

Official Rules Differences of NFHS & MLB Baseball

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NFHS 1-1-4

NFHS 1-1-4/OBR 4.03

All fielders must be in fair territory when the ball is pitched, with the exception of the catcher, who must be in the catcher's box. A fielder is considered to be in fair territory if at least one foot is touching fair territory. If there is a violation, the pitch is ruled to be illegal.

[OBR requires both feet in fair territory except catcher and first baseman (when defense is not objecting). There is no penalty given.]

NFHS 1-2-3, 3-3-3

NFHS 1-2-3, 3-3-3/OBR Umpire Manual

An "on-deck" batter is the batter waiting to be the next hitter. An "on-deck circle" is to be provided on the playing field outside the dugout, and should be a safe distance from home plate. A team does not have to have a batter on-deck, but if they do, he should be warming up in or near the circle.

[MLB/MiLB require an on-deck hitter]

NFHS 1-2-9

NFHS 1-2-9/OBR 2.03

Safety rules for high school play allow breakaway bases at first, second and third, and a "safe-base" at first.

[OBR does not permit break-away bases or a safe-base.]

NFHS 1-3-1

NFHS 1-3-1/OBR 4.01e

Legal baseballs have the NFHS "authenticating mark." If such baseballs are not available, the umpire should go ahead with the game with whatever baseballs are acceptable to both teams. The umpires should report the situation to the state association. The home team is to provide three baseballs to the plate umpire to start the game and must have at least two baseballs available after that.

[OBR: one dozen regulation baseballs must be available.]

NFHS 1-4-2, 10-2-3m

NFHS 1-4-2, 10-2-3m/OBR 7.04

On a game ending situation, if a coach wishes to protest a ruling made by the umpires, or disputes the final score, he must do so before the umpires leave the field.

[OBR: the protesting team has until noon the next day to file the protest. For a disputed final score, there is no provision in the rules for a procedure.]

NFHS 10-1-2

NFHS 10-1-2/OBR 4.03e

Umpire jurisdiction over a game begins when the umpires enter the field with the intent of remaining there for the duration of the game.

[OBR: jurisdiction begins when the plate umpire receives the lineup cards (and remains in effect through the second game if there is a double header).]

NFHS 2-10-1, 3-4-1, 3-4-2

NFHS 2-10-1, 3-4-1, 3-4-2/OBR 5.10l

Coaches often need to consult with their players during a game, and this is regulated by charged conferences.

A team is allowed one conference per inning while on offense.

A defensive team conference is a little more involved because of the pitching position, which changes more often. On defense the coach (or a non-playing assistant coach) is allowed three conferences per game and, if there are extra innings, he gets one and only one conference per inning. One of the umpires is required to notify the coach of each charged conference and to make note in writing of each conference.

Note that a conference is not charged if:

a pitching change is made

a coach consults with his players during the other team's charged conference and does not delay the game

there is an unrelated break in the action and the offensive coach consults with his players (the defensive coach is not allowed this courtesy)

A defensive conference held on fair territory ends when the coach crosses the foul line on his way back to his bench. Any other conference, defensive (held on foul territory) or offensive, ends when the coach begins to head back to his bench or position.

During the first seven innings of play, if a coach has been charged with three defensive conferences, he must replace the pitcher every time he consults with a defensive player on the field. During any extra inning, the same rule holds after one defensive conference has been charged in that inning.

[MLB allows unlimited conferences except when a second trip to the same pitcher occurs in the same inning (different batter). Conference ends when he leaves the dirt circle of the mound or an imaginary 18-foot circle around the conference location.]

NFHS 2-17-1

NFHS 2-17-1/OBR 7.01a

A high school game is scheduled to be seven innings, unlike Major League Baseball, where they play nine. Thus any rule that applies to the "last inning" applies to the 7th inning in high school baseball.

Also high school rules allow for a “ten run rule.” If the home team is ahead by ten or more runs after the top of the fifth inning, or the home team goes ahead by ten or more runs in the fifth or a later inning, the game ends. This is sometimes called the “mercy rule” and helps to ensure that things don’t get out of hand.

[OBR: 9 inning regulation game, 8.5 if home team takes lead in the 9th, or game is otherwise shortened due to a called game.]

