

USSSA Fast Pitch Clarification & Interpretation

The following topics have been developed by the USSSA Fast Pitch National Umpire Committee. The intent is to provide further explanation in conjunction with the Official USSSA Fast Pitch Playing Rules (Rule Book). The goal is to help participants understanding the rules. In some instances, they represent official interpretations. However the Rule Book remains the authority should there be a conflict between this document and the Rule Book.

If there are any comments, questions, errors with this document, please contact the National Umpire Committee.

- USSSA Fast Pitch Clarification & Interpretation 1
- Additional Player 2
- Appeals 2
- Ball Rotation 4
- Batter Hit by Ball 4
- Bat hits Ball/Ball hits Bat 5
- Batter in Batters Box 5
- Batting out of Order 5
- Charged Conference..... 6
- Check Swing/Bunt Strike..... 7
- Courtesy Runner 7
- Designated Hitter 8
- Double First Base..... 8
- Ejection / Restrict to Bench 9
- Ground Rules 9
- Interference 10
- Jewelry 12
- Lightning and Thunder 13
- Look Back Rule 14
- Obstruction..... 15
- Over Running (Over Walking) First Base 16
- Overthrows..... 16
- Pitching 17
- Pitcher’s Uniform..... 18
- Run scoring on the third out of an inning 19
- Runner hit by fair ball 19
- Shorthanded Teams..... 19
- Team Warning 20
- Tiebreaker Procedure 21
- Time Limits..... 21

Additional Player

A team may play with one (1) additional player (AP).

By State Adoption, a team may play with two (2) additional players.

The decision to use or not use additional player(s) is optional but it must be made before the start of the game.

A team that uses additional players bats 10 (or 11) players for the entire game.

Any nine (9) of the 10 (or 11) may play defensive.

Players can change defensive positions at any time.

Just as a player can change from shortstop to left fielder, the additional player can play defensive at any position and that player sits out for all or part of the game.

As long as a player is in batting order, she is in the game.

The AP can be substituted for and re-entered just like any other player.

Appeals

An appeal play is a play where the umpire does not make a ruling until requested by a coach or player.

Types & Live Ball/Dead Ball Appeal

- ❖ Missing a base, advancing or returning – live ball or dead ball
- ❖ Leaving a base before caught fly ball is touched - live ball or dead ball
- ❖ Batting out of order – dead ball only
- ❖ Attempting to advance to second after overrunning first – live ball only

A Live Ball appeal can be made by any fielder in possession of the ball. She can touch the runner if the runner is still in field of play even if she is on another base. Or she can touch the base missed or left too soon.

A Dead Ball appeal is made while the ball is not live.

Once all runners have finished running and time is called or if the ball goes out of play and runners had chance to finish running.

PITCHER with the ball (STATEMENT IN RULE BOOK 10-2)

Any coach, manager or player with or without the ball (ACCEPTED PRACTICE) may make a verbal appeal.

It must be clear what is being appealed.

With multiple runners, the defensive must indicate which runner is being appealed.

There does not have to be a verbal declaration. For example, with a runner leaving 1B on the pitch; the batter hits a line drive directly to the second baseman who catches the ball and immediately throws to the first baseman standing on 1B. This is a valid appeal of the runner leaving the base before a caught ball is first touched. The runner should be called out.

Appeals must be made before next pitch (legal or illegal) or all infielders have left fair territory or all umpires have left field of play.

A runner may not return to touch a base

- ❖ If reached base beyond and dead ball
- ❖ If left field of play
- ❖ If a succeeding runner has scored.

More than one appeal play may be made but guessing games should not be allowed.

EXAMPLE: If a runner misses (or nearly misses) two bases, the defense has the right to appeal both bases if the umpires run safe on the first appeal.

If two runners tag and leave early, the defense could appeal both runners for leaving early.

SITUATION: B1 hits a slow roller to F5 and arrives safely but misses first base. F3 catches the ball while standing on the first base after F3 has beaten the throw.

RULING: If the runner passes first base before the throw arrives, she is considered to have touched the base unless an appeal play is made. F3 must tell the umpire she's appealing B1 missing first base before B1 returns to the base.

Fourth Out Appeals

Because a run does not score if the third out of an inning is a force play and a runner does not score if a preceding runner is the third out, the defense may make an appeal after it has recorded three outs as long as it is made properly.

EXAMPLE: Bases loaded, two (2) outs. The batter hits a long ball between the outfielders and attempts to run all the way home. She is thrown out at home for the third out of the inning. The defensive team then appeals that the batter runner missed first base. If the appeal is upheld, no runs would score.

Note it is not a force when a runner leaves a base too soon on a caught fly ball and returns in an attempt to retag. If this appeal play is the third out, it is considered a time play.

