
Pitching Rules

To view the MLB rules, go to - http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official_info/official_rules/pitcher_8.jsp

Legal Pitching Delivery

There are two (2) legal pitching positions, the Windup Position and the Set Position, and either position may be used at any time. Pitchers shall take signs from the catcher while standing on the rubber. (Comment: Pitchers may disengage the rubber after taking their signs but may not step quickly onto the rubber and pitch. This may be judged a quick pitch by the umpire. When the pitcher disengages the rubber, he must drop his hands to his sides. Pitchers will not be allowed to disengage the rubber after taking each sign.)

- The Windup Position. The pitcher shall stand facing the batter, his pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and the other foot free. From this position, any natural movement associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without interruption or alteration. He shall not raise either foot from the ground, except that in his actual delivery of the ball to the batter, he may take one (1) step backward and one (1) step forward with his free foot. When a pitcher holds the ball with both hands in front of his body, with his pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and his other foot free, he will be considered in the Windup Position. (Comment: In the Windup Position, a pitcher is permitted to have his "free" foot on the rubber, in front of the rubber, behind the rubber or off the side of the rubber.) From the Windup Position, the pitcher may:
 - deliver the ball to the batter,
 - or step and throw to a base in an attempt to pick-off a runner,
 - or disengage the rubber (if he does he must drop his hand to his sides). In disengaging the rubber the pitcher must step off with his pivot foot and not his free foot first (1st). He may not go into a set or stretch position; if he does, it is a balk.
- The Set Position. The Set Position shall be indicated by the pitcher when he stands facing the batter with his pivot foot in contact with, and his other foot in front of, the pitcher's plate, holding the ball in both hands in front of his body and coming to a complete stop. From such Set Position he may deliver the ball to the batter, throw to a base or step backward off the pitcher's plate with his pivot foot. Before assuming Set Position, the pitcher may elect to make any natural preliminary motion such as that known as "the stretch." But if he so elects, he shall come to Set Position before delivering the ball to the batter. After assuming the Set Position, any natural motion associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without alteration or interruption. Preparatory to coming to a set position, the pitcher shall have one (1) hand on his side; from this position, he shall go to his set position as defined above without interruption and in one continuous motion. The pitcher, following his stretch must:
 - hold the ball in both hands in front of his body, and come to a complete stop. (Comment: This must be enforced. Umpires should watch this closely. Pitchers are constantly attempting to "beat the rule" in their efforts to hold runners on

bases and in cases where the pitcher fails to make a complete “stop” called for in the rules, the umpire should immediately call a “Balk.”) (Note: With no runners on base, the pitcher is not required to come to a complete stop when using the Set Position. If, however, in the umpire’s judgment, a pitcher delivers the ball in a deliberate effort to catch the batter off guard, this delivery shall be deemed a quick pitch, for which the penalty is a ball.)

- At any time during the pitcher’s preliminary movements and until his natural pitching motion commits him to the pitch; he may throw to any base provided he steps directly toward such base before making the throw. (Comment: The pitcher shall step “ahead of the throw.” A snap throw followed by the step directly toward the base is a balk.)
- If the pitcher makes an illegal pitch with the bases unoccupied, it shall be called a ball unless the batter reaches first (1st) base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter or otherwise. (Comment: A ball, which slips out of a pitcher’s hand and crosses the foul line, shall be called a ball; otherwise, it will be called no pitch. This would be a balk with men on base.)
- If the pitcher removes his pivot foot from contact with the pitcher’s plate by stepping backward with that foot, he thereby becomes an infielder and if he makes a wild throw from that position, it shall be considered the same as a wild throw by any other infielder. (Comment: The pitcher, while off the rubber, may throw to any base. If he makes a wild throw, such throw is the throw of an infielder and what follows is governed by the rules covering a ball thrown by a fielder.

Pitching Restrictions

The Pitcher shall not:

- Bring his pitching hand in contact with his mouth or lips while in the eighteen (18) foot circle surrounding the pitching rubber. Exception: Provided it is agreed to by both managers, the umpire prior to the start of a game played in cold weather, may permit the pitcher to blow on his hand. Penalty: For violation of this part of this rule, the umpires shall immediately call a ball. However, if the pitch is made and a batter reaches first (1st) base on a hit, an error, a hit batsman or otherwise, and no other runner is put out before advancing at least one (1) base, the play shall proceed without reference to the violation.
- Expectorate on the ball, either hand or his glove;
- Rub the ball on his glove, person or clothing;
- Apply a foreign substance of any kind to the ball;
- Deface the ball in any manner;
- Deliver a ball defaced in a manner prescribed by the rules above, or what is called the “shine” ball, “spit” ball, “mud” ball or “emery” ball. The pitcher is allowed to rub the ball between his bare hands.
 - Penalty: For violation of any part of the rules listed above, the pitcher shall be ejected immediately from the game. If a play follows the violation called by the umpire, the manager of the offense may advise the plate umpire that he elects to

accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play. However, if the batter reaches first (1st) base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batsman, or otherwise, and no other runner is put out before advancing at least one (1) base, the play shall proceed without reference to the violation. Even though the offense elects to take the play, the violation shall be recognized and the pitcher shall be ejected immediately from the game. The umpire shall be sole judge on whether any portion of this rule has been violated.

