

# Principles of Umpiring

## Pause, Read, and React

Read the position of the fielders to help determine the play.

## Pivot

Enables you to get into position and change direction on the field.

## Watch the ball, glance at the runners

Must know when to take your eyes off the ball; head on a swivel .

## Chest to ball

Always face the ball at all times.

## Angle/Distance

Angle first! Get as much distance as play will allow.

## Be Set

You must be set to see the play. You must see the play to make the call.

## Timing

Proper use of the eyes – wait until you see it all happen.

## Adjust

Constantly.

## Open the gate

Know when to do it. Let the fielder take you to the play.

## Echo your partner


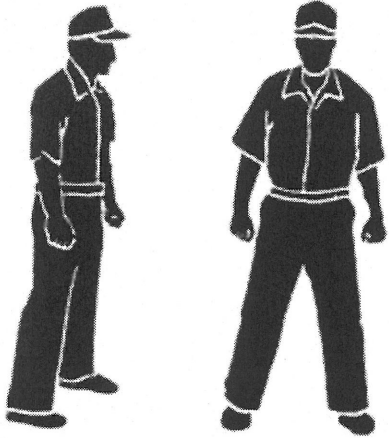
Knowing responsibilities for balks, overthrows, and time out means less confusion on the field.

## PRE-GAME CONFERENCE

Right before the scheduled time of the game and when all warm ups have been completed do the following:

- Ask both coaches to home plate for meeting (see ump position page 22)
- Introduce yourselves
- Make sure lineups have been exchanged
- Get game balls if you haven't already done so
- Review ground rules (note: home team coach does this when hosting a team from out of town)
- Ask if both teams are legally and properly equipped
- Helmets must be worn by all offensive teams will on the field
- Ask that both teams hustle on and off the team and to always engage in good sportsmanship
- Shake hands and ask home team to take the field

# Set Positions

 <p><b>Side</b>                      <b>Front</b></p>	<p><b>Hands on Knees Set Position</b></p>
 <p><b>Side</b>                      <b>Front</b></p>	<p><b>Standing Set Position</b></p>

# Slot Position

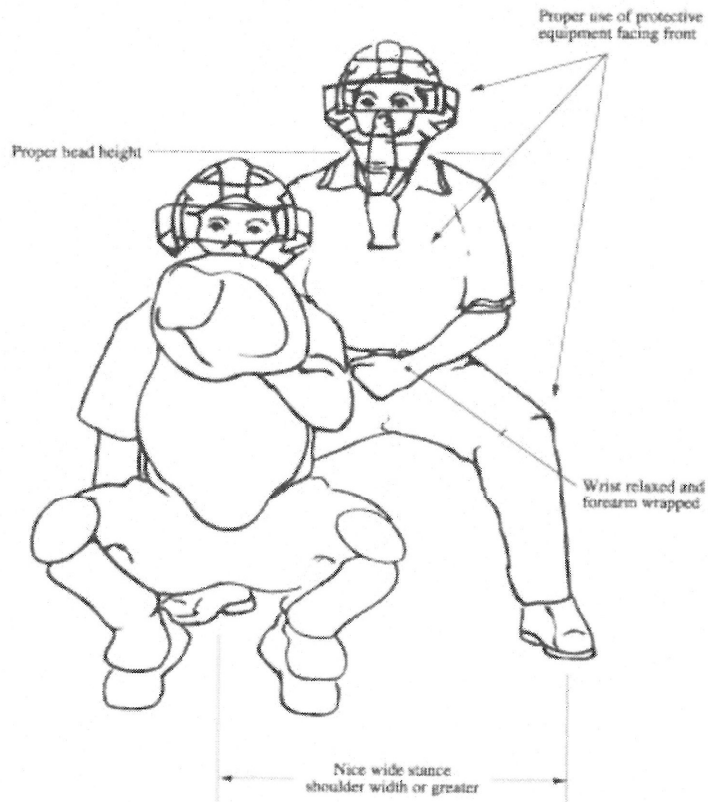
The purpose of the slot position is to give the plate umpire the best possible view of the strike zone while maintaining the correct head position.

