

The Bunting Game

An excellent way to really sharpen your overall short-game offense and defense is to play the bunting game. This will improve your bunting skills, your base running skills, and your defense.

Divide your players into two teams based on their primary and secondary infield positions. Generally we do not use a pitcher in this drill. Position your [Louisville Slugger pitching machine](#) on the pitcher's mound and have a coach operate it. Position the players at first, second, shortstop, third, and catcher. This is essentially a scrimmage with only bunting allowed. You might want to eliminate stealing as well depending on age and ability. The first team bats until they have three outs and then switches to defense. Obviously since the defense knows what is coming the coach must make sure they play their positions as they would in a real game. No cheating up before the pitch is thrown.

From an offensive standpoint, this is going to allow your hitters to see where they need to place the ball to get a hit. The bunting game gives them immediate feedback so they are able to learn and adjust.

This game also provides a great time for working on getting your runner from first to third on a bunt. Let the runners know their goal is to go all the way from first to third. They need to make a hard turn at second and be looking for the coach. I have found bunting to the left side of the infield, to keep the third baseman occupied, offers better results on getting your runner to third.

Obviously on the defensive side, you are practicing having first and third crash the plate, second base is covering first base and the shortstop is covering either second or third depending on the situation. With a runner on first base, if the batter shows bunt, we have our shortstop hold her position until the ball is bunted or missed. If the ball is bunted then she breaks for third base, if the ball is missed she breaks for second base. You

are probably scratching your head about that so here is my reasoning. If the ball is put in play, I would NEVER have one of the players attempt to throw out the lead runner at second base. The odds of making that play successfully are probably 1 in 50. So, we send our shortstop to cover third so that runner can't go from first all the way to third. However, she can NOT cheat on her coverage. She must HOLD her position to see if the ball is missed. If it is missed, she must be breaking to second to cover the steal. If she breaks to third too early, you will have given second up without a challenge. Because the shortstop can't get a quick break on defending the steal, we generally have her positioned two strides towards second base in this situation to give her a chance at covering the steal. She should still be able to cover third in case of a successful bunt. Fastpitch softball is a speed game. Don't let the other team's speed beat you.