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# MROS SOFTBALL UMPIRE MECHANICS MANUAL

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Mechanics are the physical part of umpiring; how you move on the field and position yourself to be in the best possible location to make an accurate call. In this manual, specific guidelines have been developed for you to follow to keep all the elements of the play in front of you: the ball, the base, the defensive, and offensive player. There will be times that you need to read the play as it develops and adjust your position accordingly to have a better view of the action.

***Remember to always keep the ball, base, defensive, and offensive player in front of you.***

## **Abbreviations:**

**P = Plate Umpire (2 and 3-Man)**

**B = Base Umpire (2-Man)**

**R2 = Runner on Second Base**

**U1 = First Base Umpire (2 and 3-Man)**

**BR = Batter-Runner**

**R3 = Runner on Third Base**

**U3 = Third Base Umpire (3-Man)**

**R1 = Runner on First Base**

NOTE: U1 and B are interchangeable terms in 2-Man

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# Section 1: All Umpires

Umpires communicate through body language, signals, voice, and mechanics. Every move an umpire makes on the field is sending a message to their partners, the players, coaches, and fans. Umpires must be aware of how they stand, how their hands are positioned, how they hold their head, and how they move about the field. Learn to use your body language to send the message you want to portray — an umpire who is approachable and confident in their abilities.

## 1.1: Positioning

- Always work to keep the ball, base, runner, and fielder in front of you.
- **Arrive ahead of the action and get in a set position.**
- Starting distance in A or D with a runner on base (3-Man): 10-12 feet.
- Starting distance in A or D with no runners on base (2 and 3-Man): no closer than 18 feet.
- Work for a 90-degree angle from the throw on a force play.
- Attain a distance of no closer than 18 feet on a force play.
- On tag-up plays, move to line up the tag and the ball in your field of view, then move to your next play.
- Work for the best position to see all elements of a tag play. **Utilize the “wedge” concept.**
- Attain a distance of 3-10 feet from a tag play.
- When you are responsible for the play at a base, it is also your job to see the runner approach, touch, and round the base.
- On plays with no runners on base, always obtain your primary or holding position, stop, watch, and wait for the calling umpire to finish their signal and for the ball to be in the circle before you move to your next starting position.
- Call in your area and observe in all other areas.
- Give your full attention to every play.

## 1.2: Choosing a Position - Angles and Distances

### Force Play

There are three elements involved when judging a **force play**:

- Fielder catching the ball.
- Runner touching the base.
- Fielder touching the base.

Umpires must be able to see all three elements the instant they occur in order to make an accurate call.

**You must keep your distance to see all three elements.**

Defenders will usually stretch from the bag in the direction of the approaching ball, making the desired angle for seeing the fielder's foot on the base nearly the same as a 90-degree angle to the path of the ball. The third element, the runner touching the base, complicates an umpire's choice of position. Adjust your position to give equal attention to all three elements of the play.

Umpires need to work for a 90-degree angle to the throw, keeping your distance from the play no closer than 18 feet and staying within a 30- to 50-degree angle to first base. For example, on a throw from the plate area, although the 90-degree-to-the-throw concept will take the umpire into the baseline between first and second base, the umpire should stop no farther than a 50-degree angle to the base. This allows the umpire to keep the other two elements, runner and fielder touching the base, in view. This also allows for easy adjustments if the defender has to move away from the base to catch the ball and attempt a tag on the batter-runner.

If the ball is fielded and thrown from inside the baseline, drop step several strides and move to the left a couple of steps to increase a force play depth from second base. If the ball is fielded and thrown from outside the baseline, drop step several strides and move to the right a couple of steps to increase a force-play depth from second base.

### Tag Play

The calling position develops around the actions and position of the defender, the runner and the ball. The initial primary position should be obtained before a runner approaches a base to ensure that all the elements are in front looking through the play. Read the play as it develops, determine if obstruction and/or a collision has occurred, then adjust your position as needed to see the application of a tag.

The calling position is achieved by being in position to see the path of the runner into the base and to see the ball/glove tag of the runner at a distance of 3-10 feet. A high percentage of runners routinely use an avoidance-type slide to touch the outer edge of the base. The umpire must adjust their calling position to see the application of the tag or a swipe tag. Umpires must allow the entire play to conclude before rendering a

decision. Be prepared to describe your call verbally if the non-routine occurs. **The use of the “wedge” concept is highly advisable both in the field and on the plate on tag plays.**

### **Dropped Third Strike**

When the batter has two strikes, all umpires should pre-pitch prepare and determine if the batter is entitled to run. All umpires should be aware of the possibility of a checked swing request and the plate umpire should immediately ask for help from the appropriate umpire if needed. Mentally prepare to give the appropriate signal or verbal.

### **Infield Fly**

**The plate umpire is responsible for calling an infield fly;** however, if the plate umpire does not make the call, the base umpire(s) may declare the infield fly. **The base umpire(s) should not echo the signal.** It is generally considered ordinary effort if an infielder can nearly settle under the ball while still facing the plate. If you feel an infielder could have caught the ball with normal effort and an outfielder calls her off and takes the catch, it is still an infield fly.

An infield fly is not called until the ball has reached its highest point. When judging if a ball is an infield fly, remember that it must be a ball in flight, not a bunt or a line drive.

The umpire-to-umpire infield fly signal is given by the plate umpire before stepping in to take a stance behind the catcher. The base umpire(s) acknowledges the infield fly rule by returning the same signal to the plate umpire. The umpire-to-umpire infield fly signal should be exchanged among the crew every time a new batter comes to the plate and there is an infield fly situation. When the infield fly situation is no longer in effect, the umpires should again communicate by wiping the infield fly off or use the two out indicator or timing play signal. **If the plate umpire fails to initiate either signal when warranted, the base umpire(s) should initiate to the plate umpire before the next pitch.**

### **Look-Back Rule (The Circle)**

- Always know the location of the ball, if it is in the pitcher’s circle, and if it is in the pitcher’s possession.
- Know each umpire’s responsibilities for covering plays involving the pitcher’s circle.
- At the conclusion of a play, do not move until the pitcher has control of the ball in the pitcher’s circle and all base runners have stopped on a base.
- One umpire must keep eyes on the runner(s) and pitcher while the other umpire(s) move to their next starting position.

The intent of the look-back rule is simple: once the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle, the runner(s) must immediately proceed or retreat. The pitcher is not obligated to do anything. Compliance is the burden of the runner(s).

When a pitcher who is in the pitcher's circle receives a throw from the outfield, runners must be given the opportunity to locate the ball and realize it is the pitcher who has possession of the ball and that she is in the pitcher's circle.

If time is requested before the ball is in the pitcher's control in the pitcher's circle, **do not immediately grant it.**

If either defense or offense request time, **check to confirm all runners are stopped on a base, action has concluded and then grant time.**

An example of a widely used look-back rule situation occurs when the runner overruns first base after she has beaten out an infield hit or when she is awarded first base on a walk. If the ball has not been returned to the pitcher in the circle, the runner is not restricted to first base. If the ball has been returned to the pitcher in the pitcher's circle and the runner is returning to first base within the baseline extended, she has the option to return to first base without stopping or proceed to second base without retouching first base.

However:

- Stepping beyond the extended baseline in foul territory commits the runner to first base.
- Stepping beyond the extended baseline toward second base commits the runner to second base.

The first base umpire is responsible for making the call. The first base umpire should keep their eyes on the runner and should increase their depth from the base to expand their range of vision to include all the elements of this play.

### **Home Run**

The crew must communicate and continue to umpire on the hit. If the ball is close to the foul pole, the umpire who chases will turn, set and straddle the line, and focus his or her view on the ball as it crosses the vertical plane of the fence and the foul pole. Give the home run signal immediately after the ball passes over the fence while you are facing the outfield. Do not wait for the ball to land before giving the signal. If the ball is not near the line, chase parallel to its flight, stop before it clears the fence, and signal immediately facing where the ball went over the fence. When no one chases, the plate umpire must move to achieve the best angle and be set to make the call.

On out-of-park home runs, the plate umpire must watch all runners complete their base running responsibilities before ruling on dead ball appeals, then put new ball in play.

## **Rundowns**

Successful coverage for rundowns depends on timing and deliberate movement. Until help can arrive, the umpire must find a position that is a comfortable distance from the baseline to move laterally between the bases while observing the action. The umpire should square their shoulders to the runner and move sideways with the runner. It is not necessary to keep up with the runner; rather shadow the runner's movement along the baseline.

The umpire coming to help must move aggressively toward the closest end of the action when the play is moving away. Communicate verbally to the other umpire.

Once shared responsibility has been established in a rundown situation the responsibility for calling a tag falls to the umpire with the best look.

Generally, the umpire positioned where the action is nearing will make the call. When the tag is on the runner's back, the umpire positioned away from the action has a better view to make the call. When umpires are not sure who should make the call, quick eye contact and a verbal acknowledgment of "I have the call" will resolve the problem.

With multiple runners on base, both umpires involved in the rundown must be aware of additional or subsequent runner responsibilities. For instance, in 3-Man if an umpire chased with a runner in scoring position and there is a rundown between first and second base, the plate umpire cannot help in the rundown but must remain ready for a play at the plate.

