UMPIRING SOFTBALL LEVEL TWO

PARTICIPANTS MANUAL
## Version Control

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Foreword

Softball Australia – Level 2 Umpire Manual

Welcome to the Softball Australia Umpire Development Program and specifically this Level 2 Course, which is designed for Level 1 Umpires looking to progress to the next level of accreditation.

This manual has been designed to assist you during the completion of the Level 2 Course. Satisfactory completion of this Level 2 Course is a prerequisite to Level 2 Accreditation.

It is hoped that this Level 2 Course will show the important need for consistent interpretations with relation to the rules of softball, umpire responsibilities, signals and mechanics, not only throughout your association but also throughout your state and nationally.

While some flexibility must be allowed for modification as an umpire gains experience, the ultimate aim must be remembered. That is, to have uniformity in teachings and umpire development, mechanics and interpretations throughout softball umpiring in Australia.

Umpiring sport carries a duty of care and responsibility for all involved: players, coaches, administrators, fellow umpires and spectators. So it is imperative that a course is provided to cater for the newly developing umpire.

We acknowledge the training program managers and clinicians from New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland whose combined efforts have contributed significantly to this manual and indeed the full Level 2 Course.

The reader of this manual should be aware that at the time of production the content was current and up to date. As time passes, the mechanics and theories of softball and softball umpiring may change and the reader should be prepared to check if there are updates available.

For further information on softball umpiring please visit the Softball Australia website www.softball.org.au and go to the Umpiring’ tab for information and contact details.
Module 1 – Umpires in Softball Australia Today

Introduction
Becoming an umpire is like becoming part of a big family! You may find that the people with whom you are sitting today may become your close friends as you progress together through the umpiring ranks.

In this module we will look at what championships you can umpire at throughout your umpiring career and how to progress through the various umpiring levels. We will also cover uniform and equipment requirements, an aspect that is “uniform” throughout the country!

Outcomes
The attendee will be able to:
• Define the process by which umpires progress through the accreditation system;
• List the major categories upon which an umpire is practically assessed; and
• List the items in an umpire’s uniform.

Prerequisites
NIL

Resources
• Attendee handouts
• Pens, pencils, highlighters
• Uniform
• Kitbag
Theory

National Umpire Accreditation System

There are 8 levels in the Australian Umpiring system:

- **Level 1**
  Does not require a practical assessment to be undertaken; it is awarded when a 65% pass mark has been attained in either the Basic Rules Assessment (or 55% in the Open Rules Assessment), the umpire has been umpiring 12 months or more at their local association, and has an understanding of the basic umpire mechanics and conduct.

- **Levels 2 – 4**
  Require you to pass a practical assessment at a State Championship/Tournament. Also required is the appropriate rules assessment mark for the level being assessed; you have attended a basic clinic for Level 2 and Intermediate Clinic for Level 3 and 4 within the last 2 years.

- **Levels 5 – 6**
  Require you to pass a practical assessment at a National Championship and attain the rules assessment pass mark of 85% in the Australian rules assessment and the umpire must have participated in an Advanced Clinic.

- **WBSC Accreditation**
  Require you to pass a practical assessment at a championship nominated by Softball Australia/Oceania Region and the International Softball Federation in conjunction with a WBSC Umpire Certification Clinic. A pass mark of 90% in the WBSC Rules Exam is required.

- **Levels 7 – 8**
  International Accreditations and are awarded by Softball Australia after gaining WBSC Certification.

Each level has several prerequisites as outlined in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>THEORY MARK</th>
<th>COURSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Open 55% Basic 65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Open 65% Basic 80%</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Level 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>Advanced</td>
</tr>
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<td>WBSC</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Level awarded by Softball Australia</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Level awarded by Softball Australia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
The Assessment System

Theory Assessment
The Australian and WBSC rules assessment consist of 100 True / False or Yes/No questions.

The Australian rules assessment is conducted annually as an on-line assessment. The assessment is available to be completed during the last week of April.

The WBSC Rules Assessment is completed online prior to attending a certification clinic and every two years thereafter.

Practical Assessment
The assessment system is designed to have a consistent approach to the assessment of candidates throughout Australia. The elements upon which a candidate is assessed are detailed below.

Candidates
To be a candidate you will need to be pre assessed on a plate and base and pass the required mark.

It is important to note that the elements of assessment will not change, regardless of the level of Assessment, however there is a higher standard set and higher expectations of competency as the levels increase. The elements of Assessment include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL</th>
<th>JUDGEMENT AND RULES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. APPEARANCE</td>
<td>14. JUDGEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. PHYSICAL CONDITION</td>
<td>15. RULE KNOWLEDGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PRE GAME DUTIES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. BETWEEN INNING CONDUCT</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. CO-OPERATION WITH PARTNERS</td>
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<td>6. POST GAME CONDUCT</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAME CONTROL</th>
<th>POSITIONING AND CALLS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. MENTAL/ PHYSICAL REACTION</td>
<td>16. FIELD POSITIONING BEFORE PLAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. WORKING WITH TEAMS</td>
<td>17. HUSTLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. AWARENESS</td>
<td>18. SIGNALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. ATTITUDE PHYSICAL REACTION</td>
<td>19. BASE MECHANICS</td>
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<td>11. ADAPTABILITY</td>
<td>20. ROTATION</td>
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<td>12. REACTION TO PRESSURE</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. DECISIVENESS</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLATE WORK</th>
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<tr>
<td>21. PLATE MECHANICS</td>
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<td>22. PLATE MOVEMENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. CALLING OF BALLS AND STRIKES</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Official Umpires’ Uniform

Why A Uniform?
Umpires must be uniform in both their dress and their application and interpretation of the rules. Umpires who dress neatly and properly are proud of the way they look, which in turn reflects on the way in which they umpire.

Pride in both oneself and the work that one must accomplish shows in a clean and neatly presented uniform, which in turn gains immediate respect.

Dress Code
The requirements as set down by Softball Australia for umpires in all states are as follows:

- Navy Cap to be worn under Mask
- Black Mask - must be fitted with throat protector or extension
- White or Navy under shirt to be worn under chest protector
- Light Blue Shirt
- Navy ball bag
- Black Belt
- Counter
- Navy Trousers
- Black or Navy Socks
- Black Shoes or Black Shoe with White Trim - must be polished

Working Equipment
- Rule Book
- Bat Ring
- Pen or Pencil
- Small Note Pad
- Small Plate Brush
- Rain Jacket
- Bag for Equipment
- Clothes Brush
- Shoe Polish
- Tape Measure
Additional Uniform Information
Caps - Long peak for base umpire and shorter peak for plate umpire.
Jacket - Solid dark navy blue jacket.
Athletic Protector (Box) - Recommended for male and female umpires.
Sunglasses - Conservative, non-reflective sunglasses. Remove sunglasses when speaking to coaches/managers.
Jewellery - Umpires must not wear exposed jewellery that may pose a hazard, except Medical Alert bracelets and/or necklaces (which must be taped to the body).

Umpire Equipment
Mask - Black Mask (Black frame and black or tan pads), with throat protector or extension.
Chest Protector - Black or navy chest protector, to be worn under powder blue umpire shirt.
Leg Guards - Black or navy leg guards, to be worn under trousers.
Ball Bag - Navy ball bag, worn by plate umpire only.
Indicator (Counter) - Used in left hand, all umpires must use one (spare is recommended).
Bat Ring - Softball Australia approved. Necessary for pre-game equipment checks.
Tape Measure - Small tape measure (up to 6ft) to be used for pre-game equipment checks.
Brush - To fit in hip pocket, brush pouch or ball bag, used to clean home plate, pitcher’s plate or bases.
Line-up Card Holder - Used by plate umpire, keeps team line-up cards dry and allows hard surface for writing.
Pen/Pencil - Used by plate umpire to make changes on line-up card (usually carried in Ball Bag)

Equipment bag
Must be large enough to carry all equipment. Should include:
- Shoe cleaning equipment
- Spare black laces
- Current rule book
- Note pad
- Sewing kit
- Spare indicator
- Clothes brush
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle
- Towel/soap and other toiletries
Review

1. Fill in the missing information in the table below – the rules assessment marks information is missing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>THEORY MARK</th>
<th>COURSE</th>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Level awarded by Softball Australia</td>
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</table>

2. List the five main categories used in the practical Assessment system.

___________________________________________________________________________________
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3. Fill in the blanks

The umpire’s uniform consists of:

A ______________________ shirt, ______________________ blue trousers,
______________________ cap, with a ______________________ peak for on base and a
______________________ peak for on the plate. ______________________ belt and shoes, and a
black ______________________ mask when on the plate.