NFHS 2-22-1, 5-1-3, 8-3-2

NFHS 2-22-1, 5-1-3, 8-3-2/MLB 6.01h

Obstruction is when a batter or runner has right-of-way and a fielder hinders him. When obstruction happens, the umpire calls it but lets the ball remain in play (do not call “time”).

After the play ends the umpires can award any bases that would counteract the obstruction. Every runner who is obstructed must get at least one base beyond the obstruction, whether as a result of the play or by an umpire’s award.

Obstruction includes the catcher interfering with a batter who is trying to hit the ball (this is called catcher’s interference under the Official Rules). It also includes a fielder trying to field a throw who does not yet have possession of the ball.

If a fielder fakes a tag, it is obstruction. The team is warned not to violate this rule again. If someone does so, the player is ejected.

Obstruction can also be verbal, such as a fielder telling a runner to go back a base because a ball was foul when it actually was not batted.

[OBR: ball is dead when there is “Type A” obstruction: play is being made on the obstructed runner at the time of the obstruction. Catcher interference with batter is not obstruction. If a fielder is trying to field a throw, it cannot be obstruction unless there is intent to obstruct. A fake tag is not obstruction, and there is no verbal obstruction.]

NFHS 2-33-1

NFHS 2-33-1/OBR 5.10e

Courtesy runners can be used as part of high school baseball game speed up rules. Most states use this option, so umpires must know the rules regarding courtesy runners.

A courtesy runner is someone who is not batting in the game and can be used to run for the pitcher or catcher. This allows the pitcher and/or catcher to get back on defense more quickly when the half-inning ends. The courtesy runner remains a regular substitute who can come into the game as a fielder or batter.

Here are the rules regarding a courtesy runner:

The same courtesy runner cannot run for the pitcher and the catcher. A courtesy runner runs for the position, not the player. Thus if a pitcher is moved to the catching position and then gets on base, he must have a different courtesy runner as catcher than he did as pitcher.

Any player who has played in the game cannot be a courtesy runner.

If a player participates as a courtesy runner in a given inning, he cannot go into the game as a batter in the same half inning.

If a player bats for the pitcher or catcher, that player is not allowed a courtesy runner if he reaches base.

A courtesy runner can be replaced on base by another courtesy runner.

The plate umpire must record any courtesy runner's participation.

[OBR: courtesy runners are not allowed.]

NFHS 3-1-3

NFHS 3-1-3/OBR 5.10d

All starting players (there are either 9 or 10, depending on whether a designated hitter is being used) can be taken out of the game and put back into the game one time (this is called "re-entry"). A player can only be listed as a starting player, however, if he is present at the game site when the lineup cards are exchanged by the coaches.

A starting player who re-enters has to go back into the same batting position as where he started.

In a situation where a pitcher has become injured or ill, the starting pitcher may not re-enter if he has not pitched to one batter, or if more than eight warmup pitches are used as the offense makes the switch.

A similar rule is the one that allows courtesy runners for the pitcher and/or catcher.

[OBR: a replaced player is out of the game unless he is a pitcher who has not met his obligation to face a batter or retire the side; that pitcher must re-enter and meet his obligation.]

NFHS 3-1-4

NFHS 3-1-4/OBR 5.11

Here are the specifics of the designated hitter (DH) rule for high school games:

The DH can bat for any defensive player (not just the pitcher, as in some leagues)

The DH would normally bat for one player and any of that player's substitutes on defense

The DH must be listed next to or under the player he is batting for

The DH and the player he is batting for are both locked into the same batting slot; neither of these two players can ever bat in

If the DH enters the game on defense, the player he was batting for must come out of the game

A replaced DH can re-enter as a pinch runner for the player who had replaced him

The DH role for a team is terminated for the rest of the game if:

A replaced DH re-enters the game on defense (the acting DH is disqualified from further participation)

The player for whom the DH was batting pinch hits or pinch runs for the DH

[OBR: DH must bat for the pitcher, etc.]

NFHS 3-2-3

NFHS 3-2-3/OBR 6.01f

If a base coach is touched by a ball that is in play while the coach is on **fair territory**, it is interference. The runner or batter being played against would be called out.

[OBR: the coach is only called out if it was intentional or the coach failed to avoid the play when he should have been out of the way.]

NFHS 3-3-1

NFHS 3-3-1/OBR 8.01d

If a high school player throws equipment such as a glove, helmet, bat, etc., he is immediately ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct. This conduct is considered highly unsportsmanlike, and potentially dangerous.

