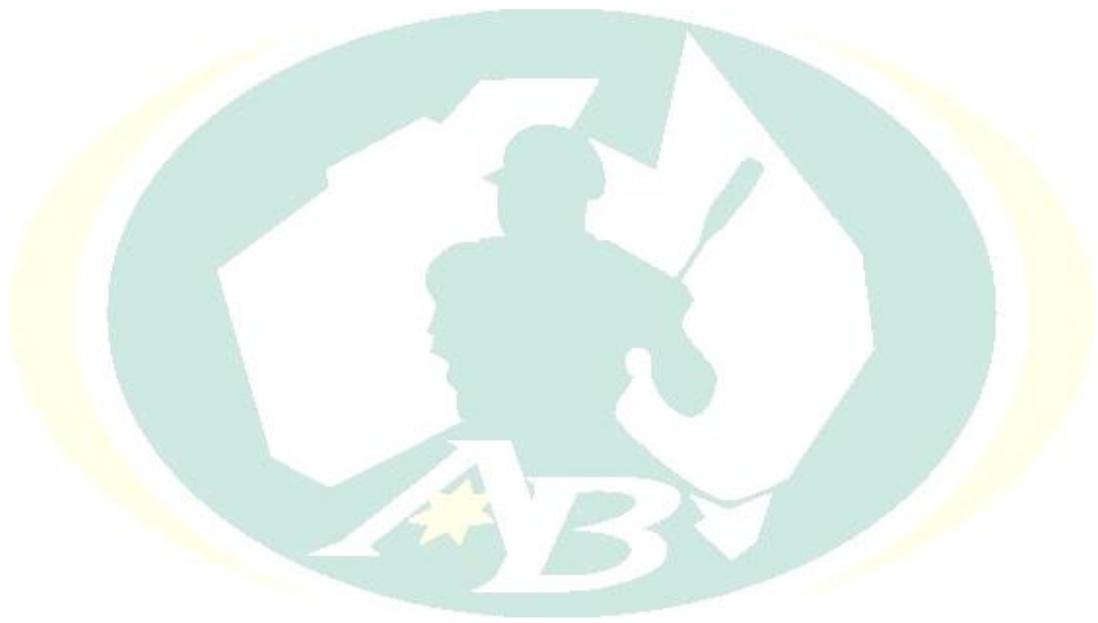


AUSTRALIAN BASEBALL

UMPIRE'S MANUAL

Resource Material

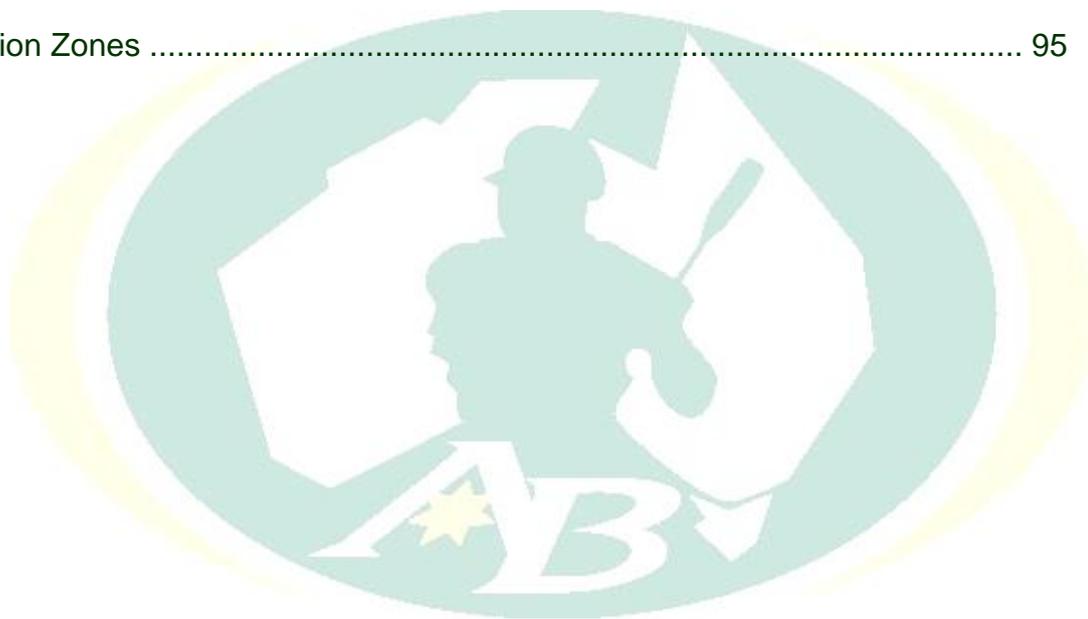


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FOREWORD

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

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

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

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

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

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

The objectives of this course include:

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

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

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

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

PHILOSOPHY OF BASEBALL UMPIRING

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

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

Remember you represent the league and all of baseball.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



A CODE OF ETHICS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Use commonsense allied with good judgement in all situations.

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

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

WHILST OFFICIATING ...

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

Set your watch for the correct time.

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

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

Never smoke on the job.

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

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

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

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

Be alert, consistent and on top of the play.

Be letter-perfect on rules and mechanics.

ALWAYS SUPPORT BASEBALL

REQUIREMENTS OF AN UMPIRE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ATTITUDE

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

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

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

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

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

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

OBJECTIVITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

BEING HUMAN

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

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

HUSTLE AND DECISIVENESS

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

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

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

STEADY CONCENTRATION

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

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

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

GOOD JUDGMENT

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

CONSISTENCY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONTROL AND DISCIPLINE

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

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

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

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

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

Knowledge of Rules

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

Appearance

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

Attitude

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

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

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

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

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

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

What works for one may not work for all.

PRE-GAME PREPARATION

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

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

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

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

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

Check:

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

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

STRIKE ZONE (IN AUSTRALIA)

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

UPPER LIMIT - *WHOLE BALL BELOW BOTTOM OF BREAST*

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

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

LOWER LIMIT - *MATCHING THE KNEE-CAP*

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

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

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

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

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

DISTANCE - *OPPOSITE THE PLATE*

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

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

The underlined expressions are to be remembered and quoted.

FAIR / FOUL

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

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

Fair Territory

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

Foul Territory

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

Fair Ball

Essential points are:

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

Foul Ball

Essential points are:

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

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

DEAD BALL / LIVE BALL

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

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

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

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

DELAYED DEAD BALL SITUATIONS

The umpire should signal a delayed dead ball when:

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

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

DEAD BALL - RUNNERS ADVANCE ONE BASE

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

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

DEAD BALL - RUNNERS RETURN

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

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

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

DEAD BALL - RUNNERS RETURN UNLESS FORCED

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

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



CATCH / No CATCH

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

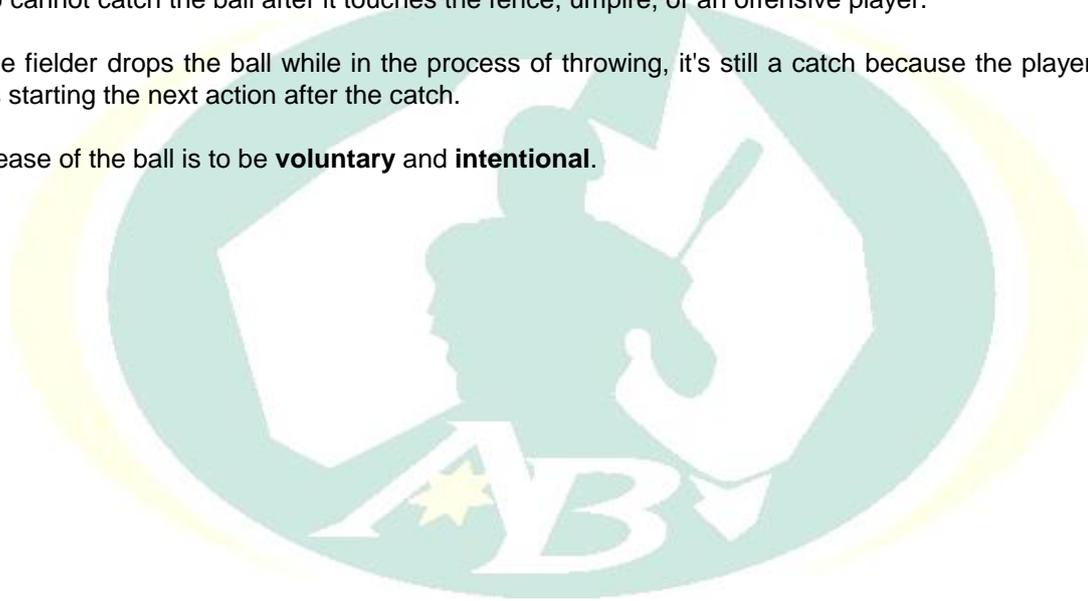
Some people think that a player has caught the ball as soon as he grabs it. This is not the case.

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

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

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

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



INFIELD FLY

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

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

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

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

Points to remember:

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

AWARDS OF BASES

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

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

(1) **Pitcher**

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

A pitcher, whilst not in contact with the rubber, is considered an infielder.

(2) **Fielder**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OBSTRUCTION

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

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

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

UMPIRE'S COURSE OF ACTION

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

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

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

PENALTIES IMPOSED

1. (Rule 7.06a) If a play is being made on an obstructed runner, the umpire calls "Time" and awards the obstructed runner the next base and all other runners the bases they would have reached (in his judgement) if there had been no obstruction.

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

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

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

2. (Rule 7.06b) If no play is being made on the obstructed runner, then play shall proceed until no further action is possible. The umpire shall call "Time" and impose penalties to nullify the obstruction. The ball is not dead and if the runner advances beyond the base which the umpire would have awarded, the runner does so at his / her own risk and is liable to be tagged out.

INTERFERENCE

WHAT IS INTERFERENCE?

To impede, hinder or confuse.

(Definition (Rule 2)) There are four types of interference:

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

OFFENSIVE INTERFERENCE

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

If a batter or runner is declared out for interference, all other runners return to last legally touched base unless otherwise stated. (Rule 7.09)

DEFENSIVE INTERFERENCE

Defensive interference is an act by a fielder that hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch. (Rules 6.08(c), 7.04(d) and 7.07)

UMPIRES INTERFERENCE

Plate umpire interferes with a catcher's throw (unless the catcher achieved what he / she set out to do, in which case the interference is ignored). (Rule 5.09(b))

A fair ball touches an umpire on fair territory before passing an infielder. (Pitcher excepted). (Rule 5.09(f), 6.08(d))

SPECTATORS INTERFERENCE

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

Spectators throwing items onto the playing field may constitute interference.

INTERFERENCE PENALTY

On any interference the ball is dead.

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

Interference need not be intentional.

WHO CAN CAUSE INTERFERENCE

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

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

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

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

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

BATTING OUT OF ORDER

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

SWEARING AND EQUIPMENT ABUSE

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

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

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

BLEEDING RULE

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

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

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

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

FORCE PLAY SLIDE RULE

It is an illegal slide if:

- (1) The runner slides or runs out of the base line in the direction of the fielders and cannot reach the base with hand or foot.
- (2) The runner uses a rolling, cross body or pop-up slide into a fielder. (A pop-up slide is a legal slide as long as the runner does not make contact with or alter the play of the fielder.)
- (3) The runner's raised leg is higher than the fielder's raised knee when in a standing position.
- (4) The runner goes beyond the base and makes contact or alters the play of the fielder. (Beyond the base refers to any part of the offensive player's body that makes contact with or alters the play of the fielder beyond the base.)
- (5) The runner slashes or kicks the fielder with either leg or arm.
- (6) The slide is flagrant.
- (7) Runners are not permitted to use a slide 'to break up the double' at home plate.

NOTE: If the runners slide is flagrant, the individual shall be ejected from the game.

If the runner on a force play makes an illegal slide at any base, including home plate, interference shall be called.

PENALTY

The umpire shall call the batter / runner out because of interference of his team-mate. Interference is also considered to have occurred if the runner:

- (1) makes illegal contact with the fielder;
- (2) forces fielder to alter pattern of play by running or sliding at fielder in an illegal manner to disrupt the fielder's attempt to complete a play; or
- (3) illegally slides towards or contacts the fielder even if the fielder makes no attempt to throw to complete a play.

NOTE: If interference is called, other runners shall not be allowed to advance. Examples: bases loaded no outs; double play attempt at second base and interference is called. The runners at second and third bases must return to their original base.

FORCE / TAG PLAYS

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

Refer to Rule 2.00 - Definitions for Force Play and Tag.

FORCE PLAY

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

TAG PLAY

Note that the term as defined can have two meanings:

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

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

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

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

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

General rules:

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

Reference can be made to the notes following Rule 4.09 for further examples.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.08(c): Runner is out when tagged whilst off the base.

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

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

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

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

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

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

TAG PLAYS

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

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

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

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

Try to frame the complete picture:

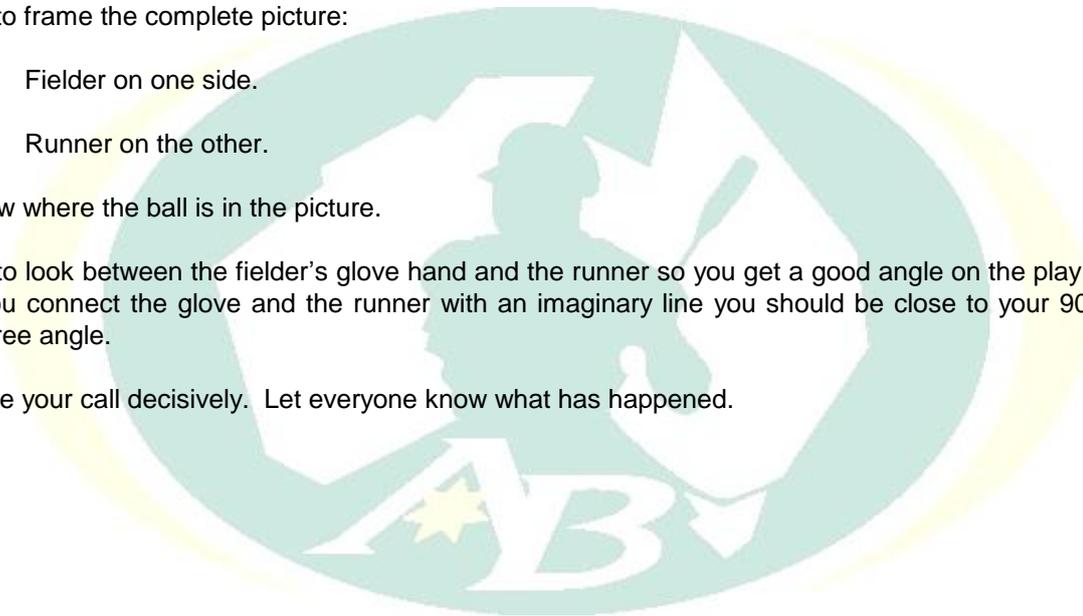
Fielder on one side.

Runner on the other.

Know where the ball is in the picture.

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

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



APPEALS

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ball is alive.

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

FURTHER APPEAL SITUATIONS

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

PROPER PROCEDURE

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

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

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

THE PITCHER

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

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

THE RUBBER

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

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

POSITIONS OF WINDUP AND SET

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

Pitchers:

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

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

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

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

WINDUP POSITION

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

The pitcher's pivot foot* must be:

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

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

- (1) perpendicular to;

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

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

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

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

(1) may (but not must) step once backwards; and

(2) must step once forward.