A white ______________________ shirt is also worn.
Summary
As you can see, the process that you have begun by attending this clinic is just the beginning for what can be a very rewarding career in umpiring. The benefit is that every senior umpire in Australia has gone through this process and is here to assist you in meeting your goals.

Use their experience to benefit you – be willing to ask for feedback, and if you are unsure of how to progress, do not be afraid to seek the assistance of a senior umpire!
Module 2 – Plate Mechanics and Movement

Introduction
During a game each umpire will be responsible for adjudicating plays that occur at the bases, home plate and elsewhere around the diamond. Your position in relation to the play is the key element enabling you to respond with the correct decision. Combined with this is the necessity to develop good timing in making and communicating your decisions.

In this module we will look at the mechanics used so that you have every opportunity to make the correct ball and strike calls and be an effective plate umpire.

Outcomes
The participant will be able to:
- List three (3) responsibilities of a plate umpire;
- List the three (3) primary priorities (in correct order) for the plate umpire;
- Define the strike zone;
- List the three (3) components of the plate umpire’s set position; and
- Demonstrate all of the above in a live pitching exercise.

Prerequisites
NIL

Resources
- Participant manual
- Pens, pencils, highlighter pens
- Plate umpire equipment
Theory

Roles and Responsibilities
The roles and responsibilities of the plate umpire include:
- Calling balls and strikes
- Calling fair and foul balls
- Adjudicating on Batter and Batter-Runner calls
- Adjudicating on plays at home plate
- Adjudicating on plays at 3rd base as required by the rotations
- Managing the flow and speed of the game
- Managing all changes and substitutions (see module “Giving Changes” and “Changes and Substitutions” PowerPoint for specific details)

Mechanics
The mechanics for the plate umpire break down into several very simple options. These are:
- Mechanics of calling the balls and strikes
- Mechanics known as “clearing the catcher”
- Mechanics when there are no runners on base
- Mechanics when there are runners in scoring position

Balls and Strikes are Priority
The priority for the Plate Umpire is always as follows:
1. Ball or Strike
2. Fair or foul
3. Catch or no catch

Everything else is of significantly lower precedence on any given play.

If the ball is hit in the air you will need to consider whether there is a catch or no-catch. Do not prejudge the outcome; watch the play in its entirety then check for firm and secure possession, then give the appropriate mechanic and vocal. There is never any need to rush a call of “catch.” Wait until the fielder voluntarily releases the ball before making the call.

Plate Movement
On ground balls to the infield you first clear the catcher. Your prime responsibilities are runner’s lane interference and an overthrow to 1st base. A pulled foot at first base is not your responsibility but if your crew member needs help and asks for your input respond with what you have seen.

Clearing the Catcher
The plate umpire is not a “sit-back-and-watch” position. After discharging your priority of calling strikes or balls you must be prepared to move, following the ball and the play. The first part of doing this is often referred to as “clearing the catcher.” This is where the plate umpire clears away from the catcher enabling them to perform other functions as required.

On all batted balls you will have to clear the catcher. To do this, take one step toward third base and then move on a 45° line in the direction you need to go. You will remove your mask while you do this first step.

On passed balls, wild pitches, and pop-ups at the plate it will still be necessary to clear the catcher but in a different manner. The best way to clear the catcher in these situations is to simply mirror the catcher’s movements (watch catcher’s shoulders and move in the opposite direction to open up your view of the play).
**Making Calls at the Plate**

As a plate umpire you want to gain a good angle on the play to either see the force play, or the more difficult tag play.

All calls that are made at the plate should be on the 3rd base side of the plate (using the extension of the 1st base line) ensuring you have the leading edge on all plays. Careful anticipation and understanding of the play will allow you to move into a good position. Remember to be flexible so you can move into the best position as dictated by the catcher and runner, and most importantly ‘the ball’.

**REMEMBER** - Angle before distance.

**Clearing the Bat**

With runners in scoring position, it may be possible to remove a bat that may inhibit a runner’s slide or deflect a thrown ball to the plate. This is strictly a courtesy and not a required mechanic. Your primary concern is to get in position for a play at the plate. If time permits, you may pick up the bat and slide it from the field of play. Simply bend over, grab one end of the bat and slide it forcefully from the field or kick the bat clear.

**The Face Mask**

The face mask is an essential piece of safety equipment for the plate umpire. Once the pitch has been thrown and the ball is in play, you have no use for it. So, what do you do with your mask when not facing a pitch?

**When Must We Wear A Mask?**

Very simply, whenever you are behind the catcher and the pitcher may deliver a pitch you wear your mask. This includes your opportunity to “get into the game” by watching the warm up pitches a pitcher delivers before the first inning commences.

It is important to remove your mask once the ball is in play. Why? Your facemask, if correctly fitted, is loose and may fall off or otherwise get in the way if you run whilst wearing it.

**Mask Removal**

You remove your mask with your **LEFT** hand. This frees your right hand for signals, such as “Out.”

*Tip:* Pull the mask forward then up off your head.

Never drop, throw or place your mask on the ground.
The Strike Zone

Maintaining a consistent strike zone is an important aspect of the plate umpire’s role.

As defined in the rulebook, the strike zone is that space over any part of the home plate, between the batter’s armpits and the top of his knees, when he assumes his natural batting stance.

The batter may be positioned in any part of the box, however the strike zone remains the same.

The strike zone is taken from the position of home plate.

The top and bottom of the zone is taken from the batter’s natural batting stance.

The ball need only pass through the strike zone at some point while over home plate for it to be considered a strike. This is especially important for balls that drop, rise or curve through the zone.

The complete ball must pass under the batter’s arm pits, some part of the ball must be above the top of the batter’s knees; and any part of the ball can pass over any part of the home plate for it to be a strike.

I.E. The outermost cover of the ball may pass over the extreme outside edge of the home plate and still be called a strike.

This does not include a ball that touches the ground and bounces up through the strike zone before reaching home plate.

Note: If the ball passes through the Strike Zone and lands on Home Plate, it is not a Strike unless the Batter swings at the ball.

The Set Position

The set position is the setup that the plate umpire assumes behind the catcher resulting in effective judgement and calling of balls and strikes. It consists of 4 elements:

1. The Slot
2. Head Height
3. General Pelvic Alignment (GPA)
The Slot

The slot is the space between the batter and the catcher. The umpire should position themselves in the area behind the catcher and slightly inside the inside corner of home plate so that the eyes are lined up just inside the corner closest to the batter and just slightly above the top of the strike zone. This position allows the catcher free movement up and down without obstructing the umpire’s view and enables the umpire to see all of the home plate and the batter’s strike zone.

Head Height

In the set position the umpire’s eyes should be slightly above the top of the strike zone. Each batter is a different height, so the umpire must adjust their height accordingly.
**General Pelvic Alignment (GPA)**

Correct GPA assists the plate umpire to accurately judge the strike zone by defining the field of vision and allowing the head to naturally track the ball. An angle of the hips and shoulders approximately 15 degrees to the pitcher – with the navel (belly button) pointing between the centre of the front of home plate and no further than outside front corner of the plate should be used, and the feet should follow the body’s natural stance.

The diagrams above show the incorrect and correct stance that should be used by Plate Umpires. Our GPA should be to the centre and no further than the outer corner of the plate.
Preparing to call Balls and Strikes

Warm Up Pitches
Taking an opportunity to watch the pitcher’s warm-up so that you become familiar with their motion and rhythm is very important. Viewing at least three of the five warm-up pitches taken by each pitcher at the beginning of their first innings is recommended.

Getting Set
- Prior to assuming the set position, the umpire should assume a position by properly placing the feet while waiting in a relaxed fully upright stance.
- The proper time to drop to the set position is immediately after the pitcher has taken the signal and has started the wind-up, but prior to the release of the ball.
- The umpire should never be moving to the set position while the ball is in flight toward the plate. Also, it is important to recognise that an umpire can ‘set’ too early, as well as too late.
- To assume the set position, the knees should be bent while keeping the back as straight as possible.
- The umpire should always be able to see all of the plate, the batter’s feet and hands.

Calling of balls and strikes
To assist in calling balls and strikes watch the ball into the catcher’s glove (called “tracking”). Tracking the pitch allows the plate umpire to see every part of the pitcher’s delivery and will improve the consistency of the strike zone and the umpire’s awareness of where the ball is. Tracking the pitch requires a lot of concentration so it is important that the plate umpire uses both ‘hard eyes’ (hard focus) and ‘soft eyes’ (soft focus) when working the plate.

Ball or Strike
Drop to the set position using the timing outlined above. If you leave it too late you will be moving while the pitch is on the way and this will affect your strike zone. Allow the pitch to cross home plate. Do not start moving into your signal nor make a call until the catcher has caught the ball.

Make your verbal NOW.

