



2026
MOA SOFTBALL STUDY
CLUB LESSON #1

Name _____

Lesson _____

Date _____

Review and discuss the following **2026 Rule Changes for Softball** and the information concerning this change for softball. (Please see comments on the rules change in the Rule Book, page 87 with comments (pg.3), for further information and rationale for each rule change.)

[2026 NFHS Softball Rules Changes](#)

1-8-6: No player shall transmit or record audio or video from the playing surface. New language further clarifies the use of electronic devices and what is not permitted.

Rationale: This change clearly defines the types of electronic devices prohibited by the rule.

Rule 8: Rule 8 has been reformatted for clarity. Changes have separated longer articles, and organized exceptions, penalties, and effects into outline format for improved comprehension.

Rationale: Added article references to PENALTIES and EFFECTS, and Section 4 was separated into two sections addressing runners entitled to advance with and without liability to be put out to delineate differences.

10-4-2: Effective January 1, 2027, heather gray umpire pants will no longer be permitted. NFHS umpire slacks may either be charcoal gray or navy blue. The heather gray option was stricken from the rules book.

Rationale: Manufacturers have discontinued producing heather gray umpire pants. This change will assist umpires in the purchase of pants that are currently being manufactured.

2026 Rules Changes –

Review and discuss the following information in the **NFHS Softball Preseason Guide 2026** concerning the new rule changes this year. New rule changes articles are on pages 1-2 of the Preseason Guide

2026 Major Editorial Revisions for Softball - Review

2026 SOFTBALL EDITORIAL CHANGES

1-6, 2-25-3, 3-2-3a & b, 3-2-5, 3-6-PENALTIES (Arts. 11 through 16), 4-3-1f & g, 4-3-2, 6-2-NOTE



2026 SOFTBALL POINTS OF EMPHASIS

The NFHS Softball Rules Committee has identified two points for emphasis this year. These points of emphasis will be discussed during the online Softball Rules Clinic but please review and discuss these points of emphasis as a group.

1. Obstruction
2. Maintaining an Unobstructed View

MHSA softball rules clarification - reminder:

Class AA Only

-Class AA programs are allowed to schedule variety and JV contests at the same time a maximum of four times during the regular season.

-Class AA players are allowed to participate in a maximum of 9 innings when JV and varsity contests are played at different times for a one-game series. Programs with low roster numbers may appeal to the MHSA to allow players to participate in more than 9 innings to provide JV opportunities.

It is recommended that Class AA programs play varsity contests first, followed by the JV game.

- Pitcher – 1st Base and 3rd Base Must Wear a Mask (they cannot participate without a mask)
- Pitcher – the starting varsity pitcher cannot pitch in the JV game.

New for 2026 - Junior varsity games played prior to varsity games; the following time limit shall apply: No new inning shall begin more than 1 hour and 45 minutes after the conclusion of the pre-game plate meeting.

No Buckets Allowed – MHSA Policy – it is against the rules of the game, and it is a huge liability issue – Do not allow coaches to sit on buckets (or be in) live ball areas giving signals.

Walk-Up Music - May be played in the regular season by the home team only if approved by the school's administration. Each team can choose their own approved music. Administrators should review the music to determine its appropriateness. Walk-up music should stop the moment the batter steps into the batter's box. Officials may order the music turned down or off if the music is inappropriate or is interfering with the orderly administration of the game.

Review the **Major Mechanics Changes (2026-2027 Two-Year Manual)** – this is the first year of this manual. This was sent to pools that requested and provided official numbers.

Previous Rule Changes - Review and discuss last year's rule changes, major editorial revisions, and major mechanics revisions. Were there any problems, concerns, or unusual situations caused by these changes?

Rules Changes 2025

1-8-6 EXCEPTION & PENALTY: A high school softball coach is now able to use electronic devices in the dugout for one-way communication to the catcher while the team is on defense. The penalty from Rule 3-6-11 was added to Rule 1-8-6 as well, with violators subject to ejection unless the offense is ruled to be of a minor nature.

Rationale: The committee has made these changes to support the use of emerging technology within the sport of softball. Being a permissive rule, the use of this one-way electronic communication will allow those who choose to embrace the technology an additional option to communicate with the catcher while on defense.



