



UMPIRE'S MANUAL

Resource Material

C*ONTENTS*

Foreword	5
Introduction	6
Philosophy of Baseball Umpiring.....	7
A Code of Ethics for Baseball Players and Coaches	9
Requirements of an Umpire	11
Control and Discipline	14
Pre-Game Preparation.....	16
Strike Zone (in Australia).....	17
Fair / Foul	18
Dead Ball / Live Ball	19
Catch / No Catch	21
Infield Fly.....	22
Awards of Bases	23
Obstruction.....	24
Interference	25
Batting Out of Order	27
Swearing and Equipment Abuse	28
Bleeding Rule.....	29
Force Play Slide Rule.....	30
Tag Plays	32
Appeals	33
Further Appeal Situations.....	34

The Pitcher	35
Umpire Mechanics.....	38
Umpire's Jurisdiction	43
Helpful Hints for Umpires	46

*F*OREWORD

This manual has been produced to assist in the training and development of baseball umpires.

The mechanics, methods and interpretations are as taught to umpires throughout Australia and used in the evaluation of umpires during the accreditation process.

This is designed as a resource document and therefore some flexibility must be allowed for modification as an umpire gains experience, the ultimate aim must be remembered. That is, to have uniformity in teachings, mechanics and interpretations throughout baseball umpiring in Australia.

This manual has been produced with the assistance of Major League Baseball International, Major League Baseball Umpire Development Program, and the State Directors of Umpiring. Without their assistance this manual would not be possible.

The reader of this manual should be aware that at the time of production all rules were current and up to date. As time passes, the rules of baseball and the junior rules may change and the reader should be prepared to check if there is any need to update this manual.

INTRODUCTION

It is trusted that your motivation for attending an umpires' school or seminar is because, like many umpires, you can see and appreciate the need for more umpires to control and supervise all levels of baseball.

While many will be starting at the junior level, through your enjoyment of baseball umpiring, some of you will progress to the senior ranks.

This condensed course is designed to introduce you to the way that we, as umpires, view a game of baseball. It is designed for people like yourselves who have an interest in the game.

The objectives of this course include:

1. Learning to understand and interpret the basic rules of baseball.
2. Learning to demonstrate and explain fundamental umpiring mechanics.

Baseball in Australia is heading in the right direction; the rewards for the umpire who wants to achieve something are there for anyone who is willing to work towards a goal.

Baseball Australia is supportive of umpires at international, national, state and local association competitions. In turn you have the opportunity to join the ranks of umpires and from there international representation is only a 'ball and strike' away.

So let's start from the beginning and who knows, one day one of you may just make it to the top.

PHILOSOPHY OF BASEBALL UMPIRING

We as umpires must strive to be perfect. We must continue to improve each and every time we go onto the field. We will try to convey to each of you some of the things we feel will help each of you to become a better umpire.

The first thing we as umpires must do is to co-operate with our partners. We must help others. Don't be hesitant to ask for assistance if you are blocked out on a play. The main objective we have as umpires is to have all of our decisions ultimately correct. However, always remember that you will probably be the closest umpire to the play and should not expect your partner, who may be 40 to 100 feet away, to see the play any better. So, do not rely on that umpire as your crutch. Strive to be in position and make the correct call. Do not be influenced by team members calling out to get help on calls.

Remember you represent the league and all of baseball.

Keep personalities out of your work. We may not get along with all the players all the time but you must not go onto the field with a chip on your shoulder. You will get it knocked off. We must be able to forgive and forget and leave the things that happen on the field, on the field. Every game is a new game.

Next, don't make sarcastic remarks about a ball player and in no way make any remarks about your partner in the vicinity of players. If you are involved in an argument with a player of the game or coach don't insist on having the last word - let them go - DO NOT FOLLOW THEM.

Never, ever charge a player or follow him / her if he / she is moving away from you. Another thing you do not want to do is point your finger or use gestures during an argument.

Always remember to keep your temper. We are the only people on the field many times that have a cool head. Remember a decision you make in anger is not always a sound one.

Don't ever use language toward a player or coach that you would not let them direct at you. Not only are players and coaches disciplined, but umpires are also open for discipline - so WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE.

We as umpires are representative of the league and are duty-bound to hear out the manager if there is a question of the rules of the game. Remember there is a difference in rules and in judgement; never let anyone prolong an argument on play involving your judgement. You as umpires can do this with dignity and by doing so can gain respect of all involved. We must be the impartial judges we are and maintain a calm attitude becoming the authority we have.

When you go into a game do so looking your very best. Go out there with a clean uniform with your shoes clean and shined. Keep your equipment in top condition and keep yourself in good physical condition, keep active and alert on the field at all times.

Keep the game moving along - do this by not allowing the pitcher to throw too many pitches while warming up and get fielders to get the ball off the infield. Be courteous, impartial and firm. By doing these things you will gain respect for your ability to keep the game moving quickly and smoothly.

When going to and from the baseball field always try to dress appropriately. Even when off the field always remember you are the representative of baseball and your league. Never do anything or put yourself in a position that would bring disgrace to the league, baseball and most of all yourself.

The last thing we must do is have fun working each game and to go onto the field with the attitude that *'I am the best umpire there is and I am going to be a true representative of the greatest game played'*.

Always act, dress and work in a way befitting your profession.

A CODE OF ETHICS

If benefits are to be derived from the playing of baseball, the highest standard of ethics and sportsmanship must be maintained. The ethics and sportsmanship of players, coaches, officials and others associated with the game must be exemplary and beyond reproach. Everyone participating must conduct himself or herself so that he / she is a credit to the sport.

The following code of ethics for baseball prescribes the duties and basic responsibilities of those playing and administering the game:

1. Coaches and players should comply with the meaning and the spirit of the playing rules. Purposely ignoring or wilfully violating rules is intolerable. Those who break the rules degrade not only themselves but also the game, their team, the association and the community.
2. Coaches and players should show respect for the decisions of umpires and the efforts of their opponents and they must conduct themselves so as to dignify the game.
3. Coaches should motivate players so they will control themselves at all times, thereby preventing any unsportsmanlike act to opponents, officials or spectators.
4. Coaches should refrain from heckling game officials and from challenging the judgement decision of umpires. Discussing an occasional rule interpretation is permissible if it is done with dignity and sincerity.
5. Coaches with an ethical approach will not tolerate actions by players which are physically dangerous to opponents, such as a pitcher purposely throwing at a batter or a base runner deliberately trying to injure an opponent during a double play.
6. Coaches, players and umpires should co-operate in eliminating game delays and stalling tactics.
7. Coaches in the coach's boxes are expected to direct their remarks to their team-mates and not use their position to upset the opposing pitcher.
8. A dedicated coach will instil in players the habit of properly respecting opponents and game officials. Players must not direct unbecoming language or personal remarks to opponents.

Vitally included in the promotion and control of baseball throughout Australia is the most important aspect of promotion and training of umpires to the required standard.

Umpires are **responsible for the enforcement of the rules**. It is obligatory for umpires to impose the penalty when the rules are broken.

Umpiring is a responsibility that demands the highest performance of properly qualified officials. The umpire must be a person of unimpeachable integrity, be absolutely fair and impartial, capable and efficient with a strong sense of justice and a desire to help the game.

Exact and exacting umpires, free from officiousness, are excellent umpires. Strict application of the rules will benefit the game. The rules are made for baseball as a whole and not the individual.

Use commonsense allied with good judgement in all situations.

Umpires must never barrack or criticise players, coaches or fellow umpires. To do so casts grave doubts on their impartiality and is a betrayal of loyalty to their team-mates.

Because of the absolute power vested in umpires we have a tremendous responsibility - use it wisely to benefit the game. Exercise self-discipline and good conduct at all times in all situations. Be businesslike in your approach to the game. Cultivate a judicial attitude and keep the game under complete control.

WHILST OFFICIATING ...

Be neatly dressed in regulation uniform with foot wear clean, hair tidy, and outfit pressed to be a credit to your profession.

