PIAA BASEBALL UMPIRES MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

In competitive athletic contests, the game official represents the ultimate in integrity for any competition. By their very nature, officials are neutral and are responsible to keep the contests played on equal terms. Through actions on and off the field, officials must earn the respect and confidence of players, coaches, and spectators. This confidence and respect is not earned by words, but by unquestioned honesty, demonstrated ability, obvious devotion to, and full understanding of the game.

The rules of competitive athletics are, for the most part, complex. They are difficult to read, understand, and interpret. Mere book knowledge of the rules does not make an official. To an official, knowledge of the rules is basic. To achieve excellence, an official must combine knowledge with good officiating techniques. To assist in this goal, we have provided the following meeting guides. Hopefully, these guides will assist in having each play considered with consistent judgment, intelligence, understanding, courage, and without intimidation.

Athletic officiating is a vigorous avocation and it demands that an official be in excellent physical condition, able to give the very best, on every play, in every contest. To that end, the American Medical Association has stated that before one attempts any vigorous physical activity they should first visit their family physician for a check-up. It is part of good personal health maintenance to have an annual physical exam and participate in an exercise program. This type of exercise program should be minimally three days per week and include cardiovascular conditioning, strength training, flexibility, and muscle endurance. These components, along with proper nutrition, will assist in developing one’s optimum body composition.

The Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) Sports Medicine Committee recommends that each registered sports official have an annual physical examination and practice good health habits. Being physically fit and conveying an appropriate, positive image through proper health and nutrition habits will greatly assist all officials in keeping up with the game. After all, the game, the schools, players, coaches, spectators, and fellow officials deserve no less. As importantly, officials owe good health habits to themselves and their families if for nothing more, than the health of it.

Chapters are encouraged to copy any portion of this manual and distribute it to their membership.

Reminder:
Material in blue type indicates a rule change or new addition to this manual.

These changes or additions can be found on pages: 2, 8, 10, 19, and 30.
As a long time employee in professional baseball, a high school and former coach in the college ranks as well as being a sports official in three sports, I realize how tough a job an umpire has, especially at the high school level where the unexpected happening is usually the norm. Missed calls are a part of the game. That is why I, like most coaches, will say my piece and move on. However, there are several areas in which the most consistent umpires will get in trouble with me as well as with most coaches. These areas usually deal with the attitude or professionalism of the umpire.

The first way an umpire will get into trouble with a coach is if they are late in showing up for a game. Umpires must understand that pre-game preparation, especially for the starting pitcher is critical. Unforeseen circumstances may occasionally arise. In such cases, a call to the home team’s coach or athletic director with the estimated time of arrival would be appropriate. Then both teams would be able to adjust their warm-up routines accordingly. Letting the school know ten minutes before game time is not appropriate in this situation.

Next, an umpire’s appearance indicates to the coaches, players, and the fans how much he cares about his job. Shoes shined, pants and shirt ironed, and other equipment kept clean are all items noticed when an umpire makes his appearance for a game. Umpires should remember that gaining the respect of all contestants and fans begins with his own self-respect.

The best umpires are the ones that no one notices. The game is about and for the players, not the coaches or the umpires. Many umpires get themselves into trouble with coaches, players and even worse fans, when they assume the role of dictator on the field. If an umpire wants respect during the contest, he must show respect to the coaches, contestants, and even the fans. Having “rabbit ears” or looking for trouble will surely get the umpire into trouble.

Personally speaking, one area that will get an umpire into trouble with me, is if I think he has misinterpreted a rule and he refuses to listen to my arguments (reasoning). Umpires should realize that good coaches study the rules, know umpiring mechanics, and use these areas as a part of their instruction. Umpires already have two strikes against them in the coaches’ mind because coaches have no recourse to correct misapplied rules. These misapplications may cost a player game time. If an umpire would take the time to find the rule in question and explain his interpretation, it would help to alleviate the situation. The coach may not agree with him, but he will have more respect for the umpire both as a professional and a person.

Another area that needs mentioning is what an umpire says to players before and during games. Even though the umpire’s intentions may be good, they can get him into trouble. Here is an example of what I mean. During our exit meeting with our players last season, a senior player asked the coaches a very straightforward question. “Why do umpires at our games tell us to obey all rules when they tell us that they are going to break a rule, even before the game begins?” I asked him what he meant and he said, “Some umpires tell us we better go up to the plate swinging because they have a big strike zone. I thought the strike zone was a defined rule? I thought the strike zone was a defined rule? This really got me off my game before it even started. If the umpires want us to obey the rules, why can he tell us he is purposely going to be breaking the rules? Did he just want to get the game over as quickly as possible?” His statement really got me thinking. In the 60’s and 70’s, players would have just accepted this as advice. Today, however, our young people do not freely accept authority, especially if they think they are being wronged, which this player truly felt.

Good umpiring makes a great game. A major part of good umpiring, I feel is the umpires approach to his interactions with players, coaches and fans.

THE UMPIRE IN BASEBALL
1. Baseball umpiring may be divided into the following three parts:

   a. **Judgment** may be developed and improved with hard work and experience. This is true especially with help of experienced instruction on the baseball field.

   b. **Mechanics** are more than just an aid. The use of proper mechanics can ensure quality umpiring.

   c. **Rules** are a major concern; therefore, it is important that knowledge of the rules and their application be known thoroughly by every umpire.

2. The following are some characteristics of successful umpires:

   a. **Knowledge of the rules** of the game is a must for every umpire. There is no excuse for not knowing the rules. This is a basic tenemnt of umpiring. Remember when unfamiliar situations occur consult the rule book for a correct ruling. “You can be excused once for your mistake, but not twice.” (Carry a rule book with you onto the game site). Talk about situations that have happened to you or fellow umpires. If you can share these experiences, all may profit. Attend as many games as possible. Observe other umpires and compare them to your own experience. If you can attend games with another umpire and discuss mechanics and positioning, it may assist in your knowledge of the game. Another excellent resource is to study the umpires while attending major or minor league ball games. Remember, do not criticize other umpires.

   b. **Physical conditioning**. You will not be at your best when you are not physically fit. Find time to prepare for the season by working on your fitness. Exercise is valuable activity to many umpires. The types of movements that are closely associated to the ones used in umpiring are good to use. You can practice your actions in calling pitches, players on the bases, etc. This will not only help your conditioning, but also your timing.

   c. **Timing** is very important. If you call a play “too soon” you are more likely to “guess” ahead of time what is going to happen. “Anticipating a call is a cardinal sin.” Hesitation is just as bad as calling the play too soon. Do not wait too long, people will think either you cannot make up your mind or you are guessing. Practice your timing. You owe it to yourself, your fellow umpires, and the teams to be at your best in this phase of umpiring.

   d. **The ability to handle situations**. Compare two umpires with nearly the same ability. One can have far more success than the other simply because he is able to react to unusual situations.

   The following are some personal rules to consider:

   (1) Learn how to handle situations with the least amount of friction and always keep an even temperament.

   (2) Be courteous at all times and under all conditions be firm.

   (3) Keep all personalities out of your work and be able to forget.

   (4) Never be sarcastic or want the last word. “Never follow or charge a player,” and above all
“do not point your finger and yell.” It is important to keep your poise through trying situations.

e. **Personal appearance.** Good grooming is more than just a desirable asset to the umpire, **IT IS A MUST.**

f. **Knowing proper play, coverage, and field position.** If you have the wrong angle on a play, it is impossible to make a decision without guessing. Study and practice until you know what position you should be in and how to get there.

g. **Proper signals:** The closer the play, the more vigorous must be the signal. If you call a close play in a hesitant manner, the team and fans might think you missed it. It is important to call every play, no matter how obvious. On the obvious play, “do not” demonstrate, but make the call in a way that no one will see it unless they are looking at you. The umpire should always say “safe.”