3-6-11: This rule change specifies that coaches are prohibited from using the device to communicate with any other team member while on defense or any team member while on offense and the coach cannot use the device outside the dugout/bench area.

Rationale: Clarifies that a coach may use an electronic device for one-way communication to the catcher while the team is on defense.

9-3-2b: When a baserunner who is declared out for being hit by a fair batted ball, the batter-runner is credited with a fielder's choice in the scorebook.

Rationale: This change corrects an error in the rules book that awarded a base hit in this instance.

Review Pitching Regulations and on pg. 49 -56 in the **2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book**

Concussion Law – Remember you must view the NFHS Concussion Course before umpiring any scrimmage or game (State Law and MOA Requirement). Review once again the MHSAA procedure for MOA officials to follow regarding these concussions and other injuries (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after the last Study Club).

- Remember you must view the NFHS Concussion Course: [Concussion in Sports Course](#) before umpiring any scrimmage or game (State Law and MOA Requirement).
- All courses must be completed June 1st or after each year. Review once again the MHSAA procedure for MOA officials to follow regarding these concussions and other injuries (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4).

DP/Flex Rule (this information is provided in the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4).

- NFHS DP/Flex PowerPoint has been provided to all Softball Pool Leaders.
- Additional information is found on the MHSAA Website at www.mhsa.org under softball/rules and regulations or click the this link [Softball - Home Page | Montana High School Association \(MT\)](#)
- 2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book Appendix H has been added to the Softball Rules Book – DP/Flex Simplified Reminders on pg.99.

In Addition, the following link provides information on new ways to teach the DP/Flex Rule: [NFHS New Approaches to DP/Flex](#)

Completed outline must be signed by all present and sent to the regional director by May 15, 2026



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CLUBS LESSON #2

NAME _____

LESSON _____

DATE _____

Various Topics - Discuss and review the following information on a variety of topics from the 2026 NFHS Softball Preseason Guide:

- Opening Day Coming in Hot – pg. 5
- Get Together and Fix It – pg. 6-7
- Softball Injury Surveillance Study – pg. 7-8
- Give 'Em the Option pg. 8
- Shade of Gray pg. 9-10
- High and Tight pg. 10-11
- Step and Reach pg. 11-12
- De-Fence Less pg. 13
- Storm Warning pg. 14-15
- Agree to Disagree pg. 15-16

Pitching Information –

Games hampered with light precipitation can often pose problems for pitchers, who are allowed to use a towel or approved drying agents to dry the pitching hand. An umpire’s judgment comes into play under a few wet-weather circumstances. A pitcher is allowed to use a towel, as long as, in the umpire’s judgment, it is not distracting to the batter. A towel that is tucked in the pitcher’s waist in front facing the batter and flopping around is likely to be more distracting than if it is tucked in her back pocket or in her waist in back. NFHS rules allow the pitcher to use powdered resin or any comparable drying agent to dry the hands. The resin applied to the pitcher’s hands and fingers does not have to be wiped off prior to throwing a pitch.

Pitchers may only use dirt, powdered rosin or comparable drying agents that are listed on the USA Softballs certified equipment webpage to dry the hand. [USA Softball Certified Equipment](#)

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2026
MOA SOFTBALL STUDY
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NAME _____

LESSON _____

DATE _____

Mechanics & More - Review the following information on mechanics and information that has been included in previous study clubs over the years regarding umpiring mechanics:

- Take time to access the information on the MOA Website regarding softball mechanics training.
- **Equipment** - Review and discuss your pregame meeting and what will be discussed and what is required (team equipment legal and uniforms properly worn) – remember head coaches must attend this meeting, and the game cannot continue until the head coach is present.
- **Ground Rules** - Review and discuss your procedures for communicating ground rules to each team at the pregame conference. Discuss with pool members the ground rules associated with each field your group works at during the season. **Please review Rule 4-1-3 – Ground Rules in the 2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book on pages 41.**
- **Signals-** Review the Official Softball Signals on page 91 of the 2026 NFHS Rules Book and the Signals and Descriptions on page 91 of the 2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book. All umpires need to use these signals and only these signals.
- **Unnecessary Signals Review the information on Unnecessary Signals contained in the Addendum after Study Club # 4.**

And: Please always take time to review and discuss all areas in the **Umpires Manual** — dealing with proper mechanics – proper mechanics are critical, and yearly review is necessary for rookie umpires but also very valuable for veteran umpires. The manual breaks down specific areas including responsibilities of the plate umpire and the field umpire and contains detailed explanations of different umpire systems.

