



# Most Misunderstood Rules of Softball Revised 2017

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## *Ayr Minor Softball Association*

*Learn the correct interpretation for common situations and how to handle them when they occur in a game*

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## Who Needs Rules?!?

Hello Coaches,

Thank you for volunteering to coach with the Ayr Minor Softball Association. Your time and effort is invaluable and the reason we are able to provide a positive sporting experience for so many kids!

The information in this document will help you to understand the most misunderstood rules in our game. These rules and interpretations are taken from the Softball Canada Rulebook and Umpire Casebook. It is important that you as a coach not only know the rules but also know how to communicate about them with the umpires in a game. The correct approach can be the difference in a game and also shape how your players see the game, their coaches and the officials.

Have a great season and have FUN!

Ken Sherk

Ayr Minor Softball Association

Player Development Coordinator

## Umpire communication tips

- Always assume the umpire has every intention of calling the game fairly.
- Don't try to appeal by talking or yelling from the bench. After ensuring time is called, approach the umpire.
- When appealing a call approach calmly and remain calm.
- Attempt to keep the conversation between you and the umpire. Nobody else needs to know what you are discussing. It is much easier for an umpire to ask his partner for help if he has not just been publically called out.
- Avoid face-to-face posture. Umpires will be more responsive if you turn slightly to the side while discussing.
- Don't exaggerate. You lose credibility immediately when you do this.
- Accept the final decision and move on to your next coaching task.
- Do not accept any umpire abuse from your players or spectators. Make it clear it will not be tolerated.
- Do not show up an umpire or publicly highlight clear mistakes
- Never bring a rule book on the field to the discussion (see point above). This is grounds for ejection from the game. Do have a rulebook on hand for your own reference if unsure about a rule. Umpires are responsible for knowing the rules but especially with newer umpires there may be mistakes. They are required to make the call to the best of their ability but must do so of their own accord, not by checking a rulebook at that time.

## **Common Rule Misinterpretations**

The following list covers some of the most misunderstood or misapplied rules in the game of softball. As a coach it is your responsibility to know and understand the rules of the game and it is therefore recommended that you read the rule book cover to cover at least once per year. This section will help you better understand and know how to handle situations you may find yourself in during games.

### **A few general notes:**

- **The decision of the umpire will be final. Questioning the judgment, fairness or ability of an umpire is unsportsmanlike and will not be tolerated.**
- **All communications with the umpires shall be done in a respectful manner**
- **Understand the rules of the game so you can discuss them intelligently.**
- **You are responsible for your spectators and their behaviour. Ensure they understand their responsibilities and they do not engage in any communication towards the umpires.**

The following items are meant as a quick reference guide but they reflect the official Softball Canada Rule Book 2015-16.

Be aware that tournaments or playdowns may have alternate or additional rules which should be supplied to you prior to the competition.

# Appeals and Protests

## Appeal Situations

An appeal play is a play upon which an umpire cannot make a decision until requested by a manager, coach or player of either team.

There are only 11 types of appeals that may be made.

- Missing a base
- Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched
- Batting out of order
- Attempting to advance to second base after making a turn at first base
- Illegal pitcher returning to the game as a pitcher
- Illegal substitutions
- Illegal re-entry
- Hitting a ball with an illegal or altered bat
- Making a play with an illegal glove
- Replacement player or returning withdrawn player not reporting to the umpire
- Runners switching positions on bases they occupy

Any other situation is not an appeal. There is no legal method to challenge a judgement call (throw beats runner, strike/ball, fair/foul). While other situations are not appeals you may approach an umpire at any time to ask for clarification on a ruling

There are two types of appeals.

1. Live Ball Appeal – happens while the ball is still in play and before an umpire calls “TIME!”

Some potential situations could include:

- Runner leaving base early on caught fly ball
- Runner missing a base
- Batting out of order

A live ball appeal must be made by a player on the infield. For a runner leaving a base early or missing a base your players may either tag the runner or the base in question. According to the rules the player must indicate to the umpire why they are making the appeal verbally (ex. “She left the base early!”) For most situations the reason is clear and the umpire will simply grant the appeal without any verbal indication but it is good practice to teach players to make the indication.

