

**AUSTRALIAN BASEBALL
FEDERATION**



OFFICE FOR UMPIRE DEVELOPMENT

ORIENTATION TO UMPIRING

ACCREDITATION SEMINAR

FORWARD.

Orientation to Baseball Umpiring, a course Designed for the Uninitiated Umpire at Junior, Club, Association Levels.

Welcome to the Orientation to Umpiring Accreditation Course specifically designed for umpires at Junior and Club Level.

It is encouraging for me, as an administrator and lover of baseball that this course has been so readily accepted.

This manual has been designed to assist you during this course.

Unfortunately, owing to some disparity in interpretations throughout the various associations, there maybe some variance in rules as explained in the manual and throughout the course.

Should there be any uncertainty please don't hesitate to ask questions.

However it is hoped that this course will also show the important need for consistent interpretations, not only throughout associations but throughout the State and National bodies.

Baseball through history has always experienced some difficulties maintaining a balanced mix between the players and the support services necessary to ensure the smooth conduct of a game.

Although all areas of the sport should move together in an ordered fashion, baseball currently lacks the number of accredited umpires to adequately service all levels of the sport. This is so obvious at junior and club levels/association levels. There is no aspect at these levels of baseball not in need in this respect, unlike some other sports that have requirements of not registering a team without the necessary staff to service it, e.g., coach, scorer, umpire, team administrator.

Unfortunately the umpiring duties usually fall upon some unsuspecting parent, team supporter or player, an unsuspecting conscript.

In many cases these 'conscripts' find enjoyment in umpiring and look to further their involvement, others are just happy to help out their team or club.

Those umpires that look to further their careers readily and regularly attend seminars and rule sessions to hone their skills but many of the junior/club umpires cited many reasons for not being willing to attend these seminars and rule sessions, they were too time consuming for the level that the umpire was officiating, they had no desire to umpire at a higher level and were happy doing what they were. However, up until now, there was no formalised course to cater for the “club” or “junior” umpire as such

The Australian Baseball Umpire Development Program recognises the need to provide such a course catered suitably for these umpires.

In baseball as perhaps in no other sport inadequate umpiring can dramatically distort the final outcome. Continued development to achieve the skills required for such an exacting role is vital.

Umpiring sport carries a duty of care responsibility for all involved; players, coaches, managers, fellow umpires and spectators. So it is imperative that a course is provided to cater for the junior/club umpire.

The following is in respect to risk management and the current state of the insurance market:

We have recently received a letter from our insurance broker, Jardine Lloyd Thompson, that insurance companies are adopting a hardening approach to the issue of risk management. A trend was occurring with many insurers that indicates “that in the near future all umpires and coaches will need to be accredited”, and/or “a risk management program is set up or underway with an expected completion date”.

The ABF Board considered the issue on May 5 and resolved that “that the ABF introduce an appropriate risk management policy covering the conduct of baseball training and games and that this policy includes the compulsory accreditation of umpires and coaches”.

Our insurer needs to feel comfortable that if a claim occurred, the ABF, through risk management are able to mount a suitable defence. This is why it will be compulsory for all umpires to be nationally accredited. Why? Because it needs to be shown that the people that have control of the game have the appropriate training to do so. Those that don't are an easy target, so those umpires who are not nationally accredited will have no cover under the ABF policy. It is imperative that we work towards keeping our premiums at the lowest possible level. Large claims both numerical and value will only lead to higher premiums and may make insurance coverage unattainable.

Also, and very importantly, having umpires properly trained to execute their duties can only benefit the game and its participants. In reality there are very few professional organisations or businesses that will allow untrained personnel perform their duties.

Additionally, clubs and associations should have codes of conduct signed by umpires, parents, players, coaches and managers. These documents help delineate the responsibilities of each group and may be used to protect umpires from unhelpful criticism.

At all stages, umpires should be encouraged to study the game, its rules, umpire mechanics and systems and associate with senior umpires within an umpire association.

Hopefully there will be some of you who would look forward to attending further seminars and join the umpiring ranks. Therefore I would recommend attending the annual seminar conducted by the State Umpire Association under the guidelines of Australian Baseball Umpire Development Program.

The UDP caters for umpires who see themselves as having a career path and would like to officiate at higher levels and just as important those umpires who are happy with the level that they are umpiring and just want to do the best job possible. These seminars cater for both. Your State Director of Umpiring can assist you regarding attending these seminars.

I would like to thank the instructors for their time and assistance without them this course would not have been possible.

To all of you upcoming umpires thank you for attending the course, I hope that you benefit from it, and, above all enjoy yourselves.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoff Robertson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Geoff Robertson.
Manager, Umpire Development.

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 avocation 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 crew chief is the manager and the line umpires are the assistant managers.

Like it or not, this is what the managers, coaches, players 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.