Do not use terms such as “You're in there,” NO NO, He's all right.” It is either, “**Safe or Out**” accompanied by the proper signal. Remember: See the whole play, then make the call clearly, concisely, and crisply.

h. **Attitude.** The following fundamentals of conduct for umpires have been applied with success for many years and are considered sound and are to be incorporated into your umpiring:

(1) Cooperate with your partners. Help each other. Do not hesitate to ask assistance if you are blocked out of a play. The main objective is to have all decisions ultimately correct.

(2) Keep all personalities out of your work. You must be able to forgive and forget. Every game is a new game.

(3) Avoid sarcastic comments. Do not insist on the last word. If after an argument a coach or player is walking away, let them go!

(4) Never charge a player or follow him if he is moving away and do not point your finger or use violent gestures during an argument.

(5) Keep your temper. A decision or an action taken in anger is never sound.

(6) Watch your language! Never use language toward a participant of the game if the same language was used by the participant and would result in disciplinary action being taken.

(7) If the coach has a legitimate point to discuss a rule, it is your duty to listen to him. An umpire can do this with dignity and no loss of respect.

(8) Keep active and alert on the field at all times. Keep the game moving.

(9) Be courteous, impartial, and firm.

(10) Even when off the field, remember that you continue to be a representative of the PIAA. Never do anything that would bring disgrace upon your profession and the organization.
GAINING RESPECT: AS AN UMPIRE

How does one gain respect as an umpire? The same is true in any occupation, hard work and dedication. As an umpire, you need to exhibit (so that all can see) traits, which reflect selfless dedication to your profession. This can be accomplished through exhibiting high performance levels in the following areas:

1. Hustle.
2. Hard work.
3. Focus on the game.
5. Professionalism.
6. Become more assertive on the field only as the situations call for you to do so.

These are the traits which will gradually earn you respect on the field. How about respect by your peers? Well, we can certainly point to a number of “taboos” for an umpire in attaining admiration from his peers, among them:

1. Never speak negatively about another umpire!
2. DO NOT be a politician.
3. DO NOT worry about being a friend to everyone on the field.
4. Do be polite, courteous, and professional.
5. DO NOT voice concern about your own advancement.

Through such efforts, an umpire slowly earns respect by those on and off the field. Even totally, he can earn the ultimate compliment of being “an umpire’s umpire”. Remember, you cannot DEMAND respect: “YOU EARN IT!”

EIGHT LESSONS FOR ASPIRING UMPIRES

As an umpire, you look for the pitches, you look for plays, and you do not coach. You
react to what happens.

Your reaction under pressure is what makes a good umpire different from an average umpire. Making game ending calls sometimes stays with you. The big thing as an umpire is to try not to let it trouble you. Easily said, not easily done. The umpire who continues to umpire is the person who can live with all these situations that occur during their umpiring career. The umpire who cannot is doomed and may stop umpiring. The umpire has to be prepared and ready to make decisions that affect the outcome of a game.

Lesson #1: Baseball is a game of inches. This seemingly insignificant detail of the game makes the difference in many games. No play is so insignificant that it might change the completion of the game.

Lesson #2: Do not allow the personalities of the players or coaches to affect your decisions. Justice is blind. Remember the statue of the woman in front of the Supreme Court in Washington? She’s blindfolded and she does not let any perceptions of the people in the court affect her decisions.

Lesson #3: Know the rule book. You cannot be overruled for a judgment call but you can be overruled for rule interpretation.

Lesson #4: Have enough knowledge and patience to explain your decisions to players and coaches. Consider yourself an educator, as well as an arbiter. You do not always have to explain, but you should always be prepared too.

Lesson #5: Think ahead. Before every game and before every pitch try to anticipate which plays (not calls) might develop. If you think about baseball as an umpire rather than a fan you will react to plays on the field like an umpire. Think about these situations as you are preparing to do the game. Expect the unexpected!

Lesson #6: Control the game. Don’t let the game control you. The umpire’s main task is to maintain order on the field.

Lesson #7: Always realize that you are a league representative on the field. The decisions you make have the full authority of that league.

Lesson #8: Intently watch everything that happens on the field. When the second baseman makes a force play make sure he is in complete control of the ball. When a base runner rounds the bases make sure he touches all the bases. Let no detail escape you.

Finally: If you follow these eight lessons diligently you are on your way to becoming a successful umpire.

Remember: Any successful umpire is one who keeps their mistakes to a minimum and never ever repeats a mistake.

Getting the Call Right
When a coach disagrees with an umpire’s ruling or call, there is a right way and a wrong way.
No umpire should refuse a brief conversation on a respectful FIRST request. This being said, there are going to be discussions that arrive at an impasse. To avoid an ugly situation and in an attempt to make sure your decision is correct, there are times you should go to your partner for help.

Umpires should have a predetermined private signal, such as one hand in the pocket, that lets each other know if help is available. If help is available, ask in these situations:

1. After a pitch is called a ball and there was a checked swing and the coach states “the batter went around”, or “can you ask for help” - You should ask. Under NFHS rules we DO NOT HAVE to ask, but you should ask.

2. If you are blocked out of a play (and this means you were out of position), you should ask.

   NOTE: You should always make a call before going to your partner, because if you ask before making a call and your partner can’t help, you now have two umpires who did not see the play!

3. If there is a possibility the ball was dropped or juggled, during a tag play, and you did not see it – You should ask.

4. Unusual situations out near the outfield fence, such as whether the ball bounced over or went over on a fly. You should Ask.

There are also times when you should not ask for help:

1. If the rule book does not allow it, such as a foul call or a check swing called a strike.

2. A close call on a force play.

3. Tags on non-force situations where the ball is not dropped or juggled.

4. If changing the call will get you into a crazier situation, such as changing a catch or no catch of a fair fly ball with runners on base.

5. You should not go to your partner for help after an extended discussion.

After making a call, there are times when you should go to your partner immediately after the play happens without an appeal from a coach.

These situations include:

1. Check swing on a 3rd strike followed by a play.

2. You are the base umpire in the B or C position and there is pulled foot play at 1st base.

3. A swipe tag at 1st base and you are straight lined in the A position or you are in the B or C position.

When you are working a game, all you have out there is your partner and your knowledge. So use both of them wisely.

SECTION II. PLATE UMPIRE MECHANICS
**Position and Stance:**
Position and stance are critical to good umpiring. Let’s start by talking about your position in relation to the pitcher/catcher and how to position your hands.

**Position in Relation to the Catcher:** As a plate umpire, work to the side and rear of the catcher. Majority of umpires today wear an inside protector, so position yourself to the side and to the rear of the catcher; which side depends on the batter. We will call this position, the slot. With left-handed batters, work to the catcher’s right; with right-handed batters, work to the catcher’s left.

To work the plate consistently, take the same position behind the catcher on every pitch. Once the catcher has settled down to receive the pitch, assume your stance, the one that will give you the best perspective from which to judge the pitch. How you place your feet is crucial to your stance. The most common method is a catcher like crouch behind the catcher.

Whether your foot position is the scissors, the box, or the knee, your head should be in the same position every time. Your chin should be at the top of the catcher’s head, with your head slightly behind and in the “slot” between the catcher and the batter. If the position of the catcher or batter make it impossible for you to see the pitch, adjust the best you can. As a last resort, move above and directly behind the catcher’s head. You will be able to see the corners, but lose some perspective on the low pitch. Go back to the normal position as soon as the batter or catcher allows it. Seeing the pitch will sometimes depend on the catcher. His stance just before the pitch may cause a problem in your following the flight of the ball. With better skilled catchers and pitchers, the easier and more fun it is to umpire the plate, because they are consistent in how they work and you know what to expect.

**Position in Relation to the Pitcher:** For best protection, square shoulders to the pitcher (not sideways). Don’t expose the unprotected side of your body. Point your toes toward the pitcher so that your foot is not angled to the flight of the ball. Otherwise your instep will be vulnerable to a pitched or foul ball. Also, the protection afforded by the outside padded tongue of the plate shoe is considerably lessened if your foot is angled.