The proper slot stance is having your head just to the side of the catcher's shoulder with the chin no lower than the top of the catcher's head. The back of the catcher's heels controls the relationship between the toe of the forward foot (slot foot) and the location of the catcher. The toe of the trail foot should not be further back than the heel of the forward foot. (see diagram on page 8)

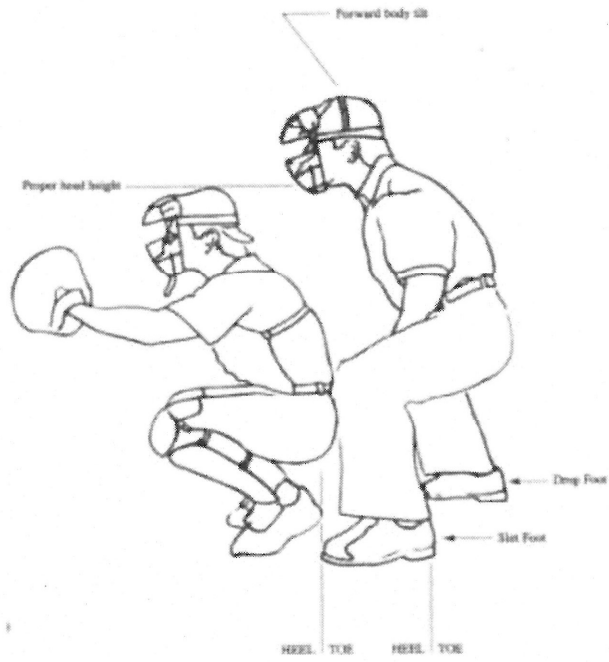
## THE SLOT (FRONT VIEW)

Proper head position is controlled by

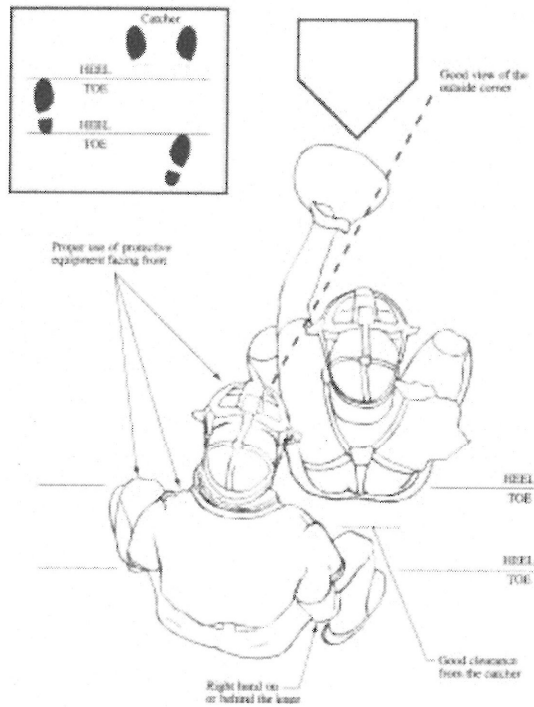
1. Width of stance
2. Amount of squat
3. Forward body tilt



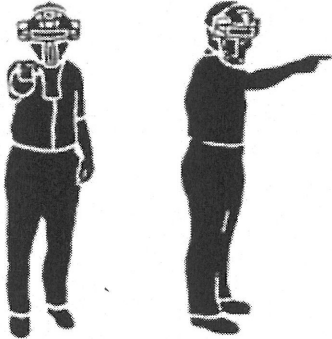
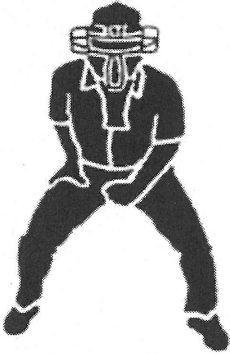
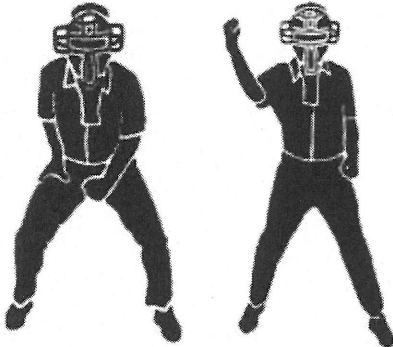
### The Slot (Side View)

