

SECTION 9 – Pitching

Defensive Positioning Required for a Legal Pitch – SECTION 9.1.

- a. The pitcher is considered to be in the pitching position when they step forward, puts both feet on the pitcher's plate, and the catcher is in position to receive the pitch.
- b. The pitcher may not take the pitching position on the pitcher's plate without being in possession of the ball, and may not simulate the pitching position with or without the ball when near the pitcher's plate.
- c. The catcher must be in the catcher's box from the time the pitcher steps on the pitcher's plate until release of the pitch.
 - 1) No part of the catcher's feet may be outside the lines until the pitch is released.
 - 2) If the batter is positioned in front of the batter's box to receive a pitch, the catcher may move closer to the plate without penalty. At all times, however, the catcher must avoid catcher's obstruction as the batter legally has the right to the entire batter's box.

PENALTY (a)-(c) – Illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8).

Pitching Procedure

Taking the Signal from the Catcher – SECTION 9.2.

- a. Before starting a pitch, the pitcher must comply with the following:
 - 1) Both feet must be on the ground and in contact with the pitcher's plate, and, all, or part of her pivot foot must be on the top surface of the pitcher's plate. Both feet must be within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate.
 - 2) Shoulders must be in line with first and third base.
 - 3) Hands must be separated.
 - 4) The ball must be held in one hand, either bare or gloved.
 - 5) The ball may be held in front of, at the side of or behind the body.
- b. While in this position, the pitcher must take (or simulate taking) a signal from the catcher.
- c. After receiving the catcher's signal, the pitcher's hands must come together for no more than 10 seconds before starting the pitch.

Note: The hands do not have to come to a complete stop and, therefore, may be moving during the touch.

PENALTY (a)-(c) – Illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8).

Start of the Pitch – SECTION 9.3.

The pitch officially begins when the pitcher has taken (or simulated taking) a signal from the catcher, both hands have touched, and the hands separate.

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Step/Stride – SECTION 9.4.

In the act of delivering the ball, the pitcher must push off with the pivot/drag foot from the pitcher's plate and take one step/stride forward toward the batter, on or within the 24-inch length of the pitcher's plate.

- a. The rear, pivot/drag foot must remain in contact with the pitcher's plate at all times before the forward step.
- b. It is not a step if the pitcher turns their pivot/drag foot to push off or slides their foot across the pitcher's plate, provided contact with the plate is maintained. No rocking or lifting movement that pulls the foot off the pitcher's plate is allowed.
- c. Having pushed off from the pitcher's plate, the rear pivot/drag foot must stay in contact with the ground without creating a second push-off point before the stride foot lands.
 - 1) No leaping is allowed. The pitcher may not become airborne on the initial drive from the pitcher's plate. The rear foot must slide/drag on the ground.
 - 2) No crow hopping is allowed. The pitcher may not replant, gain a second starting point and push off their pivot/drag foot. Once having lost contact with the pitcher's plate, the drag foot may trail on the ground but not bear weight again until the pitch is released.

PENALTY (a)-(c) – Illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8)

The Windup – SECTION 9.5.

The pitcher may use any windup desired providing they do not, after having taken the signal and brought their hands together:

- a. Make any motion to pitch without immediately delivering the ball to the batter.
- b. Separate their hands and then return the ball to both hands.
- c. Stop and change direction more than twice.

Note: The pitcher may drop their arm to the side and to the rear before starting the windup. The pitching hand may go past the hip twice as long as there are not two complete revolutions.

PENALTY (a)-(c) – Illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8).

Delivery – SECTION 9.6.

In delivering the ball to the batter, the pitcher must comply with the following:

- a. Once the hands have separated, the pitcher may not make two com-

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- plete revolution of the arm in the windmill motion.
- b. The step/stride and delivery of the ball to the batter must take place simultaneously.
- c. The pitched ball must be released underhand.
 - 1) The hand must be below the hip.
 - 2) The wrist must not be farther from the hip than the elbow.
- d. The release of the ball and follow through of the hand and wrist must be forward and past the straight line of the body.
- e. The pitcher may not make another arm revolution after releasing the ball.

PENALTY (a)-(d) – Illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8).

The Pitch

Dropped During Pitch – SECTION 9.7.

- a. If the ball accidentally slips from the pitcher's hand during the act of delivering the pitch, the following penalty will be invoked.

