

Three Rivers Umpires Association

Here is a list of softball myths that are believed to be true by many fans, coaches, players, and yes even some umpires. Please become familiar with these so you can explain the real rule to the coach when he tries to argue the mythical one.

1. The hands are considered part of the bat.

One of the greatest rule myths. The hands are part of the batter, not the bat. If a batter is hit with a pitch on the hands, it is a dead ball. If the batter was swinging and the ball contacts her hands it is a dead ball and a strike. If the ball contacts any part of the batter in the strike zone it is a dead ball and a strike. If it is the third strike in either of these cases, the batter is out. Anytime a batter is hit, it is always a dead ball.

2. The batter-runner must turn to her right after overrunning first base.

The runner is protected back to first base regardless of which way they turn as long as they don't make an attempt or feint towards second base (umpire judgment). Merely turning to the left after overrunning first base does not put the runner in jeopardy of being tagged out unless they make an attempt to advance to second base.

3. If the batter breaks her wrists when swinging, it's a strike.

The umpire's first priority on this play is to determine if the pitch was in the strike zone. If so, it is merely a strike. If not, the umpire must then judge did the batter attempt to hit the ball (did she offer at it). If in the umpire's judgment, she offered, then the umpire should rule a strike. Wrist motion has no bearing in this decision.

4. If a batted ball hits the plate first it's a foul ball.

Home plate is in fair territory and a ball that first hits the plate is fair or foul depending on where it settles or is first touched, not by where it first hit the ground.

5. The batter cannot be called out for interference if she is in the batter's box.

A batter is safest from being called for interference by staying in the batters box and doing nothing out of the ordinary (or intentionally interfering with a throw by the catcher) unless there is a play at the plate. When there is a play at the plate the batter must vacate any space necessary for the fielders to make a play.

6. The ball is dead on a foul tip.

The term foul tip is often used incorrectly to denote any pitched ball that is hit sharply off the batter's bat in foul territory. The definition of a foul tip is a ball that is hit and goes "sharp and direct" from the bat to the catcher's glove and is caught in flight. (In some rule sets it is a foul tip if the ball does not go higher than the batter's head.) A foul tip remains alive and runners are free to advance at their own risk. If the foul tip is strike three, the batter is out and the ball remains alive.

(Please know the rule differences and the signal differences between a foul ball and a foul tip)

7. The batter may not switch batter's boxes after two strikes.

The batter may switch at any time in the count as long as she does not switch sides once the pitcher is on the rubber taking her signs.

8. The batter who batted out of order is the person declared out.

The batter who should have been at bat is the person declared out. Example: Anne, Betty, Carol due up. Betty bats in the place of Anne and gets a base hit. Carol then comes to the plate. The defensive manager calls time and points out to the plate umpire that Betty batted out of turn before the next batter receives a pitch. The plate umpire will then declare Anne out, remove Betty from the bases and it is now Betty's time at bat again. Once Carol receives a pitch (legal or illegal) Betty's time at bat is legitimized making Carol the correct batter. Anne will now have to wait until her next time to get to bat again.

9. The batter may not overrun first base when she gets a walk.

The batter may overrun first but may be in jeopardy to be put out by either a tag by the first baseman if she makes an attempt to advance to second base after she has passed first base or if she violates the Look Back Rule.

10. The batter is out if she starts for the dugout before going to first after a dropped third strike.

The batter would not be declared out by the umpire until she enters her team area or other dead ball area unless she is trying to avoid a tag.

11. If the batter does not pull the bat back from over the plate it's an automatic strike.

Merely leaving the bat over the plate is not a strike. The batter must "offer" at the pitch. The batter is not required to pull the bat back. (In college ball not pulling the bat back is a strike.)

12. The batter is out if a bunted ball hits the ground and bounces back up and hits the bat while the batter is holding the bat.

If a batter is hit by their own batted ball while still in the batters box it is a foul ball. If the ball bounces up and hits the bat while the batter is still in the batters box, it is a foul ball.

13. The batter is out if her foot touches the plate.

The batter is only out if she makes contact with the ball, either fair or foul, while one foot is wholly outside the lines of the batters box and totally on the ground or any part of one or both feet are in contact with home plate. There is one organization that says the entire foot must be on the plate at the time of contact with the ball for the batter to be out.

14. The batter-runner is always out if she runs outside the running lane after a bunted ball.

The batter-runner is only out if in the judgment of the umpire, she interfered with the fielder taking the throw at first base. The ball must be thrown for interference to be called.

15. A runner is out if she slaps hands or high fives other players, after a home run is hit over the fence.

A runner is only out if a player (who is not a runner) or coach physically assists a player in running the bases.

16. Tie goes to the runner.

If a throw gets to the base before the runner then the runner is out otherwise she is safe.

17. The runner gets the base she's going to, plus one on a ball thrown out-of-play.

Overthrows are a 2 base award from the time of the throw, regardless of whether the throw was from the infield or outfield. The award is based on the last base touched by the runner at the time of the throw.

A pitch that goes out of play are a 1 base award from the time of the pitch. If this pitch is ball four, the batter is awarded 1st base only.

18. Anytime a coach touches a runner, the runner is out.

See #15.

19. Runners may never run the bases in reverse order.

A runner is entitled to run the bases in reverse order (and sometimes required) when back tracking to tag up on a caught fly ball.

20. The runner must always slide when the play is close.

The runner must avoid a fielder who has the ball when waiting to make a play. She does not have to slide. She may attempt to run around the fielder (and possibly be called out for being out of the baseline), she may run back to the last legally held base, in some rule sets she may attempt to jump over the fielder, or she can simply give up. If in the umpires judgment the ball, the fielder and the runner all converge at the same place at the same time it is simply a wreck and is neither interference nor obstruction.

