

Introduction to Basic Baseball Rules



Presented By:

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Information from 'Rules Made Easy' by Al Kaplan and 2005 NFHS Baseball Rule Book;
as adapted by Hometown Umpires Association

Rules We Will Cover

- What is a Catch?
- Foul Tip
- Infield Fly Rule
- Dropped Third Strike
- Illegal Pitch
- Balks
- Delayed Dead Ball
- Dead Ball – Runner Advances One Base
- Dead Ball – Returns Return
- Dead Ball – Runners Return Unless Forced
- 2 Base Award from Time of Throw
- 2 Base Awards from Time of Pitch
- Plays to Ignore Infraction
- Obstruction

What is a Catch?

■ A Catch Must . . .

- ❑ Secure Possession
- ❑ Complete control of the ball
- ❑ Have a *voluntary release*

■ It is a catch if the field drops the ball in the act of throwing

- ❑ Ball falling down (drop) vs. flying out (catch)

■ NO catch if . . .

- ❑ Fielder drops the ball as a result of collision or falling
- ❑ The ball touches offensive player, ground, fence, or umpire

Foul Tip

- Is **sharp and direct** from bat to catcher's hand or mitt
- Must be caught by the catcher
- Is a strike
- Ball remains alive (do not verbalize anything)
- NOT a catch if rebounded, unless it hits the catcher's hand or mitt
 - **EX: ball hits catcher's mask and then trapped against chest protector, this is a foul ball**

Infield Fly

■ 5 Requirements

- Fair fly ball
 - If potentially foul, announce “Infield fly, if fair”
- NOT a bunt or line drive
- Requires ordinary effort by infielder
 - Outfielder can become infielder for purposes of this rule
- Runners on 1st & 2nd OR bases loaded
- LESS than 2 outs (1 out or 0 outs)

■ Effect

- Call at peak of ball arch (“Infield fly, batter is out”)
 - Pointing upwards toward sky
- Batter is out; eliminates all forces
- Same as a fly ball for runners advancing (i.e. must tag on the catch)
- Base protects runner if hit by infield fly (must be on the base)

Dropped Third Strike

- What is it?
 - A third strike, swinging or not, that is not caught on a fly by the catcher
- When is it in effect?
 - ALWAYS with 2 outs
 - NEVER with a runner on first and less than 2 outs (i.e. 0 or 1 out)
 - A runner stealing from first is immaterial; if he was on first at time of the pitch, then he is 'on first' for purposes of dropped third strike

Illegal Pitch

- What is it?
 - A pitch without pivot foot in contact with the rubber
 - A quick-return pitch
- Results in . . .
 - A ball if bases are unoccupied
 - Balk if bases are occupied
 - Each runner advances one base

Balks

- What is it?
 - An illegal pitch or a move by the pitcher with the intent to deceive the runner(s)
 - Theory is that the runner(s) need to have a fair opportunity to steal a base without the pitcher intentionally doing something that inhibits this chance
- Simple examples
 - Taking signs off of the rubber
 - “Feint” to first base without leaving the rubber
 - Coming to the set position on the mound with hands and feet all in one motion
 - Not pausing under the chin after coming set
 - With right-handed pitcher: he steps on the rubber and sets and then starts his wind-up with left foot and then steps off with the right foot mid-windup
 - He must step off with his right foot if he is going to step off; starting back with left foot means you need to go to the plate
 - Basically, he cannot step back with his left foot, and then step off with the right foot

Delayed Dead Ball Situations

- **Catcher's interference followed by batted ball**
 - If ball in play, let play finish and then award base if batter is out
 - If batter is put out on fly ball, but runner scores on a tag, manager can have the score (result of play) or his batter-runner on first (result of infraction)
- **Batter's Interference followed by a play or throw**
 - On a steal, if runner is put out, the play stands
- **Plate umpire interference followed by throw**
 - On a steal, catcher hits umpire when throwing; if runner is put out, the out stands. Otherwise, interference is called and runners return.
- **Obstruction**
 - No runners on, batter-runner rounds 1st and is obstructed by first baseman. Umpire calls it, but if the runner goes beyond 2nd base and is put out, the out stands

Dead Ball – Runners Advance 1 Base

- Balk
 - Runner attempting to steal on pitch when catcher's interference occurs
 - Pitched ball lodges in umpire's mask (*THIS SHOULD NEVER HAPPEN*)
 - Pitch touches runner attempting to score
 - After catching fly ball, field falls into dead territory
 - Pitched or thrown ball by pitcher from rubber goes into dead territory
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Dead Ball – Runners Return

- Foul ball not caught
- Illegally batted ball
 - Ex: batter steps on plate as he hits/bunts the ball
- Plate umpire interference unless runner is thrown out
- Batter called out for batting out of order
- Offensive interference by a runner
- Batter interference unless runner thrown out

Dead Ball – Runners return unless forced

- Fair batted ball strikes runner or umpire
- Hit batter
- Catcher's interference
 - *Note:* Only the runners that are forced to advance do, NOT all runners

2 Base award from time of throw

- Generally, all overthrows except for 1st play by an infielder
 - Thrown ball into dead territory by an outfielder
 - Thrown ball into dead territory on 2nd play by an infielder
 - Any relay throw into dead territory by any fielder

2 Base award from time of pitch

- Thrown ball into dead territory on 1st play by an infielder
- Fielder deflects wild pitch into dead territory while retrieving it
- Fair batted ball is deflected into dead territory
- Fair batted ball bounces over or flied through outfield fence (ground-rule double)

Plays to ignore infraction

- These plays proceed without reference to an infraction provided the batter and/or runners advance at least one base each
 - Catcher's interference followed by batted ball
 - Illegal pitch followed by a batted ball
 - Pitched touching hand to mouth followed by batted ball (without wiping his hand dry on jersey)

Obstruction

- If to batter-runner before he reaches 1st base
 - Time called at moment of obstruction
 - Batter-runner awarded 1st base
 - Other runners . . .
 - Advance one base if forced
 - If not forced, advance or return according to umpire's judgment

Obstruction (cont.)

- If while play is being made on obstructed runner . . .
 - Time called at moment of obstruction
 - Obstructed runner awarded at least one base
 - Other runners . . .
 - Advance one base if forced
 - If not forced, advance or return according to umpire's judgment
- Any other obstruction . . .
 - Play proceeds until a play is made on the obstructed runner until no other action is possible
 - All runners advance according to umpire's judgment