



Umpire Manual

UMPIRE MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

Rules are written for the players, managers, umpires and fans. There are rules for the offense and rules for the defense. The rules are not meant to hinder or restrict play but rather to guide the game so that it is played fairly without one team gaining an unfair advantage over the other.

Umpires are there to apply the rules without favour or emotion. Umpires are the judges of whether the game is played fairly. Umpires take pride in their judgement and mechanics. Included in mechanics are the umpire's positioning, the umpire's signals, umpire's hustle, the umpire's game management and the umpire's attitude. Mechanics are all about the umpire.

This manual assumes that you have some basic knowledge of the fundamentals of the game, and of umpiring, and is written to provide guidelines to the ISF preferred method of umpiring and the expectations of an ISF umpire.

Umpiring has existed for many, many years and it is not the intention of the ISF to re-invent the wheel. The standard signals and mechanics used in umpiring are adopted here with variations offered to some accepted practices to improve an umpire's view of a play.

This manual would not exist with out the assistance of many, many people. Many organizations have contributed to the development of umpiring and we must acknowledge the following for their contributions to this manual: Softball USA (the ASA – Craig Cress and Kevin Ryan); Softball Australia (Alan McAuliffe, Kevin Broomhall and Margo Koskelainen); Softball Canada (Randy Souliers, Bob Henning, Brian Van Os); NCAA Softball (Emily Alexander and Jeff Hansen) Special thanks and acknowledgement to Henry Pollard, former Deputy Director of ISF Umpiring, for his many ideas and hard work.

This manual would not have been possible without the vision, hard work, dedication and love of umpiring of one man, Mr. Merle O. Butler. The ISF dedicates this manual to the memory of our dear friend Merle.

Bob Stanton
ISF Director of Umpires

SECTION 1

BEING AN UMPIRE

WHY BE AN UMPIRE

What kind of umpire do you want to be?

Why do you want to umpire? There are many reasons why people umpire:

- Financial
- Give back to the game
- Exercise authority
- Earn respect of players, coaches, fans, friend and colleagues
- Be on a national or international game as an official

One of the above reasons may be the main motivation or it may be something else. Each umpire has their own reason for umpiring however regardless of what that reason may be, all umpires can work to being the best umpire they can be and this manual is written to help you bring out the best in yourself and to assist you in attaining your goals.

When setting goals, ensure that they are attainable, are realistic and are measurable, i.e., you can tell when you are getting closer to attaining what you desire. Take your improvement in small steps, improve one thing and then go on to the next.

"Umpiring is the only job where a person must be perfect the first time, and THEN improve over the years!"

THIS MANUAL

This Manual has been prepared on an assumption that the umpire has a basic knowledge of the game of softball, including rule knowledge and an understanding of the signals and mechanics used.

This is only one minor part of the whole picture, when we are taking a total approach to officiating. The goals, the mechanics, the positioning, the rules and, most importantly, the ATTITUDE of the umpire, are all part of the total approach. No one part is the answer, just as not one source has all the answers – nor should we expect it.

The Manual is not complete, nor will it ever be, as there is always more to learn and to be added.

USE THE MANUAL AS IT WAS MEANT TO BE USED....which is only one (1) part of the total approach to becoming the best umpire that you can be.

Enjoy reading this Manual and remember, focus on YOUR VISION, and never lose sight of it.

THE EMPHASIS is for uniform signals and calls, so that Umpires will have a common base to work from. All umpires will then personalize their signals and calls from that common base.

SO YOU WANT TO BE AN UMPIRE

U	UNIFORMITY – maintain consistency
M	MOBILE – always HUSTLE and be in position
P	PRIDE – be professional in attitude and dress
I	INCONSPICUOUS – be confident, but not cocky
R	REVIEW – the rule book and this Manual for mechanics
E	EXCELLENCE – continually strive to the best you can be

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the I.S.F. Umpire Program is to improve the overall quality of umpiring throughout the world by:

- ❖ Identifying, observing, evaluating and training umpires for assignments to National, Regional and World Championships.
- ❖ Providing consistency in the interpretation of I.S.F. softball rules and umpiring mechanics.
- ❖ Promoting better communication between umpires, coaches and the administrators of I.S.F.
- ❖ Providing the best educational material available to umpires around the world to improve umpiring and the game itself.

PREREQUISITES TO GOOD UMPIRING

Every umpire is performing a service to their fellow umpires, the leagues that they serve and to the managers, players and spectators of Softball. In performing their duties, a competent umpire will take on a number of roles.

- Firstly, an umpire is the Brand or Image representing their league, State/Provincial body, National body, the umpiring fraternity, and the sport of Softball. From the moment umpires enter the ballpark, people will judge them, and all the organizations they represent based on their appearance and behavior. First impressions are always very important.
- Secondly, an umpire is a **Decision Maker**. At the very core of umpiring is the ability to observe the game and make timely decisions based on those observations and the rules of Softball. Your decisions must be made fairly, impartially, without emotion or bias and within the spirit of the rules.
- Thirdly, an umpire must be a **Communicator**. They must be able to talk and listen effectively to their partner(s), players and coaches. Umpires must also use proper and easily recognized signals.
- Finally, umpires are **team players**. They must support their partners by always being in position to help them and not submit any suggestions or opinions concerning the other umpires' decisions until requested by those umpires. As with any good team player, try to help your other team members. Lead by example.... Do it right!

To effectively carry out these roles, a good umpire must have a sound set of skills and attitudes as detailed throughout this manual.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR UMPIRES – DO'S AND DON'TS

DO:

- ❑ STUDY RULES REGULARLY
- ❑ TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR WORK
- ❑ ALWAYS STRIVE TO IMPROVE YOURSELF AND YOUR UMPIRING
- ❑ STAY IN SHAPE
- ❑ HUSTLE
- ❑ BE PLEASANT AND PROFESSIONAL AT ALL TIMES
- ❑ BE APPROACHABLE
- ❑ BE COURTEOUS, BUT FIRM (CONTROL THE GAME)
- ❑ BE ALERT IN THOUGHT AND ACTION
- ❑ BE TRUTHFUL
- ❑ BE PUNCTUAL
- ❑ BE NEAT AND WELL GROOMED AT ALL TIMES
- ❑ AVOID UNNECESSARY CONVERSATION WITH PLAYERS AND MANAGERS
- ❑ KNOW THE BALL PARK AND GROUND RULES
- ❑ FORGET THE BAD DAYS AND THE PLAYERS THAT GAVE YOU PROBLEMS. TOMMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY.
- ❑ KEEP THE PLATE , BASES AND THE PITCHING RUBBER CLEAN
- ❑ KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE BALL
- ❑ BE ON TOP OF THE PLAY
- ❑ STAY FOCUSED WHENEVER NECESSARY
- ❑ BE CLEAR, CRISP AND MEANINGFUL WHEN MAKING CALLS
- ❑ WORK WITH AND BACK-UP YOUR PARTNER(S)
- ❑ KEEP YOUR CAP, SHOES, BALL BAG AND UNIFORM ITEMS CLEAN
- ❑ KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THE PLAYERS OR COACHES AT ALL TIMES

- ❑ USE THE ENERGY NECESSARY TO MAKE A CALL BELIEVABLE, BUT NEVER EMBARRASS A PLAYER.

DO NOT:

- ❑ GO OUT ON THE FIELD WITH A CHIP ON YOUR SHOULDER
- ❑ BE OVERLY TECHNICAL. USE COMMON SENSE!
- ❑ CALL THE STRIKE OUT LOUD WHEN THE BATTER OBVIOUSLY SWINGS AT AND MISSES THE PITCH.
- ❑ MAKE EXCUSES TO ANYONE AT ANY TIME! IT WON'T HELP
- ❑ LOOK FOR TROUBLE. YOU'LL FIND PLENTY OF IT WITHOUT LOOKING.
- ❑ GET LAZY. NO ONE RESPECTS OR APPRECIATES AN UMPIRE WHO DOESN'T HUSTLE. YOU'RE FOOLING NO ONE BUT YOURSELF.
- ❑ SECOND GUESS YOUR PARTNER AT ANY TIME, ON OR OFF THE FIELD.
- ❑ CHEW TOBACCO OR GUM WHEN ON THE DIAMOND.
- ❑ TRY TO OUT-TALK THE PLAYERS, COACHES OR MANAGERS. LET THEM DO THE TALKING AND WHEN THEY HAVE SAID ENOUGH, MAKE THEM PLAY BALL.
- ❑ MAKE ANY OF YOUR CALLS TOO SOON. IT IS BETTER TO BE A LITTLE LATE IN MAKING THE CALL THAN TO HAVE TO CHANGE YOUR DECISION.
- ❑ HAVE TO HEAR EVERYTHING THAT IS SAID OR RESPOND TO THE SPECTATORS.
- ❑ TELL THE PLAYERS WHAT TO DO, OR HOW TO PLAY THEIR POSITION. YOUR JOB IS TO UMPIRE AND ATTEND TO THAT ONLY.
- ❑ PICK ON ANY PARTICULAR PLAYER. IT LEADS TO UMPIRE/PLAYER FRICTION. AVOID THOSE PLAYERS (AND MANAGERS) WHO ARE LOOKING FOR AN ARGUMENT.

A FEW WISE WORDS

"It's not the mistakes we make that count, it's how we learn from the mistakes we and others make."

"Knowledge is of two kinds...we know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it."

SECTION 2

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN ISF UMPIRE

I.S.F. UMPIRE CODE OF ETHICS

The Umpire Program of the I.S.F. places responsibility for ethical conduct in softball on the following:

- umpires
- team members
- administrators
- spectators
- the media
- educators
- parents
- sponsors.

The ISF Umpire is to act as an impartial arbitrator of softball competitions and carry out their duties with:

- accuracy
- consistency
- objectivity
- the highest sense of integrity.

The Umpire Program of the I.S.F. recognizes that to preserve and encourage confidence in the professionalism and integrity of umpiring, ethical behavior must be fostered by all umpires.

In conjunction with the Umpires "Code of Ethics," UMPIRES HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPECT THAT:

- Their health and safety are paramount.
- They are treated with courtesy, respect and openness.
- They are not appointed or recommended to a level of competition beyond their level competence.
- They have access to self-improvement opportunities.

ETHICS

The following Behavioral Ethics apply to ISF Umpires:

- 1) Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being regardless of age, gender, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
 - Refrain from any discriminatory practices on the basis of age, gender, ethnic origin, religion, or ability.
 - Cooperate and be professional in your association with your fellow officials on and off the field and do nothing to cause them embarrassment.
 - Refrain from negatively criticizing the on-field performance and conduct of any umpire.
- 2) Be professional in your appearance and manner and accept responsibility for all actions taken.
 - Display high standards in language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation.

- Display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved with softball (including athletes, coaches, officials, scorers, administrators, the media, parents, and spectators) and encourage other umpires to demonstrate the same qualities.
 - Be courteous, respectful and open to discussion and interaction.
 - Honor all assignments and report to the playing field at least 45 minutes prior to the scheduled game time.
 - Be prepared both physically and mentally.
 - Refrain from making any comments or committing any action that undermines the I.S.F. and its officers.
 - Do not smoke or chew tobacco on or in the vicinity of the playing field nor drink any alcohol beverages on the day of the game.
 - Refrain from the use of banned or illegal substances.
- 3) Refrain from any form of harassment.
 - This includes explicit, implicit, verbal and non-verbal harassment.
 - 4) Avoid any situation which may lead to a conflict of interest.
 - 5) Operate within the rules and spirit of softball.
 - Abide by and respect the regulations governing softball and sport generally and the organizations and individuals administering those regulations.
 - 6) Refrain from any form of personal abuse towards athletes.
 - This includes verbal, physical and emotional abuse.
 - 7) Place the safety and welfare of the participants above all else.
 - Ensure that equipment and facilities meet rule requirements and safety standards.
 - 8) Make a commitment to providing quality service to umpiring and the I.S.F., by seeking continual improvement of your umpiring knowledge and skill through study, performance, appraisal and regular updating of competencies.
 - Maintain and improve on umpiring skills.
 - Observe the work of other umpires so you may gain knowledge and new skills or successful mechanics.
 - Study the rules through rule books and case books diligently and ask questions when in doubt. Always remember, "no question is a stupid question."
 - 9) Be impartial.
 - Be fair and unbiased in your decisions, rendering them without regard to the score.
 - 10) Show concern and caution towards sick and/or injured athletes. Call the medical staff onto the field immediately.
 - 11) Encourage inclusively and access to all areas of umpiring.
 - Remember that while your work as an official is important, you must conduct yourself in such a way that spectator attention is directed to those playing the game and not at yourself.
 - 12) Be a positive role model for softball and umpiring, and always be aware that you are a representative of your country and the I.S.F. Umpire Program.
 - Personal conduct on the field, around the ballparks and at softball events and meetings should be above reproach.
 - Keep in mind that the game is more important than the wishes of any individual player or coach, or the ambitions of any individual umpire.

- Dress and maintain your appearance in a manner befitting the dignity and importance of the game and the I.S.F.
 - Be fair, but not overbearing; courteous, but not ingratiating; positive, but never rude; dignified, but never “cocky”; friendly, but not companionable; and calm, but ever alert.
- 13) World Championships:
- Attend Opening and Closing Ceremonies when requested.
 - Be a part of the umpire team on and off the field.
 - Follow international protocol where ever a championship may be held.
 - Be courteous to all host committee members, drivers, and sponsors at all times.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

ISF umpires must continuously seek self improvement by studying the game, the rules, and the accepted mechanics of umpiring.

Umpires have to keep up with the way the game is being played, what new strategies are being adopted, what new skill sets are being used and the tendencies of the players.

Umpires need to know the rules, the intent of the rules, the spirit in which they are to be enforced and the fairness to be adopted in the application of the rules.

Using accepted mechanics allow umpires to be in the best position possible and to communicate their decisions with clarity.

Umpiring is a combination of science and art; angles and distances and set positions are all science; signals however, while maintaining the basic elements can employ an individual artistic touch that allows an umpire’s personality to be displayed. Umpires are not meant to be robots.

Umpires must always put their best foot forward and present themselves as professional, courteous, approachable while also being a firm decision maker without displaying arrogance.

An umpire is part of the umpiring team and part of the game. Umpires must ensure that they:

- support their partners
- allow the game to be played safely and fairly
- not allow any player, coach or administrator to unfairly influence a game or any of its participants
- handle conflicts quickly and with dignity for all involved.

Everything an umpire does will reflect on himself, his partners, the game, and his Federation or organization. Always be aware that you represent more than yourself.

As an umpire you will make errors from time to time. This should not cause you to feel shame or to seek forgiveness. It is a human trait to err in judgment from time to time. We must learn from our mistakes and work harder to lessen them.

MENTAL PREPARATION AND GAME STRATEGY

Mental preparation is as important as physical preparation for a game. An umpire must understand the theory behind the rules and the mechanics. Games do not happen in a vacuum so rules cannot easily capture every situation. Knowing the intent and spirit of the rule can help when dealing with those gray areas.

Likewise with mechanics. Diagrams encourage us to assume that X marks the best spot where we should be. X is merely an indicator of where to be in an ideal situation. Ideal situations rarely happen so you must adapt to where the ball is, where the fielders are and where the runner might be. If you know the theory and keep the four elements in front of you, ball, defensive player, base and offensive player, you will be in good stead.

Before each game, visualize how you will umpire the game; prepare a strategy using your knowledge of the teams, players, level of play, past history, what is at stake (play off, National or World Championship) and who your partners are. Think about how you will handle certain situations like obstruction, interference, confrontation and close plays.

Clear your mind of personal problems, leave them behind. Forget about personal biases. If problems have occurred in the past between you, a player or coach, forget it and start with a fresh page.

Be prepared. Visualize yourself being the umpire you want to be. See yourself in the tough situation. See yourself taking charge, managing and resolving. See yourself hustling, getting in perfect position and making a good, crisp signal. When situations arise, you have "been there-done that" in your mind and you will know just how to act.

Always control the things you can control. Do not create your own distractions. If it is hot, begin hydrating a few hours before. Plan to eat when it is most comfortable for you. Do not allow being physically unprepared to destroy your mental preparation.

INTERACTION WITH THE WORLD AROUND YOU

Fellow umpires

Being a member of an umpiring crew is like being the member of a partnership. While you may not always agree or see eye to eye, you are in it together to obtain a desired outcome – a well officiated game. Some things you can do to ensure a working partnership are:

- keep the big picture in mind
- be respectful, treat others as you would want to be treated yourself
- set aside prejudices and biases
- work together, communicate and maintain a united front
- support one another.