### **1.3: Going for Help**

There are circumstances that umpires need to go for help. Going for help when appropriate does not destroy an umpire's credibility but allows the umpire to receive a piece of information that was missed when the call was rendered. Going for help on a slap or bunt attempt on strike two with the ball going foul is a very specific situation. The plate umpire should follow the same guidelines as in a checked swing by asking the open umpire if it was a bunt or slap attempt. The response from the base umpire(s) is the same as in the checked swing.

All conversations between umpires should be short and to the point. When it is necessary in 3-Man to have all three umpires meet because of the complexity of the call, then this action should take a minimal amount of time.

### **1.4: The Power of the Point**

The point signal is extremely valuable and effective when used wisely. The point shifts viewers' attention from the umpire to the infraction. It should be used on check swings or bunt attempts that were ruled by the



plate umpire. **It should not be used on obvious bunt attempts or swings by the batter, or obvious calls on the field**, as this detracts from its effectiveness on big plays when you really need it to sell a call. Base umpire(s) should use the point signal on tag plays only when it's close.

## **1.5: The Value of Verbal**

Using appropriate tone, volume, and inflection when verbalizing a call can sell the call, prevent questions, and enhance the confidence others have in you. Verbalizing to communicate with partners can strengthen the bond of the crew, increase the comfort level, and help a crew perform flawlessly. Know your partners first names. Use their name as the first part, or sometimes the only part, you need for communication. Partner communication can prevent small mix-ups and huge catastrophes. Get in the habit of talking as a crew.

## **1.6: At the Conclusion of the Game**

The last out of the game does not dissolve the crew. When the final out is made, umpires must remain aware of each other's position and remain alert to the actions on the field. One crewmember will be closer to the exit than the other(s), so it is a good idea for that member to wait for the crew to gather and exit the field together.

## Section 2: Plate Umpires

### 2.1: Plate Stances

When working the plate, you may use the Box Stance, Gerry Davis, Modified Gerry Davis or Heel/Toe. **Set up in the slot** with all of these stances. It is imperative that you are able to see the outside corner of the plate with an unobstructed line of vision of the entire ball from the pitcher's release point through the strike zone to the catcher's glove.

Plate umpires should set their head height in a position that allows total view of the strike zone. However, **your eye level should be no higher than the top of the strike zone and your chin should be no lower than the top of the catcher's helmet.**

#### Box Stance

Your feet are apart slightly wider than shoulder width. Your non-slot foot is placed on the ground about a foot behind the middle of the catcher's back when she is directly behind the plate. The slot foot is parallel to and in line or even with the non slot foot at a distance that places the head in the slot. Both feet are pointing at the pitcher. Drop set by bending the knees.

#### Gerry Davis

Start with your hands on your knees base set. Your feet are wider than shoulder width, feet approximately parallel to and generally even with each other. Your hands should be gripping your thighs above your knees. Your upper body weight rests on your knees with your elbows straight which provides consistent head height. Adjust head height with the width of your feet. Begin about an arm's length behind the catcher with your nose in the slot. As the pitcher commits to deliver, drop your butt slightly about two to three inches to bring your line of sight parallel to the ground and to eliminate neck strain.

#### Modified Gerry Davis

Start with your hands on your knees base set. Your feet are wider than shoulder width, feet approximately parallel to and generally even with each other. Your hands should be gripping your thighs above your knees. Your upper body weight rests on your knees with your elbows straight which provides consistent head height. Adjust head height with your width of your feet. Begin about an arm's length behind the catcher with your nose in the slot.

## **Heel-Toe Stance**

Your feet are apart wider than shoulders width. Your shoulders and body are nearly square to the plate so that a line drawn down the middle of the umpires' waist it would bisect the plate. Your slot foot should be in the slot pointing directly at the pitcher's plate and in line with or slightly in front of an imaginary line drawn from the catcher's heels to the toe of the slot foot. Your non-slot foot is angled no more than 45 degrees. You should be no deeper than a closed fist between your non-slot foot and the catcher's back when you drop set. Drop set by bending your knees (like sitting in a chair).

**All of the stances require you to position your head in the slot in order to see the outside corner. It is imperative that you are able to see the outside corner of the plate with an unobstructed line of vision of the ball from the pitcher's release point through the strike zone to the catcher's glove.**

## **2.2: Working the Plate**

- Work the slot; be sure you can see the outside corner and the batter's knees.
- Use a balanced, comfortable stance that allows you to drop to a solid set, see the entire strike zone, and exit the plate area quickly.
- Use the same stance (mirror image) on both sides of the plate.
- Get set before the pitch is released.
- Do not touch the catcher.
- Track the pitch with your nose.
- Do not indicate pitch location with body movement.
- Use the strike zone that is defined in the rulebook.
- Call an accurate strike zone.

## **Strikes**

- When a strike is called, verbalize in the down position and signal in the up or going-up position.
- When a strike is called, use a very loud and distinct verbal for a strike.
- Finish a called third strike differently than a routine strike.
- Use the same timing for a swinging strike as for a called strike, except do not verbalize the call.
- Between pitches, step back out of your stance and relax after you have given your signal.

- Watch the catcher for any potential play on a runner.
- Remain alert for any reaction or conference request from the batter, catcher, or coaches.

### **Balls**

- Verbalize a ball call in the down position before you begin to stand up.
- Verbalize a ball call in the same tone, with the same timing, and same emphasis every time.
- Between pitches, step back out of your stance and relax after you have given your signal.
- Watch the catcher for any potential play on a runner.
- Remain alert for any reaction or conference request from the batter, catcher, or coaches.

## **2.3: Watching Warm-Up Pitches**

It is good practice to watch a few warm-up pitches. This allows you to get a feel for the speed and movement of the pitches and how the catcher works. In the top of the first inning, watch the second, third and fourth pitches. Do the same in the bottom of the first inning and for any new pitcher unless occupied with administrative duties (substitutions, etc.). NOTE: Watch only if the person catching is fully equipped.

## **2.4: Pre-Pitch Preparation**

Before every pitch, mentally answer these questions:

- Where are the runners?
- Are my partner(s) in the correct starting position?
- How many outs are there?
- Do I have an umpire-to-umpire signal to give?
- Where do I go if a partner chases?
- Where do I go on a hit to the outfield?
- Where do I go on an infield hit?
- Who will I go to on a checked swing?
- Is there a potential for a steal or pickoff?

## 2.5: General Plate Duties

- Work in priorities: pitcher, pitch, batter, and action.
- Eyes up when taking your position.
- Always take your position behind the catcher with your mask already on.
- Give the count after a steal, pickoff attempt, checked swing requests, illegal pitches, timeouts and foul balls.
- Wait to present the count until the pitcher is facing home plate.
- Always ask for help on a checked swing when asked by the catcher or coach.
- It is acceptable to go for help when a batter has two strikes and bunts or slaps and the ball becomes foul. Go to the umpire who had the checked swing responsibility and ask, “Do you have a bunt?”
- Be expedient when documenting and reporting lineup card changes and all warnings. Report all changes to the official scorer and to both dugouts.
- Look at your partners at the beginning of the game and each half inning to see if they are ready for play. **Do not point at them.** If they are not ready, wait.
- Make sure all runners are on base before you use the “Play Ball” signal after every suspension of play. It can be done with a quick point and low verbal, so both the batter and catcher hear it.

## 2.6: After the Ball is Hit

- Call fair/foul and catch/no catch decisions unless a base umpire chases.
- Call fair/foul decisions on all ground balls from home plate to over first and third bases.
- Trail the runner no more than 15 feet up the line when first base is unoccupied and the play is going to first base.
- Trail the runner no more than 15 feet up the line when there is a runner on first base and the play is at first base. Be set for the play at first, and then move to third base for a possible play.
- Watch for possible interference by the batter-runner at first base.
- (3-Man) Cover third base and home plate if U1 cannot get to the plate on an umpire rotation.
- Do not call or signal obvious foul balls with no runners on. For example, on a foul ball straight back to the backstop, over the back or sides of the backstop, or hit obviously foul down a line, **everyone knows what just occurred so no signal or verbal is necessary.** With runners on base, if the ball is near the foul line and foul, a signal and a verbal call should be given for the benefit of base umpire(s) and runners. **Anytime the ball is**

**close to the foul line, the umpire (plate or base) must be straddling the foul line, give a signal, and the verbal call.**

- At the conclusion of a play, return to home plate at a quick walking pace. Do not run.
- Stay alert in case a coach approaches to request a conference or to make a change.
- When a base umpire does not chase and a live ball is nearing a dead ball area, ball status is a priority for the plate umpire.

## **2.7: Movement at the Plate**

The plate umpire has the following position choices:

- Trail the runner when there are no runners on base or when there is a runner only on first when the play will go to first base.
- Trail the runner no more than 15 feet. Be on or near the line in fair territory.
- Be in the holding area in front of the pitcher's circle.
- Be in the holding area between third base and home plate.
- Be near or at the point of the plate.

## **2.8: Positioning for Plays at the Plate**

### **"Point of Plate"**

This position is essentially a simple step back from the umpire's position during a pitch. It is used when the plate umpire has no calling responsibility at third base or, in the 3-umpire system, by U1 who has rotated home. From this position, the umpire can see the path of the runner, the movement of the catcher, the flight of the ball, and the development of obstruction. Also from here, the umpire will determine if they need to change their position based on the development of the play to utilize the "wedge."

This could be a calling position if the elements of the play dictate that this is the best position to see the play. Although the point of the plate is the best starting position, the umpire might not be able to use it if they have responsibilities elsewhere on the field.