2. Dead Ball Appeal – happens after a play has been declared dead by the umpire. Some plays may cause the ball to become dead immediately.
  - Offensive Interference
  - Ball out of play

Any play eligible for a live ball appeal can also be appealed on a dead ball as long as a pitch has not been thrown to another batter or the entire infield defense has left the playing area at the end of an inning.

If you wish to make a dead ball appeal you should first ensure time is called. Approach the umpire and say that you would like to appeal the call. You must specifically state what it is that you are appealing (ex. "Runner left third base before fly ball was touched"). The appeal must be made to the umpire responsible for making the call. If you are unsure which umpire then approach the home plate umpire first and he will redirect you if needed. There is no need for the ball to be put into play for a dead ball appeal. This was the case many years ago but is not currently part of the rules.

Any time a coach addresses an umpire it should be done in a professional and calm matter. Anger and disrespect all reflect poorly on the coach, team, organization and community. Always approach umpires in a non-confrontation manner and state your reason clearly and without exaggeration. An example of poor form would be yelling "He was 3 steps off the base before the ball was even touched!". If the umpire states that he did not see the play in question you may request that he consults with the other umpire in case that official had a better/different view of the play. The umpire is under no obligation to honour this request but most will do it if for no other reason than to end the discussion.

The umpire will give you a ruling on the play and at that point it is official. Accept the call and move on.

There will always be bad calls in the game but it is our responsibility as coaches to treat them as part of the experience and learn from them. Any responsible umpire will also review the questioned play themselves when they have an opportunity after the game.

## Protest Situations

A protest is a method of objecting to an umpire's decision based solely on whether it misinterprets or misapplies a rule or fails to impose the correct penalty for a given violation. Protests carry significant consequences for both sides and should therefore only be used when absolutely necessary. It is the strong recommendation of AMSA that protests not be used at any level other than provincial qualifying events. Many tournaments do not allow protests. The best course of action if you believe you would have a valid protest is to ask the umpire if he will confer with his partner to ensure they have the rule interpretation correct. This may or may not be granted but often results in the umpires coming to the correct call.

If you do intend to file a protest you must notify the plate umpire before the next pitch is thrown (legal or illegal). Once a pitch has been thrown any decision by the umpire will stand and a protest will not be allowed. Protests must be filed in writing to the governing league/association and must include a full documenting of the circumstances (inning, score, outs, etc.)



The only exception to the next pitch requirement is when the protest involves eligibility of a team roster member and that must be taken up with the governing body responsible for the game, not the umpire. This protest may be made at any time.

# Pitching

## Illegal Pitch

As a coach you should learn the pitching rules and understand their application. This is an area that most umpires are reluctant to interject unless it is severe. Generally, unless a pitcher is gaining a distinct advantage from the action it will not be called.

Typical complaints about pitchers being illegal include:

- No pause between bringing hands together and starting pitching motion (1-10 seconds)
- Stride foot stepping back behind pitching plate
- Two feet not on pitching plate to start delivery
- Leaping (both feet off ground simultaneously)
- Crow Hopping (landing on push foot then pushing forwards again from that foot prior to releasing the ball)

If you believe there is an illegal action by the pitcher and it is having a significant impact on the play of the game then you should discretely bring it up with the umpire (preferably between innings). Simply state that you feel the pitcher is getting an unfair advantage from this specific action and you would appreciate if it can be addressed. Typically the umpire, if in agreement, will talk to the offending coach and/or pitcher. Do not pursue it any further and avoid letting it become a distraction for your players. Tell them they need to find a way to get the better of the pitcher no matter what he is doing. While we expect all players to act within the letter and spirit of the rules the important skills being developed in minor sport include dealing with adversity and sometimes with unfairness. Turning a game into a confrontational experience is rarely in the best interest of the participants.

## Pitcher's Circle

The Pitcher's Circle is the area within an 8' radius of the front middle of the pitcher's plate - the lines are considered within the circle.