**Hands:** Positioning of your hands is critical. The first concern is protection. You can protect your hands with a right-handed batter at the plate by placing your left elbow in the inside of the left leg when you’re down in the squat position. Your hands are down behind the catcher, loose so that they will give, if hit. Don’t put a hand on your knee; if the ball hits your hand in that position, there is no give. Hand bones are easily broken.

Many umpires rest their forearms on the top of their thigh, instead of tucking their elbows on the inside of the leg. It’s a good idea to leave them in this position because it leaves your elbow unprotected. It only takes one good hit on an elbow to make you wish you had tucked it in. Your hands should not touch the catcher; this is a bad habit. Some catchers will tell you to move back, that you bother them. Honor the catcher’s request and give him a little more space. Place yourself a comfortable distance from the catcher that allows you to have a good view of the strike zone and the plate area.

**Line of Sight:** This is critical to your ability to call balls and strikes. Establish a good line of sight. Your line of sight, when you’re in the squat position, should be somewhat over the left shoulder of the catcher (when the batter is right-handed). After the pitch has been released, don’t move to follow it. Your view of the plate should be complete. Don’t let the catcher’s head block your view of an outside pitch. If it does, adjust your stance to get an unobstructed view.
The squat style seems to make outside pitches the hardest to call, but if you have a long torso, you can use this position successfully. Make sure not to squat so low that you miss the outside pitch because it’s blocked by the catcher’s body.

**Strike Zone:** The rules book defines the strike zone. Hopefully, umpires, players, coaches and spectators are familiar with the rules book definition. Each umpire should try and visualize this “dotted-line-rectangle” over home plate in their mind. Umpires should develop an understanding of the strike zone to establish a consistent zone, and to develop reference points for the inside strike and the top of the strike zone. There are a couple of matters to consider in terms of preparing for the pitch. The batter’s position in the box.

**Batter in Box:** Be sure the batter is in the batter’s box when establishing position. Quickly, glance at his bat to be sure it is legal. Take note of his stance to establish his particular strike zone.

**Flinching:** Flinching is occasional a problem for some umpires. It’s puzzling in that it can come and go without any apparent reason. Many umpires have worked consecutive games without a hint of a flinch and then have it occur. It can irritate you far more than it affects your umpiring. Umpires who flinch are also concerned, and rightly so with their image. If flinching is so pronounced that it is noticeable to fans or players and even your partner that day, one remedy is to force yourself to wait as long as you can before getting into your stance just before the pitch. This shortens the time of stressful concentration. Another helpful suggestion is to keep your teeth separated while the pitch is in the air.

**Timing of Strike Call:** An important part of the mechanics of plate umpiring is proper timing. Don’t make your call too soon or too late. Be conscious of your timing. If you are off, it’s better to be a little slow then to make snap judgments. Hasty calls invite mistakes and the appearance of mistakes. Let the pitch hit the catcher’s mitt then delay slightly, before you begin the strike call motion. You may at times notice your timing is deteriorating. Here’s a tip when you notice you’re calling pitches too quickly. When getting down in the squat position, place the fingers of your strike hand into the bend of your left knee. When you are completely down in the final position, make sure your fingers are locked into the bend so that you can’t pull them out. The only way to release the fingers to make the strike call is to start to stand up. This extra second keeps you from making the strike motion too quickly. You can also grab the inside of the left pant leg and hold tightly.

**Verbal Calls:** Your motion is important in calling pitches and so is your voice. Call out all called strikes and balls. On swinging strikes, though, say nothing; just raise your fist, as the action itself clearly communicates the message, unless it’s a checked swing. On the first called strike, call out “Strike”! Loudly. On the second strike, if it’s a called strike, make it louder. On the third strike, if it’s a called strike, make it loudest of all the perhaps with some body movement, making it different from strikes one and two. When the pitch is a ball, call “Ball” loud enough for the infielders to hear.

There is a reason for calling balls and strikes audibly. If you don’t call the ball out loud, it’s harder to maintain proper timing. Poor timing can give the impression of guessing. Vary your calls of non-swinging strikes in intensity, tone and length. Ball calls vary much less, with ball four possible getting more emphasis than earlier balls.

**Call’em, Don’t Explain’em:** Don’t routinely explain your ball and strike calls. Such as, “Ball! Low”, “Ball! Inside,” or “Strike, Caught the corner.” If the catcher asks where a certain pitch was, tell him. However, the catcher should not ask repeatedly, “Where was the pitch?” If he
does, you should tell him that you’re not going to explain every pitch to him. Tell him that you are perfectly aware of where he caught the pitch. From that point on, “end of discussion.”

Of course, there will be times that you can agree with the catcher as he asks about location. For example, if he asks, “Was it low?” you can answer, “Yes”!

Think about it this way. When a catcher repeatedly asks about a ball call, it’s either a form of protest or an inexperienced catcher. Try to distinguish between the two. If you’re convinced it’s an honest request for information, give a short matter-of-fact reply. A batter will at times inquire if what he swung at and missed was strike. Give him the information he asks. Make it short not long, but it is okay to respond to such request from players, because it doesn’t violate any principles of communication between umpire and player.

**Catcher’s Space:** Give the catcher room. Keeping out of the way of the catcher on a foul ball can be tricky. If you understand the basic moves of the catcher, it makes the umpire’s job easier.

All catchers are not alike in style and manner by the way they cover foul balls. Some are not well-trained, and they all make a wrong move now and then. Give then adequate room to move and anticipate what the catcher is likely to do. **NEVER** put your hand on the catcher’s back. When a right handed batter fouls off an inside pitch, the experienced catcher usually turns to his left, because the fouled ball usually goes over his left shoulder. Therefore, you should be ready to turn to the left with the catcher.

When a right-handed batter fouls off an outside pitch, the ball, by the same token, goes up over the catcher’s right shoulder. The experienced catcher will whirl to his right. Simply reverse the movements for a left-handed hitter. Just make sure you give the catcher enough space to operate. Keep your eyes on the catcher, “not the foul ball itself”. The catcher’s job is to catch the foul ball. Your job is to stay out of his way while following the action. As the catcher moves to find and catch the ball, move with him. Keep a safe distance in case he changes directions. If the catcher runs to the fence, dugout, or elsewhere, follow him. Being close to this kind of play makes the call easier. Trot/jog back to your position. Your hustle will keep the game moving.

**Batted Ball Hitting Batter:** React immediately to a batted ball that hits the batter. When the ball goes from the bat directly to the dirt and then strikes the batter or catcher, immediately shut down the play by throwing your arms up and calling, “FOUL!”

Only the front inside corner of the batter’s box is in fair territory. A ticked ball is almost certain to be in foul territory by the time it hits the ball. It’s often difficult to judge, should the ball make contact with the batter near the far corner of the box. Most umpires automatically call such a ball, foul.

**Passed Ball:** On a passed ball with a runner on third, a play at the plate is likely; so be alert. Remove your mask quickly. Set yourself at a right angle to the catcher’s throw. This gives you a good angle on the play at home. Most importantly, watch the ball and the catcher retrieving it. Otherwise you won’t know where he will be when he makes the throw. Make sure the catcher gets the ball and makes the throw, and follow the flight of the ball right into the glove as you turn to make the call. Be careful not to turn too quickly, you could get hit by a badly thrown ball.
Take your time on this call. You know the tagging player must have full possession of the ball. It’s embarrassing to make an out call only to have the ball roll out from under the players. If there is contact, ask the catcher to “show me the ball”.

When you are certain that the play is complete, make your call emphatic with body language. After all, your call takes its importance from the importance of the play.