Coaches

Umpires and coaches have a role to play in any game. Understanding how those roles interrelate can give you an appreciation of the coach's role and how you can better work together. Always make an effort to:

- forget any negative comments you may have heard about a coach
- bear in mind where the coach may be coming from, his job is to defend and motivate his players
- be professional and you will be treated professionally
- see the coach as a professional, he will do like wise
- use all your communications skills, be a good listener
- acknowledge the coach's efforts
- show empathy
- remain calm
- stay in charge, manage the situation
- keep conversations one on one

Players

The game needs umpires and players so they need to find a way to get along; some things you can do to get along with players:

- treat them with respect
- understand that, in most cases, they are driven to win
- be mindful of your comments – keep your comments general in nature
- acknowledge a good play
- acknowledge fair play and displays of sportsmanship
- let them start the conversations

Fans

Fans are there to cheer for and support their team. They will see things with their heart, not their eyes. If there are problems with the fans let the home team or tournament officials deal with it. Umpires cannot win at trying to manage fans.

Enter and leave the field as a crew, ignore comments from the fans and if amongst the fans do not make comments about the game.

Behavior

As an official you must behave in a professional manner both on and off the field. You are seen as a representative of the organization to which you belong. Dress and speak in an appropriate manner at all times.

Even if you are merely watching a game as a fan, it is important to realize that almost everyone in the park will know you are an official. Ensure that you do not comment on the work of the umpires doing the game. Most importantly do not make any comments on a play or call.

You set an example for others to follow. You may be the first official that someone sees at the park. Make a good, lasting first impression.

SECTION 3

UMPIRE TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

- A - Terms Used in Umpiring**
- B - Uniform and Equipment**
- C – Pre-game – Self, Partner and Coaches**
- D - Equipment Check**
- E - Forfeits, Protests and Ejections**
- F - Rain, Darkness, Grounds**
- G - Post Game – Partners and Self**

A. Terms

90-Degree Angle - Tag

This concept determines the umpire's location on tag plays. The umpire should be 90-degrees to the path of the runner into a base or the application of the tag on a play not involving a base from a location 3-3.5 meters (10-12 feet) away.

90-Degree Angle – Throw

This concept determines the umpire's location on force plays. The umpire should be 90-degrees to the path of the ball (throw) to a base from a location 5.5 meters (18 feet) away.

B1

The batter or batter-runner. The batter-runner may also be referred to as the BR.

Base Line

The imaginary straight line between home and first, first and second, second and third, and third and home.

Base Path

An imaginary straight line between the base and a runner (advancing or returning to the base), when a play is being made on the runner.

BR

A batter who has hit a fair ball and has not reached base or been put out.

BU

The base umpire. When more than two umpires work together, U1 is the first base umpire. U2 is the second base umpire, and U3 is the third base umpire.

Calling Depth

- A force play should be viewed from an approximate distance of 5.5 meters (18 feet), allowing the umpire to see the ball, runner, base and defender within his/her field of vision.
- A tag play should be viewed from an approximate distance of 3-3.5 meters (10-12 feet). There may be times when, because of the position of the player's body, the umpire may need to move closer or look over the top to clearly see the play.

Calling - Making the Call

While in the set position, the umpire should pick the ball up with the eyes and track the ball by turning the head with the ball.

On force plays, just prior to the thrown ball reaching the receiver, change your focus to the ball, fielder and runner, watching the three come together. Once you have made your decision on the play, rise from the set position and signal and verbalize your call, using appropriate emphasis and voice.

On tag plays, watch the thrown ball into the fielder's glove and follow the ball and glove to the area of the tag, picking up the runner in your field of vision as the fielder begins to move towards the area where the tag will happen. With the Four Essential Elements in front of you judge whether the tag was made prior to the runner touching the base. Rise and make the signal and verbal call, using the appropriate emphasis and voice. If required you must adjust your position to best see all the Four Essential Elements.

Calling Position

The subsequent movement or adjustment, usually one or two steps from the Primary Position to physically see the tag (or what needs to be seen dictated by the play) and to make an informed judgment. Remember on tag plays, never have (a) a fielder between you and the tag; (b) a runner between you and the tag, or (c) a base between you and the tag.

Clear the Catcher

The plate umpire will clear the catcher whenever a play follows a pitch e.g., passed ball or pop foul fly ball back to screen. To clear the catcher, step back with the foot away from the catcher's turn (with a right-handed batter and the catcher turning to the right, step back with your right foot; if the catcher turns left, step back with the left foot). The same is true with a left handed batter. This will increase the distance between your body and the catcher. When properly executed, the movement prevents contact between the plate umpire and the catcher and allows the umpire to move to observe the developing play. Do not remove your mask until you have cleared the catcher.

Dead-ball Signal

To indicate that time is out and the ball is no longer in play, an umpire will raise both hands above his/her head, arms extended, palms forward and call "Dead Ball!"

Fielders

The defensive players are routinely designated by their numerical scorekeeping identifying numbers: F1 is the pitcher, F2 is the catcher, F3 is the first baseman, F4 is the second baseman, F5 is the third baseman, F6 is the shortstop, F7 is the left fielder, F8 the center fielder, and F9 the right fielder.

First-base Line Extended

An imaginary line that extends the first-base fair/foul line into foul territory behind home plate for an unlimited distance. The plate umpire will assume a position on the first-base line extended in several instances including: to render fair/foul decisions on batted balls to the right of home plate; to observe action at first base as another runner scores (which he/she must also observe), or as a starting position on selected tag plays at home plate.

Hammer

The final position of the strike or out signal. It is holding the right arm up and away from the body with an angle of 90 degrees or greater, and the fist closed. The hammer is held long enough to convey the decision with conviction. The arm is brought down prior to moving the feet.

Holding Position

A position in foul territory, halfway between home plate and 3rd base or home plate and 1st base, 3.5-4.5 meters (12-15 feet) off the foul line. Umpires use the holding position while watching the play develop to determine which base they are required to cover.

Hustle

Brisk, purposeful and appropriate movement at all times during a game.

Overhand Out

One of the "sell" calls referred to later, with the umpire using emphasis to make the call by using a similar movement as a ball player throwing a ball. The right arm comes up and over as the umpire steps towards the play and ends up with the feet square to the play and the right arm ending at the waist. Some umpires use a "punch" to emphasize their "sell" call.

Overthrow

A thrown ball that goes beyond its intended target. The ball is in play unless it enters dead ball territory or is blocked.

Primary Position

The initial location assumed by an umpire to rule on a play as a runner approaches a base or as a play develops. The umpire's line of vision forms a 90 degree angle perpendicular to:

- 1) The path of the runner on a tag play into a base.
- 2) The application of the tag on a tag play not involving a base.
- 3) The path of the flight of the ball on force plays.

Ready Position:

The ready position is the body position a base umpire takes immediately prior to the pitcher bringing his hands together for the pause and up until the pitch is released.

As the pitcher assumes the pause position, (hands together), the umpire should take the ready position by placing the feet at a comfortable distance apart, (normally shoulder width) staying relaxed but still. As the pitcher releases the pitch, soften the knees (slightly bend), adjust body weight to the balls of the feet and draw the hands in, close to the body at belt level.

If the ball is hit, push off the ball of the outer foot and move to the appropriate position for a possible play. If the ball is not hit, relax until the start of the next pitch but always be aware of pick off plays, passed balls, etc that may require the umpire to move to a position to call a play.

Secondary Position

The subsequent location assumed by the umpire after the initial play, or after a runner has obtained a base.

Sell call

A movement similar or identical to an umpire's basic signal, but delivered with added flair or emphasis in an effort to convince all players, coaches, and fans in attendance of the importance and/or correctness of the umpire's decision.

Set Position on the Bases

This is the position an base umpire should take, prior to making a call on a play. This position is very similar to the ready position.

On a force play, the umpire moves to a proper position to see the play; 5.5 (18 feet) back, 90 degrees to the throw; on plays at 1st base, do not go beyond 45 degrees to the base, and normally take two or three steps into fair territory which will give a 22.5 degree angle. Once at this position the umpire should go into the set position which mimics the ready position, feet spread apart (normally shoulder width) knees soften and slightly bent with hands drawn into the body at belt level.

On a tag play, the umpire moves to a proper position to see the play, 3-3.5 meters (10-12 feet) back and not in line with the throw, 90 degrees to the runner's base path and just short of the leading edge of the base. Once at this position the umpire should go into the set position which mimics the ready position, feet spread apart (normally shoulder width) knees soften and slightly bent, and hands drawn into the body at belt level.

On a pick off (throw back) at 3rd base, U3 moves to a position, 3-3.5 meters (10-12 feet) back and on a 45 degree or less line through 3rd base in foul territory so that the ball, base, defensive player and returning runner player (the Four Essential Elements) are in front of the umpire.

Set Position at the Plate

Bend at the knees, not the waist. The umpire's eyes should be at the top of the strike zone, allowing the umpire to look down through the zone with an unobstructed view of the entire zone. The hands may be in front of and in close to the body, but not supporting the body. The plate umpire must be completely set when the pitch is released and remain motionless as the pitch is delivered. See "stance" – the position the plate umpire begins with prior to dropping to the "set position." The set position must be mirrored for both right and left handed batters. The position must be balanced and comfortable, but not relaxed.

Slot

The area between the catcher and the batter when the batter is in his/her natural stance and the catcher is in his/her normal crouched position. For right-handed batters, the umpire's right eye is on a line with the left edge of the plate. For left-handed batters, the umpire's left eye is on a line with the right edge of the plate.

Square to the Bag

When set for a play at any base, your head, shoulders and feet should be in line and perpendicular to a line from your location to the base. By taking a position square to the bag, you will avoid a tendency to turn away from the play before it is complete. When using the "Overhand Out" sell call, your final position should be "Square to the Bag" as well.

Stance

The position the plate umpire establishes behind the catcher. A heel/toe stance is recommended. The legs are shoulder width or wider. The shoulders and body are relatively square to the plate, with the pelvic area aligned with a spot between the top middle and the outside corner of the plate. For the heel/toe, the slot foot should be in the slot pointing directly at the pitching plate and in line with or slightly in front of an imaginary line extended from the catcher's heels. The non-slot foot is behind the catcher in line with or slightly in front of an imaginary line extending from the heel of the slot foot. This foot may angle up to 45 degrees.

Starting Positions – Base Umpires – 4 Umpire System

With no runners on, U1 and U3 should be 5.5 meters (18 feet) behind the base, 15 cm (6 inches) off the line (measured from the outside of the foot closest to the foul line.) With no runner on, U2 should be 5.5 meters (18 feet) back, on the 1st base side, just short of the leading edge.

With runners on, the U1 and U3 should be 3.5-4.5 meters (12-15 feet) behind the base, 15 cm (6 inches) off the foul line. Exception: With a runner on 3rd, U3 should be off the foul line to have a clear vision of the entire plate area – up to 2 meters (6 feet) off the line. The umpire must not have his vision to home plate blocked by the runner so he is able to make judgments on check swings when requested by the plate umpire. U2 should be 3.5-4.5 meters (12-15 feet) back, on the 1st base side, just short of the leading edge.

Starting Position

Also called the “ready” position. The location of the umpire as the ball is ready for play prior to the next pitch. The umpire should be stopped and have shifted his/her weight to the balls of their feet at the time of release.

Subsequent Play

The action that follows the defensive team’s first attempt to retire a runner, but is not reasonably predictable. For example, when there is a squeeze bunt and collision at the plate, the tag play at home is the initial play; if after the play at home B1 advances toward second, the ensuing play at second is a subsequent play. (See “secondary play”)

Timing on Bases

Reading the play, choosing a primary position, allowing the play to be completed (adjusting if needed), locating the ball, making a decision and only then signaling the decision. The signal is held long enough to communicate complete understanding and strength of the message.

Timing at the Plate

Take the time to accurately assess the merits of each pitch by ensuring the ball has completely passed over the plate and into the catcher’s glove before making a decision. Making the decision first, and then making the call. The verbal call is in the down position and signal is in the “up” position. The signal should be given immediately after the verbal call. The hammer is strong with an angle of 90 degrees or greater and the signal is held long enough to convey the decision with conviction. The feet do not move until the signal is complete.

Tracking

Following the ball with your nose. Letting the ball bring you to the play. See “bases” and “plate” below.

Tracking the ball on the Bases

Observe the fielder release the ball. Track the flight of the ball until just before it reaches the targeted receiver, then switch focus to the receiver’s glove and follow the ball into the glove.

Tracking the ball at the Plate

Observe the entire flight of a pitch with only slight head movement. Head movement is so the umpire will see the ball. It is not a signal of pitch location. See the release of the pitch, track it to just in front of the plate, switch focus to the batter’s zone, then see the ball into the catcher’s glove. This will allow you to make your decision when it crosses the plate and assist on outside pitches by seeing where the catcher’s glove is located when the ball is caught. Don’t lose the ball, but follow it into the glove with your nose.

Umpires

PU is the plate umpire. BU is the base umpire. When more than two umpires work together, U1 is the first base umpire, U2 is the second base umpire, in the 4-umpire system and U3 is the third base umpire.

B – Uniform and Appearance

You only get one chance to make a first impression. Your appearance will make a lasting impression on those who see you. It will make a statement about who you are and what you are about.

If you wear your umpire uniform properly, that is, your uniform is:

- Proper shirt – powder blue color with insignia
- Pants – navy blue - pressed and creased
- Shoes – shined
- All clothing should be clean and properly worn
- Hat should be neat and fit properly

If your first impression is that of a person who cares about yourself and what you are doing you will also send the following messages:

- I am a professional
- I am here because I want to be
- I care about my umpiring
- I care about the game, the players and the coaches

These are strong messages to send to players, coaches and fans alike. If you look the part, they will give you the benefit of the doubt and assume that you are knowledgeable and able to umpire.

Wearing the uniform proudly and correctly makes you a member of the large umpire family. We never add to our uniform so as to call attention to ourselves. The umpire uniform is our business suit.

The I.S.F. uniform is:

- Powder blue, short-sleeve pull over shirt.
- Navy blue slacks.
- All black shoes – clean and shined, not patent leather. Manufacturer's logo is permitted.
- Black socks.
- Plain Navy cap
- Plain all black belt with a plain silver buckle – 1 to 1 ½ inch, not patent leather.
- Plain navy blue jacket, with no colored trim. Patches only at the local level..
- All white t-shirt (crew or v neck) is optional under the uniform shirt.

The umpiring crew shall be dressed alike except the plate umpire does not have to wear a jacket even if the base umpires do. If one base umpire wears a jacket, all should.

Equipment

- Black mask and harness. Black or tan pads. Black throat protector if not built into the mask. Avoid visible advertising if possible.
- Plate umpires can wear a black mask/helmet combination, which resembles a hockey mask.
- Ball/strike indicator – must be used on the plate and on the bases.
- Brush – every umpire must carry one.
- Navy blue ball bag to match pants. Plate umpires only and if preferred, two may be worn.
- Pen or pencil
- Bat ring
- Lineup holder
- Shin guards – exposed parts must be navy or black.
- Chest protector – exposed parts navy or black with as little advertising as possible.
- Sunglasses – must have smoke lens or darker and all black frames. No mirror lens allowed. If a strap is used, it must be black and the kind that holds the glasses tight to the head, not the kind that holds the glasses when they are not being worn. Sunglasses are to be removed when discussions are held with coaches or players. Sunglasses should never be worn on top of the cap or hooked into the belt. If they are not needed, remove the sunglasses from the field of play completely.

Umpires must not wear exposed jewelry (with the exception of Medical Alert Bracelets and/or necklaces).

While the umpiring uniform for some leagues or tournaments may differ from that described here, the pride with which it is worn and the standard of its appearance should never change.

C - Umpire Conditioning

All umpires should be physically fit at the start of each season and then make certain that they keep themselves in good condition.

Umpires must be able to keep pace with the players and the game.

Physical conditioning is a prime requisite of umpiring and requires a certain amount of discipline. Pre-season conditioning should include exercises designed to strengthen the legs, such as jogging, running in place, etc. Conditioning during the season itself boils down to a matter of weight control and water level balance. Fluids must be replaced during and between games to prevent even the best umpires from dehydrating during the season.

Keep the game moving. Good players usually hustle. Good umpires always hustle. After a rotation on a play, back to the next starting position; to the pitching plate to sweep it off after the third out of an inning; back to the starting positions after the team has completed warming up between innings; when running to the outfield on a fly ball, run back into the infield as well. These are just a few of the "hustle" situations, which are observed by the players and coaches. Fans gain more respect of your work when this hustle is demonstrated. YOU MUST LEAD BY EXAMPLE! And it all begins with conditioning.

D - Pre-Game – Self, Partner and Coaches

Self:

Prior to your game you should:

- Clear your mind of all distractions
- Make sure you have looked after any minor injuries
- Focus on the game ahead

Partner(s):

- Review coverage
- Review rotations
- Review communications
- Discuss how to handle unusual situations
- Tags ups
- Ejections

After the pre-game with your partners, you should enter the field 20 minutes prior to the start of the game. Your duties here include:

- Check bats, helmets and other equipment for legality and safety
- Check field for holes in the fencing, etc,
- Give the field a good look to see if anything looks out of place, base distances, pitching distance, etc.
- Infields - 15 minutes before – home team; 10 minutes before visiting team; 5 minutes before Plate meeting with coaches.

