

OFFICIAL BASEBALL RULES

2019 Atlantic League Amendments

Larger Bases

2.03 The Bases

First, second and third bases shall be marked by white canvas or rubber-covered bags, securely attached to the ground as indicated in Diagram 2. The first and third base bags shall be entirely within the infield. The second base bag shall be centered on second base. The bags shall be 18 inches square, not less than three nor more than five inches thick, and filled with soft material.

No Infield Shift

5.02 Fielding Positions

When the ball is put in play at the start of, or during a game, all fielders other than the catcher shall be in fair territory.

- (a) The catcher shall station himself directly back of the plate. He may leave his position at any time to catch a pitch or make a play.
- (b) The pitcher, while in the act of delivering the ball to the batter, shall take his legal position;
- (c) Except the pitcher and the catcher, any other fielder may station himself anywhere in fair territory; provided, however, that at the time a pitcher releases the ball for delivery to the batter, a team must have at least four infielders, two of which must be on either side of a straight line running from home base, through the pitcher's plate and second base, to the outfield fence.

PENALTY: If the defensive team violates Rule 5.02(c), the pitch shall be called a "ball" and the ball is dead, unless the batter reaches first base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter, or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the violation. If any other play follows the violation (*e.g.*, sacrifice fly, sacrifice bunt, *etc.*), the manager of the offense may advise the plate umpire that he elects to decline the penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play.

Guidance to the ALPB Umpires and Clubs on Experimental section in Rules 5.02

- Experimental Rule 5.02 (c) states that a team must have at least four infielders at the time that the pitch is released.
 - For the purpose of this rule, a defensive player will be considered an infielder if positioned within the infield or on the outfield grass within 10 feet of the infield cutout.

Stealing First Base

5.05 When the Batter Becomes a Runner

- (a) The batter becomes a runner when:

* * *

- (10) The catcher fails to catch any pitch and the batter immediately chooses to become a runner. The batter shall be deemed to have chosen to become a runner under this rule if (i) both of the batter's feet leave the batter's box, and (ii) the batter, in the umpire's judgment, demonstrates or otherwise creates an impression of his intent to advance to first base. If first base is occupied when the batter chooses to become a runner this creates a force play.

* * *

Guidance to the ALPB Umpires and Clubs on Experimental Rule 5.05(a)(10)

- Experimental Rule 5.05(a)(10) states that the batter must "immediately" choose to become a runner.
 - For the purpose of this rule, the batter must demonstrate his intent to go to first base prior to a defensive player regaining possession of a pitch not caught in flight or the pitch not caught in flight going out of play.
- Once the batter has demonstrated an intent to become a runner the umpire should point at the batter-runner and verbally state that the batter is now a runner. Any umpire is permitted to make the judgment that a batter has demonstrated that the intent to become a runner, but specific attention to the potential batter-runner should be paid by the first and third base umpires as the home plate umpire has responsibility for the pitch not caught.
- If a batter attempts to become a runner following a pitch not caught after a defensive player is in possession of the baseball, the umpires have the authority to call "time" and return any runners attempting to advance to the base they occupied at the beginning of

the play if, in the umpire's judgment, the actions of the batter negatively impacted the defense's ability to make a play on the previously advancing runner.

Pitcher Must Step-Off the Pitcher's Plate Prior to a Pick-off Attempt

5.07 Pitching

(a) Legal Pitching Delivery

There are two legal pitching positions, the Windup Position and the Set Position, and either position may be used at any time.

Pitchers shall take signs from the catcher while in contact with the pitcher's plate.

Rule 5.07(a) Comment: Pitchers may disengage the rubber after taking their signs but may not step quickly onto the rubber and pitch. This may be judged a quick pitch by the umpire. Except to throw to a base, when the pitcher disengages the rubber, he must drop his hands to his sides.

Pitchers will not be allowed to disengage the rubber after taking each sign.

The pitcher may not take a second step toward home plate with either foot or otherwise reset his pivot foot in his delivery of the pitch. If there is a runner, or runners, on base it is a balk under Rule 6.02(a); if the bases are unoccupied it is an illegal pitch under Rule 6.02(b).

