

MOA BASEBALL STUDY CLUBS
2026
LESSON #1

NAME _____

CLUB _____

DATE _____

Statewide baseball study club, Wednesday March 11 at 7:00 pm. A zoom link will be sent closer to the date.

- I. Review and discuss the following **2026 Baseball Rule Changes** and the information concerning this change for baseball. (Please see comments on the rules change in the Rule Book, page 69, for further information and rationale for each rule change.)

Rule Change: 1-2-9, 2-5-1h, 2-16-1h, 8-2-1, 8-2-2(a)1-7, 8-2-7, 8-4-1g(1) – Modified that the double first base will be mandatory effective January 1, 2027 and associated rule changes.

Comment: Mandating Double First Base (Effective January 1, 2027) and associated rules (1-2-9, 2-5-1h, 2-16-1h, 8-2-1, 8-2-2(a) 1-7, 8-2-7, 8-4-1g(1) — A double first base enhances player safety by reducing the risk of collisions between the batter-runner and the first baseman on close plays. It provides a separate space for each player—fair territory for the fielder and foul territory for the runner—helping to prevent injuries while maintaining the integrity of the game.

Rule Change: 1-4-4 – Clarified what is allowed on a school’s official baseball uniform.

Comment: School Uniform (1-4-4) — Clear uniform guidelines help maintain the integrity, fairness, and educational purpose of high school baseball. Uniforms represent the team and school, not individual expression, and must comply with NFHS rules. Defined standards prevent confusion, promote equality, and teach values like respect, discipline, and accountability— hallmarks of education-based athletics.

Rule Change: 1-6-3 – Clarified what is not allowed to be worn by a player to record or transmit audio or video feeds.

Comment: Player Communication Equipment (1-6-3) — In high school baseball, players are not permitted to wear any audio or video equipment for the purpose of broadcasting or live recording while actively participating in the contest. This rule protects safety, fairness, competitive integrity, privacy of others, focus on education and the educational mission of high school sports.

Rule Change: 2-10-3 – Clarified the definition of a player-to-player defensive meeting.

3-4-6 – Clarified the difference from a player-to-player meeting and a charged conference.

Comment: Definition of Player to Player Meeting (2-10-3, 3-4-6) — Utilizing the rule additions, clarifies that the defensive players can offer support and provide camaraderie to their pitcher and limits the occurrences. The new rule also clarifies that it is not a charged conference and maintaining the integrity of the existing rule. It is hopeful that these changes prevent teams from stalling to gain an unfair advantage when weather or darkness is approaching.

II. Please review and discuss the following information in the **NFHS Baseball Guide 2026** concerning the new rule changes this year - this study guide was mailed in February:

- **New rule changes articles are on pages 1- 3 of the guide. MONTANA WILL NOT IMPLEMENT THE DOUBLE FIRST BASE RULE UNTIL THE 2026-27 SCHOOL YEAR AND THE 2027 BASEBALL SEASON.**
- **2026 Points of Emphasis on pages 3 and 4 of the guide.**

III. **MHSA Baseball Pitch Count rules:**

Review pitch count rules for Montana. Pitch counts rules are available on the MHSA website under the MOA-Sports-Baseball section.

IV. **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 MHSA 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).

V. **Please review and discuss the following NFHS Baseball Rules Interpretations:**

SITUATION 1: The pitcher comes to the mound wearing a wristband containing defensive plays and pitch selections. The wristband is on the non-throwing arm. The opposing coach protests saying the pitcher cannot wear an item while pitching.

RULING: It is legal for the pitcher to wear the wristband on the non-throwing arm provided it is a solid color, not white or gray, and is non-distracting. (1-6-1)

SITUATION 2: The pitcher's wristband containing defensive plays and instructions is of a single, solid color but does not match the color of the jersey or undersleeves.

