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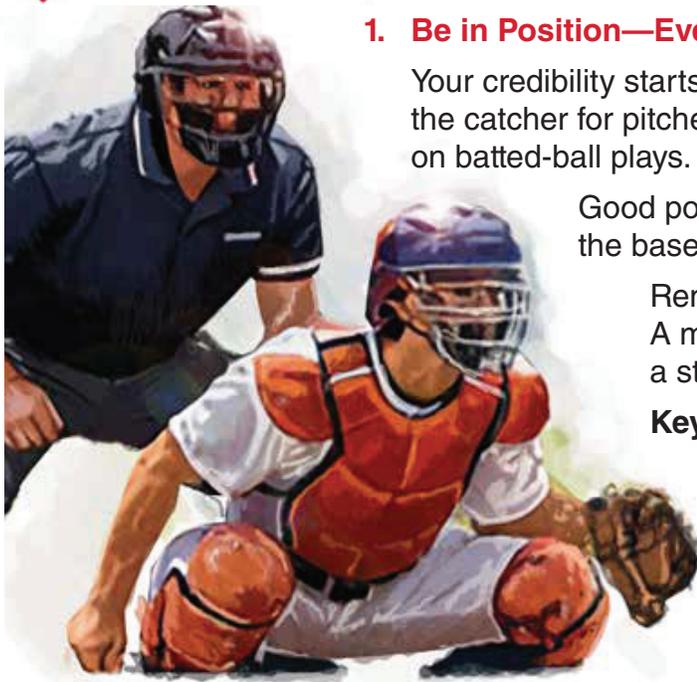
NFHS Baseball Weekly Rule Interpretations

This week's interpretation is the first of many this baseball season. While some states are weeks into their season, the majority of the country is just starting to get "warmed" up. We are offering some basic Top Ten suggestions to get ready for the upcoming season. For the new umpire, this is a great checklist to use to prepare for the season. While not completely new to veteran umpires, it serves as reminder of good common sense items to examine before the season starts in earnest. We trust the feedback will be positive and encouraging. Thank you for your continued support and professionalism throughout the season.

We are attaching the illustration as a separate document for your use and for ease of distribution. These resources are excellent conversation starters for first year and seasoned umpires alike! Have a wonderful baseball season!



TOP TEN TIPS FOR BASEBALL OFFICIALS ¹



1. Be in Position—Every Pitch, Every Play

Your credibility starts with your feet. Secure the proper slot behind the catcher for pitches, and move quickly into the best angle on batted-ball plays.

Good positioning means you see the ball, the runner, and the base all at once.

Remember: angle is more important than distance. A moving umpire who gets a great look is better than a stationary umpire guessing.

Key Habits:

- Read the play immediately off the bat.
- Move with purpose, not panic.
- Don't watch the play from where you started—get where you need to be.

2. Call What You See, Not What You Think

Never assume the outcome of a play. Let it happen, then decide. Anticipation is good for positioning, but not for judging.

Crowd noise, coach reactions, and player body language should not influence your call. Trust your eyes and your training. Mantra: “See the whole play—then call it.”

3. Be Consistent with the Strike Zone

Players and coaches can adjust to a strike zone if it stays the same. What frustrates them is a moving target. Our zone should be based on the rulebook, but consistency is the key to respect.

Helpful Tips:

- Establish your zone early and stick with it.
- Call the same pitch the same way in the 1st inning and the 7th inning.
- Be consistent for both teams—no makeup calls.

4. Sell Your Calls with Confidence

A confident call prevents arguments before they start. Use strong mechanics, a clear voice, and decisive signals.

A weak or hesitant call invites coaches and players to challenge you. Remember: You don't have to be loud, but you must be clear and decisive.

5. Know the Rules Cold

Rule knowledge separates average umpires from excellent ones.

Study NFHS rules, case plays, and mechanics manuals regularly.

When you know the rules, you stay calm under pressure and answer questions confidently.

Helpful Tip: *Carry a rulebook and review one rule per day during the season.*

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6. Communicate with Your Partner

Baseball umpiring is a team effort. Pregame discussions, eye contact, and clear signals prevent coverage mistakes.

Talk through rotations, fair/foul responsibilities, and unusual situations before the game.

Good partners:

- Back each other up.
- Never show disagreement on the field.
- Handle questions as a united crew.

7. Manage the Game, Not Your Ego

Your job is to keep the game fair, safe, and under control—not to win arguments. Stay calm, professional, and patient.

Use warnings, preventive officiating, and quiet words before problems escalate.

Golden rule: “The game is bigger than you.”



8. Handle Coaches Professionally

Coaches will question calls—that’s part of the job.

Listen briefly, respond respectfully, and move on.

Do not debate, lecture, or argue.

Simple approach:

- Listen.
- State the ruling.
- End the conversation.

If a coach becomes unsportsmanlike, enforce the rules calmly and firmly.

9. Stay Mentally Tough

Every umpire misses a call. The great ones forget it immediately and focus on the next pitch. Do not carry mistakes into the next play. Players and coaches feed off your confidence.

Mental reset technique: Take a breath, say “*Next pitch,*” and move forward.

10. Look the Part

Your appearance affects how players and coaches perceive you. A clean uniform, polished shoes, proper equipment, and good posture; project authority. *Hustle and body language communicate professionalism before you ever make a call.*

First impressions matter.

ENJOY THE GAME

You are part of the game’s tradition. Your passion, fairness, and professionalism shape the experience for young athletes. When you love the job, players and coaches feel it—and they respect you for it.