**Ground Ball to the Infield:** As plate umpire, your duties don’t stop when the ball is hit. First, watch to see if the batter is going to run. If he does, move out from behind the catcher to get a better look at the play. On a ground ball hit to the infield, head toward first base, either down the running lane or in the infield grass. Try, to get at least 10 to 15 feet from home plate. The farther the better, but stop in time to watch the play at first. This initial hustle shortens the distance to where the action is. It also gives you a better vantage point from which to see any runner infractions. Sometimes what starts as a routine play develops into a difficult situation for the base umpire (view blocked). If you have moved properly, you will be where you can see what is happening and be of assistance to your partner (if help is requested). Going to the infield is really just doing your job right. Many people call it “hustling.” It becomes easier the more you do it. It soon becomes a habit, and a good one.

**Slow Roller:** One play that makes the plate umpire hustle is the slow roller down a foul line. Stay on top of the slow roller; don’t hesitate. Get out from behind the plate and as close to the ball as possible without getting so close that you cause interference with the fielding of the ball.

**Fly Ball:** On a fly ball hit to the outfield, go farther than you do for an infield grounder. Many times you go as far out as the pitcher’s mound to watch the catch in the outfield. Whether the ball is caught, trapped, or dropped. It’s your job to observe the catch if the base umpire doesn’t elect to go to the outfield. It’s the base umpire’s job to see if the runner touches the bases. However, don’t get too far away from home plate if there is a potential play there.

On a long, hard-hit fly ball near the right field foul line, when the base umpire goes to the outfield to follow the play on the ball, move quickly to the infield, circling the pitcher’s mound for a possible play at second. Make sure the batter-runner touches first base. If the runner attempts a double, your hustle will put you at second base before the runner, right on top of the play. Done right, it’s beautiful. You won’t be required to do this often but when the situation arises, be ready.

With no runners on base, be prepared to rule on trapped balls hit to leftfield. The base umpire will rule on balls hit to center and right. On all routine fly balls, move near the pitcher’s mound and shout “Catch” so your partner can hear you. The base umpire moves into the infield. If the ball is dropped, the base umpire checks to see if the batter-runner tags first base, that the first baseman does not obstruct the runner and then moves to cover a possible play at first or second.

When the base umpire moves to the outfield to rule on a possible trap, you must rule on plays at all bases and should move to the center of the diamond where you can move in any direction. After the base umpire makes a ruling, you should return to home plate to make a ruling on any throw/play made there.

**Infield Fly:** This situation arises frequently in a game, and when it does, umpires need to communicate with each other. You should have a signal to give one another before the pitch is made to acknowledge that the infield fly rule is in effect. One umpire gives the sign and the
other umpire(s), acknowledge with the same sign. You can use a variety of signals. Pick one that suits the crew best.

When a batted ball is judged to be an infield fly, give the signal; right hand raised overhead, with your index finger pointing at the ball. At the same time yell, “Infield Fly if fair, batter’s out!” Include “If Fair” regardless of the relationship of the ball to the foul line. This habit takes care of the fly that ends up foul, and causes no problem when the fly ball is obviously fair.

Usually the plate umpire calls the infield fly first. This does not mean that the base umpires can’t make the call first, if the plate umpire hasn’t made the call when the base umpire judges the fly ball to be an infield fly. Each umpire has the responsibility for making the call. When your partner calls infield fly, regardless of how you see it, call it.

Remember, if neither umpire has declared an infield fly and it is an infield fly and the ball lands up fair without a verbal announcement, it’s the “Situation that counts, not the Declaration” (still an infield-fly).

Communication With Players-Coaches: Obviously your umpiring must communicate clearly to players and coaches. Here are some techniques you need to know.

Infield Fly: In communicating the infield fly rule to players, don’t be in a hurry to make the call; make it as the ball starts downward. This informs the runner or runners in time and enables you to judge whether the ball “can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort”. If an outfielder catches a ball that could have been caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, the infield-fly rule is still in effect. Again, “it’s the situation that counts not the declaration”.

Using Your Fingers: If you feel the information is needed, extend your fingers to indicate the number of balls and strikes. This is especially good on fields, which do not have a prompt and accurate operator of the ball/strike display or have no scoreboard at all. If you do show the strike count with your fingers, do it so it so all can see. It is important that the count be known; if the board is wrong, announce the correct count and show it with your fingers. This should be done before the next pitch.

With Batters: On ball four, don’t award the walk by pointing to first base; (the runner knows where it is). If he doesn’t head toward first, don’t prompt him by pointing; let him stand there for a moment. Any embarrassment at having to ask, when you have called ball four, will teach the batter to be more attentive.

With Pitchers: Keep the pitcher away from the plate. A pitcher will at times be unhappy with your call. As a result, he might approach the area of home plate to voice his objections. Being inexperienced, he might not realize at the moment that technically no player or coach can object to a ball/strike call. In addition, there is an unwritten understanding among umpires that no player, especially the pitcher, can come to the home plate area to argue about a called pitch.

In high school baseball, the pitcher may not know this, or he may know but hasn’t learned to discipline himself. If you feel you must communicate with the pitcher, share your concerns with the catcher and send him to deliver your message to the mound. Explain to the catcher that it is his duty to keep his pitcher on the mound and to tone down the pitcher’s display.

Explaining Certain Calls: We discussed earlier balks and illegal pitches. You simply make
these calls without explanation. However, there could be times when it's okay to explain what constituted the balk or illegal pitch. When the outcome of the game is in doubt, however, such explanations are out of place because the explanations and the defense. It's not your duty to coach the players. It's the coach's job to instruct.

When a balk or illegal pitch call is questioned, it's better to explain the call after the game, if you care to do so and if the coach is interested in listening to your explanation.

**Time Out:** You will frequently have to call time out. Sometimes it's only necessary for a few players in the immediate area to be aware that time is out. On other occasions, everyone, players and fans alike need to know that time has been called. However, do not overdo time outs. Certainly don't call time when it would prevent the completion of a play. Let play continue unless there is a valid reason for calling time. Don't grant a player's request for time unless he has a bona fide reason.

Once time is called or the ball becomes dead, the ball becomes live when the following occur:

1. The pitcher holds the ball in a legal pitching position.
2. The batter and catcher are in their respective boxes.
3. You call "PLAY BALL" and give the appropriate hand signal.

**Handling Complaints:** Catchers and Coaches: Be prepared to handle catcher/coach complaints. Ordinarily, the catcher is permitted to make remarks if he does it in a mild manner and as long as he is facing the pitcher. Never let the catcher turn around to protest. Warn him. A good way to do this without embarrassing him is to brush the plate, look him in the eye, and explain your dissatisfaction.

Coaches who constantly protest strike calls from the bench set a bad example. Deal subtly with their actions. One way is to talk to them between innings, telling them they should show some restraint. If they feel they have a legitimate gripe, they should not be ill-mannered in presenting it. Their manners, good or bad, will be seized upon as a pattern by their players.

They should come to you between innings in a respectful, manner to make their point. In the event they don't choose this method and persist in hollering and carrying on displaying their objections, take appropriate action. This means restricting coaches to the dugout area and with any further infractions "eject them". Be sure that what you do is necessary and just. Use good judgment and then act. Whenever you deal with coaches/players, don't purposely embarrass them. "Don't trouble, trouble until trouble troubles you".

**Confrontation:** Never argue with a coach. If a coach questions a judgment call, say something like "Coach, that's a judgment call and that's the way I saw the play. Let's play ball!" If he questions a rule interpretation, explain your ruling. Don't prolong the conversation; short, sweet and concise. If there is any doubt about your ruling, don't be afraid to ask your partner. If you're incorrect, change your ruling, get the rule right. This discussion with your partner should be held privately away from everyone.

Here are a couple of ways that you can avoid trouble between innings. When you are having a difference of opinion on balls and strikes with the team that just batted (especially after calling the batter out on strikes) do not go toward that team, as they take the field. If you do, they
could mistake it as a challenge. If you had trouble with the pitcher, avoid being where he will pass you on the way to the dugout. Don’t chat with players. Answer their questions politely, and let that be the end of it.

