

WSSL Umpire Guide

This guide is meant to be a supplement and refresher to use daily to improve your performance as a WSSL umpire.

Responsibilities

Ensuring player safety and controlling the game are your two primary responsibilities. You must be an impartial enforcer of the rules, and set a good example of how to call the game. You must know the rules, know where to position yourself on each play, and use the proper hand and verbal signals in each situation.

Base Umpire Positioning

The Base Umpire is responsible for calls at first and second base, and assisting the plate umpire in calling fair or foul ground balls over first base.

With no one on first base, start just in foul territory behind first base. As soon as the ball is put into play, move 15' onto the dirt so that you have a side view of the runner, ball, and position of the first baseman.

With a runner on first base, start mid-way between the bases, preferably behind the second baseman, so that you have a side view of any play at either base. If the throw is coming from left center to second, reposition yourself to gain the side view of the throw.

Home Plate Umpire Positioning

The Plate Umpire is responsible for player safety, managing the game, enforcing the rules, calling fair/foul balls, calling catches or traps in the outfield, calls at third base and home plate, and backing up calls at second or first.

Before each pitch, hold the hand up opposite the batter, ensure bats and equipment are picked up, all players are in the dugout, fielders facing the play, then call "Play Ball".

Before the pitch, position yourself on the opposite side of the batter, facing down the line, so that you can call fair/foul balls.

After the ball is hit, move 15' onto the field, and position yourself for a side view of the play. Exact position will be determined by where the ball is hit and where the play will be, but always prioritize your position for calls at third base or home plate.

Hand Signals

Hand signals are a critical part of the game, as they give a visual cue to players who can't hear the verbal call, and acknowledge that you saw the call.

Time Out/Dead Ball: Both hands raised, followed by a loud call.

Foul: point down to the ground at a 45 degree angle towards foul territory, accompanied by a loud call.

Fair: point towards fair territory, with NO verbal call.

Strike: perhaps the most abused, not used signal. Right hand raised in a 90 degree angle, with a loud call.

Delayed Call: Used for obstruction and an illegal pitch. Left Arm raised to a horizontal position, with a quiet verbal call. Indicates you observed an infraction, but play will continue. After play stops, institute action required by the delayed call.

Out: Pump the right fist, with a loud call.

Safe: Both arms extended horizontally, with a loud call.

Rarest Event

Player safety is paramount. If you see a player is down and needs assistance (usually struck in the head with a ball, a collision, or a player collapses), immediately stop play (Dead Ball) and get the player assistance. Once play can resume, ask yourself “How far would they have gotten if I hadn’t stopped play?”. If you are unsure, call the managers together and confer, then award any bases that would have been reached. You are in charge, and your judgement after consultation is final.

Common Events

Illegal Pitch: Call at the top of the arc. Quiet verbal “illegal pitch”, delayed call signal.

Obstruction: Any action by the defense not in possession or in the act of fielding the ball is obstruction. Quiet verbal call “obstruction”, delayed call signal, enforce the rule after play stops.

Interference: The key is that the fielder must be given the opportunity to field the ball or make a throw anywhere on the playing field. A collision is NOT necessary to invoke the rule. Any action (contact, or verbal or visual distraction) that hinders the execution of the play constitutes interference. Immediate call “Dead Ball”, interfering player is out, runners return to last base.

Foul Tip: Must have an “observable arc” to constitute an out if caught by the catcher. It does NOT have to go above the batter’s head to be an out if caught.

Infield Fly: Call “Infield Fly” at the top of the arc. Routine effort is based on the position of the ball, position of the infielder with the best chance to catch the ball, and the ability of the fielder who can catch the ball. The hardest ones to judge are balls hit between the pitcher and the bases. This call can be made after the play is dead.

Occasional Events

Time Limit: Only the Extra Inning can start after the 80-minute mark. The 7th inning begins right after the 3rd out of the bottom of the 6th. You and the scorekeeper set a 70 minute alarm, and call the managers together to decide which will be the last, unlimited run inning. If the 6th inning has started at the 70 minute mark, you can probably get to the 7th inning before time expires.

Extra Inning: In the event of a tie, place the *last batter* on second base, with unlimited runs for both teams.

Overruling the Base Umpire: The Base Umpire may be slightly out of position and did not see all of the play (defender bobbles the ball, foot off the base, batter uses the white rather than the orange first base, batter does not run in foul territory on a dribbler to the catcher, etc). If you believe the call should be different, call time and discuss the decision with the Base Umpire. If you decide to overcall, explain the reason to both teams.

Leaving the Base Early (Rule 8.2) The intent is to prevent the runner from gaining an advantage by starting to run early. Running is different from movement off the base. If the batter swings and misses, and the runner merely steps off the bag, this is not gaining an advantage and should merit a warning. Any repeat after a warning, or a more flagrant movement, should result in calling the runner out.

Scorekeeper

Scorekeeper Coordination: The Scorekeeper tracks the lineup and advises you who is the last out, when the 5th run is on base, and provides the score after each half inning for you to post on the white board behind home plate. The SK also keeps two timers: 70 minutes and 80 minutes. At the 70 minute mark, call the managers together and establish which will be the last inning. At the 80 minute mark, no additional inning may start, and the current inning (whether limited or unlimited runs) will stop at the end of the inning.

Rules

We recommend that you read the rules every time you are scheduled to umpire, on the night before you umpire.

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Revised Overruling, Added Scorekeeper