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

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

THE SET (OR "STRETCH") POSITION

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

The pitcher's pivot foot must be:

(1) parallel to;

(2) completely on, or forward of, and touching the pitching rubber.

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

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

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

(1) join hands; and

(2) execute a complete stop of such motion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PICK OFF MOVE LEFT HAND

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

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

PICK OFF MOVE RIGHT HAND

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

What are the points the umpires will look for?

There are quite a few of them.

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

BALK

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

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

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

UMPIRE MECHANICS

THE SET POSITION

The set position shall:

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

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

ASSUMING THE SET POSITION

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

NOTES

PLATE UMPIRE - EQUIPMENT AND STANCE

Equipment

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

Shoes	A reinforced toe and guard over the top of the instep.
Shin Guard	Reaching from the ankle to the knee.
Cup	Tucked into your athletic support.
Body Protector	There are two types: (1) The outside: Rarely used today because of its bulk, but a very efficient shelter from errant balls. (2) The inside: Strapped to the body, under the shirt. The body section is padded. There are hard shells to cover the shoulders; some have extensions to protect the upper arms. Both must be used well up under the chin to protect the throat.
Mask	Similar to that worn by the catcher. All must have projections to protect the ears. If you wear an inside protector you will also want a throat guard on the chin of the mask.
Counter	Held in the left hand.
Brush	Held in the ball bag or pocket.
Ball Bag	Worn on the belt of your throwing side. Holds three to five balls.

Stance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PLATE UMPIRE - TIMING

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

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

The Strike Call

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

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

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

The Call of Ball

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

There should be an audible call on every pitch.

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

FIELD UMPIRE – FIRST BASE POSITIONING

Stance

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

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

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

Position

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FIELD UMPIRE - SECOND BASE POSITIONING

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

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

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

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

Double Plays

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

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

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

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

Pick Off

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

Steal

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

Pick Off

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

Steal

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

FIELD UMPIRE – FIRST BASE PIVOT

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

UMPIRE'S JURISDICTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

HELPFUL HINTS FOR UMPIRES

HOW TO SPEED UP A BALL GAME

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

The following points should be observed:

- All pre-game arrangements (diamond marking, warm up, scorebooks, final instructions, signals, etc) must be completed to ensure the game will start on the scheduled time.
- Benches are correctly placed to ensure the teams are in the game.
- The umpire shall be supplied with sufficient spare balls for the particular ground.
- All bases shall be properly and securely pegged to avoid breaking of straps and re-positioning during the game.
- Ensure the pitcher always has a match ball for warm-up, etc.
- Pitcher has up to one minute for up to eight warm-up pitches over the plate only. If the catcher is delayed, have a spare player at the plate to take the warm-up. If, before complete eight pitches, the pitcher has had enough, the pitcher should indicate to the umpire. No warm-up for the catcher is necessary. Catcher or spare player to be wearing mask during warm-up.
- The pitcher shall take signals from on the plate (Rule 8.01).
- Pitchers shall avoid unnecessary delays (Rule 8.05 (h)).
- First baseman shall promptly pass the ball to his / her bench when the umpire calls "Ball Out!"
- Batters shall come up to the plate without waiting to be called and next batter shall always be ready.
- Prompt fetching of foul and overthrown balls by both sides. Fetched by whoever is nearest and not necessarily the batting side.
- Fielders should not have to chase balls beyond playing limit, ie, passed balls, overthrows, fouls, etc. The alternative ball shall be called in.
- Appoint a bat boy to collect bats and helmets rather than leave this for the next batter to collect.
- The catcher shall promptly return the ball to the pitcher who shall take his / her position on the plate promptly (Rule 8.04).
- A runner put out at second base shall hustle off the diamond.

- After a batter is out and the infield throw the ball around, the catcher shall have an early throw to ensure he / she is back at the plate when the batter is ready. Teams shall develop a regular throw around system.
- This throw around shall be amongst the infielders only. All throws short and direct to avoid mistake.
- Plays for tight situations are plotted before the game and signals are used to a maximum. The call of "Time" should be limited.
- If "Time" is called for discussion by players with their coach, this shall be completed with a minimum of time wasted.
- Both teams to hustle on and off the diamond between innings.
- Unless the catcher is the last batter and is left on base, there should be no excuse for him / her to delay getting to position for the new inning.
- Base coaches shall hustle to position and not linger behind the plate.

DO'S AND DON'TS

Do:

- Hustle.
- Study rules daily.
- Be neat at all times.
- Communicate.
- Be courteous but firm.
- Be punctual.
- Forget the bad days.
- Be truthful.
- Call your own plays.
- Keep your cap and uniform clean.
- Keep the plate clean.
- Make decisions at a dead stop.
- Be on top of your plays.
- Back up your partner.
- Keep your eye on the ball.
- Be a gentleman.

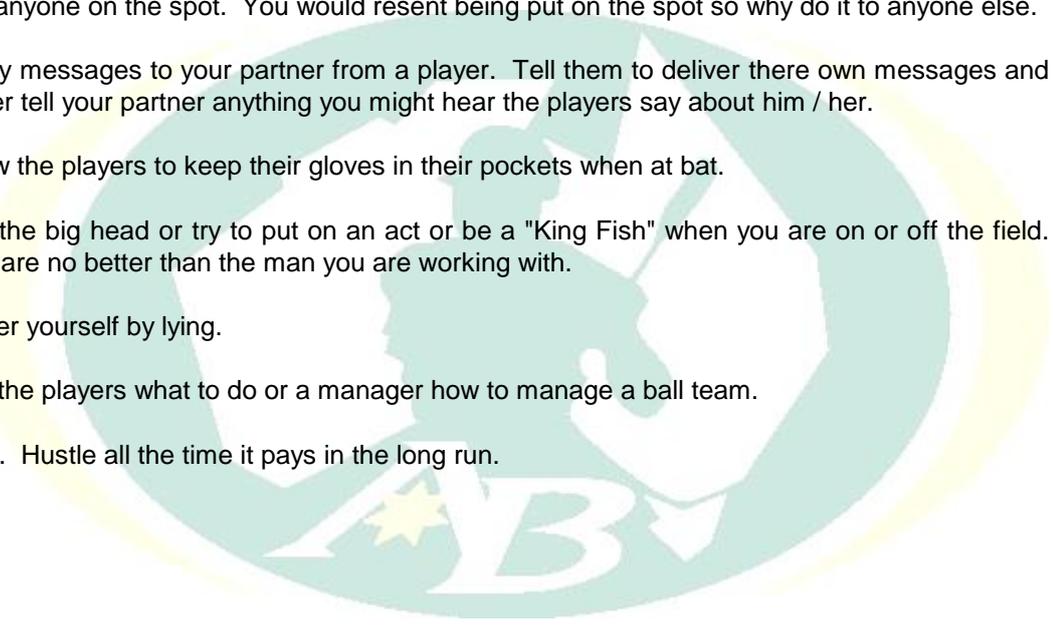


- Bear down whenever necessary.
- Be alert in thinking and action.
- Improve yourself and your umpiring.
- Stay in shape.
- Take pride in your work.
- Be pleasant and smile.
- Avoid unnecessary conversation with the players.
- Think ahead while on the field.

Don't:

- Kid the ball players at any time.
- Drag out the calling of balls and strikes.
- Call the hitter out on a fly ball when it is obvious.
- Call the strike out loud when the batter swings at and misses a pitch.
- Second guess your partner at any time, on or off the field.
- Make a decision on the run. Stop first.
- Make a decision too soon. Take a good look first to be sure the play is completed, and then give it to the player with plenty on it.
- Tell the players what to do or how to play their position.
- Call the runner out with your mask in your right hand.
- Let the players run over you, but take as much as you can.
- Be doubtful. Know what is going on.
- Stand in a player's way then they can't use you as an alibi.
- Be rabbit ears. What do you care what they say or do in the stands.
- Look for trouble. You will find plenty of it without looking.
- Get set too soon when working behind the plate.
- Be over technical.
- Talk about anyone unless you have something good to say about them.
- Go out onto the field with a chip on your shoulder.
- Try to out-talk the players. Let them do the talking and when they have said enough, make them play ball.

- Talk back to the stands for they can think faster than you.
- Worry about the game or what happened on the diamond. It is all over as far as you are concerned when the last out is made.
- Smoke during a game.
- Call tag plays too soon. It is better to be a little late in making the call rather than to make the call then have to change your decision.
- Locate the ball for the players or let them know where the ball is. If it is in the field the team is trying to pull the hidden ball trick.
- Alibi to anyone at any time. It won't help.
- Put anyone on the spot. You would resent being put on the spot so why do it to anyone else.
- Carry messages to your partner from a player. Tell them to deliver there own messages and never tell your partner anything you might hear the players say about him / her.
- Allow the players to keep their gloves in their pockets when at bat.
- Get the big head or try to put on an act or be a "King Fish" when you are on or off the field. You are no better than the man you are working with.
- Lower yourself by lying.
- Tell the players what to do or a manager how to manage a ball team.
- Loaf. Hustle all the time it pays in the long run.



UMPIRING FROM THE STANDS

Some time back a distraught young umpire phoned me:

"I'm gonna get scratched. I blew a balk. If that other umpire hadn't said anything, I think....." "Hold on", I interrupted. "That other umpire is supposed to call balks". "Oh, I don't mean my partner, I mean the one in the stands"...

With a sigh, I ended the conversation as soon as possible, after assuring the rookie that blowing one call wouldn't get him scratched. But what could I do about the "one in the stands"? He's the one I would like to scratch.

Meetings often concern field behaviour, taking charge, handling tricky situations, dealing with coaches, game control. But seldom does anyone teach us how to comfort ourselves off the diamond.

One lesson I learned the hard way is that we all belong to one officiating brotherhood. For 15 years I did not officiate. My second year back, I attended a junior football game. One team represented the school where I worked. Just before the half ended an obvious pass interference prevented my team from scoring, but no flag. Like everyone else I yelled my objection, louder than most, I'm sure. During intermission, I hurried down to the field to discuss the "error" with the referee. I knew him, as we had both called basketball games together;

"That's interference," I said. "Get off my back", he snapped. "I thought you were an official. I was wrong". "Look, I don't referee football....." I began, "Now we know why. But if you are an official, act like one. We have to stick together. Dammit, shut up!"

That embarrassing incident led me to the rule that will keep you out of trouble when you are not calling a game.....STAY HOME. If your son is pitching, you'll probably want to be there. But you can't afford to make a fool out of yourself.

As an official you are likely to be a 'type A' personality: impatient, excitable, aggressive, and critical of others but not always yourself. Even if your son or daughter is not playing you may have ties to one team. Remember your brotherhood, if you go, keep quiet. If you can't keep quiet, don't go.

Another trouble maker is the official who's there because he / she knows he / she does a better job than those clowns on the field. It may be he / she's been scratched from his / her game and is checking to see why the coaches would prefer those incompetents to his / her own superior work. Even modest officials generally believe themselves better than others who don the uniform. We all want to go behind the plate.

I'm an Umpire You Know

Game situation: The runner hooks into second, the fielder swipes the tag and the umpire signals out.

Too often, an off-duty umpire in the stands will moan or grimace. They might turn to a friend and shake their head sadly. Even worse, they may want everyone to know they're also an umpire and so has come to the game still in uniform. This person is begging to be noticed.

Even if he / she is in civilian clothing, many will know he / she's an umpire. Seeing his / her act, those who lost the decision now believe their opinion; "it was a brutal call", has been made canon law. That umpire agreed with them and everyone knows he / she's better than old Smithy, who should have retired years ago.

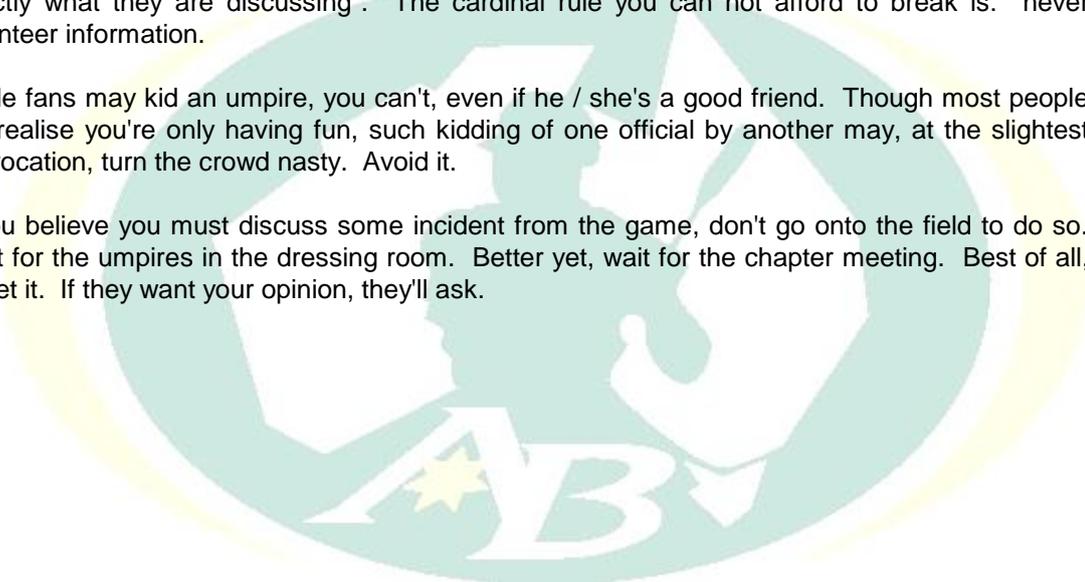
One tenet of the Umpires Code of Ethics is: "Co-operate and be professional in your association with your fellow umpires and do nothing to cause embarrassment". If you and a friend are at a game, after a controversial call, you must not be seen dissecting the play. You can't afford to show disapproval either verbally or with body language. Even if the call was the worst you have ever seen, you must remain silent.

That's difficult, especially if you're well known. For someone is sure to lean over and say, "What do you really think about that call?" In the old days I used to comment "Well if you promise not to tell....."

What you ought to say is: "He was closer to the play then we were". Or try this: "I didn't see the whole play". When an argument erupts about a rule, you should say if asked: "I'm not sure exactly what they are discussing". The cardinal rule you can not afford to break is: never volunteer information.

While fans may kid an umpire, you can't, even if he / she's a good friend. Though most people will realise you're only having fun, such kidding of one official by another may, at the slightest provocation, turn the crowd nasty. Avoid it.

If you believe you must discuss some incident from the game, don't go onto the field to do so. Wait for the umpires in the dressing room. Better yet, wait for the chapter meeting. Best of all, forget it. If they want your opinion, they'll ask.



PHILOSOPHY ON “GETTING IT TOGETHER” by Jim Evans – Major League Umpire

My personal philosophy has always been to 'control the things you can control' because there certainly will be many things happen to you that you cannot control.

Regardless of the level of baseball you umpire, I believe the following philosophies will enhance your efforts:

1. No Tobacco Usage On the Field

Professional baseball is trying to clean up its image. Many clubs have anti-tobacco policies. The Umpire Development Program (UDP) demands strict adherence. This is something you can control, so control it.

