

2026-27



UMPIIRE'S MANUAL



SSUSA UMPIRE MANUAL

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Note: Whenever “he” or “him” or “their” pronouns appear in this umpire manual, they have been used in their generic sense to include both male and female sexes.

Section I

Expectations & Responsibilities

Umpire Code of Ethics

Honor all contracts and assignments. Arrive on time – at least 30 minutes prior to your first game. An umpire's word is his or her bond. **If you accept a game, be there.** Excuses are a poor substitute for not being there.

Always act and look professional, on and off the field. Your entire uniform should be clean and neat. Wear the official shirt and hat. Wear black shoes, a black belt, a black ball bag and black shorts or slacks with belt loops. (Golf shorts or slacks or professional softball/baseball umpire shorts or slacks are best. No cargo shorts, basketball shorts or dickeys.) Tuck in your shirt. Shine your shoes. Bring the proper gear, including indicator, timer and pencils for writing on the game card. (Note: Do not use your phone as a timer. Put away your phone while umpiring.)



When you interact with players, coaches and spectators, your behavior should enhance confidence in SSUSA. Show loyalty to SSUSA and fellow umpires. Never talk behind the backs of tournament directors and fellow umpires. No smoking or foul/abusive language where it can be heard or seen by players, coaches or spectators.

Hold and maintain the basic tenets of officiating: history, sensitivity, integrity, professionalism, neutrality, discretion,

respect and tactfulness. Study and understand the rules. Observe the work of other umpires. Work to constantly improve. Be prepared physically and mentally. Cooperate with directors and UICs. Be fair and unbiased in all decisions. Inning and score should be irrelevant. Display superior communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal. Resist temptation and pressure to use one's position to benefit oneself. Recognize potential conflict of interest, either real or apparent. **Do not solicit or accept gifts, favors, special treatment, or privileges from a player, manager or team.**

Umpire Philosophy

SSUSA softball umpires comprise a large group of men and women who find great satisfaction in maintaining direct contact with a sport they love. Being an SSUSA umpire is considered a highly refined profession, honest and honorable, and should be regarded as such by all SSUSA umpires and those who are contemplating becoming one. SSUSA's ability to make umpiring attractive enough to draw people with a good personality, sincerity, and good judgment is very important.

Tactfulness pays huge dividends in umpiring. A diplomatic manner often will prevent ill will and resentment. Tactfulness encourages a cooperative attitude among players, coaches and spectators. It goes a long way toward creating a willingness to accept decisions. Your conduct and actions are for settling controversies rather than starting or continuing them. You are there to judge plays, not players. Avoid any urge to scold or chastise.

Courtesy is the lubricant for good human relations. Sometimes umpires think politeness implies softness. This is far from the truth. A polite umpire can be strict and exacting. Cheerfulness and optimism tend to bring out the same qualities in the players. A good umpire is courteous but avoids visiting with players during the game. Don't go on the field with a chip on your shoulder. You can get more out of a player or manager by being human and civil.



It is OK to share a laugh.

Timely and positive decisions are essential, especially on close calls. Timidity or hesitation causes a lack of confidence. Self-confidence can be developed. Many decisions can be questioned no matter how they are called. Pause slightly to "see" and visualize the full play but do not hesitate too long, as that looks like you are unsure or even guessing. The practice of making unhesitating decisions must be habitual.

Loyalty implies an active, intelligent desire to carry out the intent of the rules by a well-coordinated team of officials. Each umpire must be willing to share the responsibility and must avoid attempts to shift the blame, whether on or off the field.

An umpire must be **physically fit** to meet the requirements of a long hot season, especially when working several games a day. **Hustle and energy** have no substitutions. An umpire must cultivate the habit of moving quickly and being in proper position to observe the action. One extreme is wild

purposeless running. The other is “standing on a dime” and making decisions at long range. **GET OUT FROM BEHIND THE PLATE!** Know the best positions and angles to most accurately see a play and get the call correct.



As batter-runner heads to first, plate umpire should hustle inside the diamond to working area.

Predictability and proper field coverage require good mechanics to ensure that umpires will be in the proper place at all times. An out-of-position umpire has committed the “unpardonable sin” of umpiring. To avoid this, watch the most respected members of the umpire crew work games. Ask questions.

Call games consistently without regard to the score, position on the field, whom it may be against, or how it may affect future relations with the coach or players. **Your honesty must be above reproach.** The personal reputation of an umpire is built on this. All umpiring actions should reflect strict and total impartiality.

SSUSA Umpire Techniques

1. RULE KNOWLEDGE: Umpires must know and understand the playing rules. They should routinely read and study the rule book. Being familiar with the rules helps improve reaction time for making calls. Common sense application of the rules is the stamp of a master umpire. The more games you work, the more competent and confident

you become. The more you discuss rules with colleagues, the better you learn.

2. TECHNIQUE: Lack of technique is the difference between the best amateurs and any professional. The polished umpire rarely gets surprised. Umpiring calls for complete attention and energy for the entire game. Technique consists of being in the right place at the right time. See the play completely and make the call effectively -- with **good timing and the right volume**. Master where you need to be based on how a play develops, and hustle to get there. You cannot make a good call until you see the play and it has been completed.

3. JUDGMENT: No provocation should cause an umpire to lose sight of the fact that his primary responsibility is to keep the game going and that an angry person is never the



master of the situation. Your use of sound judgment in applying the rules to the given situation may be even more important than rules knowledge. As the game's rule enforcer, it is up to you to handle all game situations fairly. Experience, exercising self control and using sound judgment will enable you to manage any situation. You will keep the game under control and on schedule.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY: Though SSUSA often provides bottled water for umpires, an umpire should bring his or her own water jug and anything else needed to stay healthy, especially in the heat. Start hydrating several days before a tournament. Carry a neck cooling towel, etc.

Pre-game Preparation

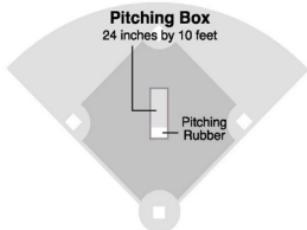
When you arrive at your park (**at least 30 minutes before game time**), check in with the field director. Directors and UICs need to know that all umpires have arrived and are ready to work. Check the written umpire schedule for any changes. (It is incumbent on the umpire to know his or her schedule.) Ask if the directors/UIC are going to have an umpire meeting that morning. If so, attend and pay attention.