**Sportsmanlike Conduct:** Be alert to unsporting comments from the dugouts and take immediate action to halt them. Frequent unsporting comments may cause you to lose control of the game. If you have trouble determining who is making the comments, inform the coach that you will remove someone in the area on the next occurrence.

**Being Consistent:** Having a good game is great. Having two or three good games in a row is even better. What’s best and what will strengthen your reputation, is when you are consistently good over many games.

One of the easiest ways to help your reputation is being consistent in your ball/strike calls. You may be the best base umpire around, but if you are not a good ball and strike umpire, as they say, “you are not much”!

As you develop your own strike zone, stay with it. Some umpires acquire reputations as low-ball umpires or high ball umpires. Some also become known for having a small strike zone (postage stamp) or large ones (dugout to dugout). These discrepancies are recognized and accepted by coaches, players and knowledgeable fans.

Most umpires do not purposely set out to earn any type of reputation in this manner, it just seems to develop over the years. There is nothing wrong to have people think that way about your umpiring. What is bad is if you are not consistent with your strike zone. When you maintain consistency with your strike zone, players and coaches know what to expect.

**Using Good Judgment:** As important as mechanics are in umpiring, it is not what you, ultimately will be judged on. Most will call you a good umpire if they believe your judgment is good on ball/strike, safe/out and fair/foul calls. Strive to exercise your best judgment and to be consistent.

If you want to advance in umpiring, here are a few things you can do after you have established your ability to exercise good judgment:

1. Increase your mastery of mechanics.
2. Improve your appearance.
3. Increase your understanding of the rules and their application to the game situations.

One of the most difficult tasks that you’ll have is interpreting a rule to an upset coach. Stay calm and give a complete explanation of the rule and its application to the play. This will go a long way toward gaining the coaches respect and toward building your reputation as a competent rules umpire. A good reputation does not come without considerable and consistent effort. Repeated reading and studying of the rules and casebook is a must. Discussion of rules and plays with other umpires, attending rules meetings, viewing films and participating in chapter meetings all contribute to you becoming a better umpire.

**Handling Mistakes:** To err is human. To forgive is divine”. Umpires are human. You will miss pitches and make some errors in judgment. Do your best to make as few errors as possible. A missed pitch or a booted call is just that; it’s missed and gone forever. Keep your
mistakes to a minimum and never ever repeat your mistake! Often you will hear the statement from other umpires “When in doubt, call him out.” Reverse that statement to “When it’s tight, get it right”.

SECTION III. BASE UMPIRE MECHANICS

A. Effective Communication: Your ability to communicate, verbally and non-verbally, with your partner and the participants will be one of the factors that make or break your career as an umpire.

Communication is the key to successful umpiring. Proper communication and crisp signals sell a call. If you look lazy you will be perceived as a lazy umpire and few will accept your decisions, regardless how right they may be.

Proper communication during game action and on your call combined with good crisp signals lend a credibility that says, “this umpire knows what he is doing.” That is the image you strive to present and maintain during each game and throughout your career as an umpire.

Hustle to get into proper position to see each and every play. Use crisp signals and proper communication to help you sell what you saw. Should the first baseman pull his foot off the bag on a close play at first, you have a better chance of letting everyone know what happened when you aggressively call. “Safe, he is off the bag, Safe!” While forcefully stepping and with a sweeping motion with your arms indicating his foot was off the bag.

Minimizing conflict is what effective communication and proper mechanics help to accomplish. How you communicate with players and coaches as well as your partner is also vital to how you are perceived. There are two basic forms of communicating, verbal and non-verbal.

B. Verbal Communication During a Play: This includes, but is not limited to, the words safe, out, fair or foul. Vocal tone, volume and emphasis are all important and vary according to the game situation. Accurately gauging the situation and play, then offering an appropriate level of communication, requires years of umpiring experience and an appreciation of the game.

Study the habits of good umpires in your area, notice how they announce decisions and deal with conflict when a decision is challenged. Recognize what is happening when your decisions are accepted and when they are questioned. This will help you recognize whether your verbal communications of play decisions are accepted.

C. Non-Verbal Communication During a Play: Sell calls with tone of your voice and emphasis of your body language. There is a difference between a nonchalant “out” signal and a big, sweeping, overhand “punch.” Each is appropriate at certain times and each may create problems when used inappropriately.

D. Verbal Communication with your Partner: Without a doubt, this is the area that needs most improvement among amateur baseball umpires. Partner communications begin no later than the Pregame conference and should continue on every play. A good Pregame sets the tone for the game. A good Pregame conference helps each member of the crew focus on his/her responsibilities and ensures that each crew member understands exactly what he is expected to do during the game. The keys to holding a good Pregame lie in understanding each umpire’s basic responsibilities, reviewing the most common on field occurrences and lending variety to
the discussion by including a sampling of odd plays or unusual coverage. If crew members cooperate during the Pregame, they are more likely to work well during the game.

Clear, clean, concise communication during each play is the only reliable method that will eliminate coverage errors and insure that at least one umpire is watching everything that happens on a baseball field.

That includes the plate umpire letting you know he’s moving to cover a play at third base. “I’ll cover third if the runner tags.” It includes a base umpire telling the plate umpire he is going out on a trouble ball. I’m going out” and the plate umpire response, “OK, I’ll cover the runner.”

Using good communication techniques allows you and your partner to flow with the action and gives a strong appearance of confidence. With one exception, there are times when one umpire, often the plate umpire, should not communicate with his partner. Those times are when the partner is focused on a play that is imminent. An example: If a sinking line drive is eight feet off the ground and the outfielder is about to attempt a diving catch, the base umpire is focused on that play. The plate umpire should not choose that moment to say “I will cover third if he tags.” As in all things, commons sense and good judgment are imperative.

E. Non-Verbal Communication With Your Partner: It is equally important that you communicate non-verbally with your partner prior to specific action. Signals that confirm the number of outs, or remind you that an infield fly, time play situation or force play slide rule exists, are both fundamental and also invaluable. To eliminate confusion, those signs and signals should be reviewed with your partner before each game. In addition, each umpire must know whether his partner expects some acknowledgment which is often non-verbal.

F. Communicating With Players and Coaches: An umpire must understand there is a fine line between being cordial and being friendly. Some instructors caution about the potential problem of being too sociable with a coach or player. There is a distinction between being cordial and being friendly.

Umpires certainly don’t want to be unfriendly on the field but being too friendly can also cause problems. Overly friendly could be construed as showing favoritism toward a coach, player or team.

Umpires know that many coaches and players are paranoid that an umpire is favoring a team. A cordial demeanor provides a professional distance between you and the coach or player. When you are overly friendly, you shorten that distance, which in turn, weakens their perception of your professionalism. So how do you maintain your professionalism without appearing too robotic or unapproachable?

A good umpire sets the tone for the game. The first indication of your umpiring personality is how you relate with the coach during the meeting at home plate. Often the meeting is a quick confirmation of the ground rules as the home team anxiously waits to take the field. After the initial preparatory statements, being cordial means you don’t initiate conversations with player or coaches. On the other hand, answering small talk with one-word answers gives the impression you are not overly friendly. Work on being polite without being engaging. Here are some things to avoid. As a base umpire refrain from starting a conversation with, the first baseman or first base coach. Keeping your distance will limit your opportunity to begin needless conversation.

The first base coach will never be your friend. (If you think so, just wait until the first close call.)
Reinforcing the cordial aspect of your professionalism is the recognition of an excellent play by a fielder. “Nice play.” That type of response can reinforce that you are human and are aware of a players efforts. Similarly, accept a compliment about your judgment on a close play or your hustle with a sincere “thank you.”

