

Mentor Teaching Standards

The following Standards shall be followed by each Mentor for the purpose of training our mentees (1st, 2nd & 3rd year umpires) on a consistent basis.

A. Our Standard for which game assigned umpire should initiate the contact with his partner prior to game day to determine where to park, confirm who has the Plate, what color shirt to wear, etc.; and our Standard for how many days in advance this contact should be made, is as follows.

- When the Assignor does not assign the specific positions for the game; i.e., the positions for Plate and Bases, such as the case for our Arbiter assignments for high school and American Legion, then the umpire who is listed first in the Arbiter shall contact his partner two days prior to game day. If the contact and confirming discussion is not made two days prior, then it is the responsibility of the second umpire listed to make contact the day before the game.
- When the Assignor does assign the positions, then it is the Plate Umpire who will initiate the contact two days prior to game day and the Base Umpire will communicate back his confirmation no later than the day before game day.

B. Our Standard time for BOTH umpires to arrive in the parking lot will be no later than 30 minutes prior to game time.

- This will give time for dressing, final decision on shirt color, and holding a 10-15 minute Pre-game discussion prior to taking the field.
 - If you cannot find your partner in the parking lot, and it becomes time to go to the field, and you haven't pre-arranged which color shirt to wear, then our "Standard" will be to wear your Navy Blue shirt.
- Our Standard will be for Both umpires to be on the field 15 minutes before game time to allow time for signing any paperwork, checking field conditions, making sure each team has, or is, warming up, and to help assure the game will start on time.
- The Plate Umpire is responsible for starting the Pre-Game Ground Rules Conference with the coaches at least 5 minutes prior to game time.

C. Our Standard procedure for what to do if your partner is late to the game site is as follows.

- You should have each other's cell phone numbers. If your partner is late call him. If you are the one who is running late, call your partner. These calls should be made no later than 20 minutes prior to game time.
- If your partner is late, notify the home team coach 15 minutes before game time, and get dressed for the Plate, so that you can arrive on the field at least 7 to 10 minutes before game time if alone. The late partner will work the Bases when/if he arrives.

D. Our Standard Items that must be covered in every pre-game meeting with your partner are as follows.

- The Plate Umpire is responsible for running our pre-game meeting
- Review our signals
- Discuss coverage for Foul/Fair, catch/no catch

- Discuss coverage of Tag Ups, appeals, and coverage of resulting plays at each relative base.
 - Especially discuss responsibilities when runners are on first and second with less than two outs.
- Discuss coverage of third base when there is either a runner on first, or runners on first and third, for a base hit or error ball on a ball that travels into the outfield.
 - Our Standard is that the Plate umpire will cover third.
- Discuss who will cover third base when there is either a runner on first, or runners on first and third for a ball that stays in the infield, such as a slow roller infield base hit, error, or bunt.
 - Our Standard is that the Plate umpire will not cover third on an infield hit, but rather watch for the potential swipe play, or pulled foot at first base. The Base Umpire will be responsible for all calls at all the bases.
- Discuss how you will verbally communicate certain live in-play situations, such as, the Base umpire going out for fly balls, coverage of third base with a runner on first, or first and third when the Plate Umpire must make a Fair/Foul, catch/no catch call down the right field line.

E. Our Standard for what should be covered in your Pre-Game Coaches Conference/Ground Rules meeting; and what need not be covered is as follows.

- Home Plate umpire is responsible for starting the Pre-Game Conference/Ground Rules meeting. Start the meeting 5 minutes before the scheduled game start time.
- Be cordial, concise, be consistent from game to game, and be sure to cover what the specific League you are working requires you to cover. Each league might have their own special requirements that must be covered before the game starts, i.e., NFHS requirements, JLS requirements, American Legion requirements, etc.
- Listen to hear each coach's first name at your introductions.
 - If more than one coach from a team attends the conference, make sure you know who the **head** coach is.
- Receive the Home Team's lineup card first, then the Visitor's lineup card
 - Review the lineups to determine 9, or 10 players in the starting lineup? Do they have a DH? What uniform number is the pitcher? What uniform number is the catcher? (You'll need these numbers in case "courtesy" runners are used). If the league requires that all subs be listed, verify the total roster number with the coach, and make sure each player and sub has a uniform number listed next to his name.
 - If the league you are working has a pitch count/rest days requirement then ask each coach which of his pitchers are ineligible to pitch today and mark your lineup card accordingly.
- Ask each coach to verify that all his players and equipment are legal, including all bats and all helmets.
- If it's an NFHS/MIAA game ask who the site administrator is.
- Let the Home Team coach review his field's ground rules
 - Don't allow a ground rule that is in conflict with our official rules (NFHS, or MLB , whichever is applicable)
 - Don't allow a ground rule that in your opinion might be unsafe