Plate meeting with Coaches:

- Plate umpire introduces himself/herself and crew
- Allow coaches to introduce themselves
- Go over ground rules
- Inspect line ups, ask if any changes
- Make line-ups official

E – Equipment Check

Coaches are responsible for ensuring that the equipment used in competition meets the prescribed I.S.F. standards of safety and legality. Coaches are also responsible for ensuring that their players are legally equipped and properly attired. Umpires should check equipment to be used in the game for noticeable defects and anything obviously illegal or unsafe.

Bats should be checked for any dents (metal bats) or any obvious damage as well as weight, length, grip, knob and required certification provided by the I.S.F. To determine whether a bat with dents (or a flat spot) is legal, a bat ring must slide over the barrel without significant force. Only ISF approved attachments to a bat are allowed in the on-deck circle.

Helmets must have double earflaps, be all the same color as the team uniform, and should be checked for cracks and missing padding. Colors of helmets may be mixed provided they are the team colors, e.g. there can be a blue or white helmet as long as both colors are team colors.

F – Forfeits, Protests, and Ejections

Forfeits

A forfeited game shall be declared in favor of the team not at fault in the following cases (Rule 5,

Section 3-f[1-9]:

- If a team is on site but refuses to begin a game for which it is scheduled or assigned within five minutes after the umpire has called "Play Ball".
- If, after the game has begun, one side refuses to continue to play, unless the game has been suspended or terminated by the umpire.
- If, after play has been suspended by the umpire, one side fails to resume play within two minutes after the umpire has called "Play Ball."
- A team employs tactics obviously designed to delay or shorten the game.
- If, after a warning by the umpire, any one of the rules of the game is willfully violated.
- If the order for the removal of a player or any team personnel authorized to sit on the bench is not obeyed in one minute.
- If, because of the removal of a player(s) from the game by the umpire or for any cause, there are less than 9 (FP Only), 10 (FP with a DP), 10 (SP Only) or 11 (SP with an EP) on either team.
- If a declared "Ineligible Player" re-enters the game and one pitch has been thrown.
- If an ejected player/coach/manager is discovered participating in the game again.

An incident report should be filed immediately with the local league, local tournament director, or world and/or regional championships if a forfeit is declared.

Protests

Protests may involve:

- Participation of an ineligible player or coach
- The failure to apply the correct rule to a situation
- The failure to impose the correct effect for a given situation
- Misapplication of a playing rule
- A combination of judgment and the misapplication of a playing rule.

Protests may not involve:

- Judgment only.

If the game is continued under protest:

- The plate umpire must announce to the opposing coach, official scorer and the public address announcer that the game will be resumed under protest.
- The plate umpire must note and record the relevant information including:
 - 1) The opponents, date, time and place of the game.
 - 2) The names of the umpires.
 - 3) The rule and section of the official rules or a copy of the ground rule under which the protest is made.
 - 4) The essential facts, details and conditions pertinent to the protested decision.

If the protest is about participation of an ineligible player or coach, accept the protest and resume the game after doing the above items. Make no effort to settle this protest. Ineligible player protests must be handled by the League or Tournament Director.

Ejections

The following general principles should be considered when deciding whether to eject a player or coach from a game:

- Use of profanity specifically directed at an umpire or vulgar personal insults, including accusations of bias or cheating.
- Deliberate physical contact with an umpire or towards another player.
- Refusal to stop arguing and further delaying the game after the umpire has provided a player or coach adequate opportunity to make his/her point. The umpire should warn the player or coach that he/she has been heard and instruct the coach to return to their position or the dugout, or they will be ejected.
- Arguing balls and strikes after being warned.
- Use of gestures (e.g. jumping up and down, putting hand around neck resembling a choking motion, kicking dirt, or violently waving arms) while arguing with an umpire.
- Throwing uniform items, a towel, a cap or other items from the dugout or while arguing.

Exercise patience and common sense in the ejection of players. Do not eject a player except for good cause. Ejection of players for trivial offenses is indefensible and reflects badly upon the umpire. Never lose your temper and eject out of anger. Only eject with the dignity of knowing the ejection was deserved.

Once you decide to eject, do it. If you delay you will look indecisive or unsure. Do not look to others to help you with the removal of the player or coach from the game. If the ejection is for a rule violation, do not embarrass the player or coach. If the ejection is for some serious action then ensure that you are being seen to have handled the situation. Handling ejections properly will gain you respect.

Once an ejection occurs, it is time for your partners to enter the situation to help defuse the reaction to the ejection. Your partners should ensure that the ejected player or coach leaves the playing field and then the dugout as quickly as possible. Partners need to be alert to the situation and be ready to help. Once you have ejected, walk away and let your partners handle it.

Do not cause confusion between an ejection (leave the playing field) and removal of a player due to a rule violation (illegal player, illegal re-entry, etc) for on a removal, the player can remain in the dugout and even coach from the coach's box.

G – Rain, Darkness, Grounds

The calling of a game for rain or darkness is a judgment call. There is always pressure to allow the game to continue but the safety of the players, fans and umpires is the governing factor. The plate umpire should check with his/her partners. In World Championships, the decision to suspend a game will rest with the Championship UIC.

H - Lightning

When lightning occurs, the 30-30 rule of thumb will be used to determine the suspension and resumption of play. If lightning is seen and thunder is heard within 30 seconds, the game should be suspended. Look for direction from the Tournament or World Championship UIC. All players should be asked to leave the playing area including metal dugouts.

A game suspended for lightning should not resume until a minimum of 30 minutes has elapsed from the last sighting of lightning. Administrators with knowledge of local weather conditions and habits may give advice on the time to wait before a game is resumed.

Check with the local host committee, just thunder itself may be an indication that a storm is too near to continue play.

I – Post Game – Partner(s) and Self

At the conclusion of the game:

- Return the game balls to the ball return or roll them to the home team dugout.
- Be alert for any possible appeals or protests that could still be legally made.
- Briskly walk off the field with your partners by the most convenient route to the umpire's dressing area.
- Avoid mingling or moving through players.

If a hotly contested game, take the exit route of least resistance. If you see a problem arising, go in another direction. Go directly to your change area before discussing the game. Discuss:

- Unusual plays
- Missed rotations
- Confusing rule interpretations
- Areas for improvement

Do a self evaluation after each game. You are the best to know what you could have done better, where you need to improve and what you are doing right. Are you still working toward your goals?

SECTION 4

SIGNALS

Communication is essential to umpiring and the first line of communication is the umpire's signals. These signs enable one umpire to let a fellow umpire know the game situation on a specific play. These decisions are also relayed to the players, coaches, and spectators by their usage.

You must have good signals to be a good umpire. Every signal initiates from a set or ready position. The feet are planted in a solid, wide base at least shoulder width apart. In order for a signal to convey its message, it must be seen. The first move before giving any signal is, without moving your feet, to come to a full standing position. Nearly all signals are given up or away from the body for the express purpose of being seen

Once a signal is seen, everyone who sees it must understand what it means. Signals must always be informative, precise, structured and meaningful. They are designed to convey strength, confidence and authority. The manner in which a signal is given determines, at least to a degree, its acceptance by players, coaches and spectators. Any movement while giving a signal is always forward toward the play. The signal is held long enough to convey conviction, then the arms and hands are brought back into the body, thus completing the signal, before moving to the next position.

Signals should not be used unnecessarily. Poor signals are confusing. Do not draw attention to yourself by overusing or needlessly using any signal. It is of the utmost importance that we use the correct signal and that it is done properly. Equally important is that we give the signal the correct amount of emphasis in relation to the play being called.

Do not echo a partner's call (except for illegal pitches or foul balls with runners on) If there is no play, a call or signal is not needed. Some examples of when a signal is not needed are (but not limited to):

- The ball clearly going over the fielder's head, or bouncing in front of him/her.
 - A pitch is fouled directly back to the backstop or fouled over the backstop, or over the sides of the backstop.
 - The ball is overthrown or completely missed by the intended receiver.
 - A runner obtains a base or home before the ball arrives.
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A - SIGNALS

OUT

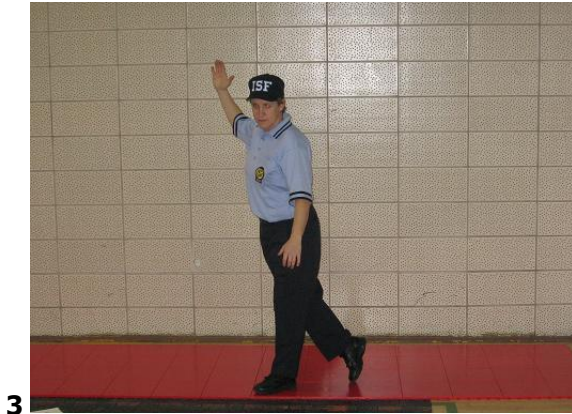
From a standing position with feet shoulder width apart, pull the left hand/arm into the midsection of the body. Extend the right arm straight up with the palm of the hand facing the ear. Bring the right forearm slightly forward while clenching it into a fist (this is the Hammer). The right upper arm and forearm should be at a 90 degree angle or greater. Verbally call "Out". Bring the right arm back into the body before moving the feet or moving to the next position.



1

OVERHAND OUT

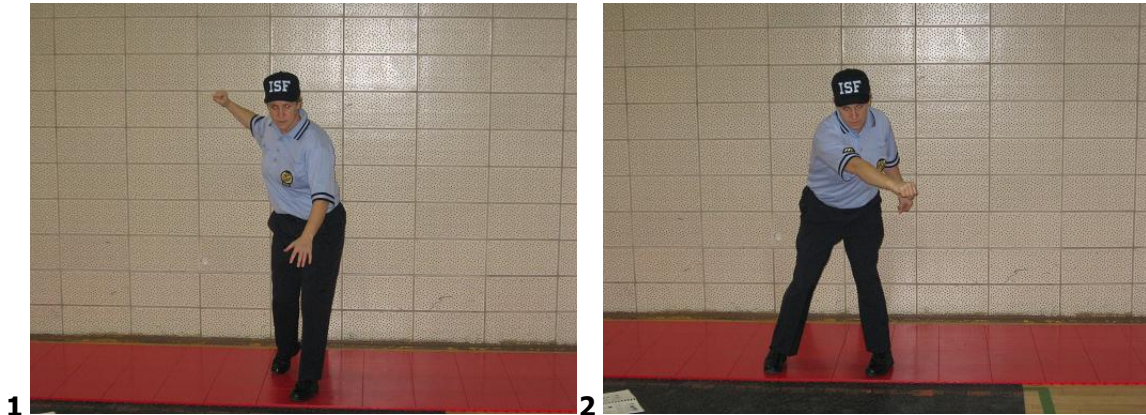
With feet at least shoulder width apart, step toward the play with the left foot. Bring the right foot over and behind the left foot while raising the right arm high in the air. Plant the right foot and step forward again with the left foot while bringing the right arm over the top of the head in a throwing motion with a closed fist. Just as the throwing motion is completed, bring the right foot forward, in line with the left foot and end in a set position. A verbal call of "Out" (usually drawn out – "ouutt") accompanies the signal usually starting when the arm is directly overhead and finishing with the thrown fist.



PUNCH OUT

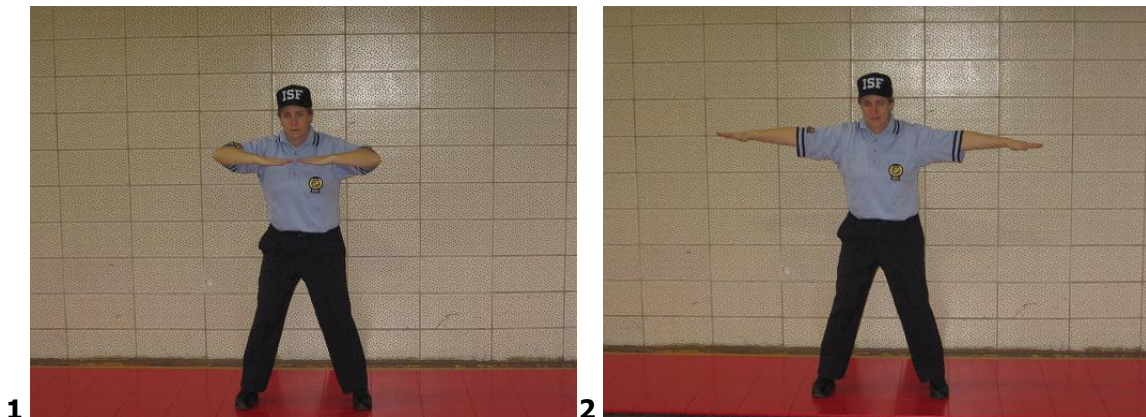
Use this signal as a sell out when you are too close to the play to do a full overhand out. It can also be used if a play warrants more than a routine out but less than a full overhand out.

From a standing position with feet shoulder width apart, step back with the right foot and punch forward with the right arm at about shoulder height. The hand is in a fist. The technique brings you no closer to the play than when you started. The initial stepping back is overshadowed and compensated for by the strength and forward thrust of the punch.



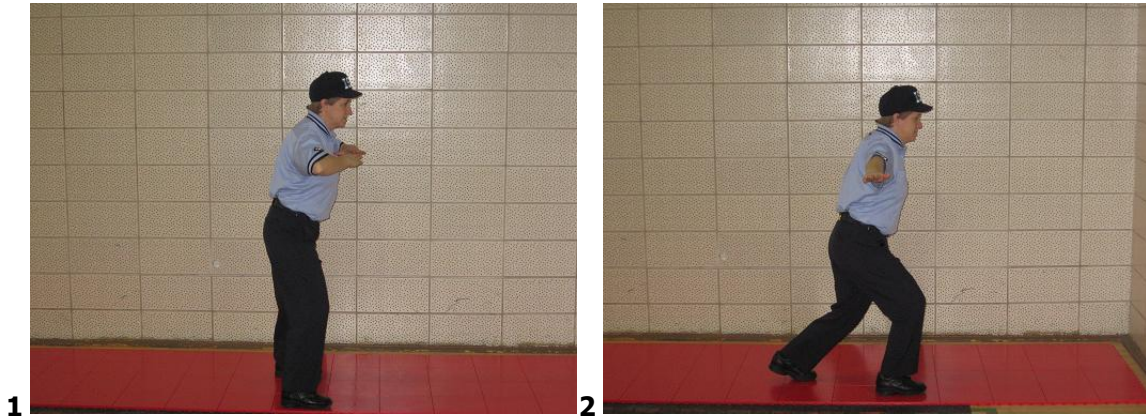
SAFE – NO CATCH – NO TAG – NO INFRACTION – TRAPPED BALL

From a standing position with feet shoulder width apart, bring both arms into the chest at shoulder level with the palms of the hands facing down. Extend both arms straight out horizontally with the palms down. Do not have your hands in fists. Verbally call "Safe", "No Catch", or "No Tag". Bring both arms back into the body (similar to a Ready Set position) before moving the feet or moving to the next position.



SELL SAFE

From a standing position with feet shoulder width apart, bring both arms into the chest at shoulder level, parallel to the ground, with the palms of the hands facing down. Take a step toward the play with the left foot while extending both arms straight out horizontally with the palms down. Loudly call "Safe". Complete the signal by bringing the right foot forward on a line with the left foot. Bring both arms back in the body (similar to a Ready Set position) before moving the feet or moving to the next position.



DEAD BALL – FOUL BALL – NO PITCH

From a standing position with feet shoulder width apart, raise both arms straight up with palms forward. Arms should be at about a 35 to 40 degree angle from the body. Verbally call: "Dead Ball", "Foul Ball", or "No Pitch". If the ball is close to the line, the feet should be straddling the line. When the plate umpire signals "No Pitch", the signal may be accompanied by movement to the open side of the plate for better visibility.



TIME

From a standing position with feet shoulder width apart, raise both arms straight up with palms forward. Arms should be at about a 25 to 30 degree angle from the body. Verbally call: "Time".

**1**

FAIR BALL

From a standing position with feet shoulder width apart, extend the arm closest to the field horizontally at shoulder height and point, with either open hand palm forward, to fair ground. Do not make a verbal call. If the ball is close to the line, the feet should be straddling the line and use a pumping motion with the arm closes to the line.

**1**

FAIR/FOUL INDICATOR

The Fair/Foul Indicator signal is permissible provided it is subtle.

On any fly ball close to the foul line the umpire should straddle the line, feet shoulder width apart, and, depending on the resulting action rule the ball fair, four, or an out.

Use A, B or C to make the appropriate call:



DELAYED DEAD BALL

Extend the left arm straight out at shoulder height, parallel to the ground. The hand is in a fist with the fingers of the fist facing forward.

Display the signal continuously while the runner is between the bases where the obstruction occurred unless a rundown develops.



1

INFIELD FLY

Fully extend the right arm above the head with the hand in a clenched fist. Verbalize: "Infield fly – the batter is out". If the ball is close to a line say: "Infield fly – the batter is out, if fair".

Either the plate or base umpire may make this call. Once the plate umpire makes the call, it should be echoed by the bases umpires using the same signal but verbalizing only: "Infield fly".