If you are the first umpire of the day, take a strike mat to your field. (If you are the last umpire of the day, return the strike mat to the directors unless told otherwise.) Pick up your field's clipboard containing all game cards for that field for the day. At least 20 minutes before game time, get the first card out to one team so that the manager can write his official batting order and substitutes on the back of the card. Ask him to return the card to you or give it to the opponent. **Having the official line ups done before the pre-game plate meeting is essential to staying on schedule.**

For later games, get in the habit of rolling the next game card and sticking it in the backstop fence so that the next managers can fill out the card while you work your current game. If you arrive for a later shift, check with the umpire on your field to see if the game card is out to the next teams.

KNOW YOUR BALLPARK, FIELD:
The first umpire of the day should confirm that the bases distances and

SENIOR SOFTBALL DIAMOND
Pitcher's Box



pitchers' box are correct. Verify that the commitment line and scoring line are properly placed. Walk the field to check for problems, such as gaps in the fence or unsafe playing conditions. Check if there are any special ground rules.

If you are going to be working the game as part of a two-umpire crew, have a pre-game meeting with your partner. Discuss coverage, recording of courtesy runners, who has what tag-up coverage and calls, etc. Both umpires should know what signals will be used to assist in making calls.

Bat Check & Managers' Meeting

BAT CHECKS: Roughly 10 minutes before game time, ask players on both teams to line their bats up in or outside the dugout so you can check them. Run your hand over each bat searching for cracks or burrs, which are not allowed. Look for the SSUSA logo or the "SSUSA approved" wording on the bat. If you find an illegal bat, such as an USA Softball or USSSA Softball bat that does not have the Senior Softball-USA logo, tell the team the bat cannot be used. If you spot an altered bat, such as one with pine tar on the barrel, tell the team it is considered altered and cannot be used. Explain what makes it altered.



MANAGERS' PLATE MEETING: Never pass up an opportunity to start a game early, if both teams are ready. Call the managers to the plate. Ask them to bring two game balls apiece. Be friendly and professional. Go over the ground

rules, home run limits and the time limit until the unlimited-run inning begins. **VERIFY that both teams filled out the game card correctly**, including that:

1. Each team's name is printed above its batting order and substitute list.
2. The lineup shows each player's last name and first initial or first name. (No nicknames.)
3. The lineup has the correct number of batters and subs for each team. This is the managers' opportunity to catch an error, such as a player left off the card.
4. There are no duplicate uniform numbers.

SI Rocky Mountain		Big Daddys	
TEAM:	Last Name, 1 st Initial	TEAM:	Last Name, 1 st Initial
	#		#
Williams, T	5	1	5
musial, S	7	2	12
Jackson, R	2	3	22
Guerrero, Y	16	4	7
Smith, W	55	5	Judge, A
Tucker, K	41	6	Whit, B
Schwarner, K	14	7	Rodriguez, J
Ohtani, S	2	8	Hinojosa, A
Machado, M	8	9	Francois, N
Freeman, F	10	10	Hopkins, S
Olson, M	24	11	
		12	
		13	
		14	
		15	
		16	
Substitutes		Substitutes	
Stowers, K	20	11	Dowell, D
Sale, C	13	12	Dowell, F
Ruth, B	3	17	Bubic, K
		23	Jordan, M

Note: If a team is batting one player less than the normal defensive alignment, such as only 10 players for a 70+ team, ask why and explain that an out will be taken the first time through the batting order for the missing player. If a player arrives late, he shall be inserted into the last spot in the batting order.

After verifying the game card, ask if either manager has questions. Then let the managers know that **ONLY** they may approach you with questions during the game. Remind them that SSUSA has zero tolerance for F-bombs or

intimidation tactics against opponents or umpires. Stress that only on-deck batter(s) and two base coaches are allowed outside the dugout when a team is batting. When a team is on defense, NO ONE should be outside the dugout other than the defensive players. **Enforce this!** Team members who refuse your direction to get in the dugout can be ejected. Warn them first. Work with the manager on this.

COIN TOSS: If the game is being played with an equalizer, the “stronger” or younger team (the one giving the equalizer) **must** be the home team. No exceptions. **Note:** If the “weaker” or “older” team wants to waive the equalizer and play straight up, then flip a coin to determine the home team. (Also write a note on the card so the director knows that the equalizer was waived.) If there is no equalizer, a coin toss will determine home and visiting teams for every game until the first championship game of a bracket, when the undefeated bracket team gets its choice of home or visitor.



Coin toss procedure: Display your flipping coin and ask “Who wants to call it?” If only one manager does, proceed with the toss. If both insist on calling it, use a double coin flip. Assign one side of your coin to the team in the first-base dugout, and the other side to the opponent. Flip the coin. The winner then gets to call the second coin flip.

Wish everyone good luck then say **“You’re on the clock,”** start your timer, announce the start time, and write the start time on the game card.

Game responsibilities

Whether working solo or with a partner, the plate umpire has numerous responsibilities beyond out/safe and strike/ball. Key ones are tracking the score and marking it correctly on the game card; tracking all home runs, including excess ones hit for outs; tracking all substitutes; staying on top of the game time; and properly announcing when time has expired before the unlimited-run inning.

SCORING: While in many associations the home team keeps the official score book, in SSUSA play, the umpire keeps the official score. He should check with both teams' scorekeepers each half-inning to confirm that his score matches theirs, and that the home run count matches. Whenever the two scorekeepers disagree, the umpire's score counts. The umpire is encouraged, however, to bring both score books together to settle differences and make sure, as best possible, that his score is correct.



Use your indicator in left hand. Keep runs on the innings dial.

SSUSA umpires should announce how many runs have scored as each half-inning progresses. **When the potential fifth run gets on base, the umpire should announce it.** For example, "Five is on two," or "Five is on three." In Major Plus games for the 40+ through 70+ age brackets, teams can score seven runs an inning. In those, the umpire should announce when the potential seventh run reaches base.

Any time a manager reports a substitute, the plate umpire should **record the substitution immediately.** If the player is

not on the game card, he cannot play. If a manager says he will re-enter the starter, the umpire should require that to be reported when it happens, not earlier.