### **"The Wedge"**

The point of plate starting position allows us to use the wedge on the plate. As defensive players are not allowed to position themselves between the runner and the plate without possession of the ball, catchers are

setting up in front of the plate until they receive the ball. Almost always, this results in a flailing swipe tag as the runner goes by.

“Traditional” positions may not give the umpire the best possible view of this swipe tag. The umpires must position themselves where nothing comes between them and the ball or the plate. The runner must never come between the umpire and the catcher.

There is an infinite amount of possible positions umpire could be in in order properly see the play. There are no static/set positions in seeing the tag play. As the play develops, the umpire must adjust to maintain visibility of all the elements. The play is dynamic, and so must be the umpire’s movements. The umpire should actively work close to the catcher, reacting to the catcher’s left hip movements. If necessary, the umpire will move with the catcher, keeping the glove in their field of view always. As the catcher brings the ball to the runner, continue to rotate with the catcher, if needed, to keep the ball in view. In some cases, this may result in the umpire rotating to the first base side of the plate.

If the catcher moves away from the plate up the third base line, the umpire should move up the line with her, staying close to the catcher. If the catcher moves up the line in fair territory, the umpire should move in fair territory with her. If the catcher moves up the line in foul territory, the umpire should move in foul territory with her.

In all situations, staying close to the catcher gives the umpire the ability to change angles quickly to prevent the runner from coming between the catcher and the umpire; therefore, allowing a great view of the tag or no tag and the touch of the plate by the runner. Also, this allows a great view of blocking the runner without the ball — obstruction.

### **First Base Line Extended**

If your starting position is from a holding position between third and the plate – first base line extended may be the best position available and achievable. This position works well if the runner slides directly into the plate and/or the catcher receives the ball ahead of the runner and tags while blocking.

## **2.9: Conference Management**

The plate umpire has primary responsibility for conference management. All offensive and defensive conferences must be recorded and the head coach must be notified that a conference has been charged. Write down the team, the inning, the number of outs, and whether it’s an offensive or defensive charged conference.

Be consistent yet appropriate with the time allowed for a conference. Defensive conferences are usually longer, and offensive conferences are often quicker. Game situations can also determine the amount of time allowed for a conference. If the conference is not ending after a reasonable amount of time, break it up. For a

defensive conference, walk purposefully to the pitcher's circle (or wherever the huddle is) and ask: "Are you about ready?" Do not leave until the conference breaks up, and do not return to the plate without the catcher. For an offensive conference, walk purposefully to the huddle and ask, "Are you about ready?" Do not leave until the conference breaks up and do not return to the plate without the batter.

Do not charge either team with a conference if performing your umpire duties causes the initial delay of the game. When you are ready to resume play and teams are still conferencing, advise them that it is time to play ball. If they do not respond immediately, ask if they want to request a conference (if they have one remaining).

Be proactive. Do not allow a team to violate the conference rule and do what is necessary to prevent it from happening.



## Section 3: Base Umpires

### 3.1: Pre-Pitch Preparation

Before every pitch, mentally answer these questions:

- What is my chase area?
- Where are the outfielders in my area positioned?
- (3-Man) Where do I go if a partner chases?
- How many outs are there?
- Do I have an umpire-to-umpire signal to return?
- Where do I go on a hit to the outfield?
- Where do I go on an infield hit?
- (3-Man) Is it my checked swing responsibility?
- What is the potential for a steal or pickoff?
- Do I have a potential call for interference/obstruction/nothing?

By reviewing as much as you can before the pitch, you not only maintain focus but also increase your ability to recognize and respond to the action without hesitation.

### 3.2: Pre-Pitch Mechanics

- When walking the line, do not take more than two steps. End your step on the outside push foot (left foot in A, right foot in D). This allows your body to be angled slightly towards the field of play instead of away from it and allows a quicker first step into the field. Become set before the ball arrives at the plate.
- Be in a stationary position once the pitcher steps on the pitcher's plate. Begin watching the pitcher's motions and any runners for whom you are responsible.
- It is acceptable to work close in B or C — one or two steps from an infielder. The softball diamond is small enough, don't limit yourself by giving up too much space just for cushion. If you are in her way, she will tell you and you can adjust.

### 3.3: Fly Ball Calls

- Know your calling / chase areas.
- Consider going when the ball is hard hit in the air (unless no doubt leaving the park), near warning track or side fences, when two fielders are converging, gappers, near the lines, or bloopers.
- Loudly verbalize “Going!” or “Gone!” In 3-Man, you can verbalize “2-Man!”
- (3-Man) When the ball’s hit in your partner’s area, know if they chase (listen and verbalize). Never assume.
- (3-Man) When your partner chases, move to your new position.
- (3-Man) When your partner does not chase, move to your normal position.
- An umpire’s chase path should be parallel to the flight of the ball. If the ball is hit near the line, stay on the line, turn, set, and visualize.
- Always stop and set before the catch/no-catch occurs.
- If a fielder trips, rolls, or falls into or over a fence after appearing to catch the ball, move in quickly to the play to determine if the ball was held.
- Make the signal for catch/no catch facing the play.
- **Always know where the fielder’s throwing lane is and move to stay out of it.** Turn with the throw as it goes to the infield and observe the action.

### 3.4: Working Between Pitches

Working between pitches is a mechanic used by base umpires on non-batted balls. The mechanic of working between pitches enables the base umpire to remain alert to the runner(s) for whom they are responsible in case of a play. This mechanic ensures readiness and credibility in the event of an immediate pickoff attempt or delayed throw behind the runner or a possible obstruction on the runner’s return to the base.

If the catcher immediately throws to a base after the pitch, the umpire simply reacts to that action by committing to a calling position on that runner. When the throw is not immediate, use the method described below according to the starting position.

#### **Starting Position — On the Line (A or D Position)**

There is not one position that works best for every pickoff attempt at first or third base. Depending on who covers and the likelihood of how the runner will return, working between pitches as U1 or U3 on the line is simply staying in the set position (the starting position assumed before the pitch) until the runner has

returned to the base. Watch the catcher's actions with the ball, be alert to the defender's actions, and watch for obstruction on each runner's return to base. Return to your position once the runner has returned to the base and the ball is in the pitcher's circle.

### **Starting Position — Not on the Line (B or C Position)**

In 3-Man, this applies only to the counter-rotated U1. This mechanic does not apply to U3 with a runner only on first base because there is no runner responsibility. U3 follows the same mechanic as stated above (Starting Position-On the Line (A or D Position)).

There are three musts for U1 on every non-batted ball:

- Move out of the set position.
- Watch the ball and the catcher's movement.
- Move and remain ready for a play.

(3-Man) When U1 has responsibility for R2, read the movement of the closest defender in order to determine your primary position. When 2B is covering second base, allow her to get 6-12 feet away from you to read her position to take the correct path to second base. In most cases if the defender does not throw to second base, you will take only a few steps toward second base. Remain alert to SS covering if 2B does not move and react accordingly. Watch for obstruction on R2 returning to the base. Once the ball is in the pitcher's circle and the runner has returned to the base, return to your starting position.

(3-Man) When U1 is only responsible for R1 with runners at first and third bases, read the movement of the closest defender to know where the primary position is. In most cases, 1B will be covering first base, but remain alert to 2B. When there is no throw, take a few steps parallel to the baseline toward first base remaining ahead of R1. Watch for obstruction on R1 if she returns to the base. Once the ball is in the pitcher's circle and the runner has returned to the base, return to your starting position.

(3-Man) When U1 is responsible for R1 and R2, take a couple of steps forward from your starting position. Watch for obstruction on R1 and R2 if runners return to their bases. Remain ready to commit to either play. Once the ball is in the pitcher's circle and the runner has returned to the base, return to your starting position.

In 2-Man, U1 will work between pitches towards the base with one runner on. With multiple runners, work between pitches by taking a couple of steps forward from your starting position. Watch for obstruction on the runner(s) if they return to their bases. Remain ready to commit to either play. Once the ball is in the pitcher's circle and the runner(s) have returned to their base, return to your starting position.

### 3.5: Runners Leaving Early

- (3-Man) When U1 or U3 is on the line in a set position (not walking the line), your body will be squared to the 30' mark of the opposite base line (halfway between home plate and the base) to see this play. The umpire should focus on the runner's foot that will leave the base last and peripherally watch the arm swing of the pitcher.
- When the pitcher's arm is in line with her body (hand at the hip), the ball is considered to be released.
- Any benefit of the doubt should be given to the runner.
- When a runner leaves a base before the pitcher releases the pitch, the umpire signals a dead ball and verbalizes "Dead ball! The runner left early, she's out!" followed by an out signal.

### 3.6: Teamwork Among Umpires

- Know your checked swing responsibility — concentrate on the bat. As a rule of thumb, if the swing carries the barrel of the bat in front of the batter's body toward the infield, it is a strike. This interpretation is outlined in Rule 2-11. **Do not use the plate as a reference point on checked swings, as the batter's position forward or back in the batter's box changes where the plate is in the swing path.**
- Never signal/echo foul balls.
- Never stop runners on foul balls or tell them not to slide.
- **Stay outside the diamond as much as possible.** When it's necessary to come inside the diamond, use a pivot. Start the pivot approximately 10 feet inside the baseline. Always pivot open toward the runner coming at you. If necessary, move back outside the diamond after pivoting inside to keep the elements in view.
- **Always know the location of the ball.**
- Always work to keep the elements in front of you.
- Remain aware of the running and throwing lanes when you move as a result of a hit or play.
- When moving through foul territory, always move between the base and the base coach. Never allow the coach to be between you and the base. Communicate your movement to avoid contact.
- Use parallel movement with runners that are your responsibility.
- Make sure the action at your base is complete before you move to your next position.
- Recognize your next play and be ready to move to the next primary calling position.
- Always obtain a primary calling position on every play.
- Watch plays not in your calling area to assist if requested.