If the plate umpire does not make the call (forgets or is not certain of the call) and a base umpire, after eye contact communication with the plate umpire, is certain the ball is an infield fly; the base umpire may make the call.



1

POINT

The right or left arm extended straight out at the play or player. All fingers should be extended on the hand. The other arm should be under control in close to the body.

Use the Point to indicate an abnormality in a play (e.g. a tag, a missed tag, a pulled foot) or to reference a player who committed some act. This signal is followed by another signal, usually 'out' or 'safe'. The Point signal must be finished (bring the arm into the body) before another signal is started.



HOME RUN

Fully extend the right or left arm above the head with the index finger pointed skyward and make a clockwise circle motion with the hand and arm.



DOUBLE

Fully extend the right arm above the head with the index and middle finger showing on the hand. Do not circle the arm.



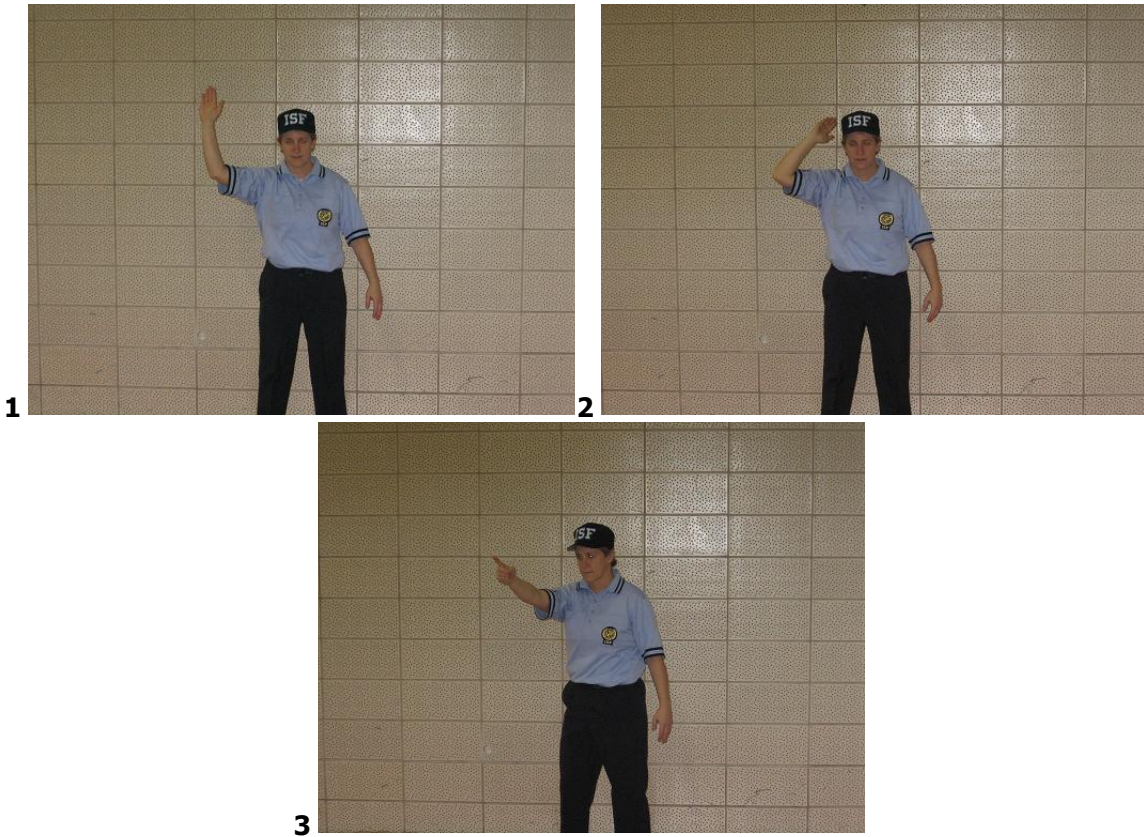
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EJECTION

It is imperative when making this signal that no aggressive move or gesture, real or perceived, is made toward the person being ejected. The signal should be moderately animated after increasing the physical distance between the umpire and the ejected person as needed. This signal does not have to be exact, but it must be clearly understood (that someone has been ejected) and should not be overly demonstrative. Two options are offered:

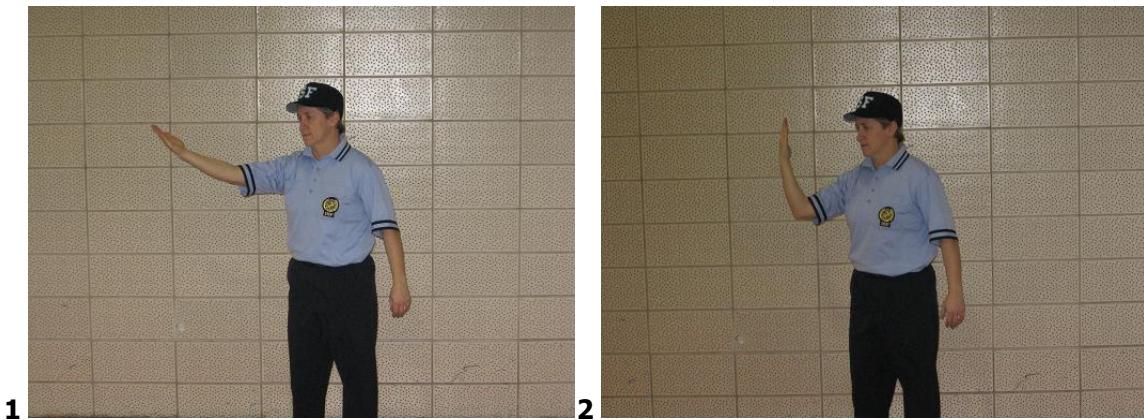


While facing the person to be ejected, step back with the right foot (this opens the body and will allow it to turn/open to your right as you make the arm signal). Bring the right arm with the index finger extended, up, across the body and point skyward to your left. Your arm should be at a 45 degree angle to your body. You will be facing away from the ejected person now and the right side of your body will be facing him/her.



PLAY BALL

Any of a variety of hand motions used by the plate umpire to indicate the ball is in play. With arm extended toward the pitcher, the umpire may use a beckoning motion with an open hand, a pointing motion with an open hand or a pointing motion with one or two fingers extended. The signal may be accompanied with the verbal call: "Play ball!" The verbal call may be used without any signal.



DO NOT PITCH

Either arm of the plate umpire extended straight out directly at the pitcher with the hand open and the palm of the hand facing the pitcher. Using the hand opposite the batter gives this signal better visibility.



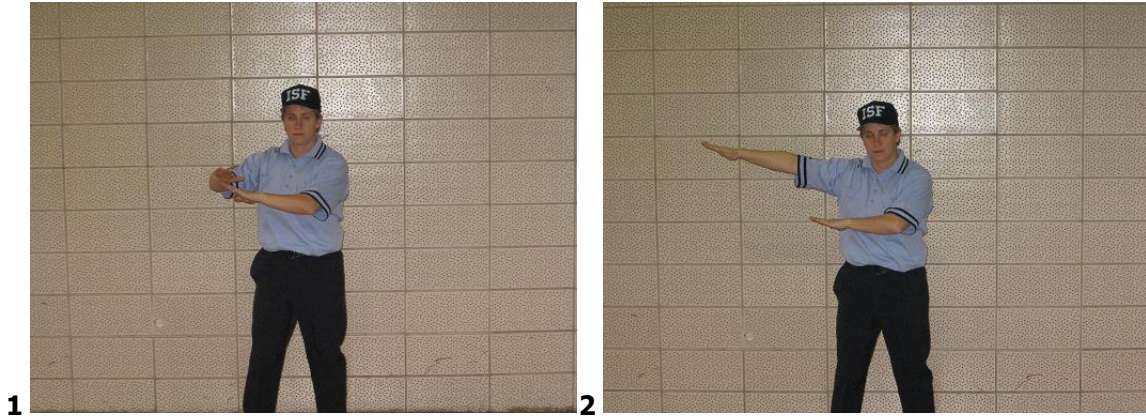
STRIKE

The verbal call of "Strike" is made in the down/set position. The signal is made in the "up" or "going to the up" position. The feet do not move during the signal. The left hand/arm is pulled into the midsection of the body. The right arm is 1) extended straight up with the palm of the hand facing the ear then followed by bringing the right forearm slightly forward while clenching it into a fist (this is the Hammer), 2) extended up and forward as the hand closes in a fist. In either style, the right upper arm and forearm should be at a 90 degree angle or greater. The signal is held long enough to convey the decision with conviction. The signal is finished by bringing the right arm back into the body before stepping back or moving the feet.



FOUL TIP

This is an optional signal. It may be used every time the ball is a foul tip or used only at times when the ball being a tip is not completely obvious. Bring the left hand in front of your body, mid-chest or higher, with the palm or back of the hand facing you. With an upward motion, brush the fingers of the left hand with the fingers of the right hand. This signal is always followed by a strike signal.



COUNT

Raise both arms up and in front of the body. Each arm/hand should be seen peripherally when the umpire is looking at the pitcher. Balls are shown with the fingers of the left hand. Strikes are shown with the fingers of the right hand. Consecutive fingers should be used in displaying the count. A verbal call may accompany the signal and, if used, should be as follows: "2 and 2" or "22". The count is given to the pitcher and held long enough for any other player to see it. The hands should be turned to increase visibility.





B – Umpire-to-Umpire Signals

Umpire to umpire signals are exactly that. umpire to umpire. There is a need for umpires to communicate amongst themselves and this can be done at times verbally and at other times by the use of signals. While these signals are only intended for umpires, there is no need to try and hide them or keep them so subtle that umpires will miss them.

Because of this difference, unlike most signals that are given up and away from the body, umpire-to-umpire signals are given lower and closer into the body.

Like all signals, these signals are vital to good communication within the crew. These signals should be precise, dignified and used consistently. To enhance visibility and recognition the signals should always be given against a contrasting background such as the shirt or pant leg.

INFIELD FLY SITUATION ON

The right hand, palm open, on the left chest indicates the infield fly situation is in effect.

The infield fly signal should be initiated by the plate umpire just prior to the batter stepping in the box. Each base umpire should acknowledge, to the plate umpire, by returning the same signal. The signal should be given before every batter when an infield fly situation is possible.



INFIELD FLY SITUATION OFF

The right hand used in wiping motion from the left elbow to the left wrist indicates the infield fly situation is no longer in effect.



HOW MANY OUTS

To verify or determine how many outs there are, the umpire looks to a partner and clenches the right fist against the right thigh.

There is nothing wrong with verbalizing the request: "Partner, how many outs do you have?" This, however, draws attention to the umpire and, if it is not necessary, umpires should avoid drawing attention to themselves. If such a request needs to be made more than once during a game, it gives the impression that the umpire is not concentrating.



1

HOW MANY OUTS? – RESPONSE

The responding umpire should indicate the number of outs by putting the appropriate number of fingers against the right thigh.



1

WHAT'S THE COUNT?

To request the count from a partner, place both opened hands against the chest.

There is nothing wrong with verbalizing the request: "Partner, what count do you have?" This, however, draws attention to the umpire and, if it is not necessary, umpires should avoid drawing attention to themselves. Also, if the count is being lost on a regular basis, it gives the impression that the umpire is not concentrating.



1

WHAT'S THE COUNT? – RESPONSE

The responding umpire should indicate the correct count by the fingers on the chest.



1

Section 5

HANDLING EVERY GAME SITUATIONS

- A – Appeal Plays
- B – Catch
- C – Checked Swings
- D – Conferences
- E – Dead Ball and Dead Ball Situations at the Plate
- F – Illegal Pitch
- G – Infield Fly
- H – Intentional Walk (World Championship/Olympics)
- I – Interference, Obstruction, Collisions
- J – International Tie-Breaker
- K – The Pitching Circle
- L - Differences between Fast Pitch and Slow Pitch

A – Appeal Plays

Appeal plays are plays on which an umpire may not make a decision unless requested to do so by a player or coach. Appeals may be made while the ball is alive or dead.

Appeal plays are:

- Missing a base
- Leaving a base too soon on a caught ball
- Batting out-of-order
- Attempting to advance to second base after a turn at first base
- Illegal substitution
- Use of unannounced players under the replacement player rule
- Illegal re-entry
- Use of unannounced players under the Designated player rule
- base runners switching base they occupied bases following a conference or time out..

Live ball appeals:

- must be made on runners attempting second base after passing first base.
- can be made on a missed base or leaving too soon on a caught fly ball.
- are made by tagging the runner attempting to go to second base. The runner or base may be tagged on a missed base or leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball.

Runners may attempt to advance during a live ball appeal and if the appeal is abandoned to make a play on another runner, the appeal may still be made after the play.

Dead ball appeals:

- Only allowed after all play has ceased and time is granted.
- Players may ask for time to make an appeal
- May be given verbally or with ball.
- If to the wrong umpire, refer player to the correct umpire by indicating the umpire and saying their name – “Susan, they are appealing number 8 missing second base”.

All appeals must be made before the next pitch and before all fielders have left fair territory or in the case of the catcher, the catcher has left the catching position. Any fielder may make an appeal, provided they are in the infield when doing so.

Fourth out appeals are allowed in cases where the third out is obtained by playing action or a previous appeal and a successful fourth out appeal would nullify a run.

B – Catch

To be considered a legal catch, the defensive player must have control of the ball in either hand and control of his/her body. There is no time limit, however control of the ball and the body must be established to the umpire's satisfaction.

If the fielder drops the ball while transferring the ball from the glove to the hand for a throw, it is still considered a legal catch provided all the elements of a legal catch were established before the transfer began.

To be ruled a catch, a fielder must have secure possession of the ball before stepping or falling into dead ball territory. A fielder may be stepping on the dead ball line or in the air and make a legal catch, but no foot may be touching the ground or an object completely in dead ball territory at the time of the catch.

C – Check Swings

If on a ball called by the umpire, the catcher requests or the umpire himself/herself is unsure, the umpire may check with his partner to determine if the batter may have attempted to hit the ball.

The plate umpire should step out from behind the catcher, remove the mask, point to his open umpire partner, say his or her name and ask – "Swing". The response should be Yes, with a strike signal or No with a safe signal.

The umpire being asked should be sure if the batter attempted at the pitch or not. Things to consider are bat location, (Over the plate); wrist action (wrists bent); and location of the ball, (was the batter merely trying to get out of the way of the pitch).

The Plate umpire should give the count after any check swing situation.

D – Conferences

Conferences must be recorded on the line up card.

Move up on the line nearest the team having the conference. Advise the coach that the conference was charged.

If a coach is checking on an injury, accompany the coach to ensure that the injury is the only issue that the coach is dealing with. If no other messages are delivered, do not charge a conference.

If you the umpire is the cause of a delay in the game, do not charge a conference if the coach is talking to a player. Get the game going as soon as you are ready. It is not an offensive conference when a coach and batter talk while you are sweeping the plate or retrieving game balls. Nor is it a defensive conference if a coach stands with the pitcher in the pitching circle during the time between innings.

It is not a defensive conference if the coach make a pitching change.

E – Dead Ball and Dead Ball Situations at the Plate

The plate umpire has primary responsibilities for determining if the ball has entered dead ball territory. If a base umpire is chasing the ball, it is then the base umpire's responsibility.

Once the ball enters dead ball territory the umpire should call "Dead Ball" and signal with both arms up and palms extended forward. The umpire should get as close as possible to the area where the ball is about to enter deal ball territory

Umpires not involved in calling the dead ball should mentally note the location of the runners at the time of the pitch, or throw or when the ball became dead.

Base umpires should only mirror the dead ball call if necessary to stop the runners.

When awarding bases the umpire should indicate the bases awarded, i.e., Number 18, awarded 2nd base and 3rd base. This should help prevent runners skipping awarded bases.

Dead ball situations at the plate include:

- Hit by a pitch
- Hitting the pitch while out of the box or touching the plate
- Hit with a batted ball
- Hitting a pitched ball twice

On Dead Ball situations at the plate:

- Use the term "Dead Ball"
- Sell it
- Plate umpire has primary responsibility

Hitting the pitch while out of the box or on the plate - Elements

- Plate umpires call
- Dead ball
- Out
- Foot entire out of box, on the ground at time of contact
- Ball can be fair or foul
- Part of foot touching the plate.

This call belongs solely to the plate umpire. It is a dead ball and an out. The bat must have contacted the ball and it does not matter whether the ball goes fair or foul because it is dead at the moment of contact. For the dead ball and an out, the batter's foot must be touching the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box or some part of the foot must be touching the plate even if part of that foot is still on the line of the batter's box.

Batter hit with batted ball

- Any umpire may call
- If still in box, foul ball
- If out of box, out
- If hits bat twice and bat still in batters hands and still in box – foul ball.

