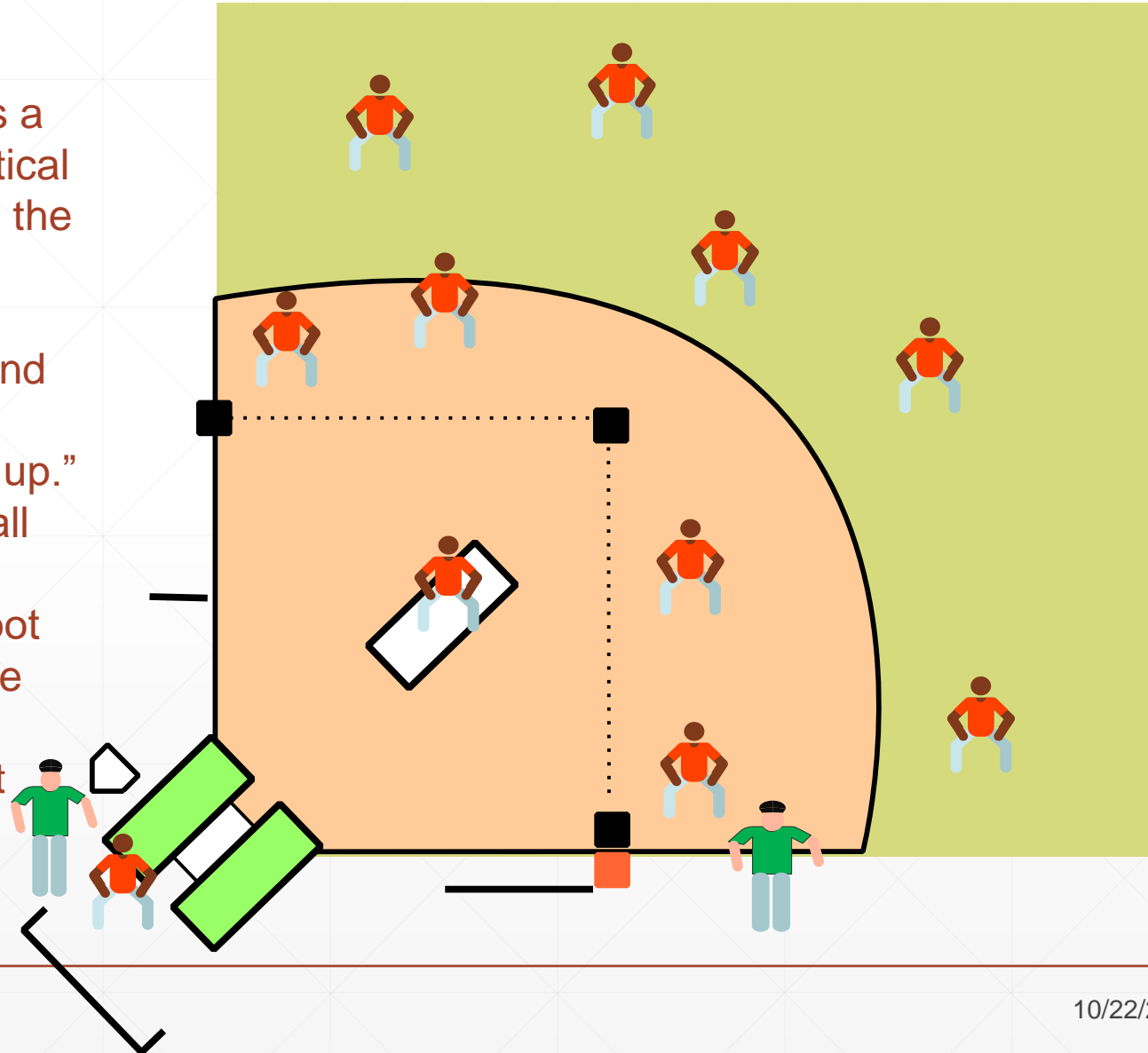


Senior Softball Umpiring Basics

Material drawn from the World Baseball Softball Confederation, Global Sports League Softball Umpire Manual, and The Villages' umpires' experiences.

