

2025 Hot Stove Softball Umpire Clinic



Welcome!

- Thank you for attending!
- Ensure a data sheet is completed
- Obtain a copy of the softball rule book
- Obtain all handouts
- Introduction of State and County Officials present
- Introduction of Community Head Umpires and officials
- Breakdown of schedule
- Please silence cell phones – there is a lot of important information to provide in a relatively short period of time!



About this Clinic...

This Clinic is designed to be interactive! Our outline has been tweaked and perfected (hopefully!) over the past 30+ years – from former State and County Head Umpire, the late Bob Feierabend, to current State President Lou Vasi, and Lorain County Head Umpire Jerry Clapper. Input is garnered from the senior umpire staff. Please ask questions – we will be more than happy to answer any umpire- or rule-related question. As we go through the course, we will be discussing certain rules in depth – please keep your questions to the section we are currently discussing.

Lastly, remember to have fun!

A Few Thoughts About Umpiring

- The quality of the game can never exceed the quality of the umpiring available.
- Every game is a new game, every pitch a big one.
- Let the umpire lose his temper, and he/she is through.
- Let the umpire get pushed around, and he/she is through.
- 6 words describe what an umpire should be: *Quick to think, Slow to anger.*
- Perhaps the most difficult part of being a successful umpire is the ability to ignore outside influences and internal pressures and to maintain absolute concentration on the game and only the game, including each individual play and pitch.
- There are no close plays: only Ball or Strike, Safe or Out.
- In the public mind, the umpire appears at best to be a necessary evil; at worst as a Neanderthal bent upon robbing the home team of its just desserts. How else to explain the singular propensity of umpires to blow calls obvious even to those sitting in the last row of the upper deck, and to misinterpret rules known even to those who have never read a rule book?
- The way to study the rule book is to read a rule and then let it play out in your mind, visualize it, make application of that rule to the play. In your mind you see the play in the field, and then, when it comes up, it's like it's been there before.
- In order to be a good umpire you have to have the desire to learn something every day. Every umpire feels that he/ she is the best umpire there is. But the best umpire is the one that feels that way and then learns something new the next day.
- The toughest call an umpire has to make is not the half swing; the toughest call is throwing a guy out of the game after you blew the hell out of the play.
- To be an umpire, you must have good judgement, good eyesight and confidence that you can do the job. You do not know or care to know who you are calling safe or out, and when the ball reaches home plate, you know only that it is either a ball or a strike. That's integrity; if an umpire loses that, he's lost everything. If players and managers know an umpire calls the play the way he sees it, they will respect him even if he might not be the best umpire.

State Of Ohio Concussion Return-To Play Law

- All LCHSS managers, coaches and **umpires** must comply with this law!
- Use this site to get your free certification: [NHFS Free Concussion Course](#)
 - Select “Ohio” from the drop-down. You will be prompted to login or create an account.
 - Follow all prompts until you have the option to “Begin” the course. Although it may look like you'll be charged for the course, there is no cost.
 - If you want additional information on this law, go to Healthy Ohio :: Concussion in Youth Sports: Ohio's Return-to-Play Law
- A community may be asked to provide proof of compliance
- Save a picture of your completion certificate on your phone and keep it with you, as needed
- The course is intended for awareness – umpires don't diagnosis concussion, but should alert a coach, etc. if a potential issue arises



Softball Umpire Dress Code

- *See Rule 14.19 G (pg. 125) in the Lorain County Hot Stove Softball Rule Book*
- Hot Stove Softball umpires wear the Black MLB replica as our Official uniform shirt
- Gray pants (Charcoal Gray are the most common/preferred, but lighter shades are acceptable – DRESS SLACKS ONLY)
- Black or Dark Blue Socks
- Red Undershirt
- Black Shoes, shined, with black laces; some white trim is ok.
- Black belt: This is a must – we don't umpire without a belt on.



Softball Umpire Dress Code

- Umpire Hats (various lengths available)
 - Black or Dark Blue
 - Ohio Hot Stove Softball logo is the only one permitted
 - ALWAYS wear the brim forward, even when behind the plate – unless you are wearing the hockey style helmet (then no hat is required for the plate umpire)
 - Hats should be clean, with no visible dirt or stains
- Accessories, including clickers and brushes, are a must
 - Clickers come in three- or four-wheel varieties
 - Brushes also come in a variety of shapes and sizes



Softball Umpire Dress Code

- Ball Bags are only worn by the PLATE umpire, and always on the right side.
 - You may wear one on both sides.
 - If you are left-handed and need the bag on your left: wear two ball bags.
 - Gray, Black, or Navy Blue is acceptable. They must both match if wearing two.
- Any color MLB, etc. replica may be worn during the regular season, provided both umpires are dressed the same.
- Coat: Any black or dark blue coat. No hoodies, no logos. Visible neutral-colored sweatshirt under umpire shirt OK for cold games.



Softball Umpire Dress Code

- Chest protector, Shin Guards, and personal protective gear are worn UNDER the uniform.



Former North Olmsted and North Ridgeville Hot Stove Umpire and Current MLB Crew Chief, #92 James Hoye.

Softball Umpire Dress Code

- Where to buy items: Purchase Officials, Final Score Sporting Goods, Honig's, ump-attire.com, Fleming's Referee & Sport; used gear
- All Umpires should be clean and neat.
- NO metallic jewelry. Wedding band is OK. NO watches.
- Dress as an umpire to do a game, dress as a fan to watch a game.
- NO smoking/vaping, chewing tobacco during games.
- NO cell phone use during games.
 - OK to use to keep track of time limit for games (umpire's responsibility)
 - If you have your cell phone, keep it in your pocket and only use it to call 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Hot Stove Softball Age Classes

- Playing age is determined by age on August 31 of previous year:
 - Farm Minor – 5–6-year-old girls
 - Farm Major – 7–8-year-old girls
 - Class A – 9–10-year-old girls
 - Class B – 11–12-year-old girls
 - Class C – 13–14-year-old girls
 - Class D – 15–18-year-old girls

Hot Stove Softball Bat Rules

Rule 4.1 (pg. 27)

- All Classes: Must bear ASA 2000, or ASA 2004 or USA softball all games certifications and not listed on the USA “Non-approved bat with certification” list.
- No more than 34 inches in length
- Weigh no more than 38 oz.
- Be no more than 2 ¼ inch in diameter
- Any bat less than 30 in not required to have certification markings.
- Other Bat Information
 - Bat handles can be space taped or continuous. “Lizard grip” is legal.
 - Choke-up knobs are illegal (pictured).
 - Shock absorber knobs are legal.
- “Axe” handle bats are legal as long as they conform to all Hot Stove material and drop rules.



Helmets and Chin Straps

Rule 4.9 – 4.11 (pg. 32)

- ALL batters must wear a NOCSAE approved batting helmet. Must not reflective/distracting and in safe condition (judgement call).
- Girls Farm Minor must also wear a chin strap.
- **NEW for 2025!**
 - Girls Farm Major through Class B: chin straps not required.
 - If worn: chin straps must be worn properly, touching the underside of the chin.
- Facemask required in softball, and must be installed correctly. Facemask must also be NOCSAE approved.



Helmets and Chin Straps

Rule 2.28 (pg. 18)

- Non-adult (under 18)/player base coaches and all bat boys/girls must wear a batting helmet while on the field.
- Umpires' responsibility to ensure batter is wearing proper head gear. Game is stopped until corrected.
 - If a batter is discovered to not have proper head gear, correct the situation and warn the player and coach. (No ejection for first offense.)
- Catcher's helmets must also have a NOCSAE stamp. All hardware must be properly and securely attached with no screws missing.
 - Skull cap and mask combination not legal in softball.