Set your watch for the correct time.

Never be careless enough to sit or lean on a fence or backstop.

Never engage in idle conversation with coaches, players or spectators.

Never smoke on the job.

Never raise your voice to "chat" a player or coach.

Do not have a late night prior to an assignment - self-discipline is mandatory.

Do not discuss plays with outsiders - they usually get them wrong and misquote you.

Have proper pride in yourself and in your chosen profession. Give courtesy - never sarcasm. Be firm and decisive - command respect. Should an umpire make an error and be proven wrong, it is their duty to change the decision immediately to avoid injustice.

Be alert, consistent and on top of the play.

Be letter-perfect on rules and mechanics.

ALWAYS SUPPORT BASEBALL

REQUIREMENTS OF AN UMPIRE

An umpire must be decisive, objective, consistent and courageous. An umpire must hustle and anticipate what will happen during a play. An umpire must be a disciplinarian, but must also be understanding about players' frustrations and be willing to accept pointed criticism.

The making of a good umpire starts with several physical traits. Eyesight of course is the major prerequisite. The home plate umpire must make between 270 and 300 ball / strike calls per game. The pitches watched move at speeds of 70 to 90 + miles an hour.

The umpire is in a much better position to judge the pitch's high speeds than either the batter or catcher. The umpire can wait for the pitch to travel its entire path before deciding whether it's a ball or strike. The plate umpire must be able to 'track' pitches as they move from the pitcher's hand to the plate; watch the ball.

The umpire must also be in good physical shape. The plays that develop are often explosive and umpires have to move quickly to keep up.

One of the most frustrating aspects of umpiring is the image of a bunch of pot-bellied guys who call games because they aren't athletic enough to play.

Umpires working the two-umpire system have to do as much running as the players, so they had better be in shape.

The umpire must be quick; he / she must be able to pivot to switch direction quickly. The plate umpire also must have strong legs to deal with the up and down pressure of squatting behind the plate. If you can't be comfortable behind the plate, your attention will wander and you won't see plays as well.

ATTITUDE

When you take the field, think of yourself as a business executive. Your job is to manage the game the same way an executive would manage his office, keeping people busy, making snap judgements, settling disputes and avoiding problems before they happen.

When an umpire takes the field, he should look like a professional. That means dressing in clean, pressed clothes. Good appearance shows the teams you mean business. The purpose of dressing well is to stress your professionalism. You also need to have the demeanour of a professional to gain the respect you need to call a game.

Acknowledge players, managers and coaches but do no more than that. Be friendly but aloof. Do not be seen being over friendly to any one player, manager, coach or team.

There is not much the umpires can do about differences in judgement. The players and coaches usually understand that umpires have slightly different standards but the teams will get understandably upset if the umpire applies different standards in similar situations.

Everybody has bad days when you just can't seem to get in a groove and see things right. It takes a certain amount of professionalism though to stick with a game and force yourself to concentrate.

Once you start calling a game, treat each pitch and each play as if it is the last call you will ever make because that's the one they will remember.

OBJECTIVITY

The most serious affront to an umpire is the charge that he favours one team over another. You must not allow yourself to be liable for this charge. Baseball is a game of conditioned reflexes, when you're working a game, you usually don't have more than enough time to let your feelings enter into your decision making, if you vow to start each pitch with a fresh mind. It's almost impossible not to be an objective umpire.

The key to remaining objective in baseball is starting over with each new play. Once you start thinking about past calls when you are making new calls you will lose your consistency and objectivity.

It is your job as an umpire to know all the rules and to know how to use the Rule Book.

Whenever you get a chance, study the rule book. Try to imagine plays that could develop in a game for each rule.

The umpires should be willing to explain their calls and any rule questions that arise during a game, but they should avoid being drawn into protracted discussions.

Once the game is over, leave the field right away. Your job is over.

BEING HUMAN

Umpires make mistakes. What separates the good umpires from the bad is not only how many mistakes they make, but also how they behave when they do.

When you go to a game, concentrate only on the job at hand. You should be courteous to the game's participants. The home plate umpire should establish a good working relationship with the coaches and players.

HUSTLE AND DECISIVENESS

There is one sin for which an umpire should not be forgiven: the lack of hustle. At least try to be in a position to cover all of the game's plays.

It's not necessary for the umpire to huff and puff his / her way around a diamond if he / she can anticipate where a play might develop? He / she should make sure he / she's on top of the play when it happens.

The umpire must also be decisive. When you make a call, make sure everyone in the park knows what it is. Make your signal obvious and bark out your calls in a crisp voice.

STEADY CONCENTRATION

Making good calls, as an umpire requires more than eyesight, good positioning, and good physical conditioning. It requires a level of concentration that athletes describe as an almost trance-like state of mind. You can afford to be relaxed. When you call a game, try to establish some kind of rhythm. One way to establish this rhythm is to constantly talk to yourself about the game.

The plate umpire can imagine pitches moving into the strike zone. If the pitches do indeed move through the zone, it's a strike; otherwise it's a ball.

The umpire should also anticipate what play will develop and how he / she will rule when that play either goes according to or against the anticipated play.

GOOD JUDGMENT

Making judgement calls cannot be taught in a textbook. Good baseball judgement requires one part knowledge of the rules, one part knowledge of human nature and one part anticipation and preventive actions.

CONSISTENCY

Nothing irks players and managers as much as an inconsistent umpire.

Different umpires have slightly different strike zones. Different umpires will see a possible obstruction or interference call differently.

What should you do if you blow a call as an umpire? Maybe remind yourself to concentrate and be patient with the manager and players who argue the play. Whatever you do, don't make a habit of telling the players you made a mistake.

Umpires make mistakes when they are out of position or do not concentrate on the play.

If you get an argument from the team that was victimised by your mistake, be a little more patient than usual. They will simmer down if you listen calmly.

You make so many calls over the course of a game that mistakes are inevitable. You might say, "Look coach, maybe I messed up, but I can't change the call so let's get back to playing ball".

Only admit the most obvious mistakes and don't make a show of your contrition.

Umpiring is a job of conditioned reflexes. There will be many times when your immediate response will be more accurate than your mental instant replays or the partial analysis of angry players.

You're going to have your share of rough days when you just don't have much concentration or interest in the game.

That's true for everyone: player, umpire, coach. People understand that. Don't try to compensate by 'evening the score'; compensate by bearing down.

With umpiring you can't hope to do a good job of officiating a baseball game without interesting yourself in more than the routine decision-making of a ball game.

To be an excellent umpire, **you must constantly think about baseball.**

CONTROL AND DISCIPLINE

Umpires are vested with a great amount of responsibility every time they walk on the field. When you put on the blue uniform you become judge, jury and executioner. As an umpire you must temper the absolute authority with reason, good judgement and commonsense. You know before a game you may get into trouble. The good umpire is the one who handles the difficult situations with the most tact and diplomacy.

If a coach is giving you a hard time and you say, "Coach, sit down and shut up", you have created a problem for yourself. You have embarrassed the coach in front of players and fans and you have challenged him / her unnecessarily. If the coach doesn't sit down and shut up you are going to have to throw him / her out which he / she may deserve. However, if you let the coach know in a firm manner that you "have heard enough" or "you have had your say, now let's play", you have accomplished the same end without the direct challenge. Avoid going to the bench or dugout to engage a player or coach in an argument. You must remember when you go to the dugout you are in their territory and are out-numbered. If you let yourself fall into this trap, you may wind up ejecting three or four people instead of one. Often you can single out a solitary voice and let them know you have had enough without going to the dugout.

Using tact in handling players can have some positive results. Your broom is one of the most effective weapons to use in dealing with a catcher who does not seem to agree with your judgement. You can turn, brush off home plate and let the catcher know you don't want to hear any more without anyone else in the ballpark knowing you have said a word. Often a simple "OK you've had your say, now let's play ball" while you are brushing off the plate can cool things down. You may, however, run across a catcher who will continue even after being warned. If after you have given a warning you must eject the catcher; do so. Players and coaches don't respect umpires who take unnecessary abuse.

