



Rules Help Sheet

common situations & rules

This document is intended as a brief guide to some of the more common (or unusual) situations and rules which are likely to crop up during the season. It is not a substitute for the official rules, and should be used more as a memory aid than as a comprehensive manual.

The Help Sheets have been separated into three broad sections, aimed at **Players**, **Captains** & **Umpires** respectively. But it is advised that the entire guide be read to get a more rounded understanding.

Each explanation is accompanied by a reference to the official rule in either the WBSC Rules or LSL Standing Orders & Regulations Governing Play. It is strongly recommended that these references be looked up, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the rule and its context.

The latest versions of the WBSC Rulebook, the LSL Regulations Governing Play, and these Help Sheets can be downloaded from: <https://londonsoftball.co.uk/resources/>

Any queries about this document, or technical matters in general should be directed to the league's Technical Officer:
technical@londonsoftball.co.uk

Player Help Sheet

Overthrows

If the ball is thrown into dead ball territory, all players advance **two** bases from where they were the moment that the ball was **thrown**.

Example Situation #1:

The shortstop fields the ball and attempts to throw the runner out at first base. The ball goes dead. The batter-runner, who had not reached base by the time of the throw, is awarded second base.

Example Situation #2:

The batter hits the ball into the outfield. The runner from first base is half-way to second when the ball is caught, so they turn back to tag up. The outfielder, attempting to double up the runner at first base, throws the ball dead. The runner is awarded third base.

If two runners are between the same bases at the time of the throw, the award is dictated by the **lead** runner.

[WBSC 5.11.B.ii]

Fair or Foul?

When determining whether a batted ball is fair or foul, it is helpful to separate the field into two main areas:

In the **infield** (ie. inside the baselines) it is where the ball comes to rest or where the ball is when first touched. If the ball is initially hit into foul territory but comes to rest in fair territory, it is a fair ball. If the ball hits 3rd base or the white portion of 1st base the ball is fair. Home plate is in fair territory, so a ball which comes to rest on the plate is fair.

In the **outfield**, where the ball first lands or is touched determines whether the ball is fair or foul.

[WBSC 2.1.12 & 2.1.16]

A batted ball touched close to the Foul Ball Line.

Whether a ball is fair or foul is dictated by where the **ball** is - **not** the fielder's **feet**. If the ball is touched in the air over foul territory the ball is foul. If the ball is over fair

territory when touched, it is fair - regardless of where it ends up.

[WBSC 5.1.21]

Catching the ball close to the Dead Ball line.

Unlike fair/foul, dead ball calls depend on where the fielder's **feet** are - **not** the **ball**.

Fielders can lean into dead ball territory to catch a ball as long as their feet are in playable territory. If making a catch while airborne, as long as the fielder left the ground before reaching dead ball territory, the catch will stand.

[WBSC 5.1.9]

A ball caught in foul territory is still **live**, and runners can advance at their own risk.

[WBSC 5.1.9]

Carrying the ball into Dead Ball territory.

Occasionally, a fielder may accidentally carry the ball over the dead ball line. Each runner advances **one** base from the time the ball was carried dead.

[WBSC 5.1.9]

If, in the umpire's judgement, the ball was **deliberately** carried, thrown or kicked over the dead ball line, each player advances **two** bases from where they were when the ball was last touched by the fielder.

Fair hits going into Dead Ball territory

A batted ball which initially lands fair but ends up in dead ball territory is known as a 'Ground Rule Double'. The ball is dead and all runners advance **two** bases from where they were when the ball was **pitched**.

If a fair ball is **unintentionally** deflected into dead ball territory by a fielder, the same rule applies: all runners advance **two** bases from the time of the **pitch**.

[WBSC 5.11.b]

Illegal Pitch

If, during a pitch, the umpire calls "illegal" and the batter **does not swing**, it is a ball.

If the batter swings at the pitch, however, all play continues as normal.