If the pitch is a “ball”, the umpire will stay down in the set position while making verbalising “BALL”. After the call, the umpire will stand up and step back from the catcher. There is no signal given to indicate a “ball”. Turn on ‘soft eyes’ – look around the diamond. Get into position and wait for the next pitch.

On ball 4, the umpire will call, “ball 4”, there is no signal given.

If the pitch is a “strike”, give a brisk verbal call “STRIKE”, bring your left hand into your body, on your stomach slightly above the waist as you rise to an upright position then form the hammer (clenched fist) with the right hand above your head.

Turn on ‘soft eyes’ – look around the diamond. Drop your arms, step back, and wait for the next pitch. On Strike 3, if the batter swings and misses the pitch and it is caught by the catcher, the umpire will give the strike signal and call “Strike 3 – OUT”.

If the batter does not swing at the 3rd strike, and the pitch is caught by the catcher, the umpire will sell the decision by calling “Strike 3 – OUT” and signaling with a throw out mechanic.

If the catcher does not catch the 3rd strike, the umpire gives the strike signal and call, “Strike 3”.

NOTE: A caught Strike 3 pitch is two separate calls: Firstly, it is a strike and then, if caught, the batter is out. Be sure that the catcher has securely caught the ball before calling “out”

Plate Umpiring – Handy Tips
Always carry the Indicator in your left hand. With practice, you will be confident in removing your mask with your left hand while holding the indicator.

When brushing the plate, call time and brush the plate with your back to the pitcher. It is clear to everyone that the ball is not in play.
### Points To Consider About Your Stance

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is my head too...</td>
<td>HIGH?</td>
<td>LOW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I too...</td>
<td>CLOSE TO</td>
<td>FAR FROM the catcher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are my feet too...</td>
<td>WIDE APART?</td>
<td>CLOSE TOGETHER?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I setting too far...</td>
<td>INSIDE?</td>
<td>OUTSIDE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I going into set position too...</td>
<td>EARLY?</td>
<td>LATE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I standing up from my stance too...</td>
<td>EARLY?</td>
<td>LATE?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I making my calls too...</td>
<td>EARLY?</td>
<td>LATE?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Am I moving my...</td>
<td>HEAD</td>
<td>as the ball is coming towards the plate?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is my strike zone too...</td>
<td>HIGH?</td>
<td>LOW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is my...</td>
<td>VISUAL FOCAL POINT</td>
<td>correct? (i.e. pitcher’s release area)</td>
</tr>
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Review

Practical
Practice the skills described in this module to gain more confidence in calling balls and strikes. If possible practice calling balls and strikes with drills using pitchers and catchers.

Theory
1. Three responsibilities of a plate umpire are:

___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

2. The three primary priorities (in correct order) for the plate umpire are:

___________________________________________________________________________________; then
___________________________________________________________________________________; then
___________________________________________________________________________________.

3. Fill in the blanks for the definition of the strike zone:

   The strike zone is that space over any part of the _______ _______ between the batter’s
   ___________ and the top of his __________ when he assumes his __________ batting stance.

4. The three components of a plate umpire’s set position are:

___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
**Summary**
The priority for the Plate Umpire is always ball or strike, _then_ fair or foul, _then_ catch or no catch.

“Clearing the catcher” enables the plate umpire to get to position and perform other required functions.

The plate umpire removes the face mask with the left hand while holding an indicator in the same hand.

The strike zone is that space over any part of the home plate, between the batter’s armpits and the top of his knees, when he assumes his natural batting stance.

To correctly get to the set position remember the four components - head height, position in the slot and GPA.

Movement into the set position is determined by the pitcher’s movement.

The keys to a consistent strike zone are practice and using the techniques practices from this module.

**Conclusion**
Having completed this module you now have the basic knowledge of how to successfully call balls and strikes.

The key to developing your skills is to practice!

NOTE: The use of video technology can greatly assist enhancing an umpire’s plate mechanics. Video footage from centre field, for instance, allows you to see whether you are using the correct stance, the accuracy of your strike zone, the timing of your calls and your ability to clear the catcher.
Module 3 – Base Mechanics

Introduction
During a game each umpire will be responsible for adjudicating plays that occur at the bases, home plate and elsewhere around the diamond. Your position in relation to the play is the key element enabling you to respond with the correct decision. Combined with this is the necessity to develop good timing when communicating your decisions.

This module will examine the specific mechanics that need to be used so that you have every opportunity to make the correct call on a play.

Outcomes
The participant will be able to:
- Name the four elements of a play
- List the three (3) basics of calling a play
- List the three (3) steps in calling a play in the correct order
- Demonstrate the correct starting positions for the base umpire, with or without runners on base, by annotating a diagram and demonstrating on a diamond
- Demonstrate the Ready Position
- Demonstrate correct base movement, distances and angles for both tag and force plays at all bases.

Prerequisites
NIL

Resources
- Participant manual
- Pens, pencils, highlighter pens
- Gloves
Theory

The Four Elements
Having the “Four Elements” of a play in front of an umpire is the essential, basic component in base mechanics. The four elements are:

- The ball
- The fielder
- The runner
- The base or the tag.

The four elements are required for a play to occur therefore an umpire needs to have the four elements in view to correctly adjudicate on the play. If the four elements are not in view then the umpire must move to a position to see as many of the elements as possible.

The Diamond Division Principle

- For infield hits, the first play on the diamond (except at home) is the responsibility of the base umpire. For subsequent plays the Base Umpire assumes responsibility for plays at 1st and 2nd bases and the plate umpire assumes responsibility for plays at 3rd base and home plate.
- For outfield hits, the base umpire immediately assumes responsibility for plays at 1st and 2nd bases and the plate umpire assumes responsibility for plays at 3rd base and home plate. EXCEPTION: The base umpire will assume responsibility for the batter runner on the diamond advancing to 3rd base.

Timing
Development of proper timing and rhythm in making decisions is important to ensure you are not seen to be guessing. Timing must be slow enough, yet deliberate and consistent.

An umpire can’t have good judgement without good timing.
They go hand-in-hand.
Three Simple Steps
1. Consider all INPUTS
2. Make your DECISION
3. COMMUNICATE your decision

Basics of Calling a Play
Remember: Stop, Wait, Call, Signal.

1. STOP! Be STILL/STATIONARY as you watch the play
2. WAIT until you have all the inputs for that play before making your decision
3. Make sure the fielder has the ball under control. The ball can be touching the body of the fielder as long as a hand or glove has it securely held i.e. not just pressed against the body
4. After making your decision, give the call and signal to communicate your decision
5. Learn to read the play. Just like a player, it is important that an umpire learns to anticipate where a play will be but not what the call will be, for example:
   - With 2 outs, the next play will PROBABLY be at first base (for the third out)
   - With a runner on 1st, none out, watch for the potential steal to 2nd or a bunt play

The Ready Position
The ready position is the body position of the base umpire pre pitch, during and prior to the pitch reaching the batter or catcher.

As the pitcher assumes the set position (hands together), the umpire should step into the ready position, stopping just prior to the start of the pitch with the feet a comfortable distance apart (at least shoulder width), staying relaxed but still.

Before the pitcher releases the pitch, the umpire should adopt the ‘ready’ position by softening the knees slightly, with the weight resting lightly on the balls of the feet and the hands drawn in close to the belt line in front of the body, or with relaxed open hands and arms bent at the elbows approximately 45 degrees.

NOTE: In this stance, the umpire’s upper body should be relaxed and the umpire should not be in a semi sitting position. A good example of this is the fielders; they go into a Ready Position every pitch with the pitcher.

The umpire should stay in this position until the ball reaches the catcher or is hit by the batter.

If the pitch is hit or the catcher throws the ball to a base, the umpire pushes off on the balls of the feet and moves to position for a potential play.

The base umpire should assume the ready position simultaneously using the cues from the pitcher.
Starting Depth
In all cases umpires should be close enough so the umpire can move and rotate inside or to the next position when required, without rotating during the play or being late to position. This timing will depend on each umpire’s mobility, reaction time and the speed of the game.

Starting Positions – 2-Umpire System
- With no runners on, the base umpire’s preliminary start position should be 6-7 metres (18-21 feet) behind the base, with the inner foot approximately 150 mm (6 inches) off the fair/foul line in Foul Territory (measured from the outside of the foot closest to the foul line).
- With a runner on 1st base, the base umpire moves to a position 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) away from the base line no closer than halfway but not more than two-thirds from 1st base, between 1st and 2nd bases.
- With a runner on 2nd or 3rd base the base umpire moves to a position 4-5 meters back from the base line, approximately half way between 2nd and 3rd bases.
- In both these cases the base umpire should adjust his position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations, and the infielder’s positions.
- The base umpire must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.