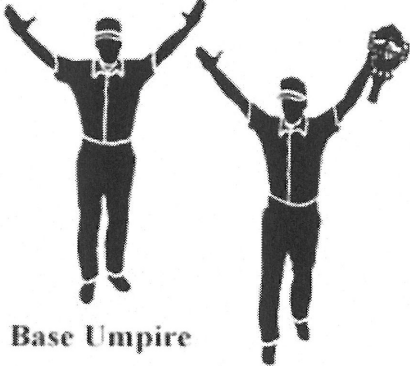
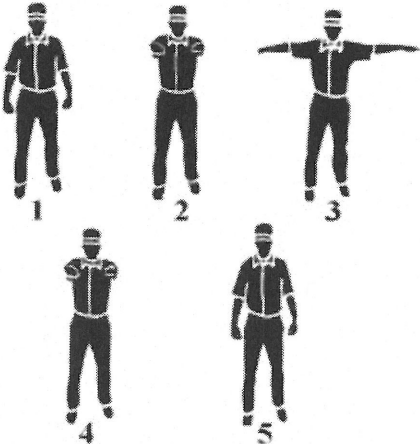
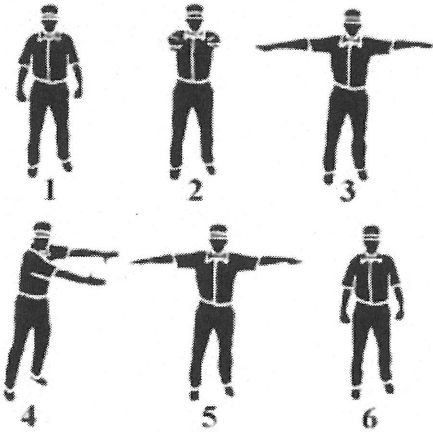


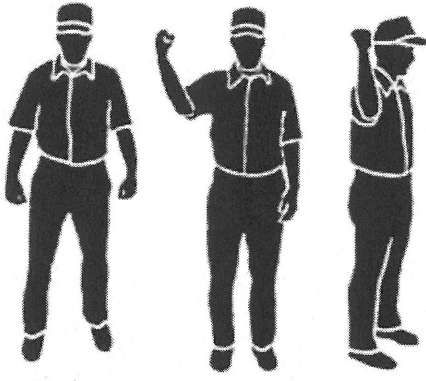
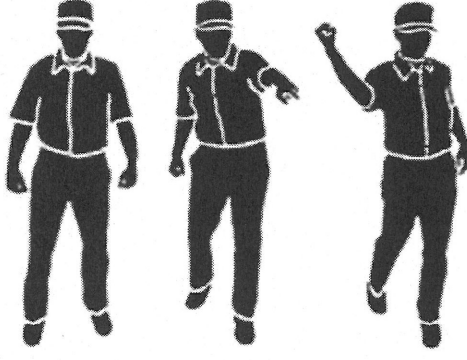
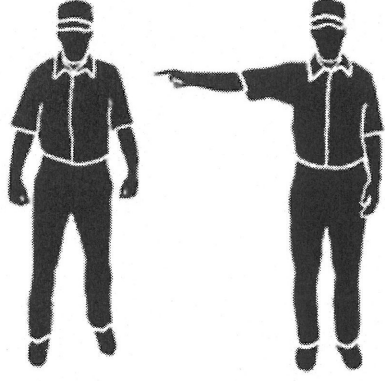
### THE SLOT (TOP VIEW)

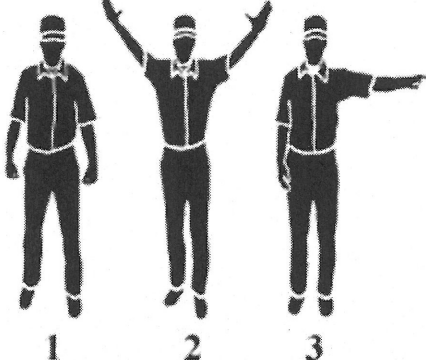
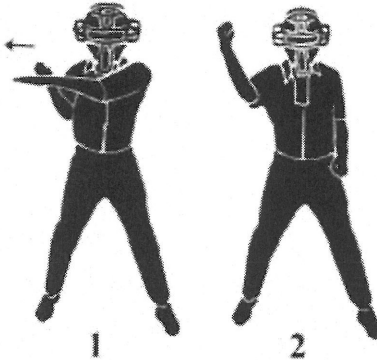
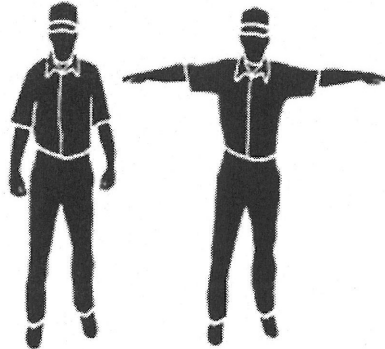