2. Facial Hair

Though the UDP has recently amended its policy on prohibiting facial hair, my personal suggestion would be to refrain from any form of facial hair. The UDP policy allows a neatly trimmed moustache. However, facial hair including moustaches, has often been associated with rebellion and nonconformity. As a young umpire, I feel that you should find ways to cooperate and work within the system.

3. No Hands In Pockets

This is an absolute 'no-no'. Again, to put the issue in perspective, let me say that this bad habit does not have much to do with anyone's judgment. You could be an outstanding umpire with unlimited potential, but by putting your hands in your pockets you send a very strong impression that you are bored, willing to buck the system, or defy your supervisors. It is very simple to control, so control it.

4. No Talking On the Field

Of course there are times between innings that discussion with your partner is essential. Communication is a very important aspect of good umpiring. Most conversations between innings however, are frivolous and unnecessary. Be a professional at all times.

5. No Fraternisation With Players

Most fraternisation is a symptom of insecurity. One feels that if he or she has an amicable, 'palsy-walsy' relationship with the participants, they are less likely to cause problems later. Don't believe it! Not only will you get the reputation of being a 'politician', but you will also lose the respect of stronger partners. Personality is a vital quality of a respected umpire. However, there is a fine distinction in being courteous and professional as opposed to being too solicitous.

6. No Unnecessary Relationships With Club Officials

Your job is on the field, not in the front office. Be courteous and professional with club officials but do not get too close. Officials generally want to get along with umpires. There are going to be times when conflicts and differences of opinion arise. That's part of the job description. You represent the President of the league. His / her actions must be fair for all members of the league and likewise, so must yours. Don't develop any love affairs with the front office. You will regret it!

7. **Respect Your Employer**

You have an inherent obligation to respect your employer and supervisors. This does not mean you cannot raise questions or express your sincere feelings at any time. It does mean though, that you should have the brain in gear before you put the mouth in motion. As umpires, we do not like to be criticised or chastised by someone who doesn't understand our job. By the same token, our boss' actions are often based on facts and information we don't have. Show respect!

8. **Do Not Bad Mouth Other Umpires**

Believe in yourself! When you develop a genuine confidence in your own abilities, you will find there is no need nor justification in comparing yourself to others or denigrating their work. When asked to comment on a play or decision, you are probably not going to be given all the facts, much less the extenuating circumstances. The umpiring fraternity is a small one and we should all work together to make it a better one. Be a good partner and staff member.

9. **Try Not to Carry Your Work Home With You**

I say "try" because this is a very difficult task to master. Remember, you **are** human and **are** going to make mistakes (not too many we hope). You **are** going to be criticised, sometimes fairly and sometimes unfairly. When you walk off the field you should have the feeling that you did your absolute best. Learn something every game. This can be a very self-gratifying profession, it can also be the most humbling experience in the world. Understand this truth and learn to cope with it.

10. **Take Pride in Your Work / Develop a Strong Work Ethic**

Be honest with yourself! Remember that no one can make you feel inferior without your granting them permission. Be firm **not** stubborn. Be proud **not** cocky. Be aggressive **not** overbearing.

By working intensely each game you will develop work habits that reduce your chance of error. Many people are surprised to hear me say that I work each spring training games with the same intensity as I do World Series games. I was told early in my career by some older umpires that I took my job too seriously. I disagreed then and I disagree today. To me, that's like telling Jack Nicklaus not to concentrate on that next shot because it's only one stroke and he has a three-stroke lead. Besides, this is a small tournament.

Jack Nicklaus, Ben Hogan and many other outstanding performers I have admired through the years program themselves for success on each shot. Preparation and concentration are key elements to that success.

There is a time to play and a time to work. Know the difference!

In conclusion, let me remind you that to improve your work you must develop some form of 'continuing education', either through self-study, organised efforts, or simply synthesising experience when you realise your successes.

PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLES by Jim Evans – Major League Umpire

1. Cooperate With Your Peers – Do Not Compete

Umpiring is a team effort. Be the best partner you can be. If your partner has a problem, your crew has a problem. If you have a problem, you both have a problem. Think and work as a team.

2. Umpire Responsibility – Do Not Let Someone Else's Irresponsible Behaviour Control You

Fans expect players, managers and coaches to act irrationally at times. Fans expect umpires to act professionally and rationally at **all** times. Do not lower yourself to their standard. Set your own standard.

3. You Must Earn Respect, It Does Not Come With the Uniform

The only thing that comes with the uniform is the cleaning bill and lots of responsibility. Learn to earn respect.

4. Work Hard Every Pitch of Every Game – That Pitch Means Something to Someone

Many umpires get themselves in trouble simply because they 'let up' or let their intensity diminish. Many unexpected things happen everyday on the baseball field. Be prepared each pitch and remember, "it ain't over till it's over".

5. Respect the Player's Desire to Win – Your Job is to Make Calls, Not to Pass Judgment

Respect players for what they are - exceptional athletes who have earned the right to be where they are because of their athletic skills. Like any occupational cross-section, some are respectable human beings and others have no compunction about any of their actions. Umpire the game not the personalities. Take charge and control the game as necessary.

6. Understand that Understanding People Are Not Going to Always Understand Things the Way You Understand Them – Understand?

Just because someone disagrees with a call, a way you handled a situation, or some other issue, does not mean that person is a real idiot or does not recognise your genius. We all view the world from different angles with different motives. Trying times are often the best opportunities for an umpire to prove how professional and good they really are. Think of tough situations as opportunities.

7. Try to Leave the Game at the Park – You Do Not Get Paid Extra for Double Headers

It is mentally impossible to walk away from the park and never again think about that game. Not only is that impossible, but also an ineffective way to learn and progress as an umpire. Be realistic about your expectations. Review your work conscientiously but do not become consumed by your shortcomings. Conversely, do not be lulled into a false sense of greatness by an exaggerated estimation of your own work. Today's star is tomorrow's cinder. Umpiring can be a very humbling experience. An unrealistic appraisal of your work can lead to real problems off the field. Do not be like an umpire I once knew who only drank after games to forget a bad call or to celebrate a great one.

8. **Be Honest With Yourself – If You Do Not Believe that Person In the Mirror, Remember One Thing: 000**

A poem I discovered years ago has stuck with me and has been a daily reminder of this universal truth. I would like to share it with you and wish you many satisfying innings wherever you may work.

THE MAN IN THE GLASS

by Dale Wimbrow

When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself
And see what THAT man has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass;
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.

Some people may think you a straight-shooting chum
And call you a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.

He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest
For he's with you clear up to the end,
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of life
And get pats on your back as you pass,
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

FITNESS, EXERCISE AND DIET

FITNESS AND EXERCISE

This is an age in which, even in the country, more and more people go everywhere on wheels. Keeping fit has become a universal problem.

Research has shown that the physically fit person is able to withstand fatigue for longer periods than the unfit; that the physically fit person has a stronger, more efficient heart and that there is a relationship between good mental alertness, absence of nervous tension, and physical fitness.

There are many misconceptions about exercise and its effect upon the heart. "Exercise is harmful" nonsense! There is no evidence to support this contention.

Exercise, appropriate to age and physical condition, continued through your life span will help to reduce the possibility of heart and blood disease. Exercise, in mild form of course, is recommended as part of the recuperative phase in cases of heart and coronary disease. Exercise is beneficial to the function of the cardiovascular system.

The human body contains some 639 different muscles, accounting for some 45 percent of body weight. Each of these muscles has four distinct and measurable qualities which are of interest to us:

- (1) They can produce force - measured as strength of muscle.
- (2) They can store energy which permits them to work for extended periods of time independent of circulation - measured as muscular endurance.
- (3) They can shorten at varying rates - speed of contraction.
- (4) They can be stretched and will recoil - elasticity of muscle.

The combination of these four qualities of muscle is referred to as "muscular power".

If muscles are to function efficiently, they must be continually supplied with energy fuel. This is accomplished by the blood which carries the energy fuel from lungs and digestive system to the muscles. The combined capacity will supply you with muscular and organic power to perform with the highest possible efficiency.

All umpires have an obligation to the game of baseball as well as to themselves to have a reasonable standard of fitness. No one can call a good game if they are not "fit".

A reasonable standard of fitness can be obtained, depending on age, by a sample set of exercises and / or a planned programme of training.

Physical fitness is only half of being fit for umpiring. You must also be mentally fit. A game lasts for a long period of time without any rest periods. Concentration in a full game, not to mention a double-header, can tire you just as much as prolonged physical activity. Relaxation is an important part of umpiring. You need to relax without losing concentration. Personal hang-ups need to be discarded, they must not be taken onto the field with you.

If you have been following a programme of fitness training, you have prepared yourself physically and mentally for your umpiring.

Before commencing a programme of fitness training, you must look at yourself objectively. Decide what your capabilities would be and begin a programme that fits your body and even then, start quietly yet giving a reasonable effort.

If you have any doubts as to your capacity to undertake a fitness programme, see your medical advisor. You should not perform fast, vigorous, or highly competitive physical activity without gradually developing and continuously maintaining an adequate level of physical fitness, particularly if you are over the age of 30.

Never sit on a level of effort. Always try to improve. Work hard, yet remember not to go too far and relax often.

Don't follow the same programme until it bores you. Every now and then break the routine and do a different activity yet still working. Always try to seek advice whether by reading books on the subject or asking advice from a physical fitness expert or your doctor.

DIET AND EXERCISE INFORMATION

When planning what to eat to maintain proper weight and health ones diet should be made up of the following approximate percentages:

Carbohydrates:	58% (48% complex, 10% simple)
Protein:	12%
Fat:	30% (10% saturated, 10% monosaccharide, 10% polyunsaturated)

Complex carbohydrates consist of starch and fibre, natural sugars (ie, pasta, baked potatoes, oranges, etc).

Simple carbohydrates consist of simple concentrated sugars (ie, candy, etc).

Saturated fats are butter, meat, milk, eggs, etc. The more saturated a fat is, the more firm it is. Saturated fats tend to elevate blood lipids.

Monosaccharide is cashews, olive oil, peanut oil, peanut butter, etc.

Polyunsaturated is corn oil, margarine, almonds, etc. Polyunsaturated fats tend to lower blood lipids.

Lipoproteins are a cluster of fats associated with protein. Two most known are HDL (High Density Lipoproteins) and LDL (Low Density Lipoproteins).

HDL are in the blood and pick up unused cholesterol for disposal by the liver. HDLs can be increased through exercise. These are considered good.

LDL are made by liver and carry cholesterol to cells. These are considered bad.

Improper diet is a leading factor in the development of coronary heart disease. The major factors are fatty substances (lipids) called cholesterol and triglycerides. Cholesterol is manufactured by the body and is essential for carrying out many natural functions. It is present in certain foods we eat and is absorbed into the bloodstream during ingestion. When too much lipid cholesterol, (triglyceride) circulates in the blood, the excess gradually deposits on to the inner walls of the arteries causing them to close off. This is called atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).

To work out your recommended daily calorie intake requirement, use the following:

Your weight in kilograms _____ (1)

(1) x 24 hrs _____ (2) BMR

(2) X ____% activity _____ (3) Activity

(2) + (3) = _____ x .10 _____ (4) SDE

_____ (2)

_____ (3)

_____ (4)

_____ **Total Calories Needed Per Day.**

REMEMBER: To lose .5 kilograms per week, cut calories down by 500.

Don't try to lose too much too quickly. Lose it slowly over a long period and it will be harder for it to come back.

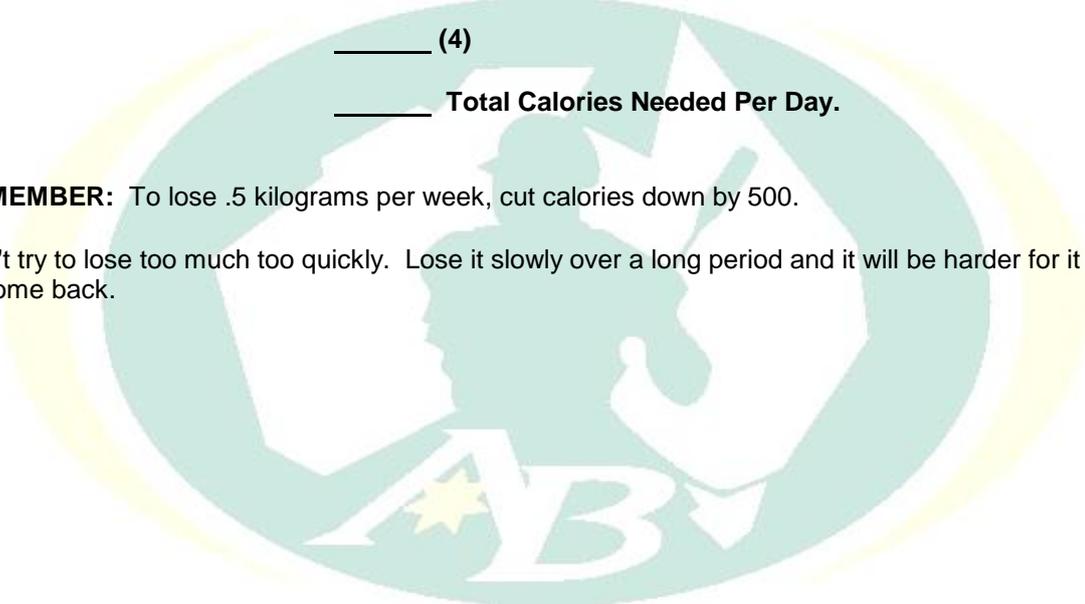


PLATE UMPIRE PROFESSIONAL TECHNIQUES

CALLING BALLS AND STRIKES

Definitions

Slot

The area between the catcher's head and the batter's body when the batter is in a natural stance and the catcher is in normal crouched position.

Tracking

Observing the entire flight of a pitch with eye movement rather than head movement. Seeing the ball the entire distance from the moment it leaves the pitcher's hand till it hits the catcher's mitt without any body movement necessary.

Timing

Suppressing the natural tendency to react immediately. Ensuring that a play or pitch is **completely** over before calling. Slow timing is always better than fast timing though extremely slow timing can produce negative results also.

Positioning

The plate umpire shall assume a position partially behind the catcher in which he / she is able to see the entire strike zone. The head shall be positioned in some portion of the slot at all times with the top of the head height above the catcher's. Ideally, the plate umpire's chin should be even with the top of the catcher's head and positioned in the slot with eyes focused on top of the batter's strike zone.

In order to get the head in the proper position the plate umpire must position the feet properly. A solid foundation created by spreading the legs slightly wider than shoulder width should be established. When assuming set position the position of the front foot should be established in the slot first and then the free foot positioned behind the catcher. The slot foot will point directly toward the mound and the free foot may angle up to 45 degrees.

The plate umpire's front foot will be in line with or slightly in front of an imaginary line extended from the catcher's heels. Each individual plate umpire must determine how far right or left in the slot that foot should be. Remember that feet position determines head position laterally. Vertical head position is determined by the width the feet are apart and the amount of squat the plate umpire introduces into the stance.

The plate umpire should position the head and shoulders relatively square to the plate. Angling the body and cocking the head to see the strike zone will present a distorted view.

As the catcher adjusts to different batters, so must the plate umpire adjust to different catcher positions. If the catcher virtually eliminates the slot by working so far inside, the plate umpire can work a little higher over the catcher's head. It may also prove beneficial to back up a little.

Techniques

Establish a rhythm with the pitcher and catcher. Do not assume set position behind the catcher until the catcher has set for the final time. Catchers generally set twice - once to give a signal and again to set the target.