Base Umpiring
There are two basic calls an umpire must master to establish themselves as a ‘top notch’ umpire:
- The force play
- The tag play

The Force Play
As the fielder is getting into position to field the ground ball, the base umpire should be moving into one of the recommended positions. As the ball is fielded, the umpire should stop. Upon the fielder releasing the throw, watch the ball to ensure it is on target, then switch your attention to the four elements coming together.

The umpire should now concentrate on the BASE, where:
- a) The runner touches it
- b) The fielder is on the base when the ball is caught
- c) The ball is controlled by the fielder

On a force play, while concentrating on the play and if proper positioning has been maintained (5 to 6 metres from the base), an important consideration is to watch the runner coming down the line and, at the same time, actually see the ball being caught by the baseman. A position too close to the base restricts the angle, closes the range of vision, and may cause the umpire to get caught in the action.

While concentrating on the play and allowing peripheral vision to aid you in seeing the play develop, the sound of the ball hitting the glove helps determine which arrived first - the ball or the player’s foot hitting the base. Never take your eye off the ball or depend entirely on the sound of the ball hitting the glove, as crowd noise could distract you or drown out the sound of the ball hitting the glove.

If proper mechanics are employed as described, the only consideration remaining to ensure proper timing is a slight hesitation to allow a clear ‘mental picture’ to develop, ensuring the correct call.

Tip: Umpires who focus purely on a runner or the base can miss a ball that is errored or a wild throw, which could put them in a dangerous position. Focusing on the runner or ball alone has a marked effect on the umpire’s judgement in making correct decisions.
The Tag Play

Position, angle and peripheral vision are, again, important on this type of play.

The proper angle will have all four essential elements in view. When watching the tag on a slide, make sure the base is in view. Never communicate an ‘OUT’ on the play unless you can see the ball!

Once you have allowed the play to develop, move in on the play (approximately three to four metres from the play), with an unobstructed angle on the leading edge. Concentrate on whether the tag was made prior to the runner reaching the base or not. If there is a hard slide that causes a collision and you cannot find the ball after the tag, look down and ask the fielders in a crisp voice “SHOW ME THE BALL”. Remember, you must FIND THE BALL.
Review

Practical
As a group, we will go through a variety of scenarios on the diamond where you will need to mark, with the marker cones, where the leading edge will be for the runners who are advancing on the play and where your starting position will be on the play.

As a group, we will also practice the use of the ready position during a live pitching session so that you can gauge when you need to move into the position by taking your cue from the pitcher.

Theory
(Circle True or False)
1. Three of the basics of calling a play are: wait until all play is finished; be on the move ready for the next play; and ensuring that the ball is under control.
   True / False

2. In calling a play we should follow three steps in order: consider all inputs; make the decision; and communicate the decision.
   True / False

3. As the first base umpire, with a runner on 1st base, you should be positioned approximately 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) behind the base in Foul Territory.
   True / False

Finish the following sentences:
4. The ___________ _____________ is the body position of a _________ umpire pre pitch, during and prior to the pitch reaching the batter and/or catcher.

5. With no runners on base, the base umpire should stand approximately ______________ metres behind the base in ______________________, with the inner foot approximately 150 mm (6 inches) off the ____________________ line.

6. List the four elements of a play:
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
Summary

A play is comprised of four elements: The ball, the runner, the fielder and the base/tag. The umpire must always have the four elements in front of them to call plays.

There are three key basics of calling a play: wait until all play is finished; be stationary; and make sure that the ball is under control.

Follow three simple steps in order: watch the play and consider all of the inputs; make the decision; and communicate the decision.

Good timing complements good judgement and gives the appearance of an umpire who knows the rules. The ready position is used by the base umpire on every pitch. The base umpire takes the cue from the pitcher and moves into the ready position at the same time.

A sound understanding of the relevant starting positions and depths will assist in ensuring you arrive in the correct position in adequate time to make a call.

Conclusion

Mobility is key to successfully umpiring using the 2-umpire system. Being in the best position to adjudicate on a play is important. It gives us the best chance to see all of the inputs and respond with the correct decision. When communicating our decision, it is important to utilise good and consistent timing.

When next watching a game officiated by senior umpires, observe the process they implement to call balls and strikes, safes and outs, fairs and fouls. Observe their timing and the emphasis they place on certain calls. Undoubtedly you will see the information you have just covered put into practice.
Module 4 – Starting Positions and Rotations

Introduction
In the two-umpire rotation system, as implied by the word ‘rotation’, there is an expectation that umpires move into positions appropriate for each play. For this system to operate efficiently it is necessary for both umpires to achieve and maintain a reasonable level of fitness.

The information referring to positioning and the calling of plays is written for ideal circumstances and for the best possible positioning for the majority of plays. However, situations will arise where you will need to have the knowledge, anticipation and alertness to make adjustments to achieve the best possible position to correctly call the play.

Outcomes
The participant will be able to:
- Explain the Division Principle
- Explain the Infield/Outfield Principle
- Explain the Leading Runner Principle
- Demonstrate the correct position to assume at the pre-game meeting
- Demonstrate the correct position to assume between innings
- Demonstrate the correct starting positions for each umpire with none, one, two and three runners on base
- Demonstrate the 2-Umpire infield rotation
- Demonstrate the 2-Umpire outfield rotation

Prerequisites
- Base Mechanics Module

Resources
- Participant Manual
- Pens, pencils, highlighter pens
- Bats, balls and gloves
Theory

Three Basic Principles
There are three basic principles that apply to the 2 Umpire Rotation System: the division principle, the infield/outfield principle and the leading runner principle.

The Division Principle
The plate umpire takes all calls at home plate and 3rd base and the base umpire takes all calls at 1st and 2nd base.

Exceptions:
- When the batter-runner goes to 3rd base, the base umpire takes the call at 3rd
- Base umpire has the first call on the infield unless it is at home plate.
- When a runner steals 3rd base, the base umpire takes the call.
- When the base umpire is standing between 2nd and 3rd base (in the outfield) before the pitch and there is a pick-off play by the catcher to 1st base in an attempt to put out the runner on 1st base, it is the plate umpire who takes the call at 1st base.

The Infield/Outfield Principle
- When the ball is in the infield, the base umpire moves or stays in the outfield.
- When the ball is in the outfield, the base umpire is positioned in the infield.

The Leading Runner Principle
The base umpire should start in a position that is up with the lead runner. The expectation is that, on a pick-off play (i.e. a play where the catcher attempts to put out a runner leading off from a base on the pitch), the catcher will play the lead runner and therefore the base umpire needs to be in a position to make this call.

Tag-Up Responsibilities
- With one runner on base, the division principle is applied (i.e. the base umpire is responsible for any tag-up on 1st base and the plate umpire is responsible for 3rd base).
- With two or more runners on base, the plate umpire is responsible for the lead runner and the base umpire is responsible for any succeeding (following) runners.

Note: It is the responsibility of BOTH umpires to ensure ALL bases are covered in tag-up situations.

Conventions
The conventions used to describe the situations in this manual are:
1. The plate umpire is referred to as ‘Plate’ or ‘P’ and the base umpire is ‘Base’ or ‘B’.
2. Runners at 1st, 2nd and 3rd bases are indicated with ‘R1’, ‘R2’ and ‘R3’ respectively.
3. The umpire’s movement is
   Movement of the ball is
4. Icons used in this manual:

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>R</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate Umpire</td>
<td>Base Umpire</td>
<td>Runner</td>
<td>Fielder</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Pre-Game Meeting & Between Innings Positioning**

**Plate Meeting**

**Plate Umpire**

- Will assume the position behind the plate between the 2 batters boxes looking out to the diamond.
- Introduce your crew members, discuss any competition or ground rules and ask if there are any pre-game questions.

**Base Umpire**

- Assumes the position at the end of the batters boxes looking towards the back net.
- Immediately after the pre-game meeting the base umpire will move to the between innings position.

**Between Innings**

**Plate Umpire**

- Will take a position on the 3rd base line.

**Base Umpire**

- Will take a position on the 1st base line
- At the start of the game after the last warm up pitch and with the catcher’s throw over to second the umpires will indicate to each other that they are ready and move into position.
- The plate umpire will sweep home plate.
No Runners on Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire
- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.

Base Umpire
- Will take a position in foul territory approximately 5-6 metres (16-18 feet) behind the base, 15 cm (6 inches) off the line in foul territory (measured from the outside of the foot closest to the foul line).
No Runners on Base
Infield Hit

1st Movement

Plate Umpire

- Exits to the left of the catcher and trails the batter-runner about 7 metres (20-25 feet), down the inside of the base line toward first base.
- Is there to assist B with interference, obstruction, safe/out and pulled foot situations if required.
- Hustle is required but must remain behind the thrown ball.
- In the case of an overthrow, moves into a holding position about 4-5 metres in foul territory and halfway between 3rd base and home plate.