Example with one out and R1 on third and R2 on first, a long fly ball is hit to the outfield. R2 leaves with the hit; R1 stays on third. The ball is caught. R1 leaves legally from third. F7 throws to F3. R1 touches home plate. F3 catches the ball while touching 1B. R2 returns to 1B.

R2 is out for the third out and R1's run counts because she scored before R2 was out.

No appeal can be made on the last play of the game once the umpires leave the field. If there is a possible appeal by the defense, the umpires should wait until all defensive infielders have crossed the foul line on their way to the team dugout, before leaving the infield. If teams line up for high fives there is little chance for an appeal even if the defensive infielders have not crossed the foul line and umpires can leave the game at this point.

Ball Rotation

The philosophy is to get all new balls used in the First Inning. This is to prevent putting a new ball in play late in the game.

The pitcher has a choice of which ball to use at the start of each half inning. If both balls do not get into play in the first half of the first inning, the pitcher in the bottom half of the first inning **MUST** throw the unused ball. No choice is offered.

After an inning is completed, the ball should be returned to the vicinity of the pitching plate by the team leaving the field or the umpire. The pitcher taking the field now has a ball with which to start the next half inning. The pitcher may request another ball from the plate umpire. The Umpire should get current ball and then give the pitcher a ball from his ball bag. The pitcher can not switch back.

The current game ball should be used until such time as it goes out of play or becomes unplayable.

Batter Hit by Ball

Any time a pitched ball or batted ball hits the batter, it is a **DEAD BALL**.

It does not matter that the pitched ball hits the ground first.

If the batter is swinging, Dead Ball; Strike

If the ball is in strike zone or is prevented from going through strike zone, Dead Ball; Strike.

If the batter can but makes no effort to avoid ball, Dead Ball; Ball or Strike depending on where ball is in relationship to strike zone.

If batter makes an effort to avoid ball and ball is out of strike zone, Dead Ball; Batter is awarded first base.

The hand is part of the batter. The hand is not part of the bat.

- ❖ If ball hits hand and bat simultaneously, Dead Ball. If batter not swinging and ball out of strike zone, batter awarded first.
- ❖ If ball hits bat and then hand, Dead Ball, Foul.
- ❖ If ball hits hand and then bat, Dead Ball as soon as it hit the hand.

Batted Ball hits batter – Dead Ball

If a batted ball hits the Batter/Runner while she is still in the batter's box, Dead Ball, Foul Ball even if the B/R is in fair territory.

If the Batter/Runner has moved out of the batter's box and unintentional contacts the batted ball, Dead Ball. If the ball is in fair territory, she is out. If the ball is in foul territory, it is a foul ball.

Bat hits Ball/Ball hits Bat

If the bat is in the hands of the batter when the ball comes in contact with it, and

- ❖ The batter runner is still in the batter's box, it is a foul ball.
- ❖ An entire foot of the batter is completely outside the batter's box, she is out. The ball is Dead.

If the bat is out of the batter's hand (dropped or thrown) and the bat hits the ball in fair territory, the ball is dead and the batter-runner is out.

If the bat is out of the batter's hand and the ball hits the bat on the ground, the batter is not out. It is a fair or foul ball as follows:

- ❖ If the ball rolls against the bat in fair territory, it remains live.
- ❖ If it stops or is touched in fair territory, it is a fair ball.
- ❖ If it touches the bat in fair territory and then rolls to foul ground and stops, it is a foul ball.
- ❖ If the ball rolls against the bat in foul territory, it is a foul ball.

Batter in Batters Box

The batter is considered to be in the batter's box waiting for a pitch when no part of either foot is touching the ground outside the boundary lines forming the batter's box.

The lines of the batter's box are part of the box. When taking a stance in the box, both of the batter's feet shall be in the batter's box. If any part of the batter's feet is touching the lines, she is considered within the batter's box.

The batter shall be called out for being out of the batter's box when at least one foot is on the ground completely outside the lines of the batter's box when the ball is hit. The batter is also called out when any part of a foot is touching home plate when she hits the ball. The ball is dead. The batter is out whether the ball is fair or foul.

If no contact is made with the ball, there is no penalty.

If there are no batter's box lines evident, good judgment must be used and the benefit of any doubt must go to the batter.

Batting out of Order

Batting out of order is an appeal play by the defensive.

A batter is in proper order if he follows the preceding player in the lineup, A player is considered to be at bat as soon as he enters the batters box and one pitch has been thrown.

The defensive may appeal that the batter was not the correct batter until there has been one pitch to the next batter.

After one pitch, the defensive may only appeal that the current batter is not the correct batter.

If the current batter in the batter's box with one pitch is not the correct batter,

The correct batter is brought to bat and assumes the ball – strike count

No one is called out for batting out of order when there is a count on the batter.