## Section 4: First Base Umpire (U1 / B)

- Umpires should work for a 90-degree angle from the spot of the throw on force plays. Keep your distance from the play greater than 18 feet and stay within a 30- to 50-degree angle to first base.
- When the ball is hit in the infield, umpires should **see the ball fielded by the defense, watch the release of the ball, and track it to the base.**
- On force plays, achieve calling depth and angle. Just prior to the thrown ball reaching the fielder, change your focus to the ball, fielder, and runner, watching the three come together. Once you have made your decision on the play, rise from the set position and signal and verbalize your call using appropriate emphasis and voice. Take your time here and see the entire play before making a call (Pause, Read, React).
- On tag plays, consider the fielder's setup and then watch the movement of the fielder to catch the thrown ball. After the catch, follow the glove to the area of the tag. Pick up the runner in your field of vision as the fielder begins to move toward the area where the tag will be applied. **Use the "wedge" and move to see the space between the runner and the glove.** You must adjust your position to best see all the elements.
- If the ball is hit to right field, you may use foul territory to watch the runner at first base but avoid going farther than 45 degrees off the line. You risk having your vision obstructed by the coach or runner. **Use this position only on a throw from RF or when 2B comes into your area to field the ball.**
- Be ready to help the plate umpire on a ball near the dead ball line on the first base side of the field if the plate umpire must move to third base for a play.
- (3-Man) Do not use foul territory for plays at first base if U3 has chased.
- (3-Man) When counter-rotated, choose a position not closer than 15 feet from first or second base.
- (3-Man) When counter-rotated, base your choice of position on the location of the runners, the probability of a steal or a pickoff, the current game situation, and your knowledge of the offense and defense.
- (3-Man) When counter-rotated with R2 only, on an infield hit, wait until the fielder commits on a play then move quickly toward that base.
- (3-Man) **U1 has first right of refusal over U3 on chasing fly balls.**
- (3-Man) When starting on the line or when counter-rotated, stay outside the diamond when the ball is hit to left or center field whether U3 chases or not.
- (3-Man) When counter-rotated with the ball hit to right field, you may choose to pivot inside the diamond.
- In 2-Man in the C position with the ball hit to left field or in B position with the ball hit to right field (i.e., the ball is hit over your head), you may choose to pivot inside the diamond.

## Section 5: Third Base Umpire (U3)

(Section 5 only pertains to 3-Man Mechanics)

- With a runner on third base, adjust your position to accommodate seeing your checked swing responsibilities. Move farther off the line. Do not straddle the line.
- Do not over-hustle. Often a step or two is needed to achieve the best position. Avoid crossing any running or throwing lanes.
- When the ball is hit in the infield, umpires should **see the ball fielded by the defense, watch the release of the ball, and track the ball to the base.**
- On force plays, achieve calling depth and angle. Just before the thrown ball reaches the fielder, change your focus to the ball, fielder, and runner, watching the three come together. Once you have made your decision on the play, rise from the set position, signal, and verbalize your call using appropriate emphasis and voice.
- On tag plays, consider the fielder's setup and watch the movement of the fielder to catch the thrown ball. After the catch, follow the glove to the area of the tag. Pick up the runner in your field of vision as the fielder begins to move toward the area where the tag will be applied. **Use the "wedge" and move to see the space between the runner and the glove.** You must adjust your position to best see all the elements.
- When rotated, set up 10-12 feet from second base angled toward right-center field or left-center field (first base or third base side of second) – you must have a clear view of the batter.
- When there is a runner on third only and there is a hit that easily scores R3, move to a primary at second base. Verbally communicating to U1, "I have second base."
- When there is a runner starting on second base only or second and third base, and there is a hit that will score R2, before moving, look to see what U1 is doing with the batter-runner. If U1 is with the batter-runner and coming toward second base, remain at third base. When the batter-runner moves back toward first base, U3 should run hard into the primary at second base while communicating to U1, "I have second base."
- With no runners on and moving to a primary at second base, stop, set, and watch any play on the batter-runner at first base. Stop and wait until U1 finishes the out signal on the runner before starting back to your position on the line. When the runner is safe, remain in the primary position until the batter-runner returns to first and the ball is in possession of the pitcher in the pitcher's circle.
- When starting on the line with U1 counter-rotated and no chase, stay outside the diamond in foul territory.
- When rotated and the ball is hit sharply to any field for a possible force play at second base, stay outside the diamond and drop step to more depth. Move left or right accordingly to get the best angle on the throw to second base.

## Section 6: Situational Mechanics

Situations could arise in any game that would cause an umpire to deviate from the standard mechanics. Every mechanic cannot be covered in this manual. Umpires should read the play and adjust to the changing situations as they arise. This is the part of umpiring that allows you to read and adapt to a unique play situation as necessary.

The following are examples of approved situational mechanics:

- U3 or U1 is on the line. The batter hits the ball, which is a line drive that moves quickly through the infield near the foul line. U3 or U1 can make a fair ball call (pointing to the side of fair territory), then continue standard mechanics. **This is known as the “Point-and-Go” mechanic and can be used in both 3-Man and 2-Man Mechanics when on the line.**
- (3-Man) With a 3-2 count and two outs, all umpires may move to force play calling depth, as all potential tag plays have been eliminated.
- (3-Man) U1 is counter-rotated. The batter hits a fly ball that is near the line. U1 should chase on a possible trap near the line. The plate umpire has fair or foul responsibility and U1 determines catch/no catch.
- (3-Man) U3 is rotated. The batter bunts or bats a ball that rolls slowly near the foul line, requiring P to stay with the ball longer than usual to determine fair/foul. U3 must be prepared to take R1 to third base for a possible play. If this happens, U3 should communicate they have third base. P stays at home and U1 would be responsible for any plays on the batter runner at first and second base.

## Section 7: Signals

Signals are the most important form of umpire communication. Information is relayed to the players, coaches and spectators by their use. Signals should only vary in emphasis, not in implementation. From the routine play to the sell call to the unusual, every signal must be visible, distinct, strong, informative, and meaningful from its beginning to its end. **Poorly executed and non-standard signals serve only to confuse everyone, including your partner.** All signals worth giving are worth being given correctly.

- Every signal should be initiated from a stopped, set, or ready position. The feet are planted in a solid base, at least shoulder-width apart. The first move before executing any signal is to, without moving your feet, come to a full standing upright position.
- Signals must always be presented with confidence and strength. Everyone who sees the signal should understand its message.
- Any movement while giving a signal is always toward the play.
- The signal must be held long enough to convey the conviction of the decision, and then the arms and hands are brought back into the body, thus completing the signal, before moving to the next position.
- Do not draw attention to yourself by overusing or needlessly using any signal. A call or signal is needed only when there is a play. If there's no play, no signal is necessary.

### **Here are some examples of when a signal is not needed:**

- When a hit ball clearly goes over the fielder's head or bounces in front of her, a "no catch" signal is **not** needed.
- On a hit ball that is fouled directly back to the backstop or fouled over the backstop or over the sides of the backstop, **no foul ball signal or verbalization is needed.** Everyone knows what just occurred.
- On a ball that is overthrown or completely missed by the intended fielder, a safe or "no catch" signal is **not** needed.
- On a play where a runner clearly obtains any base or home plate before the ball arrives, a safe signal is **not** needed.
- When the batter is getting set and the pitcher is showing no indication of quick pitching, a "do not pitch" or hold signal is **not** needed.



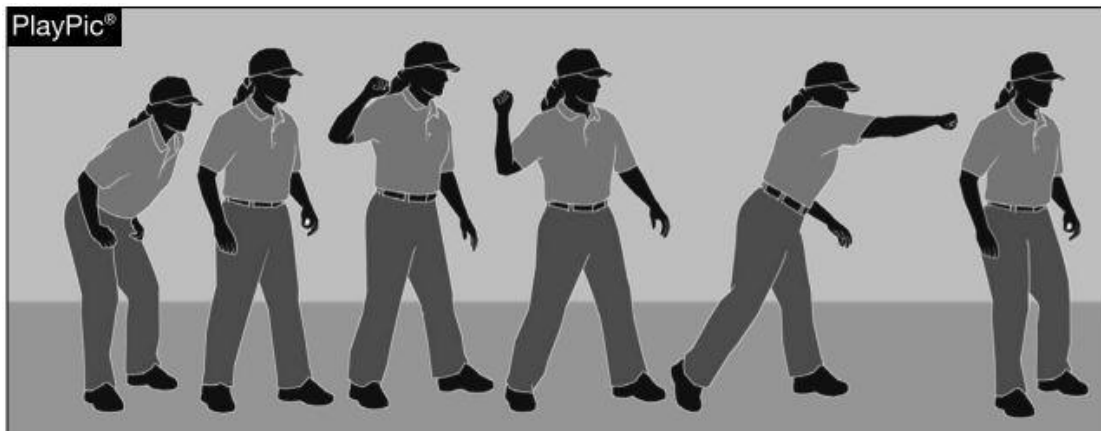
## 7.1: Standard Signals

### Out



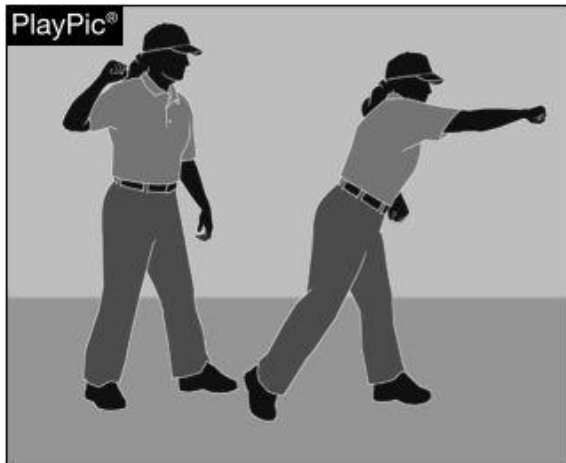
Extend the right arm straight up with an open palm facing the ear, then bring the forearm slightly forward while clenching the hand into a fist, this is the Hammer. The right upper arm and forearm should both be at a 90-degree angle or greater. Verbally call “Out” if appropriate. Control the left arm by pulling it into the midsection of the body or against the body.

