

## Umpire Communication

Communication on the field is vital. There's a standard set of signals used to convey each type of call. In order to be a good umpire, you need to know every single one. The signs and signals insure that every umpire on the field is focused on the task at hand, that the count is consistent and everyone knows what might occur on the next play.

### Listed below are the Basic Six Signals:

#### Strike

Always signaled with the right hand, each umpire develops a personalized system for signaling a strike. Some do the tradition bang-the-door clenched fist, some indicate the strike out to the side with a pointed finger. Some umpires face forward, some turn. Some call strike, then signal and others do simultaneously. One essential element is not to turn away from the action.



#### Ball

Calling a ball requires no physical signal. It's sort of the default call. If you don't do anything, people will assume you called a ball. To make it simple, just stand up out of your crouch and say "Ball" aloud.

#### Out

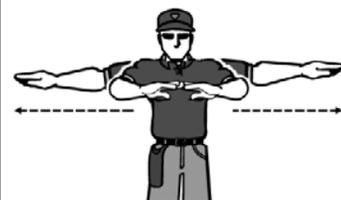


The umpire should bring the right hand out similar to the start of shaking another person's hand. Having the palm open and fingers together, bring the right hand up even to the face. Then bring down the hand making a fist in front of the body. The motion is similar to "banging the door" with the bottom of the fist. The umpire's verbal mechanic should be at the same time the umpire is giving the out signal..."Out!" Most umpires use this technique for all out calls, regardless of how it may seem. For closer calls, most umpires will not modify the motion at all; rather they will simply make the motion swifter, harder and perhaps with an

extended follow through.

#### Safe

The umpire's fingers must be together and elbows locked as the arms come up parallel to the ground. The arms are not to go higher than the umpire's shoulders. Keeping the arms parallel to the ground, extend the arms outward. The umpire verbal mechanics should be at the same time the umpire is giving the safe signal..."Safe!" The key to the same mechanic should be: Crisp, Confident, Smooth and Visible.



#### Time

The signal for a timeout is similar to that of a foul ball. Simply raise both arms up in the air and shout, "Time!" It's also a good idea to move out from behind the plate while you make the call so the pitcher (and everyone else) can easily see that the ball is dead.



#### Foul Ball

Use the same signal as "Time" but the call becomes "Foul". Some umpires add a point into foul territory with one hand after giving the signal.



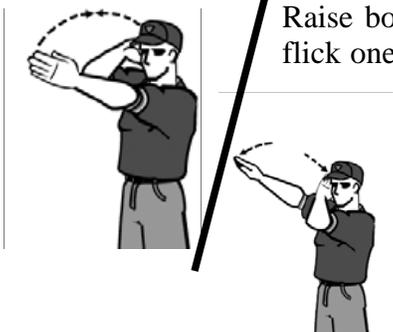
## Other Signals:

### Play

The umpire points the ball back in play (pointing to the pitcher or the plate) with the right hand and calling “Play!” This call is essential for your partner, the pitcher, the catcher, defense and offense so they know exactly when a ball is back in play.



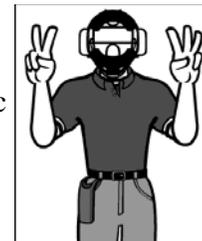
### Foul Tip



Raise both hands up to shoulder height, touch your fingers together, and then brush or flick one hand over the other to signal a foul tip. You can follow this up with a “strike” sign to show that the foul tip counts as a strike.

### Giving the Count

Hands up around eye level with the appropriate number of fingers extended. Proper mechanic is to state “3 and 2” or “3 balls, 2 strikes”, not a fist and not “Full count.”



### Fair Ball



There is never a verbalization for a fair ball. The appropriate umpire simply points into fair territory with either his left or right arm to indicate that the ball is fair.

### Strike Out

The umpire is to use the same sign as “Strike”. However, **never say “Strike Three—You’re Out!”** In some leagues the third strike does not have to be caught while in others it must be caught. An umpire should only call “Strike Three.” In play where the batter is not entitled to advance if the third strike is not legally caught, the plate umpire should follow the strike three call with “Batter is Out!”

### Ball Four

“Ball Four” is announced clearly. You should NEVER point to first base even with the left hand. Just say “Ball Four”. If the umpire points to first after the pitch and the defense thinks it’s strike 3 and starts to leave the field, chaos will abound.