[OBR has a provision for an equipment violation in the Umpire's Manual; an equipment violation is not a required ejection.]

NFHS 3-3-1 f thru k (This is the MIAA "Strike One" Rule)

NFHS 3-3-1 f thru k/OBR 8.01d

When an umpire is trying to deal with a coach who is being difficult, the normal disciplinary route is to **first warn** the coach to stop or to eject him from the game for his words or actions, or both. That warning is the MIAA "Strike One," this is a written warning and it requires the coach to remain in his dugout for the remainder of the game.

A high school umpire has one additional option. The umpire can also "restrict" the coach to his bench for the duration of the game. The coach must then remain in his dugout or the bench area. The one exception is that the restricted coach is allowed to come on the field to assist any of his players who become injured.

Restriction to the bench is not a requirement before a coach can be ejected; the coach can still be ejected immediately when his words and/or actions warrant ejection. "Restriction" should be seen as one option in addition to warning a coach that can be used rather than ejecting him.

[OBR does not provide for a restriction to the bench.]

NFHS 4-2-2, 4-2-3, 4-2-4

NFHS 4-2-2, 4-2-3, 4-2-4/MLB 7.00

Most state high school baseball associations issue their own game-ending regulations, so high school umpires must check their local state associations and know the rules for their state.

If a state association has made game-ending rules, they must be followed, even if the coaches of the two teams want to agree on and use some other rules.

If the game is being played in a state that does not have its own game-ending rules and the coaches want to make some agreement on what rules they want to use for that game, the umpire can agree to what they want to do. However, the coaches need to let the umpires know what they want before the game begins.

However, if a state has not adopted its own game-ending rules and coaches have not come to their own agreement on what should be done, a high school umpire would follow the NFHS rules found in rule 4:

If a game is tied at the point of stoppage, it is declared a “tied” game. There is no winner.

If a game has gone enough innings to be official (4.5) and the game has to be called, then:

If the home team is ahead, they win

If the score is tied or the visiting team is ahead, the game score reverts back to what it was at the end of the last completed inning

[MLB: too complicated to enumerate here.]

NFHS 4-4-1

NFHS 4-4-1/OBR 7.03b

If a high school team playing with nine players reaches a situation where one of the players must leave the game, the team is allowed by the rules to continue with eight players. If the player who had to exit the game was a runner, the last previous batter before him who is not on base is allowed to take his place as a courtesy runner.

Under this rule, a coach is allowed to continue a game with eight lineup batters, even if he has substitutes available. Any time that a vacant batting slot comes due to bat, the plate umpire is to rule an out.

If a player apparently had to leave the game for good, leaving his team with eight players, but is later able to play, he can come back into the game. However, depending on what happened, the player may need to have a doctor’s note that OK’s him to come back into the game.

[OBR: a team unable or unwilling to field nine players has to forfeit.]

NFHS 5-1-1f

NFHS 5-1-1f5/OBR 5.12 (MLB Umpire Manual)

If a batted ball becomes stuck in a fielder’s glove and the fielder is unable to get it out, the ball is dead and the batter and/or all runners get two bases.

[An MLB interpretation says the ball remains in play and the fielders can throw the glove/ball combination in an attempt to get an out.]

NFHS 5-1-1k, 6-1, 6-2, 6-3

NFHS 5-1-1k, 6-1, 6-2, 6-3/OBR 5.06b3A, 6.02a

A balk or illegal pitch results in an immediate dead ball in high school baseball. If there is a balk but the pitcher delivers the ball and the batter hits or runners advance, the resulting action is meaningless because the ball is dead. If there is a balk or illegal pitch with runners on base, they each get one base. If there is an illegal pitch with no runners on base, a ball is added to the ball-strike count.

Note that a balk is also considered an illegal pitch under NFHS rules. If there are no runners and a pitcher does something that would be a balk with runners on base, it is considered an illegal pitch and a ball should be added to the count. However, sometimes it is practical for an umpire to give the pitcher a warning first and use it as a teachable moment.

