



Sliding Fundamentals and Types of Slides

Sliding into bases is one of the least practiced areas of the game of baseball. There is definitely a risk factor of getting injured while sliding, so many coaches stay away from practicing it. Even if it is not practiced on a regular basis the basic fundamental and different styles of slides should be addressed with your team.

One of the first things to teach your players is “when in doubt to slide or not....slide.” More injuries occur when players are hesitant to slide or they enter the base standing up. There is an unwritten rule that many umpires have that if the play is close and the player doesn’t slide he will be called out. We’ve all seen that. So tell your players to get down and slide into the base.

During the past decade rules have also changed in regards to sliding to protect the defensive players at all levels other than the professional level. The basic rule is that players have to slide directly into a base without going past the base or rising up and interfering with the defense. Most all coaches agree that these are good rules that make the game safe, but not all coaches inform their players of the exact sliding rules.

The perfect time to practice sliding is on a hot day when your team needs a little “change of practice scenery.” This is a fun drill, but still very beneficial drill. Set out a regular Slippery Slide or tarp on a slight decline if possible. Water the tarp and Slippery Slide down and put a thrown down base at the end of it. Have players work on every type of slide teaching them the proper fundamentals. With the water lubricating the tarps the risk of injury is very minimal. Or you can use a mat. When using a mat with no water have the players take off their shoes, so they can slide easier. Young kids at your camps especially enjoy these sliding drills.

When teaching your players to slide try to make your players think they are “gliding” and not sliding. The more body surface that touches the ground at the same time will not only allow the player to glide to and through the base, but it will also help reduce the chances of getting “cherries,” or scrapes and cuts on their bodies.

Additionally, players should extend their arms out to limit the chance of jamming or separating a shoulder. They also should make a fist with their hands, put some batting gloves in their hands, or put some dirt in their hands to limit the chance of jamming a finger or scrapping the hand.

Players need to be aggressive with their slides. Many times you’ll see a player with above average speed slow down greatly before he slides and he ends up landing all on one part of his body and sometimes he doesn’t even get to the base. Ricky Henderson, the Major League Baseball all-time leader in steals, was probably also the most aggressive slider of all time. There were times he actually slid past the base and had to grab the base with his hand.

The following are the basic types of slides and a short description of each:

1. **Feet First Slide**

This is probably the most common type of slide and the safest slide. When using this slide the player will lead with his dominant kicking leg and curl the other leg under. The key here is to not land on the curled leg knee causing a “cherry” and not allowing for any gliding movement. Make sure your players slide directly into the base without going through the base when there is a follow up throw. They also have to keep their hands down and not interfere with any throws.

2. **Head First Slide**

Some players are great at the head first slide and others don't feel comfortable. It is recommended to leave the choice of slide up to the player. A player that feels he might get hurt sliding head first or not knowing how to will probably get hurt. Again, an aggressive slide that allows the player to glide is needed. Some players use the head first slide into 1st base on close plays, but it has been proven it is slower than running through the base. It should be used at 1st base on high throws. The 1st base coach should be yelling to the base runner to get down when he sees an errant high throw.

3. **Pop Up Slide**

Pop up slides should be used on all delay steals and on slides where the base runner sees the ball gets away from the defender and he has a chance to advance to another base. It's the quickest slide. The front part of the base is hit and at the same time the base runner is already coming up. This shouldn't be used when there is another potential throw to be made, as an umpire could rule interference with the base runner getting up and in the way of the throw.

4. **Hook Slide**

This slide really isn't used as much any more like it was in the past, but it can be an effective slide when going to one side of the base when a throw is on the other side. It works the best at 3rd base, as the 3rd base coach can see the ball coming and he can let the player know what side of the base to hook slide. Basically, the base runner bends out his left leg similar to a hurdler stretch position. He has his other leg extended out and just touches the base with the left leg away from a throw to the other side of the base.

5. **Hand First Slide at Home Plate**

This is a unique slide that you see at home plate a lot where once the base runner touches the base he can go past the base. If the throw is to the 1st base side the base runner slides to the 3rd base side of home plate with his entire body to the left side of the plate and just touches home plate with his left hand, which doesn't give the catcher any place to tag him out at.