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 a 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, **he has not caught** the ball. 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 his next action after the catch.

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

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 rulebook 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:

1. 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 e.g. foul poles.

2. 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.

3. 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 i.e. home run.

4. 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 bases 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, he should compare the penalty for the illegal act with the situation that developed in the play. He 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 because:

- The ball gets stuck in the umpire's mask.
- The pitcher throws the ball into dead territory while standing on the pitcher's rubber.
- The fielder falls into dead territory after catching the ball.
- The pitch touches a runner who is attempting to score.
- The pitcher balks but does not pitch the ball or throw the ball.
- The base runner attempts 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 where they were standing on at the beginning of the pitch when:

- The foul ball is not caught.
- There is an illegally batted ball.
- The plate umpire interferes with a play, unless the runner is thrown out.
- The batter interferes with the catcher, unless the runner is thrown out.
- The batter is called out for batting out of turn.

DEAD BALL - RUNNERS RETURN UNLESS FORCED:

The umpire should order the runners to return to their original bases 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.

OBSTRUCTION

DEFINITION

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 not in the act of fielding the ball, either batted or thrown, he 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.

It is entirely up to the **judgment** 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.

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 judgment) if there had been no obstruction.

If the batter-runner is obstructed before he reaches first base, the ball is dead and he is awarded first base unless his hit is a fly catch in which case the B/R is OUT on the fly catch.
(The obstruction has no effect on the catch, as he 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 (e.g. 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, he does so at his own risk and is liable to be tagged out.

INTERFERENCE

What is interference?

To IMPEDE, HINDER or CONFUSE.

There does not have to be contact.

Definition (Rule 2)

There are four types of interference:

1. Offensive
2. Defensive
3. Umpires
4. Spectators

Offensive interference is an act by the team at bat which INTERFERES, IMPEDES, HINDERS, 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 is an act by a fielder which hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch. (Rules 6.08(c), 7.04(d) and 7.07)

Umpires interference

- (a) Plate umpire interferes with a catcher's throw (UNLESS the catcher achieved what he set out to do - in which case the interference is ignored). (Rule 5.09(b))
- (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 occurs when any spectator reaches out of the stands or goes onto the playing field and touches a live ball. (To throw items onto the playing field may constitute 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, e.g. 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

BATTER
CATCHER
COACH
BAT BOY
FIELDERS
RUNNERS
SPECTATORS
UMPIRES
GROUNDSMEN
OFFICIALS

With?

BATTED BALL (Fair or foul)
THROWN BALL
FIELDER ATTEMPTING TO FIELD
FIELDER ATTEMPTING TO CATCH
FIELDER ATTEMPTING TO THROW
BATTER
CATCHER

When?

ANY TIME WHEN THE BALL IS IN PLAY

MAIN POINTS TO CONSIDER

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)
 - (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 judgment of the umpire....*"
7. If a fielder is hindered or impeded in making a play - 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 dug-outs - benches).
9. When a play is being made at the home plate, the batter must move out of the batters 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. Batters interference with catcher - if the catcher achieves what he set out to do (e.g. 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.

Play or Attempted Play

A play or attempted play [Official Rules 7.05(g) and 7.10] shall be interpreted as a legitimate effort by a defensive player who has possession of the ball to actually retire a runner.

This may include an actual attempt to tag a runner, a fielder running toward a base with the ball in an attempt to force or tag a runner, or actually throwing to another defensive player in an attempt to retire a runner. A fake or a feint to throw shall not be deemed a play or an attempted play. (The fact that the runner is not out is not relevant.)

A Play or Attempted Play

1. Runners on 1st and 2nd, ground ball to the shortstop who makes a swipe at the runner from 2nd but misses and then throws beyond 1st base into the stands. The swipe by the shortstop is an attempted play; thus the throw to first is not the first play by an infielder (even though it is the first throw), and the proper award of bases would be from the time of the throw.
2. Runner on 1st and ground ball to 2nd baseman who flips ball to short to get runner from 1st but who is safe. Shortstop throws beyond 1st into the stands. The flip by the 2nd baseman to the shortstop is an attempted play, even though unsuccessful. The throw to 1st is not the first play by an infielder and thus runner should be placed from the time of the throw. Runner who was on 1st would score and batter–runner would be placed at second.

Not a Play or Attempted Play

1. A fake or a feint to a base but not actually throwing, even though the fielder draws his arm back to feint a throw.
2. A pitcher feinting a throw toward a base to hold or check a runner's progress in order to complete an appeal play at another base.
3. Runner on 1st, ground ball to the shortstop, who starts to flip the ball to the 2nd baseman but doesn't, and throws the ball beyond 1st and out of play. The feint to the 2nd baseman is not considered a play or attempted play and award of bases is from the time of the pitch.
4. Runners on 1st and 3rd, runner on 1st stealing as ground ball is hit to shortstop. The short stop feints a throw home but does not throw - instead throws to 1st and into the stands; during this the runner from 1st has rounded 2nd base.