All advances made shall stand.

If the batter who just completed her time at bat is not the correct batter, on appeal,

The correct batter is declared out.

The batter is removed from base.

All outs made on other runners on the play stand;

Any advance by runners on the play is nullified.

If the batter was out, the out will be rescinded because of the correct batter's out.

The next batter is the player who follows the correct batter (who was declared out) in the batting order.

All advances made before the batter became a batter runner shall stand

Charged Conference

It is a charged conference when time is requested for someone from the dugout to communicate with team members on the field.

Defensive

The defensive is charged with a conference when they request time and a coach (someone from the dugout) enters the playing field and communicates with any defensive player.

However if the defensive informs the umpire that the pitcher is being removed before any verbal communication, they should not be charged with a conference.

The defensive is allowed three (3) charged conferences in a seven inning game.

They are allowed one (1) and only one charged conference in each extra inning.

Time granted to change pitchers does not count as a charged conference.

If there are any conferences exceeding the limit, the pitcher can not pitch any more in that game. The pitcher may remain in game at any defensive position other than pitcher.

If the pitcher returns to the pitching position after being removed and one pitch has been thrown, the pitcher is disqualified from the game.

Offensive

The offensive is allowed one (1) charged conference per inning.

The umpires should refuse to grant the second conference. Penalty for excessive offensive conference is ejection.

Time granted for injury does not count as a charged conference. During the other team's conference or official's time out, a team may confer without being charged. They must end when charged team's conference ends.

The plate umpire shall keep a record of defensive team charged conferences for each team.

Check Swing/Bunt Strike

B1 starts to swing at a pitch but attempts to hold back, or it appears as though it is an attempt to bunt the ball. In either case, B1 misses the ball. How does the umpire determine what to call the pitch?

A call of this nature is based entirely upon the umpire's judgment. Therefore, the umpire shall, in order to be consistent, have guidelines to follow. The rule that most umpires follow is: If a batter swings halfway or more across the plate, it is a strike. In other words, if the bat is swung so it is in front of the batter's body or ahead of it, it is a strike. The "breaking of the wrists" has sometimes been used as a guide. However, it is believed using the first criterion will be more definite. In bunting, any movement of the bat toward the ball, when the ball is over or near the plate area, is a strike. The mere holding of the bat in the strike zone, or pulling the bat back, is not an attempt to bunt.

First, was the pitch in the strike zone? If so, it is simply a strike.

Second, did the batter swing at the pitched ball or in the case of a bunt attempt, did she move the bat toward the pitched ball?

If in doubt or if blocked out, the pitch should be called a ball. Umpires will not call the pitch a strike unless it was in the strike zone or the batter swung at the ball. If the umpire calls the pitch a ball and the catcher requests help, the umpire should ask for help.

Courtesy Runner

The coach may use any player who has not been in the lineup as a courtesy runner.

The Pitcher and the Catcher are the last players to throw and catch a pitch.

In the top of the first inning, the pitcher/catcher is the person listed on the line up card.

A substitute or re-entered starter can not be considered a pitcher or catcher before playing defense.

A courtesy runner may be entered for a pitcher or catcher on base at any time. A courtesy runner does not have to enter immediately after the pitcher or catcher gets on base.

A player who has been taken out of the game can not be used as a courtesy runner.

The same player can be use as a courtesy runner twice in the same inning. The pitcher or catcher would have to get on base twice and the CR would have to run for the same player.

A player can not be a courtesy runner for both the pitcher and catcher in the same inning.

A player can be a courtesy runner for both the pitcher and catcher in the same game.

An unreported courtesy runner is treated the same as an unreported substitute. The team is warned and further violations result in the ejection of the coach.

If the courtesy runner is injured, she must be replaced by another courtesy runner or the pitcher or catcher for whom she is running.

If the pitcher or catcher is placed on second base under the Tiebreaker Procedure, a courtesy runner can be used for her.

If a pinch hitter reaches base and the pitcher or catcher re-enters, a courtesy runner may not be used for her.

Designated Hitter

The Designated Hitter (DH) and Defensive Player (DP) are locked into the same batting position in the lineup.

Both players should be listed in the same lineup position.

1. Smith/Jones - 1st name is DH; second name is DP.

A substitute can be used in either the DH position or the DP position.

Both the player in the DH position and the player in the DP position can re-enter.

The DH may play defense. The DP may play offense (hit, run).

If either the DH plays defense or the DP plays offensive (bats or runs), the role of the DH/DP is terminated for the rest of the game.

Do not confuse the DH position and the person who is the DH.

Removing the DH/DP position does not remove the player's re-enter privileges.