- **Mechanics** - Review once again the plate mechanics information (this information is provided the addendum to these study clubs after Study Club # 4). The MHSA office continues to receive concerns from empires and teams regarding difficult weather conditions. Rain and impending darkness are two major culprits. High winds, lightning and thunder can be troublesome. Please review as a pool your procedures for determining when a game should be suspended or called for any condition. **Especially review the rules adopted three years ago that are listed below where regular season games suspended before 4 1/2 or 5 innings will be resumed from the point of interruption and do not start over:**

a. Games suspended before 4-1/2 or 5 innings because of weather (resume from the point of interruption).



- b. Games suspended before 4-1/2 innings that are tied (resume from the point of interruption).
- c. Games suspended before 4-1/2 or 5 innings because of darkness (resume from the point of interruption).

Guidelines on Handling Contests During Lightning Disturbances – on page 96 – Appendix E in the 2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book.

(Montana state adoptions regarding ending a game are listed in Study Club # 4).

Cancelled/postponed/rescheduled contests: The following is the pay information for umpires regarding cancelled/postponed/rescheduled contests:

E. If an official was not notified but was present to work a contest that was cancelled or postponed for reasons related to an act of God including, but not limited to, power failure, adverse weather, or hazardous road conditions, the officials must be paid at least half of the game fee plus all travel and per diem allowances. Contest(s) cancelled due to weather or act of God will be rescheduled using the same officials (if possible) and those officials will receive only travel and per diem allowances for the cancelled contest(s).

If different officials are used, officials will be paid all travel/per diem allowance and game fee. In regard to cancellations/postponements after the contest begins, officials that work one quarter (or its equivalent, **i.e. two full innings in softball**) or more will receive a full game fee and if the officials work less than one quarter, they will receive one half a game fee (lightning cancellations, power outages etc.).

F. If an official was not notified by a school that a contest date was changed or cancelled, but the official was present to work the contest as originally scheduled, the official must be paid a full game fee plus all travel and per diem allowances. This also applies when a team does not show up for the contest.

Communicable Disease and Skin Infection Procedures – with the emergence of MRSA and other blood borne infectious diseases please review the NFHS policy listed on page 95, Appendix D in the **2026 NFHS Softball Rules Book**.

Continuing Issues - Discuss as a group the most important rules that continue to surface throughout the season. Do they include the following? (add yours to the list also):

- DP/Flex
- Uniforms – Exposed Undergarments
- Jewelry Rule; NFHS adopted Jewelry Rule
- Interference / Obstruction
- Pitching – Illegal Pitcher
- Appeal Plays
- Look Back Rule
- Dead Ball – Delayed Dead Ball



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The National Federation allows states to alter certain rules – Review the following alterations that the MHSAA Executive Board has approved for adoption by our state:

Double first bases are mandatory – rules for utilizing the double first base have been moved back into the body of the rules. Please review Section 11 on page 76 of the Rules Book.

Game ending procedures (4-2-1): page 42 of the Rules Book, pg. 87 of the MHSAA Handbook – Softball Section.

Invitational Tournament - Employ a minimum 1 ½ hour time limit to end games at **invitational tournament**. Using a maximum time limit of 1 ½ hours can end games played at invitational tournaments. The game can be called if there is five minutes or less before the maximum time limit **or officials should not start a new inning after one hour and twenty minutes of play, except if a tie exists where NFHS Softball Rules for tiebreaking would be followed.**

Varsity and Sub-varsity games - will end after three (3) innings if a team is leading by (15) runs. Coaches **DO NOT** make the decision on game ending decisions.

Tie Breaker - Art. 5 pg. 43 (4-2-6) **Invitational tournaments** which use a tie breaking procedure shall follow the NFHS rules – beginning in the top of the eighth or at the time limit the last batter from the previous inning will be placed on second base at the beginning of each half inning with the game then proceeding in a normal manner until a winner is decided.

Review how your group will recommend (**rank**) umpires to the MHSAA office for the state tournaments. (Class AA – Missoula, Class A – Hamilton, Class B-C – Billings)

Review the selection process for **state tournament hiring**, which is found on pages 131 Letter H of the MOA Handbook.