### Sell Out



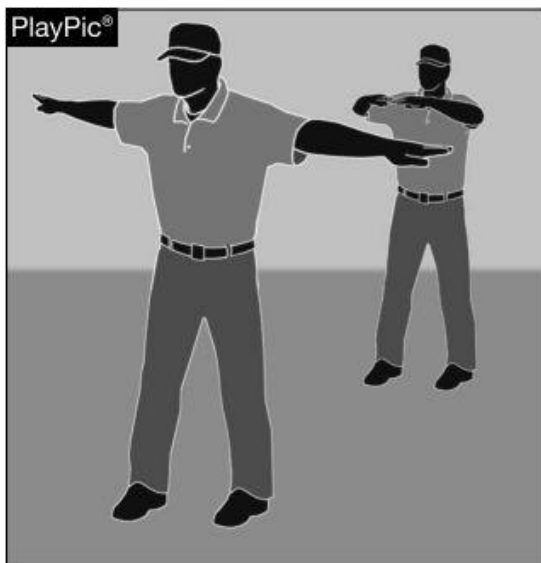
While moving at the play, bring the right arm even with or above the head somewhat like a throwing motion then bring it down toward the play with force while making a fist. A verbal call of “Out” (usually a drawn out, “Oooooutt”) accompanies the signal, typically starting when the arm is by the head and finishing with the thrown fist. End in a balanced position facing the play. Maintain dignity and control of the body, feet, and arms throughout the signal. Utilize this signal on very close plays.

## **Punch Out**



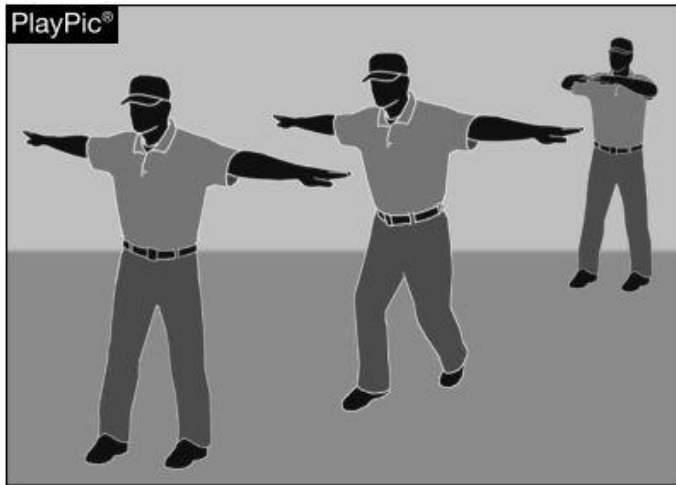
This is a variation of the Sell Out signal. It can be used to sell an out when you are too close to the play to do a full sell out, if a play warrants more than a routine out but less than a full sell out, or as a full-fledged sell out in its own right. To use a punch out that brings you no closer to the play, step back with the right foot and punch forward with the right arm. The initial stepping back is overshadowed and compensated for by the strength and forward thrust of the punch.

## **Safe, No Catch, No Tag, No Infraction**



Bring both arms into the chest at shoulder level then immediately “Pop and Hold” this signal by extending both arms straight out horizontally with the palms down. Do not have your hands in fists. Verbally call “Safe,” “No Catch,” “No Tag,” “That’s Nothing/No Infraction,” as appropriate to the play. Do not allow the extended arms to snap back in front of your body. Finish the signal with a controlled release of the arms back down into the body. Do not just drop them before moving to the next position.

## Sell Safe



Bring both arms into the chest at shoulder level, then immediately take a forward step at the play as you “Pop and Hold” this signal by extending both arms straight out horizontally with the palms down. Loudly call “Safe!” Do not allow the extended arms to snap back in front of your body. Finish the signal by bringing the back foot forward, even with the front one along with a controlled release of the arms back into the body. The difference between a Sell Safe and a standard Safe signal is the forward step and the increased volume on the verbalized “Safe!” call. Utilize this signal on very close plays.

## Dead Ball, Foul Ball, No Pitch, Time



Raise both arms straight up with palms forward. Arms should be at about a 35 to 40 degree angle from the body. Verbally call: “Dead Ball,” “Foul Ball,” “No Pitch,” or “Time.” Hold this signal until the call has been recognized and all action ceases. If the call is “Foul Ball” and the ball is close to the line, the feet should be straddling the line to finish the signal. When the plate umpire calls “No Pitch” or “Dead Ball”, the signal may be accompanied by a sideward movement out from behind the plate for better visibility.

**Dead Ball – Interference:** Raise both arms straight up with palms forward (Dead Ball signal). Arms should be at about a 35 to 40 degree angle from the body. Using a strong voice

call “Dead Ball.” Step in with authority and call the runner out for interference. Return all runners back to the base they occupied at the time of the interference. Note: If the batter-runner causes interference, the ball is dead from the time of the pitch.

## Infield Fly



Fully extend the right arm above the head with a point of the index finger. Verbalize, "Infield fly. The batter is out." If the ball is close to a foul line say, "Infield fly, the batter is out, if fair" and after completion of the catch or a ruling of a fair ball, verbalize, "The batter is out," then signal an out. The plate umpire is responsible for making this call. If the plate umpire does not make the call (forgets or is not certain of the call) and a base umpire, after eye contact communication with the plate umpire, is certain the ball is an infield fly, the base umpire should then verbalize, "Infield fly."

## Delayed Dead Ball



Extend the **left arm** straight out at shoulder height, parallel to the ground. The hand is in a fist with the fingers of the fist facing forward. This signal is used to indicate obstruction and illegal pitches.

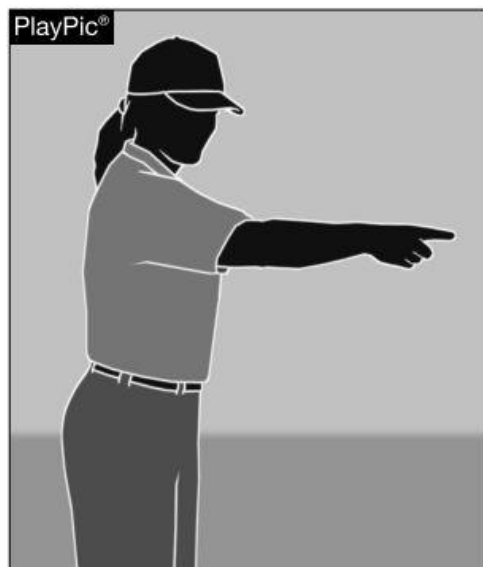
## Strike



The “Called Strike” consists of a verbal and a signal. The verbal call for a “Called Strike” is made in the “down/set” position and should be immediately followed with the “strike” signal which is made in the “up” or “going to the up” position. To signal a “Strike,” extend the right arm straight up with an open palm facing the ear, then bring the right forearm slightly forward while clenching the hand into a fist (this is the Hammer). The right upper arm and forearm should be at a 90-degree angle or greater. Control the left arm by pulling it into the midsection of the body or against the body. Do not move the feet during the signal. The signal is finished by bringing the right arm back into the body before stepping back or moving the feet.

NOTE: A “Swinging Strike” only has a signal (the Hammer) with no verbal. A “Called Third Strike” signal differs from a called strike one or two because it is not only a strike, but is also an out. A more demonstrative signal and additional emphasis on the verbal is always used for a “Called Third Strike.” Two popular styles are the bow-and-arrow/chainsaw and the overhand. The feet may move during this signal but the eyes, head, and body must remain facing the plate area.

## Point



This is an optional but extremely useful signal that helps sell a call during an abnormal play. The right or left arm is extended straight out at a play or player. Only the index finger is extended on the hand. The other arm should be under control in close to the body. Use the “Point” to indicate or sell an abnormality in a play (e.g. a tag, a missed tag, a pulled foot, a swing attempt, etc.) or to identify a player who committed a violation. The “Point” signal may be accompanied with a brief verbal explanation of the abnormality then is followed by another signal; either an “Out,” “Safe,” or “Strike.”