Other Equipment Rules

- Jewelry (*Rule 1.18, pg. 19*): Jewelry is permissible unless an item is deemed unsafe, unsportsmanlike or distracting by the umpire (**NEW for 2025**).
- Playcard bands: Permitted, & must be worn on forearm/left in pocket.
- Casts (*Rule 1.19, pg. 19*): All casts, splints and braces must be padded and shall not have any exposed metal.
- Pitcher's Compression Sleeve (*Rule 4.7, pg. 31*): Pitchers may wear compression sleeves on throwing arm but may not be optic yellow or a color that is distracting to the batter. This is a judgement call.
- Pitcher's Glove (*Rule 4.7, pg. 31*)
 - May not have optic yellow
 - No sweat bands, etc. permitted on throwing arm below elbow
 - Batting glove is permitted under mitt
- All Fielder's Gloves/Mitts: Mitts and gloves are legal for all players at every position.
- Fielder Face Masks: Required for pitcher, 1st & 3rd baseman in Farm Minor, Farm Major, & Class A ONLY (optional in Class B & up); optional for all other fielders.

Coaches

- No muscle shirts – we wear sleeves in this league!
- No cutoff shorts
- No hats on backwards
- No sandals/open-toe shoes/Croc-like shoes
- No smoking, vaping smokeless tobacco use permitted on field/bench area
- Cell phone may not be used on the field
 - Emergency personnel/ first responders may have cell phone for emergency use only.
 - Must be identified at ground rules
 - If a call is received, coach must leave field of play to complete call
 - May use cell phone/tablet for electronic scoring (i.e., GameChanger)

Levels of Warnings and Ejections

- Warnings (1) can be issued when warranted. If a Coach is being overly belligerent, try talking quieter; in turn, it will make them settle down to hear you. Do not get into an argument with them. Maintain composure.
- Bench restrictions (2) are an option in both sports! Coaches that are bench restricted may not leave the dugout and come into the field of play, or foul territory for the remainder of the game. (*Rule 4.6.E, page 30*)
- Once you issue a warning, for example, “Coach-One more word, and you’re gone!”. If the coach says another word, you have to eject (3) them, or risk losing respect and control of the game. Ejections should be the absolute last option.
- Be firm but polite. Let them have their say – they are only doing their job. Once you’ve heard them out, act on their request, and be done.
- Any bench restriction or ejection issued in a game MUST be reported to the County Head Umpire and the local Head Umpire that assigned you that game.

Game Management

- Umpires have some control over the game – especially the plate umpire.
- NO fraternization upon arrival at the field. If you aren't distracted by talking, you can more effectively do your job.
- Between half-innings: Plate umpire stands to the defense side of the plate, near the foul line. Base umpire goes to short right field. Talking to partner between innings should be kept to a minimum (only essential information/if training).
- Plate umpire should be watching the transition between innings, and asking teams to hustle up if they are taking too long.
- Request the pitcher and a catcher (or someone to warm up the pitcher). Fielders don't need the infield practice between innings.
 - This will allow the coach time to set the other players, while the pitcher is warming up.
- HUSTLE! Umpiring is not a spectator sport. Move smartly to your next position. Don't walk – jog. If you're going to make a call: stop first, see it, let your mind process what your eyes just saw, and make a call (1-2 seconds total).
- When making a call, angle is more important than distance.

Game Management

- Softball Pitcher has no more than 1 (one) minute to throw no more than 5 warm up pitches – new pitcher or not.
 - If it is cold, plate ump may allow more pitches. Tell the catcher this, and that she needs to throw the 5th pitch down.
- If you're counting pitches as well, remind catcher to throw next one down. If he/she doesn't, don't allow him/her to waste more time.
- If you need a drink, have it close – you can drink and still pay attention.

Game Management

- If a batter tends to wander too far away between pitches, ask her to stay closer. You could request she keep one foot in the batter's box if this gets excessive.
- The batter has 10 (ten) seconds to be ready to bat from the time the pitcher gets control of the ball within the 16' circle.
- When the last warm-up pitch is done and the catcher has thrown it back, Plate ump should already have his brush out and be cleaning the plate off. By the time you're done, the pitcher will be ready.
- In the younger leagues, we recommend requesting that a coach make sure helmets are on correctly and chin straps snug (Farm Minor) before the player enters the on-deck circle.
- Base Umpire: Always have a brush, and use it to clean off bases as needed, and the pitcher's plate. Like the plate ump, the base ump can be ready; position yourself near the mound so when the ball goes to 2nd base, you can clean the rubber and jog back to first base, before the pitcher is ready to throw.

Game Management

- If doing a younger level game, where three outs may not always be the end of the inning: make sure you know the rules and enforce them from day one.
- By knowing and enforcing the rules, the game will move at a good pace.
- No fraternization (talking, joking, etc.) with Coaches, Managers, Players, Spectators, or any field personnel.
- Be firm, but polite. Make it clear the rules will be followed. A question about a rule should be courteous and brief. Talk to your partner (if needed), make a call, and move on.
 - If Coach Asks: Umpires are not required to grant judgement call or rule appeals, but they may consult with their partner if they desire to get their take/to discuss a rule.

Manager Conferences/Visits

- Offense: One conference per inning while batting.
- Defense: (3) defensive conferences in a regulation game without penalty.
 - Changing a pitcher does not count as a charged conference.
 - Only one conference per extra inning allowed without penalty.
 - PENALTY: Any conference beyond the allowable amount requires the pitcher to be removed for the rest of the game.
- If an injury, instruct coach on way to mound that if he only talks about the injury no trip will be charged; if he/she talks about softball or strategy, it is a charged conference.
- Inform the coach and scorekeeper about charged trips/keep track yourself.

Umpire Etiquette

- Arrive at least 30 minutes early. Know the designated spot where you'll meet your partner. DO NOT walk straight to the field to wait!
- If you don't know who your partner is, ask. Don't be shy. All umpires are willing to help the new umpire.
- Find out what color shirt you're wearing. If you only have one shirt, it should be the black MLB replica.
- Discuss who is doing plate or bases. Do not plan to be a "base guy/girl" forever.
- It's a good idea to text/call your partner before getting to the field!
- Take advice from the "old guys" (veterans). If they say to clean your shoes, clean them. We're only trying to help.
- Go to the bathroom before the game-typically we do not take a bathroom break, however you may if it is unavoidable.

Umpire Etiquette

- Discuss signals (examples on the next slide).
- Look at each other. If the veteran is dressed wrong, tell them. Don't allow them to go out dressed incorrectly. This includes jewelry.
- If you have any questions, ask. This is your time to get it set in your head. Before/after games, feel free to discuss any situations you're unsure of with veterans!
- Walk together to the field at least 15 minutes before scheduled start time. Check equipment – including bats, helmets & catcher's helmets.
- The UIC or Crew Chief is usually the plate umpire. The older/more experienced partner may be the Crew Chief or UIC for the game and do the bases. This allows the new umpires to get plate experience.
- **Keep your temper. Deaf ears. No rabbit ears.**

Signals

- *Work out a set of hand and arm signals, so you are both on the same page. Common examples:*
 - Touching the top of the head-need the count: flash number of balls on left hand, strikes on right.
 - Right hand over heart, number of outs (0 or 1) in left hand: Infield fly rule.
 - Wipe hand down arm-Infield fly is off.
 - Two closed fists tapping on top of one another: good call
- Discuss who is covering catches in the field, and who has tag ups.
(Example: field ump has catch, plate ump has tag ups.)
- Check swing: Base umpire only rules if asked BY THE PLATE UMPIRE. Return signal same way. Silent or verbal.
- Mechanic Signals (see handout or green book)

Substitutions

- Classes A & B: All players must play minimum of 12 outs (2 innings). **SUBSTITUTES** must play these 12 outs consecutively.
 - Subs must be in by the top of third inning. If they don't fulfill the sub rule, and the game is protested: the penalty is a forfeit, including tournament games.
- Matching: Coaches have to match players in this rule. If one has 10 and the other 12, only one sub has to meet this requirement.
- Once the starters and subs have played 12 outs, in Classes A & B, free substitution rule may be used.
- Girls Farm Major: Must use a continuous batting order (i.e., "the roster"); ALL players must play 6 defensive outs. (*Rule 10.2.D, pg. 52*)
- Classes C & D: Do not have substitution rules that require any minimum playing time.