The feint by the shortstop toward home is not considered a play or attempted play; thus his throw beyond 1st is the first play by an infielder and awards should be made from the time of the pitch.

Rule 8.05 - Balk

Penalty

The ball is dead, (when play stops), and each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out, unless the batter reaches first on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter, or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk.

Approved Ruling

In case where a pitcher balks and throws wild, to either a base or home plate, a runner or runners may advance beyond the base to which entitled at the risk of being put out.

Approved Ruling

A runner who misses the first base to which advancing and who is called out on appeal shall be considered as having advanced one base for the purpose of this rule.

When is Play Considered Stopped?

The following cases should help explain when play is considered '*stopped*'.

- If the pitcher balks and does not throw the ball, play is considered '*stopped*' and the balk should be enforced.
- If the balk is followed by a batted ball, play should continue until it is apparent that the batter and all will not advance one base. At that moment play is considered '*stopped*' and the balk enforced.

Example (1): If a batted ball follows the balk results in a fly ball that is caught, play is considered '*stopped*' the moment the fly ball is caught.

Example (2): If a batted ball follows the balk and results in a ground out on a previous runner at the base to which he would be entitled because of the balk, play is considered '*stopped*' the moment the out is made and the balk enforced.

If, however, the batter reaches first and all runners advance at least one base on a play following a balk, play proceeds **without reference to the balk**.

There is no option available.

- If the balk is followed by a pitch that is **caught** by the catcher, play is considered '*stopped*' the moment the catcher catches the ball and the balk enforced.

(Note the exception in ball four situations covered in Case 5)

- If the balk is followed by a pick-off throw to a base that is **caught** by a fielder, play is considered '*stopped*' the moment the fielder catches the ball and the balk enforced.
- If the balk is followed by ball four delivered to the batter and is **caught** by the catcher, play is considered '*stopped*' the moment the catcher catches the ball. The balk is enforced **unless** all runners advance one base because of ball four. In that situation, play proceeds **without reference to the balk**.
- If the balk is followed by a pitch which strikes the batter, play is considered '*stopped*' the moment the pitch strikes the batter. The balk is enforced unless the hit batter forces all other runners to advance one base, in which case play proceeds without reference to the balk.
- If the balk is followed by a **wild throw** to a base, the Approved Ruling of Official Rule 8.05 provides that the runner may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk. In that situation play is not considered '*stopped*' until all runners have stopped running **and** the ball is in possession of a fielder in the infield.
- If the balk is followed by a **wild pitch**, the Approved ruling of Official Rule 8.05 provides that the runner may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk. In that situation play is not considered '*stopped*' until all runners have stopped running **and** the ball is in possession of a fielder in the infield.

Note that even if the runner advances to or beyond the base to which he is entitled because of a wild pitch following a balk, the balk is still '*acknowledged*'. That is, the pitch is nullified and the batter will resume his at bat with the count on him when the balk occurred unless,

- (a) The pitch was ball four on which all runners advanced one base; or
- (b) The wild pitch was strike three on which the batter and all other runners advanced one base.

In both situations (a) and (b) above, play proceeds **without reference to the balk**, since all runners, including the batter-runner, advanced one base on the pitch following the balk.

Appeal Plays

7.10 Runner Out on Appeal

Any runner shall be called out, on appeal, when:

(a) After a fly ball is caught, he fails to retouch his original base before he or his original base is tagged;
“Retouch,” in this rule, means to tag up and start from a contact with the base after the ball is caught. A runner is not permitted to take a flying start from a position in back of his base.

(b) With the ball in play, while advancing or returning to a base, he fails to touch each base in order before he, or a missed base, is tagged.

When a runner misses a base and a fielder holds the ball on the missed base, or on the base originally occupied by the runner if a fly ball is caught, and appeals for the umpire's decision, the runner is out when the umpire sustains the appeal.

Play: Runner on first, batter hits the ball far into the outfield and runner races for third. Catch is made, and outfielder throws ball to shortstop who steps on second base asking umpire to rule an out. This is improper play by the shortstop, as runner may be called out only by being tagged or first base being touched before the runner reaches first base.

APPROVED RULING:

(1) No runner may return to touch a missed base after a following runner has scored.

(2) When the ball is dead, no runner may return to touch a missed base or one he has left after he has advanced to and touched a base beyond the missed base.

A runner may return to a missed base (or one he has left too soon), when the ball is dead if he has not touched the next base.

A runner may, of course, return to any missed base (or one he has left too soon) while the ball is in play unless a following runner has scored.