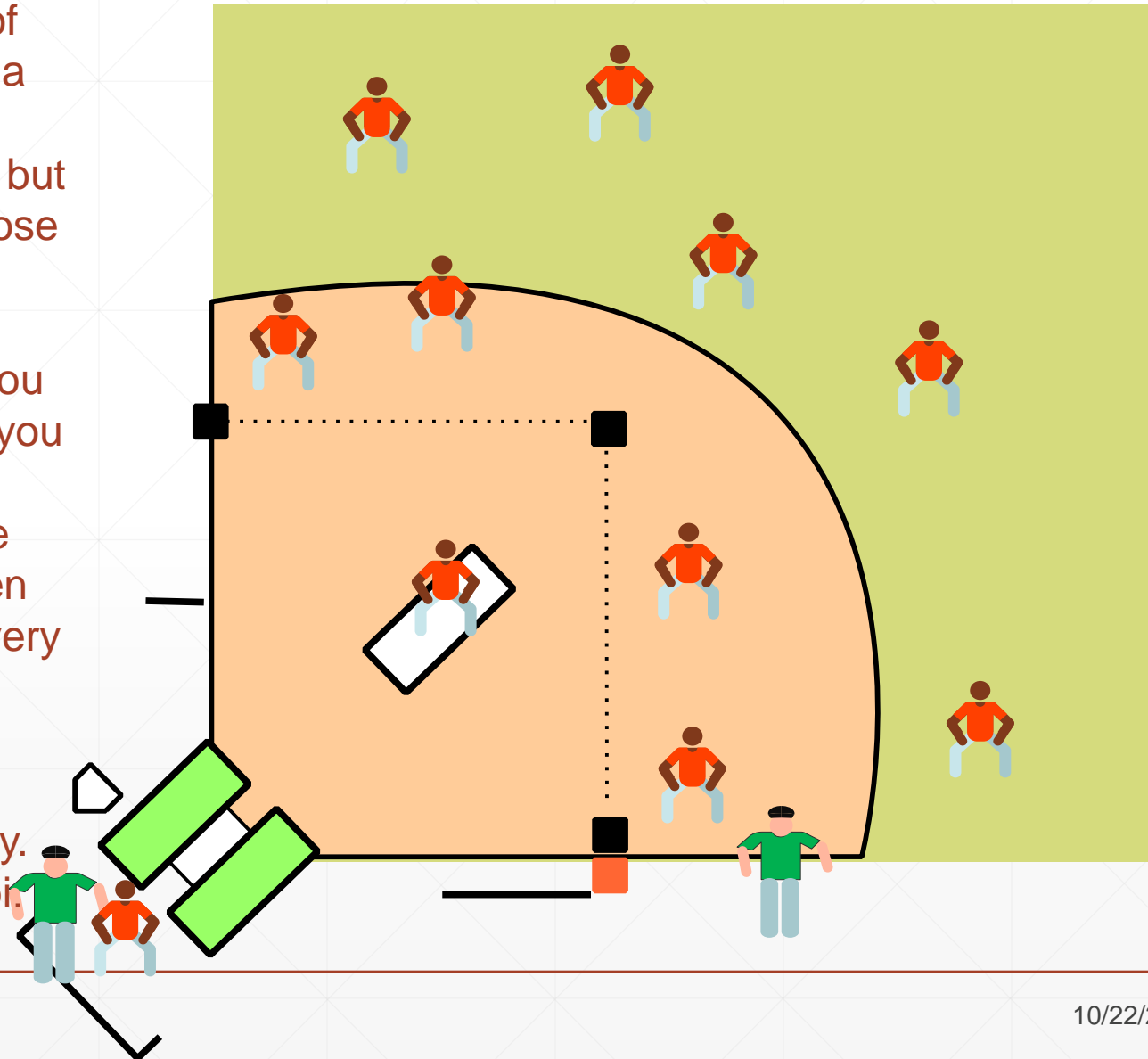
Readiness: General Principles

- Take the field ready to do your best mentally and physically.
- Know there is no such thing as a crucial call or game: All are critical to the teams. Be consistent on the easy ones as well as the hard ones.
- Focus when you miss a call (and you will) and get the next one right. Do not try to “even them up.”
- Don’t let players or coaches call plays for you.
- Concentrate on the runner’s foot hitting the bag and listen for the ball hitting the glove.
- Think ahead on the field: What might happen next?



Positioning and Vision: General Principles

- Move to an unobstructed view of the play and make decisions at a full stop.
- Be close to a play (8 to 10 feet) but avoid being in the way or too close to see the whole play.
- Watch the whole play through completion and time is called: you never know what will happen if you turn your back.
- Wait until the play is over before the call: see it, replay it, and then call it. If you are too quick on every call and then hesitate, players assume you are guessing or undecided. Don't be forced to make two calls on the same play. Umpires are a player's best alibi.