[WBSC 5.4.3]

Batter's Box

The batter's feet must be entirely in the box prior to the pitch (the painted lines are considered part of the box).

[WBSC 5.4.2.d]

At the time the batter makes **contact** with the ball, their feet must **not** be **completely** outside the box (if any part of the foot is within the box, this is okay). Stepping on the plate at the point of contact is also not allowed. The batter is out, the ball is dead and runners cannot advance.

[WBSC 5.4.4.a.iv]

Tagging Up

If a batted ball is caught, runners must retouch their base before advancing. Failure to do so will result in the runner being called out if correctly appealed. Runners are free to leave their base as soon as any fielder **touches** the ball, whether it is caught or not.

[WBSC 5.1.42]

Base Path

This is the natural route of a runner advancing to a base. This is not necessarily a straight line. Runners cannot move more than 3 feet either side of this line **to avoid a tag**. To avoid running into a double-play, runners can **stop** or **go back**.

[WBSC 5.5.2.a.vi]

Runners **can** move outside the base path to avoid interfering with a fielder. Provided the fielder is not making a play to get the out.

[WBSC 5.5.2.b.iii]

A Dislodged Base

If a runner dislodges a base from its usual position, as long as they do not attempt to advance, they are safe from being tagged out – whether they are still in contact with the base or not.

Subsequent runners must use the spot where the base **should** be.

[WBSC 5.9.e]

Infield Fly

This rule exists for the benefit of the batting team. It stops a fielder deliberately allowing an infield pop-up to drop, thereby enabling an easy double or triple play. This rule occurs only when there are **fewer than two outs** and with **runners on 1st and 2nd** (or 1st, 2nd and 3rd).

If, in the umpire's judgment, a fair fly ball hit in this situation is capable of being caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, the Umpire shall call "Infield Fly". If the ball is caught or lands fair, the batter is automatically out and runners are no longer forced. The ball remains live, and runners can advance at their own risk. A foul ball is treated as per usual.

[WBSC 5.1.2.6]

Avoiding Obstructing Runners

When a fielder is **not in possession** of the ball, they must not impede a runner. However, if they are in the act of fielding a **batted ball**, it is the runner's responsibility to avoid a collision.

[WBSC 5.1.32]

Avoiding Interference

Runners must **avoid** impeding a fielder who is in the act of making a play.

[WBSC 5.1.30]



Captain Help Sheet

Legal Bats

To be considered legal for use in LSL games, bats must have the ASA stamp **and not** appear on the ASA Banned Bat list.

[LSL Standing orders - Section B.5]

Number of Players

Teams may start a game with as few as 8 players (4 male and 4 female), taking automatic outs for each batter missing from the lineup.

[LSL Standing orders - Section B.10]

Substitutions & re-entry

Substitutions can be made at any time the ball is dead.

A starting player who has been substituted can re-enter the game once – but must return to the same position in the batting line-up. A player who has entered the game as a substitute cannot return a second time.

If a team has 12 batters, players in the line-up can freely switch back and forth between the Extra Hitter and fielding positions, as long as the male:female ratio remains 5:5.

[WBSC 3.2.6]

Temporary Runner

Only players injured **during the game** are eligible to have a runner; and **only** if no suitable substitute is available.

[LSL Standing orders - Section B.13.d]

Automatic Walk

When there are two outs, if any player hitting a 12" ball is walked, the following batter (regardless of gender or which ball they are hitting) can opt to walk to first base without batting.

[LSL Standing orders - Section B.4.c]

Runs not Counted

If a runner crosses the plate before the 3rd out is made, the run will **not** count if the third out is on a **forced runner**.

[WBSC 1.2.5.c]

Run Ahead Rule (A.K.A. 'The Mercy Rule')

If a team is 20 runs ahead after 4 innings or 15 runs up after 5 or 6 innings, the game is over. If **both teams** want to continue playing, they can - but the official score stands.