Answer questions put to you in a reasonable manner. If you call a balk and the pitcher politely asks what he did wrong, explain the rule or describe the violation. Although it is to the coach’s benefit to know the rules, the reality is most coaches do not. If you are asked to explain a rule, do so in plain talk and without sounding over officious. Keep it simple during your explanation of the rule violation.

Some umpires try to impress a coach on how knowledgeable they are about the rules. Remember the kiss philosophy “Keep it simple – stupid.”

**QUICK TIPS**

1. After each out or play, communicate and confirm the number of outs with your partner. Make eye contact and flash the number with your fingers. It may seem like overkill, especially if you do it even when the leadoff batter reaches base, but it is a good habit to develop. If you lose track or disagree, it is far better to figure things out before the next play than to get caught in a potentially game changing blunder.

2. When trying to discern whether or not a pitcher is balking observe the flex of the knee on his pivot leg. The rules prohibit the pitcher from prematurely flexing his leg before stepping and throwing to first base. No one expects the pitcher to either pitch or attempt a pick-off with a stiff leg. If you judge the pitcher is using the same flex on both pitches and pickoffs and by doing so, he is deceiving the runner you should call a balk. If you have to intently analyze both moves to figure that out, leave it alone!

3. On run downs with only one runner on base take one end and let your partner take the other. Stay with the runner until your partner communicates that he is on the other end. But remember when there are multiple runners; your partner can only help with the lead runner.

4. If you have called a play correctly do not stand around and pat yourself on the back, because very quickly you will probably have another decision to make. That next pitch is going to produce your next decision. As long as you have a game, they are going to throw the ball, when they throw the ball you have to be ready. “Expect the unexpected.”

5. There are four times you should go out on a fly ball and they are all from position A. (1) If fair/foul is a consideration; (2) if the outfielder turns and runs back toward the fence; (3) if fielders are converging and there is a possibility of a collision; and (4) if the ball will be caught below the waist. Remember, it is better to go out on a ball that you should not have, then trying to make a call on from the infield.

**SECTION IV. TWO-UMPIRE MECHANICS.**

1. **Angle is primary. Distance is secondary.** With only two umpires, you are not going to be able to get as close as you would like on some plays.
Work to get an angle. "Too close to the forest you do not see the trees."

2. The plate umpire (PU) will move. Helping on a pulled foot at first base, helping on force play slides at second base, covering plays at third base, PU is responsible for much more than balls and strikes.

3. Studying two-umpire mechanics will help you to understand three-umpire mechanics. The two-umpire system is the basis for much coverage with multiple umpires.

**Balk Concentration: Two Umpires**

There are some balks that are more obvious from some positions.

1. Plate umpire should concentrate on:
   
a. Left-handed pitchers stepping to home plate (slide step).
   
b. Left-handed pitchers coming to a complete stop (discernable).
   
c. Right-handed pitchers coming to a complete stop (discernable).
   
d. Right-handed pitchers stepping toward the plate on the third to first move. He may do this move with or without disengaging the pitching rubber.
   
e. Right-handed pitchers gaining ground on the jump turn.
   
f. Right-handed pitcher closing their front shoulder before the jump turns.
   
g. Right-handed pitcher (wind-up) starts arms in an upper motion, then steps off with runner on third.

2. Base umpire should concentrate on:
   
a. Left-handed pitchers stepping toward home plate.
   
b. Left-handed pitchers coming to a complete stop (discernable).
   
c. Right-handed pitchers breaking their front knees before the jump turn.
   
d. Right-handed pitchers gaining ground on the jump turn.
   
e. Right-handed pitchers closing their front shoulder before the jump turn.

**Outfield Coverage**

1. Do not go out automatically on all fly balls in your coverage area.
2. Pause, read, and react (three important ingredients to making correct calls).

3. Four conditions that require an umpire to go to the outfield:
   a. The outfielder turns and his back is toward the infield and runs toward the outfield fence.
   b. Multiple players converging on a looping fly ball just over the infielders.
   c. A catch by an outfielder "below the waist."
   d. Outfielder moving toward the foul line and a possible fair/foul decision.

4. If in doubt, go out on fly balls in your coverage area:
   a. If you are going out, go out hard.
   b. Leave no doubt in your partner's mind about going out. Use voice "I'm going out."
   c. Signal your partner by raising your arm followed by voice "I'm going out."
   d. If you are not going out, hold your arm out "palm" facing your partner indicating you have the call all the way.
   e. Once you go out, do not return until the play is complete.

**Exception:** With no runners on base and U1 goes out, U1 would return to home plate after ruling no catch for any play on the batter-runner there.

f. Base Umpire positioned within the infield, there will be times when you must cross the base path to get a closer look at the play. In the past, Base Umpires were instructed to never, ever cross the base. That concept is long gone. More important is to get the play right.

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**

The plate umpire will be described as PU and the field umpire as U1. It is assumed that in all situations PU will start out behind home plate. The three basic positions for U1 on the bases are described as follows:
**POSITION A:** Both feet in foul territory, approximately ten feet behind the first baseman. This will be the basic position with no runners on base.

**POSITION B:** Approximately halfway between the pitcher's mound and second base, on the first-base side of the infield, more or less on a line extended from the plate through the edge of the mound, with feet positioned parallel to the pitcher's plate so the umpire can move to cover a pickoff attempt at first or an attempted steal of second. This will be the position used with first-base occupied in the two-man system.

**POSITION C:** Approximately halfway between the pitcher's mound and second base, on the third-base side of the infield, more or less on a line extended from the plate through the edge of the mound, with the feet positioned parallel to the pitcher's plate so the umpire can move to cover any attempted pick-off or steal at any base. This position will be used in any situation with runners occupying bases other than first base in the two-man system.

**GENERAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**PLATE UMPIRE:**

1. Calls balls and strikes.

2. Hustle! Just because you have the "plate" does not mean it is your only responsibility.

3. Rule on fair/foul situations from home plate to the leftfield foul pole. If U1 is in Position A, rule fair/foul on all batted balls that come to rest or are played upon in front of first base. Call fair/foul on all batted balls from home plate to the right field foul pole if U1 is in Position B or C. Be careful not to call foul too soon.

4. Get your mask off and move on all batted balls.

   On ground balls in the infield, come into the infield and be ready to move to cover plays which are your responsibility and to help your partner. Watch ground balls close to the line carefully to make the fair/foul call. With a runner at third base, be careful not to go with the ball. Watch the play from the base line extended so you can see the runner touch home plate.

   On fly balls to the infield, call catch/no catch on foul flies up to both bags and fair flies to the left of second base or taken by the pitcher or catcher.

   On fly ball to the outfield with U1 in Position A, call catch/no catch on any fly ball that U1 does not go out on. You have responsibility on all fly balls hit to centerfield that move the centerfielder to his right or towards left. If U1 is in the infield, call catch/no catch on all fly balls to left or right field on which the outfielder moves toward his respective foul line.

   Remember to watch the tag up on any runner at third base or the lead runner in a situation involving multiple runners.
5. Be prepared to move to third base if a play happens there on a batted ball or to first base to help your partner on a throw behind the runner or in a rundown if possible.

6. With a throw near home plate, observe the batter-runner’s position in relation to the three-foot running lane. If the batter-runner is not in the lane and interferes with the throw, call interference and the batter-runner out.

7. On a pop foul to the catcher, move with the catcher while observing him and not the ball. Do not remove your mask until the catcher has tossed his mask. If the catch is near the screen, position yourself so that you will know if the ball touched the screen.

**BASE UMPIRE U1:**

1. Hustle on every play to be in the best position possible to make your calls. Remember: "Pause, Read, React." Angle is everything.

2. When in Position A, take one or two steps toward home plate with the pitch.

3. With no runners on, you will always be in Position A; with a single runner at first base, you will always be in Position B; with a runner as far as second base, you will be in Position C. These positions remain the same; it is not dependent on the number of outs.

