

# Strategy for Running and Sliding

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The purpose of this document is to discuss strategy for running and sliding. Running and sliding go together, whether running the bases or running in the outfield. Being able to track a ball while you run is the same whether you are running the bases or in the outfield. Being able to shift gears is the same and for the same purpose whether running the bases or in the outfield.

### Strategic Definitions: First and Second Gear

To be understood, running and sliding requires some definitions. To run with your head up, your shoulder blades have to be all the way together in the back, and you have to come down on your toes first. To run without decelerating or bouncing requires you use your toes to soften the step. To accelerate, the head is down, the shoulders are together in front, and the weight or center of gravity is way forward. The first definition would be first gear: the name of the body position when you start out. The second definition: second gear is running with your head up and chest out.

### Shifting Gears

Begin to shift gears as you begin to lengthen your stride. Lengthen your stride as it helps you go faster. The more you hold your shoulder blades together in the back, the more your calf muscles and feet propel you forward (not up and down). So it is easier to hit the base, catch the ball, and make turns, shift gears to keep your head from bouncing. First gear is very good for going straight, and second gear is good for balance in turns and sliding.

### Sliding

I have been playing baseball and softball almost 60 years without really sliding well. I slide like Ichiro, on my left knee. Over the years I learned how to do it right, but never by habit put it into practice. Ichiro and I stay in first gear. We keep running with our chest in, so when we slide we stay forward and slide on our knee. The problem with staying forward in the slide: it is more dangerous and slower. Diving head first is really dangerous, just ask my good friend Jack Yeoumans. In first gear you run with your butt up and in second gear you are running with your butt down. So, sliding in first gear is hard, and sliding from second gear is relatively easy. In second gear your butt is already close to the ground and your hips and feet are already forward of your weight. People like me who slide in first gear just go straight in, while people who slide from second gear can be more evasive. Sometimes though (like when a catcher is blocking the plate) straight in between his legs is the answer, but more dangerous.

## Summary: Strategy for Running and Sliding

The purpose of this document is to discuss a strategy for running and sliding. Definitions are the most important part of a strategy. Understanding these first and second gear definitions are the most important part of understanding running and sliding.