Exception: ruling on fair/foul balls must take precedence over trailing the batter-runner.

Base Umpire

- Will move into fair territory approximately 2 metres 90 degrees to the throw to get a good angle (no more than 45 degrees from the base line) on the throw, catch and batter-runner and to avoid the batter-runner.
- In the case of an overthrow, moves into the infield midway along the base line and prepares to go to 2nd and 3rd base (if required).
No Runners on Base
Outfield Hit

1\textsuperscript{st} Movement

Plate Umpire

- Moves to the left of the catcher and into the diamond in the direction of the ball (watching both the ball and the runner).
- Responsible for calling all fly balls caught as well as fair and foul balls.
- Rotates toward 3rd base parallel with the batter-runner should they continue to 2nd base.
- Rotates back to home plate should the base umpire move to 3rd base with the batter-runner.

Base Umpire

- Moves into the diamond with a button-hook (i.e. turn in an anti-clockwise direction) so that the batter-runner remains in view at all times and can be seen touching 1st base.
- Should the batter-runner continue to 2nd or 3rd base, the base umpire moves around the diamond keeping slightly ahead of the runner.
- Responsible for the call on the batter-runner at 2nd and/or 3rd base.
Runner on 1st Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire
- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.

Base Umpire
- Is positioned 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) back, no closer than halfway but not more than two-thirds from 1st base, between 1st and 2nd base.
- In both these cases, the base umpire should adjust their position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations and the infielder’s position.
- Must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.
Runner on 1st Base
Infield Hit

1st Movement

Plate Umpire

- Moves to the left of the catcher and approximately 9.5 metres (30 feet) down the 3rd base line, parallel with the runner from 1st base.
- Should the runner continue to 3rd base, P moves in on the leading edge and closer to 3rd to make the call.
- Also need to be prepared the rotate back to home if the lead runner advances.

Base Umpire

- Responsible for any calls at 1st and 2nd base.
- Anticipate a double play.
- Move quickly toward the base where the play is made.
- When making a call at 1st base, move down the line towards that base, parallel with the base line, but must be stationary when making the call.
- When making a call at 2nd base, moves down the line towards that base, parallel with the base line, but must be stationary when making the call.
Runner on 1st Base
Outfield Hit

1st Movement

Plate Umpire

- Moves to the left of the catcher and rotates towards 3rd base parallel with the lead runner.
- Responsible for any calls at 3rd or home on the lead runner.
- Should the runner continue to 3rd base, P moves in on the leading edge and closer to 3rd to make the call.
- Moves out of the diamond and returns to home plate if required to make a call at home plate.

Base Umpire

- Rotates into the diamond to a position halfway between 1st and 2nd base.
- Responsible for any calls at 1st and 2nd base.
- Move quickly toward the base where the play is made.
- Responsible for any call on the batter-runner. This means should the batter-runner continue to 3rd base, rotate to 3rd base, slightly ahead of the runner for a possible call at that base.

2nd Movement
Runner on 2nd Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire

- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.

Base Umpire

- Positioned approximately halfway between 2nd and 3rd bases and 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) outside the base line.
- Should adjust their position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations and the infielder’s position.
- Must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.
**Runner on 2nd Base**

**Infield Hit**

1st Movement

- Plate Umpire
  - Moves to the left of the catcher and watches down the 1st base line for any interference or obstruction on the batter-runner.
  - Must then move approximately half way toward 3rd base.
  - After the 1st play on the infield, responsible for any call at 3rd base and home plate.

2nd Movement

- Base Umpire
  - Responsible for the 1st play on the infield (not home plate).
  - After the 1st play, responsible for any call at 1st and 2nd bases.
  - When making a call at 1st base, move towards that base as shown but be stationary when making the call.
Runner on 2nd Base
Outfield Hit

Plate Umpire
- Moves to the left of the catcher and into the diamond as shown.
- Rotates to 3rd base to the leading edge parallel with the lead runner.
- Responsible for any calls at 3rd or home on the lead runner.
- Moves out of the diamond and returns to home plate if required to make a call at home plate.

Base Umpire
- Rotates into the diamond to a position half way between 1st and 2nd bases.
- Responsible for any call on the batter-runner at these bases.
- Should the batter-runner continue to 3rd base, rotate to 3rd base slightly ahead of the runner for a possible call at that base.
Runner on 3rd Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire
- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.

Base Umpire
- Is positioned approximately halfway between 2nd and 3rd bases and 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) outside the base line.
- Should adjust their position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations and the infielder’s position.
- Must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.
Runner on 3rd Base
Infield Hit

1st Movement

Plate Umpire
- Moves to the left of the catcher and watches down the 1st base line for any interference or obstruction on the batter-runner.
- Must then move approximately half way toward 3rd base.
- After the 1st play on the infield, responsible for any call at 3rd base and home plate.

Base Umpire
- Responsible for the 1st play on the infield (not home plate).
- After the 1st play, responsible for any call on the batter-runner at 1st and 2nd bases.
- When making a call at 1st base, move towards that base as shown but be stationary when making the call.

2nd Movement
Runner on 3rd Base
Outfield Hit

1st Movement

2nd Movement

Plate Umpire

- Moves to the left of the catcher and down the line toward 3rd base as shown.
- Responsible for any call at 3rd base or home plate on the lead runner.
- Responsible for a call at home plate on the batter-runner.

Base Umpire

- Rotates into the diamond to a position halfway between 1st and 2nd bases.
- Responsible for any call on the batter-runner at these bases.
- Should the batter-runner continue to 3rd base, rotate to 3rd base slightly ahead of the runner for a possible call at that base.
Runners on 1st and 2nd Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire
- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.

Base Umpire
- Is positioned approximately halfway between 2nd and 3rd bases and 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) outside the base line.
- Should adjust their position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations and the infielder’s position.
- Must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.
**Runners on 1st and 2nd Base**

**Infield Hit**

1st Movement

---

2nd Movement

---

**Plate Umpire**

- Moves to the left of the catcher and watches down the 1st base line for any interference or obstruction on the batter-runner.
- Must then move approximately half way toward 3rd base.
- After the 1st play on the infield, responsible for any call at 3rd base and home plate.

**Base Umpire**

- Responsible for the 1st play on the infield (not home plate).
- After the 1st play, responsible for any call at 1st and 2nd bases.
- When making a call at 1st base, move towards that base as shown but be stationary when making the call.
Runners on 1st and 2nd Base
Outfield Hit

1st Movement

Plate Umpire

- Moves to the left of the catcher and down the 3rd base line as shown.
- Responsible for the tag up of the lead runner and any plays at 3rd base or home plate.
- If no play is made on the lead runner at 3rd base, moves toward 3rd or home plate depending on the play.

Base Umpire

- Rotates into the diamond to a position approximately half way between 1st and 2nd bases.
- Responsible for any call on the batter-runner at either of these bases.
- Should the batter-runner continue to 3rd base, move toward 3rd base slightly ahead of the runner for a possible call at that base.

2nd Movement
Runners on 1st and 3rd Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire
- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.

Base Umpire
- Is positioned approximately halfway between 2nd and 3rd bases and 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) outside the base line.
- Should adjust their position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations and the infielder’s position.
- Must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.
Runners on 1st and 3rd Base
Infield Hit

1st Movement

2nd Movement

Plate Umpire
- Moves to the left of the catcher and watches down the 1st base line for any interference or obstruction on the batter-runner.
- Must then move approximately half way toward 3rd base.
- After the 1st play on the infield, responsible for any call at 3rd base and home plate.

Base Umpire
- Responsible for the 1st play on the infield (not home plate).
- After the 1st play, responsible for any call at 1st and 2nd bases.
- When making a call at 1st base, move towards that base as shown but be stationary when making the call.
Runners on 1st and 3rd Base  
Outfield Hit

1st Movement

Plate Umpire

- Moves to the left of the catcher and down the 3rd base line as shown.
- Responsible for the tag up of the lead runner and any plays at 3rd base or home plate.
- If no play is made on the lead runner, moves toward 3rd base or home plate depending on the play.

Base Umpire

- Rotates into the diamond to a position approximately half way between 1st and 2nd bases.
- Responsible for any call at either of these bases.
- Should the batter-runner continue to 3rd base, move toward 3rd base slightly ahead of the runner for a possible call at that the base.

2nd Movement
Runners on 2nd and 3rd Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire

- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.