HOME RUNS: When a home run is hit, immediately mark it on the game card. Use a dot, asterisk, X or some other symbol to mark the home run to show the inning it occurred. At the end of the game, the umpire should write the home run total in the final box of the team's score-by-innings line.

Tracking homers by inning helps settle home-run tally disputes, as the umpire can show the manager how many home runs were hit in each inning.

SENIOR SOFTBALL USA 9823 Old Winery Place • Suite 12 • Sacramento, CA 95827 • (916) 326.5303												
ACTUAL START:			HR = <u>6</u> /Team/Game • Outs			50 m			DIVISION			
FACILITY: <u>BLD</u>			DIAMOND: <u>W</u>			DATE: <u>9/17</u>			OFFICIAL GAME CARD			
GAME TIME: <u>9:30</u> PLAYING TIME: <u>65 + Open</u> EQUAL: <input type="checkbox"/> 5-Run <input type="checkbox"/> 7-Run <input type="checkbox"/> 11-Def.												
GAME TIME, AS LISTED ON THE OFFICIAL TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE, IS ALSO FORFEIT TIME												
TEAM	1	2	3	4*	5*	6	7*	8	9	10	TOTAL	HR's
VISITOR <i>Si Rocky Mountain</i>	3	0/3	2/5	4/9	3/12	0/12	11/23				23	6
HOME <i>Big Daddy's</i>	4	1/5	3/8	0/5	5/13	5/18	3/21				21	7
SIGNATURES: <u>Reggie Wentzky</u> <u>**</u> <u>**</u> <u>**</u> <u>*</u>												
UMPIRE(S): <u>John</u> <u>23</u> <u>Visitor Manager</u> <u>Verify Score First!</u>												
HOME MANAGER <u>Bill J</u> <u>21</u> <u>Verify Score First!</u> Rev. 10/06/2022												
UMPIRE COMMENTS: _____												

On the game card example shown here, the umpire used asterisks to mark home runs and an X to mark the excess home run. Note that the umpire also kept the running score by half-inning. The upper left diagonal space in each box shows **runs scored that inning**.

The lower right diagonal space shows a team's **total runs** through that inning. **Use a pencil to fill out game cards. Write neatly.** Make sure team names are clear; avoid abbreviations when possible. For example, do not write "SI" for

a Scrap Iron team. There are more than 20 Scrap Iron teams. Write instead “SI Rockies,” for example.

TIME LIMITS: “Game time” on the card shows the time the game is to start. “Playing time” represents how many minutes the teams play before the open or unlimited-run inning. When the umpire’s timer goes off, the umpire should announce loudly, “Time has expired. We will finish this inning and the next one will be the open inning.” If the game already is in the sixth or seventh, the seventh inning automatically is the open inning.

IMPORTANT: If the timer goes off before the third out in the bottom of the fifth, the umpire MUST announce that time has expired **before that out occurs**. After the third out, the sixth inning officially has started. If the umpire announces “Time has expired” after the third out, the teams must play another five-run inning before the open inning. Exception: Vegas Rule. (If this is in effect, the UICs will explain it.)

BETWEEN INNINGS: The plate umpire has many duties to between innings. 1. Write down how many runs scored. 2. Verify with scorekeepers that your score and home run totals match theirs. 3. Exchange game balls. (Teams always hit their own. All new balls entering game must come through the umpire. Pitchers do NOT take the game ball back into the dugout. You keep it.) 4. Check the remaining game time, and announce time remaining every half-inning starting in fourth inning. 5. Drink water to stay hydrated.

END OF GAME PROCEDURE: When the game is completed, the plate umpire should mark final scores and home

run totals on the game card. **Have both managers confirm the score and sign the card in the proper spot.** Each manager should write down his team's run total next to his signature. The umpire(s) also sign the card and make any notes on ejections, etc., for the directors. If working a two-umpire crew, always leave the field together. (The game is officially over once the umpires have left the field.)



A good rule of thumb is for the crew to exit through the winners' side of the field. Report any flagrant irregularity associated with the game to the tournament director or UIC.

Section II - Plate Umpire Mechanics

The Slot, The Count, The Pitch

Always work the "slot." Position your body in an area that falls between the batter and the strike mat on the inside edge of the strike mat. Be sure you can see the mat without being obstructed by or interfering with the catcher. (Note: If the catcher insists on being too far back for you to stay behind him and still see the mat well, you



The Slot: Umpire should stand on the same side of strike mat as the batter.

can stand in front of the catcher -- but do not block him. Catchers can stand as far as 10 feet behind the batter's box.)

Before a half-inning starts, and before any new at-bat, always glance at the dugouts to make sure everyone is in the dugout except for two base coaches and one or two on-deck batters. (The number of on-deck batters will vary by park, but never allow more than two.) Check that no more than two bats are in the on-deck circle or on-deck area. All extra bats and other equipment should be in the dugout. Coaches should not have drinks, cigarettes, ball gloves or other items on the field, except they may carry a score book. No team video equipment is allowed on the field.

THE COUNT: SSUSA uses a 1-1 starting count with one free foul once the batter has two strikes. (This foul is called a courtesy foul or "one to waste.") Use an indicator held in the left hand. The umpire is responsible for keeping the proper count on the batter. When verbalizing the count, always say balls first and strikes second. Always give the number of balls with your left hand and the number of strikes with the right hand. When the courtesy foul, or waste foul, has been hit, give the count and add "Has to be fair" or "Foul is gone." There is no need to give the count after every pitch. Give it when requested, after a delay in the normal flow of the game, or whenever the next pitch could create a third strike or a base on balls.



THE PITCH: Using an open hand with palm facing the pitcher, hold up the pitcher until the batter is situated in the box and ready to hit. (Use the right hand for a right-handed batter and the left hand for a left-handed batter.) Watch the pitcher for infractions, such as failing to pause with the ball in front of the body before starting the pitching motion. Do not allow “quick” pitches, “walking the box” or other illegal pitching motions. Know the SSUSA pitching rules and enforce them!

Focus on whether the pitched ball reaches a minimum legal height of 6 feet from the ground or exceeds the legal maximum height of 12 feet. Keeping your head still and tracking the ball with your eyes will help consistently determine the pitch arc. Do not make a call until the pitch is determined illegal, hits or misses the mat, or has been caught by the catcher.