The common misconception is that if the ball is thrown back to the pitcher and he has it in his possession in the pitcher's circle before the batter-runner reaches first base that the batter-runner must stop at first base.

Even though the ball may be in the pitcher's possession in the pitcher's circle, the batter-runner:

- May continue past first base.
- Is entitled to run toward second base, as long as he does not stop on first base.
- Once the runner makes a stop, he must immediately proceed to the next base or return to his base UNLESS the pitcher makes a play (including a fake throw) on the runner or another runner.

If the runner stops and simply stands there off the base while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made - "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF".

If the runner stops and then makes a move in more than one direction immediately after the stop while the pitcher has possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle and no play is made "DEAD BALL - RUNNER IS OUT - LEAD-OFF"

Points of Emphasis:

- The pitcher cannot force the first stop by a runner merely by having possession of the ball in the pitcher's circle. Put another way - the runner is allowed one stop - as soon as he stops he must make a decision immediately to either advance or return.
- A play on the runner (including a fake throw) nullifies any penalty - put another way, every fake throw allows the runner one more stop.

Definition of a "Play on the runner" is at the discretion of the umpire. As a coach you are entitled to ask for an explanation of how the ruling was made and formally appeal if you believe the rule was not properly applied.

## Hitting

### Batted Ball Hitting Home Plate or Any Other Base

#### Home Plate

- A batted ball remains alive and in play when it strikes home plate: This is a common misconception - many, many years ago when a batted ball struck home plate it was declared a dead ball. Home plate is also dead in the game of Slo-pitch Softball.
- In the event that a batted ball comes to rest on home plate, it shall be ruled a fair ball and the plate umpire shall signal accordingly.
- Remember, the fair/foul lines come to the back point of home plate so the plate is entirely in fair territory.

#### First (white portion only) or Third Base

- When properly installed, first and third base are positioned on the diamond completely in fair territory.
- Once a batted ball strikes first or third base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball regardless of where the ball ends up.
- Once the ball touches first or third base it does not have to pass the base, touching the base is all that is required to make it a fair ball.

#### Second Base

- Once a batted ball strikes second base without having been first touched by a player, the batted ball shall be ruled a fair ball.

### Batter's Box Infractions

#### Stepping on Home Plate

- The batter is out if any part of his foot is touching home plate when the bat contacts the ball; the ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play

#### Stepping outside of batter's box

- The batter is out if his foot is completely outside the lines of the batter's box and touching the ground when the bat contacts the ball
- The ball is dead and runners may not advance on the play.

#### Points of Emphasis:

- There is no penalty unless the batter makes contact with the ball.
- The position of the foot must be judged at the time the bat makes contact with the ball - if the foot is in the air and then comes down on the ground after the ball is hit, there is no penalty. This is extremely hard for an umpire to determine when he is watching the ball coming into the hitting zone so don't expect it to be called often.
- With the exception of the foot touching home plate, the foot must be completely outside the lines of the batter's box - touching any part of the lines is acceptable as the lines are part of the box

- The same penalty applies whether the batted ball is fair or foul - “Dead Ball” is called as soon as the batter makes contact with the ball.

This call is at the discretion of the umpire and can be influenced by inconsistencies of field preparation. Some batter’s boxes may be incorrectly sized or positioned. If in doubt, discuss with the umpire.

#### Staying in the batter’s box

- A new rule in 2013 required the batter to maintain one foot in the batter’s box between pitches. This requirement was waived if the batter swung at the prior pitch or was somehow forced out of the box due to the pitch or subsequent play by the defense or baserunners.
- The penalty is a strike call to the batter. This penalty is entirely up to the discretion of the umpire.
- The intent is to keep the game moving without long delays by batters so it is hoped the penalty would be very rarely enforced and players would cooperate in keeping the game moving.
- Umpires may still be learning how to apply this rule so, please be patient and if you have concerns with the application of the rule you should discuss it with them.

## Check Swing

If it is the plate umpire’s judgment that the batter made an attempt to swing at the ball, the plate umpire shall call the pitched ball a strike. A strike call is an affirmative call and may NOT be appealed to the base umpire.