- Do NOT get into a rules discussion, unless asked a specific question that can be answered quickly.
- Do Not bring up certain past circumstances, or issues, nor should you let the coach bring one up.
- Do Not explain how you plan to adjudge certain situations, for example, the Force Play Slide Rule, or the Collision Rule.

F. Our Standard Signals & Signs that are relayed from Plate umpire to Field umpire are as follows.

- The Plate Umpire will initiate the signal to the Base Umpire. The Base Umpire will mirror the signal as confirmation he agrees.
- Use the “modified” NFHS Signals as shown in our ***“Umpire Signals”*** section of our ***WMBUA Mentor Program Two-Man Mechanics Manual***

G. Our Standard for proper positioning and mechanics for Plate, Field A, Field B, and Field C, for various plays, depending on where the ball is hit, and where the runners are advancing is shown in our ***WMBUA Mentor Program Two-Man Mechanics Manual***.

- All Mentors are to teach their mentees the same mechanics as shown in our *WMBUA Mentor Program Two-Man Mechanics Manual*. Don’t deviate based on what you like to do. Your deviations might work for you, but we want all the mentees to be taught the same. So, if you don’t personally follow the mechanics manual, then at least keep your mantra message to them ... “do as I say, not as I do”.

H. Our Standard for how and when to ask for help, and how and when to offer help is as follows.

- As the Base Umpire (U1) you own the calls on the bases you cover. If you clearly see the play, and can honestly say to yourself that you were in a good position to see it all, then you shouldn’t need to ask for help.
 - If the coach brings up a point that you hadn’t considered, or points out that you might have been shielded or straight lined from seeing what he describes-and if you didn’t see what he describes, then you can ask for help. But if the coach just wants a second opinion or a different angle from your partner without explaining why your partner’s angle would be better, then don’t ask for help. Own the call!
 - As the Plate Umpire (PU) if you have information that might help the U1 you can show your partner a subtle **“Signal M”**.
- As the Base Umpire (U1) in the B or C position, and you have a swipe tag on the batter-runner going into first base, or a possible pulled foot at first base, or a swipe tag on R3 going back into third base, and you aren’t sure of the call, then make the safe call and when action stops, call time and ask your partner for help. You don’t need to wait for the coach to question you.
 - You still Own the call. Be specific with what you ask your partner, such as, “did you see a tag?” If he says yes, then you might have to also ask him how sure he is that he saw a tag, and possibly where he saw it applied. Because you then must decide if the tag happened before the runner reached the base. That is still your call. If you decide to change your call, then YOU must give the signal for the changed call and YOU must be the one who explains to the coaches.
- As the Plate Umpire (PU) you own all the calls at the plate. Asking for help on a call at the plate would be rare. You also own the call on R1 going into third on a hit to the outfield.

- If you are not in the proper position to make the call at 3B, and you know it, then you can ask U1 for help, but only After you make the initial call. If you are in the proper position and had a good look at the play at 3B, then don't let the coach talk you into asking for help.
- REMEMBER, our objective is to get the call right; so as the non-calling umpire, if you have definite knowledge that your partner didn't see something obvious, then call time when the action stops. Approach your partner and ask him what he saw. For example, the fielder obviously dropped the ball during the tag but you believe your partner didn't see it. Then, go to your partner and ask him ... "Did you see how the ball got to the ground?" That question will start his conversation/answer back to you. It's still his call to change.
- If your partner has misapplied, or misinterpreted a rule, then, approach your partner and discuss the rule. There is no excuse for an umpire to allow his partner to misapply a rule without first having a discussion to try to convince him you are right. If he still disagrees, and you are the plate umpire, then as umpire-in-chief you can overrule him, but you better be certain you are correct. If you are the base umpire and you can't convince the umpire-in-chief that he is incorrect, then he has the final call.
 - After the game, email our WMBUA interpreter, copying your partner on the email, describe the situation, and describe your interpretation, and request the Interpreter give you both an answer/ruling.