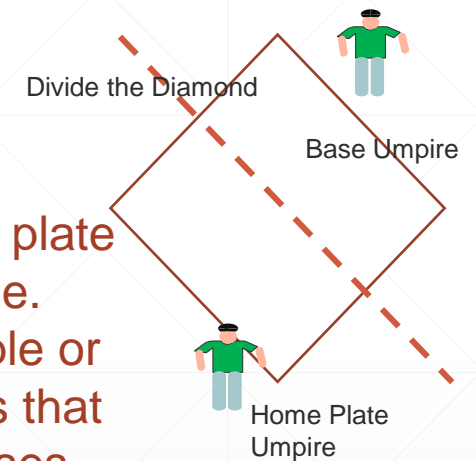


Two-Umpire System Overview

In the two-umpire system, umpires move into positions appropriate for each play. Proper positioning means thinking in terms of “keeping the play in front of you.” There are four basic elements in doing so: 1) *the ball*, 2) *the defensive player making the play*, 3) *the offensive player: batter-runner and/or runner*, and 4) *the base or area where the ball, defensive player, and offensive player meet*.

Positioning draws on three basic principles:

- **The Division Principle:** Normally, the home plate umpire takes calls at home plate and third base and the base or field umpire takes calls at first and second base. With no runners on base, the base umpire takes the batter/runner hitting a triple or any trail/last runner to third base. The home plate umpire positions for runners that score. Both umpires watch for tags, obstruction, interference, and touched bases.
- **The Infield/Outfield Principle:** When the ball is hit to the infield, the base umpire moves and stays 8 to 10 feet on the outfield side of the base line. When the ball is in the outfield, the base umpire moves to a position on the infield of the base line.
- **The Runner’s Principle:** If there are runners, the base umpire’s starting position is off the second baseman, shading towards the lead runner or first base. Both umpires must ensure that all bases are covered in tag up/fly ball touch situation.

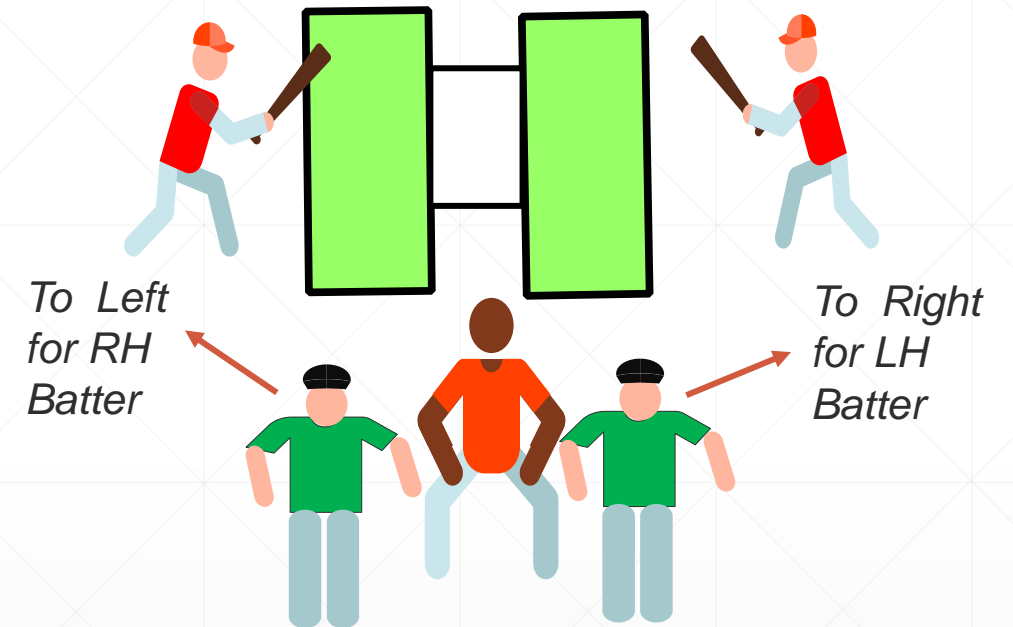


Umpire Mechanics: Home Plate

Position slightly to the right or left behind the catcher in the slot between the batter and catcher. Stand to see the plate and batter without being obstructed by or interfering with the catcher. However, the catcher cannot dictate where you stand to see the plate.