RULING: The wristband is not required to match the color of the uniform or the sleeves worn underneath the uniform jersey. (1-6-1)

SITUATION 3: The batter, hearing a string of numbers announced by the third-base coach, takes an instruction card from the pants pocket, looks at the card and determines the offensive play and then puts the card back into the pants pocket.

RULING: This is legal. The card may be kept on the wrist or forearm or in a player's uniform pocket. (1-6-1)

SITUATION 4: The pitcher is wearing a communication wristband on the belt. The coach tells the umpire that in the last game the team was told the pitcher could only wear it on the belt as it was distracting if worn on the forearm.

RULING: Illegal. The wristband can only be worn on a player's wrist or forearm and only on the non-throwing arm of the pitcher. This being the first offense, the coach is issued a warning. (1-6-1)

SITUATION 5: The catcher is wearing a one-way electronic communication device with an earpiece but no microphone. The coach in the dugout is relaying to the catcher the next pitch the coach wants the pitcher to deliver.

RULING: This is legal. (1-6-2)

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by May 15, 2026
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I. Please discuss and review the following information on a variety of topics from the **NFHS Baseball Guide 2026:**

- **Review of 2025 Rule Changes – pages 5.**
- **A Key Element for Nailing Plays at the Plate – page 5.**
- **Get It in Writing – pages 7-8.**
- **Your Dead-ball Role – pages 8-9.**
- **Locked In – page 10**
- **Call With Authority, Not Theatrics – pages 10-11**
- **Perfecting Chest-to-Ball Mechanics – pages 11-12.**
- **It's Called the Working Area for a Reason – page 13-14.**
- **Mastering Mound Visits – pages 15- 16.**
- **Attack the Slot – page 16.**
- **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.**

II. Review playing rules adopted by Montana.

The playing rules as authorized and published by the National Federation of State High School Associations for the current year shall be followed for all games. By National Federation Rule, Montana has adopted the following:

- a. Any regular season game will end when, after two and a half or three innings, when a team is fifteen (15) or more runs behind and has completed its turn at bat.
- b. Any game will end when, after four and a half or five innings, a team is ten or more runs behind and has completed its turn at bat.

- c. Games suspended before 4 1/2 or 5 innings because of weather – resume from the point of interruption.
- d. Games suspended before 4 1/2 or 5 innings that are tied – resume from the point of interruption.
- e. Games suspended before 4 1/2 or 5 innings because of darkness – resume from the point of interruption.
- f. *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.***
- g. Using a maximum time limit of 1 1/2 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.
- h. Postseason play-in games suspended before 4 1/2 or 5 innings because of weather, darkness or a game that is tied – resume from the point of interruption if the game can be continued at a later time, unless the opposing coaches wish to terminate the game and determine a winner. If the game is suspended and the game cannot be played at a later time, the higher seeded team (#2 seed) is declared the winner. In case of a tie, the higher seeded team is declared the winner.

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.

III. Review major rule differences between NFHS rules and American Legion rules.

IV. Please review and discuss the following NFHS Baseball Rules Interpretations:

SITUATION 1 The batter has a sliding glove tucked in the back pants pocket. The batter hits a pitch to left center field and, in an attempt to obtain second base, is tagged by the shortstop on the sliding glove.

RULING: The batter is out on the tag. (8-4-2h)

SITUATION 2: What is "bench-jockeying?"

RULING: Bench-jockeying occurs when words or actions reflect unfavorably toward another person or team. This may or may not be orchestrated and/or choreographed. Bench-jockeying is negative in focus and includes actions (including verbal) that are intimidating, discouraging, taunting (or insinuation of taunting), baiting, poking fun, and/or intended to rattle the other team and its members. These are some of, but are not limited to, types of actions, that are in violation of the NFHS Bench and Field Conduct Rule 3-3-1. This behavior must be immediately addressed by the officials and coaches and have no place in the game of high school baseball. (3-3-1)

SITUATION 3: The pitcher, with runners on the bases, gets on the pitcher's plate in the set position (pivot foot parallel to the pitching plate and touching it) with hands already together, i.e., already set. Is this legal?