(1) The Windup Position

The pitcher shall stand facing the batter, his pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and the other foot free. From this position any natural movement associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without interruption or alteration. He shall not raise either foot from the ground, except that in his actual delivery of the ball to the batter, he may take one step backward, and one step forward with his free foot.

When a pitcher holds the ball with both hands in front of his body, with his pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and his other foot free, he will be considered in the Windup Position.

Rule 5.07(a)(1) Comment: In the Windup Position, a pitcher is permitted to have his "free" foot on the rubber, in front of the rubber, behind the rubber or off the side of the rubber.

From the Windup Position, the pitcher may:

- (A) deliver the ball to the batter, or*
- (B) disengage the rubber to throw to a base, or*
- (C) disengage the rubber without dropping his hand to his sides (other than to throw to a base).*

In disengaging the rubber the pitcher must step off with his pivot foot and not his free foot first. He may not go into a set or stretch position—if he does it is a balk.

(2) The Set Position

Set Position shall be indicated by the pitcher when he stands facing the batter with his pivot foot in contact with, and his other foot in front of, the pitcher's plate, holding the ball in both hands in front of his body and coming to a complete stop. From such Set Position he may deliver the ball to the batter or step backward off the pitcher's plate with his pivot foot. Before assuming Set Position, the pitcher may elect to make any natural preliminary motion such as that known as "the stretch." But if he so elects, he shall come to Set Position before delivering the ball to the batter. After assuming Set Position, any natural motion associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without alteration or interruption.

Preparatory to coming to a set position, the pitcher shall have one hand on his side; from this position he shall go to his set position as defined in Rule 5.07(a)(2) without interruption and in one continuous motion.

The pitcher, following his stretch, must (a) hold the ball in both hands in front of his body and (b) come to a complete stop. This must be enforced. Umpires should watch this closely. Pitchers are constantly attempting to "beat the rule" in their efforts to hold runners on bases and in cases where the pitcher fails to make a complete "stop" called for in the rules, the umpire should immediately call a "Balk."

Rule 5.07(a)(2) Comment: With no runners on base, the pitcher is not required to come to a complete stop when using the Set Position. If, however, in the umpire's judgment, a pitcher delivers the ball in a deliberate effort to catch the batter off guard, this delivery shall be deemed a quick pitch, for which the penalty is a ball. See Rule 6.02(a)(5) Comment.

With a runner or runners on base, a pitcher will be presumed to be pitching from the Set Position if he stands with his pivot foot in contact with and parallel to the pitcher's plate, and his other foot in front of the pitcher's plate, unless he notifies the umpire that he will be pitching from the Windup Position under such circumstances prior to the beginning of an at-bat. A pitcher will be permitted to notify the umpire that he is pitching from the Windup Position within an at-bat only in the event of (i) a substitution by the offensive team; or (ii) immediately upon the advancement of one or more runners (i.e., after one or more base runners advance but before the delivery of the next pitch).

* * *

(d) Throwing to the Bases

At any time during the pitcher's preliminary movements and until his natural pitching motion commits him to the pitch, he may throw to any base provided he disengages the rubber. The pitcher may not throw to an unoccupied base, except for the purpose of making a play or for purposes of an appeal.

Rule 5.07(d) Comment: The pitcher shall step off "ahead of the throw." A snap throw followed by the step off is a balk. When determining whether the pitcher throws to an unoccupied base for the purpose of making a play, the umpire should consider whether a runner on the previous base demonstrates or otherwise creates an impression of his intent to advance to such unoccupied base.

(e) Effect of Removing Pivot Foot From Plate

If the pitcher removes his pivot foot from contact with the pitcher's plate by stepping backward with that foot, he thereby becomes an infielder and if he makes a wild throw from that position, it shall be considered the same as a wild throw by any other infielder.

Rule 5.07(e) Comment: The pitcher, while off the rubber, may throw to any base. If he makes a wild throw, such throw is the throw of an infielder and what follows is governed by the rules covering a ball thrown by a fielder.