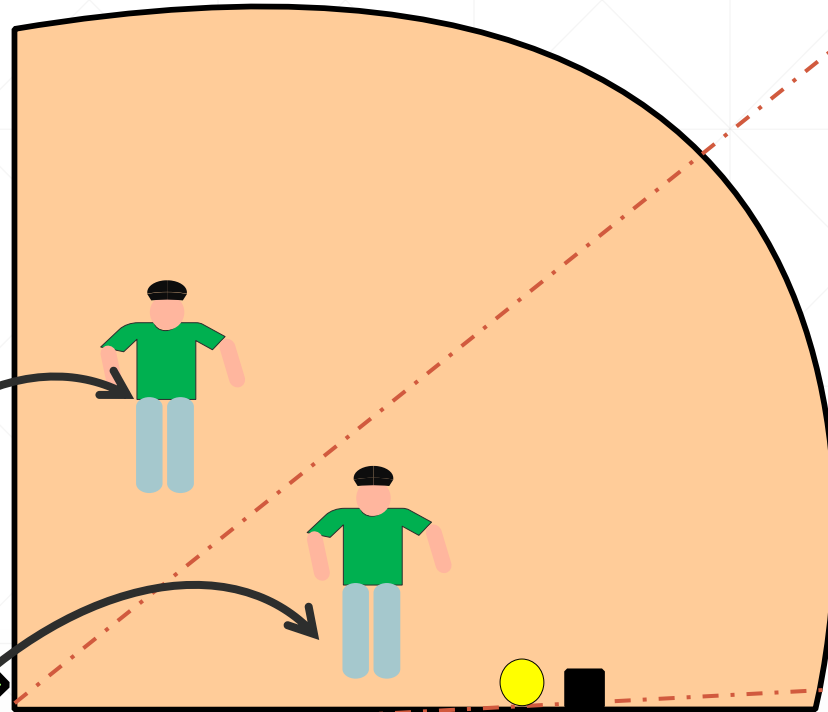
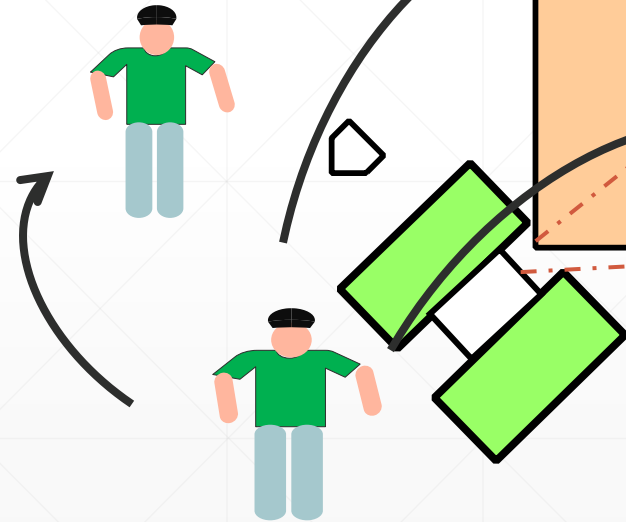
Hold the pitch count indicator in your left hand. Always give the number of balls with your left hand and strikes with the right. Do not describe a pitch, such as saying or motioning, “Too deep” or “Just short.”

Call an illegal pitch or no pitch well before the ball reaches the plate, saying “illegal.” Do not say “flat” or “too high.” On other pitches, do not make a call until the pitch crosses the plate or has been caught by the catcher. Use an illegal pitch motion only for an illegal pitch—not for all balls.



Umpire Mechanics: Home Plate

IN: With a runner on first, when the ball is hit, leave the home plate area and circle into the infield. Buttonhook about halfway between the fair/foul line and the pitcher's mound.



OUT: When the ball is hit to the outfield, move into the infield. The plate umpire calls all fly balls, fair or foul, safe or out.

For fly balls hit near the base lines, the call is always fair or foul. If foul, loudly call "Foul." For fair balls, say nothing, but point to the infield. The final position of the ball is the only determining factor in calling a batted ball fair or foul.

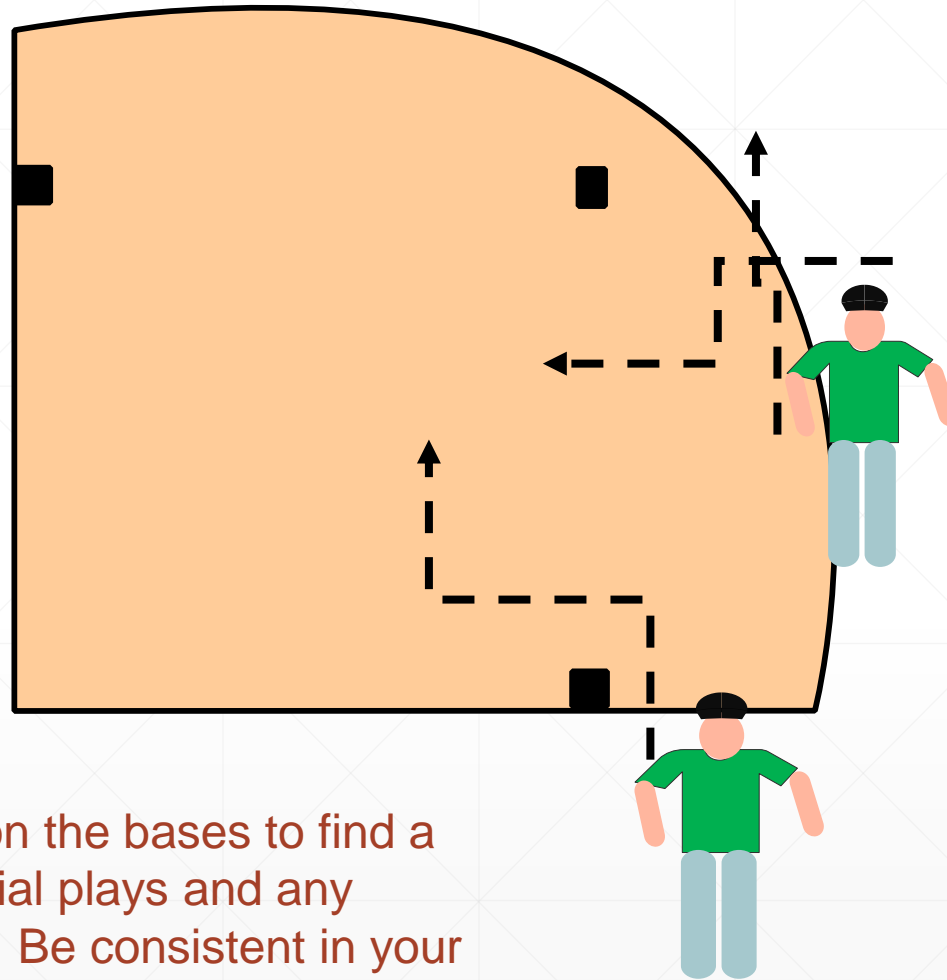
With no runners on base, trail the runner down the first base line about 15 feet and 8 to 10 feet inside the baseline.