Should the pitcher become a problem, you can either talk to the pitcher as he / she leaves the mound between innings or tell the catcher to go out and settle the pitcher down. If this fails, you may have to go to the mound yourself. But if you do you can bet you will also have a coach to contend with and again you are out-numbered. So issue your warning and if it is not heeded, eject the pitcher.

A batter may also be dealt with without showing him / her up. Let the batter know if you feel he / she has gone too far in the objection. If you keep your mask on few will know that you are letting the batter know, "I have had enough, now get back in the box and hit". Again, issue the warning and if it is not heeded, eject the batter. Respect is something that is difficult for an umpire to earn. Things that will help in gaining respect are:

Knowledge of Rules

Rules are difficult to learn and interpret. Sit down and read the Rule Book, one rule at a time, visualising the plays and trying to understand why the rule is the way it is. Regardless of how many years you have umpired, continue to review the rules and discuss them with your fellow umpires. Don't get hung up on the technicality of the rule but rather its intent and purpose. The umpires that nit-pick and look for trouble will be bound to find it.

Appearance

An umpire who looks like he / she knows what he / she is doing immediately commands respect.

Attitude

If you can instill in the players and coaches that you are there to help them play the game and be its impartial judge, you have gone a long way to gaining their respect. You will get complaints - this is part of the job - accept them provided they don't get personal or prolonged. If an argument is presented in a reasonable manner; listen. Once the point has been made simply say, "Coach, you have had your say, I called the play the way I saw it, now let's play ball", if the coach continues to argue or gets carried away, there is no alternative but to eject the coach; do it.

Handling difficult situations becomes the best way to gain respect and become recognised as a top calibre umpire. Each person is of a different temperament and no two people handle a situation the same way. More often it's your attitude that makes the all-important difference.

Perhaps the most dangerous thing that can happen in any game is to get into a bean ball war. Often an alert umpire can sense this and head off a potential battle by talking to the catcher or pitcher about an extra close pitch after a home run or on a two-strike pitch. Warn both coaches and if it continues eject both the pitcher and coach.

Other situations that present problems are: tough sliding plays at second on potential double plays; hard slides at the plate or crashing into the catcher on an obvious out at home plate; stepping on, or running into the first baseman. All of these situations are potential dynamite. Any one of them may result in a fight at any time. If you see what you believe is an unnecessary act, let the player involved know your feelings. Tell him you will not tolerate such action further. If you feel it is an overly aggressive action, deal with it as such and eject the player.

However, it still takes firm action by the umpires to enforce the rules and try to prevent a senseless act from leading to all out combat.

A firm hand early in the game, by taking charge without being overbearing, can often prevent problems later. There are many situations that must be dealt with and many types of personalities that must deal with them.

What works for one may not work for all.

PRE-GAME PREPARATION

Arrive early enough to go through the preliminaries with the major objective of calling "play" at the scheduled starting time. For example: step onto the diamond at 15 to 20 minutes before start-time, dressed ready and with all equipment.

Meet your fellow umpire(s) if you are so fortunate to have an assistant.

Field setup is the responsibility of the ground authority or home club. Only check it if requested and then only if a dispute has arisen.

The teams' warm-ups are their own concern, but starting the game on time is the umpire's vital objective at this stage and therefore you may start to hustle the teams for this purpose.

Have all your equipment on and meet both managers at **not less than five minutes to starting time**.

Check:

- (1) the time and any limits upon the game;
- (2) the playing conditions and field limits;
- (3) receive match balls and ensure there are sufficient spares (of the same brand and type as the original balls which commenced the game).

Call the home side onto the diamond. The base umpire(s) goes off to position. Take a quick glance around that all is ready to start.

STRIKE ZONE (IN AUSTRALIA)

For ease in instruction and to assist umpires to be consistent, Australia has adopted a strike zone which differs slightly from the professional Rule Book.

UPPER LIMIT - * WHOLE BALL BELOW BOTTOM OF BREAST*

For the given width, the whole of the pitched ball must be below the batter's breast (bottom of the breast), ie, if the top of the ball clips into the batter's breast level, it is too high and is called a ball.

A dropping pitch from high must be below the breast at the front of the plate to be called a strike.

LOWER LIMIT - *MATCHING THE KNEE-CAP*

For the given width, the whole of the pitched ball must be above the bottom of the batter's knee at the plate. As the knee-cap is approximately the size of a baseball, the called strike should therefore be no lower than matching the knee-cap.

To clip below the knee-cap is too low and is called a ball.

See the pitch all the way through the knee, ie, a dropping pitch matching the front leg knee-cap at the front of the plate must not drop lower than the batter's rear leg knee-cap as the ball passes across the plate to be called a strike.

WIDTH LIMIT - *PART OF BALL OVER EDGE OF PLATE*

Any part of the ball across any part of the whole plate width, ie, to clip any edge of the plate within the given height, is a strike.

DISTANCE - *OPPOSITE THE PLATE*

The batter's height strike zone is projected to be opposite the plate irrespective of whether the batter is standing forward or back of the plate. The pitch is judged only where it crosses the plate and most usually at the front (nearest the pitcher), but a curving pitch that cuts across the back (side) edge of the plate within the given height, is a strike.

BATTER'S STANCE - *WHEN THE BATTER IS PREPARED TO SWING AT A PITCHED BALL*

The underlined expressions are to be remembered and quoted.

FAIR / FOUL

After strike / ball calls, decisions on fair / foul can be the most important calls to be made because no plays can be made until it is confirmed that the batted ball is fair. If it is foul, the ball becomes dead.

The Rule Book is quite explicit on fair and foul. Under Rule 2.00 (Definitions) we find descriptions, firstly of fair and foul territory and then of fair and foul balls. Consider the definitions:

Fair Territory

Note that the foul lines and first and third bases are in fair territory. Also included is the base of the home run fence and upwards, eg, foul poles.

Foul Territory

Simply that part of the ground not in fair territory. The important thing therefore, is to know what fair territory is; everything else is foul.

Fair Ball

Essential points are:

- Batted ball.
- Settles on fair territory.
- Is on or over fair ground when it bounces through the infield to the outfield.
- Hits a base.
- First falls on fair ground in the outfield on or beyond first or third base.
- Touches a player or umpire on or over fair ground.
- Goes out of playing field in flight whilst over fair territory, ie, home run.

Foul Ball

Essential points are:

- Batted ball.
- Ball settles on foul territory between home and first or third base.
- Bounding ball past first or third base in foul territory.
- Ball first falls on foul territory in the outfield beyond first or third base.
- Ball touches a fielder or umpire on or over foul territory,
- Ball touches a foreign object on or over foul territory.

NOTE: Foreign objects are specifically mentioned in relation to foul territory, thus a ball hitting any object which is foreign to the ground immediately becomes foul. This does not apply to fair territory between first and third bases, therefore a ball hitting a foreign object between first and third bases on or over fair territory and subsequently rolling into foul territory is a foul ball.

DEAD BALL / LIVE BALL

There are three kinds of baseball: live ball, immediate dead ball and delayed dead ball.

A **Live Ball**, of course, is any ball that is in play. When the ball is alive, the base runners may attempt to get to the next base, the batter can attempt to swing at pitches and the defence can attempt to retire its opponents. A ball is alive almost the entire game.

An **Immediate Dead Ball** is the ball at any point in the game when no plays are permitted to take place. If a fielder misses a pop fly in foul territory, the ball is immediately dead. Nothing can happen until the umpire declares the ball to be alive again.

A **Delayed Dead Ball** is a ball that is about to be dead. Delayed dead ball plays occur when a player does something illegal during a play, but that illegal action does not prevent the play from being completed. The ball is not dead until the play ends.