If you umpire multiple levels, chances are you work a level where a balk is not always an immediate dead ball. Thus it becomes important not to signal a balk with the same signal as “time.” To avoid this, get in the habit of pointing at the pitcher when he balks, and voicing, “That’s a balk!” Then determine if time is to be called for that level of play. If it is not an immediate dead ball, you’ll want to get back into position for the pitch. Say the batter hits a home run after a balk/pitch on a level where the ball is not immediately dead for a balk. In that case the home run would stand.

[OBR: balk is not necessarily an immediate dead ball; a pitch or throw occurring right after the balk is allowed. If the batter and/or all runners advance at least one base as a result of the pitch or throw, the balk is nullified.]

NFHS 5-1-3

NFHS 5-1-3/OBR 5.05b1

Under high school rules, the defensive team can verbally request a base on balls. Time is called and the batter is sent to first base with no pitches thrown. The request can be made at any time during an at bat, so the ball/strike count at the time of the request does not matter.

[OBR: the pitches must be thrown.]

NFHS 5-2-1

NFHS 5-2-1/OBR no rule

In a high school game, if a player becomes injured during a play, the umpire should stop play if he judges that further play may bring more harm to the injured player. The umpires would then have to decide where to place runners, whether outs should be called, etc.

[OBR: no such rule and play would likely be allowed to continue barring an emergency.]

NFHS 6-1-2

NFHS 6-1-2/OBR 5.07a1

If the high school pitcher has taken the windup position, the only legal moves he can make are to deliver a pitch or step back off the pitching plate. If he is legally in contact with the pitcher’s plate in the windup position and steps and throws to a base for a pickoff play, it is a balk. The ball is dead immediately and all runners get a base.

[OBR: pickoff move from the windup position is legal.]

NFHS 6-1-2

NFHS 6-1-2/OBR 5.07a1 Comment

With no runners on base, if a pitcher goes from the windup position to the stretch position (or vice versa) without first legally stepping off the pitching plate, it is an illegal pitch. A ball is added to the count.

[OBR: this would be a balk with runners on base; with no runners the umpire would just call time and “reset”.]

NFHS 6-1-3

NFHS 6-1-3/OBR 5.07a2, 6.02a5

If there are no runners and a pitcher is using the stretch position, and the pitcher fails to come set before delivering the pitch to the batter, it is an illegal pitch. The umpire should call time and add a ball to the count.

[OBR: must just be certain the pitcher is not quick-pitching the batter (delivering in a manner that catches the batter off guard).]

NFHS 6-1-6

NFHS 6-1-6/OBR: no rule

High school pitchers are to be limited in the number of game pitches they can deliver within a certain amount of time. This rule seeks to ensure that a coach, team or player is not tempted to overdo it, resulting in a pitcher doing physical damage to his pitching arm. State associations can make their own regulations, but each state following the NFHS rules must have such regulations protecting pitchers. Umpires must make sure they know what the rule is for their state. **Both coaches are required to track the pitch count of both teams' pitchers. Umpires are not responsible for pitch counts.**

For purposes of this rule, an ambidextrous pitcher is considered one pitcher. All pitches that an ambidextrous pitcher delivers in a game go toward his pitch count. It does not matter what arm he uses. When he reaches the limit, he must exit and wait the prescribed amount of time.

[OBR: no such limitation.]

NFHS 6-2-2c

NFHS 6-2-2c/MLB 5.07b

The first time a high school pitcher warms up on the mound to pitch in a game, he is allowed eight pitches. Thereafter, when warming up before the start of an inning, he is allowed only five pitches.

[MLB: 8 pitches.]

NFHS 6-2-4a

NFHS 6-2-4a/OBR 6.02a2

It is legal for a high school pitcher, while in contact with the rubber in the stretch position, to fake a pickoff throw to third base when the base is occupied. There must be an arm motion included with the fake to third.

[OBR: cannot fake to third (or first); must throw to the base.]

NFHS 6-2-4d1, 7-2-1e, 7-3-1

NFHS 6-2-4d1, 7-2-1e, 7-3-1/OBR [This one is not done; Kyle is getting back to me on it]

If there are runners on base, a pitcher has started his delivery, and the batter requests time or steps out of the batter's box:

And the pitcher pitches the ball,

It is an automatic strike if the batter stayed in the box or stepped out with only one foot.

Two strikes are called if the batter stepped out of the box with both feet.

And the pitcher hesitates and does not pitch,

There is no penalty if the batter stayed in the box or only stepped out of the box with one foot. They “reset” and try again.