RULING: No, it is not. When a pitcher takes the set position, the pitching hand shall be down at the pitcher's side or behind the pitcher's back. In the motion to become set (to join gloved hand and pitching hand), the pitcher must go to the set position in one continuous motion without interruption with ball in both hands in front of the body at or below the chin. (6-1-3)

SITUATION 4: There is one out with runners on third and first bases. The batter hits a double, easily scoring the runner from third base. The runner from first misses second on the way to third. The batter-runner touches first base and touches second but is tagged out in an attempt to return to second base. The defense now successfully appeals the runner from first missing second base. How many runs score?

RULING: The runner from first was forced at the time second base was missed, so the appeal is a force out. If a runner is forced to a base when he missed touching the base, the appeal is a force out. No runs score since this third out is a force out. (9-1-1b)

SITUATION 5: The home crowd is out of control throwing debris on the field and yelling profanity at the opposing team. The umpire-in-chief declares a forfeit on the home team and ends the game.

RULING: The umpire-in-chief cannot declare a forfeit due to actions of spectators. Umpire jurisdiction is within the confines of the field, i.e., inside the fences. Game management should be requested to bring the situation under control. If game management is unable to bring the spectators' behavior to a satisfactory condition for the game to continue, the game is suspended. (10-2-3h)

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MOA BASEBALL STUDY CLUBS

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1. Discuss the DH rule for MHSB baseball.
2. Discuss re-entry rule for MHSB baseball.
3. Discuss the force-play-slide rule for MHSB baseball.
4. Define the two different pitching positions.

SITUATION : The pitcher takes a position on the pitcher's plate such that the umpire is in doubt if the pivot foot is simply in contact with the pitching plate or in contact and parallel to the pitching plate. What should the umpire determine? **RULING:** To be in the set position, the pitcher must have his pivot foot in contact with or directly in front of and parallel to the pitcher's plate. If the pivot foot is in contact with but not distinctly parallel to the pitcher's plate, then the pitcher is judged to be in the windup position. (6-1-1, 6-1-2, 6-1-3)

5. What is the rule on conferences for MHSB baseball for both offense and Defense?
6. Who is required to be at the plate meeting for MHSB baseball?
7. What is the obstruction rule for MHSB baseball?
8. Discuss the "seat belt" rule vs. ejection.
9. Discuss MHSB fan ejection rule interpretations.

MHSB Ejection Rule Interpretations

- **Coaches and Spectators:** A coach or spectator who is ejected must **leave the site immediately** and shall not be present on-site or within sight, sound, or communication for the remainder of that day of competition.
- **Student-Athletes:** A student who is ejected may be allowed to remain on the team bench as long as they do not create a further disturbance. However, officials may require the student to leave, in which case they must be accompanied by an adult.

10. Please review and discuss the following NFHS Baseball Rules Interpretations:

SITUATION 1 : The catcher is wearing an electronic device that has the capability of being a two-way communication instrument. The coach tells the umpire that the device is muted so that the catcher cannot talk to the coach.

RULING: This is an illegal electronic device and must be removed. The coach of the team involved will be issued a team warning. (1-6-2)

SITUATION 2: The catcher is wearing an earpiece from a one-way communication device along with an electronic bracelet that displays codes to the catcher only. The opposing coach wants a team warning to be given claiming the catcher cannot be wearing both.

RULING: Both electronic communication devices are one-way only to the catcher; it is legal for both devices to be worn. (1-6-2)

SITUATION 3: The team has been previously warned about the catcher having a two-way communication device. The pitching coach is now giving pitch selections over a one-way communication device to the catcher from the bullpen.

RULING: This is illegal. The device may only be used from within the dugout/bench area. The pitching coach, catcher and the head coach will be ejected. (3-2-5)

SITUATION 4: An assistant coach in the bullpen has an earpiece but no microphone and is simply listening to the pitch instructions to the catcher coming from the dugout.