Illness or Injury (Non-Continuous Batting Order)

- A-B: (2) lineup options: straight 9 or continuous
 - Classes C & D have one more option: DP/Flex
- If a player becomes sick or injured and unable to continue in the game: a legal, available substitute may enter the game.
- If no legal sub is available, the opposing coach may select a player to enter the lineup in the sick or injured players spot (Not ejection). This is the only time you may change the batting order. (*Rule 5.4 c, pg. 38*)
- If they have NO subs on the bench (only had 9 players), drop to 8 players and play on. An out is declared in the missing player's spot in the batting order.

Continuous Batting Order

- Continuous batting order is optional for Classes A-D (*Rule 5.3E, pg. 37*)
- Each team has the option to use a continuous batting order.
 - If one team uses a continuous batting order, the other team is not required to use it.
- Must be declared at ground rules.
- All players present at game must be placed in batting order.
 - Late arriving players are placed at the bottom of the lineup.
- If a player is removed for illness/injury or ejection, the vacated spot becomes an out for the duration of the game. Player may not return to the game.
 - Farm Major: continuous batting order is mandatory, so no out is declared if a player is removed until the batting order is below 10 players.
- All defensive substitution rules must still be met for Classes HH-G.
- Player matching may not be used by a team using a continuous batting order.

Courtesy Runner

(Rule 9.10, pg. 89)

- All Classes: A courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher or catcher at any time during the game that the catcher gets on base or is already on base.
 - The same runner may not be used for both positions in the same inning.
- This situation is NOT considered a substitution.
- Must be player not currently in the game (exception for only 9 or continuous).
- Catcher has to play defense BEFORE they are entitled to a Courtesy runner, or be the catcher the next inning.
 - Exception: Top of 1st inning, the visiting team has not yet played defense. They are still entitled to a CR. The individual identified on the lineup card as the catcher must play defense as the catcher on the bottom of the 1st inning.
- This is a speed up rule. Ensure the catcher/pitcher (softball) is getting ready to play defense.

Slide or Give Up??

- LCHSS DOES NOT have a “Slide or Give-up” rule.
- (*Rule 9.8.S pg. 84*) Rule states to avoid injury, the runner SHOULD SLIDE – but are not required.
- LCHSS allows jumping over or around the defensive player attempt to slide to avoid being tagged.
- Headfirst slides are legal.
- If, in the umpire's judgement, malicious contact is witnessed, the runner is declared OUT and ejected from the game.
- See rule book for specifics on illegal slides (Rule 2.58).

Interference

(Rule 2, Definitions, pg. 21)

- Interference is the act by a member of the OFFENSE to impede, hinder or confuse any fielder attempting to make a play on the ball. Batter/Batter runner or runner is out immediately. All runners go back to the last base legally touched in the judgement of the umpire.
- Umpire Interference: When the umpire hinders or impedes the catcher's throw to prevent a stolen base, or, when a fair ball touches an umpire before it passes any fielder, aside from the pitcher.
- Fan Interference: When a spectator reaches out of the stands or goes on the field and touches a live ball.
- Ball is dead immediately.

Interference

- Offensive interference is an act by a member of the team at bat which interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play. If the umpire declares the batter, batter runner or runner out for interference all other runners shall return to last base that was, in the judgment of the umpire, legally touched at the time of the interference. (*Rule 2, Definitions, pg. 21*)
- Examples:
 - Runner on third-stealing home on the pitch, batter swings and on follow-through lingers around the plate blocking the catcher from making the play at home – the umpire can call interference and call the runner out. (*Baseball Rule 7.9.D, pg. 37, Softball Rule 8.2, pg. 57*)
 - Runner attempting to score on a play in which the batter interferes with the play at home base before two are out. The runner is out. With two out, the interference puts the batter out and no score counts. (*Baseball Rule 7.8.I, pg.36, Softball Rule 8.2, pg.57*)
 - The player that interferes is out, and runners return to last base touched at time of interference.

Obstruction

(Rule 2, Definitions, pg. 22)

- Obstruction is the act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball, or, not in the act of fielding the ball, impedes the progress of any runner. A fake tag is considered Obstruction.
- Defensive/Catcher's Interference: The act by a fielder to impede, hinder or prevent a batter from hitting a pitch.
- Judgement call, and *delayed dead ball* (until obstructed runner is put out – then ball becomes dead and penalties enforced, if applicable).
 - Penalty: Runner(s) awarded the base(s) they would have received, in the umpire's judgement, had there not been obstruction. Runner(s) not protected if they pass the base the umpire judges they would have reached.
 - If initial play on the infield is “flubbed”, the defensive player is protected if the ball stays within a “step and reach”.
 - See index for specific rules regarding Interference and Obstruction.

Obstruction

(Rule 2, Definitions, pg. 22)



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Obstruction

(Rule 2, Definitions, pg. 22)



<https://youtu.be/lBy-maGTDNw>

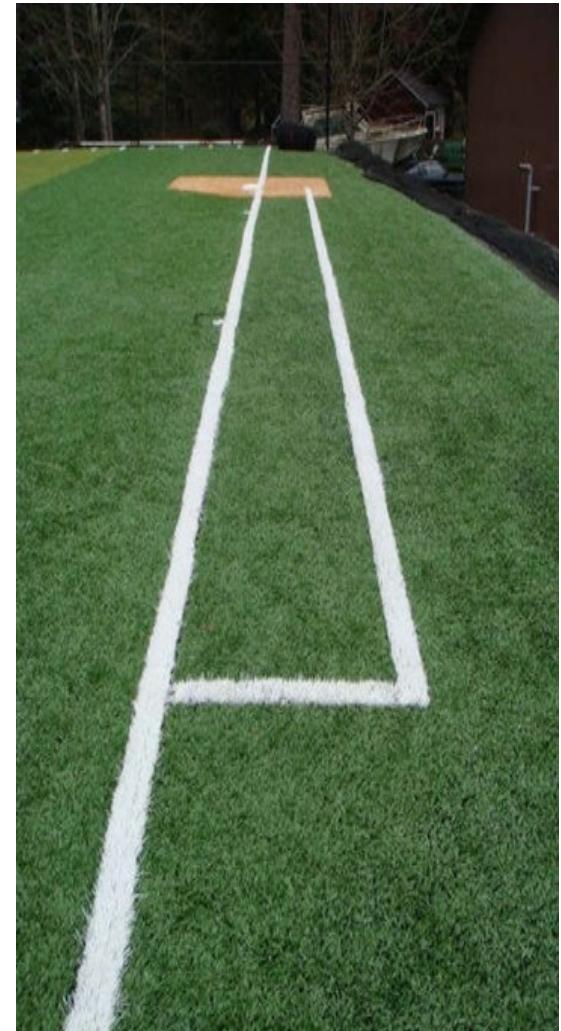
Obstruction or Interference?