F – Illegal Pitch

- May be called by any umpire
- Outside the 24 inches of the pitchers plate is the responsibility of the plate umpire. (Only stepping foot has to be within the 24 inches, pivot foot may be outside)
- Illegal pitch call should be echoed by other umpires
- Should indicate to the pitcher what the infraction was
- Allow coach to come out to explain to pitcher what the infraction was; ensure that strategy is not discussed. Not a conference unless strategy is discussed.
- Call it when you see it
- Give the pitcher a chance to correct.
- Do not over focus on enforcing the pitching rule

G - Infield Fly

- Signal infield fly situation to other umpires when it exists. Plate umpire should initiate
- Either Plate or Base umpire's judgment on "ordinary effort"
- Signal end to infield fly situation

H – Intentional Walk

- Can be issued at anytime
- Requested by pitcher, catcher or coach
- One walk at a time, runner to touch first before administering a second intentional walk.

I – Interference and Obstruction

- Interference is an illegal act by the offense that impedes, hinders or confuses a defensive player attempting to execute a play.
- Obstruction is an illegal act by the defense that hinders or prevents a batter from striking at a ball or impedes the progress of a runner.
- Responsibility of the umpire to whom the play is coming.
- If the responsible umpire is involved with another play then another umpire can make the call. Be sure the responsible umpire has not already made a judgment on the play.
- Interference is a dead ball (arms up and palms extended) and an out.
- Obstruction is a delayed dead ball (left arm out) and an award of bases to the base that would have been obtained had there not been obstruction. Other runners only advance if forced.

Collisions that are neither interference nor obstruction will occur from time to time. All three elements have to be at the same place at the same time, ball, defensive player and offensive player. If nothing more than the three elements coming together at the same time happens, you have a collision without either interference or obstruction. A safe signal at this point will show everyone that you saw the play and judged no rule violation occurred.

Crashing into a catcher or fielder who has the ball is an act of interference and if flagrant, should result in a out and an ejection.

J – The Tie-Breaker Rule

At the end of seven innings, the Tie-Breaker rule is enforced in order to help determine a winner. The player scheduled to bat ninth in the inning (top of eighth and every half inning there after) begins at second base. (i.e. if the number 8 batter is scheduled to bat, number 7 begins on second; if the number 2 batter is scheduled to bat, number 1 begins on second base.)

K – The Pitching Circle

The pitching circle was added to the game to speed up play. It was not designed to create a play for either the offense or defense, but it has evolved into a major play for both. The defense does things in the circle to try to get an out. The offense runs the bases in a fashion to try to score a run.

It is imperative that umpires:

- Always know where the ball is and if it is in the circle or not.
- Consistently interpret and apply what can and cannot be done regarding the circle.
- Know the division of responsibilities between umpires for covering plays involving the circle.

The simple intent of the rule is: once the pitcher has the ball in the circle, the runners must immediately proceed or retreat. The pitcher is under no obligation to do anything. Compliance is on the runners.

Major differences between the Fast Pitch and Slow Pitch Game

NOTE: FP – indicates Fast Pitch
 SP – indicates Slow Pitch

Rule 1 – DEFINITIONS

Chopped ball. A chopped hit ball is one at which the batter strikes downward with a chopping motion of the bat so that the ball bounces high into the air. A legal act in FP, but the batter is out in SP.

Pivot Foot. That foot which in FP, the pitcher uses to push off the pitcher's plate and which in SP must remain in contact with the plate until the pitch is released.

Strike Zone. In FP, the strike zone is that space between the arm-pits and top of the knees. The strike zone in SP is that space over home plate which is not higher than the batter's back shoulder nor lower than his knees.

Rule 2 – THE PLAYING FIELD

The playing field shall have a clear and unobstructed area within a radius of 67.06m (220 ft) for both junior and senior women's FP and 76.20m (250 ft) for both junior and senior men's FP. In junior women's SP the minimum radius is 80.77 (265 feet), for senior women's it is 83.82m (275 ft), and for junior and senior men's SP it is 91.44m (300 feet). Base distances are 19.81m (65 feet) for SP, and 18.29m (60 feet) for FP. Pitching distance for men's FP is 14.02m (46 feet) and women's FP is 13.11m (43 feet), while in SP it is 15.24m (50 feet) for all men and women.

Rule 4 – PLAYERS AND SUBSTITUTES

A team must have ten (10) players to start or to continue a SP game. Nine players are required in FP. One additional player can be used in each game if in SP the team uses the "EP" (extra player), and in FP a "DP" (or Designated Player) is used.

Rule 6 – PITCHING REGULATIONS

In FP, both feet must be in contact with the pitcher's plate, motionless, for at least two (2) seconds

and no more than five (5) seconds, with the ball held in both hands. The pitcher, in SP, shall take a position with *a foot* firmly on the ground and in contact with the pitcher's plate. In SP the pitcher's arm must come to rest holding the ball in front, with a pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate for at least one (1) second and no more than ten (10) seconds in SP.

If the pitcher takes a signal they must be on the pitching plate, with hands separated in FP. Exception: When using the 20 second clock, the signal may be taken when behind the pitcher's plate. No signal is taken in SP.

In FP, the arm can pass the hip twice, but cannot make two revolutions. In SP, the pitcher must deliver the ball on the first forward swing of the pitching arm past the hip.

In FP, the pitcher may take one step and it must be forward within the 24" width of the pitcher's plate. In SP, it is not mandatory that the pitcher take a step while delivering the pitch, and if one is taken it can be forward, backward or to the side.

In SP, the ball must be delivered with a perceptible arc of at least 1.83m (6 feet) from the ground. The pitched ball shall not reach a height of more than 3.66m (12 feet) at its highest point from the ground.

In FP, the ball remains in play with runners being able to advance. A ball is awarded to the batter. In SP, if the ball slips from the pitcher's hand during the wind-up or during the back swing, it is a dead ball and a "no pitch."

In FP, the ball remains in play, therefore if the batter swings and hits the pitched ball, the batter can run. In SP if the pitched ball hits the ground prior to reaching the plate the ball is dead and even if the batter swings and hits the ball, the ball is dead and the batter remains in the batter's box unless ball four.

In FP, if the batter swings and hits an illegal pitch and if the BR and all other runners advance at least one base, the illegal pitch is ignored. If the BR or any of the runners do not make one base, the offensive manager has the option of taken the result of the play, or enforcing the illegal pitch which is a ball on the batter, and all runners are advanced one base. In SP, if the batter strikes at and misses any illegal pitch, it shall be a strike and there shall be no penalty for an illegal pitch. If the illegal pitch is hit, it is like any other batted ball and in play.

In FP, all base runners are awarded one base. A ball is awarded to the batter in both games unless the exceptions occur in SP and FP as indicated above. In SP, no base runners are awarded a base on the illegal pitch call.

Rule 7 – BATTING

In FP, both the bunt and chopping at the ball are legal. In SP, the batter is out when he bunts or chops the ball downward.

In SP, a batter is out if he/she hits a foul ball after the second strike. The ball is dead.

Rule 8 – BASERUNNING

In FP and SP, if the defensive team desires to walk a batter intentionally, the pitcher, catcher or

coach may do so by notifying the plate umpire, who shall award the batter first base. The ball is dead.

In FP, base stealing is permitted. Runners may leave base immediately *after* the ball has left the pitcher's hand. If they leave before, the ball is dead and the base runner is out. In SP, base stealing is not allowed. Runners may leave their base when a pitched ball has reached home plate and must return to the base immediately after the pitch not hit by the batter.

In FP, they can be tagged out. In SP, base runners cannot be put out if they are tagged while off their base on a ball or strike.

Rule 9 – BALL DEAD, BALL IN PLAY

In FP bunting and chopping down on the ball are legal and the ball remains live. In SP, the ball is dead when the batter bunts or chops the pitched ball.

In FP, the ball is in play after each strike or ball. In SP, the ball is dead after each strike or ball.

Rule 10 – UMPIRES

In SP, the plate umpire shall determine whether a batter bunts or chops the ball.

SECTION 6

LINE-UP CARD MANAGEMENT

Good line-up management, beginning at the pregame and continued through every substitution of the game, will ensure that an umpire rarely has to deal with those obscure, troublesome rules associated with the line-up card.

Aside from the boost of self-assurance you get from knowing you are on top of the paperwork, here are things you can do while tending to the paperwork that can make you look poised and instill confidence in others.

- Know where the scorekeeper is and the procedure for reporting changes.
- Carry an extra pencil or pen. Having to ask for a pencil because the lead in yours broke or your pen went dry makes you appear unprepared.
- Step away from the plate to record all changes. Do not step back in behind the catcher until your line-up cards and pencil are put away and your mask is on your face.
- Do not put your pencil in your mouth. This does not look professional.
- Take your mask off. A coach reporting a change deserves this common courtesy.
- Do not put your mask between your legs. Put it under your arm.
- Do not bend over and write changes on your leg. If necessary, carry the line-up cards in a line-up holder and use the holder as a mini clipboard. A coach standing above a bent-over umpire conveys a subtle but undesired message.
- Record what is necessary when it happens even though this may slow the momentum of the game. Do not burden yourself with having to remember to do something at the next break.

You must record and/or report all:

- All defensive conferences
- All offensive conferences
- All defensive changes
- All substitutions
- All re-entries
- All changes concerning the DP or Flex Player (FP)

Some tips:

- ✓ Do not accept changes that you know are illegal
- ✓ Ensure that the line-up is correct at the plate conference
- ✓ If a DP ensure there is a Flex listed in the 10th spot
- ✓ Track all changes and re-entries clearly – Matching marks for player going in and the player being removed. Put a pencil line through the names no longer eligible to play.
- ✓ Take one change at a time from the coach, go over the changes with the coach before giving to the scorekeeper. Try to use numbers, not names
- ✓ Adopt a system and use it consistently. Most umpires use a letter system for substitutes.

SECTION 7

BEING IN CONTROL

- A – Communication
- B – Game Control
- C – The role of your Partners
- D – Preventive Umpiring

A – Communication

Communication skills are one of the greatest assets that an umpire can have. The greatest communication skill is the ability to listen. Other communication skills we use are:

1. Words – choose your words carefully
2. Tone – the pitch of your voice will add much to your message
3. Volume – the strength of voice, loud or low also carries a message
4. Body positioning – is your message confrontational or calmness
5. Gestures – hand movements can express much about how we feel

Any time you have someone making a decision based on the action of others or two people or group competing for the same prize, there is potential for conflict and confrontation. It is the nature of the game and one of the aspects of the games we have to accept. We can never be afraid to enforce a rule for fear that it may cause a conflict. The mere fact that we do not enforce a rule may cause conflict and confrontation.

How an umpire handles confrontation will go a long way in establishing the level of respect that the umpire will earn. We cannot always control the confrontation but we can control how we react and handle it. In order to be in control, we must be in control of ourselves.

Remember confrontation usually arise for the following reasons:

- ❖ It is legitimate - a coach is merely looking for an explanation of a situation that he/she does not understand or agree with.
- ❖ The Coach is looking to intimidate – many coaches will test umpires or try to bully them into giving them the next close call.
- ❖ There is a personality conflict between you and the coach – obviously in this situation you and the coach have some history and do not get along.
- ❖ The coach is reacting to a situation – if there is a close play at the plate and the call going one way or another will make a difference in the game, you can expect some reaction from the coach who did not get the call.

If you can determine why the coach or player is coming to question a call, you can quickly form a strategy on how to handle it. If legitimate or situational, you can have more tolerance for the coach. If intimidation or a personality conflict, you can use different skills to handle it. Be sure it is not your personality that is causing the problem.

In a confrontation, an umpire should:

- Remain calm
- Use an appropriate tone of voice for the situation. If you keep your voice low, others will soon lower their voice to match yours
- If a coach or player starts to approach you, walk toward them and meet them in the middle.

- Establish eye contact, (remove sunglasses) however avoid face to face discussions, turn to the side a bit so that you have created some space between you and the coach and player
- Use calming body language, hands at the sides, not on the hips; body erect but relaxed, not tight and tense, wear an expression of interest on your face, not a scowl or smirk.
- Let the coach or player have their say but do not let them dispute, balls and strikes, safes and outs or fair and foul balls.
- Once the coach or player has finished, repeat the question to ensure that you have understood what the coach or player is asking, then give your explanation of what you saw and what your call was.
- Once the coach or player begins to repeat themselves, you should tell the coach that the conversation is over and start walking the coach back to their coaching box or dugout area.
- Keep you hand gestures to a minimum. Swinging of the arms hands or large gestures indicates that you may be losing control or becoming emotional
- Let a coach save his player. If a coach comes to take a player's place in a discussion, let him as that is the role of a coach.
- Never threaten to eject.

Self Control:

Control is set by the way you handle yourself on the field. Control not only means of yourself, but also of others (players, coaches, spectators).

- C Confidence – Know the situation; Don't be meek in your response
- O Only enlighten with your response (don't debate or preach)
- N Neat – Proper uniform (pressed and shoes shined) shows your confidence
- T Tools to use – Mind – Face – Body - Voice
- R Respond – don't react - helps keep your opponent calmer
- O Opportunity to be positive and not negative
- L Listen to questions and give answers

B – Game Control

Some tips to keep the game under control:

- ❖ Know the rules
- ❖ Make a good first impression – wear the uniform proudly
- ❖ Remain calm
- ❖ Develop a rapport with the players and coaches
- ❖ Keep conversations between an umpire and coach or player one on one. Partners must move all other players and coaches away from the discussion..
- ❖ Do not have "rabbit ears." Do not always react to everything you hear. Remember in the heat of competition things will be said but it is not personal, it is said towards the uniform, not you.
- ❖ Use the coach or other player with whom you have a rapport with to deal with players who are causing a problem.
- ❖ Do not ask a player to repeat what they said. If you did not hear it the first time, let it go.
- ❖ Make your call and move to your next position. Do not hang around for a dispute.
- ❖ Never touch players, coaches, other team personnel; do not permit them to touch you.

C – Going for Help

Umpire should only go for help when they believe that another umpire has different information on a play than they themselves have. Umpires must be aware that some coaches will ask umpires to check continually to cast doubt in the umpires mind so that calls will start to go in favor of the coach's team.

Only check if you feel another umpire has different or better information, otherwise stick with your call.

On check swings, it is alright to check if asked as it will build a rapport but do not let them ask every time the batter flinches.

D – Preventive Umpiring

Preventive umpiring means being aware of what is going on around you and taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure that a situation or the game does not get beyond your control. Here are some preventive umpiring tips that can assist you in keeping things under control:

- ✓ Be on time – shows you are focused, prepared and interested
- ✓ Act professionally at all time – gives the teams confidence
- ✓ Properly worn uniform – good first impression
- ✓ Check bats and helmets – eliminates having to deal with an issue later on
- ✓ Keep players in their dugouts
- ✓ Keep gates closed
- ✓ Keep unused equipment off the field
- ✓ Keep an ear attuned for player comments to one another – deal with player who try to goad or intimidate other players immediately
- ✓ Watch for hard tags and hard slides – deal with it
- ✓ Home run – watch for inflammatory actions or comments – watch for retaliation pitches
- ✓ Hit batter – get out in front – take Batter-runner half way down the line, 1st base umpire meets at halfway and takes BR the rest of the way to 1st base. - watch for retaliation
- ✓ If something happens between players, closest umpire goes to control confrontation; others control dugouts and other players. Get coaches to assist.

Section 8

Mechanics

A – General Mechanics

In order to be effective umpires must communicate. Umpires need to use all their communication tools, verbal and physical. Positioning on the field can assist in the delivery of good communications.

Mechanics is the physical part of umpiring – the positioning umpires take on various plays. It is where you go when something happens. It is what people see. What people see affects what they believe, how they feel, and how they will act. As umpires we want people to believe in our calls and feel confident in our ability.

Always know what the body is saying. Learn to send the message you want to send. Always move with briskness and purpose. Never stroll or walk. Make all signals crisp and strong.

In the manual we are limited on how we can show mechanics by static pictures. This gives the impression that there is only one position, only one correct location. We all know that the game is not played that way. Things are different on every play. In the manual we set out a starting premise or position but if you follow the principle of positioning that dictates that you keep the four elements in front of you: ball, base, defensive player and offensive player, then you will have no problem in adjusting during each individual play.

Because of this, umpires should not try to memorize the manual, but instead use it as a guide and starting place for applying the guidelines that have proven to be reliable in umpiring. Know the reason why one position is more desirable than another. Understand what advantages you are seeking, or risks you are taking, as you choose a position. Have purpose and direction as you move about the diamond. If you do not know where you want to be, it is guaranteed you will never get there.

Mechanics is being in the right place, or the best place, at the right time. If we are at the right place at the right time, we vastly increase the odds of having good judgment because we can see what happened from the best possible view.

You cannot be in the right place at the right time if you do not hustle. We have a huge area to cover. Hustle does not mean fast; hustle means moving efficiently and with purpose.

Hustle is moving as efficiently as possible. To do this you:

- Must know where you need to be
- Must know where the ball is so you can move without getting in the way of a thrown ball
- Must find the optimum route to travel
- Must be thinking three steps and one play ahead.