However, if the batter attempted to swing at the ball but the plate umpire did not see the attempt (perhaps blocked out by the catcher) then a ball shall be called. With this call, the plate umpire does have the opportunity to check with his base umpire(s) with or without a request from the defensive team. The plate umpire may make the request on his own or may choose to make the request when asked to do so by the defensive team.

The base umpire shall only answer a check swing request made by the plate umpire - they do not respond to a request made directly to them by a defensive player. Teach your catcher to make the request of the home plate umpire.

Note that there is no physical definition for what constitutes a swing. It is simply a judgment by the umpire that the batter “attempted” to bat the ball. Arguments about the bat crossing home plate or the wrists breaking should not be used as they only demonstrate to the umpire that you are not familiar with the rules of the game.

## Foul Tips

A foul tip is a batted ball which:

- Goes directly from the bat to the catcher's hand(s); and
- Does not go higher than the batter's head; and
- Is legally caught by the catcher.

Note:

- It is *not* a foul tip unless caught; and
- Any foul tip that is caught is a strike.
- The ball is in play.
- It is not a catch if it is a rebound, *unless* the ball first touched the catcher's hand(s) or glove (ex. **Ball tips off catcher's glove**, then umpire's mask, into the air and is then caught by the catcher – this is still a foul tip)

Point of Emphasis:

A foul tip is treated the same as any pitch that was not touched by the bat and the ball is live.

## Hands are Not Part of the Bat

If a batter is hit with a pitch on the hands, it is simply a dead ball and the batter is awarded first base. Any time a batter is hit, it is ALWAYS a dead ball. If the batter is swinging and the ball contacts his hands first, it is a DEAD BALL/ STRIKE. If the ball contacts the batter in the strike zone...same result – if it is the third strike in either of these cases – the batter is out.

## Uncaught third strike (U12 and above only)

An out is not recorded on a strikeout until one of the following has occurred.

- The pitch has been caught legally (without touching the ground) by the catcher
- The batter-runner has been tagged while not on a base
- First base has been legally tagged by a fielder before the batter-runner reaches it safely
- First base is occupied at the time of the pitch and there are less than two outs

Until one of these conditions is met after a third strike is called the ball is live and the batter-runner may run to first base. All regular running rules apply for any baserunners. With two outs the batter-runner will force any runner on first base to advance. Instruct your catchers that on a dropped third strike with the bases loaded all runners are forced to advance and the third out can be recorded by touching home plate before the runner safely reaches it.

## Baserunning

### Base Line vs Base Path

Pay close attention to the terminology in this item. Key terms are in bold for emphasis.

There are only two **base lines** on a softball field and their purpose is simply to determine a fair or foul ball. They have no effect on baserunners except as it pertains to the running lane at first (see below).

The **base path** is an imaginary line that is drawn between a baserunner and the base they are advancing towards. This imaginary line is defined **at the moment in time when a defender begins to make an attempt to tag out the runner** (defender must have control of the ball at this time).

From the time a base path is established the runner may not step more than 3 feet from this line **to avoid a tag**. Doing so results in being called OUT.

This rule is very commonly misunderstood by players, coaches and umpires alike. If you believe it has been misapplied it is grounds for protest. It is recommended to ask the following of the umpire: When was the base path established? How far did the runner go out from the established base path? The answers to these questions are both umpire judgments however they can lead to the rule being applied incorrectly. You may ask the umpire to consult with his partner however, once the call has been confirmed you have no further recourse beyond protesting the game.

### Infield fly

An infield fly is intended to protect the offensive team from the defense intentionally allowing a short fly ball to drop thereby gaining more than one out. Since runners must retreat to the base previously occupied at the time of the pitch after a caught fly ball they are most likely to stay close to that base when the ball is expected to be caught. If a fielder allows the ball to drop they could pick it up and force out runners who are far from the next base.

The protection for this is to have the batter declared out before the ball is caught. When this happens the runners are no longer forced to advance if the ball is not caught.