I. Our Standard for when and how to adjust positioning, and/or coverage "on the go" for special circumstances, and certain hit balls is as follows.

- Refer to the "**Basic Rotations**" section of our **WMBUA Mentor Program Two-Man Mechanics Manual**.

J. Our Standard for how to allow a coach to question/dispute a call is as follows.

- Only the head coach should be allowed to question. He should request time-out when the action stops.
- The coach should then come onto the field to have a discussion with the umpire who made the call. Don't let him question you or your partner from the dugout, unless it is a very polite question.
- If an assistant coach, while coaching one of the bases, questions your call, only give him an answer if he asks in a respectful manner and his question can be answered quickly.
 - Do not let the Assistant Coach (if he is the Base Coach) to come onto the field to question a call.
 - Do not allow the Assistant coach to yell statements at you or your partner.
- When the Head Coach comes to question a call resist the temptation to respond to his "statements". Let him talk. Listen. Then, ask if he has a "question". Only give an answer to a question.

K. Our Standard for proper stance, mannerisms, voice, etc., during a coach's dispute is as follows.

- Stand with your arms hanging loosely and completely at your sides, or preferably, with your arms and hands behind your back.
- Do not cross your arms across your chest, nor put your hands on your sides of hips with elbows bent near your waist. Both of these stances are not very "approachable".
- Look approachable and confident. Do not show displeasure.

- Let the coach talk first, and show him you are listening. Ask what his question is. You can then explain calmly and confidently, what you saw, what the rule is, etc. Be careful what you say. You should carefully think about what you will say before you say anything.
- If the coach gets loud, and boisterous, you need to remain calm and collected.
 - For NFHS games you can give him a “verbal” warning, which is the first step in the NFHS’s 3-Step process of ... 1) Verbal Warning, 2) Written Warning – this is the MIAA’s “Strike One” Warning, and it will need to be recorded on your lineup card and you’ll need to notify the opposing coach so he can note it in his scorebook. You’ll also need to notify your assignor after the game. 3) Ejection – you’ll need to submit a written report for any ejection to the following three people... A) Address your report to the Home School AD, with copies to ... B) your Assignor, C) our WMBUA Secretary.
 - NOTE: In NFHS once you issue a “Written Warning”/”Strike One” Warning to any bench personnel (Assistant Coach, Head Coach, players, score keeper) the Head Coach Must Remain in his dugout for the remainder of the game.
 - I suggest you use the same 3-Step procedure in your other leagues as well, addressing your report to your Assignor, with a copy to our WMBUA Secretary. However, you can’t restrict the Head Coach to his dugout in other leagues.
- Your voice and mannerisms need to be firm, but always under control, never aggressive. Don’t be sarcastic. Also, using humor can be risky. Before you decide to interject some humor evaluate how the conversation is going before using humor. My suggestion would be to avoid it, but sometimes it might help alleviate and end the discussion.
- NEVER let him personally attack you with verbal abuse aimed at you, or your partner. His use of the “You” word is to be considered a personal attack. There is a huge difference between the following two types of statements: A) “You just cost me a run”, or, “You are the worst I’ve seen”. B) “That call just cost me a run”, or, “That’s the worst call I’ve ever seen”. We can probably live with the B) statements, but should not tolerate the A) statements.
- In basketball officiating we have an axiom, which can be applied in every sport you officiate, ‘Treat every coach like a gentleman. Not because THEY are, but because YOU are.’

