

# Official Baseball Rules

## 2019 Rule Amendments

Below is a summary of all relevant rule changes that have been implemented by the Official Baseball Rules Committee for the 2019 season. The umpire summary for each rule change is highlighted in yellow following the rule. In the actual wording of the rule, wording highlighted in green indicates new wording added for 2019. Portions ~~struck out in red~~ indicate wording that has been deleted from the rule book.

### 1) A Club's Ability to Suspend or Resume a Game Pursuant to a Severe Weather Policy

#### 4.03 Exchange of Lineup Cards

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(e) As soon as the home team's batting order is handed to the umpire-in-chief the umpires are in charge of the playing field and from that moment the umpire-in-chief shall have sole authority to determine when a game shall be called, suspended or resumed on account of weather or the condition of the playing field. The umpire-in-chief shall not call the game until at least 30 minutes after he has suspended play. The umpire-in-chief may continue the suspension so long as he believes there is any chance to resume play. **Nothing in this Rule is intended to affect a Club's ability to suspend or resume any game pursuant to a policy governing severe weather, significant weather threats, and lightning safety that has been filed with the league office prior to the championship season.**

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#### 4.04 Weather and Field Conditions

(a) The home team shall be the sole judge as to whether a game shall not be started because of unsuitable weather conditions or the unfit condition of the playing field, except for the second game of a conventional or split doubleheader. **Nothing in this Rule is intended to affect a Club's ability to suspend or resume any game pursuant to a policy governing severe weather, significant weather threats, and lightning safety that has been filed with the league office prior to the championship season.**

Change for 2019: The Official Baseball Rules now permit a club policy regarding severe weather to suspend a game due to severe weather without the consent of the umpire-in-chief, provided the policy is filed with the league office prior to the start of the season.

## 2) Batter / Runner Jewelry

### 5.05 When the Batter Becomes a Runner

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(b) The batter becomes a runner and is entitled to first base without liability to be put out (provided he advances to and touches first base) when:

(2) He is touched by a pitched ball which he is not attempting to hit unless (A) The ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter, or (B) The batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched by the ball;

If the ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter, it shall be called a strike, whether or not the batter tries to avoid the ball. If the ball is outside the strike zone when it touches the batter, it shall be called a ball if he makes no attempt to avoid being touched.

APPROVED RULING: When the batter is touched by a pitched ball which does not entitle him to first base, the ball is dead and no runner may advance.

Rule 5.05(b)(2) Comment: A batter shall not be considered touched by a pitched ball if the ball only touches any jewelry being worn by a player (e.g., necklaces, bracelets, etc.).

### DEFINITIONS OF TERMS (All definitions are listed alphabetically)

\* \* \*

A TAG is the action of a fielder in touching a base with his body while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove; or touching a runner with the ball, or with his hand or glove holding the ball (not including hanging laces alone), while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove. It is not a tag, however, if simultaneously or immediately following his touching a base or touching a runner, the fielder drops the ball. In establishing the validity of the tag, the fielder shall hold the ball long enough to prove that he has complete control of the ball. If the fielder has made a tag and drops the ball while in the act of making a throw following the tag, the tag shall be adjudged to have been made. For purposes of this definition any jewelry being worn by a player (e.g., necklaces, bracelets, etc.) shall not constitute a part of the player's body.

\* \* \*

TOUCH. To touch a player or umpire is to touch any part of his body, or any uniform or equipment worn by him (but not any jewelry (e.g., necklaces, bracelets, etc.) worn by a player).

*(Touch) Comment:* Equipment shall be considered worn by a player or umpire if it is in contact with its intended place on his person

Change for 2019: A batter or runner touched by a ball or tag is not considered hit by a pitch or tagged in the event the ball or tag only touches their jewelry (necklace, bracelets, etc.).