Once you get to where you need to be, the job is only beginning. You have to see the play, use your judgement, give the proper signal using the right amount of emphasis and you have to do all of this in what appears to be a well rehearsed set of actions. Make sure your calls are correct and your signals strong.

The things you look for in choosing a position are:

- You want the ball in front of you.
- You want the base, the runner, and the fielder in front of you.
- You want to be 90 degrees from the throw on a force play.
- You want to be 90 degrees from the application of the tag on a tag play.
- You want to be 5.5 meters (18 feet) from a force play – to obtain the big picture.
- You want to be 3-3.5 meters (10-12 feet) from a tag play.
- You want to be set for every play.
- You want to be outside the diamond if the ball is in the infield – puts the ball in front of you.
- You want to be inside the diamond if the ball is in the outfield – puts the ball in front of you.
- You want to move parallel with the runners or the flight of the ball.

Angle is always more desirable than distance:

- Angles are all over the field.
- Angles change all the time.
- Learn to recognize where angles exist and how they develop.
- On tag plays never have the runner between you and the tag.
- On tag plays never have the fielder between you and the tag.
- On tag plays never have the base between you and the tag.

Distance serves three purposes:

- The ability to zoom in.
- The ability to zoom out.
- Credibility – if you cannot get the angle, get closer.

With this knowledge you will be able to figure out the ideal spot you would like to be in on any play that happens. Arrive at the play before it happens. It is far better to be in position for a possible play and not have a play develop, than to have a play happen and not be there. Commit to your position.

Random Guidelines for Umpires:

- *Call* in your own area. *See* in all areas.
- *Support your partners.*
- Strong verbal calls are one of the best and easiest forms of game control.
- Do not retreat from a call. That is a negative movement and does not show commitment to the call.
- A holding position is oval.
- A holding position is never a calling position.
- Hold routine signals an appropriate amount of time – not too short or too long – but long enough to show conviction of the call.
- All umpires need to hold their positions at the conclusion of a play until the pitcher has the ball in the circle and all runners have stopped on a base.
- If you finish an inning with a controversial call and feel you will be a target for remarks by standing in your normal position, move somewhere else.

- Do not move your feet when making a call. Keep your feet in a wide stance. This is stronger and you are prepared to move efficiently to your next play.
- If there is no play no call is needed. Obvious uncaught fly balls do not need a "No Catch" signal.
- On tag-up plays, line up to see the tag and then move to a primary position.
- Do not call, "Time" unless needed. The pitcher must have the ball in the circle and all runners must be stopped on a base before, "Time" is called.
- Sweep judiciously. Do not break the flow of an at-bat to remove a speck of dust from the plate. If you can clearly see the base, it does not need to be swept.
- Do not touch a ball, a player, or a coach.
- Do not invite conversations.
- Do not carry messages from a coach or player to your partner.
- Do inform the new relief pitcher of the game situation if they come into the game in the middle of an inning (e.g. how many outs, where the runners are, count on the batter).

Sometimes – RARELY – a play happens where an umpire must take charge and take a call not in his/her area (e.g., a sinking line drive, checked swing with two strikes and ball not caught). When it happens, you will know! DO NOT look for an opportunity to do this.

B – Plate Mechanics

The most crucial officiating position in any ball game is that of the Plate Umpire. Coaches, players and spectators all focus their attention on the area around home plate and the plate umpire. They are constantly observing every action, sound, expression, movement and judgment the plate umpire makes. Once you have developed solid plate mechanics you should constantly work at improving and fine-tuning your skills. The use of video cameras and your own self-evaluation of those films will greatly assist your style, positioning, mannerisms, body language, demeanor and eventual success.

When an umpire demonstrates a thorough knowledge of their "Plate Mechanics", all one needs to add, is hustle and consistency to their game, thus earning them the reputation as an in-demand, dependable top-notch umpire.

At the Plate

- Work the slot – be sure you can see the outside corner at the knee.
- Use a heel/toe stance. The box can be used if you can see that you need to see. The scissors stance is not acceptable. It is not a softball mechanic and restricts mobility.
- Use the same stance on both sides of the plate.
- Be set before the pitch is released.
- Be no deeper behind the catcher than a closed fist between your non-slot knee and the catcher's back.
- Once set do not move your body.
- Track the ball with your nose.
- Use the strike zone defined in the Rule Book. Do not call, "My zone." or the pitch is in "my strike zone."
- Being consistent is not good enough. You must call an accurate strike zone.

- **For strikes**
 - ✓ The verbal call is in the down position. The signal is in the up position. The signal should be immediately after the verbal call.
 - ✓ Use a strong hammer – it may be up and into a hammer or forward into a hammer. Angles must be 90 degrees or greater. Hold it long enough to show conviction. Do not move the feet until the conclusion on the hammer.
 - ✓ A called third strike must have a strong “sell” signal.
 - ✓ A swinging third strike is a slightly delayed, routine – not casual – signal.
 - ✓ Be aggressive; call borderline pitches strikes.

- **For balls**
 - ✓ The word ball must be verbalized.
 - ✓ Ball is said in the down position before moving or starting up.
 - ✓ The ball call is said in the same tone, with the same timing and emphasis every time. No “ball,” is more important than another ball. A ball is just, “Not a strike.” If you change your tone or emphasis on a ball close to the plate, it will appear that you might have missed the pitch.
 - ✓ Step back and relax when the pitch is over and the call is made.
 - ✓ Be alert to the batter for any reaction or conference request.
 - ✓ Watch the catcher for any play.
 - ✓ Prepare for the next pitch.

Being ready for the First Pitch

While waiting for the pre-game conference to begin, take time to watch both pitchers during their warm-ups on the sidelines. This tip will allow you to quickly evaluate each different pitcher’s rhythm, tempo, technique, demeanor and delivery style.

You may also want to observe a few warm-up pitches from each pitcher when they take the pitching plate for their warm-up pitches before the inning begins. Now is the time to adjust your footwork, balance and body position. This valuable time allows you to work on your own timing and rhythm, movement of the ball, type of pitches, speed of delivery, release point and time to make sure you can see the entire strike zone. Inform the catcher that you are going to look at some warm-up pitches. This mechanic demonstrates a commitment to your strike zone and their game.

Stepping into the Stance

From your relaxed position, step in behind the catcher with your inside foot. Once set behind the catcher’s foot, step into the staggered stance with your lead foot. If it is more comfortable for you, then use a few small steps to position yourself *in the slot* by using an offset square stance, where your outside foot (closest to the batter) is a bit more forward than your inside foot (behind the catcher) - referred to as heel/toe. Line up your pelvis or belt buckle with a point between the top middle of the plate and the top outside corner of the plate

You must always feel balanced with most of your weight distributed equally between the balls of your feet and your heels. Keeping your feet spread at least as much as double the width of your shoulders will put you in perfect position. Having your feet too close together can cause more movement of the upper body. Dig in, get balanced and feel comfortable. Relax before the pitcher steps on the pitcher’s plate. Step into your stance when the pitcher steps onto the pitcher’s plate. Always remain upright until the pitcher begins the pitching motion. Next drop into your slot set position, but maintain your stance balance and upper body control.

Working the Slot Position

The "slot" is the area between the batter and the catcher. It is one in which the umpire's inside ear (next to catcher) and the black edge of the plate are in alignment. It is at best something that may vary and drift marginally to accommodate the stance of the catcher and batter, but it remains on the inside edge of the plate. Make sure you can see the entire plate with both eyes when in your slot set-up stance.

The *slot* also affords the umpire the maximum visibility to complete strike coverage and the ability to see the ball in the entire zone. Foul balls will tend to deflect away from the slot or directly over the plate. You must always strive to see the release of the ball from the pitcher's hip to the arrival in the glove. Remember to track the ball with the nose between these two areas.

The catcher should rarely block your view. If the catchers do move, you can adjust as necessary, but never let the catcher's work you. Work with them to attain the best look you can. If the catcher takes away the inside corner, let them know. If it is the catcher's glove that is blocking the view, inform them to give the target, then drop the glove, so you can see the ball coming. If they fail to drop the glove, say something to the coach between innings and have him pass the word to the catcher.

If the batters take away the inside corner, make a small adjustment to your stance, and inform the batter. If you can't see the corner, any pitch that is inside must have crossed the plate. More strikes lead to more cooperation from the batter.

Moving to the Down (Set) Position

Try using a smooth and brisk motion to drop into your set position. This technique will include doing a multitude of things all at once. Keep your *head* square to the plate. Your *back* should feel a bit straight and stiff, although it never really is completely. Use your *legs* to go up and down. Bend at the knees and only slightly at the waist. Timing is very important in dropping to the set position. You should never drop too soon (you often anticipate the pitch while you are waiting) or too late (you will be moving on the pitch and this changes the strike zone. Remember the head must not move once you drop to the set position).

Always remember, your *eyes* should never be in the strike zone, but they will be set at the top and inside corner of it – looking down through the strike zone. A pitch delivered at your eyes and your nose is a 'strike' on the inside and at the top. If you have to look up or inside, you probably have a 'ball.' Lock and hold your position. Remain absolutely still during the entire pitch. Your *shoulders* might be a bit offset, due to your footwork, but could be square if you prefer. This may give you the feeling that you are just about to sit in a chair, but it is much more effective than bending your *back* and trying to look up.

The *hands* should be placed where they are 'most likely' not to get injured. Most officials place them in front, between the legs which helps relax you and also protects. Some place them behind their back.

Keep your entire body still while preparing to judge the pitch, even if the catcher moves in front of you after you are set. Your head should never move until just before the pitch arrives in the glove. Track the ball with your nose and then use a slight head tilt to see the ball into the glove. This may be the most critical mechanic that you can use to improve your consistency.

Footwork

Always set your foot behind the catcher first then your outside foot. It is recommended that your feet be apart at least double your shoulder width. The taller you are the more important it is to widen your stance. A good wide stance by a taller plate umpire, requires less drop and bending of the knees, when moving to the set position for batters – particularly shorter batters.

Tracking the Pitch

This is probably the most critical aspect in improving your strike zone. Begin to pick up the ball from the pitcher's hip. Next you should lock in the batter's normal zone when they are actually swinging the bat.

Follow the ball through the zone and watch the ball all the way into the catcher's glove, using the pop of the glove as a timing too. This technique is a great way to double check the location of the ball, create a natural delay in your timing and ensure that you have seen the ball all the way to the catcher's glove. Never blink your eyes during the pitch as you could miss a number of important actions taking place around the plate.

Timing and Rhythm

It is very important that an umpire develop proper timing and rhythm in making decisions. That timing and rhythm should never vary. Only the emphasis of various calls will differ.

It is said that the plate umpire sets the tempo and control the game, but to do this the umpires must first be in control of themselves. Umpires who make calls quickly on every pitch will appear to be guessing. Slightly delay your call somewhat after the 'pop.' Timing after the 'pop' should be deliberate, repetitive and consistent. Concentrate!!! You verbally call the 'strike' while in the set position and the signal starts as you immediately rise up. This rising up should not be delayed after the call.

Everyone appreciates the umpire who has developed proper timing in administering decisions as a plate umpire. This sets the tempo of the game more than any other facet of umpiring. Never delay more than a second after the 'pop.' Delaying too long may see the catcher and batter turn to see what the call will be. And this should not happen.

The Count

How often the count is given depends on a number of different situations. If the field is equipped with a scoreboard it is only necessary to give the count periodically (or to correct the scoreboard). If there is no scoreboard, then the count should be given:

- When requested.
- After a delay in the normal flow of the game.
- After all dead ball situations.
- Whenever the next pitch would create a change (i.e., three balls and/or two strikes on the batter). It is a situation where on the next pitch there will be a base on balls or a strike out. This simply alerts the defensive and offensive teams of the game situation as well as alerting all umpires to be ready.

The count should be given above your head with the number of balls on the batter with the left hand and the number of strikes on the right. In addition, give the count verbally. ALWAYS with the number of balls first. It is recommended to give the count towards center field and rotate the wrists. The plate umpire can help keep the crew in the game by sending and/or acknowledging the number of outs whenever another out is added.

Ball Rotation

According to ISF procedure, the current game ball is in play until such time as it goes out of play. Give the catcher a new ball to throw to the pitcher immediately. Do not wait for the ball that just went into dead ball area (or the stands) to return. Balls do have different seams and some do weigh more than others, so if the pitcher does not like the new ball thrown to him/her, allow them to make a change. Never place a removed ball back into your ball bag.

If both balls do not get into play in the first half of the first inning, the pitcher in the bottom half of the first inning MUST throw the unused ball. No choice is offered. Each half inning after the first, the pitcher does have a choice of which ball he/she wants to use.

Decision Time

If you have a called strike, verbalize it while you are down, then start the signal as you stand up and complete the sharp, crisp hammer as you are standing. Always face the diamond when you are selling strike three. You may use whatever signal, style and actions that you deem appropriate, but be certain that you are facing the batter's box area so you can see if the ball has fallen out of the catcher's glove.

Never sell a swinging strike three call. Simply give an easy hammer. Other helpful hints:

- If it is a ball, stay down and verbalize it. Do not point towards first base on ball four.
- If you have a swinging strike three, just use your hammer.
- In all of the above verbalizations, let the closeness of the pitch and its relevant importance dictate the required volume of your verbal calls.
- Foul tips – give the fingertip-to-fingertip brush away signal, followed by the hammer.
- Balls touched in foul territory – foul ball signal with the verbal.
- Ground balls that are hit foul – if past a base or hitting anything – foul ball signal with the verbal.
- Ground balls hit fair beyond a base – signal by pointing repeatedly towards fair territory – NO VERBAL.
- Fly balls that are hit close to a foul line:
 - ✓ On first base line, use left arm to indicate fair and right arm to indicate foul
 - ✓ On third base line, use right arm to indicate fair and left arm to indicate foul
 - ✓ Slightly move the arm away from the hip to indicate to yourself the status of the ball while in flight, once status is confirmed:
 - If fair and caught – point fair, give the hammer, and verbally call 'out.'
 - If fair and dropped – point fair, repeat pointing and sell if required.
 - If foul and caught – point foul, give the hammer and verbally call 'out.'
 - If foul and dropped – point foul, signal and verbalize foul ball.
- Pop-ups to the catcher near the line – get a proper look and do as stated on fly balls.
- Pop-ups to the catcher when you must vacate – *do not watch the ball* – watch the catcher's shoulders. Once the catcher turns use that foot to pivot and keep out of their way. Then remove your mask.
- Foul balls that are hit close to the screen or towards a dugout – HUSTLE – get in position and look at your partner to see who got the best look. If you have the best look, delay and make a call. Make sure you get to the screen to see about a trapped ball or the ball touching the screen before the catch.
- On all fly balls hustle out to get a good look for possible traps if a base umpire does not turn his/her back and go out. If you make the call, come to a stop, delay, and then make your call with a crisp hammer when out. If there are any runners on base, or if the out is not obvious, add a verbal "out" with your hammer. If you have a trap situation, give the 'no catch or safe signal' and add a strong "safe" call.

Check Swings

Umpires should use the mechanics of hitting to assist them in judging check swings. Did the batter do any of the following?

- Pass their bat through the zone
- Roll their wrists and turn their hips
- Was the bat in front of their body
- Did the bat pass in front of the plate
- Did they convince you that they made an attempt to swing?

If you are going to call it, point with your left hand and say - "Yes." Then give the hammer with the right hand. If you are not sure, call a 'ball.' And when the catcher requests you to check with your partner, take off your mask, step to the umpire away from the batter and ask him/her - "Swing?"

Some umpires are reluctant to ask for help, however, the **bottom line is being correct**, so do not hesitate to check with your partner if requested to do so. And only go for help if you called the pitch a 'ball.' One point is that if you *concentrate* too hard on a check swing, you may forget about the pitch itself and end up calling a no swing, a 'ball' and the pitch could have been in the strike zone. Checking with your partner is always advised.

Once you have called the pitch a strike, you must never check with your partner. You called it, so you have to live with it.

'Not To Pitch' Signal

There are a few points of emphasis governing these signals. The first signal of 'not to pitch' is conveyed to the pitcher only if he/she is on the pitching plate and about to quick pitch the batter. The signal is an open hand aimed at the pitcher's face with the fingers spread wide. You MUST always use the hand that is FURTHEST away from the batter (towards the empty batter's box). If a pitcher constantly rushes you or the batter, advise the catcher to please slow down the sign to the pitcher. If that doesn't work, step forward and explain to the pitcher that they are rushing the batter.

The second example for the 'not to pitch' signal is used if you are not ready to work or if you have granted "TIME" to the batter before the pitcher has broken the pause. Remember a batter can request time, but the plate umpire does not have to grant it. This request should never be granted if the pitcher has separated his/her hands in starting the pitch. Call the pitch a strike or ball depending on whether it passed through the strike zone or not. If the 'not to pitch' signal is up and the pitcher throws anyway (or throws while "TIME" has been called), leave from behind the catcher towards the open batter's box and call "TIME - NO PITCH". Two hands are up in the air for the dead ball signal. Wait until it is safe to return, put on your mask and go behind the catcher once again.