## No Pitch

Right arm straight out with palm outward and fingers up. The call is “No Pitch” and the ball is dead. If you are the plate umpire, step away from the plate. You will use this call most often in a softball game. It is used to indicate a leading off violation in some leagues. The call is a clear “No Pitch” and the “Runner is Out!” with a point and Out signal.



## Infield Fly



All umpires point into the air with their right hand. On some crews every umpire on the field echoes the infield fly call, on others the gesture is echoed. This should be dealt with in the pre-game conference. The plate umpire will usually announce the verbal portions of the signal, echoed by the other umpires.

## Time Play

Place two fingers of the right hand on the left wrist, as if on top of a watch. This signal will only be used in two-out situations where a time play involving a potential run is likely.



## Check-Swing or Appealed Strike



The plate umpire does not have to be asked for help, he can simply request it themselves. Step away from the plate, and with your left arm, gesture clearly to the base umpire and ask “Did he swing? Or Did he go?” If the answer is yes, the base umpire signals strike while saying “yes, he went!” If the answer is no—a safe sign with “no he did not go!”

## Balk/Interference/Obstruction

The base umpire will always point at the situation and call, “That’s a balk!”, “Illegal Pitch”, “That’s Interference!” or “That’s Obstruction!” as the case may be. On a delayed dead ball situation, it lets everyone know that you saw an incident occur although penalization may not take place until a later time. Depending on the circumstances, the point and call may be preceded by or followed by the Time signal and call.



## Ground Rule Double



The signal is the right arm with first two fingers extended overhead. Keep in mind that the ball has left the field and is dead, even if it should bound back onto the playing area

## Home Run

The signal is the right arm with index finger extended overhead in a circular motion. There is no voice call associated with the home run signal. The umpire then watches the bases to insure that runners legally touch the bases. Unlike the ground rule double, it is not necessary to indicate that the ball is dead.



## Catch/No Catch

Out mechanic with verbal “That’s a catch” or Safe mechanic with verbal “No catch—No catch.”

## Run Scores

Used for a time play when there is a question as to whether or not the run counts. Point to the plate and then the press box or scorer and state “The run scores, score that run” as you do so.

## Run Does Not Score

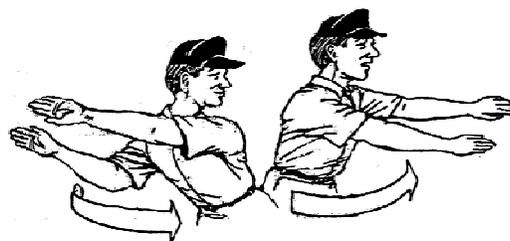
Also used for a time play when there is a question as to whether or not the run counts. Point to the press box or scorer and state “No run scores, no run scores” while raising your arms above your head in a sweeping “X” motion.

## Base Awards

The appropriate umpire points at the runner to be awarded and states, “You—2nd base”, or “You-score” while continuing his gesture toward the base being awarded. When multiple runners are to be given awards, the umpire should begin with the runner closest to home plate and work back from there.

## Off the Bag

This signal is an explanatory one used on plays in which the ball beat the runner but the fielder came off the bag to make the catch. It is used after the Safe signal and call has been made to indicate the umpire’s reason. It is vocalized as, “He’s off the bag!” The sweeping motion should be made in the direction the fielder moved and pulled himself/herself off the base.



## Enforcement/Ejection



The Enforcement signal always follows a Time signal/call, then the pointing signal. It is the act of awarding a runner additional bases predicated upon a violation by the defensive team. The call is made as follows: Point at the runner and call, “You!” Then make the Enforcement signal towards the base you’re awarding and call, “Third Base!” (or whichever base you’re awarding to the runner.

The **Ejection** signal is NEVER used in conjunction with the Pointing signal. Make sure you do not contact anyone or come exceptionally close to anyone with your gesture. Be positive, strong and aggressive but DO NOT showboat. Keep your words simple as the call is merely, “You’re gone!” Maintain your composure and professionalism. Remember, the most vicious arguments can occur after the ejection.

Using signals on the field is important because even if you can’t be sure everyone will hear what you say, you can make sure everyone sees what you’re calling. Memorize the signs and practice them in front of the mirror.