Double First Base

The Double Base or Safety Base may be used at first base. It consists of the normal white base and a colored base the same size which extends into foul territory.

The entire purpose of the Double Base is to avoid collisions at first base on close plays.

On normal infield plays, the fielder is to use the white portion as she usually would. The batter runner is to use the colored portion to keep away from the fielder.

On any out attempt from the foul side of first base, the defense can use either portion. As the purpose of the double base is prevent a collision, this exception is made so the fielder is not obligated to reach across the path of the batter runner to tag the white base nor is the catcher compelled to throw across the path of the batter runner. In such an instance, the batter runner is allowed to go to the white portion of the double base.

If there is no play at first base, as on a hit to the outfield, the batter runner may use either portion of the base.

Once the batter runner reaches first base, she can return or tag-up on either part of the base. Likewise, the fielders can tag any part of the base.

In essence, once the batter runner reaches first base, it is one big bag that can be used by either offense or defense.

Ejection / Restrict to Bench

An umpire should always work hard to keep 'em in the game.

However when it is necessary, the umpire must invoke the proper penalty.

When a coach or player is ejected, they must leave the area. Out of sight / out of sound.

When a coach or player is restricted to the bench, they are not allowed to enter the field of play. However a coach, with umpire's approval, may enter the field to tend to an injured play. Restricting a coach to the bench does not constrain the coach from continuing to coaching.

It is often advisable to work with coach to control the spectators in the crowd.

Ground Rules

The field should be clearly marked. Markings should include screens on foul poles along the foul lines past first and third and vertical foul-line markings on any barrier that limits the outfield.

Softball parks, as well as crowd and weather conditions, differ. Hence, it is sometimes necessary to have special ground rules. The plate umpire must confer with the coaches prior to the game and then announce any ground rules on which the two coaches and the plate umpire agree. Ground rules may not supersede a rule in the USSSA Fast Pitch Softball Rule Book. If agreement cannot be reached, the plate umpire must establish needed ground rules and announce them to both coaches.

Here is a list of ground rules that are often adopted in cases where the field does not meet the specifications as provided by Rule 2.

If there is a screen behind the catcher or other permanent obstruction in front of the stand, a batted ball that goes behind these becomes dead. It is recommended that no such obstruction be less than 25 feet from the diamond.

Wild pitches, overthrows and batted balls that go over or through a fence or into a dugout are governed by dead ball rules.

For special field conditions, such as an incline that makes a spot where it is impossible or very difficult for a fielder to safely retrieve the ball, the ball should become dead if it goes to that spot and each runner's advance should be limited to two bases.

For an unfenced field, a chalk or imaginary out-of-bounds line should be established to define live-ball area. If spectators are permitted in dead ball areas, umpires should consider these the same as bleachers and the ball becomes dead if it bounces into the fans. The umpires must anticipate such a situation and announce the ground rule in advance.

Interference

Interference is the act of that hampers the defensive.

Interference is the act by an offensive player or team member that inhibits a defensive player making a play. It may be in the form of physical contact, verbal distraction, visual distraction, or any type of distraction that would hinder the fielder in the execution of the play. Defensive players must be given the opportunity to field the ball anywhere on the playing field or throw the ball without being hindered.

Interference by an offensive player results in a Dead Ball and an Out.

When interference by an offensive player or coach occurs, the ball is dead, someone must be called out, and all other runners are returned to the last base touched at the time of the interference.

Runner Interference

Runner Interference includes:

- ❖ A runner or batter-runner who interferes with a fielder executing a play.
- ❖ A runner or batter-runner who is hit by a fair untouched batted ball.
- ❖ Intentionally interfering with a thrown ball.

When a runner interferes with a fielder, the umpire must determine if the interference occurred before or after the runner who interfered was put out and then apply the proper rule.

A runner could be standing on a base and a defensive player bumps the runner while watching the flight of the ball. If the defensive player fails to make a catch on a catchable ball, it is the umpire's judgment whether interference should or should not be called. A runner must move to allow a fielder to make a play on a batted ball, unless the runner is on base. In this case, the runner should not be called out unless the hindrance is intentional.

When a runner is hit by a fair batted ball, it is interference if it occurred before it passed an infielder (excluding the pitcher) provided the runner was not in contact with the base. It is not interference if the batted ball touched a player before it hit the runner, or if the runner was standing in foul territory.

If interference occurs by the runner on a foul fly ball not caught, the runner is out, a strike is called, the ball is dead, and the batter remains at bat.

Batter Interference

Batter Interference occurs while the batter is at bat and before she hits the ball. It takes place when the batter:

- ❖ Intentionally interferes with the catcher's throw on an attempted steal or
- ❖ Interferes with the catcher on a play at the plate. The batter's box is not a sanctuary for the batter when a play is being made at the plate.
- ❖ Releases her bat in such a manner that it hits the catcher and prevents her from making a play. If the batter merely drops her bat and the catcher trips over it, there is no interference.