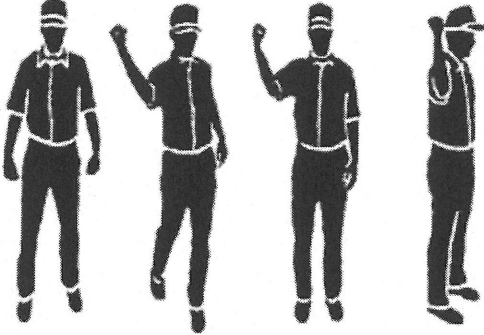
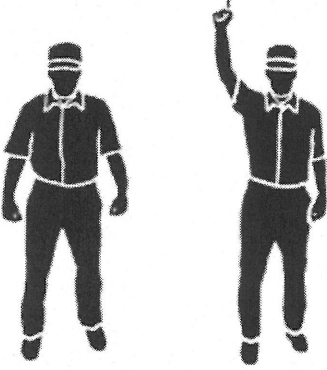
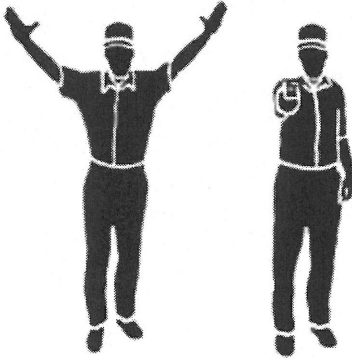
# Calls

	<p><b>“Play”</b></p> <p>Called by the plate umpire only.</p> <p>Starts the game or resumes the game when time is out.</p>
	<p><b>“Ball”</b></p> <p>Called while down with no arm signal.</p> <p>Called with the number. “Ball 1, ...2, ...3, ...4”</p> <p>Not as loud as strikes.</p> <p>There should be no vertical or lateral body movement to indicate location.</p>
	<p><b>“Strike”</b></p> <p>Called after rising up from the squat position.</p> <p>Strikes are called loud enough to be heard in the stands.</p>

 <p>Base Umpire</p> <p>Plate Umpire</p>	<p><b>“Time”</b></p> <p>Called by plate or base umpire.</p> <p>Called loud and clear.</p>
 <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p><b>“Safe”</b></p> <p>Safe calls originate from the hands-on-knees set, or standing set position and may end with a return to a hands-on-knees set position after the safe call.</p> <p>After making this call remain set with eyes on ball in case there is an immediate play following the safe call.</p>
 <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p>	<p><b>“Safe...off the bag”</b></p> <p>Called on a play that pulls the fielder off the base.</p> <p>Accompanied by a sweeping motion to indicate the call.</p> <p>After making this call remain set with eyes on ball in case there is an immediate play following the safe call.</p>

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Front</b>                      <b>Side</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“He’s Out!” or “She’s Out”</b></p> <p>Out calls originate from the hands-on-knees set, or standing set position. Make the call in a standing position.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b>                      <b>2</b>                      <b>3</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“On the tag, He’s out!”</b></p> <p>On close plays when the first baseman tags the batter runner, point to the spot of the tag and aggressively signal this call.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fair Ball</b></p> <p>No voice is used to indicate a fair ball. Indicated by pointing onto the field of play. Emphatically “pump” the signal on close calls. The call is made from the standing set position.</p>

 <p style="text-align: center;">1                      2                      3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Foul”</b></p> <p>Raising both arms above the head and make the call. The closer it is the more emphatic the voice and motion. When a hit ball is caught on the fly by a fielder outside of fair territory do <u>NOT</u> say anything and complete the foul signal and catch signal.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">1                      2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Foul Tip</b></p> <p>This is a non-verbal call used with a “strike” hand motion.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“No Catch”</b></p> <p>Called loud and clear by the umpire that has the responsibility to make the call.</p>