Base Umpire

- Is positioned approximately halfway between 2nd and 3rd bases and 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) outside the base line.
- Should adjust their position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations and the infielder’s position.
- Must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.
Runners on 2nd and 3rd Base
Infield Hit

1st Movement

2nd Movement

Plate Umpire

- Moves to the left of the catcher and down the 3rd base line as shown.
- Responsible for the tag up of the lead runner and any plays at 3rd base or home plate.
- If no play is made on the lead runner, moves toward 3rd base or home plate depending on the play.

Base Umpire

- Responsible for the 1st play on the infield (not home plate).
- After the 1st play, responsible for any call at 1st and 2nd bases.
- When making a call at 1st base, move towards that base as shown but be stationary when making the call.
Runners on 2nd and 3rd Base
Outfield Hit

Plate Umpire
- Moves to the left of the catcher and down the 3rd base line as shown.
- Responsible for the tag up of the lead runner and any plays at 3rd base or home plate.
- If no play is made on the lead runner, moves toward 3rd base or home plate depending on the play.

Base Umpire
- Rotates into the diamond to a position approximately half way between 1st and 2nd bases.
- Responsible for any call at either of these bases.
- Should the batter-runner continue to 3rd base, move toward 3rd base slightly ahead of the runner for a possible call at that base.
Runners on 1st, 2nd and 3rd Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire
- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.

Base Umpire
- Is positioned approximately halfway between 2nd and 3rd bases and 4-5 metres (13-16 feet) outside the base line.
- Should adjust their position prior to the pitch dependent on possible play back or steal situations and the infielder’s position.
- Must not set-up in a position ahead of any infielder and must also be in a position to have clear vision to home plate.
Runners on 1st 2nd and 3rd Base
Infield Hit

Plate Umpire

- Moves to the left of the catcher and down the 3rd base line as shown.
- Responsible for the tag up of the lead runner and any plays at 3rd base or home plate.
- If no play is made on the lead runner, moves toward 3rd base or home plate depending on the play.

Base Umpire

- Responsible for the 1st play on the infield (not home plate).
- After the 1st play, responsible for any call at 1st and 2nd bases.
- When making a call at 1st base, move towards that base as shown but be stationary when making the call.
Runners on 1st 2nd and 3rd Base
Outfield Hit

Plate Umpire
- Moves to the left of the catcher and down the 3rd base line as shown.
- Responsible for the tag up of the lead runner and any plays at 3rd base or home plate.
- If no play is made on the lead runner, moves toward 3rd base or home plate depending on the play.

Base Umpire
- Rotates into the diamond to a position approximately half way between 1st and 2nd bases.
- Responsible for any call at either of these bases.
- Should the batter-runner continue to 3rd base, move toward 3rd base slightly ahead of the runner for a possible call at that base.
Pick-off at 1st - Runner on 1st Base
Starting Positions

Base Umpire
- On a pick-off play, move towards 1st base, parallel with the base line to make a call.

Steal to 2nd - Runner on 1st Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire
- Starting position as defined at the start of this manual.
- On a steal, call ball or strike quickly and then move approximately halfway down the line towards 3rd base, for a possible call at 3rd

Base Umpire
- On a steal, moves towards 2nd base, parallel with the base line to make a call.
**Pick-off at 2nd - Runner on 2nd Base**

**Starting Positions**

**Base Umpire**

- On a pick-off play, moves towards 2nd base, parallel with the base line to make a call.

---

**Steal to 3rd - Runner on 2nd Base**

**Starting Positions**

**Plate Umpire**

- On a steal, the plate umpire should quickly make the call of ball or strike, and then move to the extension of the Home-1st base line for a call at Home if the ball is overthrown.

**Base Umpire**

- On a steal, moves towards 3rd base, parallel with the base line to make a call.
Pick-off at 3rd - Runner on 3rd Base
Starting Positions

Base Umpire

➢ On a pick-off play at 3rd base, the base umpire shall move toward the base line between 2nd and 3rd bases to get the angle on the Leading Edge of 3rd base.

Pick-off at 1st - Runner on 1st, 2nd and 3rd Base
Starting Positions

Plate Umpire

➢ On a pick-off play at 1st base, the plate umpire should quickly make the call of ball or strike and then look towards 1st base for a call at that base.
Review
1. Show the starting positions for the base umpires with:
   a. no runners on?
   b. a runner on 1st?
   c. a runner on 2nd?
   d. a runner on 3rd?
   e. runners on 1st & 2nd?
   f. runners on 2nd & 3rd?
   g. runners on 1st & 3rd?
   h. runners on 1st, 2nd & 3rd?
2. If there are no runners on and I am the plate umpire where should I go on the initial hit:
   a. To F5?
      ____________________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________________
   b. To F8?
      ____________________________________________________________
      ____________________________________________________________

3. If I am the base umpire and there are multiple runners, for which bases and runners am I responsible?
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

4. Who is responsible for the tag up on an outfield fly ball with a free runner at 2\textsuperscript{nd} base?
   ____________________________________________________________
Summary
Using the two-umpire system effectively requires the three principles: Division, Infield/Outfield and the Leading Runner Principles.

- The division principle helps us to cover the bases effectively and know which umpire is responsible for the calling of plays;
- The infield/outfield principle helps us to be safe (by staying out of throwing lines) and to keep the four elements in front of us as plays develop; and
- The leading runner principle helps us to be in the best position before play, and guides our movement, as plays develop to be in the best position to call plays.

The two-umpire system involves starting positions dependent on where runners are on the diamond and rotations so that two umpires are able to effectively cover plays at four locations – the bases and home.

Conclusion
The session just concluded combines theory and practical components. Putting the mechanics into practice every chance you get is the only way to effectively learn this material. As you get more experience and advance in your umpiring career you will learn other systems with more umpires. The basics learned in this system carry through to the more advanced systems and will continue to be of value to you as long as you are an umpire.
Module 5 – Rules

Introduction
Softball is a game... and like all games there are rules that govern the interactions of the participants and some that specify how a winner is decided. This module will concentrate on four rules in which a Level 2 umpire needs to demonstrate a higher level of competence than a “club” umpire.

Outcomes
The attendee will correctly adjudicate on the situations involving the following rules:
- Appeal Play
- Infield Fly
- Dropped 3rd Strike
- Overthrow
- Batter Hit by Pitched Ball.

Prerequisites
The attendee requires prior knowledge of essential softball rules including (but not limited to):
- Strike
- Ball
- Foul Ball/Fair Ball
- Safe
- Out.

Resources
- Softball Rules in Pictures
- Rules Handout (Attachment 1)
- Attendee handouts
Theory
Application of Rules
An essential part of the umpire's job is to apply the correct interpretation of the rule in a given situation. Let's explore each of five rules in turn.

APPEAL PLAY
An appeal play is a play or situation on which an umpire cannot make a decision unless requested by a manager, coach or player of the non-offending team.

What plays are appeal plays?
- Missing a base
- Leaving a base on a caught fly ball before the ball is first touched
- Batting out of order
- Attempting to advance to second base after making a turn at first base
- Illegal substitutions
- The use of unannounced players under the Replacement Player rule
- The use of unannounced players under the Designated Player rule
- Base runners switching positions on bases following an offensive conference
- Illegal re-entry.

Who can make an appeal?
A manager, coach or player of the non-offending team can make an appeal.
- A coach or manager may only make a dead ball appeal and only after stepping onto the playing field.
- If made by a fielder, the fielder must be in the infield when making the appeal.

An appeal cannot be made after:
  a) A legal or illegal pitch has been thrown
     - An appeal for the use of an illegal substitute, illegal re-entry, replacement player or withdrawn player (either leaving or returning to the line-up under the replacement player rule) and not reporting to the umpire can be made any time while such player is still in the game.
     - An appeal for runners switching positions on the base they occupied may be made at any time until all such runners are in the dugout or the half-innings is over.
  b) The pitcher and all players have left the field or
  c) The umpires have left the field of play.

RULE BOOK: APPEAL PLAY
**INFIELD FLY RULE**
The Infield Fly rule occurs when there are runners on first and second or first, second and third (loaded bases) AND there is less than two outs, and if the batter hits a fly ball that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, the batter is automatically out.
The umpire should call “Infield fly, if fair the batter is out”.

**Required Elements**
- Runners on 1st and 2nd
- Less than 2 outs
- Fly Ball hit in the air on the infield
- Can be caught with ordinary effort

**RULE BOOK: INFIELD FLY**

An Infield Fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive or an attempted bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort when first and second, or first, second, and third bases are occupied, before two are out. The pitcher, catcher, and any outfielder that positions himself in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.

**NOTE:**
1. When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare, “INFIELD FLY, IF FAIR-THE BATTER IS OUT,” for the benefit of the runners.

2. The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. If a declared infield fly becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul.

3. If a declared infield fly is allowed to fall untouched to the ground, and bounces foul before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball.