When a runner is attempting to score, position about 10 feet away from the scoring plate, lined up with both the scoring plate and strike mat.

Umpire Mechanics: Base or Field Umpire

A base umpire is responsible for

- Calling plays at or between the bases.
- Helping to call outfield plays that the home plate umpire might have difficulty seeing.
- Helping the home plate umpire when asked.



When you start the move on a play, keep the ball, the offensive and defensive players, and where the call will be made in clear view.

Do not call your plays running; come to a stop and make your call. Always keep in mind where the ball is, who had it last, and where you need to be to make the best call.

Work the angles on the bases to find a position to call initial plays and any subsequent plays. Be consistent in your calls. Keep your hands to your sides.

Umpire Mechanics: Base or Field Umpire

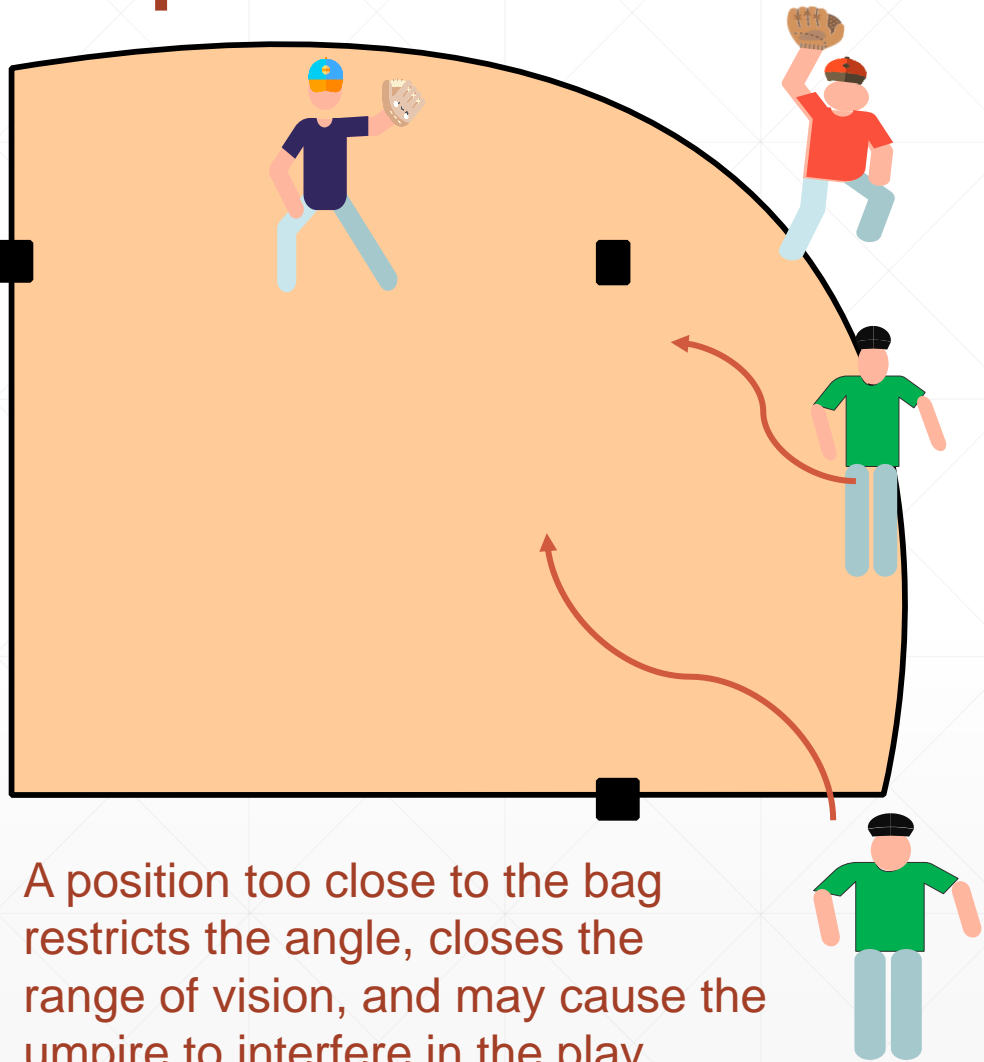
The general principle is if the ball goes to the outfield, move into the infield. If the ball is hit to the infield, turn into the base and move to where you can clearly see the base, runner, fielder(s), and ball. Do not obstruct the play.