### 3) Dead Balls

#### 5.06 Running the Bases

\* \* \*

(c) Dead Balls

\* \* \*

(7) A pitched ball lodges in the umpire's or catcher's mask or paraphernalia, or in or against the umpire's body, mask or paraphernalia, and remains out of play, runners advance one base;

Rule 5.06(c)(7) Comment: If a foul tip hits the umpire and is caught by a fielder on the rebound, the ball is "dead" and the batsman cannot be called out. The same shall apply where such foul tip lodges in the umpire's mask or other paraphernalia.

If a third strike (not a foul tip) passes the catcher and hits an umpire, the ball is in play. If such ball rebounds and is caught by a fielder before it touches the ground, the batsman is not out on such a catch, but the ball remains in play and the batsman may be retired at first base, or touched with the ball for the out.

If a pitched ball lodges in the umpire's or catcher's mask or paraphernalia, and remains out of play, on the third strike or fourth ball, then the batter is entitled to first base and all runners advance one base. If the count on the batter is less than three balls, runners advance one base.

If a ball is intentionally placed inside a player's uniform (e.g., a pants pocket) for the purpose of deceiving a base runner, the umpire shall call "Time." The umpire will place all runners at least one base (or more if warranted, in the umpire's judgment, in order to nullify the action of the ball being put out of play), from the base they originally occupied.

Change for 2019: No change to previous practice. Additional wording inserted to clarify lodged balls accidentally trapped against the plate umpire's body, as well as clarification to the penalty for a player intentionally placing the ball inside of their uniform.

## 4) Runner on Base Struck by an Infield Fly

### 5.09 Making an Out

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#### (b) Retiring a Runner

Any runner is out when:

\* \* \*

(7) He is touched by a fair ball in fair territory before the ball has gone through, or by, an infielder ~~touched or passed an infielder~~ and no other infielder has a chance to make a play on the ball. The ball is dead and no runner may score, nor runners advance, except runners forced to advance. EXCEPTION: If a runner is touching his base when touched by an Infield Fly, he is not out, although the batter is out;

Rule 5.09(b)(7) Comment: If two runners are touched by the same fair ball, only the first one is out because the ball is instantly dead.

If a runner is touched by an Infield Fly when he is not touching his base, and before the ball has gone through, or by, an infielder, and no other infielder has a chance to make a play on the ball, both the runner and batter are out. Regardless of whether a runner is touching his base or not when touched by an Infield Fly before the ball has gone through, or by, an infielder and no other infielder has a chance to make a play on the ball, the ball is dead and no runner may score, nor runners advance, except runners forced to advance.

Change for 2019: No change to previous practice. Additional language inserted for clarification.

## 5) Visits to the Mound

### 5.10 Substitutions and Pitching Changes

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(l) Visits to the Mound Requiring a Pitcher's Removal From the Game

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Rule 5.10(l) Comment: If the manager or coach goes to the catcher or infielder and that player then goes to the mound or the pitcher comes to him at his position before there is an intervening play (a pitch or other play) that will be the same as the manager or coach going to the mound.

Any attempt to evade or circumvent this rule by the manager or coach going to the catcher or an infielder and then that player going to the mound to confer with the pitcher shall constitute a trip to the mound.

If the coach goes to the mound and removes a pitcher and then the manager goes to the mound to talk with the new pitcher, that will constitute one trip to that new pitcher that inning.

A manager or coach shall not be considered to have concluded his visit to the mound if he temporarily leaves the 18-foot circle surrounding the pitcher's rubber for purposes of notifying the umpire that a double-switch or substitution is being made.

In a case where a manager has made his first trip to the mound and then returns the second time to the mound in the same inning with the same pitcher in the game and the same batter at bat, after being warned by the umpire that he cannot return to the mound, the manager shall be removed from the game and the pitcher required to pitch to the batter until he is retired or gets on base. After the batter is retired, or becomes a base runner, then this pitcher must be removed from the game. The manager should be notified that his pitcher will be removed from the game after he pitches to one hitter, so he can have a substitute pitcher warmed up. In such circumstance, the substitute pitcher will be allowed as much time to throw preparatory pitches as in the umpire's judgment circumstances justify.