Example:

Batter hits single to right field and misses first base in rounding it. Right fielder makes quick throw to first baseman in an attempt to pick off batter–runner before he can return to first base. However, his throw is wild and goes into dugout.

Ruling: Batter–runner is awarded third base. However, he must return to and touch first base before he touches second. While the ball is dead, he may return to first base to correct his mistake before he touches second; but if he touches second he may not return to first, and if the defensive team appeals he is declared out at first.

PLAY. (i) Batter hits ball out of park or ground rule double and misses first base (ball is dead) - he may return to first base to correct his mistake before he touches second but if he touches second he may not return to first and if defensive team appeals he is declared out at first.

PLAY. (ii) Batter hits ball to shortstop who throws wild into stand (ball is dead) -batter- runner misses first base but is awarded second base on the overthrow, the runner must touch first base before he proceeds to second base.

These are appeal plays.

(c) He over-runs or over-slides first base and fails to return to the base immediately, and he or the base is tagged;
He can be called out on appeal, or if in the umpire's judgment he has abandoned his effort to run the bases.

(d) He fails to touch home base and makes no attempt to return to that base, and home base is tagged.

Any appeal under this rule must be made before the next pitch, or any play or attempted play. If the violation occurs during a play which ends a half-inning, the appeal must be made before the defensive team leaves the field.

An appeal is not to be interpreted as a play or attempted play.

If a pitcher balks when making an appeal, such act shall be a play.

Unless a balk occurs. An appeal is not to be considered a play. This applies to the appeal rule only. On the balk rule an attempt to make an appeal is a play, otherwise he may be throwing to an unoccupied base. If a runner is attempting to return to a base he has left too soon, or one he has missed while the ball is in play, and the ball is being played at that base in an attempt to retire the runner shall not be considered an appeal play.

Successive appeals may not be made on a runner at the same base. If the defensive team on the first appeal errs, a request for a second appeal on the same runner at the same base shall not be allowed by the umpire. (Intended meaning of the word "err" is that the defensive team in making an appeal threw the ball out of play. For example, if the pitcher threw to first base to appeal and threw the ball into the stands, no second appeal would be allowed.)

Appeal plays may require an umpire to recognize an apparent “fourth out.” If the third out is made during a play in which an appeal play is sustained on another runner, the appeal play decision takes precedence in determining the out. If there is more than one appeal during a play that ends a half-inning, the defence may elect to take the out that gives it the advantage. For the purpose of this rule, the defensive team has “left the field” when the pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory on their way to the bench or clubhouse. If two runners arrive at home base about the same time and the first runner misses home plate but a second runner legally touches the plate, the first runner will be called out on appeal. If there are two out, and the first runner is tagged out on his attempt to come back and touch the base or is called out, on appeal, then he shall be considered as having been put out before the second runner scored and being the third out. Second runner’s run shall not count, as provided in Rule 7.12.

An appeal should be clearly intended as an appeal, either by a verbal request by the player or an act that unmistakably indicates an appeal to the umpire. A player, inadvertently stepping on the base with a ball in his hand, would not constitute an appeal. Time is not out when an appeal is being made.

A key phrase in both the awarding of bases [Official Rule 7.05(g)] and in appeal plays [Official Rule 7.10] is “play or attempted play.”

Keep the following points in mind regarding appeal plays:

1. Any appeal under Official Rule 7.10 must be made before the next pitch or any play or attempted play.
2. If a pitcher balks when making an appeal. Such act shall be considered a play. No further appeal will be allowed.
3. If the pitcher or any member of the defensive team throws the ball out of play when making an appeal, such act shall be considered an attempted play. No further appeal will be allowed.
4. If the violation occurs during a play which ends a half-inning., the appeal must be made before the defensive team leaves the field (pitcher and all infielders have crossed the foul lines).
5. An appeal is not to be interpreted as a play or an attempted play.
6. An appeal should be clearly intended as an appeal, either by a verbal request by the player or an act that unmistakably indicates an appeal to the umpire.

Should a runner in scoring fail to touch home plate and continue on his way to the bench, he may be put out by the fielder touching home plate and appealing to the umpire for a decision. However, this rule applies only where a runner is on his way to the bench and the catcher would be required to chase him. It does not apply to the ordinary play where the runner misses the plate and then immediately makes an effort to touch the plate before being tagged. In that case, the runner must be tagged.

The following are approved rulings concerning appeal plays:

1. Runner on first, one out. The batter doubles. Runner on first rounds the bases and tries for home. On the play at the plate, the catcher misses the tag and runner misses the plate as he slides by. As the catcher begins to chase the runner to apply a tag, the batter–runner tries for third base. Seeing this, the catcher throws to the first baseman, who retires the batter–runner. Can the defensive team still appeal at home on the runner originally on first?