Batter Runner Interference

Batter Runner Interference occurs when the batter runner:

- ❖ Runs to First outside the three foot lane and interferes with a thrown ball
- ❖ Steps back to avoid a tag.

On-deck Batter Interference

On-deck batters may be charged with interference if they interfere with a throw and a possible tag on a runner, or a fielder's opportunity to make an out on a fly ball.

Coach's interference

Coach's interference occurs when a base coach runs toward home and draws a throw or when he interferes with a fielder attempting to catch or throw a ball. While in the coach's box, the base coach must make a reasonable effort to avoid a fielder's attempted play.

Spectator interference

Spectator interference occurs when a spectator:

- ❖ Enters the field and interferes with a play. EFFECT: The batter and runner(s) shall be placed where in the umpire's judgment they would have made, had the interference not occurred. The field belongs to the fielder and the stands belong to the spectators.
- ❖ Reaches onto the field from the stands and prevents a fielder from catching a fly ball in the field of play. EFFECT: A dead ball is ruled and the batter is called out. All runners shall be placed where in the umpire's judgment they would have made, had the interference not occurred. It is not interference if the fielder reaches into the stands.

Umpire inference

Umpire inference occurs when an umpire:

- ❖ Interferes with a catcher's attempt to put out a runner stealing, or an attempted pick-off from the catcher to any base. It is interference only if the runner is not put out, in which case she is returned to her base.
- ❖ Is hit by a fair, untouched batted ball before it passes an infielder (excluding the pitcher). The batter-runner is awarded first base.

In no other case is umpire interference ruled.

Offensive team interference

Offensive team interference could occur on a thrown ball striking loose equipment left on the playing field should there actually be a play interfered with.

Jewelry

Players in the game are prohibited from wearing jewelry or tape over jewelry

Lance Armstrong style wristbands are considered jewelry.

Medical alert bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry. If worn they must be taped to the body, so as to remain visible.

The Penalty of wearing jewelry is:

- ❖ First offense is a team warning.
- ❖ Second offense and any subsequent violation the player is restricted to the bench for the remainder of the game. The coach shall be ejected

At the pre-game conference, the umpires should ask the coaches if their players are legally and properly equipped.

If a player has tape where it probably is covering jewelry, the umpire should ask the player and then the coach if the player has on jewelry under the tape.

If they affirm, there is jewelry. It must be removed and jewelry penalty enforced.

If they assert there is no jewelry, the umpire should take their word and proceed. If any jewelry is exposed both the player and the coach should be ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Lightning and Thunder

Games should not be continued under unsafe conditions. It is extremely unsafe if there is thunder or lightning in the area. If you can see it or If you can hear it, it is already too close. STOP your game, clear the field and seek protective shelter immediately. Wait 30 minutes from the last lightning bolt or thunder screech before re-starting.

On a multiple field complex, the minute one field suspends for lightning or thunder, all fields shall suspend.

The national weather service has stated that lightning can strike up to a distance of 10 miles, with storms traveling at a speed of 50 miles per hour. However, thunder can be heard only within a distance of 8 miles. Therefore, if you hear thunder and/or see lightning, you are in immediate danger and should seek protective shelter in an indoor facility at once! An indoor facility is recommended as the safest protective shelter. However, if an indoor location is not available, an automobile is a relatively safe alternative. If not available, the following guidelines are recommended. Avoid standing under large trees and telephone poles. If the only alternative is a tree, choose a small tree in a wooded area that is not on a hill. As a last alternative, find a ravine or valley. In all instances outdoors, assume the aforementioned crouched position. Avoid standing water and metal objects at all times (I.e.-steering wheel, bats, umbrellas, bleachers, etc.)

The most dangerous storm gives little or no warning: Thunder and lightning are not heard or seem. Up to 40% of all lightning is not accompanied by thunder and 20-40% of thunder cannot be heard because of atmospheric disturbances, thus the term “silent killer”. At times, the only natural forewarning that proceeds a strike is feeling your hair standing on end and skin tingle.

At this point, you are in imminent danger of being struck by lightning and should drop to the ground and assume the aforementioned crouched position immediately. Do not lie flat. Should a ground strike occur near your, lying flat increases the body’s surface area that is exposed to the current traveling through the ground.

A perilous misconception that it is possible to see lightning coming and have time to act before it strikes could prove to be fatal. In reality, the lightning that we see flashing is actually the return stroke flashing upward from the ground to the cloud, not downward. When you see the lightning strike, it has already hit. *It is a fact that you will never see the bolt that hits you.* If used immediately, the information provided can be used to minimize the risk of injury or death from lightning

Look Back Rule

The purpose of the look back rule is to get runners to a base so the next pitch can start. The look-back rule establishes a set of rules for when the runner has to return to a base.