DELAYED DEAD BALL SITUATIONS

The umpire should signal a delayed dead ball when:

- the catcher interferes with the batter's swing, but the batter still manages to hit the ball;
- the batter interferes with a defensive player, but a play or throw follows the interference;
- the plate umpire interferes with the catcher, but the catcher still makes a throw;
- the pitcher balks, but still throws or pitches the ball;
- a defensive player obstructs a base runner.

When the umpire signals a delayed dead ball, the umpire should compare the penalty for the illegal act with the situation that developed in the play. The umpire should make sure the team hurt by the illegal act gets at least what it would have received had the play been stopped immediately.

DEAD BALL - RUNNERS ADVANCE ONE BASE

The runners are permitted to advance one base when the ball is declared dead as a result of:

- the ball getting stuck in the umpire's mask;
- the pitcher throwing the ball into dead territory while standing on the pitcher's rubber;
- the fielder falling into dead territory after catching the ball;
- the pitch touching a runner who is attempting to score;
- the pitcher balking but not pitching or throwing the ball;
- the base runner attempting to steal on a pitch when there is a catcher's interference called.

DEAD BALL - RUNNERS RETURN

The umpire should call the ball dead and order the runners to return to the base they were standing on at the beginning of the pitch when:

- the foul ball was not caught;
- there was an illegally batted ball;
- the plate umpire interfered with a play, unless the runner was thrown out;
- the batter interfered with the catcher, unless the runner was thrown out;

- the batter was called out for batting out of turn.

DEAD BALL - RUNNERS RETURN UNLESS FORCED

The umpire should order the runners to return to their original base unless they are forced when:

- the runner interferes with the fielders;
- the catcher interferes with the batter's swing;
- a ball batted into fair territory strikes the runner or umpire;
- a batter is hit with a pitch.

CATCH / No CATCH

When a fielder makes a difficult play on a fly ball, there frequently is a question about whether or not the fielder actually catches that ball. There are a few simple rules to follow on the catch / no catch call.

Some people think that a player has caught the ball as soon as he grabs it. This is not the case.

The fielder must have **secure possession** and **complete control** of the ball for the umpire to rule that the ball was caught. This includes thrown ball as well as batted ball for the completion of an out.

If a fielder drops the ball as the result of a collision or fall, the **ball is not caught**. The fielder also cannot catch the ball after it touches the fence, umpire, or an offensive player.

If the fielder drops the ball while in the process of throwing, it's still a catch because the player was starting the next action after the catch.

Release of the ball is to be **voluntary** and **intentional**.

INFIELD FLY

This is something we should all recognise immediately. *So what is an Infield Fly?*

An infield fly is a fair fly ball (not a line drive or an attempted bunt) before two are out with runners on first and second bases, or first, second and third bases, which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort.

The rule is designed to prevent an infielder dropping a fly ball or letting it drop and making a double play.

Remember that this rule covers the situation of an outfielder making the catch providing that in the umpire's judgement the ball could have been as easily handled by an infielder.

Points to remember:

- (1) Recognise the situation.
- (2) An infield fly is any fair fly ball. Should the ball roll untouched into foul territory it cannot be an infield fly.
- (3) It must be able to be handled with normal effort by an infielder.
- (4) It may be caught by an outfielder.
- (5) It cannot be called after the play is over.
- (6) It is a judgement call and can not be an appeal.
- (7) The ball is alive.

AWARDS OF BASES

When the ball is over-thrown it mostly goes out of play, so what we are really talking about is an award of bases.

Over-throw or ball into dead territory can be divided into two categories:

(1) **Pitcher**

Wild pitch	Ball out of play	One base
Pass ball	Ball out of play	One base
Wild throw	Ball out of play	One base

A pitcher, whilst not in contact with the rubber,

(2) **Fielder**

Infielder: First play in an attempt to retire a runner - ball thrown out of play - two bases from time of pitch.

Infielder: Second play in an attempt to retire a runner - ball thrown out of play - two bases from time of throw.

The first play must be an attempted play not a feint.

Outfielder: Throws or knocks bounding ball out of play - two bases from time of throw or play. Deflects fair fly ball over home run fence into: foul territory - two bases; fair territory - four bases.

Catcher: In an attempt to field a wild pitch or pass ball: subsequently knocks the ball into dead territory - two bases from time of pitch; uses his mask to field such ball - one base from time of pitch.

Thrown Glove: Hitting fair ball: thrown ball - two bases; batted ball-three bases.

The award of bases will be from the base last legally touched.

OBSTRUCTION

Obstruction is the act of a fielder who, whilst not in possession of the ball and not in the act of fielding the ball, impedes the progress of any runner. (Does not have to be intentional.)

If a fielder is in the act of fielding the ball, either batted or thrown, the fielder cannot impede the progress of any runner.

Obstruction is an act committed by any member of the defensive team on the offensive team's runners.

UMPIRE'S COURSE OF ACTION

If obstruction has occurred, the umpire shall point to the obstruction and call "Obstruction!" in a loud voice. It is entirely up to the judgement of the umpire if obstruction has occurred.

The umpire must decide if a fielder is in the act of fielding a ball* or if a fielder has obstructed the progress of a runner.

** If a fielder is about to receive a thrown ball and if the ball is in flight directly toward and near enough to the fielder so the fielder must occupy a position to receive the ball, the fielder may be considered 'in the act of fielding'.*

PENALTIES IMPOSED

1. If a play is being made on an obstructed runner, the umpire calls "Time" and awards the obstructed runner the next base and all other runners the bases they would have reached (in his judgement) if there had been no obstruction.

If the batter / runner is obstructed before reaching first base, the ball is dead and the batter / runner is awarded first base unless the hit is a fly catch in which case the batter / runner is 'out' on the fly catch. (The obstruction has no effect on the catch, as the batter / runner was always out on the catch.)

Any preceding runners forced to advance by the award of bases as the penalty for obstruction, shall advance without liability to be put out.

If the ball is in flight when an obstruction occurs and the ball is thrown out of play (eg, trapped runner plays) then all runners are awarded the penalty for wild throw (two bases) from the base last legally touched at the time of the obstruction and the obstruction is ignored.

2. If no play is being made on the obstructed runner, then play shall proceed until no further action is possible. The umpire shall call "Time" and impose penalties to nullify the obstruction. The ball is not dead and if the runner advances beyond the base which the umpire would have awarded, the runner does so at his / her own risk and is liable to be tagged out.

INTERFERENCE

WHAT IS INTERFERENCE?

To impede, hinder or confuse.

There are four types of interference:

- (1) Offensive.
- (2) Defensive.
- (3) Umpires.
- (4) Spectators.

OFFENSIVE INTERFERENCE

Offensive interference is an act by the team at bat which interferes, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play.

If a batter or runner is declared out for interference, all other runners return to last legally touched base unless otherwise stated.

DEFENSIVE INTERFERENCE

Defensive interference is an act by a fielder that hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch.

UMPIRES INTERFERENCE

Plate umpire interferes with a catcher's throw (unless the catcher achieved what he / she set out to do, in which case the interference is ignored).

A fair ball touches an umpire on fair territory before passing an infielder. (Pitcher excepted).

SPECTATORS INTERFERENCE

Spectators' interference occurs when any spectator reaches out of the stands or goes onto the playing field and touches a live ball.

Spectators throwing items onto the playing field may constitute interference.

INTERFERENCE PENALTY

On any interference the ball is dead.

NOTE: In some cases the ball is only dead conditionally. The ball is dead if you are going to invoke the penalty. But there are interferences which do not immediately make the ball dead, eg, catcher interferes with batter, but batter and all runners advance at least one base - interference nullified.

Interference need not be intentional.

WHO CAN CAUSE INTERFERENCE

- The batter with batted ball (fair or foul).
- The catcher with thrown ball / batter.
- The coach with fielder attempting to field.
- The bat boy with fielder attempting to catch.
- The fielder with fielder attempting to throw.
- The runner with batter / fielder.
- The spectator with catcher.
- The grounds men.
- The officials.