<https://youtu.be/lBy-maGTDNw>

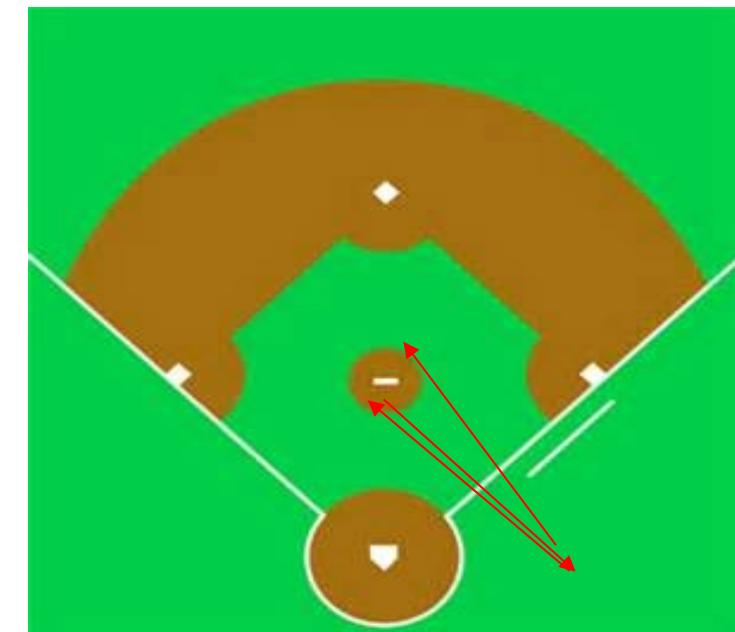
Courtesy Lane

- When running to first base, halfway down the baseline there is a three-foot courtesy lane. The lines marking the lane appear to the right of the Fair/Foul line.
- The runner **MUST** run in this lane to avoid penalty, should, in the umpire's judgement, interference be a possibility.
 - Example: Batter bunts the ball, and runs inside fair territory. Fielder throws ball wild or hits runner. Because runner was not in the lane, the runner can be called out for interference. (*Rule 9.7 G, pg. 76*)
- Throw **MUST** originate from the home plate area (behind runner).
- IF the runner is in the three-foot lane, and gets hit with the ball, there is no penalty, as this is his/her lane. Outside of the lane = one or both feet completely outside the lane (the lines are considered inside the lane).
- IF the field isn't marked with a line, it is still assumed to be there.
- Fielder doesn't have to throw the ball to have interference. If he/she hesitates because of assumed interference, you may still call it.
- He/she may run outside the three-foot line to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball.
- Double first base is legal (discuss at ground rules).



“Baseline”: Is the runner In or Out of It?

- The Fair/Foul lines down third and first are generally considered “baselines”.
- Runner makes his/her own base path.
- If the runner intentionally leaves their established base path by more than 3 feet to avoid a tag, they shall be called out. (*Rule 9.8 A, pg. 78*)
 - Base path becomes established when defensive play is being attempted on the runner (they can basically run wherever they want between the bases until that point).
 - Base path can constantly change on a rundown play.



Infield Fly Rule

(Rule 2, Definitions, pg. 19)

- Is a fair fly ball, not including a line drive or attempted bunt, that:
 - Can be caught by an Infielder with ordinary effort (young player vs. high schooler).
 - With runners on first and second; or runners on first, second, and third bases.
 - There are less than 2 outs (Zero or One).
- Pitcher, Catcher and any outfielders may also catch the ball.
- This is a judgement call! If not called at the time, it could still be an Infield Fly.
- Call when it is at apex (top) of arc (never from a bunt or a softly-hit bopper).
 - Yell out, “Infield Fly!”
 - IF the ball is near the foul line, yell out, “Infield Fly, IF Fair!”
- Ball is **LIVE**, and runners advance at their own risk. Remember this for younger age games where Infield Fly plays may become chaotic!
- Farm Major, Farm Minor: No Infield Fly Rule (*Rule 10.2.K, pg. 99*)

Catch and Carry

(Rule 9.5.1 pg. 75)

- 9.5 BASERUNNERS ARE ENTITLED TO ADVANCE WITHOUT LIABILITY TO BE PUT OUT:
 - When a live ball is unintentionally carried by a fielder from playable territory into dead ball territory, the ball becomes dead. All baserunners are awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the “fielder” enters dead ball territory. Each runner, other than the batter, may, without liability to be put out, advance one base when:
 - NOTE: A fielder carrying a live ball into the dugout or team area to tag a player is considered to have unintentionally carried it there.
 - If, in the judgement of the umpire, a fielder intentionally carries a live ball from playable territory into dead ball territory, the ball becomes dead, and all baserunners are awarded two bases from the last base touched at the time she entered dead ball territory. (NOTE: A dead ball line is considered in play.)
 - This rule is important to understand when covering ground rules.

Calling Time Outs

- Managers/Coaches/Players can request time out. It is up to the umpire to grant it. If you grant it, put both hands in air and call time out.
- Offense is allowed one coach visit/conference per inning (*Baseball Rule 5.10.F, pg. 24, Softball Rule 2.14B, pg. 14*)
- If a time out is requested after ball four, wait until the batter/runner has touched first base, and any other runners have advanced, and stopped, before calling time out. Watch the coach to make sure they stay in the dugout area until time is granted.
- If the coach begins his way to the mound, remind him, politely, to please wait for time to be granted. (Or after a walk, say, “wait until he/she gets to first base, coach”).



Batting Out of Order

(Rule 8.2, pg. 57)

- Batting order is set once given to the scorekeepers, and the Umpire says play ball. The batting order may not change, unless illness/injury (non-continuous lineup).



<https://youtu.be/lZpXXymityA>

Improper batter still at bat	Improper batter on base, but no pitch yet to next batter	Improper batter on base and pitch made to next batter
Replace the improper batter with the proper batter	Send improper batter back to dugout	Improper batter normalized; he is now "proper runner"
Proper batter assumes existing count	Nullify all action resulting from improper at-bat	Next batter: the player following the newly normalized "proper runner"
No penalty	Identify the proper batter and call him out	No penalty
	Next batter: the player following the proper batter (who you just called out)	

Farm Major Special Situations

- 3 innings of coach pitch followed by 3 innings of player pitch.
- 4 outfielders allowed (must play behind the baseline).
- Must use continuous batting order.
- No infield fly, dropped 3rd strike, lead offs, or bunting (coach pitch innings only – bunting is legal during player pitch).
- 10 batters, 5 runs or 3 outs ends a half inning (except last inning).
 - A team with 9 players can bat a maximum of 9 in an inning.
- Ball is dead when an infielder inside the baselines attempts to throw the ball to the pitcher. Any runner that has crossed the hash mark between the bases will be granted the base in which she is heading to. Any runner that has not crossed the hash mark, is sent back to the base she is coming from. Umpire shall use logical conclusion.
- Runners cannot advance on overthrows to first base.
- Pitch that rolls into a batter is not a hit batter.

Class A Special Situations

- Games are 6 innings of player pitch.
- When a batter is walked, the runner can continue running to second base provided she does not stop at first base.
- 5 runs maximum per inning per team until “last inning”. The inning is considered the “last inning” if:
 - At the beginning of the 5th inning either team has a lead of fifteen (15) or more runs.
 - After two hours of play, at any point during any inning either team has a lead of ten (10) or more runs.
 - The home plate umpire declares the 5th or 6th inning to be the last inning due to impending darkness or weather conditions.
- Dropped third strike: Not applicable – batter is out. (*Rule 9.2, pg. 66*)
- Pitchers can pitch no more than 4 innings total.

Foul Tip or Foul Ball?