4. In Position A, call fair/foul on balls hit down the first-base line from the front edge of the bag to the foul pole, especially on balls bounding over the bag. Be alert to help PU on a slow roller or bunt down the line. If you see a batted ball, contact the batter in the batter’s box, signal “time” "foul ball." Ball is dead immediately.

5. The first play by an infielder is always your call, except at home plate. Let the ball take you into the play.

6. Make catch/no catch calls on fly balls in the following situations:
   a. Fly balls in the infield which are taken by the first or second baseman.
   b. If in Position A, go out to make a call on any difficult catch by the right fielder or the center fielder moving toward second base. Always go out on a close fair or foul call. On routine fly balls, come in and make your pivot. PU will make the catch/no catch ruling.
   c. If in Position B or C, fly balls to the outfield unless the catch is attempted by either fielder moving to the respective foul line. In this situation PU has the fair/foul call and the catch/no catch. Do not cross the base paths to go make a call.

7. Line up the tag-up of a single runner, unless at third base, and on following runners in a multiple runner situation.

8. Be alert to either move to cover home plate if PU is at third base and there are no following runners or to take a following runner into third base if PU has a play at the plate, as in a bases-loaded situation.

**FIELD MECHANICS COVERAGE**
ARTICLE 1: NO RUNNERS ON BASE

PU: COVERAGE:

1. Move out on all batted balls. You are responsible for the ground rules on an overthrow at first base. PU should react toward foul territory with the path of the overthrown ball. Be prepared to assist U1 in cases where F3 has a swipe play or a pulled foot off the base. Go as far as the start of the three foot running lane unless U1 has outfield coverage, U1 has the batter runner all the way to third base. (Revised) PIAA

2. If U1 has the catch/no catch on troublesome balls in his half of the outfield, move to watch the BR touch first base and be prepared to move to cover any attempted play on the base runner returning to first base or move to make a call at second/third base, if U1 is held up by a ball down the line. U1 will have the play behind you. Run around the mound not over it.

3. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls to the left side of the infield or fielded by the pitcher or catcher, and on any foul fly balls fielded by the first baseman between the plate and the first base bag.

4. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls to left field or on which the center fielder turns his back on U1 or on which the center fielder moves to his right (left field). Make the call verbally to assist your partner, who is watching the batter-runner touch first base. Call “That’s a catch.”

5. Call fair/foul on all batted balls down the third-base line to the foul pole in left field, and all batted balls that are played on or come to rest between home plate and the front edge of first base. Follow bunted balls down the foul line, to the start of the three foot running lane.

U1: POSITION COVERAGE:

1. Move to make all calls at first base on plays in the infield. To get a good angle, take a few hard steps toward the player fielding the ball, then set, pause, react, and let the throw turn you to the bag.

2. On base hits, come into the infield, pivot while watching the batter-runner touch first base, and be ready to move to second base or third base if he should attempt to advance or return to first base.

3. On extra base hit, take the batter-runner all the way to third base. Be alert for batter-runner returning to second. (Revised) PIAA

4. Go out on fair/foul or catch/no catch situations down the right field line, getting an angle if possible. Be ready to return to take the play at the plate, since PU has the bases behind you.

ARTICLE 2: R1 AT FIRST BASE ONLY

PU COVERAGE:

1. Move out on all batted balls. Be ready to cover play at third base on R1 advancing when
there is a clean hit to the outfield. If the ball is hit in the infield move to assist, if asked by U1, on a possible swipe tag/pulled foot at first base. On an infield hit, U1 has all calls in the infield.

2. Watch all plays in the infield in order to be able to help if asked. Be sure to watch for any interference by the retired runner at second base, then look quickly to see if the first baseman keeps his foot on the bag. Only offer help if asked by your partner.

3. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls fielded by the pitcher or catcher or down either line, on all foul balls to the outfield on which the left or right fielder move toward his respective foul line.

4. Call fair/foul on balls down both lines to the foul pole. Follow bunted balls down the line.

**U1: POSITION B COVERAGES:**

1. Be alert for pickoff attempts at first, either by the pitcher or catcher; be alert for possible balks. A quick step or two toward the plate before turning on a pickoff will improve your angle at first. Your first step should be toward the start of the three-foot running lane.

2. On an attempted steal of second, step back and let the throw turn you into the play. Do not lose site of the ball or turn your head “before” the throw passes you.

3. On base hits, be sure to watch the runner from first touch second and the batter-runner touch first and any succeeding bases.

4. Call the first play in the infield; on double plays, after seeing the force at second, turn and move to see the play at first base on a base hit to the outfield. U1 has any play at third.

5. Call catch on catches on fly balls fielded in the middle of the infield and on fly balls to the outfield in between the left and right fielders.

6. Be alert to help your partner on checked swings, despite the poor angle.

**ARTICLE 3: R1 AT SECOND BASE ONLY**

**PU: COVERAGE:**

1. Rule fair/foul on ground balls from home plate to the foul pole down both lines; follow bunted balls down the line, but be alert for play situations at home plate; you are responsible for the runner touching third base.

2. On a base hit, move to line up R1’s touch of third base. Be prepared to cover the play on R1 advancing to home plate. If R1 returns to third base, U1 will cover that play.

3. On a ball hit in the infield where R1 is trapped between second and third base, be sure to watch the batter-runner touch first base, then move to third base to help out your partner if the rundown continues. Chances are good that the batter-runner will try to advance to second base on a prolonged rundown.

4. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls fielded by the pitcher or catcher or down either line, on all foul fly
balls, and on any fly balls to the outfield on which the left or right fielder moves toward his respective foul line.

5. Move to the best position possible to view the catch. Then return home for all plays there. U1 observes the R’s tag up at second base. U1 moves to a position to rule on all plays at second and third base. If the ball is not caught, U1 has all touches and plays on the bases.

**U1: POSITION: C**

**COVERAGE:**

1. Watch out for possible pick-off attempt at second base by either the pitcher or catcher.

2. Be alert for attempted steal at third base. A quick step toward the plate before turning to move to the base will improve your angle on the steal play. Do not be concerned about the fielder behind you, as to what he is up to. “Concentrate on the catcher.” His actions will lead you to the play.

3. On ground balls in the infield, watch the ball as it is fielded and let the throw take you to the play. Remember that the play is not always to first base, so do not anticipate. If the play is to first base, move toward the bag, get set, make the call, and then take a step or two toward the bag after making the call.

4. Call catch/no catches on fly balls fielded in the middle of the infield and on fly balls to the outfield in between the left and right fielders.

5. Move to line up the tag of R1 advancing to third base after a caught fly ball. You are responsible for the safe/out call at third base.

6. On routine fly balls or plays in the infield on which R1 is not advancing to third base, be alert for throws to second base attempting to catch R1 off the bag.

7. On base hits, watch the batter-runner to first and second base.

8. On balls hit in the infield, you have the play at first and third base if R1 attempts to advance.

**ARTICLE 4: R1 AT THIRD BASE ONLY**

**PU: COVERAGE:**

1. Movement is limited because of potential play at home plate; make all calls on R1 advancing to home plate.

2. Be alert for possible squeeze or attempted steal at home plate. Make sure pitcher's delivery is legal, and be sure to call the pitch first, then the play.

3. Call fair/foul on all balls down both lines to the foul pole.

4. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls fielded by the pitcher or catcher or down either line on all foul fly balls, and on any fly balls to the outfield on which the left or right fielder moves toward his respective foul line.
5. On fly balls on which there is a potential advance of R1 to home plate, move to line up tag.

6. On base hits, be sure to watch R1 touch home plate. U1 will have all calls in the infield.

**U1: POSITION C COVERAGE:**

1. Be alert for a possible pickoff attempt by either the pitcher or catcher. Make sure the pickoff move is legal. Prior to the game, discuss with your partner what each of you will be concentrating on. You do not want all four eyes looking at the same violation.

2. On ground balls in the infield, watch the ball as it is fielded and let the throw turn you into the play. Remember, the first play is not automatically to first; don’t anticipate.

