

# Umpiring 101

By Ken Mitoma, MSSL Chief Umpire

Here are a few tips for officiating (Umpiring) an MSSL game. Note, these are just basic tips/guides I have used, and each individual will interpret and use them differently.

READ AND LEARN THE [MSSL RULES](#). READ THE [SSUSA RULES](#) AND CONNECT THE DOTS AS TO HOW A PARTICULAR RULE PERTAINS TO THE MSSL AND VICE VERSA. THE MSSL GOES BY THE SSUSA RULES, BUT MSSL HAS MODIFIED SOME RULES IN ORDER TO PROMOTE SAFETY, OR MAKE THE GAME SIMPLER.

REMEMBER, SSUSA RULES ARE STANDARD SOFTBALL RULES, BUT LARGELY PERTAIN TO SSUSA TOURNAMENT PLAY.

1. Be ready for the game. Give yourself plenty of time. Make sure all field equipment are present. Fill out the field score card and ensure that you have a game ball and back up ball (get back up ball from home team).
2. Watch your time so that infield warm ups can be done by both teams. Don't fret if one or another team doesn't respond in a timely manner. They are just eating up their warm up time.
3. Make sure you have, or can borrow an umpire counter (clicker). Learn to use it. Use the innings counter for runs scored.
4. Relax. Umpiring is not stressful unless you make it so.
5. **Mobility, mobility, mobility, position, position, position**, I cannot stress this enough. If you are so capable, move to a position so that you have a clear view of the play situation. Believe me; doing so will ease controversy when you make a call. This is also true even if you have a second umpire. You need to back each other up on every play.
6. Try and watch where the ball is and where each runner is (it is a little difficult at first, but you will get used to it).
7. Make your calls clear and concise. Many calls are judgement calls and you will be right 50% of time and wrong 50% of the time. It will be up to you as the umpire to make your "right" percentage higher. And thus, develop a competence level for yourself.
8. In conjunction with #7, avoid arguing with managers or players. Keep an even keel with your emotions. Any explanation(s) should be done in a business manner. Try and not make comments that are personal in nature. Develop a thicker skin.

9. Watch other umpires and their techniques. Watch an MLB game on TV and see how the pros call a game. See where they take position on the field. How they make a call, etc. Umpiring has a constant learning curve, so there is much we can learn from each other and other sources.
10. Enjoy the game and have fun doing so. Remember, it is just as hot and tiring officiating a game as playing in one.

## Other Tips

1. Call strike is done so with the right hand and arm (regardless if you are right handed or left handed).
2. After two (2) pitches, regardless of whether they are balls or strikes, give count verbally and or with your hands (right hand strikes, left hand balls). Keep stating the count until the batting cycle is complete. **Also, make sure you let everyone know how many outs have been recorded.** We are SENIOR softball. Players tend to forget how many outs there are, EVEN when you make the announcement: Indicated verbally and with hand sign.
3. Call timeout when a play in your judgement is complete. This is usually the case when the ball is returned to the infield and runner(s) are situated on their respected base. Either the field or home umpire can make the timeout call.
4. Call timeout when there is an apparent injury or unsafe condition on the field of play.
5. Asking for a timeout can only be “requested” by either team. **Note, substitute (pinch) runners can be inserted ONLY when the UMPIRE calls timeout on the field when the play is completed.**
6. The call of “play” by the umpire means playball and the pitcher can make his pitch. If a pitch is made prior to the call of “play”, it is a “No Pitch”. Umpire makes call, time is automatically out.
7. “Illegal Pitch” is called when, based upon the umpire’s judgement through his Mark I eyeball, a pitch exceeds the maximum arc height. Make this call as soon as you can. Also, don’t be lax making this call. Let all know that the pitch is “illegal”. Batters can hit this pitch if they so desire. No penalty.
8. “Flat” pitch. A pitch that has “no” arc whatsoever. Batter can hit the pitch if they so desire.
9. Foul ball. A ball hit into foul territory but within the playable area. “Foul ball out of play” means a ball that has traveled out the playable area. Both are a called strike, or out if the hit ball is the third strike.

10. **“Dead ball”.** (1) A ball that has been played by a fielder and has traveled outside the playable area. Or, (2) the ball was hit by the batter and has hit the pitching screen (call strike). Read your rule book for further information.
11. **“Infield Fly”.** Runners on first and second with nobody or one out. Based loaded with nobody or one out. Ball is batted into the air within the infield area... call **“infield fly, batter is out”**. Either umpire can make this call. Runner can advance if they are so brave enough to do so.
12. **“Open Inning”.** Seventh (regular league) Nine (summer league). See MSSL rules pertaining to maximum runs allowed, etc.
13. **At the end of the game, get managers signatures on score card and give card to commissioner. Also, announce that “home team” bring and store game equipment.**
14. **Any questions and concerns can be directed to Ken Mitoma or Frank White.**