The look-back rule is not designed to generate cheap outs. Umpires should not call a runner out who loses contact with the base, but had no intention of leaving the base.

The look-back rule is in effect when the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle during a live ball and the batter-runner has reached first base. When the look back rule is in effect, a runner, who is off base, must immediately advance to the next base or return to the base left. The responsibility is completely on the runner. There is no obligation on the pitcher to look, fake, or throw.

Failure to immediately proceed will result in the runner being declared out.

Once the runner has returned or stops at any base for any reason, she will be declared out if she leaves the base.

The runner is released from the look-back rule when:

1. A play is made on her or another runner.
2. The pitcher leaves the circle or drops the ball.
3. The pitcher releases the ball to the batter.

If two runners are off base, only one can be called out, they. It is not possible to obtain two outs on the "look-back" rule.

When the batter runner overruns first base and starts moving back toward first base, she is neither allowed to move toward second base nor stop. If a batter-runner commits to first base (moving towards first), the runner must return to this base. The batter-runner cannot change her mind and advance to second once it looks like she is moving directly to first following the overrun. If there is any movement, except to move back toward first base, the runner is called out.

If the batter runner overruns first base and commits to going to second base, she must continue moving toward second base.

If she stops at first base, however, and then steps off the base after the pitcher has the ball within the circle, she is out.

Since the look-back rule is not an appeal play, the runner is declared out when the infraction occurs.

Any act by the pitcher in possession of the ball in the circle that, in the umpire's judgment, causes the runner to react; is considered making a play.

The pitcher has possession of the ball when the ball is in her hand or the ball is in her glove which is on her hand. The pitcher is also considered to have possession of the ball if she has the ball or the ball in the glove which is being held securely. I.e. between her legs, pinned to body under her arm or tucked under her chin.

Being in the eight-foot circle is defined as both feet within or partially within the lines. The pitcher is not considered in the circle if either foot is completely outside the lines.

Obstruction

Obstruction is the act of a fielder:

- ❖ Not in possession of the ball or
- ❖ Not in the act of fielding a batted ball

which hinders a runner

If a defensive player is blocking the base or base path without the ball, this is impeding the progress of the runner and is obstruction. After the fielder has the ball, she can block the base and make the tag. It is obstruction if the player blocks the base, catches the ball, and makes the tag.

Whenever obstruction occurs, whether a play is being made on a runner or not, the umpire will declare obstruction and signal a delayed dead ball. The ball will remain live. If the obstructed runner is put out prior to reaching the base she would have reached had there not been obstruction, a dead ball is called and the obstructed runner, and each other runner affected by the obstruction, will be awarded the base(s) they would have reached, in the umpire's judgment, had there not been obstruction. A preceding runner would advance to the next base if she occupied a base awarded to an obstructed runner.

An obstructed runner could be called out between the two bases she was obstructed if she was properly appealed for missing a base or leaving a base before a fly ball was first touched. If the runner committed an act of interference after the obstruction, this too would overrule the obstruction.

If the obstructed runner is put out after passing the base she would have reached had there been no obstruction, she is running at her own risk, if tagged, would be called out. The ball remains live and other plays may be made.

When the runner is obstructed during a rundown, a delayed dead ball is called. If the runner is tagged out after being obstructed, a dead ball is ruled, and she is awarded the base she would have made had there been no obstruction. If the ball is overthrown after the obstruction, the runner may advance. She may not be called out between two bases where she was obstructed.

If other runners are advancing when an umpire calls time following a play on an obstructed runner, a rule of thumb for placement of the other runners is: If they have reached half way to the next base, they are allowed to advance to the next base.

Catcher obstruction is a delayed dead ball call. The coach of the offensive team has the option of taking the result of the play or awarding the batter first base; advancing any runner attempting to advance (i.e., steal or squeeze) to the base she was attempting; and advancing other runners only if they are forced because of the award.

If catcher obstruction occurs when a batter steps out of the box on a legitimate attempt to hit the ball, the obstruction will take precedence and the penalty for catcher obstruction will be enforced.

If there is catcher's obstruction followed by subsequent batter's interference, batter's interference should be ruled.

A catcher reaching over the plate could be ruled catcher's obstruction

Over Running (Over Walking) First Base

A batter runner who has been awarded first base on a base on balls has the same rights to overrun first base as a batter runner who hit the ball.

If the batter/runner overruns first base but never attempts to continue to second base, she can not be tagged out.

She does not have to turn to the right.

She does not have to turn in foul territory.