Interference can happen at any time when the ball is in play. Main points to consider are:

- (1) Unless otherwise stated, the ball is dead immediately.
- (2) Unless the rule states, the interference need not be intentional.
- (3) Unless the rule states fair batted ball, it may occur on a fair or foul ball.
- (4) If a runner is hit by a fair batted ball, the runner is out unless it first was touched by a fielder, or passed an infielder other than the pitcher.
- (5) If the ball hits an umpire, it is dead unless:
 - (a) passed fielder (other than pitcher); or
 - (b) touched by fielder (including pitcher).

NOTE: Thrown ball touching an umpire is not interference and the ball remains in play.

- (6) Contact is not necessary to constitute interference. Important words are, "If in the judgement of the umpire...."
- (7) If a fielder is hindered or impeded in making a throw - that is sufficient.
- (8) Players and coaches must vacate all space needed by a fielder to make a play on a batted or thrown ball. This includes dugouts, benches, etc.
- (9) When a play is being made at the home plate, the batter must move out of the batter's box so as not to interfere with a play.
- (10) Thrown ball touching a runner - no interference unless intentional.
- (11) Runner fails to avoid fielder - runner out, intention not needed.
- (12) Batter's interference with catcher - if the catcher achieves what he set out to do (eg, runner put out) it is not interference and ball remains in play. Other runners may advance.
- (13) No runners advance on any interference unless forced by batter's advance to first base.

BATTING OUT OF ORDER

1. There must be an appeal from the defensive team and the improper batter must have completed a time at bat, eg, the improper batter must have been put out, or must have reached first base safely, in order to have anybody out on appeal.
2. The proper batter may replace the improper batter at any time before he becomes a runner or is put out. The proper batter will assume the count of the improper batter.
3. Every time you take the line-up card out of your pocket, go down the line-up.
4. An out made by the defensive team due to the improper batter hitting the ball (an out made on any other runner) will be nullified. All runners will return to their original base.
5. If an appeal is made before the complete time at bat, then this appeal is too early and all we do is get the proper batter to bat.
6. If an appeal is made too late, because a pitch is thrown to the next batter, then this act nullifies the right to appeal.
7. The right time to appeal is immediately after completion of the play, whether an out was made or the batter / runner reaches first safely.
8. Umpires must not direct attention to anyone in incorrect batting order.
9. The rule is straight forward if the umpire does not panic and goes through the situation logically, eg, look at your line-up card and nullify the advance of runners because of the illegal action. The appeal must be made at the correct time.
10. The original proper batter is out. The next batter is the batter that follows the proper batter.
11. If the defence appeals that there has been a batting out of order, the umpire need only concern himself with the last two batters. The reason for this is that we know that no matter who just batted, the man who batted immediately before him was legal (proper). Therefore, the correct last batter will always be the name that follows the man who batted immediately before this last batter.

SWEARING AND EQUIPMENT ABUSE

Any player / coach deemed by an umpire to be contravening codes of conduct relating to swearing or equipment abuse shall be given an official warning.

If players / coaches swear because of frustration the above rule is used.

If a player / coach directs the language at the umpire, the player / coach is ejected immediately from the game and the incident is reported on the official report form.

BLEEDING RULE

When an umpire notices a player is bleeding or has blood on any part of their person or uniform, the umpire is to direct the player to leave the field.

Where a player is directed to leave the field under this rule, the umpire shall wait a reasonable period to allow the bleeding to be attended to. The amount of time is entirely at the discretion of the umpire.

If, when this time has elapsed, the player is unable to take his / her place in the team, the player must be replaced in the usual manner of substitution. A player who refuses to promptly obey this instruction shall be reported by the umpire to the relevant body of baseball at that level. Such player shall be dealt with by that body as they see fit.

Umpires have the authority to eject a player / official if they refuse to obey the rule.

FORCE PLAY SLIDE RULE

(j) (7.14) Sliding to Bases on Double Play Attempts

If a runner does not engage in a bona fide slide, and initiates (or attempts to make) contact with the fielder for the purpose of breaking up a double play, he should be called for interference under this Rule 6.01. A “bona fide slide” for purposes of Rule 6.01 occurs when the runner:

- (1) begins his slide (i.e., makes contact with the ground) before reaching the base;
- (2) is able and attempts to reach the base with his hand or foot;

Rule 6.01(j) to 6.02(a)

(3) is able and attempts to remain on the base (except home plate) after completion of the slide; and

(4) slides within reach of the base without changing his pathway for the purpose of initiating contact with a fielder.

A runner who engages in a “bona fide slide” shall not be called for interference under this Rule 6.01, even in cases where the runner makes contact with the fielder as a consequence of a permissible slide. In addition, interference shall not be called where a runner’s contact with the fielder was caused by the fielder being positioned in (or moving into) the runner’s legal pathway to the base.

Notwithstanding the above, a slide shall not be a “bona fide slide” if a runner engages in a “roll block,” or intentionally initiates (or attempts to initiate) contact with the fielder by elevating and kicking his leg above the fielder’s knee or throwing his arm or his upper body.

If the umpire determines that the runner violated this Rule 6.01(j), the umpire shall declare both the runner and batter-runner out.

Note, however, that if the runner has already been put out then the

FORCE / TAG PLAYS

On occasions players fail to understand the difference between force and tag plays (particularly in junior grades). If umpires do not know the difference, confusion and argument arise, detracting from the umpire's performance. Therefore, we need to have the relevant rules and potential situations clear in our minds.

- Definitions for Force Play and Tag.

FORCE PLAY

The essential point is that the batter becoming a runner creates a force play. There is always a force play at first base and at bases to which runners are forced to advance due to the batter becoming a runner.

TAG PLAY

Note that the term as defined can have two meanings:

- (1) Tag the base (ie, touches the base with any part of the body whilst holding the ball securely in hand or glove). This is the method of obtaining an out on a force play.
- (2) Touch the runner (ie, touch (tag) the runner with the ball) with the hand holding the ball or with the glove containing the ball securely.

NOTE: The base can be tagged with the bare hand whilst the ball is in the glove, but the runner must be tagged with the hand or glove which contains the ball.

By understanding these definitions, we can now apply the relevant rules to various situations which arise.

Runs not to score when third out is batter / runner before touching first base or due to any runner being forced out.

Example: Runners on third and first bases (one out) - Batter hits to third baseman who fumbles the ball, then throws to second baseman (runner forced out at second base) and second baseman relays to first baseman (batter out at first). In the meantime, the runner from third base has crossed plate well before the third out. Run does not score.

General rules:

- (1) When a following runner is put out, the force on a preceding runner is removed.
- (2) When the batter / runner is put out, the force on all other runners is removed.

Ball becomes dead, and in some circumstances, runners 'if forced' advance (eg, batter hit by pitched ball) batted ball touching umpire.

After third strike (is not caught), after hitting a fair ball, a batter is out when he / she or first base is tagged before touching first base.

Runner is entitled to occupy a base until forced to vacate it for another runner legally entitled to that base.

: Two runners occupying a base - the following runner is out when tagged.

: Each runner advances without liability to be put out when the batter's advance without liability to be put out forces runners to vacate their bases.

NOTE: A runner advances past the base at his / her peril and can be tagged. If runner misses the base, he / she or the missed base may be tagged.

: Runner is out when tagged whilst off the base.

: Runner out when fails to reach the next base before a fielder tags him / her or the base after being forced by the batter becoming a runner.

NOTE: If a following runner is put out on a force play the preceding runner must be tagged. Note that the force is removed when the runner touches the base to which he / she is forced (ie, if runner over-runs second or third base on a force, he / she can be tagged. The rule states that if a runner reaches and passes a base to which he / she is forced and then retreats back past the base, the force is reinstated.

Example: Runner on first base steals to second base, but batter hits high fly to short left field. Runner reaches second base and realises that left field may catch the ball, so runner goes back over second base and heads towards first base. Left field drops the ball in a diving attempt but recovers and throws to second base where the base is tagged before the runner can retouch. Decision is 'out' because the force situation was reinstated.