RULING: This is illegal. Only one coach in the dugout can have a one-way communication device to relay information to the catcher regarding what pitches to deliver. If this is the first offense, a warning is issued to that team. If not, the assistant and head coaches are both ejected. (3-2-5)

SITUATION 5: The head coach is relaying offensive plays to the coaches in the coaching boxes who each have an earpiece from a one-way communication device.

RULING: This is illegal. Instructions may only be given to a catcher while on defense. The devices must be removed from the assistant coaches and a team warning will be given. (3- 2-5)

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2026 NFHS Baseball Exam – See Attached Exam

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MOA BASEBALL STUDY CLUBS

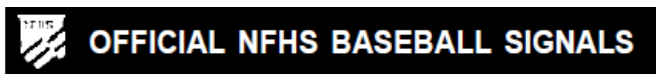
2026 LESSON #5

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I. Review Baseball Signals



A. Pre-pitch Situational Signals

PlayPic®



1. Play **Right hand point to pitcher "Play."** Ball is live.



2. Do Not Pitch **Right palm facing out.** Ball is dead.



3. Infield Fly Situation **Right hand bill of cap with index finger.**



4. Double Tag Rotation **PU covers 3rd on double tag.**



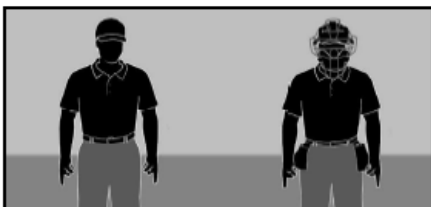
5. Count **Left hand indicates balls and right hand strikes.** Verbal count given.



6. Time Play **With 2 out potential run score 2 fingers on left wrist.**



7. Rotation **Thumbs and pinkie fingers extended.** Arm down by side. Rotate hand.



8. Stay Home **Both arms with index finger straight down for base umpire and umpire-in-chief.**

PlayPics courtesy of **REFEREE**. (www.referee.com)

OFFICIAL NFHS BASEBALL SIGNALS

B. During Play and Results

PlayPic®



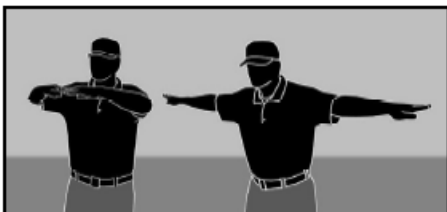
1. Strike **Verbal only without swing.**



2. Foul Ball, Time Out, Dead Ball



3. Foul Tip **Right hand pass over left hand. Strike call. Live ball.**



4. Safe, Uncaught 3rd Strike, "Did Not Go" **Arms extended in front and swing open.**



5. Out **Right arm up with fist hammering motion. "He's out."**



6. Infield Fly **Point up with index finger. Verbal on way down "If fair."**



7. Fair Ball **Point only. No verbal.**



8. Information **Tap chest. Has relevant information for partner.**

PlayPics courtesy of **REFEREE** (www.referee.com)

II. REVIEW MOA BASEBALL SECTION – MHSA HANDBOOK

XIII. OFFICIAL UNIFORM – Pages 121-122

Officials' shoes for OUTDOOR sports (i.e. football, soccer, baseball and softball), bearing white logo, trademark or manufacturer's name shall be legal. Officials' shoes must still be predominantly black and be unaltered from the manufacturer's original intent

Baseball: Officials shall wear the approved black, powder-blue or navy-blue (short sleeved or long-sleeved pullover shirt).

The official pants for baseball/softball shall be full length slack, heather gray, charcoal gray or navy blue. (Pant styles not allowed include, capri, leggings, sweats, yoga, etc.) Variance by state adoption.

Baseball/Softball umpires may wear a jacket. The required jacket shall be a standard black or navy pullover with powder blue and white (NFHS) or a navy-blue pullover with powder blue trim

(USA) to be worn for varsity contests. Jackets are to be unadorned (except for MOA service pins). Variance by state adoption. For each game the uniform shirt, pants, and jacket must be the same color for each member of the officiating crew. Variance by state adoption.

