

Softball Umpiring Guide

Taking Pride In Your Appearance

An official should always take pride in his or her appearance ! One's professionalism should begin the moment you arrive to the playing field and should remain consistent until you depart. Remember, your first appearance to the coaches, players, or fans could determine the respect you should receive during the game.

Your appearance is imperative. Umpires on the same field should discuss attire before getting dressed. It is important that you and your partner dress alike. Your uniform consists of a powder blue shirt, heather gray pants, navy blue or gray ball bags, navy blue jacket, sweaters, hats, black belts, shoes, and socks. Every part of the uniform should be clean, neat, and wrinkle free. Clean hats are necessary; those with sweat rings are unprofessional. Check your uniform during the game, you may need to tuck in your shirt or dust off your pants or hat. Always keep your shoes and belts polished.

Most of the time, a changing room is not provided. Before and after games, be cautious dressing and undressing in the parking lot. Remember, young ladies and parents will be walking past, so be discreet !

Communications and Signals

Verbal communication as well as signals are desirable and in fact, essential. They enable an umpire to let a fellow umpire know the game situation on a specific play. Umpires should review the NFHS signals system prior to the start of the game and utilize these throughout the game.

Signaling is a very important aspect of umpiring. Decisions are relayed to the players, coaches, and spectators by their use. The adopted signals, informative, meaningful, and therefore, shall be used by all umpires. Poorly executed and unauthorized signals are confusing. The manner in which a signal is given determines, at least to a degree, its acceptance by players, coaches, and spectators.

Verbal Communication is essential in letting your fellow umpires know where you are and where you are going. There are many times during a game when it is imperative to let your partner know that you are covering a specific area that may deviate from book coverage. It would be impossible for your partner to see a signal during play coverage. Verbally communicating with your partner would be the only way to let them know where you are going to be. When communicating you need to make sure that your voice is clear and precise. Let your partner know where you are going to be or what "tag ups" you are going to cover. For example, "I've got third" or "I've got the tag at second". Communicating with your partner is imperative from the pitch to the last out in order to assure that your game runs smoothly.

Topics to Discuss with Partner During Pre-Game

- How will we cover equipment checks?
- Dead ball areas
- In-between innings mechanics
- Handling confrontations
- Illegal pitches / things each umpire will look for
- Tag up responsibilities
- How will we handle check swings?
- How will we cover the 16' circle rule, with multiple runners?
- Runner advancing to 3rd base, with the base umpire starting on the right side of the infield
- coverage at 1st base on pick-offs, with base umpire behind shortstop
- Coverage at 3rd base on the second throw, if base umpire starts behind the shortstop
- If plate umpire picks up 3rd base, who will cover home ?

Priorities of Plate Umpire

Before the Pitch

- 1. Is the batter in the box ?
- 2. Is the pitcher stepping on the rubber with hands apart ?
- 3. Does she have the ball in one or the other hand ?
- 4. Are her feet within or partially within the 24" width of the pitcher's plate ?
- 5. Did the pitcher take or simulate taking the signal from the catcher with her hands apart ?
- 6. Are her shoulders square with home plate ?
- 7. Did her hands come together for at least one second and not more than ten seconds ?

During the Delivery

- 1. Did she step toward home plate within the 24" of the pitcher's rubber ?
- 2. Is the ball and wrist within the elbow on the delivery toward home ?
- 3. Did the pivot foot drag off the rubber toward home plate within the 24" width of the pitcher's rubber ?
- 4. Did the pitcher continue to wind-up after the release of the pitch ?
- 5. Was the pitch in the strike zone ?

- 6. Did the batter attempt to swing at the pitch ?
- 7. Call "Ball" or "Strike" ?

Priorities of the Base Umpire

Before the Pitch

- 1. Did the pitcher step on the rubber with her hands apart?
- 2. Does she have the ball in one hand or the other ?
- 3. Is the pivot foot on or partially on the rubber ?
- 4. Does the pitcher take the signal from the catcher with her hands apart ?
- 5. Did the pitcher bring her hands together or was there space between the glove and the ball ?
- 6. Did the pitcher start her step backward (if she takes one) before the hands come together ?

During the Delivery

- 1. Does the pitcher drag the pivot foot ?
- 2. If any runners are on base, did they leave too soon ?
- 3. Be ready to help the plate umpire on a check swing ?
- 4. If the ball was hit, do I go out or stay on the infield with my runners ?
- 5. If I go out, call "fair" / "foul" and then "catch" / "trap" ?
- 6. If I stayed with the runner(s), where is my best positioning, inside the basepath or outside the basepath ?

Appeals

1. Types

- a. Missing a base.
- b. Leaving a base too soon on a caught fly.
- c. Batting out of order.
- d. Attempting to advance to second base after making the turn at first base.

2. Live Ball Appeals

3. Dead Ball Appeals

4. When

- a. Before the next pitch (legal or illegal).
- b. Before the pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory on their way to the bench or dug out at the end of an inning.
- c. On the last play of the game, an appeal can be made until the umpires leave the field of play.

5. Missing the Plate / Missing the Tag

- If a runner misses home plate and the catcher misses the tag, the umpire should hesitate slightly. If no tag is made, the umpire should declare the runner safe. If an appeal play is then made by tagging either the runner or home plate, the umpire should then make a decision on the appeal play.

6. Missing First Base Before the Throw Arrives

- If a runner passes first base before the throw arrives, she is considered to have touched the base unless an appeal play is made. If an appeal is made it must be made prior to the runner returning to first base while the ball is alive.

Obstruction

- Defensive player who does not have the ball.
- Defensive player who is not in the act of receiving a thrown ball.
- Defensive player who is not attempting to field a batted ball.
- If the runner is tagged out after "obstruction" is called, the ball becomes dead immediately and awards are made.
- The runner may not be called out between the two bases where she was obstructed.

Exceptions

- 1. Leaving a base too soon.
- 2. Missing a base.
- 3. Malicious contact.