When there is no runner, before the play, position yourself near the first base foul line, 8 to 10 feet behind the base. Button hook inside if the ball is hit to the outfield. On a play at first base, move about 8 to 10 feet into the infield and keep an 8 to 10 feet depth behind the base line. When there is a runner on first or first and second, position yourself off the shoulder of the second baseman.

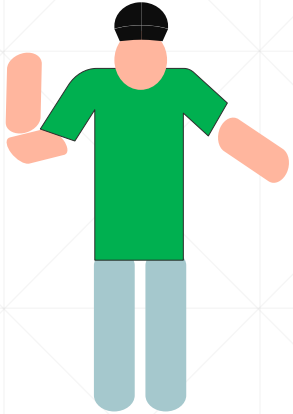
Remember as the base/field umpire:

- What is the count and how many outs are there?
- Where are the runners and who is responsible for each runner?
- What is likely to happen if the batter hits the ball?
- Where are the fielders positioned? Where is the ball?

A position too close to the bag restricts the angle, closes the range of vision, and may cause the umpire to interfere in the play.



Communications and Signals

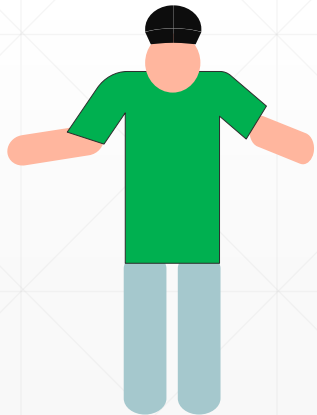


OUT OR STRIKE

- 1) Stand upright with your feet shoulder-width apart, facing square to the play and eyes on the ball. 2) Bring your left hand up belt high. 3) Bring your right hand and arm out to the side of the body and up to a 90-degree angle with the closed fist facing your head. 4) The right arm should be parallel to the ground and forward enough to see your elbow with your peripheral vision as you verbalize the out call. 5) Finish the signal by dropping your arm to your side.

NOTE: Strike calls should be voiced before the signal is given.

SAFE OR NO CATCH

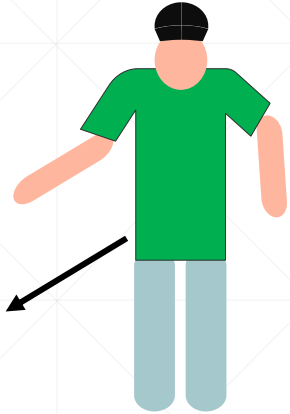


- 1) Stand upright with the feet shoulder-width apart, facing square to the play and eyes on the ball. 2) Bring both hands to the chest about shoulder high. 3) Extend the arms, parallel to the ground, with the palms of the hands down and say “safe”. 4) Finish the signal by dropping your arms to your sides.

BALL

No hand signal is given unless it is for an illegal pitch (see next slide). A verbal call should be made.

Communications and Signals



FAIR BALL

- 1) Start upright facing square to the play with the feet shoulder-width apart and eyes on the ball.
- 2) Point toward fair ground by raising your inside hand and arm no higher than your shoulder and parallel to the ground.
- 3) If further emphasis is needed, point a second time toward fair ground.
- 4) DO NOT say anything for a fair ball call.