A strike is called if the batter stepped out of the box with both feet.

If the batter is intentionally trying to make the pitcher balk by these actions, he is ejected.

[OBR: Aa is a strike or ball as usual. Ab; there are never two strikes called on one pitch. I believe that MLB has no penalty for Bb though there is in MiLB under pace of game.]

NFHS 6-2-5

NFHS 6-2-5/OBR 6.02a Comment, 6.02a9

The “hidden ball trick” is when a play has ended and the fielder fakes giving the ball back to the pitcher. The fielder goes back to his position with the ball and the pitcher head toward the mound. If the high school pitcher gets within five feet of the pitcher’s plate without the ball, it is a balk.

[OBR: only a balk if the pitcher goes “astride” the pitching rubber, fakes a pitching position off the rubber, or tries to use the resin bag to make it look as if it is the ball.]

NFHS 7-1-1

NFHS 7-1-1/OBR 6.03b3

If a player has batted out of order and there has been a third out of a half-inning, the defensive team must appeal the batting out of order situation before their infielders leave fair territory. If they don’t do so, the player who had batted out of order becomes legal. The next time that team comes up to bat, the batting order picks up with the player who is listed after the legalized batter.

[OBR: the appeal can be made at any time before the next pitch or play is made. This includes inning-ending situations.]

NFHS 7-3-7, 7-3-5c, 5-1-1n, 7-3-5f

NFHS 7-3-7, 7-3-5c, 5-1-1n, 7-3-5f/OBR 6.03a3-4 Comment

Any time that a batter’s backswing (follow through) contacts the catcher while he is making a play, it is interference. The batter is out and the runners return to their time-of-pitch bases. If the backswing hits the catcher but he is not making a play, the ball is dead and the runners return to or stay on their time-of-pitch bases.

[OBR: “weak” interference; if play is made successfully it stands. If not, ball dead, runners return or stay.]

NFHS 8-2-1 to 8-2-5

NFHS 8-2-1 to 8-2-5 Penalty/OBR

When the ball is dead and runners have ceased running the bases, a high school team on defense can make a verbal appeal that a runner failed to touch a base or to tag up. Once the appeal is communicated to an umpire, he can make a ruling.

[OBR: they must put the ball back in play]

If a high school team wants to appeal a runner's failure to tag up or touch a base, but another play has happened, the appeal is still allowed if the offense initiated the play. This might happen when the offensive team knows the defense wants to appeal, so they send a runner on an attempt to steal a base so he can draw a throw. The appeal is still allowed unless the pitcher balks (which is considered an illegal pitch).

[OBR: when a play ends, the appeal must be made before any other pitch, play or play attempt. An appeal throw that goes out of play is considered a play attempt.]

If a high school team on defense wants to appeal a runner's failure to touch a base or tag up, and they have requested an intentional base on balls, they can no longer appeal.

[OBR: no intentional base on balls.]

If a high school team on defense wants to appeal a base runner's failure to touch a base or tag up, and the game has apparently ended, they must make their appeal before the umpires leave the field.

[OBR: they have until all infielders have left fair territory.]

NFHS 8-2-1, 9-1-1

NFHS 8-2-1, 9-1-1/OBR 5.06b3B-Comment

With the bases loaded in a potential game-ending situation, if the batter-runner is awarded first base (such as a base on balls), all runners must touch their advance base. If one of them does not, he may be out on appeal. The appeal would be a force out and might take away the winning run.

[OBR: time play rules and force rules do not apply in this situation. If the batter-runner touches first base and the runner from third touches home, the game is over.]

NFHS 8-2-8

NFHS 8-2-8/OBR 6.01a-Penalty

Whenever a defensive player interferes with an offensive player, the other runners are returned to the last base they had touched before the interference.

[OBR: when there is interference before the batter-runner has reached first, the runners return to their time-of-pitch bases (exceptions: intervening play or BR award to first requires their award to advance base).]

NFHS 8-3-2

NFHS 8-3-2/OBR 6.01h2

Every time that a defensive player obstructs a batter-runner or runner, that player must be awarded at least one base beyond the spot where he was obstructed.

[OBR: when there is obstruction and a play was not being made on the obstructed runner at the time of the interference, there would be times the umpire protects or awards a runner "back into" the base he was retreating toward.]