This call involves several subjective decisions by the umpires and is rarely able to be appealed.

Requirements for an Infield Fly:

- Runners on first and second base OR first, second and third base.
- Less than 2 out.
- Not a bunt.
- Not a line drive.
- Can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort this includes the pitcher, catcher or any outfielder positioned in the infield.

In an infield fly situation, prior to the first pitch of the at bat, the umpires should give the infield fly signal to each other. When it becomes apparent that a batted ball is an infield fly (typically

when the ball reaches its' highest point and is just on its' way down) the plate umpire shall declare "INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR - THE BATTER IS OUT"

Once an Infield Fly is declared:

- if the hit becomes a foul ball, no penalty, treat like any other foul ball
- if the hit remains a fair ball the batter is out regardless of whether the ball is caught or not and the ball remains alive
- the runners may advance at their own risk
- if the fly ball is caught, they must tag up
- if the fly ball is not caught, they can choose to advance but as the batter has already been declared out there is no force play

If you believe the call is not correct you may ask the umpire for clarification. Appeals may not be made on judgments of the umpire. You should ask for confirmation that the play met all of the criteria listed above for an infield fly.

## Intentional Dropped Ball

An intentional dropped ball shall be called when, with less than two out and any time a runner is on first base, a fielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball (including a line drive or a bunt) that could be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort after it is controlled with a hand or a glove. A trapped ball, or a fly ball allowed to bounce shall *not* be considered as having been intentionally dropped.

Effect: the ball is dead and the runners must return to last base held at the time of the pitch.

Note: if an infield fly is ruled, it has precedence over an intentionally dropped ball.

## Interference/ Obstruction

This is a very complex subject and it is recommended that you read the rulebook carefully for a full understanding. Here are some general notes.

Interference:

- Typically an act by an offensive player (also possible to have umpire interference and spectator interference)
- Results in "Dead Ball" being called (exception - umpire interference).
- Results in an out if by an offensive player.
- Common misconception – There is no catcher's interference in softball, it is actually catcher's obstruction.

Obstruction:

- Is an act by a defensive player.
- Results in a delayed dead ball. Umpire holds a clenched fist with a straight arm out from his body parallel to the ground to indicate.
- Award is determined at the end of the play (exception - if the obstructed runner is called out, then play is immediately stopped to make the award).



- An obstruction call does not entitle the obstructed runner to keep attempting to advance until played upon.
- An obstructed runner cannot be called out between the bases where obstruction was called.
- Umpires must determine how far the runner could reasonably have reached had the obstruction not occurred. They may award the runner bases up to that point but the call is discretionary. After a runner has reached that point during a live play they are no longer protected by the rule. It is the responsibility of the player to understand when they are at risk to be put out. The umpire should not give any indication of where the award will be while play is live.

Note:

- A fielder in the act of fielding a batted ball has the right of way. Runners must avoid interfering with the ability of the fielder to field the batted ball.
- A fielder NOT in the act of fielding a batted ball may not obstruct a baserunner.
- Any intentional contact may result in a player (offense or defense) being called out and possibly ejected from the game.

Contact does not always mean interference or obstruction occurred. There is such a thing as incidental contact - two players both unsure of where to go and contact is made. Rule 8.10(c) states that the runner is not out when more than one fielder attempts to field a batted ball and the runner comes in contact with the one who, in the umpire's judgment, was not entitled to field the ball.

## Left Hand Turn from First

A runner forfeits his exemption from liability to be put out if, after overrunning first base, he makes an attempt to run to second base.

The key to this rule is continuation to second base. There must be at least an attempt towards second base. It does not matter which direction the batter-runner turns after reaching first base if they are coming back to first base without attempting to advance to second base. Determination of whether there was an "attempt" is up to the judgement of the umpire.

## Missed Bases

Missed bases by runners are appeal plays and are not to be called by umpires except on a valid live or dead ball appeal by the defense. Tagging a runner who missed a base is considered a live ball appeal (see Item 1 of this list).