: After over-running first base, a runner can be tagged if attempting to go to second base.

: Appeal plays require the defensive team to generally either tag the runner off his / her base or tag the base. Appeal plays are not force plays, but rule 7.12 gives guidance on whether runs score or not when appeal plays result in the third out. If a preceding runner is the third out, runs scored by following runners do not count. If the third out was a force play, then no runners can score.

Example: With two out, runners on second and third bases, batter hits safely to deep centre field and stands up on second base, but he / she missed first base and is called out on appeal for third out. No runs score because third out was a force play.

TAG PLAYS

The tag play is one of the most exciting in baseball.

If you get in the right position and concentrate you should have no trouble getting it right.

The most important thing is to forget what you learned about covering first base put-outs - forget about standing back. Get right on top of it so you can watch the play.

You need to be about five foot from the play, watch the fielder get the ball and apply the tag. Make sure you know where and when the tag was applied. Make sure the fielder has control of the ball – he / she must retain possession.

Try to frame the complete picture:

Fielder on one side.

Runner on the other.

Know where the ball is in the picture.

Try to look between the fielder's glove hand and the runner so you get a good angle on the play. If you connect the glove and the runner with an imaginary line you should be close to your 90 degree angle.

Make your call decisively. Let everyone know what has happened.

APPEALS

An appeal play takes place whenever a player on the defensive team tells the umpire that an offensive player failed to:

- (1) touch a base as he / she moved around the bases;
- (2) tag up at a base before advancing to the next base on a fly ball;
- (3) return immediately to first base after over-running or over-sliding the base;
- (4) touch home plate and made no attempt to return;
- (5) bat in order.

In each of these cases the defensive team must either tag the runner or touch the base that the runner missed - failed to return to or left early on. The appeal play must take place when the ball is alive. An appeal play can be made only before the next pitch or play. The defensive team can make only one appeal play on a given runner at a given base. If the defensive team throws the ball into the stand, etc, while attempting an appeal play, it may not make an appeal on that runner at that base again.

If the defence thinks that a base runner missed two bases or that more than one base runner missed a base, the defence can make an appeal on all of those plays; however, they must state which runner.

The manager, coach or pitcher may appeal to the plate umpire to ask his partner for help on a half swing when the plate umpire calls the pitch a ball, but not when the pitch is called a strike. If, however, you as the plate umpire are not sure on a strike call, you may, of your own accord, ask.

When asked, the plate umpire must refer to the base umpire for judgement on half swings. The base umpire's call will prevail and is final.

The ball is alive.

The manager of the defensive team may appeal to the home plate umpire that he / she believes the offensive team is batting out of order. The manager must request that time be called and state, "We have a batting out of order" situation.

FURTHER APPEAL SITUATIONS

If there is a reasonable doubt that there is a conflict with the rules, the manager is to appeal to the umpire who made the protestable decision ruling. He / she should follow the proper procedure:

PROPER PROCEDURE

1. Time should be requested - called.
2. Manager only makes the approach.
3. To the umpire who made, or perhaps should have made, a ruling decision.
4. Manager must be civil, likewise the umpire.
5. Allow the manager to make his / her point.
6. Clarify the judgement part. If that is all, then dismiss the manager, possibly with a reprimand.
7. If it is a question on rules then the umpire replies.
8. Umpire may elect to consult with partner privately.
9. Umpire who made the decision ruling makes the final decision.
10. Debate should be short.
11. The manager's next option is to protest.
12. Acknowledge protest.
13. Inform opposing team and scorer.

Proper procedure is important to the game and your fellow umpires.

NOTE: No appeal can be made on any decision which involves judgement.

THE PITCHER

The pitcher, when not on the mound and not in contact with the rubber, is an infielder for the purposes of any ball being thrown into dead territory by him / her (penalty two bases).

The pitcher, when on the mound and is in contact with the rubber, is a pitcher and any overthrows into dead territory by him / her will result in a one base award.

THE RUBBER

The pitcher works from the pitchers plate, known as the rubber.

The pitcher is required to take his / her signs from the catcher with his / her pivot foot on the rubber. If he / she doesn't there is no penalty, but the umpire will require the pitcher to get on the rubber. This prevents the pitcher from stepping and walking into the pitch.

POSITIONS OF WINDUP AND SET

The windup and the set (sometimes called "stretch") are the two legal positions a pitcher (the player designated to deliver the pitch to the batter) can take when preparing to throw a pitch. A pitch has occurred when a pitcher takes one of these positions, begins a motion to pitch and legally steps and throws the ball towards home plate while still in contact with the rubber. Either position may be used on any given pitch.

Pitchers:

- (1) must take signs from the catcher while in contact;
- (2) cannot habitually disengage the rubber after taking a sign; and
- (3) upon disengaging the rubber, must separate their hands.

NOTE: There is no penalty for violation of (1) through (3) above. Such action is simply prohibited and the umpire is required to warn the pitcher.

Normally the windup position is used when there are no runners on base or when runners on base can not steal, eg, loaded bases, runner on third or third and second.

If there is a chance of a steal, normally the pitcher will adopt the set position.

WINDUP POSITION

When taking the windup position, the pitcher must stand facing home plate.

The pitcher's pivot foot* must be:

- (1) perpendicular to;
- (2) on or forward of (but touching)

The pitcher's non-pivot (or free) foot must be:

- (1) perpendicular to;

- (2) forward of, or on, or backward of the pitching rubber.

The position of the hands may be apart or joined. Joining the hands is not required before the motion to pitch. Nor does joining the hands after taking the position necessarily mean the pitcher has begun the motion to pitch.

A pitcher, who becomes in contact according to the above dictates, has assumed the windup position.

In the motion to pitch, the pitcher's free foot:

- (1) may (but not must) step once backwards; and
- (2) must step once forward.

Neither step may be lateral (towards first or third base).

*(*Pivot Foot is the right foot for a right handed pitcher and the left foot for a left handed pitcher.)*

THE SET (OR "STRETCH") POSITION

When taking the stretch position, the pitcher must stand with shoulders towards third (right handed pitcher) or first (left handed pitcher) and face towards home plate.

The pitcher's pivot foot must be:

- (1) parallel to;
- (2) touching the pitching rubber.

The pitcher's non-pivot (or "free") foot must be forward of the pitching rubber.

A pitcher, who becomes in contact according to the above dictates, has assumed the set position.

In the motion to come set, the pitcher is required to:

- (1) join hands; and
- (2) execute a complete stop of such motion.

Before the motion to join hands, the pitcher must have the pitching hand at his / her side, hands obviously separate.

During the motion to join hands, the pitcher joins his / her glove and pitching hand, regardless of which has the ball.

Once his / her joined hands achieve a complete stop, the pitcher has set. A pitcher who legally follows the above steps has reached the set position.

After beginning the motion to join hands and before the joined hands have come to a complete stop, the pitcher can (but is not required to) draw the free foot nearer to the pivot foot.

In the motion to pitch, the pitcher's free foot must step once forward towards home plate.

The possibilities of an in contact pitcher's actions are:

- (1) To pitch.
- (2) To step and throw to a base.
- (3) To disengage the pitching rubber.
- (4) To balk (or a combination of to balk and any of the above).

PICK OFF MOVE LEFT HAND

Pitchers are always trying to gain an advantage when picking off, and try to disguise their move to the base. First, the pitcher's step must be 'toward' the base. It is acceptable to step within an imaginary line running from the pitcher's plate to the first base line at an angle of 45 degrees from the front of the plate. The 45 degrees must only be used as a guide to umpires and not mentioned during discussion with a manager, coach or player.

The pitcher must also step ahead of the throw. He / she cannot "snap" the throw, and then step - that would be a **balk**. The pitcher cannot feint a throw to first or third base while in contact with the rubber, that would be a **balk**. The pitcher must go through with the throw. The pitcher can feint a throw to second base and not complete the throw, provided he / she steps toward the base with his / her free foot.