When the pitcher is off the rubber, assume a relaxed position while keeping your eye on the ball. As the pitcher steps onto the rubber, move into ready position - your feet are not in their set position tracks but can instantly be established there. As the pitcher gets the sign and the catcher makes final adjustments, transition your feet into the exact location for set position. As the pitcher starts the wind-up or stretch, you instantly squat into set position. Remain set during the flight of the pitch, tracking the ball with your eyes only as your body remains still.

Mechanics

After tracking the pitch into the mitt with your eyes, it is time to make a decision. You must call either a ball or strike. If your timing is good, you are much more likely to call more pitches consistently correct.

Balls are to be called while still down in set position. At this stage you will always call all balls by the number, eg, "Ball 1 (2, 3 or 4)." A strong voice that can be heard at both dugouts should be used. No visual signal is given.

Strikes are to be called while coming up from the set position and also called by the number, eg, "Strike 1 (2 or 3)". The right arm is used to visually indicate a strike. The strike call and the out call are identical. A strong voice that can be heard in the nearby stands should be used.

Step back and relax until the pitcher assumes position back on the rubber. You then repeat your plate procedures.

Important Tips

- 👉 When returning to foul territory, keep your eyes everlasting on the baseball. Do not turn your back on it. Lots of things can happen, including the hidden ball trick.
- 👉 Do not automatically grant time when requested. Some players are insecure about throwing the ball back to the pitcher and will request it every play. Use sound judgement.
- 👉 On fair / foul decisions down the third base line, go out as far as possible but **never** beyond the third base bag. Establish a rock solid standing set position to see the striking point of the ball.
- 👉 As plate umpire in the two-umpire system, you **will always** advance towards the centre of the diamond in the direction of the ball on all pop-ups to the infield and fly balls to the outfield with no one on.
- 👉 Use the line connecting first and third bases as the limit for how far you should go.
- 👉 On bunts and other batted balls that the catcher will attempt to field near the line, make sure not to run into the catcher as you start for your position. You should initially start in the opposite direction of the ball. This will give you your angle first, then go for the distance.

CLEARING THE CATCHER

On passed balls, wild pitches, and pop-ups it will be necessary to 'clear' the catcher so that you do not inhibit his / her ability to field the ball. The basic step involves pivoting away from the direction of the catcher's pursuit of the ball. Keep the ball of one foot on the ground as you pivot on it by swinging the other foot back. You, in effect, are opening the gate of the catcher's box and letting the catcher exit uninhibited. If the catcher's pursuit will be to the right, you pivot on your left foot by swinging your right foot back and vice versa.

Take your mask off and locate the ball. Advance parallel to the catcher if possible and be alert for a thrown mask, fan interference, and catch / no catch.

After successfully clearing the catcher, you will keep an eye on the ball on the ground and advance into position to make any call necessary. Do not look up in the air for the ball. You should react to the catcher's actions.

GETTING HELP ON HALF-SWINGS

The plate umpire shall call all half-swings on the batter that he / she possibly can. Do not get into a lazy habit of asking at every hint of a half-swing. If you need help, ask as soon as possible. Asking before the defensive team appeals to you can often defuse a potential problem. Ask especially quick on strike threes that get away from the catcher.

Make sure that your mechanic is clear, distinct and not mistaken by your partner. Some real problems have occurred because the base umpire mistook a strike call as an appeal for help and signalled, "No, he didn't!".

Players, managers and coaches are not allowed to come out and argue half-swings since these are all strike decisions. If this happens, first **warn** the player, manager or coach. If the player, manager or coach persists, **eject** him / her.

DECLARING THE INFIELD FLY

The plate umpire should initiate the infield fly call. He / she is usually farther from the ball and has a true perspective of the whole infield. His / her guiding philosophy shall be whether or not an infielder could handle the ball with 'ordinary effort'.

You shall never call an infield fly until the ball has reached its apex and started down.

Be especially careful on windy days.

As a guideline, anytime a fielder is going to make a catch away with his back to the infield, you probably have more than 'reasonable effort'.

The plate umpire comes out to the left in case the ball goes into the outfield. If it doesn't, the plate umpire will bounce into the diamond and call the infield fly.

CLEARING THE BAT

With runners in scoring position, it may be advisable for you to remove a bat which may inhibit the runner's slide or deflect a thrown ball to the plate.

This is strictly a professional courtesy and not a required mechanic. Your primary concern is to get position for a play at the plate. If time permits, you may pick up the bat and remove it from the field of play. Simply bend over, grab one end of the bat, and slide it forcefully from the field of play. **Do not pick it up and toss it.** On-deck hitters and preceding runners have been injured this way.

Do not kick the bat as you cannot control precisely where it will go. You may re-position it in a worse spot than it was originally.

Necessary

Available

Possible

BASE UMPIRE PROFESSIONAL TECHNIQUES

THE PIVOT

This is a three-part move that enables the base umpire to change direction 90 degrees. Initially, the left foot hits the ground followed by the right foot, then the right foot turns counter clockwise to put the base umpire parallel to the base path.

The base umpire shall pivot on all base hits through or over the infield. He / she shall time the pivot so that the counter clockwise turn is made as the base runner is approaching / touching the bag. This is the only time the base umpire will have his / her back to the ball. He / she will watch for the touch and any obstruction around the base.

The pivot will enable the base umpire to stay ahead of the base runner if the base runner advances to second base. When the base runner retreats to first base, the base umpire retreats also but not beyond an imaginary line from the first base edge of the pitcher's mound parallel to the first base line.

If the ball has been hit to right field, there is a greater chance of a throw behind the base runner. In this case, the base umpire may retreat a little farther back toward first base but **never all** the way back to the base.

On a definite extra base hit, the base umpire will pivot deeper toward second base to get a head start on a faster runner advancing beyond first base.

GOING OUT FROM INSIDE

When working inside the diamond with a runner(s) on, the base umpire is responsible for the catch / no catch in the outfield (with exception of ball near foul lines). If you anticipate a tough play developing, you must go out from your initial position between the mound and second base. "Going out" means going no further than the line connecting the bases. The base umpire still has total responsibility for all plays on the bases except those taken by the plate umpire at third base.

Try to anticipate plays that may develop into difficult chances, eg, balls that take outfielders to the wall, balls that cause infielders and outfielders to converge and balls that require diving or shoestrapping attempts.

Remember, plays made by infielders and outfielders near and going toward the foul lines belong to the plate umpire.

DECLARING INFIELDFLY

As a general rule, the plate umpire will initiate the infield fly and signal when the ball is in front of the base umpire. If the ball turns the base umpire, the base umpire should initiate the call as he / she is closer. In any event, once either umpire has signalled, the other umpire should make the signal also.

The infield fly should not be called until the ball has reached its apex and started down.

Proper verbiage for this call is "Infield fly, the batter is out!" On possible infield flies near the lines, the plate umpire shall call "Infield fly, if fair!" The base umpire only calls "Infield fly!" From inside the diamond, the base umpire has no position to determine fair or foul.

HELPING ON HALF SWINGS

The base umpire shall help the plate umpire on half-swings, **only** when the plate umpire requests help. Do not indicate that the batter swung or not merely because the catcher or any other player including the manager points to you. **The plate umpire must request your help.**

Be alert and make quick decisions on third strikes and passed balls but never before you are asked. The plate umpire should come to you as soon as possible in these situations. Managers, players, or coaches are not allowed to come out and argue with you on this call since it is a ball / strike decision. If one does first **warn**, then **eject** if one persists.

IMPORTANT TIPS

Stay alert. You must be ready to help your partner on half-swings, trapped third strikes, foul balls in the dirt and balls hitting the batter.

Do not move your eyes or head in an attempt to follow the pitch in flight to the batter. When the pitcher is totally committed to pitch, focus immediately on the plate area.

Never watch the ball in flight to first base. Once the infielder releases the throw, focus immediately on the base. Following the ball will cause your eyes to be moving when a close play develops. You are apt to see nothing but a blur or an explosion at the base. That's like taking a picture with a camera moving.

Angle and distance are always primary responsibilities for calling plays on the bases. Ideally, you should get a 90 degree angle for the throws to first. However, on balls hit to the first or second baseman coming towards first base, the 90 degree angle is not always practical in the two-umpire system.

Never position yourself so that you are looking at the first baseman's back.

When the ball is touched or strikes the ground close to the line, make an extra effort to 'sell' this call if the ball is not caught. To signal 'fair', pump your left arm with index finger pointing several times. To signal 'foul', throw both arms high into the air and use a strong voice. After the initial signal, you emphatically point, 'foul' with the index finger of your right hand. When the ball is obviously foul, you signal by merely pointing into foul territory.

Most line drives that require fair / foul decisions start in fair territory and curve towards foul territory. Generally you should move into fair territory slightly off the line to avoid being hit. If you move into foul territory the ball can easily run you down.

Be alert for converging players who could possibly block your view of the ball's striking point on the ground. Often the first or second baseman and the right fielder will converge down the line to make a play on a blooper or high fly. This may require you to make an adjustment at the last second by sacrificing your position astride the foul line in order to see the ball relative to the foul line. **You must see** the ball hit the ground. **You must see** the exact spot where a fly ball is touched by a player.

When the base umpire goes out, he / she shall strive to get the best angle and not necessarily the most distance.

Always be set to see the play, not just to make the call.

Learn to read the throw. If you can anticipate an errant throw, you will be able to adjust your position and improve your angle for a 'broken lay'. Often, a player's error translates into "umpire's error". The proper position for the routine play that should occur turns out to be a

terrible position for the swipe tag off the base. By reading the throw as early as possible, you improve your chances of adjusting properly.

Another benefit of reading the throw is evident on the 'ball in the dirt'. Your brain should instinctively instruct you to slow your timing way down. 'Balls in the dirt' are tough to handle and you want to make sure of firm and secure possession before making your call.

On a sure double, the pivot should be further in towards second base to eliminate a foot race between you and the base runner.

When you anticipate the base runner going to third base, cut the corner at second base. This will help you stay ahead of the base runner.

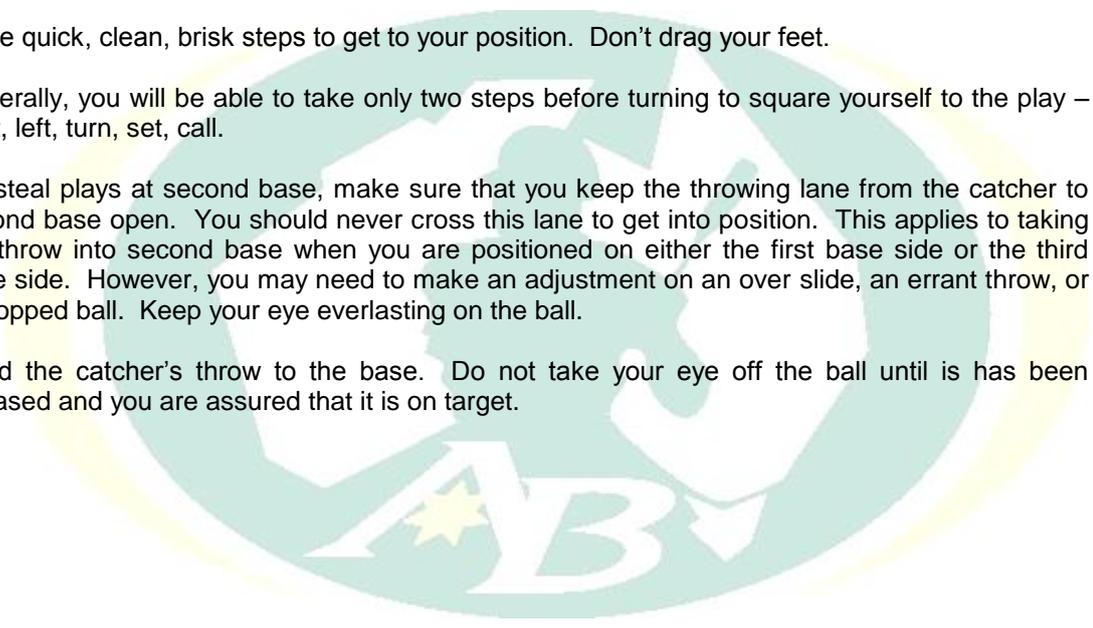
Remember, angle is primary to distance. It's great to get close to tough plays, but it is virtually impossible to do in a two-umpire system. Additionally, it is very dangerous to over-commit to one base when you have multiple runners. The base umpire is responsible for all follow-up plays.

Make quick, clean, brisk steps to get to your position. Don't drag your feet.

Generally, you will be able to take only two steps before turning to square yourself to the play – right, left, turn, set, call.

On steal plays at second base, make sure that you keep the throwing lane from the catcher to second base open. You should never cross this lane to get into position. This applies to taking the throw into second base when you are positioned on either the first base side or the third base side. However, you may need to make an adjustment on an over slide, an errant throw, or a dropped ball. Keep your eye everlasting on the ball.

Read the catcher's throw to the base. Do not take your eye off the ball until it has been released and you are assured that it is on target.



GAME SITUATION FOR *PLATE AND BASE* UMPIRES

GAME SITUATION

No one on / any number outs.

Batted Balls

Pop-ups between plate and base umpire.

Plate Umpire Responsibilities

- (1) Fair / foul on all pop-ups in front of base umpire.
- (2) Catch / no catch on plays facing plate umpire when obviously foul.
- (3) Catch / no catch on all pop-ups near the line.

Base Umpire Responsibilities

- (1) Catch / no catch on plays facing base umpire when obviously foul.

Plate and Base Umpire Positioning, Techniques and Mechanics

Pop-Ups Obviously Foul Between First Base and Home Plate

Both the plate and base umpires go straight over into foul territory keeping the fielder between them. Whoever the player is facing when he / she fields the ball is responsible for the call. If the catch is made facing neither, the closest umpire shall call it.

Pop-Ups Close to Line Between First Base and Home Plate

The base umpire comes into the infield grass and pivots. The base umpire must be ready to take the base runner into second base or take a play back into first base.

The plate umpire advances down the first base line, straddles the line, assumes a standing set position, and calls the ball fair or foul. The plate umpire then renders the catch / no catch call if required.

Pop-Ups In Front of Base Umpire

The base umpire shall hustle into the diamond and pivot as if the base runner will advance to second. The base umpire is responsible for all plays on the base runner unless a rundown ensues and the plate umpire is able to help out at the first base end.

The plate umpire shall advance down the first base line and call fair / foul and catch / no catch. If a rundown on the base runner develops, the plate umpire shall advance to the cut-out area and assist the base umpire at that end if possible.

RAIN SITUATIONS

1. Get the projected forecast for that evening before leaving for the ball park. Also check the Department of Meteorology website.
2. Meet with the general manager upon arrival at the park and discuss his / her knowledge of the present field conditions and potential grounds crew availability for that evening.
3. Introduce yourself to the head grounds keeper and identify where he / she will be should you need him / her during the game. Also advise him / her that if it rains and the field becomes greasy they will need to be ready between innings with quick dry and a rake to spread it quickly to avoid a delay.
4. Know if the park has a full field tarp and enough people to pull it out or no tarp or a partial tarp.