L. Our Standard for when and how to end a dispute is as follows.

- Respond, don’t React. When we React ... we rush, we show emotion, we give a personal defensive response instead of a professional response. When we Respond ... we take a moment to think, we focus on a solution instead of the problem.
 - Take a breath, think, and respond.
 - Be consistent and be professional. Coaches are often not.
- If you asked him if he has a question and if you’ve answered his question, then don’t dwell on continuing. Be concise, to the point, tell him what you saw, and then it’s time to move on.
- Use the correct baseball rule terminology. For example, the pitcher didn’t “sway (or jerk) his shoulders”. Rather, the pitcher “feinted to first, which by rule, is a balk”.
- A phrase that will end many arguments regarding judgment calls is, “Coach, we didn’t see it the same way, but if it happened the way you say it did, I got it wrong.” It works

because you are not admitting a mistake, putting up a defense or ignoring the coach completely.

- If the dispute involves a rule, and if the coach doesn't volunteer his take on how the rule is interpreted, you can ask him for it. By eliciting information from the coach, you have now turned the argument around and you have become the questioner, the person who actually controls the argument. Once the coach has offered his interpretation, you can tell the coach that your understanding of the rule is different from his interpretation.
- You can also tell the coach ... "I explained my call, I answered your question, now it's time to move on, coach".
 - A good move is to start walking with the coach back towards his dugout, or, if the head coach is coaching third base walk with him back towards the coaching box while you are giving him your answer. Once he is in foul territory you can walk back toward your position. Don't allow the coach to try to follow you back any longer. If he tries, tell him ... "Coach, our conversation is over, we're finished here."
- **IMPORTANT:** You don't need to get in the last word. If he is ending the discussion let it be.

M. How to handle comments from the dugout

- Don't have "rabbit ears". Tune out the chatter. If the comments get loud, especially if they are loud enough for the spectators to take notice, and they are directed towards you or your partner, then put an end to it with a verbal warning.
- Often coaches or players will make constant little sniping remarks, barbs, or jabs anonymously from the dugout. Don't let this annoyance enflame you. Instead, early in the game, firmly inform the head coach ... "I have heard your dugout's comments, and I don't expect to keep hearing them." Without saying, you have now essentially given your first step "Verbal Warning". So, if the problem continues, use your second step, official "Strike One Written Warning".

N. Best practices to keep the game moving

- As the Plate Umpire always hustle back to your starting position after each play is over. Don't walk back.
- Hustle the defensive team onto the field at the change of each half inning.
 - If the coach has a team huddle before taking the field, ask the coach to let his pitcher and catcher take the field and he can huddle with the rest of the team.
- As Plate umpire, count the warmup pitches between innings. Make sure the catcher throws to 2B after the 5th warmup pitch, or sooner if the pitcher doesn't want 5.
 - A new pitcher can take up to 8 warmup pitches the first time he takes the mound.
 - If the catcher isn't ready, ask the coach to have someone catch the warmup pitches.
 - If undue time is taken to get the 5 warmup pitches, then tell the catcher to throw to 2B on the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th warmup pitch, depending on how long it took the pitcher to be ready to throw his warmup pitches.
 - Give the catcher a new ball if he misses the warmup pitch. Don't let the catcher chase after missed warmup pitches.
- Allow no more than 30 seconds for coach's time-out conference with the pitcher and his defense. An offensive team time-out conference should be shorter, but certainly no more than 30 seconds.