[WBSC 1.2.3]

Tie-breaker

If a game is tied after 7 innings, additional innings **must** be played (if conditions allow) until there is an outright winner. Each extra inning starts with the last batter on 2nd base.

[WBSC 1.2.4]

Protests & Disputes

If a team disagrees with an umpire's final ruling, then the team must announce to the umpire and opposition that they wish to **play the game under protest**. This must be done **before the next pitch**.

[WBSC 1.2.11]

Situation details should be recorded - including the inning, score, number of outs, etc. Then the game will continue to a conclusion. The protest will be dealt with by the **LSL Technical Officer**.

[LSL Standing Orders Section B.16]

It is important to know which calls can be legitimately protested. **Judgment calls cannot be protested**.

[WBSC 1.2.10]

Any arguments about judgement calls can result in **ejection**, so it is important that captains and players respect these decisions.

[LSL Standing Orders Section B.15.J & WBSC 3.1.3]

Field Layout

It is the responsibility of the home team to ensure that the field is laid out appropriately. A diagram including the correct distances can be downloaded from:

<https://secureservercdn.net/160.153.138.94/b9q.605.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Softball-Pitch-Dimensions.pdf>

If the field does not have a painted dead ball line, the umpires and team captains will agree prior to the game how dead balls will be called. It may be necessary to use alternative reference points, such as distant landmarks. The dead ball line should ideally be 20-30 feet from the foul ball line.

Note that second base is **not** placed within the baselines, but lies instead on the intersection. The distance from the back of home plate to the pitcher's plate is **50 feet** (approximately

three feet behind an imaginary line between 1st and 3rd bases).

Base Positions



Home Plate



First Base



Second Base



Third Base

Umpire Help Sheet

Strike Zone

The strike zone is a three-dimensional area **over the plate**, measuring between the **back shoulder** and **knees** of the batter.

As only part of the ball needs to cross part of the plate, the actual width of the strike zone is approximately the plate plus a ball's width either side – 24½ inches.

If the ball hits the plate it is a ball, unless swung at.

If a pitch bounces before (or on) the plate, the ball is dead and cannot be put into play. If the

batter swings **after** such a pitch has bounced, it is still a **ball** and not a strike.

[WBSC 5.1.40]

A Catch

To be a valid catch, a fielder must have complete control over not only the ball but also their body. If a player falls and drops the ball or collides with another fielder and loses the ball, then it is **not** a valid catch.

If the ball is dropped while the fielder is transferring it to the throwing hand, the catch is valid.

[WBSC 5.1.9]

Tagging Up

If a ball is caught - whether fair or foul - runners can leave a base as soon as the ball is **touched** by a fielder. They do **not** need to wait for the fielder to be in control of the ball.

[WBSC 5.1.42]

Appeals

Certain situations require the defensive team to make a valid appeal before the umpire can make a ruling. These are known as appeal plays:

Failing to Tag up

If a runner fails to 'tag up' on a catch, they should be called out **only** if correctly appealed by the fielding team.

Missing Bases

Runners must touch the bases in order. If the fielding team correctly appeals that a runner has missed a base, then the runner should be called out.

On these plays, if the fielding team does not make an appeal, the umpire **must not** bring attention to the infraction.

[WBSC 1.2.6]

Leaving a Base Early

During the pitch, runners must stay in contact with their base until the ball is hit, touches the ground, or crosses homeplate. If a player leaves too early, the umpire should call "Dead Ball/No Pitch" and declare the runner out. This is **not** an appeal play.

[WBSC 5.10.3.b.ii]

Interference

If a fielder **in the act of making a play** is impeded by a runner, the umpire should call "Dead Ball" and the runner is out. If, in the umpire's judgement, it was a deliberate attempt to break up a double play, the **following runner** is also out.

When a fielder is waiting for the runner **in possession of the ball**, and the runner remains on their feet and deliberately collides with them, the umpire should call the runner out.

If the interference is deemed **flagrant**, the runner should also be **ejected** from the game.

