certain hit-and-run situations. If there is a 3-2 count on a hitter who doesn't strike out much, teams are likely to hit and run. In these situations the middle infielders need to hold their ground as long as possible and not move toward second base so that they don't open up big holes in the infield. With a runner on first with two outs and a 3-2 count on the batter, the runner will always be going on the pitch. The middle infielders must stay in their positions on this play, because the end result will be a walk, a third strike, or a ball put in play. There will be no play at second base.

Signals to Players

Develop a simple system of hand signals to set plays in motion, and teach your players that a sign stays on until you signal that it no longer applies. Have your players watch the entire series of signs instead of picking up a sign and turning immediately to look at the pitcher, because you may still be giving additional decoy signs. However, don't overload your players. If they have trouble grasping a strategy or remembering a signal, simplify or drop it. Usually you should try to have one sign that is an indicator, such as touching the bill of the cap with the right index finger. The next sign given after the indicator is the play that you want to put on. This technique is designed to keep the other team from figuring out your signs. You might give some decoy signs that don't mean anything unless preceded by the indicator. If your players have trouble understanding this type of system, consider making the real sign the first sign you give. Players can't execute what they can't understand. Table 9.1 shows some hitting and baserunning signals you might use (see also figure 9.3).

Table 9.1 Coaches' Signs

Sign	Message
Right index finger to bill of cap	Indicator
Right hand to ear	Bunt
Right hand to chest	Steal
Right hand to top of head	Hit and run
Grab both ears	Take (not recommended in younger age groups; let them hit!)
Rub either arm	Wipe off sign
Delayed steal	One finger extended down and to the left of body