NFHS 8-3-3

NFHS 8-3-3-c1/OBR 5.06b3E

A fielder or catcher cannot use his cap, mask or clothing as if it were a glove and touch a ball that is in play. He also cannot throw these items or his glove at the ball, touching it. If he does so, preventing a home run, the home run counts. If he does so and contacts a fair batted ball (or that might become fair), the award is three bases. If the violation is a touched throw or pitch, the runners get two bases.

[OBR award on a pitched ball is one base.]

NFHS 8-3-3d

NFHS 8-3-3d/OBR 5.12b6

If a fielder makes a catch and enters dead ball territory with both feet (or falls), the ball is dead and all runners get one base. If the fielder gains possession of a live batted ball and does the same thing, it is a ground rule double.

[OBR: on a catch, one step into dead ball territory is a dead ball and one base award. Have a question in to Jeff Nelson on what they do on a batted ball on the ground or a wild throw possessed on live ball territory and carried into dead ball territory.]

NFHS 8-4-1g

NFHS 8-4-1g/OBR 5.09a11

If the batter-runner is running outside of the 3-foot running lane on his way to first base and hinders either the fielder throwing to first or the fielder receiving the throw at first, it is interference.

[OBR: does not consider whether the runner hindered the thrower, only the fielder receiving the throw. The fielder making the throw must make a decent throw or there cannot be interference. A wild throw precludes interference.]

NFHS 8-4-1h, 8-4-2g

NFHS 8-4-1h, 8-4-2g/OBR 6.01a7

If a batter-runner intentionally interferes with a potential double play, he is out and so is the other runner who would most likely have been played against. If the umpire is not sure who would have been played against, the runner of furthest advance (closest to home) should be the second out.

[OBR: the second out in this situation is always the runner of furthest advance, no matter who they would have played against or where the play possibilities were.]

NFHS 8-4-1h, 8-4-2g

NFHS 8-4-1h, 8-4-2g/OBR 6.01a6, 10

If a runner interferes on a double play ball, even if the interference is unintentional, the runner is out and so is the other runner or batter-runner who the umpire judges would have been the second out.

[OBR: if the interference is obviously unintentional, only the interfering runner is out. Other runners returned to their time-of-pitch bases and batter-runner placed at first.]

NFHS 8-4-1i

NFHS 8-4-1i/OBR 5.05a2-Comment

If a high school batter becomes a runner on an uncaught strike three, he is free to try for first base until he has reached his bench or dugout. If the pitch happened with two outs, he is free to begin his attempt for first base at any point before all the infielders have left fair territory.

[OBR: the batter-runner is out if he leaves the dirt circle around home plate and is not trying to reach first, or if he loiters in the plate area, failing to show an attempt to advance.]

NFHS 8-4-2b, 2-21-1b, 3-3-1m

NFHS 8-4-2b, 2-21-1b, 3-3-1m/OBR 6.01i

Collisions at home plate are always a possibility. Here are the ways that the NFHS rules differ from the Official Baseball Rules on potential collisions at home plate.

A runner cannot initiate a collision with a fielder, even if the fielder has the ball between the runner and the base he is trying to get to. If the runner does so, it is interference.

A catcher who is not in possession of the ball, even if he is in the act of receiving a throw that is nearly to the plate, cannot be in the runner's path. This would be obstruction.

If the play at the plate is a force play, the runner must observe the force play slide rule or risk his out for interference and another out on the other runner who would have been played against. A runner is never required to slide, but if he does so he must not violate the rule for a legal slide, which includes sliding directly into the base or away from the fielder.

If a runner scores on a force play attempt at the plate and then interferes, he is out, his run is nullified, and any other runner played against is also out.

[OBR: permits a collision that is incidental contact (not avoidable; no player is at fault; both players are doing what they are expected to do). Thus if the catcher has the ball or is receiving the ball and is blocking the plate and the runner just tries to get through and score, it is legal. There is no force play slide rule. Any runner who scores cannot have his run taken away for interference; the other player played against is out.]