PICK OFF MOVE RIGHT HAND

With the right hand pitcher's move to first base the pitcher must step toward the base to pick off and his / her foot must go toward first and without hesitation. When in the set position, any move of the front shoulder toward first base commits the pitcher to pick off. Some pitchers use a step which is little more than a swivel of the free foot. This is legal, but the free foot must move toward first base. The pitcher cannot come down with the free foot in the same spot.

On a Pick off move the pitcher must throw to first and third

What are the points the umpires will look for?

There are quite a few of them.

The umpire watches to see if the pitcher's foot breaks the plane of the rubber. That is when the pitcher's free foot swings back past the back of the pitcher's pivot foot. The pitcher is then committed to pitch unless, of course, the pitcher is throwing to attempt to pick off a runner at second base. The pitcher is permitted to flick his foot during his step toward the base, as long as he / she does not break the back plane of the pivot foot and as long as he / she does not hesitate in the step. The pitcher may take a high leg lift in their move to first base, but cannot hesitate during that step. Some pitcher's flick their hands toward the base then pitch. A pitcher can do that, or can pick off from that move. Both are legal.

The pitcher can also use a jump step, but cannot feint a throw to first or third base and he / she still must step toward first or third base with his /her free foot before the throw.

BALK

A balk is an illegal act by the pitcher with a runner or runners on base, entitling all runners to advance one base.

It is a judgement call and can not be argued by coaches.

The major balks committed at this level would be failing to come to a complete stop (when in set position) and illegal pick off moves.

UMPIRE MECHANICS

THE SET POSITION

The set position shall:

- (1) Be assumed by the base umpire before every pitch.
- (2) Be assumed by all umpires before calling most plays.

NOTE: There will be situations that dictate a standing set.

ASSUMING THE SET POSITION

1. Lower your seat. Do not bend over from the waist.
2. Place hands on knees or thighs, not inside legs.
3. Keep your head up. Do not drop the chin.
4. Align elbows with arms.
5. Relax your shoulders. Dissipate the physical tension.
6. Keep your weight forward in your stance. This enhances agility.

NOTES

PLATE UMPIRE - EQUIPMENT AND STANCE

Equipment

Standing behind the catcher involves a risk of being hit by a foul ball or a straying pitch. So let's look at the equipment designed to protect and assist you.

Shoes	A reinforced toe and guard over the top of the instep.
Shin Guard	Reaching from the ankle to the knee.
Cup	Tucked into your athletic support.
Body Protector	<p>There are two types:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) The outside: Rarely used today because of its bulk, but a very efficient shelter from errant balls.(2) The inside: Strapped to the body, under the shirt. The body section is padded. There are hard shells to cover the shoulders; some have extensions to protect the upper arms. <p>Both must be used well up under the chin to protect the throat.</p>
Mask	Similar to that worn by the catcher. All must have projections to protect the ears. If you wear an inside protector you will also want a throat guard on the chin of the mask.
Indicator	Held in the left hand.
Brush	Held in the ball bag or pocket.
Ball Bag	Worn on the belt of your throwing side. Holds three to five balls.

Stance

Preparing to watch pitches is the most fundamental part of the home plate umpire's job.

The umpire who uses the inside protector straddles behind the catcher, to the catcher's side where the batter is standing. When you crouch behind the catcher, plant your feet as far apart as your shoulders. When you bend down, bend your knees, not your waist. When a right handed batter is batting, the umpire should place the left foot forward and point it towards the pitcher. When a left handed batter is batting, the umpire should place the right foot forward. Try to keep your back relaxed with about 80 percent of the weight of the body leaning forward towards the pitcher. Hold your hands loosely on the inside of the legs.

The umpire should crouch down low with the throat guard level with the top of the catchers head. Keep eyes level to the ground. Follow the pitch with the eyes, **not** the head.

If you feel uncomfortable or if you feel bad about the calls you are making, shift your position a little behind the plate.

Never change your stance from pitch to pitch. Invariably you will end up calling slightly different strikes in the different positions.

The plate umpire should imagine the strike zone as a five sided box covering that area. Any pitch that cuts any part of the box, even if only part of the ball cuts the box, is a strike. What

matters is not where the ball ends up but where the pitch crossed the plate in relation to the strike zone.

I cannot stress enough the need for the plate umpire to hold his head still during the pitch. The umpire should follow the ball with eyes only.

Calling pitches is a matter of split seconds, so you need all the time you can get. If you stay still when you make the ball / strike call, you have to have extremely bad judgement to blow a lot of calls. But if you are moving when you make these calls, you have to have great judgement to get most of the calls right.

PLATE UMPIRE - TIMING

When the ball is pitched hold your head still, wait until the ball is in the catcher's glove, then call it. Only your eyes should move. You should be able to see the catcher's glove when the catcher catches the ball. As the ball is pitched, you should have expelled your breath and the eyes are looking for the pitcher's release point, trying to pick up the ball from the hand as early as you possibly can. Watch the ball all the way, moving only your eyes, and not your body or head and avoid blinking.

When the ball is in the catcher's glove and not before, you will have made your decision - ball or strike.

The Strike Call

If it is a strike, you will straighten up, lift your right fist high, calling "Strike – one! (two or three)" as the case may be. You may make two motions, for instance, first the fist, then a further movement of the hand, extending one or two fingers as appropriate.

On strike three, you will make that call only and the strike signal. This will avoid a call of "Strike three, batter out!" and the catcher does not hold the ball. You will not call "Batter out!" except on the occasional instance when it is necessary on a third strike not caught, with a runner on first and less than two out.

Let your personality show in the call - but do not stray too far from the basics.

The Call of Ball

If it is a ball, stay down in your crouch and call "Ball one!" or "Ball two", etc, then stand up and relax between pitches.

There should be an audible call on every pitch.

Make your calls with authority. All players on the field and your partners should be able to hear your calls.

FIELD UMPIRE – FIRST BASE POSITIONING

Stance

The umpire faces home plate in the crouched set position. In the crouched set position the umpire stands with his hands on his knees. The feet should be spread out at least to shoulder width with the knees comfortably bent.

As the pitcher goes through the motions, the umpire should make a practice of looking for any illegal action, with head facing the pitcher.

When the pitcher makes his delivery the umpire should turn his head to look at the batter directing his attention to home plate.

Position

When there are no base runners, the field umpire stands about 10 to 15 feet behind the first base, just on the foul side of the right field line. Be governed by the first baseman. Always stay about six to eight feet behind him.

When a ball is hit on the ground to an infielder, get in position to watch the throw or the unassisted put out. The best angle to watch all throws is approximately 90 degrees. However, you will not always be able to achieve this.

When the ball is hit, move toward the hit with your shoulders open to the fielder, watching the ball. When it is fielded and thrown, turn and watch the base and listen for the ball hitting the glove of the fielder at first base. If you hear the ball hit the glove before the runner's foot hits the bag, the runner is out.

Never get too close to the throw. Try and get into a position where you can see all of the factors involved in the play; the bag, the runner and the fielder.

Be absolutely still when you watch the play. Just as it is hard to hit a moving target, it is difficult to hit a stationary target if you are moving. Be alert for the next play that may develop. Know where you have to be.

As the fielder that fields the ball moves further around the diamond, so does your position to call the play. Second baseman moving towards you, the call will be made just off the foul line.

When the field umpire sees a catch or no catch situation developing on a fly ball to the right side of the outfield, he / she should run to the outfield to cover the play. The field umpire should yell to the plate umpire that he / she is going out, so the plate umpire will know that he / she is to cover first base.

FIELD UMPIRE - SECOND BASE POSITIONING

With base runners, the field umpire's job becomes difficult. He / she now has to watch for; balk, steal, trouble catch in the outfield, pick off, etc.

When there is a runner on first base the umpire stands just in front of and to the first base side of second base. Again, not quite halfway between the base line and the mound.