(Rule 2.27, pg. 17)

- **FOUL TIP**: A batted ball which goes directly from the bat, not higher than the batter's head, to the catcher's hands and is legally caught by the catcher.
 - NOTE: It is not a foul tip unless caught, and any foul tip that is caught is a strike. The ball is in play. It is not a catch if it is a rebound unless the ball first touched the catcher's hand or glove.
- Foul tip-Indicate with hand/arm signal.
 - Unlike a foul ball, a foul tip can be a batter's third strike.
 - A Foul Tip is a **LIVE BALL** (runners may advance)
 - NEVER verbalize the words “foul tip” – only “foul ball!” or nothing at all if the ball is fair (with the hand signal pictured on a foul tip).



Look-Back Rule

(9.8.T, pg. 85)

- The Look-Back Rule goes into effect when (ball must be live):
 - The pitcher has control of the ball in the 16' circle (both feet on or within lines).
 - The batter-runner has touched first base (for any reason) or has been declared out.
 - The pitcher is not attempting a play on a runner (judgement; a fake throw is considered an attempt).
- After the pitcher has control of the ball in the circle, all runners must immediately attempt to advance to the next base OR immediately return to her base – with no more than one stop.
 - PENALTY: A base runner is out if this rule is violated.
- Once the runner returns to a base for any reason, she will be declared out if she leaves said base, unless:
 - A play is made on her or another runner (e.g., fake throw).
 - The pitcher no longer has possession of the ball in the 16' circle.
 - The pitcher releases the ball by a pitch to the batter.

Pitching

(Rule 7, pg. 47)

- Pitchers have 20 seconds to deliver the next pitch after getting the ball under control in the circle.
- When stepping onto the pitcher's plate, the pitcher must:
 - Have hands apart when she steps on the pitcher's plate (ball can be in the hand or the glove).
 - PENALTY: Illegal pitch should be called immediately if her hands are together.
 - Have her pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and non-pivot foot on or behind the pitcher's plate.
 - Have both feet on the ground within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate.
 - Have her shoulders in line with first and third bases.
- From the position described above, the pitcher must take or simulate taking a sign on the pitcher's plate (she can take the actual sign from anywhere inside the 16' circle).
- Next, her hands must come together for not less than 1 (one) second and no more than 10 (ten) seconds before delivering the pitch (ball can be inside or pressed on outside of the glove).
- Start of pitch is when her hands separate.
- “Rocking back” before the start of pitch is allowed.

Pitching

(Rule 7, pg. 47)



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New Pitching Rule

(Rule 7, pg. 47)

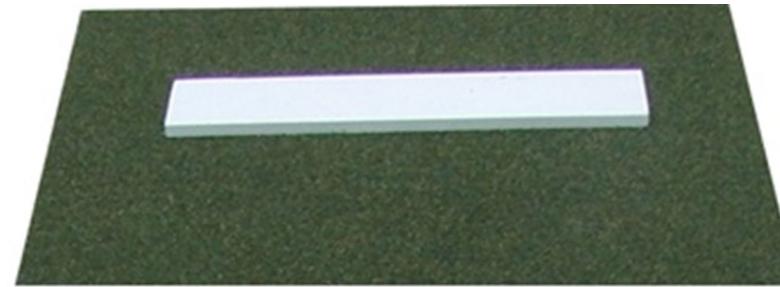


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Pitching Infractions

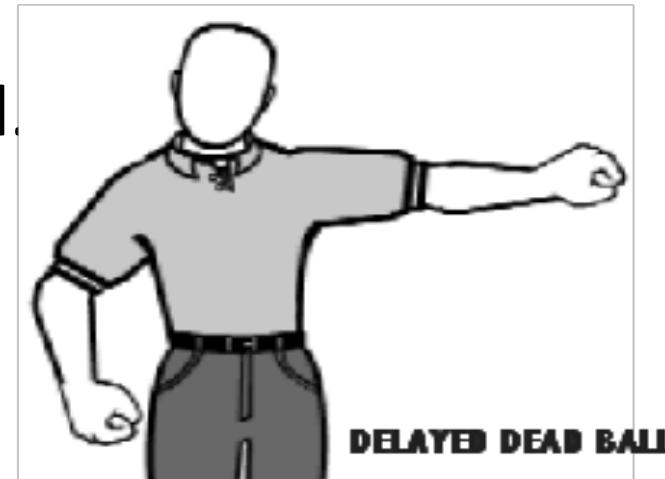
(Rule 7, pg. 47)

- The pitcher may not take the pitching position on or near the pitcher's plate without having the ball in her possession.
- Replanting the pivot foot before releasing the ball (Crow Hop).
- Foot must land inside the 24" Pitcher's plate (Judgement).
- Pivot foot must maintain contact with the ground (Leap).



Illegal Pitch

- If pitcher makes an illegal pitch, it is a ball unless batter reaches first-base on a hit, error, or the like.
- A ball that slips out of the pitchers hand it is considered a pitch and a ball is awarded to the batter.
- An illegal pitch is a delayed dead ball.



Illegal Pitch

- If the batter hits the ball, and reaches first base, and all other runners advance one base, the illegal pitch is ignored, and the play stands.
- If the pitcher stops her motion when you call illegal pitch, the play is dead, and the penalty enforced.
- The penalty for an illegal pitch is a ball to the batter and all runners return to the base occupied at time of illegal pitch.

Strike Zone

(Rule 2, Definitions, pg. 24)

- The Strike Zone is that space over any part of home plate between the batter's arm pits and the top the knees when the batter assumes a natural batting stance.
- Any part of the ball crosses and part of the plate is a strike.
- The black edges are not considered part of the plate for ball/strike calls.
- Swinging strikes - Motion only
- Called Strikes - Emphasize third strike but do not call out.

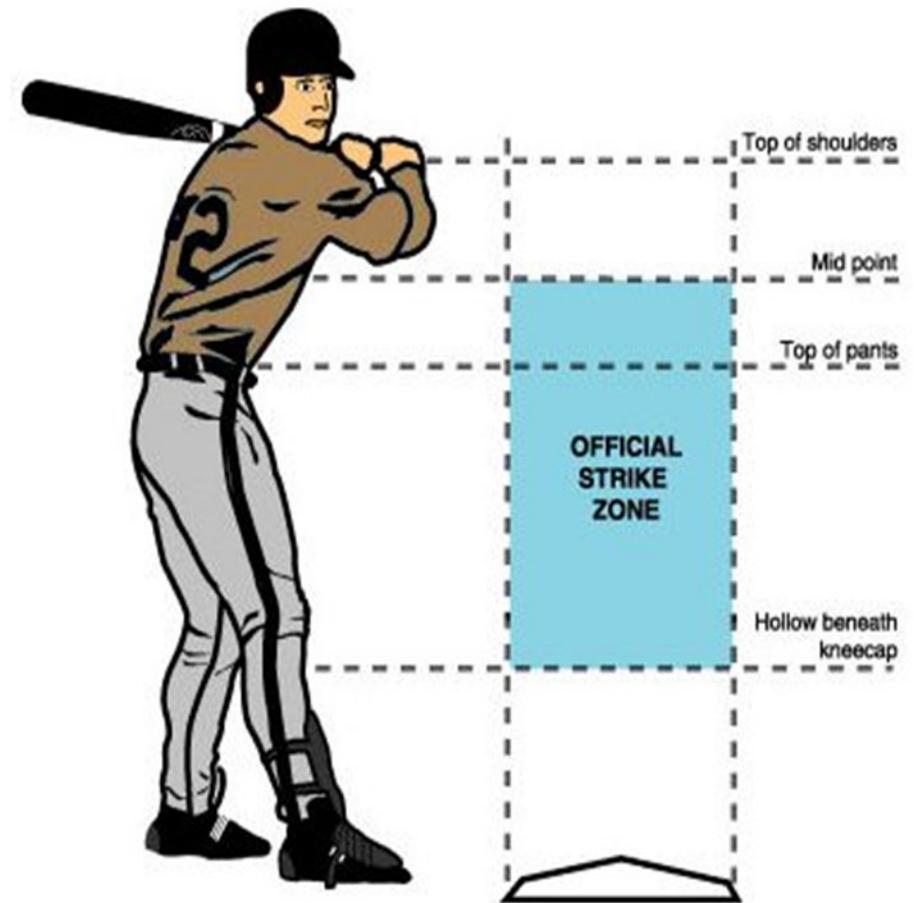


Plate Umpire Mechanics

- Positioning: Squared up behind the catcher, in the slot, within an arms reach of him. Bend at the knees up and down as needed. Also may put hands on knees, but watch for fouls and wild pitches.

