

Umpiring Rules 101: Top 21 to Know

Strike Zone: 2.00

The Umpire shall determine the Strike Zone when the Hitter takes a swing with their natural stance. The Strike Zone is the space over the Plate between the Hitter's armpits and the knee.

Safe / Out calls: 2.00

Count to 1-Mississippi...then make the call. Be loud, be confident, sell the call.

Foul Tip: 2.00

A Hitter who swings and tips a ball that goes sharply into the catcher's mitt is ruled a Strike. The ball stays "live." If this is the Third Strike, the batter is out.

3rd Strike Bunt: 6.05(c)

A batter who bunts a third strike foul is out, the ball is dead, no runners may advance.

Dropped Third Strike: 6.09(b)

In majors and above, the batter becomes a runner when the catcher does not catch the third strike, provided, 1) first base is unoccupied or 2) first base is occupied with two out.

Batter-runner First Base Running Lane Violation: 6.05(j)

The batter-runner may be called out for interference if they fail to run within the runner's lane for the last half of the distance to first base. The defensive team must throw the ball in order for the interference to occur.

Batter-runner Overruns First Base: 7.10(c)

If the batter runner overruns or over slides first base and fails to return to the base immediately and is tagged, the runner is out.

This is an umpire judgement.

Leaving Base Early: 7.13(a-c)

Baserunners shall not leave their current base until the pitched ball reaches the batter. Throw a flag when you observe the violation and make the calls as appropriate.

Running Out of Baseline: 7.08(a)(1)

Runners may leave the baseline; however, if a fielder, while in possession of the ball, is trying to make a tag on the runner, the runner must run in a direct line to the base; if the runner does not run in a straight line, while out of the base path, the runner is ruled out.

Slide or Avoid: 7.08(a)(3)

There is no must slide rule. However, the runner is out if they do not slide or attempt to legally (keep in mind the 3-foot rule) get around a fielder who has possession of the ball and is waiting to make a tag and willfully, intentionally runs into the fielder.

Call "time". The ball is dead, and the violating runner is out. All other runners are returned to their last legally touched base.

Sliding Headfirst: 7.08(a)(4)

In majors and below, the base runner is out if they slide into base headfirst while advancing.

Exception: Runners may dive head-first when returning to a base.

Courtesy Runner: 7.14(b)

When there are two outs, a courtesy runner is permitted for the catcher or the pitcher of record. The substitute must be the player in the batting order who made the last (previous) out.

Fair / Foul: Rule 2.0 and 6.09 (a-h)

Fair territory is the part of the field within and including the First and Third Base lines extending to the outfield fence. Home plate, first base, third base and the foul lines are in Fair Territory.

Catch – No Catch: 2.00

The fielder must control the ball and release must be voluntary and intentional.

Infield Fly Rule (Majors and above): 2.0

In majors and above, a fair fly ball with runners on first and second or first, second, and third with less than 2 outs that can be caught with ordinary effort. Batter is out; runners advance at their peril.

Obstruction: 7.06 (a) and 7.06 (b)

The act of the defense, a fielder who, while not in possession of a ball and not in the act of fielding a ball, impedes the progress of any runner.

If a play is being made on the obstructed runner, or if the batter runner is obstructed before reaching First Base, the ball is dead and all runners shall advance without the liability of being put out, to the bases they would have reached, if there had not been obstruction.

If no play is being made on the obstructed runner, the ball stays live and the play continues until there is no further action. The umpire shall then call "Time" and assess the bases to nullify the obstruction.

Note: A fake tag is obstruction. If a defender blocks the base (or plate) clearly without the ball in possession, this is obstruction.

Interference: 7.09 (a-k)

Offensive team hinders the Defensive Team from making a defensive play or increases their chances of advancing. The ball is dead; the runner that committed the infraction is out; the Umpire returns all runners to the last legally touched base. If the batter is not the offensive player who commits the interference, the batter/runner is awarded First base.

Dead Ball Territory Penalties: 7.05(f-i)

Base runners are awarded two bases from the base they last held when a thrown ball enters into dead ball territory (ie: dugout, over or under the fence, etc).

Base runners are awarded two bases when a fair hit ball bounces into dead ball territory like the stands, over/under a fair territory fence, under tarps, etc.

Illegal Bats: 1.10

For majors and below bats must be USABat approved bats (USABat logo) otherwise they are considered illegal bats.

BBCOR bats may be used for intermediate and juniors level.

Bats that are damaged (ie: dented, curved, etc) and unsafe must be removed from play.

Unsportsmanlike Conduct: 9.01(d)

Umpires have the authority at their discretion to disqualify any player, coach, or manager for objecting to the decisions, or for unsportsmanlike conduct, or language and to eject such disqualified persons from the playing field and the ballpark.

Umpire Judgement Calls are Final: 9.02(a)

An umpire's decision which involves judgement, such as but not limited to, whether a batted ball is fair or foul, whether a pitch is a strike or ball, or whether a runner is safe or out, is final. No player, manager, coach, or substitute shall object to any such judgement decisions.