Pool Discussions

Are there any specific problems in your area schools which should be addressed i.e. field concerns – especially safe playing surfaces and proper field markings, checks given late, security, game times, poor sportsmanship, etc.

What issues does your group believe are important universal issues that need to be addressed by all officials’ pools throughout the state? (Including rule or mechanics changes, MOA policy changes, etc.) Please submit to the MHSAA/MOA office any issues or any areas of concern that you would like included in clinics or study clubs.

Discuss your methods of evaluating fellow MOA members. Are the methods working properly and



positively? Should you start a method if you are not evaluating at the present time? Do these methods work for “upgrading How many prospective officials did you have in your pool this year? Discuss and evaluate your methods of recruitment and retention. There have been two different posters sent to each official as a part of our “Respect Officials Campaign”.

You have an obligation to read your [MOA Handbook](#). All officials should be aware of the governing body’s rules and regulations. Any changes you would like to see should be directed to your regional director for their Board meeting in June.

In evaluating your own (and possibly your pool’s collectively) performance this season and in preparation for umpiring high school softball next year review the following from your season:

- Judgment
- Mechanics and Technique
- Knowledge of the Rules
- Physical Conditioning
- Making Decisions Positively and Promptly
- Umpire Crew Cohesiveness
- Proper Mechanics
- Keeping the Game Moving
- Keeping a Dignified Attitude
- Making Decisions Based on Fact
- Rule Knowledge

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2025-2026 Softball Exam

The 2025 – 2026 Softball Exam has been provided directly to you local Pool Leaders or you may find it on the MOA Training section of the MHSAA website at [Montana Officials Association - Training Page | Montana High School Association \(MT\)](#) or

Click on the [MOA Softball Exam](#)

Completed outline **must** be signed by all present and sent to the regional director by May 15, 2026



2026 MOA SOFTBALL STUDY CLUBS ADDENDUM WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

MHSA/MOA Concussion and Injury Procedure

Officials, coaches and administrators are being asked to make all efforts to ensure the safety of athletes who participate in MHSA activities. Regarding players experiencing possible concussions or other serious injuries during MHSA contests or practices, the following procedures will be immediately implemented:

Officials' Responsibilities

- Officials are asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors of a concussion and other possible serious injuries. If there is a player that exhibits signs and symptoms of an injury (listed below from the NFHS Rule Book), officials will make coaches aware of the injured player and call an injury time out.
- The official should notify the coach by making the following statement:
 - *“Coach, you need to take a look at this player; he/she is exhibiting signs and symptoms of an injury.”*
 - Emphasize the notification statement to coaches – “Coach, you need to take a look this player he/she is exhibiting signs and symptoms of an injury.”
- Once the official notifies the coach, it is now the coach’s responsibility.
- The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the licensed health-care professional.
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by a licensed health-care professional.

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!

Coaches' Responsibilities

- After the official has notified the coach of the injury and has sent the athlete off of the field/court, or if a coach witnesses an incident in practice, the coach must then make the initial determination of the injury. For instance, if the coach knows that a player is diabetic, and may be experiencing a diabetic episode, the coach should have the student treated appropriately and then return the player to play or practice.
- If the coach suspects the athlete is exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (listed below from the NFHS Rule Book), then the coach must have the player evaluated by a licensed health-care professional.
- If an appropriate health-care professional on the sideline determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play.
- If an appropriate health-care professional is not available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be allowed by the coach to return to play.



- In game situations, the official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the licensed health-care professional.
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition or practice rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by a licensed health care professional.

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!

Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion (NFHS Rule Book)

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (be “knocked out”) to have suffered a concussion.

Discuss “Signs, Symptoms and Behaviors” consistent with identifying an injured athlete.

- **Common Symptoms of Concussion Include:**
- Headache, Fogginess, Difficulty concentrating, easily confused, slowed thought processes, Difficulty with memory, Nausea, Lack of energy, tiredness, Dizziness, poor balance, Blurred vision, Sensitive to light and sounds, Mood changes-irritable, anxious, or tearful

Suggested Concussion Management:

1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional that day.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a stepwise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon return of any signs or symptoms.

For further details please see the “NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion” at www.nfhs.org.