4. If a declared infield fly falls untouched to the ground outside the baseline, and bounces fair before passing first or third base, it is an infield fly.

**DROPPED 3RD STRIKE RULE**
The dropped 3rd strike rule occurs when there is a runner on first base and there is less than two out, if the catcher does not catch the ball that is determined to be the 3rd strike (either called or swung at), the batter is automatically out.

In all other circumstances if the catcher fails to catch the third strike, the runner may run in an attempt to be safe at first base. The runner may be tagged or played out at first base.

**RULE BOOK: THE BATTER IS OUT**

**The Batter is out:**
When he has three strikes and first base is occupied, with less than two out. The catcher does not need to catch the third strike

**EFFECT:** The ball is live and runners may advance with liability to be put out.
OVERTHROW RULE
An overthrow is a play in which a ball is thrown from one fielder to another, resulting in the ball going beyond the boundary lines of the playing field or becoming blocked.

NOTE: If the throw becomes blocked or goes out-of-play, two bases are awarded all runners from the last base touched at the time of the throw.

A wild pitch to a batter is one that goes into the stands, bench, etc. It entitles runners to advance one base without jeopardy.

RULE BOOK: RUNNERS ARE ENTITLED TO ADVANCE WITHOUT LIABILITY TO BE PUT OUT.

HIT BY PITCHED BALL
The batter is awarded 1st base if struck by a pitched ball he is not attempting to hit, nor called a strike and which he tries to avoid. Note: The batter’s hands are not to be considered a part of the bat.

NOTE: The ball is dead

RULE BOOK: A BATTER BECOMES A BATTER-RUNNER
Review

1. A live or dead ball appeal is a play or situation on which an umpire cannot make a determination until:

2. There are 4 elements to the Infield Fly rule. They are:

3. The batter is out if the catcher drops the third strike and:
   a. There is a runner on 1st and 2nd bases
   b. There is less than 2 out
   c. There is at least a runner on 1st base
   d. The sun is shining
   e. Both b and c.

4. A runner has touched 1st base and is running to 2nd when the fielder throws the ball in an attempt to get him out at 2nd. The ball goes high and wide and goes out of the field of play. The runner is awarded _______ base.

5. A runner is on 2nd base when the pitcher delivers a pitch that goes over the backnet. The runner is awarded _______ base.

6. True or False: The batter attempts to avoid a wild pitch and is hit on the hand. The ball is dead, and he is awarded 1st base T / F
Summary
There are 5 rules, beyond the basic rules of Ball and Strike, Fair and Foul, Safe and Out that Level 2 umpires need to be confident is applying. They are:

- Appeal play scenarios
- The Infield Fly Rule
- The Dropped 3rd Strike Rule
- Overthrow Awards
- Batter Hit by Pitched Ball.

Conclusion
Rule knowledge is a process that develops over the career of an umpire. The ability to apply the correct rule in any given situation is an important attribute for every umpire.
Module 6 – Pre and Post Game Duties

Introduction
There is more to umpiring than turning up and calling balls and strikes, fair and foul, safe and out. Before the game starts there are a variety of responsibilities and considerations to be addressed.

In this module we will look at the range of pre-game duties associated with umpiring, prior to the time “play ball” is called and what happens after the game ends.

Outcomes
The participant will be able to:

• List six (6) items for consideration during the umpires’ pre-game discussion;
• Describe the responsibilities of the umpires prior to the game, including arrival time at the diamond and pre-game equipment checks;
• Annotate a diagram showing each umpire’s position during the pre-game meeting and between innings; and
• Describe appropriate post-game behaviour.

Prerequisites
NIL

Resources
• Attendee handouts
• Pens, multiple colours
• Diamond with bases
**Theory**

**Individual Preparation**

For each tournament you attend your commitment may be different. You should find out what this is likely to be and in the lead up to each tournament ensure you maintain a physical fitness regime that will ensure you are able to fulfil the commitment required of you. You should also consider the environmental conditions and any need for more intake of fluids to hydrate yourself sufficiently for those conditions.

You should complete a personal equipment check ensuring you have everything you need and it is clean before you leave for the playing venue.

You should arrive at the playing facility refreshed and early enough to give yourself time to check in with the tournament TCU and to review any important information about the tournament schedule. You should remain flexible and willing to accept change as this is sometimes necessary to accommodate for any unforeseen occurrences caused by weather, illness or injury.

You should set yourself up in the umpire’s change rooms and ensure again that you have everything you need. Change rooms can often be cramped so being well organised and able to confine yourself to a small space are good traits.

Take any opportunity available to go for a long walk to warm up muscles and do some stretching exercises to ensure you are ready for those short sprints around the playing field. This is also a good time for intake of fluids to ensure hydration prior to the game.

Now you are ready. However, what about the rest of the crew?

**Crew Preparation Discussion**

On occasion you will be umpiring with someone you may not know or have never umpired with previously, so it is important to spend 5 – 10 minutes discussing various aspects of the game.

Some of the topics for discussion may be as follows:

- Verification of signals used
- Tag situations
- Tag up responsibilities
- Check swing appeals
- Appeal plays
- Base coverage
- Trapped balls on the infield
- Dead ball situations/awards
- Specific plays like the 9 to 3 and playback
- Assistance with a potential dropped third strike
- Leaving through the winning team’s dugout.
Plate Umpire

Umpires should arrive at the diamond at least 15 minutes prior to the commencement of the game to allow sufficient time to check playing equipment and liaise with coaches and statisticians. As the plate umpire you should ensure your base umpires have arrived and are aware of their duties and any local ground rules for that game.

Other than your own umpiring equipment and fluids required during the game, you should ensure you have the team lists and sufficient match balls to commence the game. Depending on the tournament you may receive these from the TCU before leaving the change rooms for the game or they may be received at the diamond.

While a preliminary inspection of the grounds may have already occurred, on arrival at the diamond you must ensure that the diamond is appropriately marked and fit for play. This may include checking that the appropriate pitching distance has been marked for the gender and age group.

- You must ensure that the team representatives have tossed and are situated on the correct benches.

Dependent on competition ground-rules at eleven minutes prior to the commencement of the game the team batting first might be permitted to have 5 minutes on the diamond for warm-up. At six minutes prior to the commencement of the game the team fielding first is permitted to have 5 minutes on the diamond for warm-up and should remain on the diamond ready to play. At some tournaments teams may only be permitted these warm-up times the first time they play on each diamond.

At one minute prior to the commencement of the game the plate umpire is to conduct a meeting at the home plate with the base umpire and the team coaches present. (Refer to Pre-Game Meeting).

Base Umpire

During the crew preparation discussions you should have discussed your duties and any local ground rules for that game. Now is a good time to quickly review these again. You will assist plate umpire to check diamond is appropriately marked and fit to play.

Remember to take with you all equipment and fluids required during the game.

Going to and from the Diamond

Umpires walk to the diamond with purpose, professionally as a team, – no dawdling or loitering; no stopping to talk to spectators and certainly no last minute cigarette. You need to arrive with sufficient time so that the pregame duties are not rushed – bat and helmet checks; meeting the official statistician and if necessary getting the line-ups; the plate meeting. Umpires should not arrive too early and force either team out of its pregame routine.

Umpires should never have to run back to the umpires’ room for any equipment such as mask, drink bottle, protector, brush, counter, extra game balls or for any other reason.

On arrival at the diamond, umpires should remain outside the confines of the netting until ready to commence the game. Do NOT cross or enter the diamond. Consequently, all pregame activities are managed by working the exterior of the back net. Such activities include the following:

- Placing your drink bottles
- Transiting from dugout to dugout to complete equipment inspections
- Collecting line-up cards
- Delivering game balls
- Relaying messages to teams, managers or coaches.

At the end of the game, exit the diamond through the winning team’s dugout together and complete the following activities outside the confines of the diamond:

- Returning team owned game balls
- Checking the score with team or official scorers or statistician
- Retrieving drink bottles.
Return smartly to the umpires’ room where congratulations and thanks can be shared and you can wind down and prepare for the game debrief. Public praise of each other’s performance should be avoided at all times – save this for the umpires’ room.

**Equipment Inspection**

The umpiring crew are required to inspect each team’s playing equipment. The umpires typically share this responsibility and should be diligent to check that all equipment expected to be used in the game is being presented for inspection. Umpires do not go through bags; rather, ask politely for equipment to be removed from bags for inspection.

Bats are to be checked in relation to safety, specifically noticing cracks, dents and appropriate certification with WBSC/ASA markings. Minor flat spots on a $500.00 bat do not make it unsafe. If you have any doubts use a bat ring to ensure bat is legal and seek input from the other crew members. If necessary send the bat to the Tournament Chief Umpire for final confirmation.