* * *

6.02 Pitcher Illegal Action

(a) Balks

If there is a runner, or runners, it is a balk when:

- (1) The pitcher, while touching his plate, makes any motion naturally associated with his pitch and fails to make such delivery;
- (2) The pitcher, while touching his plate, throws or feints a throw to any base;
- (3) The pitcher fails to disengage the rubber with his pivot foot before throwing to any base;

Rule 6.02(a)(3) Comment: Requires the pitcher to disengage the rubber with his pivot foot before throwing to any base. If a pitcher turns or spins off of his free foot without actually stepping off, or if he turns his body and throws before stepping off, it is a balk.

- (4) The pitcher, after stepping off, throws, or feints a throw to an unoccupied base, except for the purpose of making a play;

Rule 6.02(a)(4) Comment: When determining whether the pitcher throws or feints a throw to an unoccupied base for the purpose of making a play, the umpire should consider whether a runner on the previous base demonstrates or otherwise creates an impression of his intent to advance to such unoccupied base.

- (5) The pitcher makes an illegal pitch;

Rule 6.02(a)(5) Comment: A quick pitch is an illegal pitch. Umpires will judge a quick pitch as one delivered before the batter is reasonably set in the batter's box. With runners on base the penalty is a balk; with no runners on base, it is a ball. The quick pitch is dangerous and should not be permitted.

- (6) The pitcher delivers the ball to the batter while he is not facing the batter;
- (7) The pitcher makes any motion naturally associated with his pitch while he is not touching the pitcher's plate;
- (8) The pitcher unnecessarily delays the game;

Rule 6.02(a)(8) Comment: Rule 6.02(a)(8) shall not apply when a warning is given pursuant to Rule 6.02(c)(8) (which prohibits intentional delay of a game by throwing to fielders not in an attempt to put a runner out). If a pitcher is ejected pursuant to Rule 6.02(c)(8) for continuing to delay the game, the penalty in Rule 6.02(a)(8) shall also apply. Rule 5.07(c) (which sets a time limit for a pitcher to deliver the ball when the bases are unoccupied) applies only when there are no runners on base.

- (9) The pitcher, without having the ball, stands on or astride the pitcher's plate, or while off the plate feints a pitch;
- (10) The pitcher, after coming to a legal pitching position, removes one hand from the ball other than in an actual pitch, or in throwing to a base;
- (11) The pitcher, while touching his plate, accidentally or intentionally has the ball slip or fall out of his hand or glove;
- (12) The pitcher, while giving an intentional base on balls, pitches when the catcher is not in the catcher's box;
- (13) The pitcher delivers the pitch from Set Position without coming to a stop.

PENALTY: The ball is dead, and each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out, unless the batter reaches first on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter, or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk.

APPROVED RULING: In cases where a pitcher balks and throws wild, either to a base or to home plate, a runner or runners may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk.

APPROVED RULING: A runner who misses the first base to which he is advancing and who is called out on appeal shall be considered as having advanced one base for the purpose of this rule.

Rule 6.02(a) Comment: Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the balk rule is to prevent the pitcher from deliberately deceiving the base runner. For example, straddling the pitcher's rubber without the ball is to be interpreted as intent to deceive and ruled a balk. If there is doubt in the umpire's mind, the "intent" of the pitcher should govern.

* * *

Guidance to the ALPB Umpires and Clubs on Experimental section in Rules 5.07 & 6.02

- Experimental Rules 5.07(d) and 6.02(a)(3) state that a pitcher must disengage from the pitcher's plate prior to throwing to a base on a pick-off attempt.
 - For the purpose of this rule, to disengage from the pitcher's plate the pitcher must remove his pivot foot from the pitcher's plate and step backward completely behind the pitcher's plate. The pitcher is not permitted to throw to a base until his foot is in contact with the ground behind the pitcher's plate.

- The pitcher is permitted to disengage from the pitcher's plate without throwing to a base.
- The "inside move" is not permitted under these Experimental Rules.

Bunt Attempt with Two-Strikes

5.09 Making an Out

(a) Retiring the Batter

A batter is out when:

* * *

- (4) With two strikes, he bunts foul for the second time;

* * *

9.15 Strikeouts

A strikeout is a statistic credited to a pitcher and charged to a batter when the umpire calls three strikes on a batter, as set forth in this Rule 9.15.