## Home Run



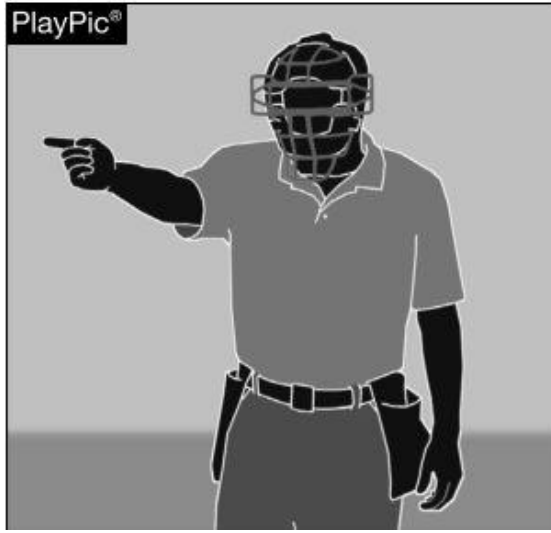
Fully extend the right arm high above the head with the index finger pointed skyward and make a circling motion.

## Double



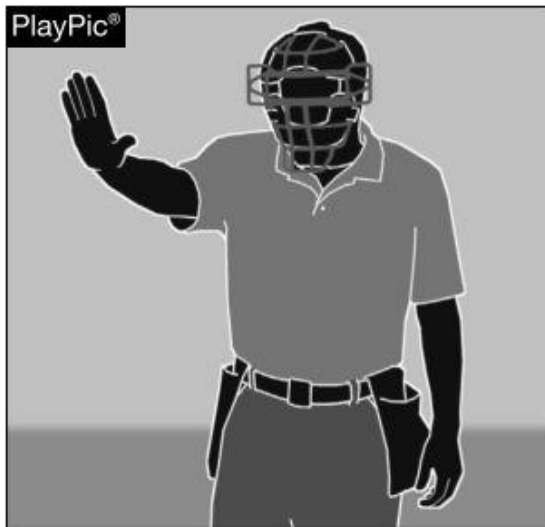
Fully extend the right arm above the head with the index and middle finger pointed skyward. Do not circle the arm. Use this signal on a two base award.

## Play Ball



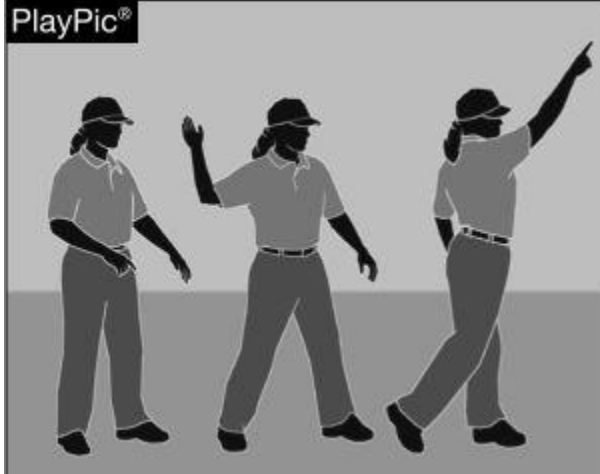
With the arm farthest from the batter extended toward the pitcher, the plate umpire may use a point or a beckoning motion with an open hand to indicate the ball is in play. The signal may be accompanied with the verbal of “Play ball” or “Play.” The verbal call may be used without any signal.

## Do Not Pitch



The plate umpire, while remaining behind the plate, may use either arm extended straight out with the palm of the hand facing the pitcher. Using the hand opposite the batter gives this signal better visibility. Only use this signal when necessary – not routinely.

## Ejection



While facing the person to be ejected, step back with one foot to open the body and allow it to turn away from the person. Bring an arm with the index finger extended up across the body and point skyward. The arm should be at a 45 degree angle to the body. You will be facing away from the ejected person. It is imperative when making this signal that no aggressive move or gesture, real or perceived, is made toward the person being ejected. The signal should be moderately animated after increasing the physical distance between the umpire and the ejected person as needed. The degree of animation is dictated by the

situation. This signal does not have to be exact, but it must be clearly understood that someone has been ejected.

## The Run Scores



Stand at the plate and emphatically point down at the plate while saying, “The run scores! Score the run!” Make sure the run goes up on the scoreboard. If necessary, use a deliberate pumping motion with the arm while pointing at the plate and repeat, “The run scores.”



### The Run Does Not Score



Stand at the plate. Raise both arms above the head like a foul ball signal. Cross the arms back and forth (not too quickly) while saying, “No run! The run does not score!” Watch the scoreboard to make sure a run is not recorded.

### Foul Tip



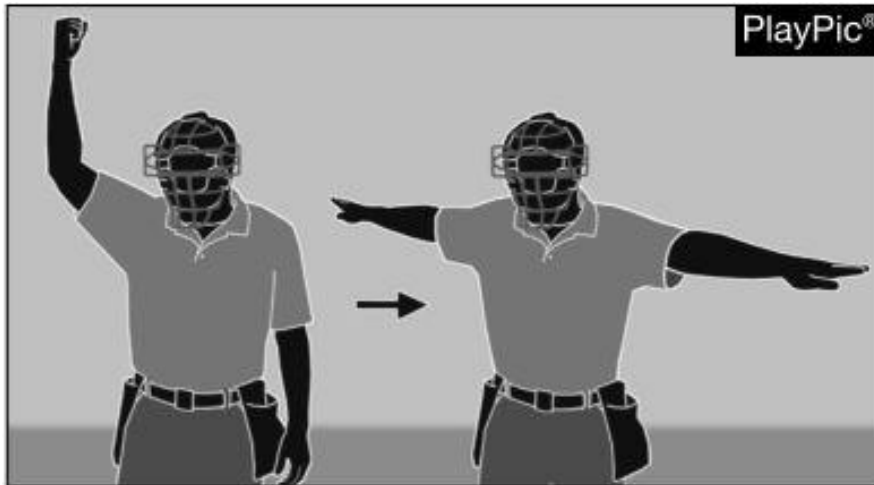
This is an optional signal. It may be used every time the pitch is foul tipped or used only at times when the ball being tipped is not completely obvious. Bring the left hand in front of your body, mid-chest or higher, with the palm or back of the hand facing you. With an upward motion, brush or tap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

### Third Strike is Caught – Plate Umpire



When a third strike is swung at and missed or is called by the plate umpire, that umpire shall give the appropriate verbal call (if any) and strike signal. If there are fewer than two outs and first base is not occupied or there are two outs at the time of the third strike, the plate umpire must also judge a “catch/no catch” on that pitch by the catcher. If the pitch was judged “caught” but it is not obvious that the catcher caught the pitch or there is any confusion among the immediate participants, the plate umpire shall verbally declare, “The batter is out” while giving an “out” signal to indicate that the pitch was judged to be “caught.”

### Third Strike is Not Caught – Plate Umpire



When a third strike is swung at and missed or is called by the plate umpire, that umpire shall give the appropriate verbal call (if any) and strike signal. If there are fewer than two outs and first base is not occupied or there are two outs at the time of the third strike, the plate umpire must also judge a catch/no catch on that pitch by the catcher. If the pitch was judged “not caught” but it is not obvious that the catcher did not catch the pitch or there is any confusion among the immediate participants, the plate umpire after giving the “Strike” signal shall immediately give a standard “Safe” signal and verbally announce “No catch” to indicate that the pitch was judged “not caught.”

## Count



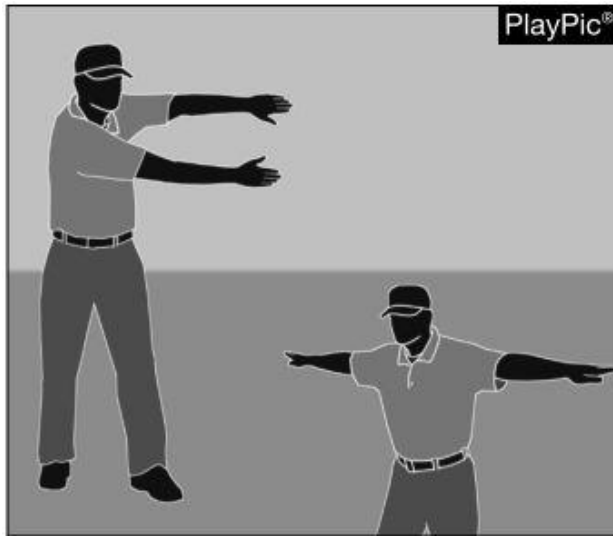
Raise both arms up in front of the body at the same time so that your fingers are above your eyes. Balls are shown with the fingers of the left hand; strikes are shown with the fingers of the right hand. Consecutive fingers should be used in displaying the count. A verbal call may accompany the signal and, if used, should be as follows: "Two balls. Two strikes." Do **not** say "Two and two" or "Two-two." The count is given when the pitcher is facing home plate and held long enough for any other player to see it.