NOTE: Handling a rain situation will vary accordingly if there is a complete field tarp, a partial tarp or no tarp at all. With a full tarp, as soon as it starts to rain hard the umpire will cover the field in an effort to save it. Without a full field tarp or a partial tarp the umpire will keep playing as long as the field is playable as it does no good to partially cover a field as it will only deteriorate during the delay.

5. After calling for the tarp stay on the field and make sure that the tarp is put on efficiently and fairly. Have your partner monitor the time of the delay. Avoid talking with players about what you will do, avoid speculation.
6. Go to the dugout or locker room but be in a position to monitor the field and always be ready to go. **Never** go on the field partially dressed during a rain delay. Look professional **at all times**.
7. Call the weather service number that you obtained earlier in the day. Confer with grounds crew and the general manager about your intended course of action. You must wait a minimum of 30 minutes before calling a game. See Rule 3.10 (c).
8. Act accordingly after talking with the weather man, either waiting or pulling the tarp. Keep in constant communication with the managers and general manager to inform them of your up-coming intentions, especially before calling a game.
9. After pulling the tarp ask the grounds keeper approximately how long it will take to get the field playable, then set a starting time and inform both managers and the general manager of it so they can get their pitchers loose to avoid further delays, then make an announcement to the fans.
10. Walk the entire field looking for unplayable areas to help the grounds crew prepare them acceptably.
11. When the field is ready to your satisfaction, start the game.

Points to Remember

- 👉 Keep good communication with managers and general managers.
- 👉 Study weather before going to the park if rain is threatening.
- 👉 Avoid speculating to players about your course of action. Tell them when it is time to play – not what ifs.

THE TWELVE COMMANDMENTS (Decreed by 9.05)

Do not talk to players or coaches with the ball in play

Be polite to club officials

Keep your uniform in good condition

Take your time

Keep the game moving

Do not lose your temper

Do not even up

Keep your eye on the ball

Do not call plays too quick

Get help if necessary

Get into position

Be courteous, impartial and firm

Never call your partner in for a chat between innings



BASIC COVERAGE THEORY

TWO-UMPIRE SYSTEM

General Fundamentals

Communication is a key prerequisite in umpiring successfully in the two-umpire system.

Verbal and visual signals must be used extremely well for this system to work.

Hustle is the motivation that gets you into position to properly see the play. There is no substitute for hustle. Over-hustle is simply the failure to pace your hustle to your best advantage.

Angle and distance will be emphasised throughout your training. Getting the proper angle is more important than getting more distance. You will always strive to get the best possible angle first and then distance.

You should always be in a set position to see the play. Too much instruction mistakenly advises you to be set when you make your call. The point is to be set so that you can see the play completely, not just render your decision from a set position.

There are two types of set position:

- (1) Hands on the knees; and
- (2) standing set.

Timing is secondary only to position.

Assuming you are in the proper position to see the entire play, timing becomes paramount. You must allow the ensuing action to be completed before rendering your decision in an authoritative manner.

Fast timing is a major problem in umpiring.

UMPIRE'S REPORT

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING AN UMPIRE'S REPORT

Shown below are instructions for writing an umpire's report. The guidelines are even line by line corresponding to the standard ejection report form.

A. To League President

Print the name of your league president.

B. Date of Game

Self explanatory.

C. From Umpire

Print your first and last name clearly.

D. Home Team, Visiting Team

Always refer to each ball club by the name of the city as opposed to the nickname of the club (eg, use "Louisville" as opposed to "Redbirds"; "El Paso" as opposed to "Diablos").

E. Manager, Player(s) This Report Concerns

(1) In most cases this line will be used for the person(s) who was ejected from the ball game. However, there will be cases when the person whose name is on this line was not ejected from the game. For example: player or players written up after the conclusion of a ball game for profanity directed at an umpire; fraternisation violations when the league president requests it; player who was warned for throwing equipment in disgust of an umpire's decision; etc.

(2) On this line of the report the person involved should be referred to in a formal manner. For example: "John Smith (#12) of the Denver ball club".

(3) Note that this line is also used to refer to personnel other than just managers or players. For example, it would be used if the report concerned the organist, trainer, PA announcer, general manager of the ball club, or any other party or parties about whom the report is written.

(4) Make absolutely certain that the name(s) of the person(s) involved is spelt correctly.

F. Ejected Player(s) Position On Field at the Time of this Incident

These spaces are used to indicate the position of the person at the time of the ejection or incident. A check mark should be made in the appropriate blank. Again, keep in mind that people other than players or managers may be involved, and in this case the category space labelled "Other" should be used.

G. Details of Incident

Self Explanatory. Make certain the facts reported are 100 percent correct in every detail.

H. **Describe the Situation(s) that Led Up To this Incident**

This space is used for a detailed written description of the facts that led up to and thereby caused the situation to develop. As an example, consider the following situation:

A batter complains about a called third strike and is warned to stop. Batter continues arguing on the way to the dugout and is warned again. After entering the dugout, batter persists in complaining about the call and is then ejected.

In this example, all of the information prior to the ejection would be reported in detail in this space of the report form.

The actual ejection and what occurred after the ejection took place would be reported in items 2 and 3 of the umpire's report form.

Make certain to include **all** details that occurred before the ejection in this space. It is essential that facts and only facts are reported in all sections of the report form. There shall be no opinions or personal viewpoints expressed in the report. The sole purpose is to objectively report the facts which occurred to the league president.

I. **Describe the reasons for the action taken by you and mention any unusual circumstances associated with this incident**

In this space you would describe the incident continuing from the point the offender was ejected from the game. You must be sure to include specific language used by the offender, using exact quotes when possible. All details related to the ejection must be included such as gestures used, throwing of equipment, specific language used and any other actions made by the offender. It is essential that the league president gains a clear picture as to exactly what happened during the incident. Again, your written report **must** contain **only** facts, without regard for your personal opinion concerning this incident. For example, if a player was ejected from the dugout after persistently complaining about a called third strike, the umpire should write:

"At that point Rick Jones was removed from the game because he refused to stop arguing about a called third strike."

AND NOT

"At that point Rick Jones was thrown out because his manager was unable to control him."

AND NOT

"At that point Rick Jones was ejected from the game for showing me up."

AND NOT

"I gunned Rick Jones because he wouldn't stop popping off."

J. **Describe any after-effects that took place**

This space is used for reporting the facts of what happened after the ejection. For example, if the manager, after being ejected, kicked dirt on the umpire's pants or buried home plate with dirt, such facts would be reported here.

Once again, you must be careful to use the exact language that was used and be certain to report all the facts. As an example, if a manager, after being ejected, turned his cap backwards and began arguing violently and cursing the umpire, such situations should be reported in the following manner:

*"After being ejected, manager Smith turned the bill of his cap around backwards and began arguing with me directly in my face. He yelled at me, "You're brutal, you no good *&^^%#! You've been *&%\$^@ us all day!". He continued yelling such phrases several times directly in my face."*

NOTE: In the actual report, the expletives shown above would be spelled out exactly as said.

This report would **not** be written as:

"The skipper started acting immature and looked like a fool by spinning his cap around jawing with me nose to nose. He acted like a jerk and was cussing at me with terrible language."

Note how the second example fails to report the facts exactly as they occurred. Here, the umpire gave opinions about the manager's behaviour as "immature", "looked like a fool", and "acted like a jerk". The exact vulgar language used was not reported ("terrible language") and the specific vulgarities would be of importance to the league president.

K. Crew chief's comments regarding this particular incident

Partner's (or crew chief's) comments should be made keeping in mind the same guidelines stated previously. Namely, facts should be reported and opinions left out of the report. Exact language should be used. The main difference in this section of the report is that the partner (or crew chief) gives his / her own comments regarding the situation. It is important that the partner be sure to include and / or verify any serious actions or language that is written in the original report. For example, if the ball player threw helmets out of the dugout after being ejected, it is important that the partner (crew chief) also verify this fact (provided he / she witnessed it). The partner's (crew chief's) comments should not be limited to such expressions as:

"Mike did a good job of handling the situation."

Instead, this section needs specific comments from the partner (crew chief) regarding what happened during the situation. Anything which was left out of the original report or not seen by the umpire who wrote the original report should be included in this section of the report form.

L. Signed and Dated

Self explanatory.

M. Witnessed by crew chief and dated

In a two-man crew, the partner would sign and date this line. It is essential that the crew chief (or partner) read and review the entire report since he / she is signing his / her name to it along with his / her partner.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- 👉 The league may or may not wish this form to be used for protested games, fraternisation violations or any other out-of-the-ordinary problem. Contact the league concerning this information.
- 👉 Umpire reports do not need to be typed but it is absolutely essential that the report is clear and legible. Take extreme care in writing the report. **Write clearly!** making sure spelling and punctuation are correct. Again, the writing must be legible and the report prepared in a neat and orderly fashion. Many umpires find it convenient to prepare a rough draft of the report before writing the final version on the report form.
- 👉 Always keep a copy of the report for your own records.
- 👉 When referring to an ejection, do not use words such as "run", "dumped", "gunned" or "chased"; instead use "removed" or "ejected", etc.
- 👉 "Showing me up" is not considered sufficient grounds for an ejection. Although the umpire may use a phrase such as "Don't show me up" during an argument, if the offender is removed from the game, the reason for ejection should not be shown as "Because he showed me up". Other reasons such as "He cursed me directly"; "He refused to stop arguing"; "He threw his cap in the air in disgust of my call"; etc, can be used instead.
- 👉 Umpire reports are extremely important. The report is usually the only written document that the league president has on which to base his / her decision. The report is actually a legal document and others may be privileged to examine it. Care must be used when writing the report.
- 👉 In case of a violent nature (bumping, assault on an umpire, serious confrontation off the field, etc), a copy of the umpire's report is also to be sent within 24 hours to the National Umpire Development Manager of the ABF head office.
- 👉 After an ejection, it is permissible - in fact, advisable - to make notation on the line-up cards concerning details of the incident. However, do not delay the game by writing these notes; wait until between innings, or during a pitching change, etc.

Game Situations

1. To explain, demonstrate and specify proper procedures for addressing various situations (arguing balls and strikes from the batter's box, pitcher's mound, coach's box, dugout and arguing check swings).
2. To specify and explain that players and / or managers cannot argue ball and strike decisions and that check swings are included as part of these decisions.
3. To explain and discriminate the reasons for ejecting personnel from the game, ie, cursing personally at you, unacceptable language audible to the fans, delaying the game, prolonging an argument, throwing equipment in disgust of an umpire's call, becoming over animated in actions in disgust of a call.
4. To simulate game situations where the student must deal with, discriminate, react and then decide a course of action with respect to what circumstances warrant ejection from the game or if other actions are pertinent.
5. To observe confidence, poise, ability to explain situations clearly and calmly and assertiveness when handling and reacting to various situations.
6. To specify proper procedures for handling 'ram' and 'bean ball' situations.
7. To present guidelines for preparing an umpire's report and to demonstrate how to write an umpire's report specifying proper procedures and the importance of being descriptive.
8. To simulate a bean ball situation and have the students write an umpire's report from their observation and actions and then critique it for possible improvements and positive points.
9. To evaluate knowledge of concepts through a written test and through observation during simulated situations and / or live games to see if correct procedures are applied.

HANDLING SITUATIONS

EJECTION CRITERIA

The following warrants ejection:

- ✎ When a player or manager personally curses at an umpire. For example, “You are!” or “You!”, a derogatory statement directed personally at an umpire.
- ✎ Bad language audible to the fans in the stands regardless of who the person is speaking to. Baseball has an image to uphold to the fans and cursing is not acceptable.
- ✎ When arguing an umpire's call, a manager and / or player is not allowed to delay or prolong a game by continually arguing with the umpire after the play has been explained clearly by the umpire.
- ✎ Managers or players are not allowed to throw equipment in disgust of a call. It is up to the umpire to determine whether the player or manager is disgusted with himself / herself or with the umpire's call.
- ✎ Managers and / or players are not allowed to wave their arms, jump up and down or become animated in similar ways while showing disgust at an umpire's decision.
- ✎ Managers and / or players are not allowed to argue ball and strike decisions. This includes check swing decisions by the plate or base umpire.

If any of these situations should occur the umpire is to **warn** the offender advising them that such action will not be tolerated. If the offender continues, the offender is then **ejected** from the game.

When questioned about a call, an umpire will explain calmly and clearly the reason for the call. If the person persists in arguing the call, that person is to be **warned** and **then ejected** if they persist further.

When providing an explanation the umpire should avoid actions or words that can be interpreted as condescending, smart-alecky, know it all, etc.

NOTE: At any time, should a player or manager become personally abusive to an umpire, a warning is not required, they shall be **ejected immediately**.

EJECTIONS AND SUSPENSIONS

When a manager, player, coach or trainer is ejected from a game, he / she shall leave the field immediately and take no further part in that game. They shall remain in the clubhouse or change to street clothes and either leave the park or take a seat in the grandstand well removed from the vicinity of his / her team's bench or bullpen. They may not stand in the runway between the clubhouse and dugout.

If the ejected person insists on standing in the runway area umpires should not delay the game by repeatedly insisting that the person leave. In such instances, the offender has seriously violated the rules therefore the umpiring crew will report this fact to the league president.

ARGUING BALLS AND STRIKES

No manager, player, or coach will be permitted to leave the bench (nor can the coach leave his / her position on the coaching lines) to question an umpire's decision on the calling of balls and strikes. For violation of this rule, the manager, player or coach will be ejected from the game.

INTENTIONALLY PITCHING AT THE BATTER

Refer to the National Association Official Rule Interpretations and Instructions to Umpires Manual - Intentionally Pitching at the Batter.

A pitcher judged by the plate umpire to have intentionally delivered a pitched ball at a batter will be **immediately ejected** from the game. No warning will be given.

At the time of the ejection, the umpire shall warn the manager of both teams that another such pitch by any pitcher during the game will result in the immediate expulsion of the pitcher **and** that pitcher's manager.

However, be aware that there are certain situations that will call for the application of a warning and not an ejection.

The key; the pitch must be deliberately delivered at the batter.

Consider the following examples:

- (1) Team A has a substantial lead and now proceeds to hit two consecutive home runs and a double off the same pitcher. The first pitch to the next batter sails over the batter's head. A warning would most likely be the appropriate action in this example.
- (2) Team A has a substantial lead and now proceeds to hit two consecutive home runs and a double off the same pitcher. The manager comes out to confer with the pitcher. The first pitch to the next batter sails over the batter's head. Ejection would most likely be the appropriate action in this example.
- (3) Team A has a substantial lead and now proceeds to hit two consecutive home runs and a double off the same pitcher. The first pitch to the next batter is thrown at the batter. Ejection would most likely be the appropriate action in this example.

Note that this rule provides that an official warning may be issued to both clubs prior to the start of the game or at any time during the game.

PLAYER CHARGING THE PITCHER'S MOUND

A member of the offensive team who charges the pitcher's mound will be automatically ejected from the game if he / she reaches the dirt portion of the mound.

Understand the options regarding bean balls.

PERSONNEL LEAVING THEIR POSITION TO PARTICIPATE IN PHYSICAL CONFRONTATIONS

All applicable field personnel leaving their position to, in any way, involve themselves in a physical confrontation must be either ejected or reported by the umpire. Umpires must decide their course of action depending upon the seriousness of the incident.

Managers and coaches are permitted to become involved, BUT only to bring the violators of their own team under control.

Get players back to the benches as soon as possible after a fight breaks out.