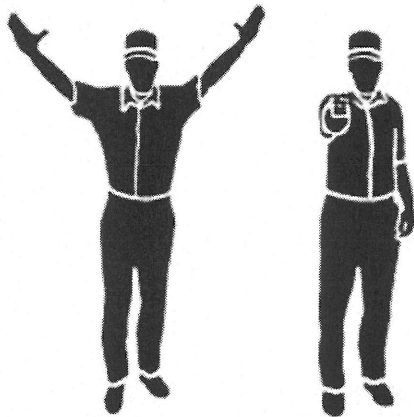
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Front</b>                      <b>Side</b></p>	<p><b>“That’s a catch”</b></p> <p>Called by plate or base umpire.</p> <p>Call loud and clear.</p>
	<p><b>“Infield Fly” or “Infield Fly, if Fair”</b></p> <p>Called by plate or base umpire.</p> <p>Call when the ball reaches peak height. Echo you partner if they call it.</p>
	<p><b>“Time; That’s Interference”</b></p> <p>Called by plate or base umpire.</p> <p>Called immediately when it happens. Follow up verbally with any base award(s)</p>



**“That’s Obstruction”  
7.06 B**

Called by plate or base umpire when a play is not being made on a runner.

Call loud and clear.  
Point at offender and let play continue. Any base awards are done after play concludes and time is called.


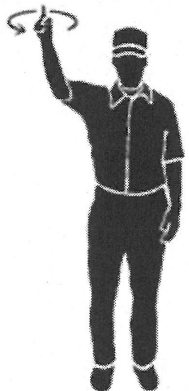


**“Time! That’s  
obstruction”  
7.06A**

Called by plate or base umpire when a play is being made on a runner.

Call loud and clear. Stop all play immediately.

Base awards are done immediately.

 A silhouette of a base umpire wearing a cap and uniform, dropping a red flag from his right pocket.	<p><b>Runner Leaves Base Early</b></p> <p>Called by base umpire only.</p> <p>Drop red flag from pocket. This is a non-verbal (no voice) call. Let play continue, when all play has stopped enforce the violation if any .</p>
 A silhouette of a base umpire wearing a cap and uniform, signaling a home run by pointing his right index finger up and circling it.	<p><b>Home Run</b></p> <p>Indicates that the hit ball went over the fence</p>

## BASIC BALK RULES

To understand the balk rule, we must first understand why there is a balk rule. The balk rule was put into place to prevent the pitcher from having an unfair advantage over the base runners. If there were no balk rule in place, the base runners would be severely handicapped in their ability to take leads, steal bases or generate runs.

**A Balk** is an illegal act by the pitcher with a runner or runners on base, entitling all runners to **advance one base**.

There are two legal pitching deliveries (The Windup and the Set) and either one can be used at any time. When the pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate, in either pitching position, the pitcher may do one of three things: 1. Deliver the ball to the batter; 2. Step and throw to a base in an attempt to pick off a runner; or 3. Disengage the pitcher's plate. In disengaging the pitcher's plate, the pitcher **MUST** step off (backwards, away from home plate) with the pivot foot and not with the free foot (non-pivot foot) first.

### Balks in the Windup Position

In the Windup position, the pitcher stands with his pivot foot on the pitcher plate and his non-pivot foot either parallel to or behind the pitching plate with both hands on the ball. He then begins his delivery motion in one continuous and uninterrupted motion to home. Balks do not generally occur when a pitcher is in the Windup Position because in order to have a balk, you must have a runner on base and pitchers do not pitch from the windup with runners on base except for occasionally with a runner on 3rd base. The only regular instances where a balk occurs in this situation is if the pitcher drops the ball during his windup or you will see the pitcher stop during his delivery if he sees the runner on 3rd break for home (suicide squeeze play). These are both balks.

### Balks in the Set Position

Here's is where a vast majority of balks occur. There is supposed to be some 31 ways a pitcher can balk. We are going to go over the most common ones keeping in mind that we need to call a balk if the pitcher is using tactics to gain an unfair advantage over the runner. Many runners are taught to start to steal when they see the pitchers first motion so illegal motion (see more below) is the main rule behind many balks. Also keep in mind that many lower levels of baseball with balk rules in effect will allow for a warning the first time a balk occurs. Check the rules in either the league or tournament play regarding this.