DEAD BALL, TIME OUT, NO PITCH OR FOUL BALL

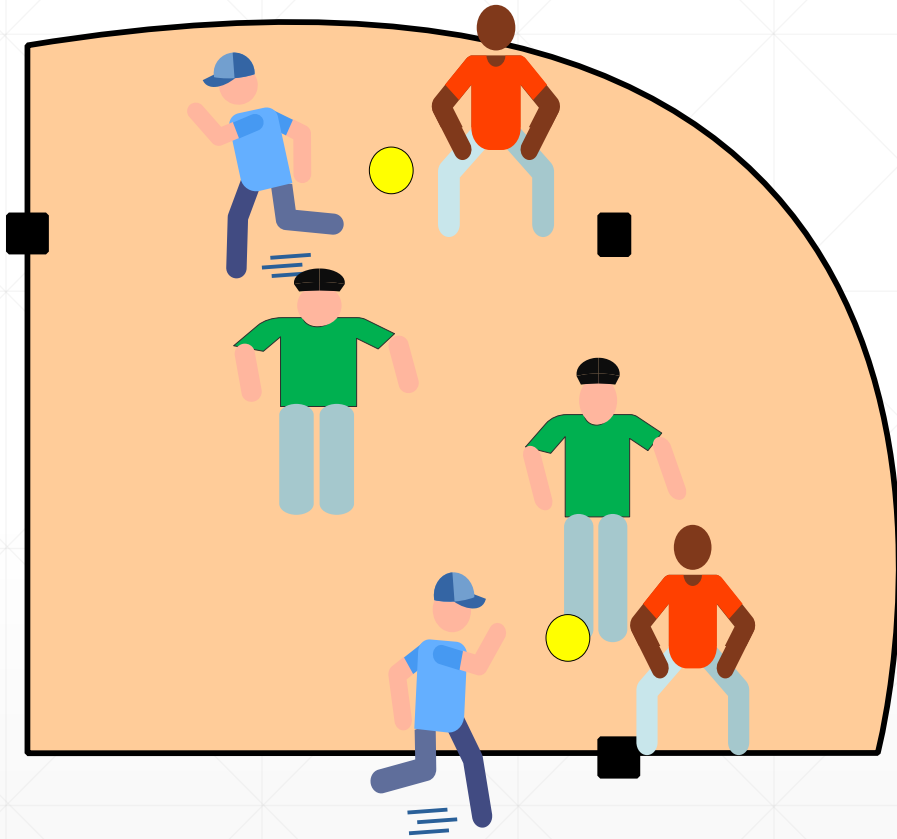
- 1) Stand upright facing square to the play with the feet shoulder-width apart and eyes on the ball.
- 2) Raise both hands high above the head with palms facing out as you shout “Dead Ball”, “Time Out”, “No Pitch” or “Foul Ball.”



DELAYED DEAD BALL OR ILLEGAL PITCH OR OBSTRUCTION

- 1) Stand upright with feet shoulder width apart and eyes on the ball.
 - 2) Raise the left arm shoulder high and parallel to the ground with the fist closed.
 - 3) Shout “illegal pitch”, or “obstruction” as needed to describe the action observed.
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Umpire Mechanics: Force and Tag Plays

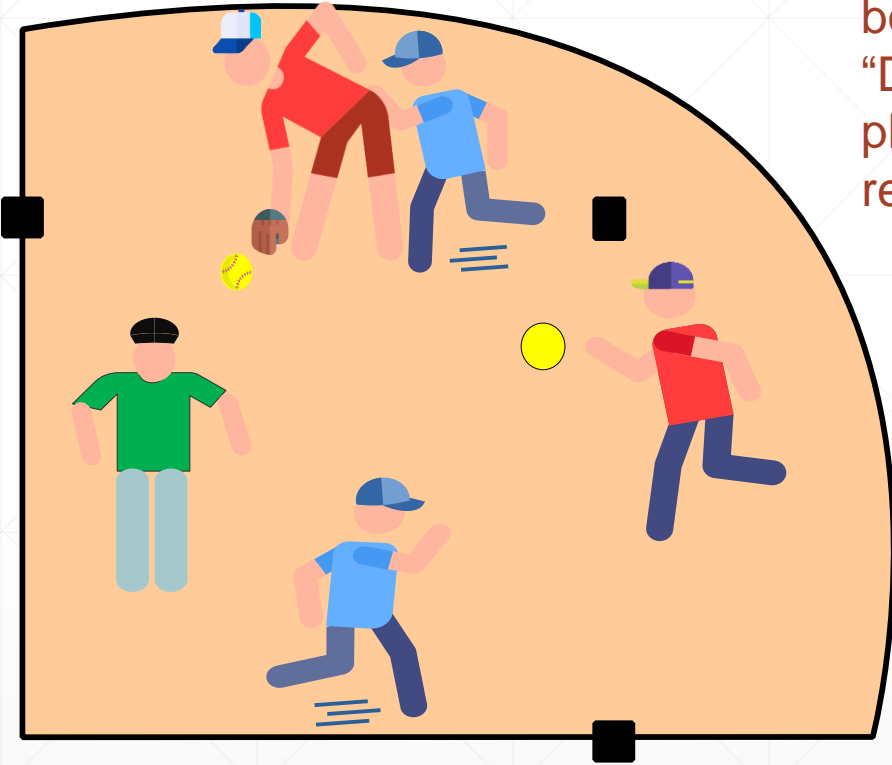


Tag play: complete your call back about 4 to 6 feet from the tag. As the runner and the ball near the tag area, start to move in towards the play, positioning for the best angle—normally 90 degrees from the path of the runner, just short of the base of the point of contact.