ILLEGAL PITCHES: The plate umpire must quickly indicate, both **by voice and delayed dead ball signal** (left arm extended parallel to the ground with closed fist) an illegal pitch. In the case of an illegal motion, such as a pitcher illegally taking two steps after the mandated pause, call “illegal” and signal illegal immediately. For pitches below 6 feet or above 12 feet, call and signal illegal when the ball reaches the top of its arc. Note: When a pitcher gets two strikes on a batter, there is a good chance the next pitch will be illegal in some fashion, so remind yourself to be ready to make the call.

STRIKES: Make a brisk verbal “strike” call, then raise your right hand, fist closed, with your elbow bent at a 90 degree angle. Your closed fist should be far enough to the right that you see it only in your peripheral vision. Always signal a strike with the right hand while holding your left fist across lower chest.



BALLS: After the pitch lands, make a brisk verbal “ball” call. Relax between pitches awaiting your next call. Between pitches, keep your eyes on the pitcher and the ball while glancing at runners to make sure they remain in contact with the bases. Stay alert for surprises, such as runners abandoning a base or a courtesy runner trying to enter illegally during an at-bat.

AFTER THE BALL IS HIT: On fair balls, move forward from the home plate area into the diamond after the ball is hit. When possible, leave left of home plate to avoid colliding with a catcher moving to back up first base. For a ball hit near the foul line, quickly move to get a view directly down the foul line to the foul pole.

CALLING FAIR OR FOUL: For fly balls hit near the foul lines, the umpire’s first responsibility is fair or foul, then safe or out. **Foul balls** should be called in a loud and decisive manner -- “FOUL BALL!” -- with both arms raised to signal a dead ball, the same signal as when calling “TIME.” For **fair balls**, point toward the diamond (fair territory) but **do not make a verbal call**. For deep fly balls, the ball should

be judged fair or foul as it passes where the outfield fence and the foul pole join. Always judge the ball fair or foul when it leaves the park. **Important:** The position of the ball, not a defensive player, determines whether a batted ball is fair or foul.



POP FOUL NEAR HOME: The plate umpire's first priority is to avoid colliding with the catcher. Watch the direction the catcher turns to get the ball, pivot out of his way, clear the area and find the ball. Look for a clean catch or the catcher trapping the ball against the fence or ground.

CATCH/NO CATCH: On fly balls, especially on possible trapped balls, do not move directly toward the play. Get a side angle for a better view of a catch or trap. Hesitate briefly to make sure the catch is held. For an out, give a good hand signal and loud verbal signal. For a ball not caught, point down or signal safe.

CALLING TIME: When the defense has control of the ball in the infield, and all runners have stopped running with no defensive play available, the umpire should loudly say, "TIME" and raise his arms to signal a dead ball. (Same as the foul ball signal.) Always call time when play stops. Until time is called, the ball remains live. If the umpire forgets to call time, and a runner takes off while the umpire has his back turned, the umpire has a problem. But if time has been called, any subsequent play is negated.



CONFERENCES: It is the plate umpire's responsibility to enforce the rules governing conferences by the offensive and defensive teams. Once either teams holds a conference, the umpire should inform that team representative, "That was your one charged conference for this inning."

The **offensive team's conference** can include any number of runners, players, coaches or the batter. A second offensive conference in the same inning results in an ejection of

A black and white silhouette illustration showing three people in a conference. One person is walking towards the others, who are standing and talking. The background is a textured gray.

the coach. A **defensive team's conference** is charged when a team representative, from the dugout, enters the field of play by crossing the foul line to confer with any player(s). If more than one such conference occurs in the same inning, the pitcher must be removed from pitching for the remainder of the game.

There is no charged conference if the offensive team confers with a batter or base runner when the defensive team requests a time out for a conference. Nor is it a charged conference when the defensive team takes advantage of the offensive team having a conference.

COURTESY RUNNERS: After every at-bat, umpires should glance at the bases and base coaches to see if the offensive team is entering a courtesy runner. If a runner enters, he (or the team) MUST inform the umpire and make sure the umpire acknowledges the entry. The umpire should loudly announce the courtesy runner's uniform number, as well as the uniform number for the runner being replaced. Example: "Five running for 15." Though scorekeepers usually track this, **the umpire is responsible** for knowing what players

have run, and who left the base. Every time a courtesy runner enters, write the jersey numbers on an index card carried in a pocket. Neither runner can be a courtesy runner again that inning. When an ineligible runner touches a base, he is out. This is not an appeal play. It is an automatic call by the umpire.

Courtesy runner violations are continuing violations. Study the rule book! **Umpires MUST understand all courtesy runner rules** and how to enforce them. **Note:** A courtesy runner may enter only between at-bats (not during an at-bat). **Umpires shall prohibit** a request for runner to enter after a pitch has been thrown to a batter.

MONITORING RUNS: The plate umpire must watch all runners score. If a play is happening elsewhere, the umpire should glance home to make sure the runner does not slide, cross through the batter's box or step on the strike mat.

THIRD OUT (RUN COUNT): When the third out results from a tag play while another runner is trying to score, the umpire should indicate immediately whether the run counts or does not count, and notify the scorekeeper(s). The run does not count if the third out is a result of:

1. A force out, which involves the batter-runner being put out before reaching first base or any runner put out because the batter became a batter-runner. This includes batter-runners called out for touching only the white portion of the double safety base at first.
2. A runner being put out by tag or live ball appeal prior to

the lead runner crossing the scoring plate. This is called a timing play, and it includes runners called out for leaving a base too soon on a caught fly ball.

INNING-ENDING HIT OR WALK: Make sure to watch all runners to see if they complete base-running duties. For example, if the bases are loaded with two outs, and the runner from first base does not touch second base on a hit or a walk, he is considered to have abandoned his base-running duties at the point he leaves the field of play or clearly moves to his defensive position. This is not an appeal play. The umpire calls the out when it occurs. If it is the third out, the run does not score. If the batter-runner fails to touch first base on a hit or walk, no matter the number of outs, he is called out and all runners must return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch. This is not an appeal play.



EXCEPTION: Runners do not have to advance to the next base on a **home run or four-base award**. The ball is dead as soon as it leaves the field of play. If a walk-off home run, count all runs, not just the winning run.

Adversity & Arguments

ARGUMENTS: Cussing at an opponent or umpire. Intimidation tactics or F-bombs aimed at an opponent or umpire. These are **mandatory** ejections. And yet, ejections should be used sparingly. Learn to calmly stop chirping, which can lead to volcanic eruptions if allowed to simmer. Avoid "rabbit ears." Hear only what the player intends for you to hear. Avoid actions that may show up a player.