Although fighting in the name of self defence does not give anyone the right to throw punches without consequence, a player involved in a confrontation while remaining in position and judged to have been defending him / herself and not contributing to the incident should not be ejected.

PROGRESS OF THE GAME

1. Turning on the Lights

The umpire-in-chief shall order the playing field lights turned on whenever in his / her opinion darkness makes further play in daylight hazardous.

After a game has been started, the umpire-in-chief is to be the sole judge as to when field lights are to be turned on. He / she should call for the lights before the beginning of a full inning unless some extraordinary conditions or abnormally long inning prompts otherwise. Umpires are instructed to use good judgment when asking for the lights. Umpires are to signal to turn off the lights when they are no longer needed during day games.

2. Between Games of a Double Header

The second game of a double header shall start 20 minutes after the first game is completed unless a longer interval is declared by the umpire-in-chief and announced to the opposing managers at the end of the first game.

The umpire-in-chief of the first game is the timekeeper and sole judge as to whether or not the second game is to start. The home club manager or management has no jurisdiction in determining this. At the conclusion of the first game, the umpire-in-chief shall advise both managers of the exact starting time of the second game.

Between games of a doubleheader the umpire-in-chief shall have control of the ground's keeper and assistants for the purpose of making or keeping the playing field fit for play.

3. Rain Situations

The umpire-in-chief shall be the sole judge as to whether and when play shall be suspended during a game because of unsuitable weather conditions or the unfit condition of the playing field; as to whether and when play shall be resumed after such suspension and as to whether and when a game shall be terminated after such suspension. The umpire shall not call the game until at least 30 minutes after he / she has suspended play. The umpire may continue the suspension as long as he / she believes there is any chance to resume play.

The umpire-in-chief shall at all times try to complete a game. His / her authority to resume play following one or more suspensions of as much as 30 minutes each shall be absolute and he / she shall terminate a game only when there appears to be no possibility of completing it.

The umpire-in-chief should check weather bureau forecasts when rain is likely. When a game starts under threatening weather conditions, the umpire-in-chief should contact the ground's keeper and advise the ground's keeper to have the ground crew in readiness to handle field covers and drying materials.

When the umpire-in-chief receives the line-up cards, he / she shall become the sole judge as to whether a game is to continue or not. After time has been called because of weather conditions, Official Rule 3.10(c) authorises the umpire to terminate the game after a wait of at least 30 minutes; but if in his / her judgment there is any chance to resume play, the umpire may continue such suspension as long as his / her judgment warrants.

In rain situations, it is essential that umpires work with the executive-in-charge, as the home club goes to great expense and obligation for each opening.

Whenever a game is suspended because of the unfitness of the playing field, the umpire-in-chief shall have control of the ground's keeper and assistants for the purpose of making the playing field fit for play.

During a rain delay, keep the following points in mind:

- (1) During the suspension of play, the crew and umpire-in-chief shall remain on one of the club's benches to observe the conditions and see that the playing field is tended to properly.
- (2) In games when weather is threatening, one member of the crew should carry a watch. That umpire should note the time immediately when play is suspended.
- (3) Keep in communication with the general manager and / or the ground's keeper during the delay concerning weather developments.
- (4) The decision to terminate a game shall be made on the field and not in the dressing room.

A game should not be called without the umpire-in-chief finding out some of the problems that confront the club and to make sure the home club is prepared for cancellation. Before an umpire calls a game, he / she is to discuss the matter with the executive in charge. Also, before calling a game, the umpires are to consult within view of the stands. The consultation adds support to the decision.

If there is a second or subsequent delay in the same game, the umpires must wait at least 30 minutes after any such delay before calling the game.

4. Curfews and Time Limits

In making a decision as to when to invoke a curfew or time limit, the umpire shall rule that an inning or half-inning starts immediately after the third out is made in the preceding inning.

5. Suspended Games

See Official Rules 4.10 (d) and 4.12

6. Weather Taking Precedence

Weather and similar conditions shall take precedence in determining whether a called game shall be a suspended game.

If play is stopped because of weather and during the delay (before the tarps have been removed) a curfew or time limit is reached the game will be considered as having been terminated because of weather and shall not be a suspended game.

If play is stopped because of weather and during the delay (before the tarps have been removed) light failure occurs and causes the game to be terminated the game will be considered as having been terminated because of weather and shall not be a suspended game.

However, in games that have been delayed because of weather, once the umpires direct the ground's crew to remove the tarps and prepare the field for play the weather factor is then removed. In such cases, if light failure then occurs or if a curfew or time limit is subsequently reached, the game will be considered a suspended game.

If play is stopped because of light failure and rain subsequently occurs before play can be resumed, the umpires shall then determine the ultimate reason for terminating the game.

Consider the following examples:

- (1) Game stopped because of light failure. Rain occurs during light failure. Lights come back on during or after rain. Field determined to be unplayable.

Ruling: Game called due to weather. Not a suspended game.

- (2) Game stopped because of light failure. Rain occurs during light failure. Field determined to be unplayable and still no lights.

Ruling: Game called due to weather. Not a suspended game.

- (3) Game stopped because of light failure. A light rain occurs during light failure. Rain stops and field determined to be playable but still no lights.

Ruling: Game called because of light failure. This is a suspended game.

7. Line-Up Cards from Suspended Games

In a suspended game, the umpire-in-chief must make notation on the line-up cards of the exact situation the moment play is suspended. Included should be the following information: inning, score, outs, runners on base (by name), batter, count on the batter, and defensive player due to bat first the next inning. The same cards will be used when the suspended game is resumed.

In cases where the suspended game is the last game of a series, the line-up cards (with exact situation at moment of suspension outlined above) should be photocopied and the photocopy retained by the original umpire crew. The original line-up cards and situation should be forwarded within 24 hours to the league office along with any other pertinent information.

8. Protested Games

When a manager officially protests a game, claiming that an umpire's decision is in violation of the rules, the manager must announce the protest to the umpire-in-chief before the next pitch, play, or attempted play. A protest arising on a game-ending play may be filed until 12:00 noon the following day with the league office.

If a manager officially protests a game, all the umpires shall confer and discuss the play or situation on which the protest is lodged. It must be determined by the crew that the umpire making the call has made a proper ruling. If the crew is certain the ruling was correct as made, the umpire-in-chief shall accept the manager's protest and have the PA announcer announce that the game is being played under protest. The opposing manager is to be informed that the game is being played under protest.

In accepting the protest, the umpires shall:

- (1) ascertain the manager's exact reason or grounds for protest. This must be done before the protest can be accepted;
- (2) confer as a crew, making certain their ruling is correct;
- (3) have the protest announced over the PA system; and
- (4) Make notation on the line-up cards as to the exact situation at the moment of protest (inning, score, outs, runners on base, batter, count on the batter, and defensive player due to bat first the next inning).

The umpires shall report by telephone the next morning to the league office that the game was protested and the reason for the protest. A detailed written report shall be sent to the league office within 24 hours. The line-up cards (with exact situation at the moment of protest) should be photocopied and the photocopy retained by the umpire crew. The

original line-up cards and situation should be forwarded to the league office with the written report.

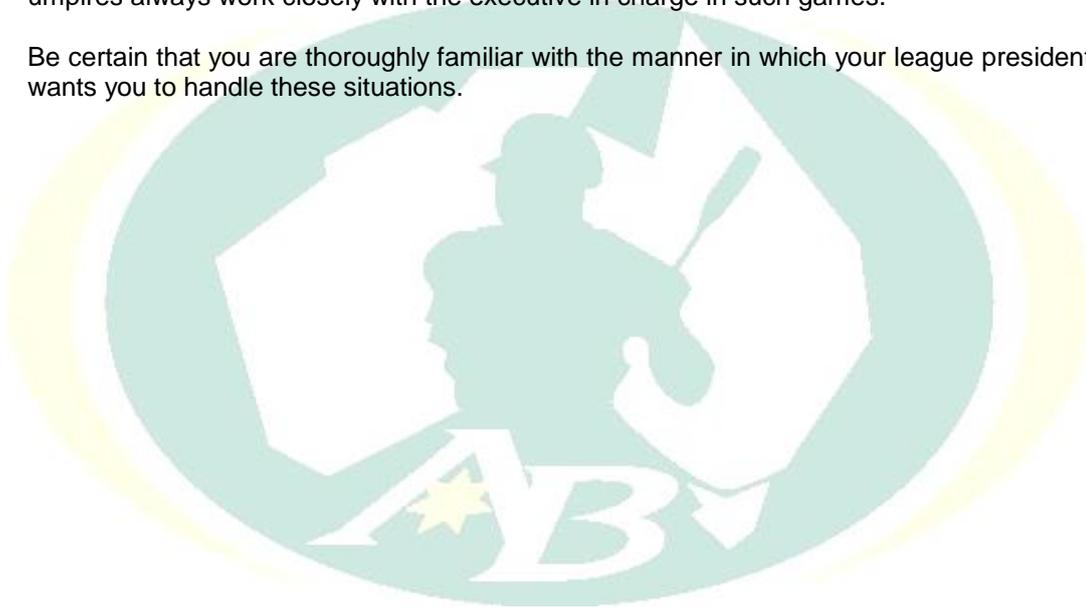
All umpires of the crew shall sign the report on a protested game.

9. Right to Postpone

The management of the home team shall be the sole judge as to whether a game shall not be started because of unsuitable weather conditions or the unfit conditions of the playing field except for the second game of a double header.

Note, however, that some leagues have a provision for transferring the responsibility of postponement to the umpires when clubs meet for the final time during the season. For example, certain leagues give the umpires sole responsibility for postponing the start of a game during the last series between two clubs in either city. Other leagues give the umpires this responsibility only for the very last series in which the clubs meet. Other leagues have no provision for this whatsoever. In any case, it is essential that the umpires always work closely with the executive in charge in such games.

Be certain that you are thoroughly familiar with the manner in which your league president wants you to handle these situations.



ADVANCED UMPIRING TECHNIQUES

VISION DYNAMICS

First, what is vision dynamics?

Baseball is a game where vision is all important, the ability to see the moving ball and to coordinate what we see with what we do. Much of this happens without thought, but like most things we do, returning to the fundamentals and understanding what we must do to achieve our highest potential will enable us to get more out of the skills nature has given us.

Vision, of course, starts with seeing something with our eyes; but vision dynamics goes further than that; for in addition to seeing, we can develop awareness of what we see, concentration upon the things we see, blocking out of distractions and increased perception. In the result we see more efficiently.

Vision dynamics has for some time been used by the players and is based upon an approach used by Dr Bill Harrison and Dr Raymond Reilly. Dr Harrison is an eye specialist who played baseball and has developed a programme for players to improve their performances upon the field. For instance:

Centring

To *centre* one's eyes upon the ball enables a hitter to pick up the ball earlier, giving him / her more time to execute the swing with timing and precision. To *centre* on the pitcher enables the base runner to define pick-off or pitch more quickly. To *centre* on home plate enables fielders to pick up the contact between bat and ball more quickly.

It takes little imagination to see the advantage to an umpire by a better understanding of what he / she is doing with his / her eyes.

You will probably be saying to yourself, "I do that now, at least some of it", and that is what first attracted my attention to this method; sitting at a meal table listening to a coach discussing visualising (a part of vision dynamics) and a player said aloud what I was thinking, "I do that now". But what I had been doing only touched the fringe of what is involved in a study of vision dynamics.

Let's look very briefly at a few of the suggestions and these are more the end result. There are tests to assess your skills, exercises to improve them, and methods to achieve the best result.

Calling Balls and Strikes

Like the batter, the earlier you pick up the ball the better. How do you do this? First you must study the pitcher to ascertain his / her 'release zone'. Then, as he / she moves into the pitching motion, *fine centre* on part of his / her body near the release zone, ie, his / her eyes, cap or insignia. This ensures that you *fine centre* your vision rather than just look, or *soft centre*. Then you shift your eyes to the release zone just prior to the pitcher releasing the ball. You then *fine centre* on the ball and follow it all the way to the catcher's glove. It is important to begin *centring* only early enough to pick up the ball from the hand as centring for too long on a target may increase your tension level.

Calling the Bases

This involves *centring* too, centring your eyes on the area over the home plate where the ball will be hit, picking it up early, following it to the fielder, picking it up from the fielder's 'release zone' and following it towards the base.

From these two situations alone I suggest that an awareness of the mechanic of *fine centring* can improve your ability to make correct calls.

In studying this subject it is advisable to follow the AVCEP procedure:

Analyse the Situation

This is what we already do before we signal an "infield fly" situation. As plate umpires we think about set or wind up position, likelihood of a steal, possibility of a bunt, all of those things that, having just considered the probable or likely action, we react just that fraction faster when it happens. As base umpires we visualise moving to the correct position on a ground ball, a foul fly, an outfield fly, with runners on, or without runners; whatever the situation we analyse it.

Visualise the Desired Performance

The batter, awaiting his / her turn to hit, swings a bat to loosen up. How much more valuable is it if he / she sees, like a moving picture in the mind, the pitcher he / she has to face, say, throwing an inside fast strike. He / she visualises the pitcher's movement and himself / herself watching the ball onto the bat and what he / she has to do to hit it. Then a breaking ball, he / she visualises what is necessary for him / her to execute proper contact. The batter goes to the plate more prepared to hit.

As a plate umpire, sitting in the dressing room before the game, you can visualise, like a moving picture, once again, the pitcher rocking into his / her action, your *fine centring* on the ball, then try visualising a fast outside ball just clip the strike zone, then one just missing the strike zone; you can visualise your whole strike zone before you even step onto the diamond. This is called pre-programming.

Do the same with your base decisions. Visualise yourself with a runner on base, a fly ball hit to the outfield, to a specific area of the outfield, and yourself moving swiftly to the correct position to check the runner's tag of the base as the fly is caught. The second baseman does this when he / she analyses the situation; a runner on first, none out, lower order batter, scores close, a bunt is likely. He / she says to the shortstop "If he squares round you've got second, I'll cover first base". Having visualised that play, when it happens he / she will be in the right spot at the right time. Visualising can be part of your training programme, but your visualising must be positive. Visualise the right way to do it, rather than the negative. As a coach says, "Do it this way", rather than, "Don't do it that way".

Centre on the Target

I have dealt with that very briefly and need not expand here. It's really a better way of saying, "Keep your eye on the ball", because you will see the ball more clearly by following Dr Harrison's principles.

Execute the Performance

Having *analysed*, *visualised* and *centred* on the ball, the execution will follow more smoothly and confidently.

Playback

Playback is the visual replay in your mind of what you have just done. Did it go right? What can you remember? If something went wrong you can probably find a blank spot in your visual replay which will indicate the spot where you took your eye off the ball or in some way departed from what you should have done. If so, visualise that part again, correctly done, to help you improve your performance.

PRE-PROGRAMMING

I mentioned *pre-programming* earlier. This can be done the day before, the morning before or an hour before the game we are involved in. We visualise what we have to do in the coming game. What we visualise must be realistic, we cannot run 100 meters in 10 seconds just because we visualise it. Pre-program what you are going to do, visualise yourself doing it correctly. This will help overcome nervousness and bolster confidence. Of course you do not have to visualise the whole game, you concentrate on any problems you may have had recently and the basic plays and timing. Even reaching the right energy level or relaxation level can be practised at this time. Your preparation for the game, from dress to muscle stretching can be visualised.