NFHS 8-4-2b, 2-21-1b, 3-3-1m

NFHS 8-4-2b, 2-21-1b, 3-3-1m/OBR 6.01j

A legal slide for a high school runner on a force play (known as the "force play slide rule") includes either sliding directly into the base or sliding to the side of the base so as to avoid a fielder. On a force play the runner cannot slide to the side of the base with the intent of contacting or hindering the fielder. The runner also cannot carry out a "pop up slide" (using momentum into the base to quickly stand up after the slide) during a force out. This is also an illegal slide. When there is an illegal slide on a force play, the runner is out and so is the batter-runner (or in some cases it will be another runner who would have been the more likely second out).

On a tag play (not a force out), the runner is permitted to slide to the same side of the base the fielder is on, as long as the runner is trying to reach the base safely and he is within reach of the base with his hand or foot. Additionally, if the base is second or third, the runner is not permitted to go beyond the base, going out of reach of it, and contact or hinder a fielder.

[OBR: a slide into the fielder is permitted as long as the runner is able to (and attempts to) reach and stay on the base, and/or the fielder moves into the path of a legal slide. The restriction of being able to stay on the base is only if the base cannot be overrun (second and third).]

NFHS 8-4-2b2, 8-4-2d

NFHS 8-4-2b2, 8-4-2d/OBR no rule

A runner cannot jump over a fielder, unless the fielder is lying down or the runner jumps over the fielder's outstretched arm. This rule seeks to protect the fielder from injury. If the runner jumps over the fielder, he is out. The ball stays in play. The ball would be dead if the runner also committed interference.

[OBR has no such rule and does not mention that such action is legal.]

NFHS 8-4-2o

NFHS 8-4-2o/OBR 5.09c1 Comment

A legal "tag up" means that the runner is at a standing start, touching the base, when a fly ball is first touched for a catch. To go behind the base and get a running start before retouching the base (timing it with the catch) is not legal. If you see this you should call the runner out immediately. The ball remains in play and the rest of the play stands, so don't call time.

[Under OBR the runner is not out until it is properly appealed.]

NFHS 8-4-2q

NFHS 8-4-2q/OBR 5.09c2-A.R. B

If the ball becomes dead, a runner who has missed a base or failed to tag up has to correct his mistake before reaching the next base. If he is at least one base beyond the base in question and the ball goes out of play, he is out on appeal no matter what he does. The same thing holds if the runner had not yet touched the base beyond the one where he failed to tag up or to touch, but he does so after the ball goes out of play. He can no longer return to correct his mistake and he is out on appeal.

[OBR: the runner can be anywhere and is able to return to touch the base he failed to touch or retouch, as long as he does not proceed to touch a base that is in advance of where he was when the ball went out of play.]

Expanded Designated Hitter Role Coming to High School Baseball

The role of the designated hitter in high school baseball has been expanded to give coaches an additional option for the 2020 season.

“The game is in the best shape it has ever been in the history of high school baseball,” said Elliot Hopkins, NFHS director of sports and student services and liaison to the NFHS Baseball Rules Committee. “This has allowed coaches to coach, players to play and umpires to umpire. This change, which was organic and intuitive, expands the role of the designated hitter and meets the desires of the high school baseball community.”

Defensive Player-Designated Hitter (DP-DH)

There are now two scenarios in which a designated hitter may be used.

The first scenario is the traditional use where the designated hitter may be a 10th starter who hits for any one of the nine starting defensive players. The team begins the game with 10 starters: nine defensive players and nine hitters in the batting order, one of whom is the designated hitter hitting for a defensive player.

“The traditional designated hitter role remains intact,” Hopkins said. “However, the committee felt it was necessary to make an additional option available to coaches that could be strategic but also maximize participation.”

The change to Rule 3-1-4 now allows the starting designated hitter to also be a starting defensive player. Utilizing this option, the player has two positions: defensive player and designated hitter. The team would begin the game with nine starters -- nine defensive players - - one of whom also assumes the role of the designated hitter.

“With the change adding pitch-count restrictions to high school baseball, this will allow pitchers to remain in the game as a hitter while removing them from pitching,” Hopkins said. “Typically, pitchers are stronger hitters as well. However, the intent of the rule is not for it to become strictly a pitcher-designated hitter role. The rule provides additional avenues for other position players as well. The change allows coaches to strategize how to keep players in the game to contribute offensively while allowing another player a chance to participate on defense.”

Additionally, a prior rules change involving baseballs and chest and body protectors will take effect on January 1, 2020. As of that date, all baseballs and chest and body protectors used in high school baseball competition shall meet the NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) standard at the time of manufacture.