



SOFTBALL UMPIRE MECHANICS

1. **TIMING:** Be consistent; allow wait time on all plays so you have built in time on bang-bang plays—this will allow you time to “replay” the play in your mind and make the best call.
2. **SET POSITION:**
 - Feet—shoulder-width apart
 - Right foot slightly behind the left foot (almost parallel)
 - Balance—don't be off balance
 - Be Comfortable
3. **PLATE MECHANICS:**
 - Behind the catcher
 - Looking over “inside” part of the plate
 - Eyes at the TOP of the strike zone
 - Move into set position when pitcher separates hands
 - Getting set too early will tire you out (& give strain your back)
 - Don't move around when the ball is in flight
 - Call pitch after ball is in catcher's glove, NOT while it's crossing the plate
 - Call pitch from set position with consistent timing and be LOUD so there is no questions what the call was
 - Signal pitch in upright position
 - On batted ball, run to the left of the catcher and trail the runner
 - Eliminates umpire interference and collisions
4. **CALLING STRIKES:**
 - Strike Zone—Knees to armpits—as ball crosses the plate (NOT as it passes the batter—i.e. front vs. back of batter's box)
 - Verbal call first—from set position (STRIKE!—not “Strike 2”—no #)
 - Signal second—upright position
 - Right arm, 90° angle with palm of hand facing ear, closed fist, elbow slightly in front of arm/wrist.
 - Left arm—across chest/stomach
 - NO verbal when batter obviously swings and misses (if questionable as to whether the batter “committed” or “checked”, either point and signal or indicate “on the swing” and signal)



5. CALLING BALLS:

- Verbal "Ball" (no #) from set position (LOUD—especially on "close" pitches)
- No signal

6. FOUL BALL/FAIR BALL:

- FOUL: Verbal/Signal—same time
 - Both hands/arms upright
 - "FOUL BALL"
- FAIR: POINT ONLY—toward fair territory—NO VERBAL CALL!
- If "close" (down the line):
 - Move 1/3 way down 1st-3rd baseline
 - Straddle the line
 - Point Fair/Foul (especially if fly ball) first
 - THEN if foul, give verbal call and signal
 - If Fair, point when ball lands in fair territory and it stops moving (i.e.—sits in front of the plate)
 - If players and coaches don't know if it's fair or foul, point & "pump" (pointing repeatedly) to reinforce the fair ball call
 - Point as soon as the ball is touched (1st Touch) when the ball is within fair territory before it reaches/passes 1st or 3rd base OR when it is "1st touched" in fair territory prior to reaching 1st or 3rd base (ball in relationship with the line)
 - Position of the defensive player has nothing to do with fair/foul ball
 - 1st Touch:
 - touched (not necessarily caught) by player
 - ball touches ground
 - NEVER call from behind the plate (unless fouled straight back)



7. DEAD BALL:

- Verbal/Signal at same time
 - Verbal: "DEAD BALL"
 - Signal: same as foul ball
- Anytime the ball leaves the playing area (enters dead ball territory)
- Foul ball that hits fence (top, back, or "base" fences)—ball cannot be caught once it hits fence
- Verbal/Signal, then award bases if it applies

8. SAFE:

- Try to get to pitcher's mound (goal is to be 2/3 way down baseline to make call on bases)
- If near pitching area, you are equidistant from all bases (so if players "surprise" you, you are still in a good position to make call at ANY base)
- Once in good position (location), get in set position:
 - View play
 - TIMING!
 - Ball control, foot on bag (look from bottom-up, not top-down!), runner
 - Make call (verbal/signal—same time)
 - Elbows out, fingertips together, thumbs in toward chest, extend arms outward, then bring hands back in toward chest, resume set position
 - When ball is "controlled" by pitcher in 8 foot radius, call "TIME" (verbal TIME with foul/dead ball signal), then return to the plate

9. OUT:

- Vicinity of pitcher's mound
- Good position (location)
- Set position
 - View play
 - Ball control, foot on bag, runner
 - Make call
 - Verbal/signal—same time
 - Verbal "OUT"
 - Signal—same as strike signal
 - Ball "controlled" by pitcher, call TIME, and return to plate



10. TIME OUT:

- Foul/Dead ball signal with verbal "TIME"
- Between plays
 - Pitcher must have ball in 8 foot radius
 - All runners must be on a base
 - Can't call time if runners are still running
 - Time can be called if runner is delaying game when catcher has ball (i.e. when runner and catcher are in a "stare down" and no one will make a move—call TIME)
- Between pitches, arm straight up with palm facing pitcher (opposite arm from batter—right hand for right-handed batters, left hand for left-handed batters)

11. PLAY BALL:

- Signal/Verbal—same time
- Signal—point to pitcher
- Verbal—"PLAY BALL" or "PLAY"

12. DELAYED DEAD BALL:

- Left arm, with closed fist, extended straight out to side
- Allow play to finish, then if necessary, call DEAD BALL and give option or issue penalty/award bases
- Use for:
 - Obstruction
 - Interference
 - Illegal pitches