Never follow a player into a dugout during an argument. Never raise your voice so spectators can hear. Guide your actions by how you want to be treated. Most important, never argue with spectators over incidents or plays on the field.

TIPS FOR HANDLING ADVERSITY:

- * Stay firm and calm while listening to complaints.
- * Situations often are defused by letting the individual air his feelings, usually resulting in a “cooling” off period.
- * Limit how long you listen. Make it clear that you made the decision based on what you saw.
- * When an argument results from a rule possibly being misinterpreted, consult your partner (if you have one), or get the director.
- * Once you order a game to resume following an argument or dispute (and you have consulted the director), if the manager or a player refuses to resume the game, eject him. But remember: **Do not remove a player unless it's absolutely necessary to maintain order.**



PROTESTS: If a team announces it wants to protest an umpire's decision, **call for a director**. Most protests must be

handled before the next pitch. Even if you know you have a rule correct, call for a director. This is a courtesy. It helps prevent resentment and escalation of a situation.

Section III - Base Mechanics

Positioning for Safe/Out Calls

FORCE PLAYS: Proper mechanics for judging a force play are vital. Your angle from the play is more important than distance from the play. (See also diagram on page 29.) A **45-degree angle from the base** or 90 degree angle from the flight of the ball **is best**. A 180-degree angle to the play (such as standing on the first base foul line to make a force out call at first base) **is the worst!**

A base umpire standing near second base to make a call at first often misjudges when the ball hits the glove. Because he is looking directly at the glove, it is difficult to discern the distance between the ball and the glove. Similarly, a plate umpire standing on the first base line a few feet from home often misjudges when the runner's foot touches the base because it can appear the foot hit sooner than it did. DO NOT set up in either place.



When the ball is hit and the fielder is getting ready to field the ball, the umpire should be getting into the best position to make a call. **The proper position** will have the ball, the base and the runner all in view. **Everything starts with the ball.** As it is thrown, **follow the ball with your eyes**,

except to glance at runners, until the ball nearly reaches the receiver's glove. If you are still moving into position, come to a complete stop before the play happens at the base. Look at the runner's foot and the fielder's foot while listening to the ball hit the glove. Look up to confirm a legal catch and no juggling. Make the call.

PULLED FOOT: Read plays for a potential wild throw. When the ball arrives first but the fielder pulls his foot, you do not want people thinking the runner beat the throw. Move toward the base, point with your left hand at the base or fielder, call "Safe!" and say: "He pulled his foot."

TAG PLAYS: The unobstructed angle is the most important thing to remember. Do not let the defender or runner get between you and the tag. The start angle is 90 degrees from the path of the runner. Adjust as needed to keep all elements in view. Get within 10 to 12 feet if possible. Keep all elements of the play in front of you – the ball, the fielder, and the runner. Watch the tag on a slide; make sure the base is in view. Hesitate in case the ball is dropped or the runner over slides. Then make the call.



SWIPE TAG: Read the play to anticipate a wide throw. If the fielder pulls his/her foot, watch for a tag. Move toward the base, point with your left hand, say "Out on the tag," and tap your body where the tag occurred.

Mechanics for Safe/Out Calls

OUT ON A ROUTINE FORCE PLAY: From your set position with your hands on your knees or thighs keeping your head forward and the eyes staying on the play, rise to an upright position. Give a verbal call of “Out” with your right arm forming a 90-degree angle.

OUT ON A CLOSE FORCE PLAY: From your set position, keeping your head forward and the eyes staying on the play, rise to an upright position. Give a loud verbal call of “Out!” with your right arm using a forceful overhand out signal. **Sell the call.**

SAFE ON A ROUTINE FORCE PLAY: From your set position, rise up, bring both arms and hands to your chest. Keep the hands open with palms facing down and fingers touching. Say “Safe” as you extend your arms away from your body, parallel to the ground with your palms facing down.

CALLING OUT ON A CLOSE TAG: Just as in force plays,

read the throw to determine if you will have to adjust your position. Positioning, angles and peripheral vision are important. The key on a tag play is that the umpire should complete his call with his “nose” right on the tag (within 10 feet). When a hard slide causes a collision making you lose sight of the ball, tell the defensive player immediately to “Show me the ball” as you point at him.



When you see the ball, make the call. Use a forceful over-hand out signal, planting your feet and “selling” your call. **The closer the play the more need for emphasis.** Sell the call by intensifying the verbal call and using a more powerful hand signal.

IMPORTANCE OF TIMING: “Safe-out” or “out-safe” calls result from rushing. Hesitate slightly while you replay in your mind what you saw. SEE IT, REPLAY IT, AND THEN CALL IT. If you hesitate the length of time it took to read that last sentence, your timing will be good. You become a more consistent umpire because you have seen the play twice. Your judgment can’t do you any justice without good timing. Judgment and timing are inseparable.

Situations on Bases, Base Paths

Whether one or two umpires are working a game, so much can happen on the base paths that sometimes even two sets of eyes are not enough. Expect the unexpected. Know the rules to enforce. Hustle for the best views.

RUNNING LANE: A violation of the three-foot running lane along the first-base-line may be interference and calls for the umpire to take charge. It is a violation if the runner runs outside the lane and, in the umpire’s judgment, **interferes with a fielder taking a throw at first base.** If the violation caused interference, the umpire should step into the play, throw his arms high above the head, and shout “DEAD BALL.” Step toward the interference, point with the left hand, give a strong overhead out signal and say,

“That’s interference, the batter-runner is out.” Instruct any other runners to return to the last legally touched base at the time of the pitch.

OUT OF THE BASE LINE: Running out of the base line to avoid a tag also is a violation, but does not result in a dead ball. The umpire should point with his left hand indicating that the runner ran out of the base line, say, “Out of the base line, out,” and follow with a strong over-head out signal. Other runners may continue to advance at their own risk. **Remember:** The runner creates his own base path until being played upon. He may go around a fielder making a play on an batted ball. He may zig zag across the infield, as long as no play is being made on him.