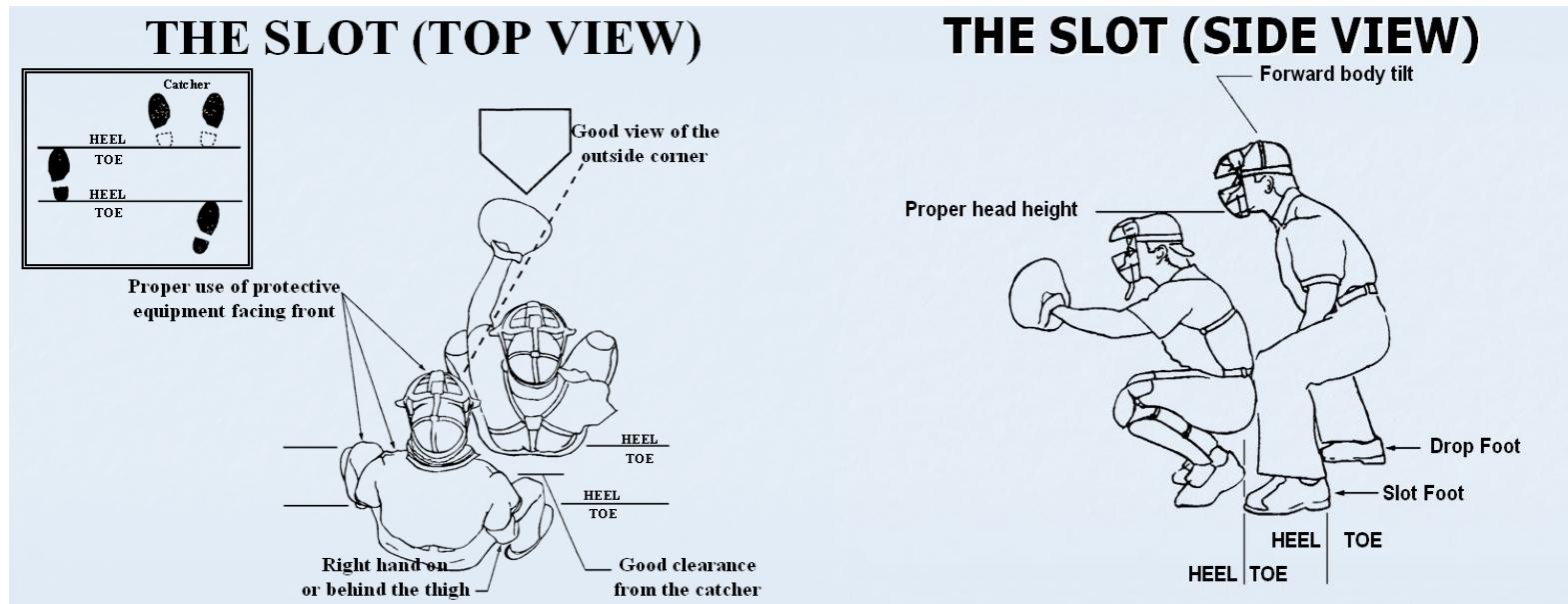


Plate Umpire Mechanics

- Brushing Plate - Between pitcher and catcher, facing catcher, bend over and do this quickly, at a natural break in game if possible.
- Walk around batter and catcher, returning to your position.
- Walks/Ball four- point with LEFT hand toward first base, or no motion.
- Call Foul balls, Point fair balls
- OK to talk to catcher.
- DO NOT call location of pitch.
- If catcher says “outside, blue?”- agree with her. Do not offer information.



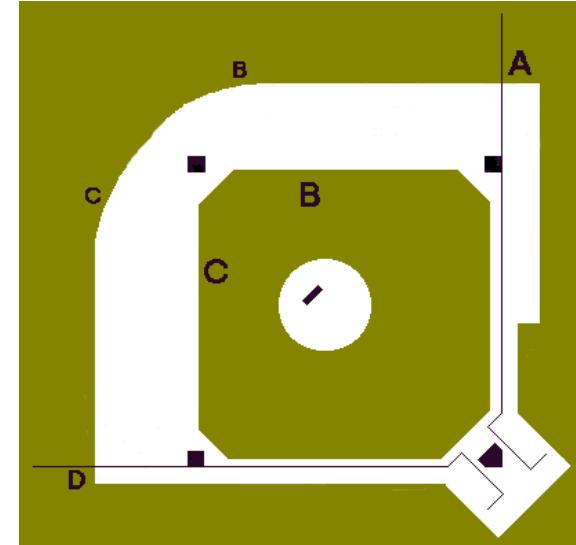
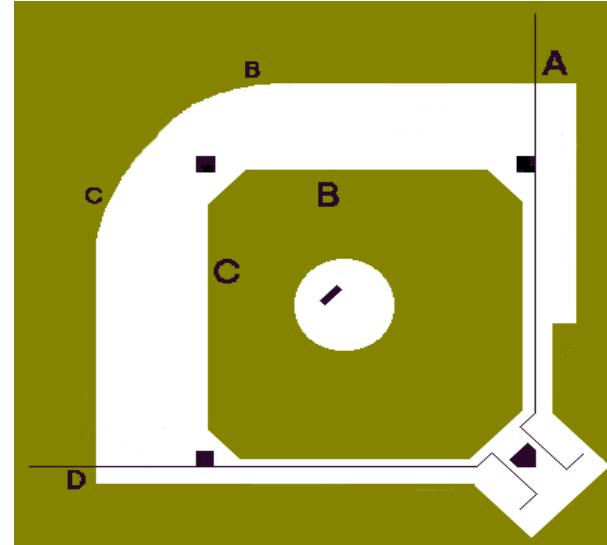
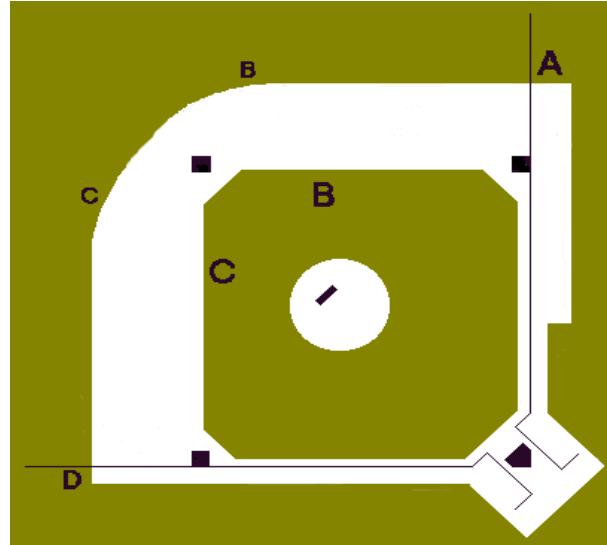
Plate Umpire Mechanics