Live ball appeals require a verbal indication of what is being appealed. Teach your players to announce to the umpire why they are tagging a runner or the base (ex. "He left the base early") When a runner misses a base and continues to the next there will be no indication from the umpire. They cannot call an out unless you properly appeal. By the rules of softball a runner is

considered to have reached a base safely simply by passing by it. He is however at risk of being put out on appeal until he does touch it.

When home plate is missed the umpire will delay the call for a few seconds. If no appeal is made immediately he will indicate safe. **This is not an error, it is proper umpire mechanics!** The call is still eligible for a legal appeal. As a coach you should watch the umpire for the hesitation on the “safe” call at home.

## Runner Hit by Batted Ball

This is a rule that is half understood by everyone but fully understood by few. If a runner is hit by a batted ball when not in contact with a base he will be declare OUT. The misunderstanding comes in the exceptions to this rule.

- Even a runner in contact with a base can be called out if determined to have *intentionally* interfered with the ability of the defense to make a play.
- Once a batted ball has passed an infielder (other than the pitcher) and no other player has a chance to make a play the runner is no longer automatically out. Once again intentional interference could result in an out being called. Example: Runner on first and F3 playing in front of base. Batter hits ball that goes past F3 and hits runner (who either didn't see the ball or attempted to avoid it) on the way to second. If no other infielder is in a position to make a play the ball remains alive and runners may continue to advance.

You may ask for clarification on the ruling however if the umpire determines that the criteria for the hit runner have been met the call will stand. If the umpire is not aware of the exceptions you may ask him/her to consult with a partner.

## Running Lane to First Base

The softball field markings should include a zone 3 feet wide on the foul side of the first base line starting half way to first and ending at the base. This lane is intended to prevent the batter-runner from intentionally running off course to interfere with a defensive fielder receiving a throw at first base as well as to provide the umpire with a standard frame of reference for interference calls.

The batter-runner is never under any obligation to run in the running lane, however:

- If there is a throw to first base which hits the runner while the runner is outside of this lane the runner may be called OUT.
- As long as the runner is within the running lane they are protected from this OUT call unless he is deemed to have intentionally interfered with the defense receiving a throw.
- Any part of the body outside the outer edges of the lines is considered “out of the lane”
- Defensive team is only protected if a throw is attempted and the receiving player is prevented from being able to make a catch. Wild throws that are not catchable by the receiver or throws not attempted will not be governed by the running lane rule.

Teach your players that when there is expected to be a play at first to run in the lane.

## Safety base

The Double Base is used at first base with the orange portion in foul territory and the white portion in fair territory. A batted ball striking any portion of the white/fair side is declared a fair ball, a batted ball striking the orange/foul portion only is declared a foul ball

The defensive player (typically the first baseman) must use only the white/fair portion of the base at all times. (see only exception below)

The offensive player must use only the orange/foul portion of the base on his first attempt at first base when a play is being made on him/her. This includes when the batter-runner runs on a dropped third strike. (see only exception below)

On a ball hit to the outfield with no play being made at first base, the offensive player may touch either portion of the base on his *first* attempt at first base.

Once an offensive player has touched the orange/foul portion of the base on his first attempt at first base, he must then use the white/fair portion of the base:

- when returning to the base after overrunning first base
- when taking his position prior to the next pitch
- when tagging up on a fly ball

Points of Emphasis:

- the defensive player - when he is required to use the white/fair portion, provided any portion of his foot is touching any portion of the white/fair portion of the base, he is considered to be in contact with the base
- the offensive player - when he is required to use the orange/foul portion, provided any portion of his foot is touching any portion of the orange/foul portion of the base, he is considered to be in contact with the base
- once the offensive player has made his first attempt at first base, for simplicity sake the orange/foul portion of the base no longer exists for him/her

Exception (introduced 2013)

- On any live ball play made from first base foul territory, the batter-runner and the defensive player may use either base. When the defensive player uses the foul portion of the double base, the batter-runner can run in fair territory and if hit by a throw from the foul side of first base, it would not be interference (unless it is an intentional act like throwing up their arms etc.)
- Allowing the first baseman to use the orange bag when a ball comes from first base side of foul territory may avoid collisions. It should be clear the runner or the fielder can use either base on a ball fielded on the foul side of first base. Both the runner and fielder could be touching the same base. If the fielder uses the orange base in this situation and the runner makes contact with the fielder it is interference on the runner. If both

players use the white portion and the fielder causes the runner to hold up or change direction it is obstruction on the fielder.