Administrators’ Responsibilities

- Administrators must require all coaches to review and implement this procedure.
- Administrators should have regular reviews with their coaching staff concerning these procedures.
- Administrators should require coaches to report all incidents to the administration immediately following the practice or contest. All incidents should be documented.
- Administrators must understand the responsibilities that coaches have in the decision to return athletes to play. MHSAA Rules and Regulations item (4) states: *A participant in any MHSAA sanctioned sport who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) or other serious injury shall be immediately removed from the game, evaluated by the coaching staff in regard to the nature of the injury, and if it is determined to be a possible concussion or other serious injury, the player shall not return to play until cleared by an licensed health-care professional.*



- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by a licensed health care professional.

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!

Concussion Resource Information

Various information and resources are available on the MHSAA website. Visit www.mhsa.org and proceed to the Sports Medicine page from the link on the home page.



DP/FLEX Rule

Designated Player (DP) / FLEX Rule – with this rule taking effect eight years ago there still is some confusion with the rule that led to misapplication of the rule. It is imperative that all umpires understand this rule to answer questions and enforce the rule properly.

Review the DP/FLEX Rule on pages 32-35 of the 2026 NFHS Rules Book

Review all the Case Book Plays dealing with the Designated Player (DP)/FLEX rule. See pool leaders for more information on case book.

Take time to review the information on the MHSAA website in regard to the DP/FLEX rule. There are actual examples illustrated by the use of a line up card including the new examples used this year in the online clinic. The site is www.mhsa.org, then click on softball on the left and then on DP/FLEX Rule at the bottom of the softball page under links and clinics. Also, information is available on the National Federation website nfhs.org under the softball tab.

Pitching Information

Pitching continues to be a NFHS Point of Emphasis and has been a point of emphasis for the MHSAA/MOA for many years – Please review and discuss this information that has been sent to each coach and included in the study clubs for the past few years:

2024 Rule Change Allows Pivot Foot Disengagement – continue to review and discuss through the season and discuss issues you may be seeing on the field.

** See Additional Resources (end of the study club) for more Pitching Information and Instructional Videos**

Plate Mechanics Information

Review the following information from Referee Magazine - “Working the Plate”

Mechanics –Discuss the following information on “plate work” for fast-pitch softball. Give demonstrations of these techniques for review and for new officials.

a) Choosing a stance

All plate umpires must master the box stance. After perfecting the box, some umpires elect to use the scissors or one-knee method of umpiring.

Box stance – (right-handed batter) – With the box, your feet are wider than shoulder width apart. Place your right foot flat on the ground six inches to one foot behind the catcher’s midpoint. The foot is pointed toward the second baseman’s normal position. The toe of the left foot is flat on the ground and pointed toward the pitcher. The lead foot is lined up with the heel of the catcher’s left foot. The toe of your right foot is lined up with heel of your lead foot. Flare your knees out so your knees are closely aligned with



your ankles. Bend at the knees, not at the waist, and keep your buttocks above your knees. Your body weight will be about 80 percent forward. Keep your shoulders square to the pitcher. Position your elbows inside your upper body frame with your hands in loose, relaxed fists in front of your crotch. Avoid folding your arms behind your back

The scissors – your legs are fully open like a pair of scissors. Position your feet one full stride apart. Your front foot, nearest the batter, is flat on the ground between the batter and the catcher and about six inches behind the catcher's left foot. Your lead foot is bent at a 90-degree angle at the knee to support most of your body weight. Your rear foot is fully extended with knee straight. The ball of your rear foot is on the ground with your heel elevated. Your head is well forward, between the batter and the catcher.

The one-knee – this stance is similar to scissors. However, your rear knee is resting completely on the ground, your feet about one-half stride apart and your back straight. For smaller batters, it may be necessary to lean forward to keep your eyes at the top of the strike zone.

Setting up – Work in the slot between the batter and the catcher. Your head position is critical. Your head must be at least one full head above the catcher's head, at least one full head to the side of the catcher's head and at least one full head behind the catcher's head. Your eyes must be level and your head outside the perimeter of the strike zone as you look down and through the zone. Line up your right ear with the black border of the inside corner.

Staying down – Avoid tunnel vision with your eyes fixed ahead. Track the pitch with your eyes. Follow the pitch all the way to the batter's bat or the catcher's glove. On a ball not batted, stay down until after the catcher receives the ball. Train yourself not to bail out, duck or flinch behind the plate.