- (a) The Official Scorer shall score a strikeout whenever a batter:

* * *

- (4) bunts foul on a second bunt with two strikes, unless such second bunt results in a foul fly caught by any fielder, in which case the Official Scorer shall not score a strikeout and shall credit the fielder who catches such foul fly with a putout.

Definition of Terms

* * *

A STRIKE is a legal pitch when so called by the umpire, which:

- (a) Is struck at by the batter and is missed;
- (b) Is not struck at, if any part of the ball passes through any part of the strike zone;

- (c) Is fouled by the batter when he has less than two strikes;
- (d) Is bunted foul (except on the first bunt attempt with two strikes);
- (e) Touches the batter as he strikes at it;
- (f) Touches the batter in flight in the strike zone; or
- (g) Becomes a foul tip.

Pitcher Must Complete Three Plate Appearances and Limitations on Visits to the Mound

5.10 Substitutions and Pitching Changes (Including Visits to the Mound)

* * *

- (g) If the pitcher is replaced, the substitute pitcher shall pitch to the batter then at bat, or any substitute batter, until such batter is put out or reaches first base, or until the half inning ends, unless the substitute pitcher sustains injury or illness which, in the umpire-in-chief's judgment, incapacitates him for further play as a pitcher.

The starting pitcher or any substitute pitcher is required to pitch to a minimum of three consecutive batters, including the batter then at bat (or any substitute batter), until such batters are put out or reach first base, or until the half inning ends, unless the starting pitcher or substitute pitcher sustains injury or illness which, in the umpire-in-chief's judgment, incapacitates him from further play as a pitcher.

* * *

(l) Visits to the Mound Requiring a Pitcher's Removal From the Game

* * *

Rule 5.10(l) Comment: If the manager or coach goes to the catcher or infielder and that player then goes to the mound or the pitcher comes to him at his position before there is an intervening play (a pitch or other play) that will be the same as the manager or coach going to the mound.

Any attempt to evade or circumvent this rule by the manager or coach going to the catcher or an infielder and then that player going to the mound to confer with the pitcher shall constitute a trip to the mound.

If the coach goes to the mound and removes a pitcher and then the manager goes to the mound to talk with the new pitcher, that will constitute a mound visit to that new pitcher that inning.

A manager or coach shall not be considered to have concluded his visit to the mound if he temporarily leaves the 18-foot circle surrounding the pitcher's rubber for purposes of notifying the umpire that a double-switch or substitution is being made.

(m) Limitation on the Number of Mound Visits Per Game

The following rule shall apply in Atlantic League games:

- (1) There shall be no mound visits, time-outs or conferences without a pitching change.
- (2) For purposes of this Rule 5.10(m), a manager, coach, or player trip to the mound to meet with the pitcher shall constitute a visit. A player leaving his position to confer with the pitcher, including a pitcher leaving the mound to confer with another player, shall also constitute a visit, regardless of where the visit occurs or the length of the visit. Visits by a manager, coach or player to join a mound visit already in progress shall not constitute an independent visit. In addition, the following shall not constitute visits:
 - (A) Discussions between pitchers and position player(s) that occur between batters in the normal course play and do not require either the position player(s) or the pitcher to relocate;
 - (B) Visits to the mound due to an injury or potential injury to the pitcher;
 - (C) Visits by position players to the mound after the announcement of an offensive substitution but prior to a subsequent pitch or play;
 - (D) Visits to the mound by position players that occur during a suspension of play pursuant to an umpire's call of "time" (*e.g.*, following an injury to an umpire or player; the presence of a spectator, object, or a member of the grounds crew on the field; a manager's initiation of Replay Review, *etc.*), provided that the mound visit does not otherwise delay a return to game action;
 - (E) Visits to the mound by position players after a home run, provided that the player returns to his position before the runner crosses home plate; and