Hats worn by baseball officials must be black and may represent the MOA Logo. Hats worn by Softball officials must be navy blue and may represent the MOA Logo.

The ball bag for baseball plate umpires will be black. The ball bag for softball plate umpires can be either navy blue or heather gray.

Officials that regularly work in both sports should purchase the standard color uniforms intended for both baseball and softball.

Hats worn by baseball officials must be black and may represent the MOA Logo.

XXV. VARIANCES BY STATE ASSOCIATION ADOPTION – Page 127

Listed below are the rules alterations adopted by the MHSA as allowed by the National Federation of State High School Associations:

A. Baseball

1. Game ending procedures:

Any game will end when, after four and a half or five innings, a team is ten or more runs behind and has completed its turn at bat.

Employ a maximum 1 1/2-hour time limit to end games at invitational tournaments. The game can be called if five or less minutes remain before the maximum 1 1/2-hour time limit or officials should not start a new inning after 1 hour and 20 minutes of play except if a tie exists where NFHS Softball Rules for tiebreaking would apply.

Varsity and Sub-varsity regular season games will end after three (3) innings if a team is leading by fifteen (15) runs.

For game suspensions:

Games suspended before 4 1/2 or 5 innings because of weather, darkness or tied game - will resume from the point of interruption.

H. Selection Procedure for Baseball/Softball Tournament Officials - Postseason Page 131

1. Selection of officials for divisional and state baseball and softball will be made by the MOA office by using a combination of the following: coaches' input (ballots), individual officials' pool ranking, and MOA office input. The MOA staff may consider reasonable geographic limitations when selecting officials.

III. Please review and discuss the following NFHS Baseball Rules Interpretations:

SITUATION 1: The team has used all of its defensive charged conferences, and the coach does not want to change pitchers. The coach tells the catcher to call all the infielders to the mound for the purpose of relaying instructions to them through the catcher and the one-way communication device. The opposing

team discovers what is happening and wants a defensive conference to be charged, thus removing the pitcher.

RULING: This is an illegal use of the one-way communication device. A warning shall be given to the coach. A defensive conference cannot be charged, as a charged conference is a meeting which involves the coach or a non-playing representative of the team and a player or players of the team. (3-2-5, 2-10-1)

SITUATION 2: A team's one-way communication device becomes inoperable. The team wants the other team to turn its one-way communication device off.

RULING: The opposing team does not have to turn its device off and no longer use it during the game. Whether a team decides to use or is able to use, a communication device has no impact on the other team. (3-2-5)

SITUATION 3: Multiple coaches have a one-way communication device and are communicating with the catcher.

RULING: This is illegal. Only one coach in the dugout or bench area may be communicating with the catcher at any one time. (3-2-5 PENALTY)

SITUATION 4: A team is using a light board with multiple various color lights to relay instructions to the team. The opposing team complains that it can only be used by the catcher for calling pitches.

RULING: This system is legal. It may be used by all players along with their wristband devices. (3-2-5, 1-6-1)

SITUATION 5: The batter comes to bat with a sliding glove tucked in the back pants pocket. A pitch is thrown and as the batter turns to avoid it, the pitch hits the sliding glove.

RULING: This is a hit batter, and the batter will be awarded first base. Preventative officiating and asking the batter to tuck the glove completely in the pants pocket may have prevented the situation. (8-1-1d)

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MOA BASEBALL STUDY CLUBS
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ADDENDUM WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

CONCUSSION INFORMATION



MHSAA/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 MHSAA activities. Regarding players experiencing possible concussions or other serious injuries during MHSAA 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 the 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 staffs 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. MHSA Rules and Regulations item (4) states: *A participant in any MHSA 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 MHSА website. Visit www.mhsa.org and proceed to the Sports Medicine page from the link on the home page.