- Keep batters in, or very near the batter's box between pitches. Should keep one foot in the box and one foot out while taking their offensive signals.
- Don't award undue time-outs to the batter once he gets into the batter's box.
- Don't hold your hand up to stop the pitcher while the batter is getting ready in the batter's box as shown in **"Signal A"** in the NFHS Rule book and also shown in our **"Umpire Signals"** section of our **WMBUA Mentor Program Two-Man Mechanics Manual**. This **"Signal A"** is only used when there is already a dead ball and it is then followed by **"Signal B"** to put the ball in play. If you use **"Signal A"** while the ball is live, you have caused a dead ball and have essentially called time-out.
- In NFHS the pitcher has 20 seconds from the time he receives the ball to either deliver his pitch, or make a play on a runner. Attempting a pick-off, or stepping off the pitcher's plate and faking a throw is considered to be a "play", and a new 20 second count begins.
 - Enforce the 20 seconds. The Base Umpire (U1) should have a watch in his pocket in case this needs to be enforced.
- As the Base Umpire (U1) you don't need to call time-out just because one of the fielders has requested it. Here are some examples.
 - The SS (or 3B or 2B) has just received a throw-in from an outfielder and there are no actions being taken by any base runner. The SS is somewhere in the shallow outfield, or on the infield dirt and he requests time-out. Tell him "no, why do you need it?" He doesn't need it and he needs to throw the ball to his pitcher.
 - The pitcher threw to his first baseman to try to pick-off the runner. The runner dives back to first base and is lying motionless on the ground. The first baseman continues to keep his glove (with ball) on the runner for an undue prolonged time. The runner, or the first base coach is now asking for a time-out. Tell the first baseman to throw the ball back to the pitcher and after he does tell the runner he doesn't need time-out. Hopefully, your words to the first baseman sink in and he won't keep doing that with every pick-off throw that follows. If he does then you could have an inconspicuous follow up conversation with him so he can get the message that he is wasting time.
 - The runner on first base (R1) just stole second base with a slide or head first dive; and he is now standing on 2B with an expected normal amount of dust on himself when he asks for time-out. You don't need to give it to him – tell him to just stay on the base and brush himself off. If you can see that he has a great deal of dust on him, such as down the front of his pants, or, on his face, etc., then, of course, award him a time-out.

Q. Best practices as the Plate umpire / best practices as the Base umpire

- Emphasize that you and your partner are a Team. When the game begins you only have one teammate, one friend on the field, and that is your partner. Always show to the other two teams and fans that you two have a united front. Discuss your differences after the game; or, if it can't wait, then between innings quietly and without a show of emotion.
- Emphasize proper Timing of calls for balls/strikes, outs/safe.
- Emphasize getting in position at a good angle, avoid getting "straight-lined". Emphasize that the angle is more important than a closer distance when making a call.
- Emphasize coming to a stop in an "athletic" stance and keeping your head still at the time you must see the play. After you see the play and are ready to make the call you can take

a step or two towards the play to make your call. The extra step helps give the appearance that you were closer.

- You don't need to be emphatic on all your calls. "Sell" your call only when you need to on a very close play.
 - If your grandmother in 22nd row can easily make that call then don't be emphatic with your call.
 - If everyone in the park can tell it's a foul ball, then you have no need to yell foul. Just put your two hands up as shown in "**Signal C**" - no verbal is needed.
- As the Plate Umpire (PU) you don't need to give the count after every pitch.
 - Develop your own routine and be consistent during the game, and from game to game.
 - As a suggestion, one school of thought is to give your first count after the third pitch. Your count will be either 2 balls & 1 strike, or 1 ball & 2 strikes. The next time to give your count is when it is again an odd number – 3 balls & 2 strikes.
 - In addition, always give your count after every dead ball before you put the ball back into play with "**Signal B**".
- Both umpires, not just the plate umpire, should write down the trips to the mound and the time-out coaching conferences.
 - This means, it is a good practice for the base umpire to carry a card (or paper) and a pencil with him so he can also record this information, or any other pertinent information during the game, such as warnings, ejections, etc.

P. The following are just suggestions as to how a Mentor might train his Mentee.

- Try to observe a couple of games that your Mentee is working
- Try to actually work a couple games with him
- Have your Mentee observe a couple of your games
- If your high school schedule and his schedule restrict the above, then perhaps it would be easier during the summer leagues to do the above.
- Maybe you can meet with him for a few minutes either before or after our general board meetings to discuss how their games have been, any game situations either of you have experienced, and answer any questions he might have.
- You might want to have a biweekly phone discussion with him to discuss game situations, review a certain rule on each call to be sure he understands how to interpret and apply it, and answer any questions he might have.
- Stay in touch with each other throughout the spring high school season and throughout the summer leagues season.
- REMEMBER: As a Mentor you are not evaluating your mentee. You are teaching him. You are the Teacher and your mentee is the student.
- But also remember, that just like back in your school days, the students always had their opinions, thus, evaluations, of their teachers. What kind of Teacher do you want to be regarded as ?