In the set position a pitcher starts in the pre-delivery position with his pivot foot on the pitching plate and his non-pivot foot in front of the pitching plate, hands apart with the pitching hand along his side or behind his back. In this position the pitcher is allowed to turn his shoulders to check on a runner. The next required move is for the pitcher to 'stand' (also called the stretch) with his non-pivot foot still in front of the pitching plate bringing the ball together in both hands in one continuous and uninterrupted motion. He then must come to a complete stop. In this segment of the pitch he may no longer turn his shoulders towards the runner, only his head. He then has the 3 option as described at the beginning of this section - 1. Deliver the ball to the batter; 2. Step and throw to a base in an attempt to pick off a runner; or 3. Disengage the pitcher's plate.

The most common balks in this position and not covered above in the Windup are:

1. Not conforming to the pitching regulations described above - not coming to a complete stop before delivery, turning the shoulders towards the runner after going into the stretch position and not stepping and throwing to a base in an attempt to pick off a runner.
2. If a pitcher is left handed throwing to first or right handed throwing to third the angle of his approach foot must be less than 45 degrees from an imaginary straight line from the rubber to the base.
3. Any feint towards the batter or runner at First Base (only)
4. Feinting or throwing to an unoccupied base.
5. Any twitch while in the stretch position
6. Pulling his hands apart while in the stretch position and not delivering the ball to home.
7. Not delivering the ball to home after his non-pivot foot is lifted and crosses (goes behind) the pitching plate
8. Making a 'Quick Pitch' (also a balk in the Windup)

Special note on balks in either position. If a pitcher stops his delivery in the middle of his motion as a result of the batter stepping out of the box or calling time then this is **not** a balk. Time shall be called and the pitcher is allowed to reset.

## INFIELD FLY RULE

The purpose of the Infield Fly Rule is to not allow baserunners the disadvantage of being forced out should a fielder on an 'infield fly' not catch the ball and therefore inviting a double-play on the runners. Here is the NFHS rule:

*An infield fly is a fair fly (not including a line drive nor an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, (rule does not preclude outfielders from being allowed to attempt to make the catch) and provided the hit is made before two are out and at a time when first and second bases or all bases are occupied.*

*When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire immediately announces it for the benefit of the runners. If the ball is near a baseline, the umpire shall declare, "Infield fly, if fair."*

Important things to know about the Infield Fly Rule - this is a judgment call and therefore not allowed to be argued once made. The area of the field does not dictate whether it is an Infield Fly or not, it's whether the infielder is in a position to make the play. Make the call as soon as it is apparent that the fielder can make the play with routine or ordinary effort. Be loud and decisive. As stated, a bunt popped up high in the air is not considered an infield fly for this rule. Runners advance at their own risk, they are not required to advance if the fielder drops the ball (no force in effect with batter being out) and they must tag if the fielder does catch the ball. As stated, an outfielder is not precluded from making this catch although I believe he would need to be playing very shallow and move up close to the infield to make this play.

## DROPPED 3RD STRIKE

This rule allows the batter when first base is unoccupied (excepting when there are two outs) to attempt to go to first base after he has taken his 3rd strike and the catcher does not catch the ball. In this case, the batter becomes a runner.

Important aspects of this rule:

1. The plate umpire shall, after declaring the pitch a strike and when it is apparent that the catcher has dropped the 3rd strike, raise his arm out in front and point to the ground thus signifying a dropped 3rd strike (not necessary for the rule but helps with the call).
2. If it is not apparent to the plate ump that the ball was dropped then he should allow the play to continue until he can confer with his base ump partner on the correct call and allow the play to stand or be overruled depending on the outcome.
3. The catcher can tag or throw to first base to put the runner out.
4. If there are two outs and the bases are loaded then a force is created at home and the catcher can just step on home plate before the runner touches home.
5. A runner at first base who is stealing does not negate the occupied first base rule. It is still considered occupied.
6. If an out is not otherwise recorded as above and the runner subsequently enters the bench or dugout area, or with two outs he does not attempt to reach first base before all infielders leave the diamond will he be considered out by "giving up". Simply walking towards the dugout does not constitute giving up.

The most difficult situation for an umpire on this play is when there is a "check swing" dropped baseball that is *not* called a strike by the Plate Umpire but on appeal to the Base Umpire is called a strike on the swing which then allows the runner to attempt to go to first, if once again first base is not occupied or there are already two outs and he has not entered the dugout.