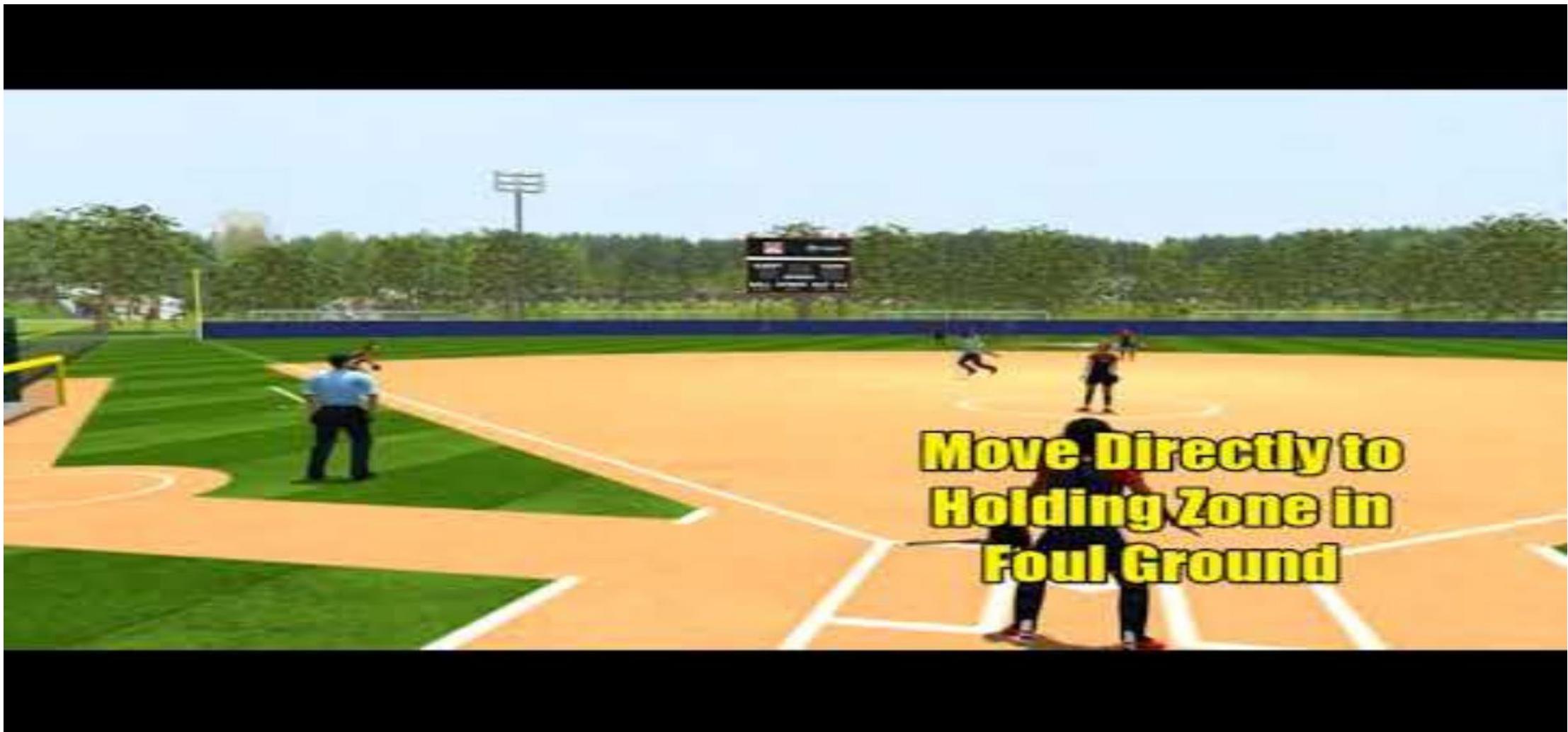
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Field Umpire Mechanics

- With the pitch, begin a slow walk toward first base, keeping your eye on the ball.
- To make a call at first base, position yourself inside the first base line, at a 90 degree angle to the play (45 degree angle to the base).
- If runner only on first, position yourself in the B position, around where the second baseman plays, closer to the pitcher.
- Any other combination of baserunners is worked from the C position.
- Bases Loaded, Second and Third, First and Second, Third only.



2 Person Umpire Mechanics



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Umpire Mechanics

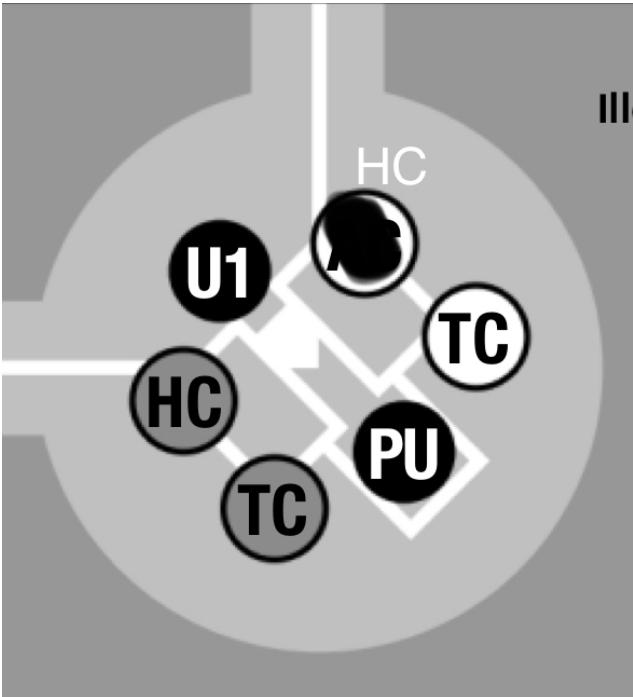
- Base Umpire responsible to watch runners touch bags. Also in ALL levels, watch runners leaving early.
- Watch the ball into the glove, listen for foot to hit bag.
- Watch for runner turning toward second. Was there an attempt?
- Go out on fly balls that need a closer look. Trap? Fair/Foul?
- With runners on base, Hands on knees, or hands at side/behind back.
- Any umpire can call an illegal pitch. Base Ump typically watches feet. Plate ump upper body and 24" violation.
- If defensive player asks you to move, do so.
- Keep your eye everlasting on the ball. If you don't know where ball is, call time.
- Do not call plays too fast or too slow. See the play. Evaluate it (about 1 second). Call it.
- The closer the play, the louder the call.
- Don't get caught up on a close call. Keep your head in the game. If the coach wants an appeal, such as a pulled foot or if she left early on a tag-up, you may or may not grant it. If you do, take the advice of your partner. If you are sure, don't give it. (If you are new allow the question and talk to your partner about it).
- Bottom line is: Get the call right.

Starting the Game:

- All levels: Teams must have 9 players to start.
 - Farm may use 10 defensive players.
- Courtesy runner (CR) Classes A-D for the pitcher or catcher may enter at any time.
 - Coach must call time out and declare the intent. The CR is a player not currently in the game. If only 9 players, the last recorded out is CR. (*Rule 9.10, pg. 88*)
- Farm minor and Farm Major- Should have 9, if they show with less than 9- play the game. There is no minimum to start a regular season game.
- Classes A-D - If at any time due to illness, injury, or ejection, a team drops to 8 players, they may return to 9 should the ability arise.
 - An out will be called in that spot. Farm bats a continuous lineup, no out declared until they drop below 9. Start with 12, and one leaves for example. No out is called.