## Ball Four



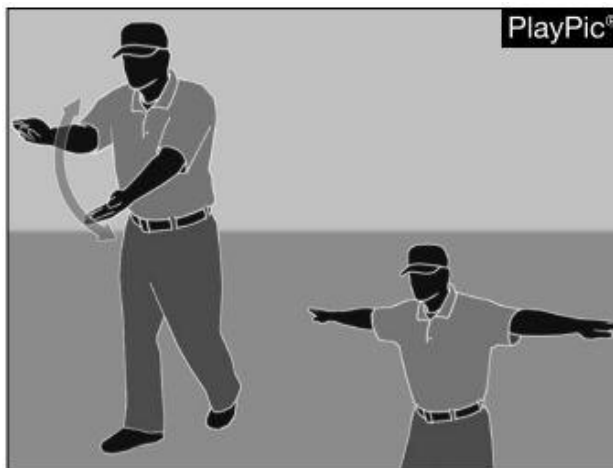
This signal should be used when the count has three balls and the batter obviously attempts to get hit by, and is hit by, the next pitch which is outside of the strike zone. She would not have been awarded first base because of the hit-by-pitch, but she is awarded first base because of the count advancing to four balls. After signaling "Dead ball," remove your mask and raise the right arm with four fingers extended up in front of the body so the fingers are above the eyes. Accompany the signal with a verbal, "That's ball four."

### Off the Bag



This is an optional but extremely useful signal that explains why the call is being made. It is used in force play situations where the ball arrives before the runner, but the defensive player is not touching the base. Give this signal **first**, which may be accompanied with a verbal “Off the bag,” followed by an emphatic “Safe” signal.

### Bobbled Ball



This is an optional but extremely useful signal that explains why the call is being made. It is used in both force and tag play situations to indicate why the runner is not out. Give this signal **first**, which may be accompanied with a verbal “No control,” followed by an emphatic “Safe” signal.

## 7.2: Umpire-to-Umpire Signals

Standard signals are used to convey information to everyone in the ballpark; umpire-to-umpire signals are meant to convey information between umpires. These signals are vital in establishing good crew communication.

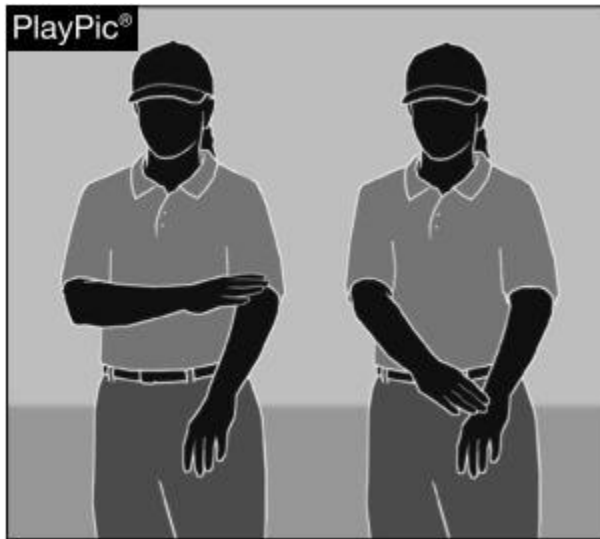
- Umpire-to-umpire signals are initiated by the plate umpire. The most appropriate timing is just after putting your mask on. This allows more pre-pitch time for the base umpire(s). It must happen prior to establishing a stance behind the catcher or the batter stepping into the batter's box.
- The base umpire(s) must acknowledge by returning the same signal back to the plate umpire.
- The signal must be given before every new batter when the situation is in effect.

### Infield Fly Situation is On



The right hand, palm open, on the left chest indicates the “Infield Fly” situation is in effect. **The number of outs should not be indicated as part of this signal.**

### Infield Fly Situation is Off



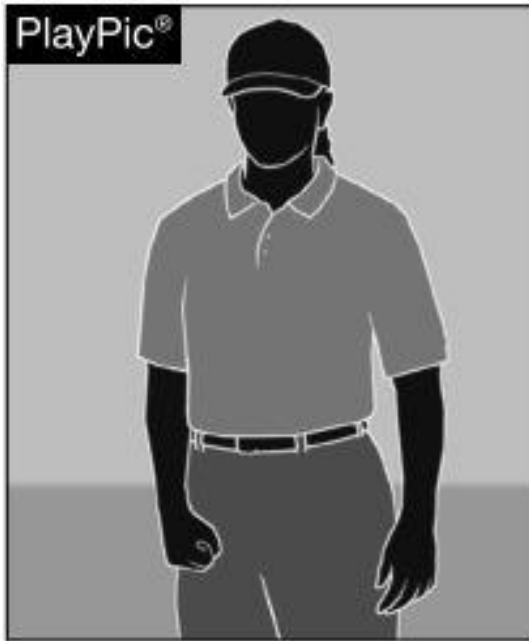
Use the right hand in a wiping motion on the left forearm from the elbow to the wrist. This indicates the infield fly situation is no longer in effect. It is acceptable to use the “Timing Play Indicator” or “Two Out Indicator” signal to indicate that the infield fly is not in effect because there are now two outs.

### Third Strike is Not Caught – Base Umpire(s)



The elbow of the right arm is held at the side of the waist, with only the forearm extending out and downward from the body at a 45-degree angle. The index finger is pointing at the ground. This signal is used by the base umpire(s) to indicate to the plate umpire that a third strike was not caught. It alerts all umpires to the potential for a play on the runner. The signal is used at all times when the batter, by rule, is entitled to run if the third strike is dropped. If the batter is out by rule on a third strike, whether it is caught or not, **do not use this signal.**

### How Many Outs?



To confirm the number of outs, the umpire looks to a partner and clenches a fist against the thigh. It is acceptable to verbalize the request, “Partner, how many outs do you have?” This, however, draws attention to the umpire and, if it is not necessary, umpires should avoid drawing attention. If such a verbal request needs to be made more than once a game, it gives the impression that the umpire is not concentrating. Do not allow play to resume if there is a discrepancy in the number of outs.

### How Many Outs? – Response



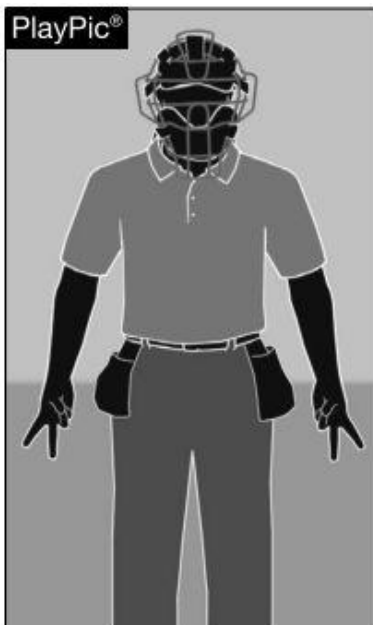
The responding umpire should indicate the number of outs by putting the appropriate number of fingers against the thigh. If a verbal request is made, respond verbally. Do not allow play to resume if there is a discrepancy in the number of outs.

### Timing Play Indicator



This signal is used when a timing play scenario is in play. Two outs with a runner on first or second (other bases may also be occupied.) The signal is two fingers on the left wrist. Base umpire(s) return the signal.

### Two Out Indicator



This signal is used with two outs and no baserunners on second or first. Hold both arms out at waist level with two fingers. The base umpire(s) should acknowledge by returning the same signal, but with one hand.



### What is the Count?



To request the count from a partner, place both opened hands against the chest. It is acceptable to verbalize the request, "Partner, what count do you have?" This, however, draws attention to the umpire and, if it is not necessary, umpires should avoid drawing attention. If the count is being lost on a regular basis, it gives the impression that the umpire is not concentrating. Do not allow play to resume if there is a discrepancy in the count.

### What is the Count? – Response



The responding umpire should indicate the correct count by displaying the appropriate fingers on the chest. If a verbal request is made, respond verbally in addition to displaying the count. Do not allow play to resume if there is a discrepancy in the count.

### Checked Swing Request



If there is any doubt about a swing attempt, the plate umpire shall ask for help from the appropriate base umpire. Clear the catcher and batter to obtain an unobstructed view of the base umpire, remove your mask (if time allows), point with your right arm and verbally state “Did she go?” A verbal option on a bunt attempt would be “Did she offer?” If the answer is “Yes,” do not echo the decision with a “Strike” signal. Upon returning to the plate area, present the count.

### Checked Swing Response – Yes



Upon completion of the checked swing request by the plate umpire, if judged that the batter attempted to hit or bunt the ball and was unable to stop the attempt, the base umpire’s reply is “YES!” accompanied by a “Strike” signal.

**Checked Swing Response – No**



Upon completion of the checked swing request by the plate umpire, if judged that the batter did not attempt to hit or bunt the ball and was able to stop the attempt, the base umpire's reply is "NO!" accompanied by a "Safe" signal.

## Section 8: Mechanics Definitions

### **90-Degree Angle — Tag**

The concept determines the umpire's location on tag plays. The path of the runner into a base or the application of the tag on a play not involving a base, together with the umpire's line of vision from a location 10-to-12 feet away, form a 90-degree angle.

### **90-Degree Angle — Throw**

The concept determines the umpire's location on force plays. The path of the thrown ball to a base together with the umpire's line of vision from a location 15-to-18 feet from the base, form a 90-degree angle.

### **Accurate Zone**

Interprets and calls a zone as defined in the NFHS rulebook.

### **Base Line**

The imaginary straight line between the bases.

### **Base Path**

An imaginary straight line between the base and a base runner when a play is being made on her.

### **Calling Depth**

The preferred distance from a play that enables the umpire to see all the necessary elements of the play.

