

Technical Bulletin

Subject: New Pitching Rule Points of Emphasis TB-2018-1 v2.1

Date: 19th March 2020

Key Points:

- After taking the signal, the pitcher may take a backward step with the stepping (or non-pivot) foot prior to the 2 second pause with the hands together or apart
- Prior to and during the pitch, it is legal if the toe, or heel of the pitcher's pivot foot is not physically touching the plate provided it would be in contact if it were grounded

Extract from the Softball Australia Rules Points of Emphasis. This should be read in conjunction with the rule book.

Changes to the pitching rules for 2018 are in Bold Italic

V1.1 Revision in Blue Text

There are six basic features of the pitching rule. They are:

1. Contact With Pitcher's Plate:

Pitchers must have the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and both feet within the 61cm (24 inch) length of the pitcher's plate. There should be no misunderstanding that if the pivot foot is on top of the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot is within the 61cm (24 inch) pitcher's plate, the pitch is legal.

It is also legal for the pitcher to have the pivot foot's heel in contact with the front of the pitcher's plate or the toes of the pivot foot in contact with the back of the pitcher's plate. If the pivot foot is only in contact with the side of the pitcher's plate ***or the back foot is completely outside the length or imaginary line of the pitchers plate an Illegal Pitch should be called.*** - See Diagram on page 3

2. Signal: A signal must be taken, or appear to be taken, by the pitcher while ***standing with at least one foot on the plate.*** The ball must be held in one hand only (either in the glove or open hand) and the hands must clearly be separated. The ball held in one hand may be in front of or to the side of the body. Taking a signal prevents a pitcher from walking onto the pitcher's plate and putting the batter at a disadvantage, by throwing a quick pitch. The signal may be taken from the catcher or from the dugout.

3. Preliminary to Release of Pitch: Pitchers must keep ***the pivot foot*** in contact with the pitcher's plate during the entire preliminary process. After taking the signal, the pitcher must address the batter, by taking the ball in both hands in front, or to the side, of the body but not behind the body. The pitcher must then come to a full and complete stop for a minimum of two seconds and not more than five seconds, after which the pitcher may begin the pitch. ***The pitcher may take a***

backward step with the non-pivot foot prior to the 2 second pause, however there can be no backward movement during or after the pause as this is an Illegal Pitch.

The stepping (non-pivot) foot can only move forward with the start of the pitch. When the pitcher brings their whole body to a complete stop, the hips, not the shoulders, must be in line with first and third bases. This permits the pitcher to turn their upper body so that the ball and glove are hidden from the batter's view at the time of the stop. It is permissible for the pitcher to adjust or rotate the ball in their glove with the bare hand during the stop, provided the rest of the body is completely stopped.

The pitcher cannot step off the pitcher's plate with either foot after the pause/stop has been made **or the pitch has started**. The only exception to this is if the pitcher is in position, **prior to starting the pitch**, decides they do not want to deliver the ball and wishes to step off the pitcher's plate. In this situation, the pitcher must keep both hands together and step back off the pitcher's plate with the hands still together. Once both feet are off the pitcher's plate, the hands must then be separated, and time should be called.

4. Start of Pitch: The pitch starts after the hands have been put together and the pitcher then takes one hand off the ball, or there is any motion that is part of the wind-up. The pitcher sliding their feet across the pitcher's plate, either forward or sideways, would be considered as starting the wind-up motion. The pitcher may not push off from a place other than the pitcher's plate prior to separating the hands.

It is not a step if the pitcher slides either foot across the pitcher's plate, the pivot foot turns, the heel or foot slides provided contact is maintained with the plate and there is no movement backwards off the plate. Lifting the complete pivot foot off the pitcher's plate and returning it to the plate, creating a rocking/pendulum motion, is an illegal act.

NOTE: It is legal if the pitcher raises the heel, or toe of the pivot foot or the stepping foot provided that, in the umpire's judgement, the pivot foot would be in contact with the pitcher's plate if it were grounded and the pivot foot does not move forwards or backwards such that it would be **off the plate** prior to the step forward by the non-pivot foot.

The pitcher may also lift the heel of the pivot foot, and use the front of the pivot foot to start their momentum. In this action, it is permissible to lift the heel of the pivot foot, twist the foot and push off with the toes or the ball of the foot, provided the pivot foot does not move forward off the pitcher's plate prior to the push off.

NOTE: Clearing the cleats to enable the foot to slide is not considered to be lifting the foot or to be losing contact with the pitcher's plate.

5. Wind-up and Delivery: The wind-up/windmill may not be two full revolutions of the arm. The pitcher's hand may go past the hip twice during the windmill action (if used), as long as there are not two complete revolutions. The wrist may not be farther from the hip than the elbow (in a throwing motion). The delivery may not have a stop, or reversal, of the windmill or forward motion.

6. Step or Release: A step (only one) may be taken and if taken it must be forward, toward the batter and within the 61cm (24 inch) length of the pitcher's plate. (To be illegal, the stepping foot must be on the ground and completely outside the imaginary lines drawn from both edges of the pitcher's plate to the home plate).

The non-pivot (stepping) foot should be the first foot **to move**. **The pivot foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate or push off and drag away or be airborne prior to the stepping (non-pivot) foot touching the ground.**

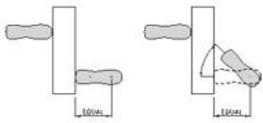
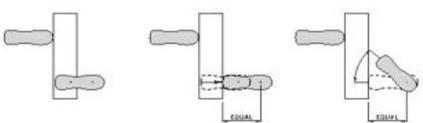
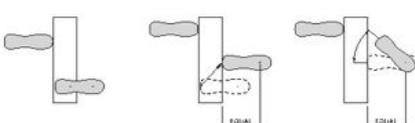
The pitcher may leap, from the pitcher's plate, land and, with a continuous motion, deliver the ball to the plate. The pivot foot may push off and/or follow through with this continuous action. This is not considered a Crow Hop.

It is legal to drag, leap or hop and then land and throw as long as the original push starts from the pitcher's plate. It is not legal to step off with the pivot foot and then drag, leap or hop and throw.

As the pitcher pushes from the pitcher's plate all movement of the pitching arm must be continuous. Pushing off with the pivot foot from a spot other than the pitcher's plate, before the non-pivot (stepping) foot has left the pitcher's plate **or ground** is considered to be a Crow Hop and is illegal. An illegal pitch should be called as soon as the action is illegal, umpires do not need to wait for the pitch to be released.

Note: If a pitcher repeatedly violates the pitching regulations, the pitcher may be excluded from the pitching position for the remainder of the game.

The following table shows legal feet placement and actions

	<p>1. The Pivot foot in contact. Pivot foot legally rotates</p>
	<p>2. Pivot foot in contact. Pivot foot legally Slides forward and may rotate</p>
	<p>3. Pivot foot in contact. Pivot foot legally slides sideways and forward and may legally rotate</p>
	<p>4. The Non-Pivot foot may be off the back of the plate, all following movement must be forward</p>
	<p>5. Both feet must be within the length of the pitchers plate, they cannot be completely off the side of the plate</p>
	<p>6. The pivot foot must be in contact with the top, rear or front of the pitchers plate</p>

Brooke Wilkins
Technical Project Coordinator
 Softball Australia

Leigh Evans
National Umpire in Chief – Technical
National Umpiring Program
 Softball Australia

This is an Approved Softball Australia Technical Bulletin for use in Australia and is current as of 19/03/2020.

For the most current version, visit www.softball.org.au and go to resources, technical bulletins.