Overthrows

Runners are awarded two bases on overthrows that go out of play or become blocked. Two bases are awarded from the last base touched at the time the ball left the hand.

Direction of runners has no bearing on the award. When an overthrow is made on a runner returning to a base, she is awarded two bases from that base.

If she was returning to first base and the throw was from the outfield and it left the outfielder's hand while the runner was between second base and third base, but the runner was between first base and second base when the ball went out of play, the runner would be awarded home.

If two runners are between the same bases, the award is determined as follows:

Two runners between first and second will be awarded second and third

Two runners between second and third, both will be awarded home.

When a fielder loses possession of the ball on an attempted tag and the ball then enters the dead ball area or becomes blocked, all runners are awarded one base from the last base touched at the time the ball entered the dead ball area or became blocked.

On pitched ball going out of play, the runners are awarded one base from the last base touched at the time of the pitch. If a batter receives a base on balls and the fourth ball gets away from the catcher and goes out of play, she will be awarded first base only.

Pitching

The basic features of the pitching rule are:

Contact With the Pitcher's Plate.

The pitcher must have both feet on the ground within the 24-inch length of the plate. The shoulders shall be in line with first and third base. She shall take a position with her pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and her non-pivot foot on or behind the pitcher's plate. The hands shall be separated. The ball can be in the glove or pitching hand. The pitcher does not have to "present the ball". If the ball is in the glove you would not see it and it would not be presented as some of you may be interpreting.

Signal.

The purpose of requiring a signal is to insure the batter is ready and prevent a quick pitch. A signal or the simulating of a signal must be taken by the pitcher while in contact with the pitcher's plate. The ball must be held in either the pitching hand or the glove while taking the signal. The ball held in one hand may be in front of or behind the body. The signal may be taken from the catcher or the dugout. There may be no signal at all must the pitcher must pause and look toward home.

Preliminary to Delivery.

After taking the signal, the hands must come together in front of the body for a minimum of one second and not more than 10 seconds. (Any touching of the hands together satisfies the one second requirement). The pitcher may begin her motion once the hands are brought together. If the pitcher wants to step back with the non-pivot foot, she may do so prior to bringing the hands together. No rocking movement which pulls the pivot foot off the pitcher's plate is allowed. If the pivot foot turns or slides in order to push off the pitcher's plate, this is acceptable as long as contact is maintained. It is not considered a step if the pitcher slides her foot across the pitcher's plate.

Start of Pitch.

The start of the pitch begins when the pitcher takes one hand off the ball or the pitcher makes any motion that is part of the wind-up after the hands have been brought together.

Delivery.

The delivery may not be two full revolutions. The pitcher's hand may go past the hip twice as long as there are not two complete circles. The wrist may not be further from the hip than the elbow. The delivery may not have a stop or reversal of the forward motion.

Step or Release.

Only one step may be taken and if taken, it must be forward, toward the batter and within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate. The pivot may remain in contact with the pitcher's plate or may pushing off and drag. It is illegal to pushing off from a spot other than the pitcher's plate (crow hop). The release of the ball must be simultaneous with the step.

A player may be removed as a pitcher and returned as a pitcher only once per inning. Any pitcher returning in the same inning will receive no warm up pitches.

Crow Hop

A crow hop is the replanting of the pivot foot prior to delivery of the pitch. Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher's plate is illegal. It is not a step if the pitcher slides (her) foot in any direction on the pitcher's plate, provided contact is maintained.

A crow hop is not the pitcher's failure to drag the push-off foot along the ground. A crow hop is, as the name implies, a "hop" off the pitching rubber by the pivot/push-off foot (typically moving it forward a foot or more) to "replant" it and use it for a second push-off point. It is an illegal act.

Leap

A leap is when both feet are airborne. The pivot foot may remain in contact with or may push off and drag away from, the pitching plate prior to the front foot touching the ground, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact with the ground.

Leaping can be caused by a failure to "drag" the pivot/push-off foot. Leaping, in fast pitch softball, is the act of having both feet off the ground at the same time. It is an illegal act.

Therefore, the pivot/push-off foot usually is dragged along the ground until the stride foot lands or remains in contact with the pitching rubber.

Pitcher's Uniform

A pitcher may wear a batting glove and/or wristband on the glove hand and wrist. The batting glove may be white. A pitcher may not wear a metal toe plate on her shoe. A

pitcher shall not wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist, forearm, elbow, or thighs, which may, in the umpire's judgment, be distracting to the batter. Tape, preferably neutral/skin color, can be worn on the pitching hand.

A batting glove may not be worn on the pitching hand.

A long-sleeved sweatshirt of any color is acceptable under the jersey. If worn, it may not extend past the wrist so a clear gap can be seen between the ball and the end of the shirt.