PENALTY – A ball is awarded to the batter, the ball remains in play, and runners may advance with liability to be put out.

- b. The pitcher shall not deliberately drop, roll or bounce the ball in order to prevent the batter from hitting the pitch.

PENALTY – Illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8).

Illegal Pitch – SECTION 9.8.

When an illegal pitch occurs, the plate or base umpire shall call it immediately.

- a. The plate umpire calls "Illegal" loud enough for the catcher and batter to hear. The base umpire calls "Illegal" loud enough for nearby players to hear. Failure of players to hear the call shall not void the call.
- b. Simultaneously, the umpire gives the delayed dead ball signal and waits to call "Time/Timeout" until the pitch has reached the plate, or the play on a batted ball has been completed.
 - 1) If the batter contacts the ball and reaches first base safely and each other runner advances at least one base on the batted ball, the play stands, and the illegal pitch is canceled.
 - 2) If the batter does not reach first base safely or if any runner fails to advance at least one base the coach of the offensive team may choose the result of the play or the standard penalty for an illegal pitch, which is that a ball is awarded to the batter, and each runner advances one base.
 - 3) If the batter is hit by an illegal pitch, the batter is awarded first base,

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- and each runner advances one base.
- 4) If ball four is an illegal pitch, the batter is awarded first base, and each runner advances one base.
 - c. The umpire who called the illegal pitch shall explain the violation to both the pitcher and her coach.

Quick Pitch – SECTION 9.9.

A quick pitch, intended to catch the batter by surprise, shall be ruled by the plate umpire to be “No pitch.”

EFFECT – The ball is dead, and all subsequent action on that pitch is canceled.

No Pitch – SECTION 9.10.

“No pitch” shall be declared when:

- a. The pitcher pitches while play is suspended.
- b. A base runner is legitimately off base (i.e., following a foul ball) and the pitcher fails to allow sufficient time for the runner to return.
- c. The pitcher delivers a quick pitch.
- d. A runner is called out for leaving her base before the ball leaves the pitcher’s hand.

EFFECT (a)-(d) – The ball is dead, and all subsequent action on that pitch is canceled.

- e. A player or coach commits any act (i.e., calls “Time/Timeout” or employs any similar word or phrase) while the ball is live and in play for the obvious purpose of trying to make the pitcher deliver an illegal pitch.

PENALTY – No pitch (see Rule 9-8) and warning. A repeat of any such act by any member of the team that has been warned shall result in the offender(s) being ejected from the game.

Regulations Governing Pitching Situations

Aborting a Pitch/Stepping Off the Pitcher’s Plate – SECTION 9.11.

- b. The pitcher is considered to be in pitching position when both feet are on the pitcher’s plate. The pitcher may legally be removed from the pitching position by stepping backward (not forward or sideways) off the pitcher’s plate.
- c. The pitch officially begins and cannot be legally aborted when the pitcher has taken (or simulated taking) a signal from the catcher, both hands have touched, and the hands have separated.

PENALTY (a)-(b) – Illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8).

Ball Rotation – SECTION 9.12.

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- a. To start the game, the plate umpire shall have a minimum of two game balls. Once the game has started, additional balls must be furnished (as needed) by a home team or tournament representative. All game balls must meet the specifications of Rule 3-1.
- b. As a general rule, the current game ball is in play until such time as it leaves the playing field or is rejected by an umpire because it is discolored, scuffed or otherwise unsuitable for play. However, each pitcher shall have a choice of game balls at the start of her respective half-inning.
 - 1) If the pitcher does not like the ball, they must first hand or toss it to the plate umpire who may then put an alternative ball into the game for play.
 - 2) The pitcher may not hold more than one ball at a time for trial purposes.
 - 3) The game shall not be unduly delayed (e.g., to retrieve a particular ball that has been fouled away from the playing field).

Foreign Substance on the Ball/Items on Pitcher – SECTION 9.13.

- a. The pitcher shall not at any time be allowed to use any moisture or foreign substance on the ball, the pitching hand or fingers or do anything to deface the ball. Neither shall any other player or team personnel apply moisture or a foreign substance to the ball nor do anything to deface the ball. Under the supervision and control of the umpire, powdered resin may be used to dry the hands.

PENALTY – For the first offense, an illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8) shall be called. On the second offense, the pitcher shall be ejected.