21. The runner is always safe when hit by a batted ball while touching a base.

A runner is not out when struck by an infield fly (or any fly ball) if she is touching the base unless she intentionally interferes with a fielder trying to catch a ball.

22. A runner may not steal on a foul tip.

The ball is live on a foul tip and runners may advance at their own risk. See #6.

23. It is a force out when a runner is called out for not tagging up on a fly ball.

Failing to retouch a base on a caught fly ball is not a force. If a runner is called out for the 3rd out on appeal for not retouching (tagging up), any preceding runs score unless the appeal is made before they cross the plate.

24. An appeal on a runner who missed a base cannot be a force out.

A runner who misses a base they were forced to and it is properly appealed for the 3rd out, can nullify any runs that score.

25. A runner is out if she runs out of the baseline to avoid a fielder who is fielding a batted ball.

A runner is declared out for running out of the baseline only if she is avoiding a tag by a fielder with the ball.

26. Runners may not advance when an infield fly is called.

Runners may advance with the risk of being tagged while off their base, and being called out on appeal for leaving a base too soon if the Infield Fly is caught. The runners are not forced to advance if the Infield Fly is dropped. The only difference when an Infield Fly is declared is that the batter is already out; all other rules pertaining to a hit ball are still in effect.

27. No run can score when a runner is called out for the third out for not tagging up.

This is a time play.

28. A pitch that bounces to the plate cannot be hit.

The ball remains alive when it hits the ground and may be hit by the batter.

29. The batter does not get first base if hit by a pitch after it bounces.

A batter is entitled to 1st base if hit by a pitch even though it hit the ground first unless the umpire determines they made no effort to get out of the way.

30. If a fielder holds a fly ball for 2 seconds (or longer) it's a catch.

It is not a catch, if a fielder, collides with another player, umpire or a fence, or falls to the ground and drops the ball as a result of the collision or falling to the ground. This is an involuntary release of the ball and there is no time limit.

31. You must tag the base with your foot on a force out or appeal.

Any portion of the fielder's body may be used to tag a base on a force out or appeal.

32. The ball is always immediately dead on an illegal pitch.

This is a delayed dead ball. If the pitcher or any defensive player applies a foreign substance to the ball such as dirt, saliva, etc.) the ball is immediately dead. If the pitcher commits a violation of the pitching rule it is a delayed ball.

33. If a player's feet are in fair territory when the ball is touched, it is a fair ball.

It is the position of the ball when first touched which determines whether it is fair or foul.

34. The ball must always be returned to the pitcher before an appeal can be made.

Appeals may either be made during live ball or dead ball situation and the ball does not have to be possessed by the pitcher.

Tagging a base that a runner failed to tag up, touching a base that a runner missed (with a request to the umpire that is what the defense is appealing), tagging the runner for a base running infraction are examples of live ball appeals.

The defense may also make an appeal on a runner after play is stopped on any base running infraction. Any infielder can appeal the infraction to the proper umpire.

35. The pitcher's hand may not pass her hip twice.

The pitching rules essentially allow for 1 time past the hips in the backward direction and not more than twice in the forward direction. No revolution following release is allowed and this is interpreted to mean nothing beyond reasonable follow-through.

36. The pitcher's foot must remain in contact with the pitching plate until the ball is released.

The pitcher's pivot foot (right for RHP, left for LHP), must remain in contact with the ground; it may push off and drag away from the pitcher's plate but not from any other place.

37. If a fielder catches a fly ball and then falls over the fence it is a home run.

This is a catch and carry and the batter is out. If the fielder completely enters dead ball

territory over the fence, all runners are awarded 1 base unless the catch is the 3rd out.

38. The ball is dead anytime an umpire is hit by the ball.

This is only true if an umpire is hit with a batted ball before it has passed an infielder.

39. The home plate umpire can overrule other umpires at anytime.

NO umpire has the authority to set aside or question decisions made by another umpire within the limits of the respective duties as outlined in the rules.

40. It is illegal for two base runners to occupy the same base.

Two runners may occupy the same base, but one of them is in jeopardy of being put out. If a runner is forced to advance to the next base the lead runner would be out if tagged. If the lead runner is not forced she is entitled to the base and the trailing runner would be out if tagged.

41. The batter may never run to first base on an uncaught third strike if first base is occupied at the time of pitch.

If there are two outs, the batter may run to first base even if it is occupied.

42. The batter may not run to first base if the catcher cleanly catches a pitch for strike three that hits the ground first.

A catch is defined in part as, "The act of a fielder in getting secure possession in her hand or glove of a live ball in flight." A ball that bounces or hits the ground is no longer in flight.

43. It is always okay for a runner to contact a fielder who is standing in the baseline.

The runner is required to avoid a fielder who is fielding a batted ball. The baseline does not belong to the runner. If the fielder is not fielding a batted ball and contact occurs between her and the runner or if the runner has to alter her path, then obstruction is called.

44. When the International Tie Breaker (ITB) is used the runner placed on 2nd base is always the last out of the previous inning.

The runner placed on 2nd base is the person in the lineup who precedes the first batter scheduled to bat. Another way of looking at it is the runner would be the last person scheduled to bat in the inning. This is determined by who is scheduled to bat first in the inning. Example: The bases are loaded with 2 outs. Anne is on 3rd base, Betty is on 2nd base and Cleo is on 1st base. Doris is at bat and Elaine is the on-deck batter. Doris hits a grounder to the pitcher who throws home for the force out on Anne coming from 3rd base. When they come up to bat with the ITB in play Elaine is the first batter. The correct runner to put on 2nd base is Doris even though she wasn't the last out. She does precede Doris in the batting order and is also the batter scheduled to bat last in the inning.