Run scoring on the third out of an inning

A run will not score if the third out of the inning is a putout at first base (batter-runner) or a force out at any other base

Missed bases could result in a force out. I.e. if the runner from first base missed second base on a base hit and that was the third out of the inning when properly appealed, any run(s) scored would not count.

An appeal play on a runner leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball is not a force. If the appeal results in the third out, any runner(s) preceding the appealed runner would score if they crossed home plate prior to the out.

Runner hit by fair ball

While in Contact With the Base.

The runner will never be called out unless the act is intentional. The ball remains live or dead depending on the closest defensive player. If the closest defensive player is in front of the base the runner is in contact with, the ball is live. However, if the closest defensive player is behind the base, the ball is dead. If the ball is ruled dead and the batter awarded a base hit, only runners forced to advance due to the batter being placed on first base shall be advanced one base.

While Not in Contact With the Base.

The runner will be called out or ruled safe depending on the interference rule. SEE INTERFERENCE

Shorthanded Teams

A team must start the game with at least nine players in the line-up.

If a team has no available substitutes, it may continue a game with one less in the batting order than it started the game if a player leaves the game for a reason other than being ejected.

A team may not play with a vacant spot if it has a substitute available. As soon as an available substitute arrives, she must be inserted into the lineup.

If a player leaving the game is a runner, she is out.

Whenever the vacant spot is due to bat, an out is declared. The defensive team may walk a preceding batter(s) to get to the automatic out.

Whenever a team plays shorthanded because a player leaves the game, the player cannot return to the line-up. Exception: A player being treated under the blood rule can return.

A team cannot bat less than eight. The game is forfeited.

If the team has only nine players, one is injured in the third inning, a substitute arrives in the fifth inning and is entered into the game, and another player becomes injured, this is legal as the team can continue to play with eight. If the same team did not have a substitute when the second player became injured, reducing the number of players to seven, the game is forfeited.

Team Warning

A team warning is to be issued to each team for each offensive

The following results in an initial Team Warning and have subsequent penalties:

- ❖ Remove helmet – team warning - subsequent violations player is confined to bench area.
- ❖ Unreported substitute – team warning player becomes legal - , subsequent violations The manager is ejected
- ❖ Unreported courtesy runner – team warning player becomes legal - , subsequent violations The manager is ejected
- ❖ Ineligible courtesy runner – team warning player out - subsequent violations manager is ejected
- ❖ Fake a tag-- Team warning. Subsequent violation player is restricted to the bench; coach shall be ejected

- ❖ Carelessly throw a bat -- Team warning. Subsequent violation player is restricted to the bench; coach shall be ejected
- ❖ Wear jewelry -- Team warning. Subsequent violation player is restricted to the bench; coach shall be ejected
- ❖ Hit the ball to teammates on defense after the game has started. -- Team warning. Subsequent violation player is restricted to the bench; coach shall be ejected
- ❖ Use electronic communication equipment Team warning.
- ❖ Use tobacco products in any form. -- Team warning. Subsequent violation player is restricted to the bench; coach shall be ejected

A reminder at home plate by the umpire does not constitute a warning for either team.

The plate umpire shall keep a record of team warnings for each team.

Tiebreaker Procedure

After seven innings or after the time limit has expired and a new inning is started, the tiebreaker procedure will be used at the start of every half inning. The player who had the last completed at bat of the previous inning will be placed on second base to the start the inning.

If the player is the pitcher or catcher, a courtesy runner may be used.

A substitution may be made for the player.

If the wrong player is on the base, there is no penalty. The correct player is placed on based. Any advance by the incorrect player is allowed.

If the team is playing shorthanded and the vacant spot was the last completed at bat. The player who precedes the vacant spot would be placed on second base.

Time Limits

In games that use a time limit, it is recommended that a visible timing device be used. The cheapest solution is a small kitchen timer placed on the back stop. Better and only slightly more expensive solutions are available. A count down timer with an alarm is preferred. A stop watch would be a second choice. Using a regular watch is not considered a good solution except as a back up timing device.

If the home plate umpire is responsible for timing the game, the clock should be started when the pre-game conference ends. It is impractical for the home plate umpire to start the clock on the first pitch. This also cuts down wasted time before the first pitch of the game. The umpire should also record the time of day as a back-up.

If a visible clock is used, it is not necessary to announce time left because the clock can be seen by the coaches. However if the time is being kept on a clock that is not visible, it is prudent to announce the time remaining near the end of the game.

When the device sounds, the inning should be completed. If the home team is ahead in the bottom of the inning, the game is over.

Once the third out is made, the next half inning begins. So if the home team has made their third out and then the device sounds, the next inning should be started. Even if no pitch has been thrown. Even if the home team is still in the dugout.