Ruling: Yes. The catcher's play on the batter–runner at third base was still part of the continuous action created by and following the batted ball. Therefore, the defensive team would not lose its rights to make an appeal by playing on the runner at home or the batter–runner at third and may still appeal at home.

2. Runner on first base, one out. The pitcher attempts a pick off but throws the ball past the first baseman down the right field line. Runner misses second base but tries for third. The right fielder's throw to get the runner at third base is too late, although he is tagged by the third baseman. Can the defence appeal at second base that the runner missed it?

Ruling: Yes. The third baseman's attempted play on the runner at third base was still part of the continuous action created by and following the aborted pick off throw. Therefore, the defensive team does not lose its right to make its appeal by playing on the runner at third base and may still appeal.

3. Runners on first and third, two out. The pitcher's next pitch is a wild pitch back to the screen. While the ball is being chased down. The runner on third crosses the plate. Runner from first misses second base but tries for third. The catcher's throw to third base gets past the third baseman, and runner tries to score. The shortstop, backing up third, attempts to throw the runner out at the plate, but the catcher's tag is too late, and the runner is ruled safe. Can the defensive team still appeal at second base on the runner originally on first?

Ruling: Yes. The defensive team's attempted plays on the runner originally on first at third and home were still part of the continuous action created by and following the wild pitched ball. Therefore, the defensive team does not lose its right to make its appeal by attempting these plays and may still appeal on the runner originally on first at second base.

4. Runner on first. One out. The batter singles. Runner from first misses second base and advance to third without a play. The ball comes into the infield and is returned to the pitcher. The pitcher stretches. comes to a set position and then legally steps off the rubber to start an appeal at second base. The original runner from first (now on third) breaks for home as the defence starts its appeal. The pitcher instead of completing his appeal play. throws home to get the runner but the tag is too late and he is ruled safe. Can the defensive team still appeal at second base?
Ruling: No. The defensive team's attempt to retire the original runner at home occurred after a definite break in the original continuous action that was created by and followed the batted ball. Therefore, the defensive team lost its right to make any appeals once it made the play at home and may not appeal.

5. Runner on first. one out. Runner from first goes to third on a single but misses second base. Runner is safe at third on a sliding tag play. The ball is returned to the pitcher who steps on the rubber. Stretches and comes to a set position. The defence intends to appeal but the pitcher balks as he steps off the rubber. After the penalty is enforced, can the defence still appeal at second base on the original runner from first?
Ruling: No. The defence did not lose its right to appeal by playing on the runner originally on first at third base: that play was still part of the continuous action created by and following the batted ball. However, a balk is considered a play for the purpose of this section of the appeal rule. Since the defensive team cannot appeal following a play or attempted play the pitcher's balk cost the defensive team its right to make an appeal.

6. Runner on second one out. Runner from second attempts to score on a single but misses third base. Runner safe at home on a sliding tag play. On the throw home the batter runner tries to take second and is safe there on a sliding tag play as the catcher's throw is too late to retire him. Time is called. The pitcher steps on the rubber stretches and comes to a set position. The defence intends to appeal at third on the runner originally on second. The pitcher legally steps back off the rubber, checks the runner at second base and steps to throw to third for the appeal. The pitcher's throw however is wild and goes into dead territory beyond the third base line. The runner on second is properly awarded home. Can the defence still make its intended appeal at third on the runner originally on second when a new ball is put into play?
Ruling: No. The attempted plays to retire the runner originally on second at home and the batter–runner at second occurred during the continuous action which was created by and followed the batted ball and does not nullify the defensive team's right to make an appeal. However, once the defensive team "errs" (i.e. throws the ball out of play) in its attempt to appeal at third on the runner originally on second it loses its right to make an appeal. Throwing the ball out of play in this situation is considered an attempted play which occurred after a definite break in the continuous action play.

7. No runners. The batter doubles but misses first base. Time is called. The pitcher steps on the rubber. stretches and comes to a set position. The defence intends to appeal at first base. The pitcher legally steps off the rubber and checks the runner at second base. The pitcher's throw for the appeal gets past the first baseman but remains in play. The runner advances to third as the ball is being retrieved. Can the defensive team still make its intended appeal at first base?
Ruling: Yes. Since the ball is live and in play. If the ball is retrieved and thrown back to first base immediately. The appeal is allowed.

8. Runner on first. One out. The batter singles. Runner on first misses second base but is safe at third on sliding tag play. Time is called. The pitcher steps on the rubber stretches and comes to a set position. The defence intends to appeal at second base. The pitcher legally steps off the rubber. Seeing this, the runner originally on first (now on third) bluffs as if to go home. The pitcher now off the rubber, steps toward third and cocks his arm as if to throw but does not throw. Can the defensive team still make its intended appeal at second base on the runner originally on first?
Ruling: Yes. The attempted play at third on the runner originally on first was still part of the continuous action created by and following the batted ball and therefore did not nullify the defensive team's right to make an appeal. The bluff by the pitcher (step and cocked arm) to check the runner at third is not considered a play or attempted play. Therefore the defensive team may still attempt its intended appeal at second base.