Leaving the Plate Area

Develop the habit of leaving the plate area from the left side of the catcher. This fits into one of the umpire's priorities that should include avoiding a collision with the catcher and/or allowing catcher's their freedom to roam. With no runners on base or a runner on first base only, leave the plate area on the left side and trail the batter-runner toward first base in fair ground down approximately 9 meters (30 feet) (where the 1 metre (3-foot line) begins). Stop close to the line and observe the play at first. You should look for:

- Obstruction and interference, with or without contact between the catcher, pitcher, first baseman and the batter-runner.
- Collisions
- Overthrows
- Blocked balls
- Pulled foot
- Infractions involving the bat
- Spiking committed by the batter-runner\Violations of the 1 metre (3-foot) lane
- Possible swipe tags or tags made by the catcher or infielders on the batter-runner for the first 30 feet of the base path.
- If the base umpire turns to go to the outfield, you are in perfect position to make calls or watch for the touch of first by the batter-runner, if necessary, and any tag-ups which may be made or not made by any runner at first.
- Only offer assistance to your partner if asked. Never tip off your thoughts on any of the above actions with any type of body language.

After moving toward first base with a runner on first base only, be aware of a possible play at third base with the lead runner, since that would be the responsibility of the plate umpire in the two or three umpire systems.

If there is a runner starting at second or third base, the plate umpire must view the actions up the first base line from a position that will not impede any base runners, a position in foul territory on the third base side (called a holding zone) which allows the plate umpire to move to third or home, if a throw is being made to either.

You must watch home plate for the touch, glance up the first base line for action and then proceed to the next potential call. In a two or three-umpire system, the plate umpire must observe a variety of things that would include missed bases, obstruction, interference, tag-ups, and pure no-fault unintentional collisions that occasionally occur.

Catch and Call Responsibilities

The plate umpire is responsible for all fly balls, except when a base umpire TURNS HIS/HER BACK to the infield, and goes to the outfield to make the call. If the base umpire does not turn to go to the outfield, he/she should not make a call. *It is imperative that you release left of the catcher, and hustle out as far as you can to see the attempted play or call.* It might require a ruling on a potential trap, line drive, fair/foul, spectator interference, home run, ground-rule double or a ball that becomes dead before being caught. An example of this, is a ball touching the fence before it was caught (or trapped against the fence).

Make sure you always come to a complete stop as the play is being made. Then after a slight delay, make your call. If you have a 'No Catch or Trap', be sure to verbalize it and be prepared to sell the call where required. Always be aware of the position of all the other base runners. You must always keep the four 'Elements' in front of you at all times. Never allow a base runner to score behind you.

Make sure you have a catch before calling the play. Often times you see the ball in the glove and turn to pick up other runners, only to turn back at the fielder and he/she is picking up the ball from the ground. Do not rush these calls. If you are not sure, often the actions by the players involved can 'tip you off' to the correct decision.

Hitting the Ball a Second Time

The problem that most umpires have is that double hits can be extremely tough to see. It occurs most often on bunts and slaps, but it can also happen when the bat, after it is dropped by the

batter and still moving, contacts the ball a second time. Remember if the ball hits a dropped bat that is stationary, we have no call. If the bat is out of the batter's hands and hits the ball, this is ruled intentional and the batter is out. If the bat is still in the batter's hands and the batted ball hits the bat, the position of the batter's feet determine the call:

- If both feet are in the batter's box and the batted ball hits the bat or feet of the batter, it is a foul ball.
- If one foot is out of the batter's box over fair territory and the batted ball hits this leg, the batter is out.
- If one foot is in the batter's box and the batted ball hits this leg, the ball should be ruled foul, even if the other foot was over fair territory.
- If one foot is over foul territory and the batted ball hits the foot, it is a foul ball.
- If a ball rolls against a bat laying stationary over fair ground it is a fair ball, but if the ball then rolls onto foul territory and is touched or comes to rest, it should be ruled foul.
- If a ball rolls against a bat laying stationary over foul ground, it is a foul ball immediately and this will not change if the ball then rolls onto fair ground.

Note, a base umpire will not call a batter-runner out from his position 23 meters (75 feet) from home plate. The base umpire only signals dead ball. It is up to the plate umpire to make the decision, and chances are if you did not see it, the call will be a foul ball. An umpire should never guess an offensive player 'out.'

Batter Hit by the Pitch

Batters are awarded first base anytime they are hit by a pitch (unless of course, the batter made *NO attempt* to avoid the pitch), and the call is valid even if the ball only contacts their uniform. Do not let batters wear sweat shirts, jackets, or loose sweaters to the plate, although it is up to you what they wear when on defense. NOTE: Preventive umpiring dictates that you must 'Sell' this call when necessary. You should immediately call "Time".

A batter cannot be awarded a base when hit by a pitch if the ball was in the strike zone. This occurs when the batter is crowding the plate, leaning over to try and force the pitcher to pitch outside. If the batter swings at a pitch and the pitch hits him/her, that too is a strike, and if on the third strike it is a 'dead ball' and 'strike three.'

Strike Zone – Mind Set Theory

To *survive* in the game of fast pitch, the plate umpire must determine the width of the strike zone. Every one knows the width of home plate is 43.18 cm (17-inches), but you should also consider the black edge and the ball. Remember some part of the ball crossing over some part of the plate is a strike, therefore, widen the plate to 68.58 cm (27 inches) – the size of the width of the plate 43.18 cm (17-inches), black beveled edges are 2.54 cm (1-inch) each (3.08 cm - 2-inches), the width of each softball is approximately 10,16 cm (4-inches) (20.32 cm - 8-inches). Adding 43.18-3.08-20.32 (17-2-8) gives the plate a width of 68.58 cm (27 inches). The point here is to go into your game *Looking for Strikes*. When calling more strikes, more often than not, the batters will begin to swing more, rather than sit on pitches that are close. You will have more strikes, fewer walks and the entire rhythm and tempo of your game will improve.

By bringing the ball down (under the armpits) or bringing it up (above the knees), we mean the plate umpire shows more consistency and can get away by calling a pitch somewhat inside or outside *a strike*. But you should never call a strike that is above the armpits or below the knees. This is definitely out of the strike zone and can be seen by both benches and spectators.

Another factor in determining your strike zone in order to gain more consistency is to make sure a strike in the first inning is still a strike in the fourth inning and again in the seventh inning. If you called the high pitch a strike, don't call a pitch in the same location a ball the next time it is thrown. You may be known as a high pitch umpire and batters, catcher's and pitcher's can adapt to that. They cannot adapt to an umpire who changes the call back and forth. The same scenario is true on a low pitch umpire. To be consistent, call every pitch thrown in the same location the same.

Consistency is our Ultimate Goal

There is no better compliment that will ever come our way than to hear from our UIC's and supervisors, "Great job, you were really consistent today." Then to hear comments from tournament directors, coaches, players, spectators and others "Thanks Blue, great job.....Very consistent work."

Whenever you ask anyone involved in our game his or her opinion about the following question, you will always hear the same answer. "What is the most important quality that you look for in an umpire?"

The Answer: **CONSISTENCY!** This is not a word we should take lightly. You must work extremely hard to have the reputation of being consistent. You might be for a game, a day, a tournament or a season. But your goal should be to achieve and maintain consistency throughout your entire career.

Third Base Calls

In making calls at third base the plate umpire should stay in foul territory halfway between home and third base, while watching the play develop. If there is in fact a call to be made on a tag play at third base, cut inside the diamond about two-thirds of the way down to third, move in to 3-3.5 meters (10-12 feet) from the base and make the call.

The reason the umpire should be inside at this point, is that it is the best position to make the call. If the ball should get away from the third baseman, it is normally going into foul territory and any interference by the umpire will be avoided by being in this position. Here again, we are using the inside-outside theory.

In addition, if the throw is wild and the runner continues to advance toward home, the plate umpire has avoided a collision with the runner rounding third. Another reason would be that from this inside position the umpire will have a 10 to 15 foot advantage in covering any play at the plate.

Rundowns

When a runner is caught in a rundown, it is important that the covering umpire move to get the best perspective of both ends of the play. Usually the umpire will be a minimum of 4.5 meters (15 feet) from the runner and move parallel to the base line, unless you are covering the play alone, and it is not necessary to run back and forth with the runner. The umpire must follow the ball and when the actual tag is attempted, move quickly toward or around the play to get the best angle. Be alert for obstruction. Most rundowns are covered by one umpire because they happen quickly.

With a single runner in a RUNDOWN, two umpires should 'bracket' the play as follows:

- Between first and second – the plate umpire should take the trail position closest to first base, inside the diamond and the base umpire should take the lead position closest to second base on the outfield side of the diamond.
- Between second and third – the plate umpire should take the lead position closest to third base, inside the diamond, and the base umpire should take the trail position, closest to second base on the outfield side.
- Between third and home – the plate umpire will take the lead position nearest home plate outside the diamond, while the base umpire takes the trail position nearest third base, inside the diamond.

In all cases, the umpire should communicate, "I've got the lead," "I've got this end," etc. This communication is critical to being able to team on the call, rather than making a possible double call. When two runners are covering a rundown, the direction in which this runner is moving at the time of the tag will dictate which umpire will make the call. Two umpires should not make the call, even if they are the same call.

Run Count (Time Play)

It is important that umpires work together on situations where the third out of the inning is a tag play with a runner about to cross home plate. The base umpire must make his/her call LOUD and CLEAR to assist the plate umpire in making his /her determination. This is one situation when the out call on the bases must be made without any unnecessary delay.

The plate umpire should immediately and without hesitation indicate the "Run Counts" or the "Run does not count" and inform the scorekeeper. The umpire should know a run does not count if the third out of the inning is a result of:

- 1) A batter-runner being put out prior to reaching first base.
- 2) A force out at any base.
- 3) A runner being put out by a tag or live ball appeal play prior to the lead runner touching home plate.
- 4) A preceding runner is declared out on an appeal. NOTE: An appeal can be made after the third out in order to nullify a run.

Tag Plays at the Plate

Basically, there are two positions for making calls on tag plays at the plate: 1) When returning from third base to make a call from inside the diamond and 2) when the play is coming from fair territory or a throw from the outfield to make a call from the outside.

In returning from third base, the plate umpire should stay inside the diamond, moving parallel to the base line and assume a position 3-3.5 meters (10-12) feet from home plate and 90 degrees from the path of the runner. Keep your weight distributed on the balls of your feet, move in on the play as it develops, find the ball and make the call.

The reason ISF wants you to remain inside the diamond in returning to home plate deals with the inside-outside theory. On a play at third that allows the runner to advance, the ball, for the most part, will wind up in foul territory. If you remain inside the diamond as you retreat to the plate, all four elements will remain within your view – the ball, the defense, the runner and the base.

On plays at the plate where the ball is coming from fair territory or a throw from the outfield, the plate umpire should assume a position in foul territory, 90 degrees from the path of the runner just

outside the deepest corner of the right hand batter's box. After making this call the umpire should move away while continuing to watch the ball, remaining in foul territory.

Assume the basic position. Keep your weight distributed on the balls of your feet, move in as the play develops, find the ball and make the call accordingly.

Due to the critical nature of the play at home, move in to find the ball. If you can't find it, ask the player to "Show me the ball," point at it with your left hand and "SELL IT" accordingly. Never, never ask "show me the ball" and then call the runner safe.

Appeal at the Plate

If a runner misses home plate and the catcher misses the tag, the umpire should hesitate slightly to allow the players to finish the play, either the runner reaches to touch the plate or the catcher reaches to tag the runner. If no tag is made, the umpire should declare the runner SAFE. If a proper appeal play is made, the umpire should then declare the runner OUT.

There are three reasons why ISF advocates this procedure:

- 1) The umpire does not want to alert either team that the play may not be over, and
- 2) A runner is assumed SAFE until put out. If a proper appeal is NOT made, the runner is SAFE.
- 3) If a proper appeal is made, this is another play and deserves another decision, therefore if the base or the runner is touched, the runner would be OUT.

To Speed Up The Game

Here are a few tips to help *Speed up the Game*:

- Have your pre-game early.
- Start your game on time.
- Hustle to your positions. This shows the players they should hustle as well.
- Don't allow the pitcher to walk around the mound, point to fielders, and generally just waste time after receiving the ball from the catcher, the umpire or fielders.
- Make sure the pitcher delivers the pitch in 20 seconds.
- Get the batter in the box within ten seconds. (Eight seconds if using the 20 second clock)
- Don't let the batters wander too far away from the plate to get signals from their coach. (If the twenty second clock is used, one foot must remain in the box).
- Speak to a coach if he/she is too slow sending signals (pitches to be called by the catcher).
- Hustle players when necessary throughout the entire game.
- Encourage a team to have another person not in the game receive warm-up pitches until the catcher (who is not wasting time) is dressed and ready.
- Don't allow lengthy conferences.
- Make sure a player is in the on-deck circle waiting to bat.
- Work with your partners to achieve success.

Helpful Hints for Plate Umpires:

- Obtain the batting order from both managers at the pre-game meeting, review it making sure there are no errors in names, numbers or positions. Discuss the ground rules so both managers and the umpires are in agreement.
- Keep the plate clean and when dusting the plate, turn your back toward the pitcher. Always brush the plate with a lot of pep and enthusiasm.
- Take the time spent in brushing the plate to warn the catcher or batter when necessary.
- Say ball only. If it is ball four, then emphasis should be placed on the four.
- Never say "Ball four, take your base," and don't point to first base.
- Say Strike only. If it is strike three, then emphasis should be placed on the three.

- Never say, "Strike three, you're out." for the catcher may drop the ball.
- A big third strike call is important, but don't intimidate or embarrass the batters with the call. Use a signal and voice that reflects the importance, difficulty, and/or closeness of the play.
- Do not verbally describe a pitch, or use a hand signal. Use only a slight body motion toward the location of the pitch.
- Plate umpire has all Fair/Foul decisions unless a base umpire chases. This includes ground balls and balls over first or third base. This is not an option to be decided in a pre-game.
- Always go for help on a check swing (to the open side umpire– even if rotated) when asked by the catcher.
- Make sure you have a good angle to see the play and a runner crossing home plate, if the next out is a third out. Report run scores or does not score to the official scorer immediately.
- On an out-of-the-park home run when teammates converge at or around home plate to congratulate the hitter, the umpire should stay outside the diamond, keeping the hitter's teammates away from the plate, to see the runner touch home and watch for any touching of the runner by her teammates. When the runner has touched home plate, give a new ball to the pitcher and prepare to resume play.
- Just give the signal when an out is obvious on a fly ball with no runners on base.
- Do not needlessly 'hold the pitcher.' Most pitchers wait until the batter is ready. Use the 'Hold" signal to control a situation that needs controlling.
- Watch for touched bases.
- Write down all conferences on the 'Line-up" card.
- Report changes to the official scorer and to each dugout.
- Do not point at your partners to see if they are ready prior to starting the game or an inning. Look at them. If they are in position then play ball.
- Communicate on a continual basis with your partners(s).
- Always know the count, the number of outs and where the runners are.
- Plate umpire initiates or wipes off the infield fly signal each time a new batter steps into the box.
- Anticipate, but do not assume.

***Success is 1% Inspiration
And
99% Preparation***

C – Base Mechanics

Techniques on the Bases

Like the plate umpire, the base umpire(s) must focus on every pitch and be ready for any play. Watch for illegal pitches. Should a foul fly be hit in territory not adjacent to the plate, cover the fielder as closely as the base situation permits. Be alert for check swings or hit batsman. Be ready to cover the catcher's attempts to pick runners off bases. Between plays, in fact, between pitches, the base umpire must remain alert for any of these possibilities. The umpire must always keep in mind that umpiring – at the plate or on the bases – demands complete concentration, undivided attention and full energies until the final out.

Be alert at all times; work your angles on the bases. Do not leave yourself open on a play and above all do not let the coach call them for you. On a close play, sell the call; but on a wide open play, a routine signal is all that is necessary.

Be on your toes at all times. Think like a ball player thinks and you will not be surprised on certain plays. Whenever possible make all your decisions from the set or ready position. Do not give a vocal call or arm signal until you know that the runner is out or safe and the fielder has control of the ball. This will help your timing and eliminate double calls or the dreaded "Out/Safe" call. Follow the ball at all times. Know where the ball is, and who had it last.

If a ball is hit to the outfield and there appears to be trouble, go out on it. A "catch" or "no catch" should be the first priority on every batted ball, even if there are base runners on base(s). If a ball is hit out of the park be sure you know where and when the ball leaves the park.

Decisions on Bases

The base umpire indicates decisions by simultaneously giving vocal and physical signals. Umpires signal SAFE when a runner has beaten a play. They punctuate a n emphatic SAFE signal with an enthusiastic SAFE call. In calling a runner out, the motion of the arm in the form of a hammer is combined with the word OUT. And if the play is close, the umpire will sell the OUT with an overhand signal and a similar enthusiastic OUT call.