The most important part of the field umpire's duties is mobility.

On ground balls hit anywhere in the infield, the field umpire should take a step or two toward the mound to get a good angle on plays, remembering to watch the ball and always keeping shoulders open to the ball. The umpire should follow the same principals followed with plays at first base. Try to get a 90 degree view on the play. Let the ball take you to the base. Be ready to move to another play and stay out of the player's way, remembering to always watch the ball.

Double Plays

The field umpire needs to be ready to cover a double-play attempt before the batter even hits the ball. Knowing where you should be under different circumstances will enable you to see the whole play. Second base is the most important part of the play. Watch the fielder take the ball and make sure he / she is holding the ball and stepping on the bag before throwing to first. As soon as you see that play completed quickly make your call. Then turn your attention to first

base. Your call at second must be sharp and quick in order to get a reasonable angle on the play at first.

With a runner at first base the field umpire will be alert for:

- (1) Pick off to first or second base.
- (2) Steal to second or third base.

Pick Off

The pick off play at first base is one of the toughest under a two man system. It is almost a matter of making an educated guess on the play because you have to call the play from across the diamond. When the play develops, try to move toward first base and get a decent angle.

Steal

The field umpire will step into the throw keeping his chest open to the ball, at the same time moving toward second, let the ball turn you into the base. Assume a set position making your call from about three to four feet or even closer if you can.

Pick Off

The pick off play at second base is a little easier. Your move is the same as in the steal, only you will need to be sharper.

Steal

Runner steals to third base; the field umpire aims for a point 10 to 15 feet along the third base line towards home plate. This movement opens up the angle on the base. Do not run to the base. When the pitcher commits to pitch the umpire should glance over their right shoulder to pick up the runner in a steal situation.

FIELD UMPIRE – FIRST BASE PIVOT

When it is apparent that the batter / runner may go or attempt to go to second base, the field umpire must be there also. To achieve this, the field umpire, from set position behind first baseman, runs quickly to a position about one third of the way toward second base from first base (watching the ball) about six to eight feet inside the line, pivots to watch batter / runner's tag of first base. If the runner is holding at first the umpire will move in towards first base to watch for a possible tag. If the runner continues, the umpire runs to second base in a straight line checking the runner and the ball as he / she does so. Set position is assumed upon reaching a point of six to eight feet from the base ready for the play.

UMPIRE'S JURISDICTION

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of umpiring baseball with a two man system is avoiding a slapstick routine. There is so much ground to cover with only two umpires, that the umpires have to make sure they know where they are going at all times. Using a formal division of responsibilities has many advantages.

If two busy umpires need anything during a game, it is a sense that the game is under control. If one umpire knows exactly what his partner will do on a given play, the two umpires will be able to cover more ground and earn more respect from the teams involved and make your job more enjoyable. Umpiring demands control, a formal system is one way to achieve it.

This is one way umpires should divide basic responsibilities on the field:

	Plate Umpire	Base Umpire
No Runners on Base		
Fair / Foul	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Any batted ball that settles or is touched before reaching the first base bag.Any slow roller that touches the first base bag and does not proceed past the bag.Any batted balls down the third base line.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Any batted ball that bounds over first base bag.Any batted ball that touches the first base bag and bounds past it.Any fly balls that may be close to the right field line.Any fly ball near the right foul pole.
Catch / No Catch	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All fly balls to outfield that the base umpire does not go out on.All fly balls to infielders, except those to second or first base going towards the base umpire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Any fly ball to centre, right centre, or right that the base umpire goes out on.Fly balls handled by second baseman coming towards base umpire (usually low line drives).Fly balls handled by first baseman coming towards base umpire (usually low line drives).
Touching Base		
Play Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Batter / runner at all bases when base umpire goes out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Batter / runner at first, second and third bases when base umpire does not go out.

	Plate Umpire	Base Umpire
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batter / runner when tagged before reaching the 45 foot line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batter / runner at home plate if possible after he / she has gone out and returned. Batter / runner when en-route to first base after he / she has reached the 45 foot line.
45 Foot Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for all interference calls. Help on swipe tag near first base ONLY if asked by the base umpire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alert at all times for batter / runner interference call ONLY if plate umpire fails to. Full responsibility for swipe tag near first base (ask plate umpire ONLY as a last resort).
Out of Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for any ball going out of play in the outfield when the base umpire has not gone out. Responsible for any errant throw back into the infield that goes out of play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible only for ball out of play when going out.
Runners on Base		
Fair / Foul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All fair / foul decisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No fair / foul decisions from inside diamond.
Catch / No Catch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All fly balls in front of pitcher's mound. Fly ball straight back to pitcher. Fly ball handled by infielders or outfielders close to and going towards the foul line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All fly balls to infield, except those to infielders close to and going towards the foul line. All fly balls to outfield except those to outfielders close to and going towards the foul line.
Touching Bases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All runners touching third base, except batter / runner. No responsibilities for runners touching first or second base. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All runners touching first and second bases Batter / runner touching first, second and third bases.
Tag Ups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All tag ups at third base. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All tag ups at first and second bases.
Pick Offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No pick off responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All pick offs at first, second and third bases.

	Plate Umpire	Base Umpire
Steals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steal of home plate only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All steal at first, second and third bases.
Run Downs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May advance into position to take first or third base end of run down if practical. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total responsibility except when plate umpire assumes one end at either first or third base.
Play Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited responsibility at third when no play is possible at home plate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All plays on the bases except when the plate umpire covers third or one end of the run down.
Play Coverage 1: Runner on first only with less than two outs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes play at third base. 	
Play Coverage 2: Runners on first and third bases with less than two outs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes play at third base on runner from first base 	
Play Coverage 3: Runners on first and second bases with less than two outs when runner from second is tagging up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes play at third base. 	
Play Coverage 4:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Never leaves plate with possibility of a Time Play. 	
45 Foot Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for all interference calls. Help on swipe tag ONLY if asked by base umpire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alert at all times for batter / runner interference. Call ONLY if plate umpire fails to. Full responsibility for swipe tag (ask plate umpire ONLY as a last resort).
Out of Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for any ball going out of play in the outfield when base umpire has not gone out. Responsible for any errant throw back into the infield that goes out of play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible only for ball out of play when going out.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR UMPIRES

HOW TO SPEED UP A BALL GAME

The majority of games are subject to a time limit and therefore all players, coaches, officials and umpires must strive to achieve the maximum play in the time permitted and avoid all unnecessary delays.

The following points should be observed:

- All pre-game arrangements (diamond marking, warm up, scorebooks, final instructions, signals, etc) must be completed to ensure the game will start on the scheduled time.
- Benches are correctly placed to ensure the teams are in the game.
- The umpire shall be supplied with sufficient spare balls for the particular ground.
- All bases shall be properly and securely pegged to avoid breaking of straps and re-positioning during the game.
- Ensure the pitcher always has a match ball for warm-up, etc.
- Pitcher has up to one minute for up to eight warm-up pitches over the plate only. If the catcher is delayed, have a spare player at the plate to take the warm-up. If, before complete eight pitches, the pitcher has had enough, the pitcher should indicate to the umpire. No warm-up for the catcher is necessary. Catcher or spare player to be wearing mask during warm-up.
- The pitcher shall take signals from on the plate
- Pitchers shall avoid unnecessary delay
- First baseman shall promptly pass the ball to his / her bench when the umpire calls "Ball Out!"
- Batters shall come up to the plate without waiting to be called and next batter shall always be ready.
- Prompt fetching of foul and overthrown balls by both sides. Fetched by whoever is nearest and not necessarily the batting side.
- Fielders should not have to chase balls beyond playing limit, ie, passed balls, overthrows, fouls, etc. The alternative ball shall be called in.
- Appoint a bat boy to collect bats and helmets rather than leave this for the next batter to collect.
- The catcher shall promptly return the ball to the pitcher who shall take his / her position on the plate promptly
- A runner put out at second base shall hustle off the diamond.