



The 2026 softball season has started!

We hope you enjoyed the first softball umpire newsletter! Our SDHSAA Softball Season has officially begun, with several games being played this past week. Despite the weather, teams are ready to go and eager to play; let's be ready to take the field and give them our best effort early in the season!

There are many sources of information, rules, mechanics, points of emphasis, and other resources available for umpires to gain knowledge that can assist us in working our softball games. Gather this information in a way that works for you so that we can work together to be the best team on the field!

In addition to reading the rules, mechanics, and case play books, we encourage you to watch training videos and game film, particularly games in which you umpire! Video is one of our best training resources, both for watching odd plays again and for observing our mechanics, movements, and body language on the field.

Have a great start to the season! And remember...

If you have a rules or mechanics topic you would like to discuss here, please let us know and it will be included!

Rules Topic of the Week **EQUIPMENT & The FIELD**

From the SDHSAA Softball Handbook

Helmets: each batter, on-deck batter, students/players in the coach's box, runners, and retired runners must wear a NOCSAE approved batting helmet with a non-glare surface. Batting helmets shall be equipped with a NOCSAE approved face mask/guard.

Bats: all bats must meet the 2004 ASA Bat Performance Standard bearing either the 2000 or 2004 certification mark, or have the USA Softball All Games Certified mark. All bats also must not be on the non-approved bat list.

Pitching Distance: 43 feet.

Double First Base: required for all SDHSAA varsity and sub-varsity games.

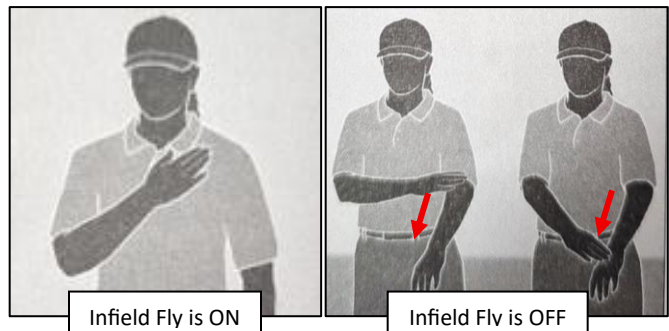
On-Deck Batter: Rule 7-5-1 states, the on-deck batter shall take a position within the on-deck circle closest to the batter's dugout. A player desiring to warm up shall use the on-deck circle provided it is safely away from home plate. Neither team's players shall warm up in the other team's on-deck circle.

Crew Communication: Umpire-to-Umpire Signals

Notes from page 50 of the NFHS Umpires Manual:

An umpire's primary method of communicating during the game is through hand or full body signals; using signals appropriately and precisely allows umpires to "pre-pitch" situations and work together on the diamond.

Make sure your signals are visible (up and out from the body), structured and distinct, informative, timely, and convey confidence (firm, with authority).



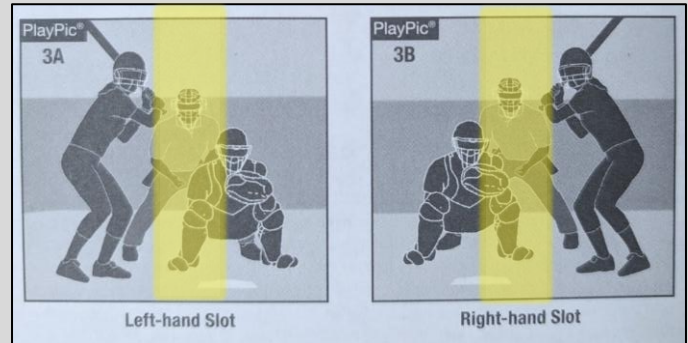


Umpiring the Plate – Slot, Stance & the Set Position

Notes from pages 23-26 of the NFHS Umpires manual:

Being in the slot affords the plate umpire an excellent line of sight to the strike zone, checked swings, hit batters, and catch/no catch pitches.

The plate umpire stance is an athletic position, with feet slightly wider than shoulder width apart and hips aligned to the front outside corner of the plate. Move into position by stepping with your inside foot behind the catcher and your outside foot into the “slot” between the inside corner of the plate and the batter. The heel of the slot foot should align with the toe of the non-slot foot, which helps guide hip alignment to the outside corner. Be approximately a closed fist distance behind the catcher and do not touch the catcher. Mirror your positioning on both sides of the plate.



Go into the set position by bending your knees until your eyes are at the top of the batter’s strike zone. The set position must be balanced and comfortable, but it is not a “relaxed” position.

Umpiring the Bases – Walking the Line & the Set Position

Notes from page 35 of the NFHS Umpires manual:

With no runners on base, start on the foul line (in foul territory) 18-21 feet behind the base. Walk the line by taking one or two steps toward home plate, staying in foul territory, with your last step being with your foot farthest from the foul line (outside foot). Stay upright and use the outside foot to smoothly push off into fair territory if a play develops.

With any baserunners, the base umpire will be off the line and use a “ready position” prior to the pitch being delivered. Stand upright in a comfortable position with feet shoulder width apart, lean slightly forward and place your hands comfortably in front of your body. Transfer your weight from your heels to the balls of your feet for better balance and mobility. Rise from the ready position at the end of the pitch and be prepared to move as the situation dictates.

