

HIT-AND-RUN

The hit-and-run is an offensive tactic that requires a more experienced batter in order to be successful. The batter must be a contact hitter and should not strike out often. This tactic is typically used with a runner on first, but it can be used with a runner on second or runners at first and second.

The baserunner leaves the base on the pitch, stealing the next base. The batter is obligated to protect the runner by making contact with the pitch, whether it is a strike or not. Therefore, the batter must have a positive count (more balls than strikes), increasing the potential for a hittable pitch. The only exception is if the pitch is so poor that the catcher will not be able to catch it (wild pitch). The batter attempts to hit the ball on the ground, with the best result being that the batter hits the ball behind the runner, to the right side. But even a ball hit to the left side can be effective, especially if the shortstop leaves her position early to cover the steal and the ball is hit to the vacated spot. If successful, the results of the hit-and-run

can range from avoiding a double play to allowing the runner to go from first to third or from second to home. This tactic can be used effectively with runners who do not have above average speed.

The most effective way for the defense to counter the hit-and-run is to get ahead of the batter early, which will enable the pitcher to make pitches off the plate that might be difficult to hit. If the offensive team is known for hitting the first pitch, the defense could pitch a high pitch early with the intent of forcing a fly ball or pop-up. The defense could even consider using the pitchout on the first pitch. Defensive players, especially the shortstop, must hold their positions until the ball passes the batter so that a ground ball to the shortstop doesn't become a base hit because the shortstop is standing at second base. If the ball is hit, the defense should expect the runner to attempt to take an extra base, especially if the ball is hit behind the runner. The defense should look to get the ball in quickly to the lead base.

RUN-AND-HIT

The run-and-hit takes some of the pressure off the hitter, but it can be a little more risky for the runner. In the run-and-hit, the runner is basically stealing, but the batter has the green light to hit a good pitch or not swing if it is not her pitch. This tactic is designed to be used with baserunners who have above average speed and can successfully steal bases. The baserunner may get the run-and-hit signal without the batter knowing. The sign should be given when there is a positive count on the batter. This allows the batter to respond to the pitch and not worry about what the runner is doing. There is a risk that the batter will hit a fly ball or line drive, resulting in a double play, but if successful, the run-and-hit can result in extra bases or prevent the double play.

The defensive strategy for the run-and-hit is similar to the defense for a steal. With a runner on first, the shortstop must anticipate the potential steal. The shortstop must hold her position until the ball goes by the batter. She must also be able to get into position to cover second for the steal. If the ball is hit, the fielders must be aware that the runner will attempt to take an extra base.

A pitchout can be an effective deterrent to a team that uses the run-and-hit. If the offense thinks there is a chance that a pitchout will be used, they will be more careful about when they call this offensive tactic. A positive pitch count for the batter is the best time to run this play, so the pitcher must try to stay ahead of the batter.

Hit-and-Run or Run-and-Hit Drill 1. *Batting Machine*

A batting machine is used for consistency in pitches to allow for adequate practice opportunities. Place a runner at first with a full defense in the field. The

batter starts with a count of two balls, zero strikes. The teacher or coach can call the hit-and-run or run-and-hit on one of the next two pitches. The

objective is for the batter to hit the ball on the ground, preferably behind the runner. The runner leaves on the release of the pitch (when it shoots out of the machine) and should attempt to get all

the way to third if the ball is hit. The defense should anticipate the attempt when making the play. Each batter should have at least four times at bat.

Hit-and-Run or Run-and-Hit Drill 2. *Live Pitching*

The setup of this practice activity is identical to drill 1, but instead of a machine, a live pitcher is used.

This is more gamelike and forces the batter to react to the pitch, which might not be a great one to hit!

ANGLE DOWN

Angle down is an offensive tactic used with runners at second and third with less than two outs. The angle down offense seems to go against some of the basics of softball. With less than two outs and runners on second and third, if a ground ball is hit in the infield, the runner at third will typically wait for the throw to first (if the ball is hit slowly to the right side, she may break for home). In angle down, the runner on third breaks for home and the runner on second breaks for third if they anticipate the ball will be hit on the ground. The batter attempts to run all the way to second base if the initial play is made to home. With this aggressive play, even if the out is made at home, the offense will still have runners at second and third with one or two outs. This is the same situation that would have occurred if the runner had stayed

at third. This tactic forces the defense to make a more difficult (and pressure-filled) play at home plate to get an out.

When the offense uses the angle down tactic, the defense is forced to attempt to get the runner who is running from third to home. Therefore, in this situation, the defense should play in (as they normally should with a runner on third) but should anticipate that the first throw will go directly home, without the need for a check of the runner at third. Good communication is needed on the field so that the fielder is aware that the runner on third is breaking for home on contact. Immediately after the play is made at home, the catcher needs to anticipate that the batter will attempt to run to second. It then becomes a first-and-third situation, and the defense needs to play it as such.

Angle Down Drill 1. *Pitching Machine*

A pitching machine is used in this drill to facilitate successful practice attempts. The pitching machine pitches consistently at the same speed and basically in the same location every time. This gives the batter a better chance to hit the ball on the ground and provide the fielders and runners with more opportunities to practice the play. Place a full defense in their positions on the field. The pitcher can feed the machine, and the catcher can either catch the

machine pitch or stand behind a catch net and move into catching position after the ball has been contacted. Either way, the catcher should be in full gear. The runners take a lead on the release of the pitch out of the machine and react to the hit ball. As soon as contact is made and they believe the ball will hit the ground, they should move to the next base. The batter runs out the hit, attempting to get to second base if the throw goes home.

Angle Down Drill 2. *Live Pitching*

This is the same practice activity as drill 1, except a pitcher is used instead of the machine and the

catcher (in full gear) is in position behind home plate.