In all cases of interference, the umpire should call "Dead Ball", declare the runner out and all other runners must return to the base they last legally held at the time of the interference.

[WBSC 5.1.30]

Obstruction

When a fielder **not making a play** impedes the progress of a runner, the umpire should make **no verbal call**, but should indicate a **delayed dead ball** by extending the left arm horizontally.

Once 'time' has been called, the umpire shall award all affected runners the bases **they would have reached** had the obstruction not occurred.

Example Situation #1:

After hitting a ball into the outfield, the batter-runner is impeded while rounding first base. Attempting to reach second base, the runner is then tagged out by the shortstop.

If, in the umpire's judgement, the runner would have reached second base if not impeded, then the umpire should call "Dead Ball" and award the runner second base.

If, however, the umpire thinks that the runner would not have reached second base, then they call "Dead Ball" and the runner is returned to first base.

Example Situation #2:

A runner from third base is impeded from reaching home plate by the catcher who is waiting for - but not in possession of - the ball. To avoid a collision, the runner goes around the catcher, missing home plate. The catcher then receives the ball and tags the runner before they can touch home.

The umpire should call "Dead Ball" and award the runner home.

[WBSC 5.1.32]

Thrown ball hitting a runner

Play continues unless the runner has deliberately interfered with the ball.

Batted ball hitting a runner

If, in the umpire's judgement, a fielder would have had an opportunity to make a play had the ball not hit the runner, the umpire should call "Dead Ball".

If the runner was **on base** when hit by the ball, they are **not out**, the batter-runner is awarded first base, and other runners advance only if forced.

If the runner was **off base** when hit by the ball, they should be **called out**, the batter-runner is awarded first base, and other runners advance only if forced.

If the ball has passed a fielder and, in the umpire's judgement, no other fielder would have had a chance to make an out, then the ball remains live and the runner is **not out**.

When to call "Time"

Time is called when a fielder has the ball and, in the umpire's judgement, the runners have stopped making progress. The ball must be in the hands of a player **in the infield**.

Dealing with Protests & Disputes

Occasionally, a team will disagree with an umpire's decision. Some disputes can be immediately rectified **if the umpire agrees** that they have made an incorrect ruling.

If a team wishes to make an **official protest**, they may do so, and the game will continue as normal.

Judgement calls cannot be disputed. Arguments about judgement calls should be dealt with by **warning** the offending team that continued arguing may result in ejection or forfeiture of the game.

Calls and Hand Signals

For clarity and consistency, it is important that umpires use the correct calls and signals to suit the situation.

Ball : Simply say "ball", with **no hand signal**. It is not necessary to state where the ball missed, unless asked.

Strike : Raise the **right fist** into the air, so that all can see it. Call "Strike" loud enough for all players to hear. In cases where a batter has swung and missed, it is not necessary to make the call, but still to use the hand signal.

Illegal Pitch : Extend your **left arm** horizontally, with the fist closed. Call "Illegal" as soon as possible, to give the batter a chance to react.

Count : Hold up both hands, displaying the number of **balls on the left** hand and the number of **strikes on the right**.

Foul Ball : Raise **both hands** in the air. Call "Foul Ball!" as loudly as possible.

Fair Ball : **Point** towards the centre of the field. If the ball was close to the line, make a **pumping motion** with the pointing arm. Do **not** make a verbal call, to avoid confusing players.

Out : Raise the **right fist** into the air, so that all can see it. On a catch or close play, it is important that you also call "Out". The closer the play, the more emphatic your call should be.

Safe : Extend **both arms** horizontally, palms towards the ground. Call "Safe". Again, the closer the play, the more emphatic your call should be.

Obstruction : Extend your **left arm** horizontally, with the fist closed. Do not make a verbal call, to avoid confusing players.

Dead Ball : Raise **both hands** in the air. Call "Dead Ball!" as loudly as possible.

Time : Raise **both hands** in the air. Call "Time!" as loudly as possible.