Infield Fly Information

Two Unwavering Philosophies – absolute guidelines

- 1) Is an infield-area pop up batted ball that could enable the fielders to execute an underserved double play if the ball isn't caught?
- 2) Is a fielder in the infield area settled comfortably underneath the ball? Note: An infield-area pop up can sometimes include part of the outfield if the two guidelines are met. That depends, of course, upon the level of play of the participants.

Don't call an infield fly until both of those requirements are met. An infield fly should not be declared before a fly ball reaches its apex, but it may be called seconds later when an umpire judges the ball is an infield fly.

Questions to ask:

- 1) Who are infielders regarding infield fly situations? All infielders, including the pitcher and catcher and any outfielder stationed in the infield at the time of the pitch or an outfielder who enters the infield area playing a batted ball are considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.
- 2) What are the infield fly signals? Crew members must place their open palmed hand across the opposite chest in an umpire-to umpire confirmation signal. When an infield fly is judged the umpire will extend his or her arm overhead with the index finger pointing upward.



After verbally declaring the infield fly, the umpire will clench the extended hand into a fist.

When the infield fly is no longer in effect, an umpire-to-umpire signal is used with a wiping motion on the forearm from the elbow to the wrist.

- 3) Who calls an infield fly? It is the plate umpire's responsibility to call the infield fly.
- 4) Ask yourself – can this ball be caught by a fielder with ordinary effort? However, avoid thinking – “should this ball be caught by a fielder with ordinary effort?”
- 5) Runner's rights – runners have the right to run at their peril on a declared infield fly or they may tag and attempt to advance on any caught infield fly.
- 6) What happens when infield fly drops? The calling umpire should dramatically and assertively confirm the call by loudly calling, “That's an infield fly! The batter is out! Bunts or line drives cannot be an infield fly.
- 7) Umpires erroneously fail to call the infield fly - the infield fly should be retroactively declared after the fact.
- 8) Intentionally dropped infield fly – the rule takes precedent – the batter is out and ball is live and in play.

Did You Know? – History of the Infield Fly – the rule was instituted in 1895 to prevent the defensive team from employing shenanigans and unsporting schemes to gain an undeserved double play on routine pop flies in the infield. The rule was only in effect when there was one out but was revised in 1901 to also be in effect with no outs.

Mechanic Information – Unnecessary Signals

Unnecessary Signals – Referee Magazine ran an article “Give Unnecessary Signals the Heave Ho.” Please review the following information from that article -

- 1) Never use hand motions to indicate that a pitch is high, low, inside or outside. If the pitch is a strike, call a strike and use a strong hammer signal – hand and arm out to the side of the body to a 90-degree angle with a closed fist – be strong and crisp (don't use baseball mechanics turning an pointing to one side with one finger). If it is a ball, call a ball and prepare for the next pitch.
- 2) Never pound your fists together to indicate a full count.
- 3) Never say, “Ball four take your base.” And don't point to first base.
- 4) Never say, “Strike three, you're out.”
- 5) When the batter swings and misses for a third strike, give a non-verbal, strike signal for strike three.
- 6) No verbal call is necessary on obvious foul balls back to the screen or over the fence.

- 7) Mechanics Quick Tip – Umpires communicate through the use of signals. The less a signal is seen, the more effective it is when used. If there is no play, a call or signal is not needed. Do not draw attention to yourself by overusing, misusing or needlessly using any signal. Except for the infield fly, there is no need to echo a partner's signal.

Signals are designed to emphasize an umpire's ruling on a play as well as communicate with his or her partner, coaches, players, scorekeepers and spectators. Poorly executed and unauthorized signals serve only to confuse.



Additional Resources



MHSA

MHSA Website – www.mhsa.org

Softball Handbook - [2025-2026 Softball Handbook - MHSA Website](#)

NFHS

NFHSLearn – www.nfhslearn.com

NFHS Softball Resources - [Click Here](#)

NFHS Umpiring Course – [Click Here](#) (This course is not required by the MHSA)

NFHS Softball Pitching Videos - [NFHS Softball Pitching Videos](#)

Disregard the video titled - Disengaging from the Playing Surface (no longer relevant)