INTERFERENCE: When a runner or offensive team member impedes or confuses a defender attempting to execute a play, the umpire should give a vigorous dead ball sign with both arms extended high in the air above his head. Say, “Dead Ball, that’s interference, out.” Halt any further play as soon as possible. Three things must occur on an interference call: 1) the ball becomes dead; 2) an out is called, and 3) all runners must return to the base they last occupied before the act of interference.

OBSTRUCTION: Know all three types.

1) **Obstruction on a runner not being played on**, which is a **delayed dead ball**. (Example: A first baseman gets in the way of a runner rounding first while the ball is in the out-field.) Protect the runner to the base he would have reached had there been no obstruction. (Even if there is a play after

the protected base, if it is close, the runner is still protected.) If the runner is put out prior to reaching the base he would have reached had there been no obstruction, it should be treated the same as a runner being played on, **dead ball. Award**



the runner the base or bases he would have reached and award all other runners the base(s) they would have reached had there been no obstruction. Note: The runner does not have to keep running after obstruction to be awarded bases.

2) Obstruction on a runner being played on, which is an immediate **dead ball**. Throw your arms up giving the dead ball signal, point to the violator and call "That is obstruction. Dead ball." Stop play and award bases accordingly. Note: In SSUSA play, a base runner obstructed in a rundown should be awarded the lead base.

3) Catcher obstruction, which is a delayed dead ball. The plate umpire should wait to see the result of the play. If the batter-runner reaches first, and all other runners safely advance one base, the obstruction is canceled and all play stands. If the batter-runner and other runners have not reached one base safely, the offense has the choice of accepting the result of the play or having the batter-runner awarded first base. Other runners advance only if forced.

COLLISIONS: A collision is contact likely to cause injury. SSUSA wants to prevent injury, therefore, runners must make every effort to avoid a collision. If, in the umpire's judgment, the runner misses a base to avoid contact, the runner should be called safe. If the fielder is not making a play, it is obstruction. If the fielder has the ball, and the runner had time to stop, slide or peel off, it is interference.

For example, if a batter hits or tops the ball on a slow roller toward first base close to the foul line, and the batter-runner, running in a direct line to first base, is on a collision course with the first baseman, both players have the legal right to the position but also the responsibility to avoid the collision.

On a batted ball, the defensive player has the right-of-way, if in the umpire's judgment he can make a play. If the runner impedes him, the umpire should call interference. If the umpire does not believe the first baseman has a play to make, and the first baseman impedes the runner, the umpire should call obstruction.

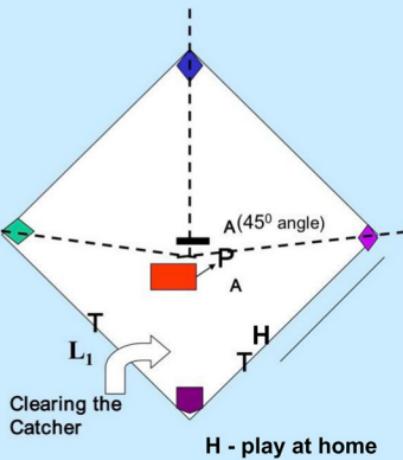
The umpire must decide: 1) Could the first baseman have made an out on the play? 2) Did the batter-runner make any attempt to avoid the collision? 3) Could the first baseman have avoided the collision and still fielded the ball?

It boils down to the umpire's judgment.

Remember: If a batter-runner misses first base while avoiding a collision, rule the call as if the runner touched the bag.

Basic Positions

- L - Library Position: Pause, Read and React
- P - Play Position
- 45° Angle – angle over distance
- A - Adjusted Position
- T - Trouble ball position
- Working Area
- Awareness
 - ball location
 - runner action



Section IV - Single umpire system

Ground ball and fly ball mechanics

Note: For the starting or inexperienced SSUSA umpire, master these recommended starting positions before attempting to deviate.

For the SSUSA veteran umpire, these starting positions are recommended positions. Situations and experience can effect them.

ANTICIPATION, HUSTLE AND ANGLE are the three tools that enable a single umpire to survive, and even thrive, working alone. **Anticipate** where the ball is going but not the outcome of the play. **Hustle** to make your calls from inside the infield, except a first play at home. Adjust to find the best **angle** as needed, depending on circumstances. Be mindful of “trouble” balls -- balls hit down the foul line, at

the home run fence, near a dead ball area, being played by an outfielder running hard, or falling between converging outfielders. Watch catch/no catch closely. Remember that play does not stop until you call Time. **Always call "TIME" when in your judgment, all play has ceased.**

SINGLE UMPIRE SYSTEM FOR GROUND BALLS:

No Runner on Base: After the ball is hit, move out left of catcher to working area (see red area in page 29 diagram). If a runner is coming home, and you anticipate a play there, move to H near the first baseline for your best view of the catch, catcher's foot, and runner's feet on a play at home. (However, NEVER be in H for a force-out call at first base!) For balls hit down either line, move to trouble position (T) to determine fair or foul. Then move inside the diamond. Watch the defender field and throw the ball. On base hits, glance toward batter-runner to make sure he touches first. Be prepared for play at second or a throw behind runner at first. Read outfielder's feet to gauge where ball will go.

Runner on First: After the ball is hit, move out left of the catcher. Pause, read and react. Move to working area. Anticipate potential plays, such as intentionally dropped fly ball, double play attempt, runner rounding second and heading to third.

Runner on First and Second: Move out, pause, read, and react. Anticipate potential plays, including infield fly/intentional drop; potential throw to plate from outfield; potential double play in infield; throw behind runner at first.

Runner on First and Third: Read the play. If first throw

is coming home, adjust based on where throw originates. Avoid getting blocked out by runner or catcher. The best view for play at home is up the **first base** line (H on the diagram), if you can get there. If no play will happen at home, move toward Working Area and adjust as needed. Read, anticipate plays, react.

Bases Loaded: Pause, read, and react. Anticipate if first throw might come home. (You might have to back toward fence or move quickly up the first base line to H to get the best view of the play at home. Adjust as needed.) Watch for infield fly/intentional drop. Be aware of potential double plays home to first, or third to home, or second to home.



Trouble Ball Reminder: On a ball hit near the foul line, stay near or on the foul lines to make the fair or foul call, then move into the infield to make calls on runner(s).

SINGLE UMPIRE SYSTEM ON FLY BALLS

Bases empty: Move toward the Working Area, reading the ball. Be prepared for trouble balls, fair/foul, catch/no catch, dropped ball, obstruction, etc.