9. Runner on first, one out. Batter hits home run out of ball park. Runner from first misses second and batter–runner misses first. After both runners cross the plate, the umpire puts new ball in play. Pitcher takes his position on the rubber, steps off, and intends to make an appeal at first base on the batter–runner. However, his throw is wild and goes into the stands. The umpire then puts another ball into play, and the pitcher again takes his position on the rubber and steps off. This time he intends to make an appeal at second base on the runner originally on first. Should the umpire allow the appeal?

Ruling: No. If the pitcher throws the ball out of play when making an appeal, such act shall be considered an attempted play. No further appeal will be allowed.

10. Runners on first and third, one out. Runner from first is stealing on the pitch. Batter hits a fly ball to right field which is caught for the second out. Runner on third tags and scores after the catch. Runner from first tries to return to first base after the catch, but the right fielder's throw beats him to the bag and he is declared out for the third out of the inning. Runner from third base touched home plate before the third out was made at first base.

Ruling: Run counts. This is a time play, NOT a force play

Some Common Misbeliefs

The hands are part of the bat

A batter gets hit by a pitched ball, right on the hands. It is anatomically for the batter's hands to be part of anything except his body.

If *no attempt* to avoid the pitch was made, the batter would stay with an additional ball or strike according to the location of the pitch. If the ball was batted, it would not be a legally batted ball. If he swings at the pitch and the ball hits him on the hands it is a dead ball. Otherwise he is awarded first, and all other runners advance, if forced.

Tie goes to the runner

There are no ties on the ball field.

Umpires are permitted to call only safe or out, never 'it was a tie.' Either the runner beat the throw or he didn't. If he did, safe, if not, out. If by some miraculous skill of visual activity, it can be determined that a tie did happen, then the runner did not beat the throw. He's out.

On overthrows, out of play, the runner gets the base he's going for plus one

There is no such award of bases. There are one base awards, two base awards, three base awards, and, even four base awards, but not a one plus one. Overthrown balls result in an award of two bases for every runner.

So if the runner on first takes off on a fly ball that is caught and then the ball is thrown out of play in attempt to retire him back at first. He is awarded third.

The runner who beats the throw to first must turn right after overrunning the base. Otherwise he is out or can be put out

The foul line is just that. It is used to adjudicate fair/foul, nothing to do with the runner. Home plate and first are the only bases that a runner can legally overrun without being in jeopardy of being put out. Runners at first can turn any way they like after passing the base, just as long as no attempt is made to go to second.

What is an attempt? Simply put, it is physical movement in that direction, and steps taken with the feet. When this happens, the runner may be in jeopardy.

The batter cannot hit a pitch that bounces

On the contrary, if he hits it over the fence it's a home run. What can't happen is that the pitch cannot be called anything but a ball, as long as the batter doesn't swing at it. The only way it can be a strike is for the batter to swing and miss or to foul it off.

Fielders must get out of the way of runners

Partially correct. Generally fielders are entitled to go after batted balls without interference from the baserunners. If there is no batted ball in the area, fielders must take care not to obstruct the runners in any way, not by slowing them down, or making them alter direction, or make a wider turn.

Fielders do have the right to field the ball, including charging in to get a favourable hop. The runners had better find a way to avoid the fielder, preferably by running behind the fielder. This is not running off the baseline! Runners establish their own baselines; they do not follow an imaginary straight line between the bases.

Runners have the right to run, fielders have the right to field, but, not at the same place at the same time. Otherwise penalties have to be assessed.

If a ball is held 'long enough', it is a legal catch

How long is long enough? The length of time a ball is held is never a consideration in determining the legality of a catch.

The only factors that matter in determining whether a ball has been caught are that the fielder has control of both the ball and his body, and that the release of the ball is voluntary.

No fielder would deliberately collide with the ground, another fielder or a fence. He had the collision because he was not in control of his body. If the ball comes out under these circumstances, no matter how long it had been held, there is no catch.

Interference must be intentional

Usually the opposite is the case. Most interference is the result of undesired, accidental contact between the ball and an offensive player or between an offensive player and a defensive player. A lot of runners are hit by a batted ball while trying their hardest to avoid it.

If there is intent then the umpire can call another runner out as well.

If a thrown ball hits the umpire, the ball is dead

In all cases, if an umpire is hit with a thrown ball, the play continues and the ball ends up where it ends up.

