

Two Umpire System

The three umpire system is the preferred, and recommended, system of umpiring for college softball because it provides for nearly perfect coverage of all situations. It is the system used in all college post season play. The two umpire system is not recommended for college softball but is still being used in some areas and conferences. This manual, though providing thorough and detailed coverage of three umpire mechanics, is not about any particular umpire system, it is about umpiring.

All concepts and philosophies - Angle

Distance

Primary positions

Calling positions

Secondary positions

Parallel movement

Efficient movement

Professionalism

Commitment to the play

Body language

Signals

Crewness

Handling conflict

Game management - apply equally to any umpire system.

Starting Positions

A - No one on:

P: at the plate

B: 18 -21 feet down the first base line completely in foul territory, in an upright standing position, and walking with the pitch.

B - Runner on first only:

P: at the plate

B: Between first and second bases, behind the second baseman, and no closer to either base than 15 feet in a set position. Usually you will start closer to first because of potential for a pick-off attempt.

C – Runners on second only, third only, first and second, first and third, second and third, or first, second and third:

P: at the plate

B: Between second and third, behind the shortstop, in a set position. Usually you will start closer to the lead runner.

Plate Umpire

- Plate Umpire has all plays and watching runners touch at home plate.
- Plate Umpire has plays and watching the touch by the lead runner at third base.
- Plate Umpire has all fair or foul calls except on the first base line when the base umpire goes out on the ball
- Plate Umpire has all fly ball calls unless the base umpire goes out on the ball

Base Umpire

- Base Umpire has all plays and watching runners touch at first and second base
- Base Umpire has the first play in the infield by an infielder at any base (first, second, or third)
- Base Umpire has the batter-runner at third base.
- Base Umpire has all steals and pick-offs
- Base Umpire has all runners leaving before the pitch is released

Tag Up Responsibilities

Plate Umpire – no chase: All tag-ups at third

Base Umpire – no chase: All tag-ups at first and second

Plate Umpire – chase: All tag-ups at first, second and third

Base Umpire – chase: No tag-ups

Working Between Pitches

The mechanic of “working between pitches” is used to ensure that an umpire is always alert to a possible play in his/her area. Working between pitches is what you do on a non-batted ball. If the catcher, after the pitch, immediately throws to a base, then you simply react to the action. Working between pitches is what you do when the catcher does not immediately throw but could possibly make a late, behind the runner, throw to send the message that she’s ‘watching her’ or to catch a runner who is lazily returning to a base.

The umpire should move to a primary position for a pick-off attempt on the lead runner (this being the highest probability of where the play will go). Umpires should work between pitches even if no fielder is defending the base. Watch the ball, not the runner, when working between pitches. This maintains the constant alertness of an umpire and creates good habits that will serve him/her instinctually.