For purposes of this Rule 5.10(l), replacing the pitcher shall constitute one trip to that pitcher that inning, regardless of whether the manager or coach chooses to go to the mound, or whether the pitcher remains in the game at a different position on defense.

Change for 2019: No change to previous practice.

## 6) Collisions at Home Plate

### 6.01 Interference, Obstruction, and Catcher Collisions

\* \* \*

(i) Collisions at Home Plate

(1) A runner attempting to score may not deviate from his direct pathway to the plate in order to initiate contact with the catcher ~~(or other player covering home plate)~~, or otherwise initiate an avoidable collision. If, in the judgment of the umpire, a runner attempting to score initiates contact with the ~~(or other player covering home plate)~~ in such a manner, the umpire shall declare the runner out (regardless of whether the ~~player covering home plate~~ catcher maintains possession of the ball). In such circumstances, the umpire shall call the ball dead, and all other base runners shall return to the last base touched at the time of the collision. If the runner slides into the plate in an appropriate manner, he shall not be adjudged to have violated Rule 6.01(i).

*Rule 6.01(i)(1) Comment:* The failure by the runner to make an effort to touch the plate, the runner's lowering of the shoulder, or the runner's pushing through with his hands, elbows or arms, would support a determination that the runner deviated from the pathway in order to initiate contact with the catcher in violation of Rule 6.01(i), or otherwise initiated a collision that could have been avoided. A slide shall be deemed appropriate, in the case of a feet first slide, if the runner's buttocks and legs should hit the ground before contact with the catcher. In the case of a head first slide, a runner shall be deemed to have slid appropriately if his body should hit the ground before contact with the catcher. If a catcher blocks the pathway of the runner, the umpire shall not find that the runner initiated an avoidable collision in violation of this Rule 6.01(i)(1).

(2) Unless the catcher is in possession of the ball, the catcher cannot block the pathway of the runner as he is attempting to score. If, in the judgment of the umpire, the catcher without possession of the ball blocks the pathway of the runner, the umpire shall call or signal the runner safe. Notwithstanding the above, it shall not be considered a violation of this Rule 6.01(i)(2) if the catcher blocks the pathway of the runner in a legitimate attempt to field the throw (e.g., in reaction to the direction, trajectory or the hop of the incoming throw, or in reaction to a throw that originates from a pitcher or drawn-in infielder). In addition, a catcher without possession of the ball shall not be adjudged to violate this Rule 6.01(i)(2) if the runner could have avoided the collision with the catcher (or other player covering home plate) by sliding.

*Rule 6.01(i)(2) Comment:* A catcher shall not be deemed to have violated Rule 6.01(i)(2) unless he has both blocked the plate without possession the ball (or when not in a legitimate attempt to field the throw), and also hindered or impeded the progress of the runner attempting to score. A catcher shall not be deemed to have hindered or impeded the progress of the runner if, in the judgment of the umpire, the runner would have been called out notwithstanding the catcher having blocked the plate. In addition, a catcher should use best efforts to avoid unnecessary and forcible contact while tagging a runner attempting to slide. Catchers who routinely make unnecessary and forcible contact with a runner attempting to slide (e.g., by initiating contact using a knee, shin guard, elbow or forearm) may be subject to discipline by the League President.

All references to “the catcher” in this Rule 6.01(i) shall apply equally to other players covering home plate. In addition, ~~This~~ Rule 6.01(i)(2) shall not apply to force plays at home plate.

Change for 2019: No change to previous practice.

## 7) Forfeited Games – Second Game of Doubleheader

### 7.03 Forfeited Games

(a) A game may be forfeited to the opposing team when a team:

\* \* \*

(7) Fails to appear for the second game of a doubleheader within ~~twenty~~ **thirty** minutes after the close of the first game unless the umpire-in-chief of the first game shall have extended the time of the intermission.

Change for 2019: Rule amended to match 2018 change regarding minimum time between games of a doubleheader.