- If you believe the exception rule was incorrectly applied you should ask for clarification on where the ball was thrown from, which base the batter-runner and fielder were entitled to and if the revised 2013 rule was applied correctly to this situation. If an umpire declares a runner out for touching the incorrect base when there is no expectation of a play at first that call may be protested.
- If an umpire calls a runner out for touching both bases simultaneously, that call could be protested.

## Fielding

### Fair Batted Ball Going Out of Play

When a fair ball bounces out of play, including if it deflects off a defensive player, the umpire shall declare “Dead Ball” as soon as the ball goes out of play.

- All runners shall be awarded two bases.
- The award is based on their position at the time of the pitch - not at the time that the ball went out of play.
- The award is the same regardless of where the ball actually goes out of play.
- In some situations this rule could actually end up bringing runners backwards.
- On a long rolling ground ball that goes out of play and the batter is already past second base - the batter goes back to second base.
- Same play, runner starting at first base is already past third base and on their way to score when the batted ball goes out of play, the runner is returned to third base.

This is very similar to the overthrow rule. The main difference is that the two base award is applied from the time of the throw, not when the ball leaves the playing area. For example, a line drive that lands in fair territory but rolls out of bounds (field with no fence down the line) all runners are awarded two bases from the time of the pitch, regardless of how many bases they may have been able to reach if the ball stayed in play.

### Overthrows

The common misconception with this rule is the old rule of “one plus one,” a rule that was changed long ago. The correct ruling is that when a thrown ball goes out of play (beyond the established boundary lines of the playing field)

- all runners, including the batter-runner shall be awarded two bases from the last base legally touched **at the time that the thrown ball left the fielder’s hand**
- if there are two runners between the same bases, the award is based on the position of the lead runner

Keys to remember with this rule:

- the award is based on their position at the time the throw was made, not at the time that the ball went out of play – difficult to call on a very long overthrow from the outfield
- the award is two bases from the last base legally touched - if a runner is returning to first base to tag up on a fly ball, they will still be awarded two bases which is second base and third base as the last base that they had legally touched was first base

This rule applies regardless of who threw the ball or from where except **it does not apply to pitched balls!**

A pitched ball leaving the playing area without being touched by the offense is a “Blocked Ball”. One base is awarded to all runners from the time of the pitch. Be aware that there may be local or league specific rules that are different but those should be covered in the pre-game ground rules conference with the umpires. This is often the case with fields lacking complete or adequate fencing.

## **Additional Resources**

For any softball related questions feel free to contact the AMSA Player Development Coordinator.

There are many different rulesets employed around the world. Whenever consulting a resource, be sure to confirm which ruleset is being applied. We use the Softball Canada Rules which are derived from the International Softball Federation Rules.

### **Publications:**

Softball Canada Rule Book 2015-2016 (provided to all AMSA coaches)

Softball Canada Umpire Casebook (available for purchase through Softball Canada)

### **Websites:**

#### **Governing Bodies**

Softball Canada: [www.softball.ca](http://www.softball.ca)

Softball Ontario: [www.softballontario.ca](http://www.softballontario.ca)

Ontario Rural Softball Association (ORSA): [www.ontarioruralsoftball.ca](http://www.ontarioruralsoftball.ca)

Ontario Amateur Softball Association: [www.oasa.ca](http://www.oasa.ca)

Provincial Womens Softball Association of Ontario: [www.ontariopwsa.com](http://www.ontariopwsa.com)

#### **Softball Discussion/Chat**

DiscussFastpitch.com: [www.discussfastpitch.com](http://www.discussfastpitch.com)

Discussion board for discussion about the sport (primarily USA girls fastpitch)