Force play (using first base): Get into position as the fielder is moving to field the ball. As the fielder releases the ball, then turn into the base. Watch and let the ball take you into the play.

Look for the runner touching the base and that the first baseman is touching the base. Listen for the sound of the ball hitting the glove to determine which arrived first—the ball or the runner. Then look up to make sure the first baseman has control and not juggling the ball. A runner is safe if she acquires any part of the bag and beats the throw or tag.

Umpire Mechanics: Additional Points



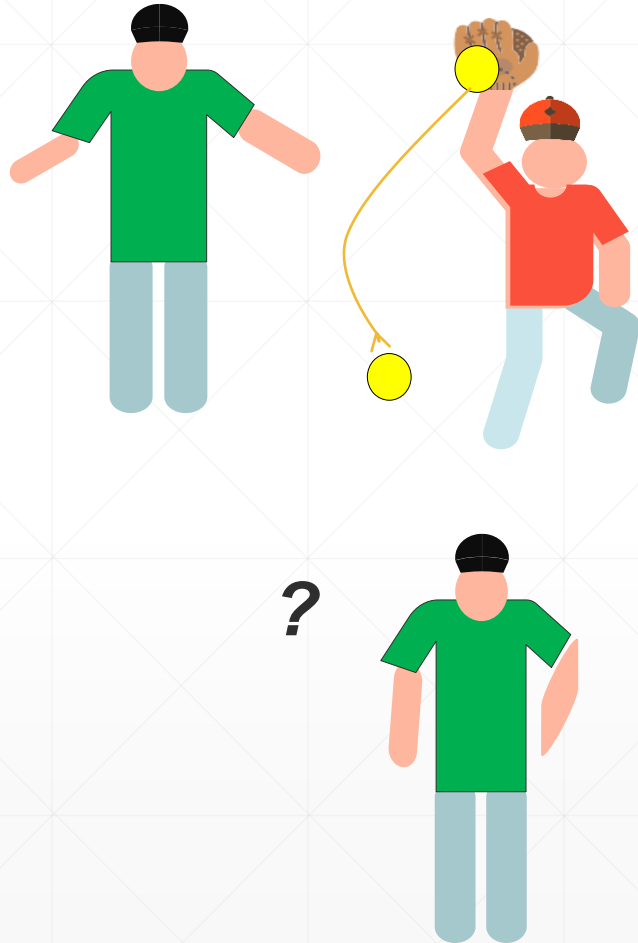
Interference (Offensive). Give a vigorous dead ball signal with both arms extended high in the air above your head, calling “DEAD BALL.” Halt any further play to avoid having continued play adding to the confusion. An out is called and all runners return to the base they were at the time of the interference.

Obstruction (Defensive). Can be of three types

- Obstruction on a runner who is not being played on (DELAYED DEAD BALL). Protect that runner to the base he would have reached.
- Obstruction on a runner (DEAD BALL). Throw arms above the head to give a dead ball signal and call DEAD BALL. Stop the play, point to the violator and award the base(s).
- Catcher obstruction (DELAYED DEAD BALL). Wait to see the result of the play before enforcement.

Collision. Before calling interference or obstruction, ask: Did the batter-runner alter direction to draw contact to get a call? Did the fielder alter the fielding attempt in any way to draw interference? Could the fielder actually make an out on the play? Incidental contact with no effect or penalty on the play should stand.

Umpire Mechanics: Asking For Help



- Make the call based on the information you have and then go for help if needed because of a missing element of the play:
 - Were you blocked from seeing the entire play? If so, go to your partner for information without being asked or if asked to “go for help.” If not, have you clearly seen the entire play?
 - Do you remember the rule that covers the play? Check if you need some help.
 - Rely on your partner’s information to make the correct call. If you ask your partner umpire an opinion on your call, accept your partner’s view.
 - If you are absolutely sure you saw the whole play and know the rule: No help is needed. Make the call. Be decisive and clear.
- Teams should not simply say “ask for help.” They should specify what was questionable about the call, i.e., “Ball was trapped.” “Foot not on the bag.” “Tag was made.” You decide if help is needed. The umpire who made the call makes the final decision.