Runner on First: Move toward Working Area, reading the ball. Anticipate intentional drop, catch/no catch, tag up at first base, play at second or runner going first to third.

Runner on Second: Move toward Working Area, reading the ball. Anticipate and react. Keep eyes on ball and posi-

tion yourself accordingly. For play at home, move up first base line. Watch tag-up at second. Prepare for play at third base or runner rounding third and heading home.

Runners on Second and Third: Read the play. Move out wide left or wide right depending on play. After runner from third scores, move to Working Area, reading the ball. Keep eyes on ball and position accordingly. Watch tag ups.

Runners on First and Third: Pause and read the play. Move up base line to H for play at plate. After runner scores, move to Working Area, reading the ball. Read the runners and anticipate plays. Watch tag ups.

Bases Loaded: Pause and read the play. If grounder hit to left side of infield, with runner coming home, back toward the fence unless play is slow enough that you can get to H. If grounder hit to right side of infield, move inside the diamond toward pitcher. After runner scores, move to Working Area. Keep eyes on ball and position accordingly.

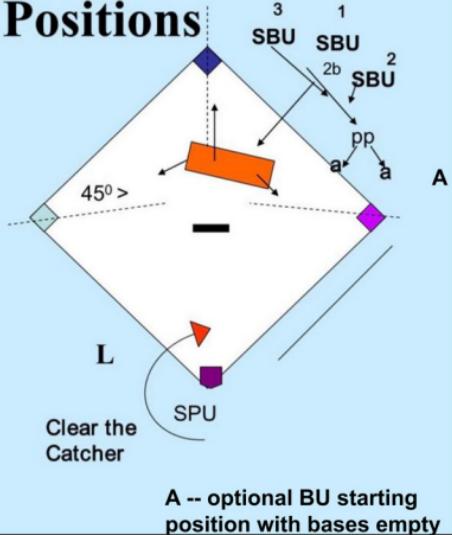
SINGLE UMPIRE SYSTEM ON BASE HITS

Base Hit or Extra Base Hit, Bases Empty: Move to working area, never losing sight of the ball. Glance at runners for obstruction and touching bases. Glance back at the ball to see where play might go.

Watch the outfielder or infielder's feet. Usually, he will step toward where he will throw. Read bad throws to anticipate adjusting your position. Once the ball is in the infield and all play has stopped, call time.

Two Umpire System – Basic Positions

- L – Library - Pause, Read and React
- PP – Play position
- SPB – BU Starting position (3 choices)
- SPU – PU Starting position
- a – adjusted position
-  working area
- Awareness for Next Play
- Three C's
- Before returning to positions
 - communicate



A -- optional BU starting position with bases empty

Section V - Two umpire system

Checklist for Two Umpire System

Plate Umpire (PU)

1. Before starting an at-bat, PU glances at BU to make sure BU is ready. PU makes sure batter is situated in the box before allowing a pitch. Hold up the pitcher as needed.
2. On balls hit down the foul lines, move to the trouble ball position (T) to make fair/foul call. Don't call foul balls too soon. Let the ball hit the ground, a fence, a glove, a player.
3. The PU has all catch/no catch calls unless the BU goes out

on a trouble ball. If BU goes out on trouble ball, PU has all tag-ups and reverts to single umpire mechanics.

4. If there is more than one base runner, the lead runner is the PU's responsibility on tag ups while the trail runner(s) are the BU's responsibility. With a solo runner, PU has tag ups at third while BU has tag ups at first, second.
5. For a play at the plate, move up the first base line to H position. Being inside the diamond is best for judging plays at the plate, as there is less chance of the runner blocking your view of a juggled catch or catcher's foot off the strike mat. All the elements (ball, glove, mat, players' feet) are in front of you. However, if bases are full, you may need to back toward fence to make a call on a first play at home.
6. On an extra base hit with multiple runners, the PU watches lead runner touch third and scoring plate/line and picks up other runners into third base except for batter-runner.
7. The PU reads and makes the infield fly rule call clear and concise and timely.
8. PU helps partner in case of a rundown.
9. As a general rule, the PU should watch the batter-runner touch first base on base hits.
10. When courtesy runner enters, if BU is tracking runners, PU waits on BU to write the numbers before allowing pitch.
11. If infield fly could be in play, PU will make infield fly



signal (right hand touches upper left chest) and makes sure BU answers with same signal before the at-bat begins. If in-field fly is no longer in play, PU touches left forearm. BU answers with same signal.

12. PU calls “time” when ball is in infield and play has stopped. (BU mirrors the arm signal after PU calls time.)

Base Umpire (BU)

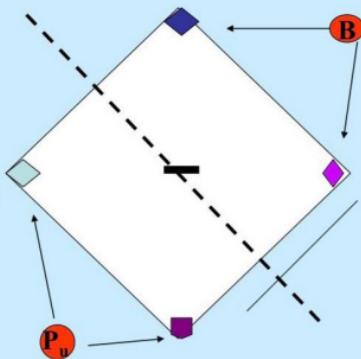
1. Start in the “B” position (see diagram on page 32) for most batters. (You may start in the optional “A” position on the first base line with the bases empty or a runner on third only.) The “B” position is two or three steps behind the second baseman and either to his left, his right or in the area between second base and the second baseman. Avoid standing near second base, which is too far for a call at first, provides a bad angle, and could cause BU to interfere with double play attempts.
2. Ask the second baseman his preference for your position.
3. Try to stay out of the outfielders’ sight line to the batter and stay way from plays by infielders.
4. Make sure runners touch first and second bases.
5. BU has responsibility on trouble balls from left center to right field line. Read the ball and the outfielders. If you do **not** go into the outfield, the PU has catch/no catch calls.
6. When the PU has a play at home, be prepared to help PU

with subsequent call at third base. If that call is a tag play and is the third out, make the call loud and concise, making sure the PU can hear you to determine if a run will count.