Ground Rules

- Ground Rules are given at or around Home Plate.
 - Usually given by the Crew Chief or UIC for the game but may be done by either umpire. At tournaments, it is the Field Judge's responsibility.
- Introduce yourselves to Managers, Coaches, etc. present.
- Know the ground rules for the field you are on.
- Go over standard rules, such as, "One from the mound, 2 from the field" and "Catch and Carry" (Fielder catches ball and runs out of play, all runners get one base).
- Coaches can not determine a ground rule – they may suggest one, but it isn't a rule until the umpires agree to it.
- Ask both Managers if all his players are properly equipped per the rules – and get an affirmative, verbal "yes".
- NO warnings at Ground Rules meetings – only reminders.



Ground Rules

Ground Rules/Plate Meeting information (2-3 minutes total):

- Both umpires should introduce themselves. Coaches will do same.
- Start behind home plate, and go around the whole field, and finish at home plate:
 - Address the backstop fence: mention holes or areas of concern. Mention the entryway.
 - Address the bench area/dugouts. Where equipment is and should be. Where the on-deck circle is.
 - Address the out of play fence(s). Are the lines visible? Is the fence the entire length of the field or is there an out of play area?
 - Address the Home Run fence, if there is one. Address any branches hanging over the fence(s). Address any holes in the fence.
 - Address the out of play fence(s). Are the lines visible? Is the fence the entire length of the field or is there an out of play area?
 - Address the bench area/dugouts. Where equipment is and should be. Where the on-deck circle is.
- Ask if all of the players are properly equipped. Get an affirmative “yes” out loud from each coach.
- A-D: Determine from each coach which type of batting order they’re using (two-three options available).
- Consider discussing age-/class-specific items (example: how you’ll help during the coach pitch innings in Class I/Farm Major).
- Mention cell phones/emergency personnel. Do not give warnings.
- Ask if they have any questions.
- Answer only questions related to the ground rules. (Do not discuss what “Your strike zone is”). If they have a rules question, politely defer to a more appropriate time.
- Give the home team a few minutes to take the field. The coaches must relay the info to the players.

Ending the Game

- Games end after 6 complete innings in Farm; 7 innings in classes A & up. (5 $\frac{1}{2}$ or 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ if the home team is ahead). International Tie Breaker is used (Rule 6.14, pg.47) if game is tied after last inning.
- A mercy rule is in effect in all classes. 10 runs after 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ or 5 innings.
- Class A – D – There is a 15-run mercy rule after 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ (if home team winning) or 4 complete innings (if visiting team winning) (*Rule 4.10.B.5, pg. 57*)
- 2-hour Mercy Rule: If one team is ahead by 10 or more runs after 2 hours have been played, the game ends at the end of the present inning. Must have a ten-run lead to have a two-hour time limit.
- 2 Hour Rule: No new inning can start after 2 hours have been played.
- Sign scorebook if asked. This is not required, but ok to do.
- ALWAYS leave field together. If you can, exit through winning teams side.

Protests

(Rule 13, pg. 108)

- If a coach wants to protest a regular season game: this must happen before the next pitch or play. Protests can be made in all Classes in both sports except Farm Minor.
- Protests can only be for a rule or ineligible player; judgement calls may not be protested. Procedure:
 - Call time
 - Get both score keepers together, and make sure the books match (inning, batter, outs, count, baserunners, etc.)
 - Mark both books with the protest and initial
 - Resume play
- Coach is responsible to forward the \$200 fee and the written protest to County
- At tournaments: Summon the field Judge/Tournament Director. They handle it. Game stops immediately. Coach has a few minutes to write it up and pay the \$200.

2025 Rule Changes

The following are new rules and rule modifications for 2025:

1. Playing age is now determined by age on August 31 of the previous calendar year. See Rule 1.1.
2. Players that are also on a non-Hot Stove roster, in addition to a Hot Stove roster, must now play in 50% of the team's played games. This is a change from 60%. Also, players playing up or down within the same community in order to meet the minimum number of players may not be from a roster in the same Class. See Rule 1.7.
3. In Class A and above, a player may continue to second base on a base on balls, provided they do not stop. See Rule 2.3 in the OFFICIAL RULES AND POLICIES publication.
4. Base coaches are permitted to use electronic scoring devices while on the field. See Rule 2.15 in the OFFICIAL RULES AND POLICIES publication.
5. Chin strap requirements have been removed. Chin straps are now optional for all Classes. See Rule 2.28 in the OFFICIAL RULES AND POLICIES publication, Rule 4.11.5, and Rule 9.7.L.
6. In Classes A and B, all starters are required to play 12 outs, 6 offensive and 6 defensive. All substitutes must play 12 consecutive outs. It is strongly recommended that all substitutes be entered into each game at the top of the 3rd inning. See Rule 5.3.E.
7. No new inning in Farm Major may begin after 1 hour, 40 minutes of play. See Rule 6.3.I.
8. In Farm Major, an inning ends when either: 3 outs are recorded, 5 runs scored, or 10 batters have an at-bat, whichever comes first. A team with 9 players can bat a maximum of 9 in an inning.
9. In Farm Major, protests are permitted.
10. In Farm Major, Bunting is now legal during the player pitch portion of the game. See Rule 11.4.Q.
11. In Farm Major, during coach pitch, the coach that is pitching must be in contact with the pitcher's plate after June 1st. See Rule 11.5.B.
12. Farm Major Penalty for coach that is pitching and giving instructions to baserunners: One (1) warning will be given to offending coach. Any subsequent violation(s) will result in the lead runner being called out. See Rule 11.D.
13. Tournament Draw Tie Breakers were updated. See Rule 14.6.K.

How To Get Games and Get Paid!

- Know who your Head Umpire is for the communities you wish to work in. The list is on www.loraincountyhotstove.com (or your charter's website).
- YOU are responsible for reaching out to assigners/head umpires to get games. They will not look for you.
- Be available, as much as possible. The season is relatively short.
- If you schedule a game, do the game. It is hard to get someone else last minute because you change your mind. The more reliable you are, the more games you'll get. Schedulers call first who they know want to work.
- If you want games but are not being assigned, contact the County Umpire-in-Chief.

Test Prep

- Running out of the baseline to avoid a tag is a violation and immediate dead ball.
- When an improper batter is discovered in the batter's box and at bat she is immediately called out.
- A batter's hands are considered part of the bat when determining hit by pitch.
- A batter must attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch in order to be awarded first base.
- The batter fails to be ready within 20 seconds after the ball is returned to the pitcher, the umpire shall call a strike.
- On a bunt, the batter must run the distance to first base in foul territory to avoid interfering.

Test Prep

- The ball becomes dead immediately when a batted ball touches any baserunner, after a fielder has had a chance to make a play.
- The ball becomes dead immediately when the batter swings at a pitch that touches her clothing.
- Prior to starting the delivery, the pitcher must take a position with both feet on or partially on the top surface of the pitcher's plate.
- On a walk, while in the 16-foot circle, the ball only needs to be in the pitcher's possession for the look back rule to be in effect.
- R1 is forced out when F6 tags second base with her glove while she has the ball firmly grasped in her hand and the ball touching the ground.
- Umpire jurisdiction ends when the final out is recorded and the defensive team leave the field.
- With two runners on base, the base umpire is responsible for all runners tagging up on a fly ball.

Test Time!

- The 2025 Hot Stove Umpire Test is online only
- You may only take the test if you were present at a clinic
- This presentation, as well as the rule book, is posted at www.loraincountyhotstove.com, under resources, 2025 Softball Umpire Presentation.
- After successful completion, your card will be emailed to you
- Cards will be emailed out. Please make sure email address and cell phone number are correct!
- Contact Jerry Clapper with any questions, jerry@loraincountyhotstove.com



