

Notes for WSSL Umpires

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July 2, 2020

This compilation of guidance and tips is provided for the benefit of all WSSL umpires. This covers routine situations plus a few of the less likely scenarios.

- A ball trapped against the fence is not a catch. A ball touching the fence is the same as a ball touching the ground (it's live if fair).
- Foul or fair: if a ball that has not touched the ground goes past first or third, it is where it hits that determines if it's fair or foul. When a fielder touches a ball in the air: if the ball is in foul territory it is foul regardless of where the fielder is. When a ball hits the ground before it passes first or third: fair or foul is determined by where the ball is when it crosses the base.
- A ball hit twice by a batter is a foul ball.
- Home plate is fair territory.
- The double base at first: the inside base (white) is for the fielder, while the outside base (orange) is for the runner on a play at first base. If a ball is hit into the outfield and the runner rounds the base, both bases are legal. A runner may overrun first base. They may turn either way to return to first safely, but if they make an aggressive move to second they may be put out.
- Obstruction by a fielder: if they block a runner, the runner may be awarded the base the umpire thinks they would have achieved had obstruction not occurred. This happens at first base quite a bit. A fielder may not vocally or physically deceive a runner.
- Interference by a runner: once a runner is forced out they must veer off and be out of the play. They may not yell, wave arms or block the clear path for a throw. Umpire may award an out if the interference warrants it. The runner may not run into a fielder holding the ball. The runner may not try to dislodge the ball from fielder.
- Leaving base too early on a pitch: the ball must cross the plate or be hit before a base runner leaves. Penalty: Ump calls time, no pitch and the runner is out. Runner may not leave base early when tagging on a fly ball. If they do, the defensive team must appeal clearly stating what they are appealing. If runner left too soon, ump will call them out.
- Pinch runner for a batter may not leave until the ball is struck. Players must be honorable about this.
- On overthrow at first or third: if the ball hits the fence, the batter may at their own risk advance one base, but they may be thrown out. If no attempt is made to throw them out, one base is the max they get.
- Infield fly: with less than two out and runners on first and second or bases loaded, a pop fly that may be caught by an infielder including pitcher or catcher with routine effort will be declared infield fly, batter out. Remember it has to be a play that is routine. If the ball is caught all rules of fly balls are in effect. If it is dropped, the batter is out and runners

do not have to run, but they may run at their own risk. If an infielder drops a batted ball, a line drive on purpose to try and turn a double play, the ump may declare intentional drop and call the batter out, returning runners to their bases.

- If a batted ball hits a runner not on a base, the ump calls time. The runner is out and the batter gets first. No runner may advance unless forced to. Exception: if the runner is behind the fielder it is a play-on live ball.
- Pay attention to where the short fielder is playing. If they are on dirt they are an infielder, if on grass an outfielder. Outfielders may not throw a batter out at first base.
- If a batter hits a foul tip, a ball going straight back to catcher, it is a strike. If it is third strike and the catcher catches it, it is an out. A batted ball that travels with a visible arc is a foul ball and if caught the batter is out. (The visible arc approach is not one I prefer but is what the WSSL has adopted in its rules.) On a third strike foul that would be an out if caught, the runners may tag up. It is played as a foul out.
- Catcher's interference: if a catcher reaches in and gets glove hit by the batter, it is a delayed call. If the batter is out or someone is forced out, the batting team has the option of taking the play or having the runner awarded first base with no one advancing unless forced to.
- Two runners occupying the same base: the trailing runner may be tagged out. If the runners contact each other or the trailing runner passes the lead runner, the trailing runner is immediately called out.
- On a home run all runs are immediately scored. Runners may immediately vacate bases. Any of the runners may run bases but the runs are scored regardless. No penalty for any miscues by runners once ball is hit over the fence.
- No fake tags or verbal deception by fielders is allowed. Penalty may be ejection and ump may award a base if merited in his judgement.
- Runners may not run more than three feet in either direction out of the base line. If they run out of the base line, call them out immediately.
- No attempt to dislodge ball from a fielder in any way is allowed. No running into a fielder possessing the ball is allowed.
- The arc zone for a pitch is 6-12 feet from the ground. If the ump chooses, they may say illegal loud enough for batter, pitcher and catcher to hear for any pitch that is too fast or has too much arc. However, if a batter swings, it counts. An illegal pitch is a ball. Pitcher must pitch between the rubber and the white line.
- If a ball hits the ump, it is play on.
- Batting out of order: if discovered while batter is batting, correct batter assumes the count and continues the at bat. If illegal batter completes at bat and it is discovered before the next pitch, the correct batter is out. All runners return to base. Next batter would be the next batter in order. The correct batter misses their turn at bat. If called after the next pitch, then the next batter will be the batter after the incorrect batter. Again, the correct batter loses their at bat.
- if a player becomes injured and cannot bat, there is no penalty but they may not bat again in the game.

- A batted ball that is intentionally chopped, bunted or partially swung at to gain an advantage to beat out for an infield hit is a dead ball, batter is out. All runners return to base.

Tips:

- Be confident.
- Talk to your partner before the game.
- Get the best angle possible.
- Call foul balls loud and clear. Do not call fair ball, just signal.
- Call strikes loud and clear. You may say nothing on balls or may signal in, out or deep.
- When action has come to a halt, call time loudly. Don't call time while a play is happening, but don't let baserunners dilly-dally when there is no play.
- Call outs immediately and loudly. If you call an out and then player drops, bobbles, etc., it is permissible to change your call.
- Two-person crew: home plate ump has outfield catches, foul and fair calls and all plays at third and home. Base ump has first and second. After a play umps may appeal to each other to correct a play if it is correctable. Example: base ump may appeal to home plate ump on whether first baseman pulled their foot.