- (F) Visits to the mound by position players during an inning break or pitching change, provided that the mound visit does not prevent the pitcher from complying with any applicable inning break or pitching change time limits.
- (3) Cross Up in Signs. In the event the home plate umpire determines that the catcher and pitcher did not have a shared understanding of the location or type of pitch that had been signaled by the catcher (otherwise referred to as a “cross up”), the home plate umpire may, upon request of the catcher, allow the catcher to make a brief mound visit without a pitching change..
- (4) Enforcement of Mound Visit Limits. A manager or coach who crosses the foul line on his way to the mound must make a pitching change, unless during the at-bat of a starting or substitute pitcher’s first three batters, in which case the pitcher shall continue to pitch to a minimum of three consecutive batters in accordance with Rule 5.10(g). If a manager or coach believes an exception to the mound visit rule applies, he must confer with the umpire prior to crossing the foul line. In circumstances in which a team is forced to make an unintended pitching change by operation of this Rule, and there is no relief pitcher warming up in the bullpen, the manager or coach who made a mound visit shall be subject to ejection from the game. The umpire may allow the substitute pitcher additional time to prepare to enter the game.

If a position player makes a visit he may be subject to ejection for failing to return to his position when instructed by the umpire; however, a mound visit by a position player as described above shall not require the removal of the pitcher.

Definition of Check Swing

8.02 Appeal of Umpire Decisions

- (a) Any umpire’s decision which involves judgment, such as, but not limited to, whether a batted ball is fair or foul, whether a pitch is a strike or a ball, or whether a runner is safe or out, is final. No player, manager, coach or substitute shall object to any such judgment decisions.
- (b) If there is reasonable doubt that any umpire’s decision may be in conflict with the rules, the manager may appeal the decision and ask that a correct ruling be made. Such appeal shall be made only to the umpire who made the protested decision.
- (c) If a decision is appealed, the umpire making the decision may ask another umpire for information before making a final decision. No umpire shall criticize, seek to reverse or interfere with another umpire’s decision unless asked to do so by the

umpire making it. If the umpires consult after a play and change a call that had been made, then they have the authority to take all steps that they may deem necessary, in their discretion, to eliminate the results and consequences of the earlier call that they are reversing, including placing runners where they think those runners would have been after the play, had the ultimate call been made as the initial call, disregarding interference or obstruction that may have occurred on the play; failures of runners to tag up based upon the initial call on the field; runners passing other runners or missing bases; etc., all in the discretion of the umpires. No player, manager or coach shall be permitted to argue the exercise of the umpires' discretion in resolving the play and any person so arguing shall be subject to ejection. Notwithstanding the foregoing, correction of a missed ball-strike count shall not be permitted after a pitch is thrown to a subsequent batter, or in the case of the final batter of an inning or game, after all infielders of the defensive team leave fair territory.

Rule 8.02(c) Comment: A manager is permitted to ask the umpires for an explanation of the play and how the umpires have exercised their discretion to eliminate the results and consequences of the earlier call that the umpires are reversing. Once the umpires explain the result of the play, however, no one is permitted to argue that the umpires should have exercised their discretion in a different manner.

The manager or the catcher may request the plate umpire to ask his partner for help on a half swing when the plate umpire calls the pitch a ball, but not when the pitch is called a strike. The manager may not complain that the umpire made an improper call, but only that he did not ask his partner for help. Field umpires must be alerted to the request from the plate umpire and quickly respond. Managers may not protest the call of a ball or strike on the pretense they are asking for information about a half swing.

Appeals on a half swing may be made only on the call of ball and when asked to appeal, the home plate umpire must refer to a base umpire for his judgment on the half swing. In making his ruling, the base umpire should determine whether the batter's wrists "rolled over" during an attempt to strike at the ball and, if not, call the pitch a ball. Should the base umpire call the pitch a strike, the strike call shall prevail. Appeals on a half swing must be made before the next pitch, or any play or attempted play. If the half swing occurs during a play which ends a half-inning, the appeal must be made before all infielders of the defensive team leave fair territory.

Baserunners must be alert to the possibility that the base umpire on appeal from the plate umpire may reverse the call of a ball to the call of a strike, in which event the runner is in jeopardy of being out by the catcher's throw. Also, a catcher must be alert in a base stealing situation if a ball call is reversed to a strike by the base umpire upon appeal from the plate umpire.

The ball is in play on appeal on a half swing.

On a half swing, if the manager comes out to argue with first or third base umpire and if after being warned he persists in arguing, he can be ejected as he is now arguing over a called ball or strike.

* * *