

General Mechanics

Pre-Game W/Partner

- Run rule, International tie-breaker if applicable
- Discuss fly ball and tag-up responsibilities
- Traps in the infield
- Communication — signals and verbal
- Going for help
- Fair/foul responsibilities
- Other positioning/coverage/mechanics questions
- Unusual plays
- Rules discussion, odd rules, DP/Flex
- Last minute check on equipment/uniforms (take a look at your partner)

General

- Do not call “Time” unless you need to
- All umpires need to hold their positions at the conclusion of the play until the pitcher has the ball in the circle and all runners have stopped on a base. As a rule the plate umpire should not return to the plate area until his/her partners are in their next starting positions — someone has to watch the runners when the pitcher is in the circle.

Plate Umpire

- Always go for help on a check swing (to the open side umpire, even if rotated) when asked by a coach or catcher
- Write down all offensive and defensive conferences on your line up cards
- Do not inform the coach of a charged offensive or defensive conference - inform them of the next one before it happens
- Initiates or wipes off the infield fly signal each time a new batter steps in
- Report routine substitutions to the official scorer for announcement, not to each dugout
- Do not signal or verbalize obvious foul balls or obvious strikes.

Base Umpire

- Do not ask fielders if you are in their way, they will ask you to move
- Do not signal foul balls from the bases
- Do not stop runners on foul balls
- Do not go for help on a safe/out call to pacify a coach, get a good look (adjust to the play) and get it right
- When you do need to go for help because you are ‘missing a piece of the puzzle’ do so before rendering a decision (when possible).

Help Younger Umpires

Help the younger umpires...ALL of you were once a rookie. Use constructive criticism. Save all the rule, positioning questions and answers until the post-game conference at your cars.

2002 Mechanics Changes

- The plate umpire is responsible for determining fair/foul on bounding balls in the infield. The base umpire will only make that call if it is obvious the plate umpire could not make that decision (this needs to be done with as little hesitation as possible). Base umpire had the call past the defensive player.

- If there is a pick-off at 2nd base, the base umpire will move directly forward to the 90-degree angle on the base line between 1st and 2nd base. It may be necessary to go past the 90-degree angle to make the call No option to go right to the extended baseline between 2nd base and 3rd base
- The First base umpire should never exceed a 45-degree angle for a call at 1st base except in the following situation. No more than 3 steps into fair or foul territory.
- With no runners on base or a runner on 1st base only, it is acceptable when there is a bunt for the First base umpire to achieve a 90-degree angle either in fair or foul ground to make the call at 1st base No more than 3 steps into fair or foul territory

Working The Plate

THE SLOT

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

The chin is approximately even with the top of the catcher's head, the eyes at the top of the strike zone and the inside ear lined up with the inside edge of home plate. This allows an unobstructed view of the entire zone.

A good heel-toe is defined as the slot foot being slightly in front of the non-slot foot (the slot foot is the left foot for a right-handed batter; the right foot for a left-handed batter). This position must be mirrored on both sides of the plate.

GETTING SET

The hands must be in front of and close to the body. Do not support your body with your arms resting on your legs. If your arms are behind the back or pulled in tightly between the legs, this will cause you to bend forward at the waist. If your arms are pulled across the body will cause the body and shoulders to turn.

You must be completely set before the pitch is released. Getting set too early could cause you to lose concentration and to cause you to lean into the catcher.

Depth — get set no more than 12" from the catcher. Being too far back of the catcher will cause you to lose the lower outside portion of the strike zone. Being too close could cause you to interfere with the catcher's ability to do her job. A proper heel-toe should take care of the depth.

TRACKING

Use your eyes to track the ball/pitch. It is not recommended that you move your head to track the ball as it tends to indicate that you are indicating pitch location by head movement.

The zone — this is the 'window pane', the 'translucent block', the 'sheet' — or by whatever name you call it. Allow the ball to pass through, brush against, or pass outside the parameters you have defined. Make the pitch convince you that it is not a strike, be aggressive when calling pitches verbalize balls and strikes with equal emphasis. The zone is specifically defined in the Rule Books; we do not have to define it.

RHYTHM

Good rhythm inspires confidence. Concentrating on your rhythm helps your consistency. In a higher emotional game you will appear undeterred and in total control ... even if you are not. Rhythm consists of both mechanics and the vocal ball or strike. Be consistent.

Every ball is just not a strike. It can be 'not a strike' by an inch or several feet. By never emphasizing a ball call it suggests you have control of your zone.

All strikes are the same except the called 3rd. We sell it not because of pitch location, but because it is also an out. There is no need to emphasize a close strike any more than a close ball.

SIGNAL ABUSE

The point is a powerful signal, but is not on any chart. The point throws the blame/attention on a player or specific action. (Look, see what I saw!). Usually it is unnecessary, save it for when you need to sell something. Then it's more effective.

"1½ time" — or a one handed "time." Like any signal — if it's worth giving, give it correctly.

Do not verbalize a swinging strike or an obvious foul ball — everyone can see that and the less attention you attract the better off you are.

Do not indicate inside, outside, high, or low pitches with a hand signal.

COMMON GOOFS

Going to the wrong umpire for help on a check swing, that wrong ump needs to point to the correct ump who needs to make a decisive call.

Infield fly indicator — should be initiated by the plate umpire before the batter steps in and then acknowledged by the base umpires.

The plate umpire must trail the batter-runner if there is a play at 1st, except if there is a runner on 2nd or beyond (then go to the holding zone in foul territory up the 3rd baseline). Use the holding zones to move to a calling point. Holding zones are not calling zones; choices of where to go are made from holding zones.

There is no need to echo the plate umpire when he calls a foul ball. Save the dead ball signal for those times when the plate umpire does not come up with the 'dead ball' immediately, for example — the ball off the batter's foot.