- A force play should be viewed from a depth not closer than 18 feet, allowing the umpire to see, without moving their head, all three elements of a force play: the ball in the fielder's glove, the base runner touching the base, and the fielder's foot on the base.
- A tag play should be viewed from an approximate distance of 3 to 10 feet, allowing the umpire to see the elements of a tag play: the application of the tag, or the application of the tag and the runner touching the base. There may be times when the need to see multiple, diverse angles or the position of the players' bodies, necessitates that the umpire move closer or even look over the top of the play to see the action clearly.

### **Chase**

The act of a base umpire who abandons their normal infield duties and assumes the responsibilities for a fly ball (catch/no catch, fair/foul, dead ball).

### **Counter-Rotated Starting Position**

The starting position of the base umpires in the 3-Umpire System with runners on:

- Second only
- First and second
- First and third
- Second and third
- First, second, and third

The first base umpire: Start in a set position, squared to home plate, between 15 feet from second base and 15 feet from first base, no more the 15 feet from the baseline or behind the fielder (1B).

The third base umpire: Start in a set position, slightly angled towards the infield (opposite baseline between home and first base), completely in foul territory, close to the line, 10-12 feet beyond third base.

### **Teamwork**

The unspoken awareness, understanding, and acknowledgment that umpires are a team. Umpires are continually aware of the movement and position of partners and responds/reacts appropriately. Umpires use proper verbal and non-verbal communication with each other. Umpires have eye contact with partners between hitters and during developing plays. Umpires are cooperative, supportive, and respectful of each other in all areas.

### **Elements of Plays**

One-element play; a tag play that involves seeing a tag applied and does not involve a base.

Two-element play; a tag play that involves seeing a runner touch a base and seeing a tag applied.

Three-element play; a force play that involves seeing a fielder's foot on a base, a runner touch a base, and the ball into the fielder's glove.

### **Game Management**

Establishing and maintaining an appropriate game pace and tone. The umpire's ability to listen and handle game issues in a professional manner. To be alert to possible problems and resolve conflict correctly and in a timely manner.

### **Holding Area/Holding Zone**

An area on the field where an umpire determines their next move. It is never a calling position.

### **Judgment**

Rendering a decision based on what was seen when in the correct position.

**Non-Slot Foot**

The umpire's right foot on a right-handed batter and the left foot on a lefthanded batter.

**Pivot**

The efficient movement used by an umpire to get from one point to another or to open to the impending play. The pivot entails planting one foot, turning the body on this foot and ending in a shoulder width stance with the ability to move to the right or to the left.

**Pivot: 10 X 10**

When U1 pivots inside the diamond from a starting position on the line, U1 should strive for a position 10 feet beyond the base line and 10 feet from the first base fair/foul line.

**Primary Position**

The initial location used by an umpire to rule on a play as the base runner approaches a base or as a play develops. Primary positions are determined by the prospect of a traditional play. The umpire's line of vision forms a 90-degree angle perpendicular to:

- The path of the base runner on a tag play into a base
- The application of the tag on a tag play not involving a base
- The path of the flight of the ball on force plays

**Rotated Starting Position**

The starting position of base umpires in the 3-Umpire System with a runner on first base only. U1 is on the first base line in foul territory at calling depth for a tag play. U3 is on an imaginary line straight out from second base toward right-center field or left-center field at calling depth or slightly deeper for a tag play.

**Secondary Position**

The next primary position assumed by the umpire after the initial play during continuous action.

**Set: Bases**

Body position of a base umpire prior to a pitch who is positioned off the line or has runner leaving before the pitch is released responsibilities, or U3 with runners on base, or any umpire prior to a play. The body is stopped, not moving, the feet are more than shoulder width apart and parallel to each other. The hands are drawn into or placed on the body in a locked position. The head may jut forward to achieve more focus. Set refers to either a ready set or hands-on-knees set position.

**Set: Hands-on-Knees**

Body position of a base umpire prior to a pitch who is positioned off the line or has runner leaving before the pitch is released responsibilities, or U3 with runners on base, or any umpire prior to a play. The body is stopped, not moving, the feet are comfortably wider than shoulder width apart and parallel to each other. The hands, with thumbs on the inside of the leg, are grasping the knees. The umpire is bent at the knees in a sitting position.

**Set: Plate**

From the stance, a plate umpire drops into the set position just prior to the release of the pitch. The amount of drop necessary is determined by the width of the feet in the stance. The umpire's head is ideally just above the catcher's head. The umpire's chin is on a line with the top of the catcher's head. The umpire's chin should not be lower than the top of the catcher's helmet, but the top of the umpire's head should never be even with or below the top of the catcher's head. The umpire must be able to see the outside edge of the plate and the batter's knees. Some torso lean may be needed to achieve proper height. Hands/arms should be in close to the body. Their placement provides balance and assists in locking-in (not moving) during the pitch. A good lock-in relies on bone structure, not muscles. The umpire must be completely set when the pitch is released and remain motionless as the pitch is delivered. The same position should be mirrored on both sides of the plate. The set position must be balanced and comfortable, but it is not a relaxed position.

**Slot**

The area between the catcher's inside shoulder and the batter when the batter is in their natural batting stance, and the catcher is in her normal catching position behind the plate. To achieve a slot position in all stances except the scissors, place the non-slot foot; right foot on right-handed batters, about midway between the catcher's feet. Spread the other foot; the slot foot slightly more than shoulder width, which brings the nose between the catcher's inside shoulder and the batter's body. To check the slot position, look at the outside corner and the batter's knees. The umpire must be able to see both clearly. The slot affords the umpire an excellent line of sight for seeing the zone, checked swings, hit batters, batter hit with batted ball, and catch/no-catch by the catcher.

**Slot Foot**

The umpire's left foot on a right-handed batter and the right foot on a lefthanded batter.

**Stance: Plate**

The position and foot placement the plate umpire establishes behind the catcher prior to dropping set. The stance must allow the umpire to drop to a rock-solid set position and remain motionless while the pitch is delivered. The stance must be in the slot and, after dropping set, afford the umpire an unobstructed view of the entire zone. The stance used for right-handed batters must be mirrored for left-handed batters

## **Stances:**

### **Box Stance**

The legs/feet are slightly wider than shoulder width. The non-slot foot is placed on the ground about a foot behind the catcher approximately in line with the center of her back when she is directly behind the plate. The slot foot is parallel to and in line or even with the non-slot foot at a distance that places the head in the slot. Both feet are pointing at the pitcher. Drop set by bending the knees. Drop only far enough so your chin remains above the catcher's helmet.

### **Heel/Toe Stance**

The legs/feet are wider than shoulder width. The shoulders and body are somewhat square to the plate where a line drawn down from the umpire's navel would bisect the plate. The slot foot should be in the slot pointing directly at the pitching plate and in line with or slightly in front of an imaginary line drawn from the catcher's heels to the toe of the slot foot. The non-slot foot is behind the catcher in line with an imaginary line extending from the heel of the slot foot to the toe of the non-slot foot. The non-slot foot is angled no more than 45-degrees. You should not be deeper behind the catcher than a closed fist between your non-slot knee and the catcher's back when dropped set. Drop set by bending the knees.

### **Standard Starting Position**

The starting position of base umpires in the 3-Umpire System with no runners on base or a runner on third base only. U1 is 18-to-20 feet down the first base line completely in foul territory. U3 is either 18-to-20 feet down the third base line completely in foul territory or, with a runner on third, in a set position 6-to-10 feet down the third base line completely in foul territory.

### **Starting Depth**

- With no runner on base: 18-to-20 feet, on the line in foul territory.
- With a runner(s) on base: 10-to-12 feet from the base if on the line (3-Man) or 10-to-12 feet from the base line, if possible, when off the line.

### **Starting Position**

The location of the umpires as the ball is readied for play prior to the next pitch. There are three Starting Positions in the 3-Umpire System:

- Standard
- Rotated
- Counter-Rotated



**Tracking: Plate**

See the release of the pitch, follow it in to just in front of the plate, switch focus to the batter's zone, and then see the ball into the catcher's glove. Observe the entire flight of a pitch with only slight head movement. Slight head movement will occur as the ball is followed in.

**Walk the Line**

Walking the line is a method base umpire use to coordinate pre-pitch to post pitch responsibilities. Coordinate the walk with the responsibilities. For a two-step, step to a set walk, or a two-step end on push foot walk, as the pitcher starts her windup keep your eyes on her feet as you begin your first step. When she releases the ball your first step is ended, and you begin your second step as you shift your eyes to the plate. Finish your second step just prior to the ball arriving at the plate. If the ball is batted then respond. If it is not batted then let your eyes continue on to the batter and catcher while remaining in a ready-set or on the push foot. For the one step, step to push foot, watch the pitcher's feet, then on the release of the pitch, take one step forward with the push foot.

**Wedge**

Wedge – Tag Play: The two sides of The Wedge represent the path of the runner and the flight of the ball. An umpire using The Wedge would work and move to constantly be in between those two lines to see the point of the play where the tag is applied, keying off the rotation of the fielder's hips/body and their movement forward, backward, or side-to-side.

Wedge – Chase Area: The area within the imaginary lines drawn from the plate to the right fielder and the plate to the center fielder. This is a chase area for U1 when counter-rotated.

**Working Between Pitches**

Movement of the umpire toward a possible play after a pitch is not hit. If there is no immediate play to a base by the catcher on a pitch not hit, the umpire should move toward a position for a possible delayed play on a base runner for which they are responsible.