3. Call catch/no catch on fly balls fielded in the middle of the infield and on fly balls to the outfield in between the left and right fielders. Stay in, do not cross the base path.

4. On base hits, watch the batter-runner touch first and second bases, you have all calls on the batter-runner in the infield.

5. With two outs, move to position B.

**ARTICLE 5: R1 AT SECOND BASE AND R2 AT FIRST BASE**

**PU: COVERAGE**

1. Be aware of the infield fly situation with less than two outs; signal your partner.

2. Call fair/foul down both lines to the foul pole.

3. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls fielded by the pitcher or catcher or down either line, on all foul balls, and on any fly balls in the outfield on which the left or right fielder moves toward his respective foul line.

4. On ground balls in the infield, move to watch the slide of a retired runner on a double-play attempt; watch the touch of third base by advancing R1. Move to be able to make a call at third base if the first play in the infield is at first or second base; any succeeding play at third base is yours. It is unlikely, but a potential play at home plate following a bobbled ball or a double-play attempt would be yours as well.

5. Move to make the call on R1 advancing after a caught fly ball unless ruling on a ball down the right field line.

6. On base hits, move to watch R1 touch third base and be ready to retreat to make a call on R1 advancing to home plate. Also be ready to move to third base for a play on R2.

7. Be prepared to assist, if asked by U1, on swipe tag/pulled foot plays.

**U1: POSITION C COVERAGE:**

1. Be prepared and aware of the infield-fly situation; signal your partner.
2. Call catch/no catch on fly balls fielded in the middle of the infield and on fly balls to the outfield between the left and right-fielders. Be alert for line drives which may become double plays.

3. Call the first play in the infield; on double plays, after viewing the force out. Turn and move to get position for the back end of the play. Do not anticipate.

4. On all fly balls to the outfield, observe the tags of R1 and R2.

ARTICLE 6: R1 AT THIRD AND R2 AT SECOND

PU: COVERAGE:

1. Movement is very limited because of a potential play at home plate; make all calls on R1 advancing to home plate.

2. Be alert for a possible steal at home plate or squeeze play. Make sure pitcher's delivery is legal; be sure to call the pitch first, then the play.

3. Call fair/foul down both lines to the foul poles.

4. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls fielded by the pitcher or catcher or down either line on all foul fly balls, and on any fly balls to the outfield on which the left or right fielder moves toward his respected foul line.

5. Move to line up the tag of R1 at third base. Make calls at home plate from third base line, if possible.

6. With two outs, be alert for a time play situation involving R2 and the batter-runner. Signal your partner. Watch the play on R2 and listen for your partner's call to determine if R1 scores before the third out.

7. On a ground ball in the infield with the first play being made at first base, move as you get into position to make a call on R2 at third base. Turn your head toward home plate observing R1 touching home, while advancing to third in foul territory.

8. On a base hit, move up the third-base line in foul ground as above. Watch R1 touch home plate, then get in position to either move to third base or to retreat to home plate for a play on R2.

U1 POSITION C COVERAGE:

1. Be alert for a possible pickoff attempt at second or third base by the pitcher or catcher. Divide your concentration on the pitcher with your partner.

2. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls to the outfield in between the left and right fielders. When the ball goes out, you back peddle toward the mound getting a better angle. When the ball is thrown back in, you follow the throw to its perspective base. Line up R2 at second base on the tag up.

3. With two outs, be alert for a time play situation involving R2 and the batter-runner. Make the out call on the batter-runner in a loud voice so your partner can hear you.

4. On base hits, watch the batter-runner touch first base and be prepared to either take him into
second base or returning to first base.

5. With two outs, move to position B.

**ARTICLE 7: R1 AT THIRD AND R2 AT FIRST**

1. Make all calls on R1 advancing to home plate. Be alert for a possible steal at home plate or a double steal. A squeeze is less likely, but never impossible.

2. Call fair/foul down both lines. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls down the lines on all foul/fly balls, and on any fly balls to the outfielder on which the left or right fielder moves toward his respective foul line.

3. On any play situation, move to watch R1 touch home plate, then cover other plays. On ground balls in the infield, your second responsibility is to watch the play at second base for interference with an attempted double play or "force play slide rule."

4. If the first play on a ground ball is on R1 at home plate, remember it is not a force out.

5. On fly balls to the outfield, move to line up the tag of R1 at third base, the move back to home plate.

6. On base hits, move toward third base in foul ground, ready to cover third base on a play there or to retreat to home plate if R2 attempts to score on the hit.

**U1: POSITION: C COVERAGE:**

1. Be alert for pickoff attempts by the pitcher or catcher at first or third base. Make sure the pitcher's move is legal on the feint to third base followed by a throwback to first base, otherwise known as the: 3-1 move.

2. Especially with two outs, watch for the delayed double steal rundown play. Be sure to make a loud and clear call on the putout because of the time play.

3. Make any call on the first play by an infielder. Be alert for line drives which may become double plays, signal catch/no catch immediately. On ground ball double plays, watch the force out, then move and turn to get into position for the call on the back end of the play.

4. On base hits, watch R2 touch second base, then look to see the batter-runner touch first base. Stay aware of the positions of the runners and your partner, since R2 could either try to return to second base or get caught in a rundown between second and third base, in which case the play at second base is yours. If the batter-runner attempts to reach second base, the play is also yours. Obviously, communication is vital in this situation.

5. With runners on the corners, use positions B.

**ARTICLE 8: R1 AT THIRD, R2 AT SECOND, AND R3 AT FIRST**

**PU: COVERAGE:**

1. Be alert for a steal, passed ball, or squeeze play. Call the pitch first, then the play.
2. Hold position on all balls in play to make calls on all runners advancing to home plate.

3. Call fair/foul on balls down both lines to the foul poles.

4. Call catch/no catch on all fly balls fielded by the pitcher or catcher or down either line, on all foul/fly balls, and on any fly balls to the outfield on which the left or right fielder moves to his respective foul line.

5. On all balls in play, first watch R1 touch home plate, then look to cover other plays, such as interference on an attempted double play.

6. Move away from home plate to line up the touch of R1 at third base on fly balls to the outfield. If it is clear there will be no play at home plate, move up the third base line in foul ground while watching R1 score in case of a play at third base. Let your partner know you have third base covered. "I got third! I got third if he comes."

7. Be careful on a play at home plate not to get too close to the play, either on a force out or a tag, because you do not want to get taken out on the play.

8. Be alert for a possible time play situation with two outs or infield-fly situations with less than two outs, and signal your partner in either situation.

**U1: POSITION: C COVERAGE:**

1. Be alert for any potential pickoffs. Make sure the pitcher's move is legal (divide responsibilities).

2. Call catch/no catch on fly balls fielded in the middle of the infield and on fly balls to the outfield in between the left and right fielders.

3. Make the call on the first play on a ground ball hit in the infield at any base except at home plate.

4. Move to line up the tag of R2 at second base on fly balls to the outfield; look back at first base to get some hint as to R3’s tag at first base. If the throw after the catch goes to home plate, be ready to move to any base to make a call on an advancing or returning runner.

5. On base hits, watch R3 touch second base, then look to see the batter-runner touch first base, and be ready to go wherever the play takes you. Generally, first and second base is your call; third base and home plate will belong to your partner. "COMMUNICATE!" In this situation, the two of you are hopelessly outnumbered by possible play situations.

6. Be alert to potential time play situations with two outs and infield-fly situations. Always signal your partner.

7. With two outs, move to position B.

This completes the PIAA Baseball Umpires Manual for 2017.

Reminders:
Rules and Mechanics PowerPoint presentations are available on the PIAA Web Site- piaa.org

The PIAA Baseball Championships are at Medlar Field at Lubrano Park, PSU on June 15 and 16

The 2017 PIAA Officials Convention is Friday August 4 and Saturday August 5.