A few other misconceptions

- If a batted ball hits the plate first it is foul, or dead.
- The ball is dead on an illegal pitch.
- Runners cannot advance on an infield fly.
- A fielder is never entitled to block the path of a baserunner.
- If a base coach touches a runner in any way or at any time, the runner is called out.
- Runners cannot run backwards on the bases.
- A batter who is standing in the batter's box cannot be called out on interference.
- The defence must touch the base with the ball in possession to make an appeal.
- Runners who were stealing must return on the bases if the batter hits a foul tip.

All of the above statements are *false*.

Many of these beliefs are the result of years of inherited misinformation, passed on by word of mouth, or rules have changed and many involved do not stay current, and are not knowledgeable of the rules as they exist today.

This can lead to conflict on the field, time wasted explaining the call, and frustration for everybody, managers, umpires players and spectators.

Lack of understanding and the erroneous ideas that are held may strain the umpire - manager relationship.

Possible remedy to the problem

- Players, spectators and managers, should not always assume that the umpire is wrong. They may be surprised what they don't know.
- Ask questions, buy and read the rulebook, attend an umpire rules clinic. Knowledge defeats misunderstanding.
- Dialogue with all involved in the game. Managers and coaches could teach a great deal to umpires about the game. Likewise, umpires have a lot to share with players and coaches in terms of their specific expertise in the game.
- Open communication and sharing of information between groups will bring positive results.

Consistency

Definition

being consistent.

Consistent

Definition

compatible.
not contradictory of conduct.
constant to the same principles.

Consistency in Umpiring.

Aim To umpire or officiate in a manner that is not contradictory, i.e., constant to the same principles of:-
The rules of the ABF, Local Leagues, the Rules of Baseball, the Constitution of your Umpire Association, and the interpretations given under the Umpire Development Program..

The Objects.

- (a) Uniformity as to the interpretation of the Rules of Baseball.
- (b) Uniformity in relation to the controlling of games.

Rules and Interpretations.

Balks

There is no grey area. It is black or white. Either the pitcher balked or he didn't. Too many umpires have allowed the grey area to creep into their umpiring. They won't call balks because they might upset people. It is obligatory for umpires to uphold the rules of the game. They are made for the game as a whole and not tailored for any individual.

Example

Third grade pitcher not stepping to first base. Flings ball to first base then steps. This is a balk - I called balk.

Months later, same situation, same pitcher, same move, same balk call.

Pitcher's comment - "That's only the second time that I've been balked for that move".

My reply - "Yes, the first time was against Baulkham Hills before Christmas".

Pitcher - "That's right, how did you know?"

My reply - "I was the umpire!"

The point to be made is there are no grey areas in this case. It is a blatant balk. Yet he only gets knocked off twice! Clearly the other umpires that have officiated this young man have not been doing their job and have not been doing the right thing by the pitcher and more importantly the right thing by the game. They've been inconsistent.

Fault - They are not umpiring consistently with the interpretation handed down by the national and state directors. These directors do a top job and should be backed by the members of their respective associations. These balks are called at a national level and there is no reason why they shouldn't be called at our level. If they don't get called at national level the managers will jump right on top of you. Rightly so.

Strike Zone

Unfortunately the Strike Zone varies from first grade down through the grades. At some times it is completely aborted.

I don't for one minute suggest that an ABL or first grade zone should be called in third grade or under 18 games or junior baseball, but it should be called so it does resemble the zone recognised by the ABF.

Sure you might give them something a little bit higher, but not much. Anything through or above the armpits is too high in any standard of baseball and definitely not shoulders.

Some under 18 games I called pitchers were wanting a pitch that was at least six inches too high. It was obvious by their reaction that some umpires were calling that pitch a strike. Calling these pitches strikes helps nobody. One umpire said to me that if he didn't call that pitch we would never finish the game.

What you're doing is getting yourself and the pitcher into bad habits. Besides it he can't find the proper zone, don't help him. By helping you're being unfair to the other side. If he throws too many balls, the coach, if he is any good, will make a change, or time will run out or God gets fed up and makes it too dark.

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 rulebook as professional baseball. To the best of my knowledge no amateur umpire has ever implemented rule 3:01(c) and it is also very clearly defined in the rulebook. The rules as described in the rulebook are to be used as a guideline by the umpire to help officiate the game, and, 2:00 and 3:01(c) are not exceptions.

Umpires should, in my opinion refine the strike zone as stated in rule 2:00 to best suit the level of baseball he is umpiring most often. As an umpire progresses through the different levels of baseball he will find more and more pressure to lower the strike zone. Umpires with a rulebook strike zone are unlikely to be very popular at a first grade, a junior or senior national or international championship level. It is very unlikely an umpire with such a strike zone will even be considered for such a game or tournament.