Batting helmets are also to be inspected, ensuring they have no cracks or damage and that each helmet has full padding.

Catcher’s masks and helmets are also to be inspected ensuring they are not damaged and the appropriate padding is in place. Leg guards are to be inspected to ensure they are free of cracks.

Distracting adornments – no exposed items, including jewellery, judged by the umpire to be distracting to opposing players any be worn or displayed. The umpire shall require the item to be removed or covered. Medical alert bracelets and/or necklaces, if deemed distracting, shall be required to be taped to the boy in such a manner that the medical alert information remains visible.

**Plate Meeting**

All umpires should enter the diamond together.

One minute before the start of the game, the umpires bring the respective team representatives to home plate for a meeting. The umpires and team representatives will line up as follows:

---

This meeting provides an opportunity to:

- Introduce all umpires - an important aspect of the meeting that helps to promote a good attitude between all parties and allows for easier communication during the game.
- Explain ground rules - make sure that everyone has a clear understanding in relation to the field of play.
- Answer any questions - prior to leaving the meeting ensure that there are no lingering doubts about how the game will progress.
- Collect game balls - obtain the game balls from the offensive team prior to the commencement of the game.

**Note:** The plate meeting should be over in less than one minute.
Between Innings Conduct
After each half innings teams are permitted one minute for the changeover. During this changeover period, which starts at the last out of the previous half innings, several things have to happen:

- The pitcher is entitled to a maximum of 5 warm up pitches in their first pitching innings and then 3 warm up pitches to the catcher or any other team member suitably attired
- You may need to drink fluids to remain hydrated and alert
- Coaches may choose to make changes during this period
- You should scan the field of play, including bench areas for potential obstructions such as equipment or gates left ajar, etc.
- You may want to check the score at the top of the 3rd, 5th and 7th innings and others as needed if the run-ahead rule might be applied.

In order to achieve all of these in the timeframe, the base umpire can assist hustling to their position or getting a drink promptly. If you can take control of your own conduct in this minute you will ensure that the players get their maximum playing time.

Restricting the pitcher’s warm up between innings if the team is slow to return to the diamond (ie has a motivational chat) is good practice and is good game management that will encourage the teams to hustle between innings.

You cannot expect the teams to hustle if you do not, so you must set the example.

Ending the Game
There are very few occasions when the umpire determines that a game has ended. These would be:

- If the game is a timed game and time has been reached
- If a number of runs were scored to win a game by the application of a run-ahead rule
- If a team scores a winning run and there are still runners on base on an in-the-park hit.

Generally, these are the only occasions when an umpire needs to indicate “time and game” or just “game”. Particularly at National Championships, State Championships, State Leagues etc, everybody knows the game situation – the players know if they are winning or not – they know when the game is over.

Individual Requirements
All umpires will need a period of time to change out of their umpiring uniform or prepare for another game. Also, a period to wind down from the game may be required and this will be different for each person.

Umpires should also take time to complete a regime of stretches and warm down exercises that will prevent injury and ensure they are able to maintain their fitness throughout the tournament schedule.

Crew Discussion
As soon as practicable after the game the crew should get together and discuss aspects of the game that may have been challenging or that each can share and learn from. Also, the TCU and tournament umpire management crew may choose to provide a crew debrief. As a learning experience, other umpires may be permitted to sit in on these debriefs. Remember to allow dialogue and questions during these meetings.
Review
1. True or false:
   a. It is sufficient for the plate and base umpire/s to meet 10 minutes before the game. _____________
   b. Knowledge of local ground rules is the responsibility of all umpires allocated to a game. _____________
   c. Only the batting team are entitled to a 5-minute warm-up on the diamond. _____________

2. What items should umpires check during the equipment checks?
   ___________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________

3. List six topics which could be discussed/addressed at the pre-game meeting:
   a. ___________________________________________________________________________________
   b. ___________________________________________________________________________________
   c. ___________________________________________________________________________________
   d. ___________________________________________________________________________________
   e. ___________________________________________________________________________________
   f. ___________________________________________________________________________________

4. Identify TWO reasons why a post-game crew discussion is important.
   a. ___________________________________________________________________________________
   b. ___________________________________________________________________________________

5. Your presenter will divide you into groups of two, and allocate you a role of a plate umpire, base umpire. You will have 2 minutes to practise an effective pre-game crew discussion, which you will then act out in front of the group. Watch each crew’s discussion and be prepared to offer constructive feedback on what was done well and which areas needed improvement.
Summary
The duties of umpires begin before the game actually commences and you need to ensure that you are ready early enough before a game to meet all of your responsibilities.

Often you will umpire with people you have never met before, especially when starting out. It is important to have an effective pre-game crew discussion to ensure the crew are able to work as a team on the diamond. You need to ensure that the diamond and equipment used by the players are safe – always take the time to check each team’s equipment before a game.

Umpires set the standard for how the game will be played. A polite and concise pre-game meeting and ongoing hustle throughout the game will ensure that the players and officials get the most time possible for softball. If you drop your standards, the players will follow.

Any challenging aspects of the game or learning experiences should be shared in a post-game meeting.

Conclusion
A successful umpire does not just concentrate on the “on-diamond” aspects of umpiring – pre-game preparation and a good manner when dealing with teams is also a necessity.

When you are next watching a game, take a look at the umpires on the game and what they do before “play ball” is called. Look at what happens between each inning. Expect to see umpires doing exactly what was presented in this module.
## Australian Umpire Development Pathway

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<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 0</strong></td>
<td>Local affiliate</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>As per local association rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>Local affiliate</td>
<td>1 year umpiring Play by the Rules online course Signed Umpires’ Code of Conduct</td>
<td>55% on Open Rules Assessment or 65% on Basic Rules Assessment Practical - Level 1 competency checklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>State affiliate</td>
<td>2 years umpiring Level 2 clinic</td>
<td>65% on Open Rules Assessment or 80% on Basic Rules Assessment Practical - U15 or 17 State Championship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3</strong></td>
<td>State affiliate</td>
<td>3 years umpiring Level 3-4 clinic</td>
<td>75% on Open Rules Assessment Practical - U19 State Championship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4</strong></td>
<td>State affiliate</td>
<td>4 years umpiring Level 3-4 clinic</td>
<td>80% on Open Rules Assessment Practical - Open State Championship</td>
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<td><strong>Level 5</strong></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>5 years umpiring Advanced umpire clinic Development plan with nationals application</td>
<td>85% on Open Rules Assessment Practical - National Junior Championships (U17 Girls or Boys, or U19 Women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 6</strong></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>6 years umpiring Advanced umpire clinic Development plan with nationals application</td>
<td>85% on Open Rules Assessment Practical - U19 Men or Open Women Championships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual experience may vary. Other tournaments may be used for assessments where appropriate.
Additional umpiring resources, including information on umpiring courses and accreditation, can be found on the Softball Australia web site (www.softball.org.au).

**Softball Australia**

t 03 9417 0022  
f 03 9417 3399  
e info@softball.org.au  
w www.softball.org.au  
a Level 1, Suite 2  
273 Wellington Street  
Collingwood VIC 3066

**Softball ACT**

t 02 6278 3000  
f 02 6278 3010  
e softballACT@bigpond.com  
w www.act.softball.org.au  
a PO Box 4264  
Hawker ACT 2614

**Softball NSW**

t 02 9677 4000  
f 02 9677 4040  
e office@softball.net.au  
w www.nsw.softball.org.au  
a PO Box 210  
Rooty Hill NSW 2766

**Softball Northern Territory**

t 08 8927 3333  
f 08 8927 9999  
e enquiries@softballnet.com  
w www.nt.softball.org.au  
a PO Box 40051  
Casuarina NT 0811

**Softball Queensland**

t 07 3391 2447  
f 07 3391 4734  
e admin@softballgld.asn.au  
w www.gld.softball.org.au  
a 1/866 Main Street  
Woolloongabba QLD 4102

**Softball South Australia**

t 08 8353 6766  
f 08 8353 2480  
e admin@softballsa.com.au  
w www.sa.softball.org.au  
a PO Box 275  
West Beach SA 5024

**Softball Tasmania**

t 03 6249 3589  
f 03 6249 3589  
e tassoftball@yahoo.com.au  
w www.tas.softball.org.au  
a GPO Box 2124  
Hobart TAS 7001

**Softball Victoria**

t 03 9415 1745  
f 03 9417 3399  
e admin@softballvic.org.au  
w www.vic.softball.org.au  
a Level 1, Suite 2  
273 Wellington Street  
Collingwood VIC 3066

**Softball Western Australia**

t 08 6181 3900  
f 08 9345 3553  
e admin@softballwa.org.au  
w www.wa.softball.org.au  
a PO Box 450  
Mirrabooka WA 6941