7. With only one runner on base at first or second, BU has the tag up responsibility for the runner. With multiple runners on base, the BU has the tag-up responsibility for trailing runner(s). (PU has lead runner.)
8. With multiple runners, and a potential play at home, the BU should follow the batter-runner to third base.
9. On base hits, the PU, in most instances, is responsible for watching the batter-runner touch first base. The BU has the calls at first and second base.
10. When your partner calls time, mirror his call by also raising your arms.
11. When PU calls infield fly, raise your left arm, fist clenched, to mirror the PU's call. (PU also should raise left arm with fist clenched.)
12. Do not wear your ball bag while working the bases. Be prepared to write down courtesy runners, if that is what you pre-game with your partner.
13. REMEMBER – anytime you deviate from the normal procedures, **COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR PARTNER.**

“Split the Field”

- In theory, it works, but if there is trouble . . .
- Umpire Pre-game, discuss all possibilities
- Base umpire – don't forget about 3rd
- Overthrows = Trouble ball



Split the Field

The “split the field” mechanic calls for the plate umpire to primarily make safe/out calls at third base and home, while the base umpire primarily makes those calls at first and second. As the checklist showed, however, that can change depending on circumstances.

Umpires should yell any deviations to each other during a play. For example, if the plate umpire calls off the base umpire taking the batter-runner into third, the plate umpire should yell “I've got third” early enough to save the base umpire those steps.

PRE-GAME: The plate and base umpires shall have a pre-game conference to go over duties. Who will track courtesy

runners? Are there any special tournament rules or ground rules? Verify base coverage and tag-up responsibilities. Go over the infield fly rule signals. Discuss any situations from previous games that could be confusing on who does what. Remind each other that if one calls interference, call it loudly -- "DEAD BALL, INTERFERENCE" -- so that the other umpire can check base runners for their position(s). Since runners will be sent back to last base touched at the time of interference, the second umpire needs to know the exact moment interference occurred. Check bats together.

Base Umpire Mechanics

Start in B (see diagram). With no runner on first or second bases, you may start in the optional A position in foul territory about 15-18 feet up the first base line.

INFIELD GROUND BALL: Move to adjusted position (a) and stop at least 15 feet from first base. As the fielder releases the ball, read the throw and let the ball take you to the play. As the ball nears the glove, focus on the base. Confirm the fielder's foot is touching the base. Watch the runner's foot **touch the safety base**. Listen for the ball hitting the glove. Look up to confirm a legal catch with no juggle.

Proper positioning, at least 15 feet from the bag is important. A position too close to the bag restricts the angle, closes the range of vision and may cause you to interfere in the play. Allow peripheral vision to aid in seeing the play develop. Hesitate briefly before making safe/out call. If you are too quick on every call and then hesitate on one play, the play-

ers will think you are guessing or undecided. Your timing should be consistent in all calls, the easy ones as well as the hard ones.

PROPER ANGLES FOR CALLS AT FIRST BASE:

1. On grounders between the shortstop and the third base line, the BU should move perpendicular or 90 degrees from the ball's line of flight. Come to a complete stop before the play happens. If you read a bad throw, be prepared to adjust your position to see a swipe tag.
2. On balls hit to middle or right side of infield, obtain a 45 degree angle from first base. Come to a stop before the play.
3. On potential double plays, take two steps toward second base for call there, then quickly take two steps back toward first for call there. Keep your eyes on the ball and let the flight of the ball turn your head and body into the play at first base. Come to a complete stop before the play happens.
4. Keep the four basic elements in front of you and unobstructed as much as possible: The ball. The defensive player making the play. The batter-runner. The base and area where all four elements meet.



BUTTON HOOK: Movement is the key to the inside-outside theory. The key movement is the "button hook," a term

for the method of moving from the outside of the diamond to the inside of the diamond. When the ball is hit to the out-field, and the umpire starts to move inside the diamond, he should concentrate on the runner he is responsible for while making sure he does not interfere with anyone. The umpire should also watch for obstruction or interference while glancing to pick up where the ball is in the outfield.

TAG PLAYS: Usually the best-unobstructed angle is 90 degrees from the path of the runner, just short of the base at the point of contact. The best angle may move as the tag and the runner's slide is being made. The umpire must also move to keep an unobstructed view of the play. Read the throw to determine if you will have to adjust your play position.



As you watch the play develop and start to move in, concentrate on whether the tag is made prior to the runner reaching or after the runner reaches. If the runner beats the throw and the tag, indicate safe as long as the runner doesn't

over slide the base. If the ball beats the runner and the tag is made, making sure the fielder possesses the ball, point to the ball with your left hand and declare the runner out. In both of these plays, good timing helps you sell the call. See it, review it, and call it. It's nothing until you call it.

END OF GAME: Join your partner as the two managers verify the final score and sign the game card. Both umpires then should sign the card. If not staying for another game,

or if you have a break between games, both umpires should leave the field together through the winning team's dugout. If it is the final game of the day on that diamond, take the strike mat back to the directors' table (unless told otherwise).

POST-GAME PROCEDURES: When applicable, have a post game conference with your partner. This is a beneficial aspect of umpiring, especially if you and your partner had a rough outing. Lessons can be learned, advice given. No game is perfect; no aspect of umpiring is perfect, though sometimes you work an outstanding game. Make it a habit to talk to your partner. A pat on the back if your partner struggled sometimes goes a long way.

SELF-EVALUATION: Continuously work on rule knowledge, technique and timing. Right after a game is the best time to replay in your mind any issue from the contest. (During the game is the time to maintain concentration for future plays and continue to work at your highest level.) If a director or UIC asks you about a play or situation, be honest about what happened. Go over it. You might learn something.

Umpires must be able to admit errors or poor judgment without becoming defensive, trying to justify, feeling insecure or experiencing self doubt. Errors happen, no matter how diligent the umpire.

Remember, just because someone says you made a bad call doesn't make it so. You had the best angle. If you think it was bad judgment, it may have been. Errors in judgment

usually are from poor technique and timing, not from bad judgment.

The ability to separate who you are from what you do is crucial. Making a bad call does not make you a bad umpire. Every umpire gets a call wrong now and then. Think how often Major League umpires get overturned by video replay. And they are supposed to be the best of the best.

At SSUSA, we believe our umpires are the best of the best of the adult slow-pitch umpiring universe. Strive to help keep it that way!

Umpire signals

All SSUSA umpires should strive to use consistent signals. It makes us look professional as a crew. Though these examples come from a baseball training poster, they closely mirror the preferred SSUSA slow-pitch softball signals. Not shown: infield fly signals.



Hold up pitch



Ball/strike count



Time, foul, dead ball



Strike or out



Fair ball (pointing to infield)



Safe



Delayed dead ball and illegal pitch

