

RUN DOWN SYSTEM

This situation occurs frequently in softball, so every team must practise it regularly and know how to execute it effectively. Anytime a runner is trapped off a base, the defence should make an out.

There are many variations to the play, all of which are acceptable, so long as the basic principles are followed and the play works. The example shown is one of the most common systems, but it is up to the coach to make any changes for their own team.

The biggest problems with this play are;

- a) mishandling the ball; and
- b) poor timing.

Follow these key principles to execute consistently:

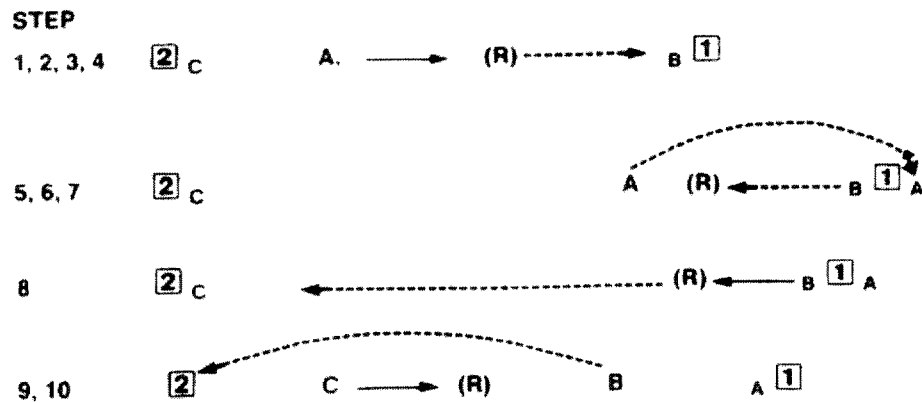
PRINCIPLES

1. **ALL BASES MUST BE COVERED.**
2. **ALWAYS FORCE THE RUNNER BACK TOWARDS THE ORIGINAL BASE.**
3. **KEEP THE BALL VISIBLE TO THE RECEIVING PLAYER.**
4. **USE THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF THROWS...PREFERABLY ONE.**
5. **ONLY ONE FAKE, THEN THROW.**
6. **THROW PAST THE RUNNER, TO THE GLOVE SIDE OF THE RECEIVER.**

EXECUTION

Study the diagram and the explanation of the numbered steps, which illustrate how to execute the run-down play, using three players. It is more common to use four, but the principles are the same.

START The play starts with a runner caught too far off a base. The player with the ball must run straight at the baserunner, forcing the runner to go one way or the other. The throw is then made to that base. If no out is made on this initial throw, the runner is trapped between bases and the run-down starts.

**STEP****EXPLANATION**

1. In the example, player (A) has the ball, player (B) is covering 1st base, and player (C), 2nd base. Presumably there would be a back-up player at each base as well. (R) is the runner.
2. Player (A), after receiving the ball, runs (R) back to first base.
3. The ball is held high, clearly visible to player (B).
4. Player (A) is permitted one fake throw only, before throwing the ball to (B).
5. As runner (R) approaches the base, chased by (A), the receiving fielder, (B), takes a step towards the runner. This step is the cue for (A) to throw the ball, so the timing of the step is critical. It is the key to the success of the play.
6. As (B) steps forward, (A) makes the throw and the runner is tagged out.
7. If no tag is made, player (A) continues forward to cover 1st base.
8. Player (B), who now has the ball, runs (R) out to the middle again.
9. When the runner reaches the center area between the two bases, (B) throws the ball ahead of the runner to (C), at 2nd base, forcing (R) to retreat. (B) continues forward to cover 2nd base.
10. (C) now chases (R) back to 1st base and the procedure continues until the out is made.

This is the standard procedure for the play, but there are other options. Players must also be flexible and learn to adapt to the game situation. However, a run-down play should involve one "chaser", one player at the bases in front of and behind the trapped runner, plus one player backing up those bases.

Coverage must also be maintained at the base in front of any additional runners, that might be on base at the time.