Attempted steals in fast pitch; attempted base stretching on hits, close force plays, most rundowns, almost all tag plays are close plays and the ruling should be rendered accordingly. Should an umpire, after an appeal, rule a runner out, the overhand out call is in order.

For fairly close force-plays, wide open tag plays, and run-downs the easy decision call, with medium emphasis as to voice and signal is called for. Keep full power in reserve for the really close ones.

The 'out-safe' or safe-out' calls are a result of poor timing. If you give it that slight hesitation and allow the mental image or 'instant replay' to take place, you will never have another 'out-safe' call in your career. **HOLD IT-SELL IT!** (You can't have good judgment without good timing. They go hand-in-hand.)

Should the batter of a ground ball be thrown out at first base by five feet or the leading runner be forced out by a wide margin on potential double-plays, only a routine out is necessary.

An obvious easy decision that could be routine must be handled as a close sell call. (i.e., a fielder failing to touch a base for a force out, failing to tag a runner sliding into the base, or missing a swipe tag.)

On attempts to pick runners off base a routine signal may also be given, unless the play is close, then use the 'overhand' out.

Any time the base umpire's back is turned on the plate umpire on a deep fly ball or a possible trapped ball, the base umpire has all responsibility for 'fair or foul' and 'out and safe' decisions on that ball. A base umpire that goes out, must stay in the outfield and never drift back to the infield for a play on the bases. This could cause two umpires to make a decision on the same play. Even if both decisions are the same, it looks bad.

The proper angle will have the ball, the base, the defensive player, and the runner in view. When watching the tag on a slide, make sure the base is in view. In watching force outs, keep your eye on the base and watch for the ball to hit the glove or let the ball take you into the play. Note: Make sure you know from where the ball is being thrown. Never take your eyes off the thrower until the ball is released and let the ball take you into the play.

Hustle is an integral part of good base umpiring technique. In essence, it is the alert application of the principles of good umpiring. Aimless running about is not hustle – at least, not productive hustle. The polished base umpire quickly finds the position for the best possible angle of the play, yet the umpire's whereabouts is overlooked by the spectators until the decision is rendered.

Base Calls

There are two basic calls an umpire MUST master before being considered as a good umpire: 1) The force play, and 2) the tag play. For the purposes of this manual, the force play at 1st base is described, however the principles involved apply to ALL force plays.

The Force Play

Again, the play at first base. As the fielder is getting into position to field the ground ball, the base umpire should be moving into one of the recommended positions described earlier. As the fielder releases the throw then, and only then, does the umpire turn into the base. (Let the ball take you into the play. A play cannot be made without the ball.) At this time, the umpire should concentrate on the BASE, where

- The runner touches it,
- The first baseman is on it, when the ball is caught, and
- The ball is not juggled by the fielder.

An important consideration for the umpire at this point is if proper positioning has been maintained (minimum of 5.5 meters (18 feet) from the base), while concentrating on the base, watch the runner coming down the line and at the same time actually see the ball being caught by the first baseman. A position too close to the base restricts the angle, closes the range of vision, and may cause the umpire to get caught in the action. (i.e., see situation on next page about smothering the play.)

Another element in making your decision is sound. While concentrating on the 'base' and allowing peripheral vision to aid us in seeing the play develop, the sound of the ball hitting the glove helps determine which arrived first, the ball or the player's foot hitting the base. Never take your eye off the ball or depend entirely on the sound of the ball hitting the glove for crowd noise could distract you or drown out the sound of the ball hitting the glove.

If proper mechanics are followed as described, the only consideration left to insure proper timing is a slight hesitation to allow a clear and mental picture to develop, insuring the proper call.

Remember, we are talking about a hesitation here, *not a delay.* Too long a delay gives rise to the thought that the call was weak and the umpire was indecisive.

Consideration must be given toward being consistent in the time it takes to announce your calls. If you are quick on every call and then have an exaggerated hesitation on one particular call it will appear to the players and fans that you are undecided and guessing. Slow your timing down and don't make a call until the play is completed, but remain consistent with your timing.

Once the umpire has observed the play come to its completion, has made a slight hesitation and knows the outcome of the play, it is time to make the decision that will be made known by the 'out' or 'safe' signal.

It is important that we understand the basic elements and how they relate to each other. For example, we discussed the basic position, proper distance and how it relates to peripheral vision in setting up your timing. If you wind up in a position where you are smothering a force play (in too close) and you are concentrating on the base, you may have to physically look up to see if the ball is caught and then look back down to see if the first baseman comes down on the base, if

there was an errant throw. While this is happening the runner may have already passed the base while you were looking up at the catch. If proper distance is maintained, peripheral vision will allow you to see the entire play, making your job considerably easier.

There are two basic positions for calling force plays at first base:

- 1) On all ground balls hit into the infield, the base umpire should move into the fair territory, observing the ground ball to a position that would be an imaginary line drawn through 1st base at 22.5 degrees and at the same distance as you were positioned at the start of the pitch. This position allows maximum use of peripheral vision, a basic to good timing and sound judgment. This allows the umpire the ability to move to the foul line for a possible tag play. You should not proceed beyond 45 degrees or an imaginary line drawn through the corners of 1st base.
- 2) The 'foul ground theory' should be used as an exception when you can't get to fair territory. Only on balls hit to the first baseman, the second baseman's extreme left, or to a short right field, where the throw is coming to the first baseman from near the foul line, the umpire should stay outside the diamond in foul territory and move up the line to make the call. Move no further than a line 45 degrees through first base and at the same distance as you were positioned at the start of the pitch. (This allows you to set up the same distance and position on both sides of the foul line.) As the outside position is very vulnerable it is preferred, whenever possible, that the umpire moves inside the diamond unless forced to stay outside by the throw to the first baseman or another fielder coming from near the first base foul line.

Tag Plays

Many of the elements discussed on force plays also apply to tag plays, such as position, angle and peripheral vision especially as the play develops. However, the major difference is in the fact that on tag plays we want you to complete the call with your nose right on the tag.

As the play develops, stay back, keep ALL the elements in front of you – the ball, the defense, the runner and the base, as well as the area where they all come together.

Now as the runner and the ball near that tag area, move towards the play. Get about 3-3.5 meters (10-12 feet) away and let the play carry you into the tag. Normally the best angle on tag plays is 90 degrees from the path of the runner just short of the base at the point of contact.

PRIMARY POSITIONS FOR TAG PLAYS AT A BASE:

Various primary positions exist around each base. By moving parallel with the runner it will always bring you to one of these primary positions which you can then adjust to a calling position. You should try to obtain a primary position for every play and should always end a play in your next primary position.

When we speak of unobstructed angles, we mean never position yourself so that the defensive player or runner is between you and the actual tag. The angle may move as the tag and slide are made. The umpire must also move to keep an unobstructed view.

Once you have allowed the play to develop, move in on the play, concentrate on whether the tag was made prior to the runner reaching the base or the runner beat the tag to the base. If the runner is in before the tag, the play is over, providing the runner doesn't slide past the base. Hesitate slightly then make your call, SAFE.

On the other hand, the out call is more critical. Nothing can be any more embarrassing than to have the tag beat the runner on a close play, have the umpire come up with a good strong OUT, only to have the ball roll out from under the pile.

If the tag is made prior to the runner reaching the base, hesitate; make certain the fielder has the ball, point at the ball with the left hand, and call OUT with the "overhand" out call, making certain you SELL IT.

On the same play where a good hard slide causes a collision and you CANNOT find the ball after the tag, continue looking for the ball and ask in a good crisp voice to, "Show me the Ball." Be sure to be pointing at the defensive player with your left hand while you are moving around the play trying to find the ball. When you see the ball, make the call with a good overhand signal, of course, be certain you don't turn your head away from the play when making the call. Remember, you must FIND THE BALL.

DO NOT PLANT yourself like a batter digging in at the plate, move in and around the play if necessary to see the tag and move to find the ball.

Pulled Foot

Quite often the play itself will dictate your actions as to 'selling the call'. For example, the pulled foot at first base. It might be obvious that the ball arrived in plenty of time to retire the runner, however, the first baseman pulled the foot off the bag before the catch. In this case you should think in terms of priorities. You do NOT want anyone to think that the runner was called safe because the runner beat the throw. Thinking in terms of priorities, your first move should be toward the play, *POINTING WITH YOUR LEFT HAND* at the base indicating that the fielder did in fact pull the foot followed with a vigorous vocal and demonstrative – '*OFFFFFF!*' and follow with the proper 'safe' signal – selling it. If you give the 'safe' signal and nonchalantly point at the base, it will appear as though you 'blew' the call and are looking for an excuse.

Swipe Tag

Similarly with the play where an errant throw goes up the line toward home plate and the first baseman makes an excellent catch and 'swipe tags' the runner prior to reaching first base. Think in terms of priorities, how was the out made.

Never guess an out. This is similar to never guessing a strike. If the runner beat the ball, never go for help. If you do request help, make the request before making the call and let the home plate umpire make the call. If you do request help, the ball beat the runner and now it must be determined if the foot was off the base or the tag made and you were blocked out and could not see the tag.

Move up and toward the foul line in the direction of the play. You may have to get low and lean one way or the other to see the tag. These movements will not only give you a better view, they will help sell the call. If you have no doubt that the tag was made, point with the left hand, and with a one-word verbal description, '*TAGGGGG*,' followed with a good '*sell out*' arm signal. If you have doubt or think the tag was missed, the point should be accompanied with a strong vocal '*NOOOOO*' followed with a good '*sell safe*' signal.

One Word Descriptions

Whenever an umpire *POINTS* to help 'sell' the call and uses a vocal description, it is recommended using one word only, such as:

- "YESSS" for calling a check swing on your own, followed with a strong hammer for a strike.
- "SWINGGG" when asking partner for help on check swing. Do not echo the signal. Only give the new count before signaling the pitcher to pitch.
- "NOOOO" when there is a missed tag, and a strong sell-safe signal, or on a check swing request it was felt the batter did not swing.
- "TAGGGG" when the fielder tags a runner, with a strong overhand out.
- "OFFFF" when the fielder pulls a foot and the runner is safe. Use sell-safe signal.

- "BALLLLL" when you can't find the ball and you want the fielder to show it to you. As soon as you see the ball, give a strong overhand out signal.

Inside-Outside Theory

The inside-outside theory is simple, if the ball is hit inside the diamond, (meaning anything hit on the dirt infield), stay OUTSIDE the diamond. In the majority of cases if ball is hit in to the outfield area, move INSIDE the bases unless you have responsibility for fly ball coverage. Sometimes at the 2nd base position an umpire may have to stay out to get the proper angle and keep all four elements in front.

The purpose is equally as simple. ALL four elements are in front of you: The BALL, the RUNNER, the DEFENSIVE PLAYER(S), and the BASE where they all come together.

Button-Hook

The Key to the inside-outside theory is movement and the key to movement regarding the inside-outside theory is the button-hook. The button-hook is a term used for the method of moving from outside the diamond to the inside. As you move toward the inside of the diamond you should be concentrating on the runner(s) you are responsible for, making sure you do NOT interfere with anyone, checking for the tag of the base, obstruction or interference while glancing to pick up the ball in the outfield.

As you are moving inside the diamond, you should be: Watching the runner, glancing to pick up the ball, watching the runner, glancing to pick up the ball. Once inside the diamond 3-3.5 meters (10-12 feet), pivot (or button-hook) into the play, make sure the runner touches the base, check for obstruction and proceed with the play.

Three-Foot Line

A violation of the 1 metre (3-foot) line is an example of an **interference** call and calls for the umpire to take charge. The umpire should step into the play throwing arms high above the head calling loudly "DEAD BALL". Step toward the violation area, point at the spot of **interference** with the left hand and give a strong overhand out signal. At this time, the runners MUST be instructed to return to the last base legally touched at the time of the **interference**.

Running Out of the Base Path

Running out of the base path to avoid a tag is also a violation *but does NOT result in a dead ball*. The umpire should point with the left hand indicating that the runner did violate the rules, (by running out of the base path) and follow with a strong overhand out signal if needed. Other runners may continue to advance at their own risk and the umpire should react accordingly.

Interference

For interference calls, a vigorous dead ball signal should be given with both arms extended high above your head, and with a strong vocal call of "DEAD BALL". It is important that you step in with authority and take charge. Halt any further play as soon as possible, as continued play simply leads to confusion. Three things must always occur on an interference call: 1) The ball is dead, 2) an out is called, and 3) all runners must return to the base they occupied at the time of the interference. Note: If the batter-runner causes interference, the ball is dead from the time of the pitch.

Obstruction – Fake Tag

Obstruction is the act of a fielder who is in the base path without the ball and is not attempting to field a batted ball, and who impedes the progress of a runner. About to receive the ball is NOT a form of obstruction.

All obstruction calls require a delayed dead ball signal, allowing a runner played on or not played on the same ability to advance. The umpire will protect the runner only to the base the runner would have made had there not been obstruction (This is solely the judgment of the umpire making the call). If the runner is played on prior to this base and the ball is in control of the defender, a dead ball is called and the award of bases(s) made. If the runner advances beyond the base protected, and is tagged out, the out stands and the ball remains live.

It should also be clear that when saying "a runner cannot be called out between the two bases obstructed," does not pertain when another violation is being played upon. (e.g., a runner leaving second base too soon on a fly ball is returning to second after the ball is caught and is obstructed between second base and third base. If the runner would not have made it back to second base prior to the throw arriving, the runner would remain out. The same is true on a missed base).

Remember, the obstructed runner cannot be called out between the two bases obstructed, therefore, if the umpire does not feel the runner would have made the advance base, the runner is returned to the previous base.

A fielder may not make a fake tag (a tag without a ball), on a runner advancing or returning to a base. This is a form of obstruction. The runner is awarded the base that he/she would have made had the fake tag not occurred. A fake tag could result in ejection.

Catcher Obstruction

If a catcher obstructs a batter by tipping the bat or holding his glove over home plate and the bat hits the glove on the forward or backward swing, the batter is awarded first base. Exception: This is a delayed call and if the batter hits the ball, reaches first base safely and all other runners advance at least one base, the obstruction is ignored. It is also ignored if the above does not happen, but the offensive manager wants to take the result of the play on the batted ball. Refer to the section on plate mechanics for further discussion on 'catcher obstruction' options and proper mechanics.

Collisions

Simply because there is contact between the defensive and offensive player does not mean that obstruction or interference has occurred. This is definitely NOT the case.

Illegal Pitches

Concern here is that the base umpire is aware of illegal pitch responsibilities. Because the base umpire has the side view on the points (first and third base), means the base umpire is responsible for any action behind and in front of the pitching plate. Feet on the rubber, front and back, as well as the crow hop. It requires a delayed dead ball signal. Allow the play to continue and rule accordingly. Again, look under plate mechanics, for the violation and penalty enforcement.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR BASE UMPIRES

- Hustle.
- When stationed at first or third base, the umpire should stand at the correct distance depending on whether there are runners on or not.
- Move on all pitched, batted and thrown balls.
- Call all your plays in fair territory except when the play dictates for you to be in foul territory.

- Don't make a call until the catch or play is completed.
- Don't let players or coaches call plays for you.
- Check to make certain all bases are secure and clean and the pitcher's plate is clean.
- Do not make a big call on obvious out, safe, fair or foul calls.
- A 'safe' signal or verbal call is not necessary when the thrown ball gets by the defensive player.
- Line-up runners on all fly balls to the outfield, as outlined in tag up procedures in this manual.
- Watch runners touch all bases.
- Slow up runners when the ball becomes dead because of foul balls, etc.
- Take positions that will keep you out of the player's way. Check with the fielders every time you move to see that you are not obstructing their view.
- Hustle out on fly balls and stay out until play is concluded.
- Never walk from one position to another; hustle and the ball players will follow your example.
- Whether there are runners or not, base umpires should always start in the 'ready' position.
- Make your close calls with a strong enthusiastic voice.
- On run-downs, the responsibility of the call is determined by the direction the runner is running towards.
- Don't touch balls thrown to you by the defensive team, as there may not be three outs.
- Recognize your next play and prepare for it.
- When calling, "TIME" for an injured player, stay nearby until the coach or trainer comes out. Then leave the area.
- Do not signal/echo foul balls from the bases, (Unless the batter is hit by a batted ball and the plate umpire does not see it or if runners are on base and are running towards you.) This would be a foul ball signal – never an out.
- Be ready to call illegal pitches.
- Watch for the position of all runners at the time of throw on overthrows.
- Watch for a pitched ball swung at (assist if requested by the plate umpire).
- Watch for batter hit by pitch in the batter's box (immediately signal dead ball)
- Watch for batter hit by ball out of the batter's box (signal dead ball)
- Watch for runners leaving base before the pitched ball leaves the pitcher's hand.
- Watch for interference.
- Watch for obstruction.
- Back up the plate umpire.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, "KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL" AND KNOW WHERE IT IS AT ALL TIMES!

Please check with ISF Ump/School Website for the most up to date version of the Umpire Manual:
www.ruleboxsoftware.com/login.aspx?tcID=1