SELF CONTROL

Important to the umpire is *self control*. This can also be pre-programmed. During the game something may get to you, a player shooting his / her mouth off, a spectator on your back. We tend to let ourselves work up a head of steam in order to do something about it. While we do that, our concentration is divided and we make a call that brings the trouble upon us all the earlier. We can programme ourselves to keep our cool, ignore the loudmouth, turn away from the player disagreeing with our decision; staying cool and taking action calmly when it is necessary.

CONSISTENCY – AN UMPIRE’S DEFINITION

"Be consistent Ump!" That criticism is made by managers, coaches, players and fans who often say it when they do not know what else to yell. Their interpretations of consistency and the umpire's interpretations of consistency may be vastly different.

What managers, coaches, and players may really mean by that admonition is to be sure to call the plays in their favour. Consistency to umpires, however, means making calls with unbiased accuracy.

How do you become and remain consistent?

Concentration and consistency go hand in hand. Also, being consistent includes the ability to recognise when you are losing concentration so that you can correct it right away.

An additional ingredient is to concentrate on calling "strikes" and "outs".

While at first that may seem facetious, further study illustrates its merits.

If a pitch is so close that you have to think about it, the strike call should prevail. Likewise, most "bangers" on the bases should be "out" calls unless you have definite knowledge to the contrary. Strikes and outs keep the game moving and reduce boredom. Every safe call adds about seven minutes to a ball game.

Unfortunately, some umpires become inconsistent, especially on balls and strikes, late in the game. They call marvellous games in the early and middle innings, but lose it toward the end, which is when they need their best performance. No one will remember or care how good you were in the first, second, or third inning if you do not have it when the game is on the line. The better umpires reach back and revitalise that concentration and consistency and dial themselves in for a fine finish.

Strive to be consistent by the umpire's definition, not the player's definition.

SPECIAL PLAYS: OUTS AND SAFES ON THE BASES

Almost all top umpire instructors preach the necessity of calling out base runners on close plays and bangers at first base. That is done for many reasons, all of which clearly indicate that most of those "eyelash" plays are indeed outs.

While you may be a subscriber to the "call em out" philosophy, there are three situations where umpires may wish to be wise not to employ that technique:

(1) The pick-off play in the two umpire system

Unless you have your car motor running in the car park, do not guess out the runner. Your position at best is usually a compromise. Most pick-off plays are safe calls, so unless you know the runner is "Out! Out!" go with the safe call.

(2) The defence turns the play into a "squeaker"

A safe call may be in order when a faulty defence turns a simple play into a difficult call. It could be a late throw after a bobbed ball, a throw that pulls a fielder off the base, a diving attempt after a misjudged fly ball or questionable swipe tag after a bad throw.

If the defence mess up, let them pay, unless you absolutely know otherwise.

(3) The batter is out of the box when he / she hits the ball

Start watching the batter's feet and you will miss pitches. You must know without doubt that the batter's foot was completely over the line and on the ground when the ball was batted.

CALLING THE TAG PLAY, TIMING AND POSITION

There is an art to properly covering tag plays. First and foremost, stay back and read the action. As the play develops, you should keep the ball, the runner and the fielder in front of you. Most tags occur near a base, so you should attempt to secure a position between the runner and the base approximately 90 degrees from the path of the runner. Just before the fielder attempts the tag, move five to eight feet from the play. You must be ready to move to the best unobstructed angle which may change as the action continues.

If the tag is made before the runner touches the base, let the dust settle before rendering a decision. Sometimes the ball will dislodge from the fielder's grasp; you should mentally register "out", but hesitate until the ball is located. That technique will prevent the dreaded "Gut-Safe" call. Good umpires rarely make the call until the play is over.

A final point: do not be too fine on tags. If the ball is there and the tag is down, the runner probably was tagged even if you did not see it. Umpires can avoid big problems if they follow that technique. Remember, the fielder almost always knows if he / she made the tag, since he / she is concentrating on doing just that. The runner, having no way of knowing where he / she will be tagged and usually "hitting the dirt" at the same time, frequently does not really know if he / she was tagged. Thus, another case is made for the "out" call.

In any event it is usually necessary to "sell the call" on tag plays.

CONTROL

Starts at home, getting gear ready, don't be rushed. Leave in plenty of time to allow for the unsuspected traffic delay, etc.

Organise yourself to arrive at least 15 minutes before the accepted time.

Be calm. Do not become involved in arguments or become involved in things that happened in other games that do not concern you.

Look the part. Uniform clean and pressed.

Gear in top shape.

Hold mask firmly.

Do not loaf. Do not joke. Be efficient when announcing changes.

Have a firm relationship with players, coaches, and managers.

Enforce the rules. Umpires that are not seen are the ones that do not call balks, interference, obstruction. They take the easy way out.

Sell yourself. Sell calls.

Simple things like the pitcher taking signs from the rubber.

Make sure you get the infringements.

Hit batter.

Players collide in a play. Stay on top of it. Penalise the deliberate offender or if nothing, tell them.

Work as a team. Talk to each other when covering plays.

Hustle.

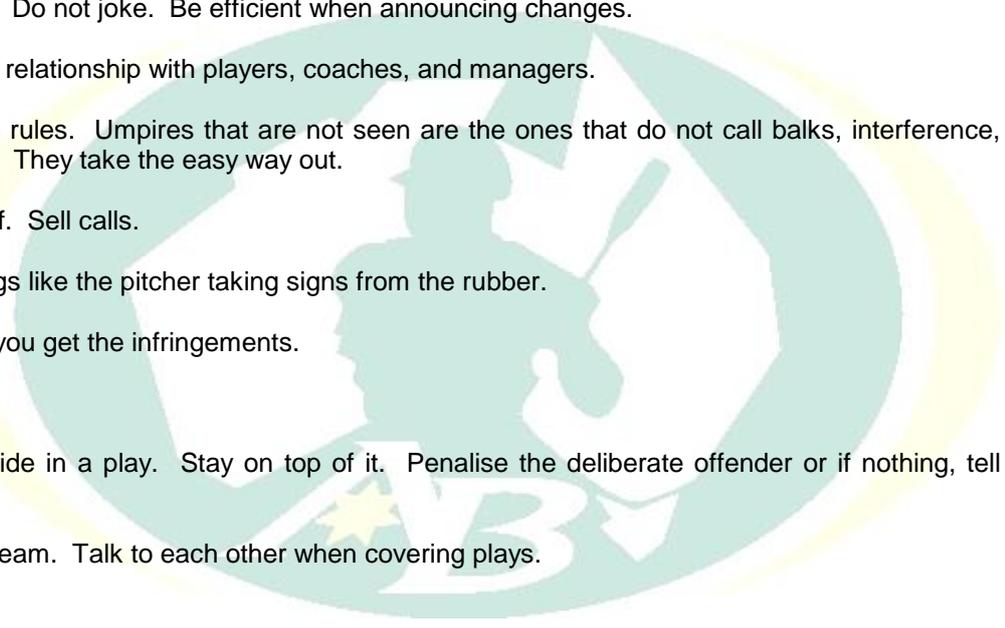
Show them that you care.

Show them that you want to do a good job.

Professionalism.

Ejections. Do not paint yourself into a corner.

Work on it or you will lose it.



GETTING OWN CALLS

Don't be plagued by "Ask the other fellow".

Do not look for help. It becomes a crutch.

You are expected to get your own calls.

Plate umpire must get his / her own check swing call. Do not put it in the too hard basket. Do not leave it to the base umpire.

Hit by a batted ball. All umpires working in the infield can call it, so, if asked, no need to check.

It is permissible to get help if a manager insists that the ball was dropped or bounced before a catch.

Get in position to see and call plays.

See balks and call them. Do not leave them to the other umpire(s).

Your children walked by you not carrying them.

GOAL SETTING

Goal setting can help umpires improve both their self-confidence and skills. It can also force confrontation between certain realities about ability and potential for improvement.

Putting your goals on paper and continually keeping them in mind can nurture commitment and ambition.

Once you achieve a goal after much persistence and practice, you will enjoy a measure of success; even if allocations and / or panels do not reflect personal improvement.

Personal goal setting must be:

- (1) attainable; and
- (2) important enough to be focussed upon.

Goals as "improve my field coverage", or, "work on timing" can help build success because they emphasise personal improvement, not competitive rivalry.

Goals must be specific.

Generalities like, "I just want to do my best" are not motivational.

Improvement can only be made after abilities have been assessed and the specific areas needing improvement addressed.

Many set realistic long range goals.

Attainable goals are troublesome at times because a true assessment of abilities is not completed, or because goals are not specific. Revise goals and if necessary reset them.

For assessment there are various approaches. Instead of finding weaknesses, find strengths of performance. Since confidence is constantly being challenged, be consistently positive.

A second approach is the importance of imaging. Specifically stated goals can be achieved through a simple three step process:

- (1) relaxation;

- (2) concentration; and
- (3) visualisation.

The technique can be used before and during games to encourage achievement and relieve self doubt.

After failure, rethink the situation and visualise a successful means.

When umpires have experienced the satisfaction of "seeing" a goal accomplished, they will find it easier to set and visualise the accomplishment of future goals.

Each success, however minor, will produce increased self-confidence.

Ultimately, the umpire's ability to set a realistic goal and then work to achieve it may take on an importance that extends far beyond the baseball realm; it may last a lifetime.

MANAGER AND UMPIRE RELATIONS

Three main principles are the basis of manager and umpire relations:

- (1) Both coaches and umpires are necessary to the proper progression of a baseball game. No serious game in a serious league can do without one or the other.
- (2) Each confrontation brings about different situations. This statement thus supposes a total absence of prejudice on the part of one or the other.
- (3) Decisions or tactics must be made according to playing situations and not according to the people who are managing or playing the game.

These three main principles apply to coaches as well as umpires.

But what, specifically, should be the guidelines or elements of behaviour in an umpire's relations with a coach?

Respect

Respect for people, teams and organisations as well as leagues and managers is a fundamental element in the behaviour of umpires.

How can an umpire expect to be respected if he / she shows little respect for others?

Flexibility

An umpire must try to accept certain situations such as a slight delay when a pitcher goes back to the mound after running the bases. Above all, an umpire is there to see that the spirit of the rule is applied and not necessarily apply them to the letter. This flexibility, however, does not indicate a weakness and is a reflection on the spirit of the game.

Firmness

An umpire must show that he / she is in charge without proving it every chance he / she gets.

Arguments often provide the best situations where the umpire can show both flexibility and firmness.

A firm umpire is always a calm umpire. He / she is in control of his / her emotions; capable of evaluating a situation from all the available information. A firm umpire is also

capable of humour in an exchange with a manager and knows how to make drastic decisions in difficult circumstances.

For example: Ejecting a pitcher when there is no substitute; ejecting a pitcher in a 2-2 ball game.

The main failings that can threaten manager and umpire relations are:

Emotions

People who umpire with their heart should stay in the stands. It is the only place where they will not hurt the game. In the same manner, a manager who wants everybody's sympathy for himself / herself or his / her team does nothing to help baseball by staying in the game.

Prejudices

There are so called adults who voluntarily spoil games, at all levels, by holding personal prejudices. They sustain these prejudices through biased interpretations of all actions and / or statements.

Too many managers and umpires maintain these types of prejudices without wanting to frankly admit it. These prejudices lead directly to tense situations such as, "I never want to see this umpire again at any of my games" or "I will throw him out every time I umpire".

Settling of Accounts

The settling of accounts does not belong exclusively to the underworld. There are some baseball people who seem to be quite civilised but are in fact far worse than the underworld when it comes to settling of accounts.

The settling of accounts, no matter who is right or wrong, always leaves scars that may go on for several generations of managers, umpires or administrators. The settling of accounts are the dregs of baseball as well as the agitation of useless quarrels where the athletes are always the losers.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

Cramp

Muscle cramps, we have all had them, that excruciating knot of painfully involuntary muscle spasm that can stop you dead in your tracks.

Cramp occurs commonly in the calf muscle but what causes it and is there a simple solution?

The most common causes of cramp are dehydration (number one cause), over-exertion or a poor blood supply to the muscle. In warm weather it is easy for the body to lose 1.0 to 2.0 kilograms of sweat in an hour and quickly become dehydrated. Large fluid losses can occur before the body signals it's thirsty. By then it can be difficult to catch up on fluid losses without stopping.

What is the cure?

Water is the best treatment for muscle cramps simply because dehydration seems to be a major cause. Until lost fluids are replaced, the cramp problem is likely to remain. This underlines the value of drinking fluids regularly before and during exercise. Small, frequent drinks of water appear to be the most effective way of getting maximum fluids into the body.

Stretching the cramped muscle is the best method of reducing the acute pain. To relieve a calf muscle cramp, grab the toes and ball of the foot and pull towards the kneecap.

What does not work?

A common proposed remedy is salt tablets. Salt tablets will not help, in fact they can be harmful. Salt in the stomach sucks water from the bloodstream causing further dehydration. Cramps are not caused by too little salt in the diet. Actually, the Australian diet has about 15 times more salt than we need.

Bananas, prescribed by some for their potassium content, are not the medicine for cramps. Bananas would take too long for the body to digest during exercise to provide any immediate help.

Although there is a lot more we need to know about cramp, adequate fluids and proper training will go a long way to avoiding surprise attack.

Warm-up

The warm-up is a vital part of any competition or strenuous exercise. The warm-up:

- prevents injury because muscles are more prone to injury when they are cold;
- helps prepare the mind and body for activity; and
- involves 5 to 10 minutes of general activity.

After a general warm-up the skills of the game should be practised, starting with a small degree of effort and gradually building up to full pace.

Stretching

Stretching is another vital factor for both training and competition as it reduces the chance of injury. Without stretching, muscles lose their flexibility and may fail to respond when being used and injury could be the result.

Seven rules should be followed when stretching to ensure maximum safety:

- (1) Warm-up prior to stretching.
- (2) Stretch before and after exercise.
- (3) Stretch alternate muscle groups.
- (4) Stretch gently and slowly.
- (5) Never bounce or stretch rapidly.
- (6) Stretch to the point of tension or discomfort but never pain.
- (7) Never hold your breath when stretching. Breathing should be slow and easy.

Hydration

Participants should adhere to the following guidelines to prevent dehydration:

- (1) Thirst is a poor indicator of the need for fluid replacement.
- (2) Plain cold water is the best fluid replacement.
- (3) The following quantities of water are advisable:

- 45 minutes prior to activity 400 to 500 mls of water.
- During activity 200 to 250 mls of water every 15 to 20 minutes.
- After activity keep drinking sufficient amounts of water until urination is normal.

REFINING THE STRIKE ZONE

The strike zone is very clearly defined in Rule 2:00 under "The Strike Zone".

Some people remind us that we are not umpiring professional baseball and they are absolutely correct. We do, however, use the same Rule book as professional baseball.

Probably no amateur umpire has ever implemented Rule 3:01(c) and it is very clearly defined in the Rule book.

The rules described in the Rule book are to be used as a guideline to help officiate the game and 2:00 and 3:01(c) are not exceptions.

Umpires should refine the strike zone as stated in Rule 2:00 to best suit the level of baseball they umpire most often.

As an umpire progresses through the different levels of baseball he / she will find more pressure to lower the strike zone.

Umpires with a Rule book strike zone are unlikely to be very popular at first grade or representative level. It is very unlikely that an umpire with such a strike zone would be considered for such a game or tournament.