Note: This rule is not designed to prohibit the pitcher from going to their mouth inside the pitching circle; the pitcher may go to their mouth, but must wipe off the hand before starting the pitch. It does not matter where the pitcher is positioned, inside the pitching circle

PENALTY – A ball is awarded on the batter. THIS IS AN ILLGAL PITCH, RUNNERS ADVANCE ONE BASE.

- b. The pitcher shall not wear any item on the pitching fingers, hand, wrist forearm or thighs that may be distracting to the batter. This includes a batting glove, sweatband and jewelry of any kind. **Exception:** The pitcher's fingers, hand, wrist, forearm or elbow may be taped for injury, providing such tape is a neutral color.
- c. The pitcher shall not wear clothing items that a batter or umpire considers distracting (e.g., loose lacing on a glove, ball-colored logos).

PENALTY (b)-(c) – The pitcher shall remove the item upon request of the

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umpire or be ejected from the game.

Intentionally Pitching at a Batter – SECTION 9.14.

The pitcher shall not intentionally attempt to hit the batter with a pitch.

PENALTY – If the plate umpire believes such a violation has occurred, the umpire shall warn the pitcher and both opposing coaches that future violations by any pitcher will be cause for immediate ejection from the game of the pitcher and the head coach. If, in the umpire's judgment, the situation warrants drastic action to diffuse a potentially volatile situation, the umpire may eject the pitcher without first warning her. Each coach should be warned, but the coach of the offending team may be ejected at this time if the umpire believes it is appropriate. A warning may be issued to both teams before the start of the game or at any time during a game.

Intentional Base on Balls – SECTION 9.15.

If the pitcher intentionally walks a batter, the ball is live and all pitches (including a pitchout) must be legally pitched to the catcher.

PENALTY – The penalty for not delivering each pitch legally to the catcher is an illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8). *Exception:* Intentionally violating the rule in order to walk the batter without pitching shall not result in a ball being awarded to the batter but each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out.

Returning a Pitched Ball to the Pitcher – SECTION 9.16.

The catcher must return the ball directly to the pitcher after each pitch.

Exceptions:

1. When there is a runner(s) on base.
2. When the batter becomes a runner.
3. Following a strikeout.
4. Following a putout or an attempted putout made by the catcher.

PENALTY – A ball shall be awarded to the batter. The ball is dead, and runners may not advance. On the first offense, the umpire shall issue a warning to the offending player. On the second offense, the offender shall be ejected from the game.

Throwing to a Base From the Pitcher's Plate – SECTION 9.17.

The pitcher shall not throw to a base during a live ball while her foot is in contact with the pitcher's plate after she has taken the pitching position. If the throw from the pitcher's plate occurs during a live-ball appeal play, the appeal is canceled.

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Note: The pitcher may be removed from the pitching position by stepping backward off the pitcher's plate before separating the hands.

PENALTY – Illegal pitch (see Rule 9-8).

Time Allowed Between Pitches – SECTION 9.18.

The pitcher must release the next pitch within 10 seconds after receiving the ball or after the umpire signals “play ball.”

PENALTY – If 10 seconds have elapsed and the pitcher has not yet pitched, an additional ball shall be awarded to the batter.

If two minutes have elapsed and the pitcher has not yet pitched, a forfeited game shall be declared by the umpire in favor of the team at bat. *Exception:* Intentionally violating the rule in order to walk the batter without pitching shall not result in a ball being awarded to the batter, but each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out. On the first offense, the umpire shall issue a warning to the offending player. On the second offense, the offending player shall be ejected from the game.

Warm-Up Pitches Allowed – SECTION 9.19.

- a. At the beginning of each half-inning, not more than one minute may be used to throw no more than five warm-up pitches.
- b. After a pitching change, a relief pitcher may throw no more than five warm-up pitches, the plate umpire may, allow additional pitches. Play shall be suspended during this time. A pitcher shall not be allowed warm-up pitches if returning to pitch in the same half-inning.

PENALTY (a)-(b) – A ball shall be awarded to the batter for each warm-up pitch in excess of five. *Exception:* This penalty does not apply if the umpire delays the start of play for any reason.

- c. After injury to a pitcher, the plate umpire must allow the relief pitcher adequate time to warm up. Play shall be suspended during this time.
- d. The plate umpire must give the pitcher adequate time to warm up after any substantial delay due to inclement weather, etc. After shorter delays for substitution and conferences, the pitcher must be ready to pitch when the umpire calls, “play ball.”