It is most important you compromise between where the majority of players prefer the strike zone and where you can keep it most consistent. Umpires that call a strike zone they are not comfortable with have a tendency to be erratic. A good umpire will establish a strike zone both he and participants (pitchers and batters) can live with and then strive for consistency.

After a third grade game the plate umpire and I discussed the game and his zone was brought up. I told him that I thought he called far too high. He called shoulders all day. His reply was that he knew he was calling high but as he called the first pitch of the game there a strike, so to be consistent he called the rest of them strikes.

Consistent - No - that's bad umpiring.

In fact what he did was miss the first pitch. He should have admitted this to himself and adjusted.

We as individuals have to be consistent in our calling of our individual games.

Too many times I have heard umpires say that they wouldn't call something a balk, or wouldn't call that pitch a ball, or call an interference play because they don't agree with what they've been told. There are some interpretations given on rules and umpires mechanics that I don't agree with, but for the sake of consistency within our organisation I officiate according to those interpretations.

Our calling, rulings and interpretations should be consistent throughout Australia.

We as members of an organisation should be consistent as one, of that organisation

Refining the Strike Zone

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Catch and Carry

Dead Ball Line

If a fielder has any part of his body *grounded* on or over the DBL it is a *foul ball*.

Fly ball, catch taken - then the player runs over the dead ball line. (7.04(c) after which;

Fielder throws the ball to make a play. Ball is alive and in play, any further play stands.

Fielder drops the ball. Runners are awarded two bases from the last legally occupied base.

Fielder falls Runners are awarded one base from the last legally occupied base.

Falling is any part of his body touching the ground, except the soles of his feet.

Home Run Line

Fielder runs over line to field the ball Home run or two bases depending on ground rule

Fielder runs over line to catch the ball Home run

Fielder catches ball inside line and carries over then,

Fielder throws the ball to make a play. Ball is alive and in play, any further play stands.

Fielder drops the ball. Runners are awarded two bases from the last legally occupied base.

Fielder falls Runners are awarded one base from the last legally occupied base.

Falling is any part of his body touching the ground, except the soles of his feet.

Fielder picks up the ball near the line He has played at the ball and the ball is in play. If he then errors he cannot claim the ball was over the line.

Fielder lets the ball remain on the ground. Runners circle the bases, the position of the ball is checked by the umpire who decides on the position of the ball as to what, if any, penalties are invoked.

Officials Roles in Youth Sport

Numerous times I have been asked, 'Is baseball losing or keeping young players?' or, 'Are they enjoying the sport?'

At times I wonder whether or not our sport is fun for youngsters for now it has become so competitive, especially at a younger age.

Many factors can cause the young to become disinterested in sports. There are so many 'fun things', video games and the like, that are not as competitive as sport. That competitiveness can cause disinterest.

However, and thankfully, many youth sports situations have a positive impact in playing a vital role in youth accepting responsibility, developing self-esteem and learning team concepts.

As officials we play a significant role in developing youths through sports in the way we handle situations and people in youth games as it has an impact on positive or negative participation. Officials can be part of the solution.

Following are some examples where officials can assist in youth development.

1. Poorly trained coaches and supervisors/organisers. Conduct meetings for coaches, parents and others regarding the rules and umpiring philosophy. The more they know about the game and how it should be played, the fewer problems exist.
2. Over emphasis on winning and competitiveness. There are few worse things than a win at all costs coach in youth sports. If they are approachable, gently remind them that they are there for the youth and the sport (even if they are not) If it persists bring it to the leagues attention and if that fails then maybe it is a problem with the entire league. This would probably be doubtful, but if it is so then assess the reality of officiating in another league that provides a more positive atmosphere.
3. **Mismatches between children's' expectations and reality. Too much pressure on children equals less fun. Keep things fairly light hearted at times. Adjust to the age group and level that you are umpiring and humour at times can ease tension.**
4. Poor examples of parents, coaches and administrators. Liase with league officials to ensure that there are rules established that effectively deal with unruly parents and coaches. If coaches, parents and others are screaming at the officials, how can a 10-year-old be expected to show respect?

5. Difference between youth sport coaching and non youth sport coaching (attempting to coach youth sports in a similar manner as senior 'A' ball, or National. That goes for officials too. There is a difference between youth officiating and non-youth officiating. Think about the manner in which you address them and the way that you handle yourself during then game. As an official, you can set an example of how to remain calm and how to effectively communicate with people. If you are a screamer then you will have the same effect as a loud-mouthed coach.

6. Parents attempting to live vicariously through the efforts of their children. Encourage parents at opportune times to get more involved in the process. As officials we should constantly search for new officiating recruits. Encourage parents to give officiating a try. At best, the adult will like it and make a positive contribution. Or, the adult will try it, quit, but a have a new-found respect for the officials. A better atmosphere results, meaning a better experience for all involved.



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