It is most important that a compromise is reached where the majority of players prefer the strike zone and where you can keep it most consistent.

Umpires that call a strike zone that they are not comfortable with tend to be erratic.

A good umpire will establish a strike zone both he and players can live with and then strive for consistency.

Being a Strike Umpire

Game management is the most important aspect of being a good umpire.

The ability to call an effective strike zone is another very important aspect of being a good umpire.

Some of the best advice I received early in my umpiring career when it comes to establishing a strike zone is this –

*A good strike zone is made up of three things –
Something that the players will accept;
Something you are comfortable calling and
Something you can call consistently.*

This approach to establishing a strike zone is relevant from local Under 12's through to the highest level possible.

A philosophy I use in many aspects of umpiring including establishing a strike zone is –

Umpire what the game accepts and what the game expects.

In understanding this philosophy 'the game' is never an individual or group of individuals. 'The game' is the collective group of all participants.

From here how do we be a strike umpire?

Being a strike umpire requires the right mental approach.

Don't be afraid to call strikes, particularly strike three. The game expects strikes to be called and the game is better off for it.

So firstly, we need to establish a 'full zone' early. Establishing a 'full zone' requires us to call all of the edges and corners; and everything in between.

Seek out the opportunity to call those edges and corners early in the game.

Now we are establishing a 'full zone' and we must maintain it. All of those strikes we sort after to call early in the game should remain strikes throughout the game.

Call as many pitches that are strikes – "STRIKE" and call as many pitches that are balls – "BALL". This is the consistency that the game expects.

Nobody is perfect and umpires are human just like the players. If you are going to err on a pitch, err on the side of calling – "STRIKE".

This will mean that every pitch that is thrown for a strike is called a "STRIKE".

Maintaining a 'full zone' for the duration of the game is a challenge for all umpires and a test of focus, concentration and endurance.

So now we are establishing a mental approach that will allow us to be a strike umpire.

Several other philosophies and phrases I value in establishing a mental approach for being a strike umpire are –

"The pitch that takes your breath away". Don't get frozen by that pitcher's pitch. The pitcher wants to freeze and deceive the batter, not the umpire. Call that pitch a – "STRIKE".

"Every pitch is a strike until it does something to become ball". When we are working a plate, step back and relax between every pitch, re-focus and want that next pitch to be a strike.

"Look aggressively into the pitch". This is a combination of a mental process and complimented by our plate stance. Positioning ourselves to see every strike. A little bit extra 'lean' in our stance can give us the feel of aggressively looking into the pitch.

"Ball four slows down the game". This doesn't mean we should change our already 'full zone' when there is a ball three count. It means be a strike umpire throughout every count.

"The pitch that is too close to call". Should be called a – "STRIKE"

To finish with a philosophy of Jim Evans –

"Work hard every pitch of every game. That pitch means something to somebody".

Do I take the philosophy of being a strike umpire into every game?...ALWAYS

Do I execute this philosophy all game, every game?.....I'M ONLY HUMAN

UMPIRES – WHAT WE REALLY ARE

Nearly everyone has an opinion of what an umpire is. Definitions range from our being a "necessary evil" to "an integral part of the game". Perhaps it would be clever to say the truth is probably somewhere in between, but honestly we **are** an integral part of the game.

What does our vocation really encompass? What is an umpire? Let's take a look.

Game Manager

First and foremost, we are really game managers. The plate umpire or umpire-in-chief is the manager and the line umpires are the assistant managers.

Like it or not, this is what the managers really want: someone to run the game. Not a dictator, but a person who will take charge and effectively manage the game.

Arbiter

An arbiter is a person empowered to decide matters at issue and to assume the absolute power of judging and determining. Not exactly a field for the feint hearted, and certainly a position open to criticism. However, if you strive to become a good communicator, much of the criticism will be alleviated.

Communicator

In the pre-game you are a communicator. In starting the game you are a communicator. Once you have rendered a game decision, you are most definitely a communicator.

If you are able to project yourself as knowledgeable, fair and impartial, you will be a successful communicator.

Communication not only involves verbalising and signalling but also includes your complete demeanour.

Although many officials refuse to believe it, or perhaps have never thought about it, being a good game manager and a good communicator are just as good as being a good arbiter.

In probable fact, it is not always the umpires with the best field judgment who advance to the very top of their leagues, but rather it is the good managers and communicators.

MENTAL APPROACH

John Scolinas was the Head Coach at Cal Poly University, California. Cal Poly is a highly respected organisation in its baseball program and Coach Scolinas is a very respected coach from all levels of the baseball fraternity and respected by the community as a person and as a citizen.

Although Coach Scolinas was speaking to the side as baseballers and as a coach would speak to his club, there is no doubt in my mind that his approach and his ideas can be applied to umpires and umpiring situations all with success.

What we are talking about is from the shoulders up!

Everybody listens, few people hear. Everybody looks, few people see.

The ability to see makes a good athlete and umpire.

The bottom line is - MENTAL TOUGHNESS. Do not let outside influences overrun your thinking or mental toughness. Some possible examples are:

- A pitcher does not like your calling of balls and strikes. Be mentally tough and do not let the pitcher's opinion or attitude override your concentration and distract you. Similar situations could arise with the catcher, batter, manager or dugout.
- Situations could and probably will occur on base calls. Do not let the runners or basemen distract your concentration - be mentally tough.
- The niggling manager, do not let him / her get to you.
- You may have a game in adverse weather conditions, heat wave or freezing cold with bitter winds. Do not let these conditions dictate to you.

You do not become fatigued; you adjust. You do not stoop or move slowly; you remain alert and aware of the situation. You are either mentally tough or you are a marshmallow and melt. If you are a marshmallow, try something else!

The above are just a few examples. You have to work at mental toughness all of the time. If you don't you will lose it!

You must make adjustments, the conditions cannot think so cannot adjust. Mentally tough umpires can adjust their thinking.

You do not let outside situations influence you!

Analyse the situation. Either a pitch or a call on bases, pick-off, fly ball, infield fly, deliberately dropped fly ball, etc. Do not try to predict or pre-empt the play, but know the possibilities. When the play occurs do not be surprised by it.

Visualise - vision dynamics.

Centre on the ball and the play.

Execute your call after the play.

Replay the incident if need be to see if you got it right. If you think you might have missed a pitch, replay it immediately in an attempt to get it right.

Adjustment if necessary.

The key is to see and react accordingly to what you see, not what you look at.

Baseball is a simple game, do not make it difficult.

Full of information, you still must perform, do it naturally.

UNITY

Always think good towards your fellow umpires. Encourage them. Hope generally they succeed. Do not wish them ill hoping that you will overtake them or step into their shoes. It does not work. You will only succeed by doing right yourself, not by other's failures.

Do not get too wrapped up in yourself.

Project a good self-image.

PRESENTATION

Keep plenty of class. Head up all the time. Hustle. Neat appearance and clean uniform. Hair neat and tidy.

If plays or calls are not working, make adjustments.

DESIRE AS AGAINST INTENSE DESIRE

Desire to succeed and do well. When you get knocked down get up quick. If you are appointed to game or grades you do not like, do not go crying to people about it. Sure, talk to your director / supervisor but nobody involved in the club scene. Take the appointments and give them your best shot. Show them by your ability to handle the game and by your approach that you are able to handle the better games and / or higher grades.

Treat it as a knockdown, or if you like, a defeat.

Handle defeat before you can handle a win. If you can't you had better start thinking about officiating in another sport because you are a marshmallow, you have melted.

RISK ASSESSMENT - UMPIRES

There is a widespread misconception that the umpire is immune from legal liability, but an umpire who is responsible for supervising a sporting event and enforcing the rules could be found responsible for injuries suffered by a player at the hands of another.

This could occur where the umpire has failed to penalise violent or dangerous behaviour that is in breach of the law or safety of the sport.

The liability of an umpire will vary from sport to sport and will depend on the responsibilities placed on the umpire by the rules of that sport.

An umpire has a duty not to inflict injury on a player by negligence, recklessness or an intentional act.

Situations where an umpire may incur legal liability when injuries are suffered include:

- Failure to remove a participant who persistently breaches the rules or uses excessive violence.
- Failure to strictly enforce the safety rules designed to prevent injuries.
- Failure to stop the event in adverse and life threatening weather conditions.
- Failure to stop the event when the safety of participants is threatened by a spectator(s).
- Failure to ensure that only authorised equipment is used.
- Failure to enforce safety guidelines, including blood and infectious diseases' policies.

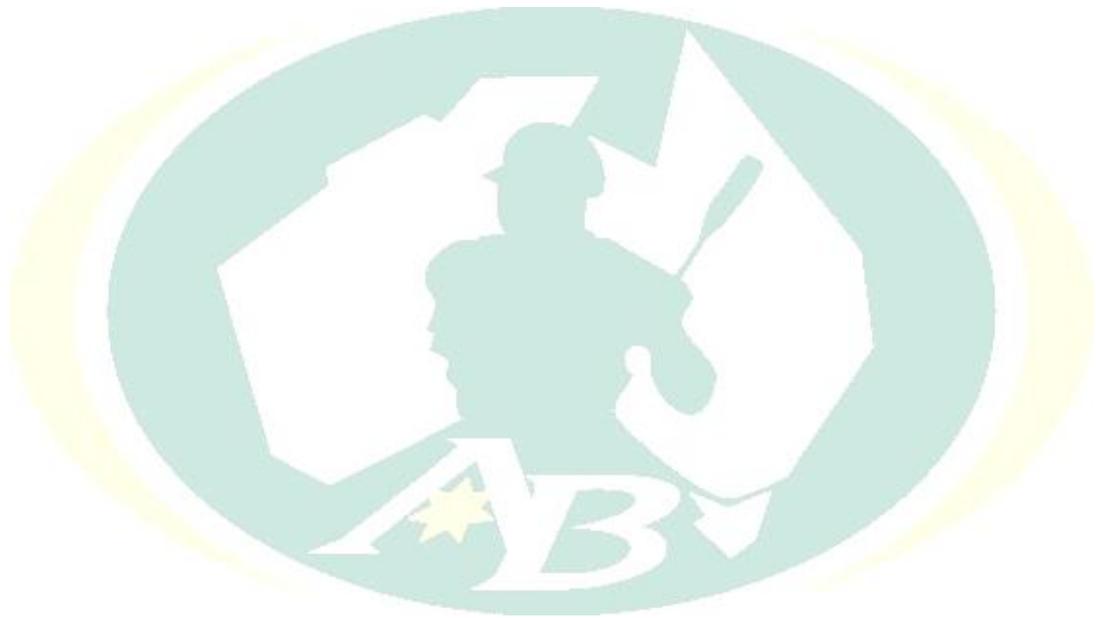
The younger the participant the greater the responsibility for safety that is placed on the umpire. It is an umpire's duty to:

- enforce the Rules;
- warn participants;
- anticipate reasonably foreseeable dangers; and
- control and properly supervise the game.

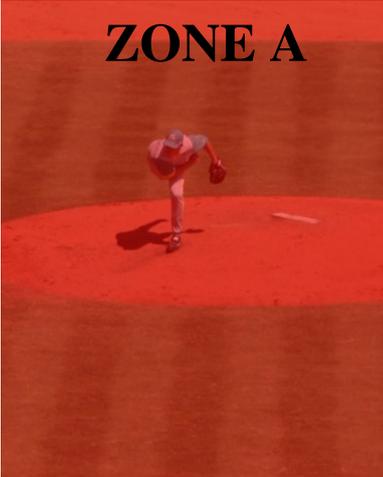
A director, instructor, assessor or trainer is at risk of litigation from:

- student injury;
- inappropriate training programs;
- libel and slander;
- assault;
- student / umpire selection;
- administration of First Aid;
- food or drink poisoning;
- inadequate supervision;

- inadequate tuition / advice on likely risks in sport;
- failure to ensure facilities and equipment are safe; and
- non qualified, non accredited officials appointed to games.

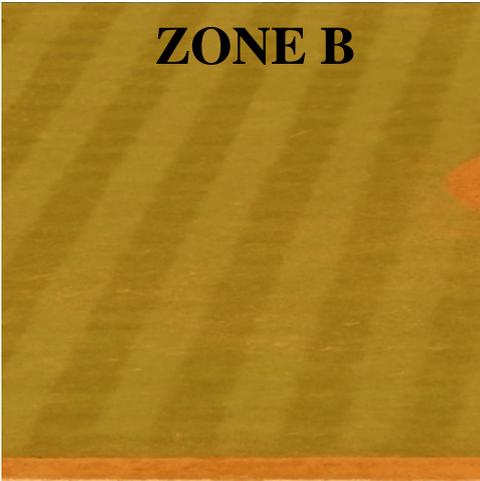


ZONE A



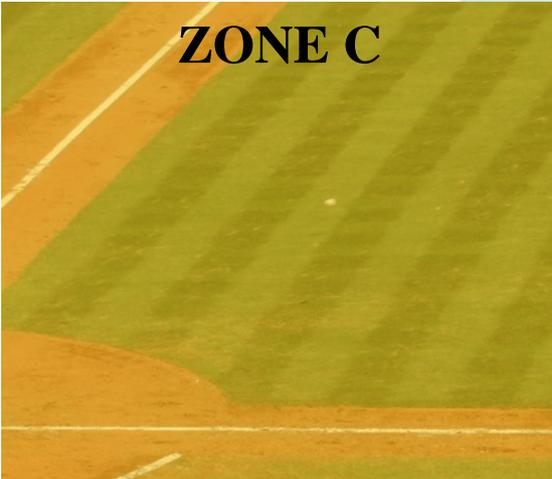
- **Set Up**
- **Grip on the ball**
- **Hand position in glove**
- **See the ball as early as possible**
- **Hand position to release**
- **Palm position at release**
- **Finger position at release**

ZONE B



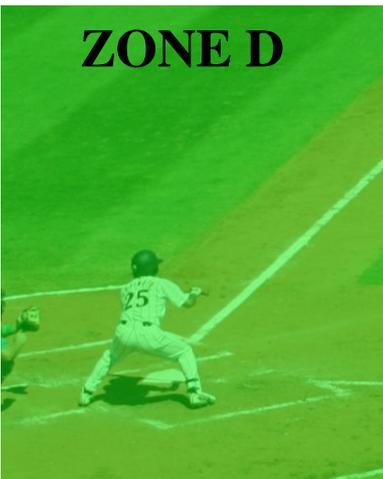
- **Rotation of ball**
- **Direction of pitch**
- **Speed of pitch**
- **Height of pitch**
- **Swing initiated**

ZONE C



- **Rotation of ball**
- **Movement in pitch path**
- **Adjustment to swing path**

ZONE D

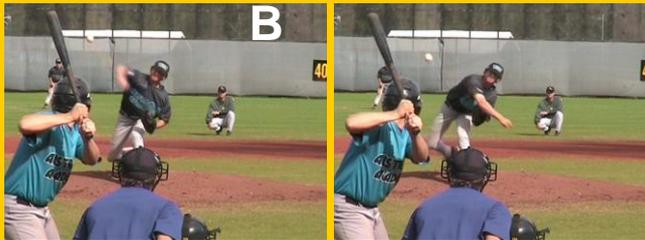


- **Ball enters contact zone**
- **Ball then enters and exits Strike zone**
- **Ball finishes with catcher**
- **Umpire calculates decision**
- **Umpire calls the pitch**



ZONE

B



ZONE

C



ZONE

D