- Comment: If a pitcher violates either the rule concerning expectorates or rubbing the ball on his person, and in the judgment of the umpire, the pitcher did not intend, by his act, to alter the characteristics of a pitched ball, then the umpire may, in his discretion, warn the pitcher in lieu of applying the penalty set forth. If the pitcher persists in violating either of those Rules, however, the umpire should then apply the penalty. If at any time the ball hits the rosin bag, cleat scrape or stick it is in play. In the case of rain or wet field, the umpire may instruct the pitcher to carry the rosin bag in his hip pocket. A pitcher may use the rosin bag for the purpose of applying rosin to his bare hand or hands. Neither the pitcher nor any other player shall dust the ball with the rosin bag; neither the pitcher nor any other player shall be permitted to apply rosin from the bag to his glove or dust any part of his uniform with the rosin bag or have on his person, or in his possession, any foreign substance.
 - Penalty: The pitcher or player shall be immediately ejected from the game.
- Intentionally delay the game by throwing the ball to players other than the catcher, when the batter is in position, except in an attempt to retire a runner.
 - Penalty: If, after warning by the umpire, such delaying action is repeated, the pitcher shall be removed from the game.
- Intentionally Pitch at the Batter. If, in the umpire's judgment, such a violation occurs, the umpire may elect either to:
 - Expel the pitcher, or the manager and the pitcher, from the game, or
 - May warn the pitcher and the manager of both teams that another such pitch will result in the immediate expulsion of that pitcher (or a replacement) and the manager. Comment: If, in the umpire's judgment, circumstances warrant, both teams may be officially "warned" prior to the game or at any time during the game. To pitch at a batter's head is unsportsmanlike and highly dangerous; it should be and is condemned by everybody. Umpires should act without hesitation in enforcement of this rule.

Pitcher's Warm-up

When a pitcher takes his position at the beginning of each inning, or when he relieves another pitcher, he shall be permitted to pitch not to exceed eight (8) preparatory pitches to his catcher during which play shall be suspended. Such preparatory pitches shall not consume more than one minute of time. If a sudden emergency causes a pitcher to be summoned into the game without any opportunity to warm up, the umpire-in-chief shall allow him as many pitches as the umpire deems necessary.

Time limit

When the bases are unoccupied, the pitcher shall deliver the ball to the batter within twelve (12) seconds after he receives the ball. Each time the pitcher delays the game by violating this rule, the umpire shall call "Ball." The twelve (12) second timing starts when the pitcher is in possession of the ball and the batter is in the box alert to the pitcher. The timing stops when the pitcher releases the ball.

- Comment: The intent of this rule is to avoid unnecessary delays. The umpire shall insist that the catcher return the ball promptly to the pitcher, and that the pitcher take his position on the rubber promptly. Obvious delay by the pitcher should instantly be penalized by the umpire.

Balks

If there is a runner, or runners on base, it is a balk when:

- The pitcher, while touching his plate, makes any motion naturally associated with his pitch and fails to make such delivery;
 - Comment: If a left-handed or right-handed pitcher swings his free foot past the back edge of the pitcher's rubber, he is required to pitch to the batter except to throw to second (2nd) base on a pick-off-play.
- The pitcher, while touching his plate, feints a throw to first (1st) base and fails to complete the throw;
- The pitcher, while touching his plate, fails to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base;
 - Comment: Requires the pitcher, while touching his plate, to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base. If a pitcher turns or spins off his free foot without actually stepping or if he turns his body and throws before stepping, it is a balk. A pitcher is to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base but does not require him to throw (except to first base only) because he steps. It is possible, with runners on first (1st) and third (3rd), for the pitcher to step toward third (3rd) and not throw, merely to bluff the runner back to third (3rd); then seeing the runner on first (1st) start for second (2nd), turn and step toward and throw to first (1st) base. This is legal. However, with runners on first (1st) and third (3rd), the pitcher, while in contact with the rubber, steps toward third (3rd) and then immediately and in practically the same motion "wheels" and throws to first (1st) base, it is obviously an attempt to deceive the runner at first (1st) base, and in such a move it is practically impossible to step directly toward first (1st) base before the throw to first (1st) base, and such a move shall be called a balk. Of course, if the pitcher steps off the rubber and then makes such a move, it is not a balk.
- The pitcher, while touching his plate, throws, or feints a throw to an unoccupied base, except for the purpose of making a play;
- The pitcher makes an illegal pitch;
 - Comment: A quick pitch is an illegal pitch. Umpires will judge a quick pitch as one (1) delivered before the batter is reasonably set in the batter's box. With runners

on base, the penalty is a balk; with no runners on base, it is a ball. The quick pitch is dangerous and should not be permitted.

- The pitcher delivers the ball to the batter while he is not facing the batter;
- The pitcher makes any motion naturally associated with his pitch while he is not touching the pitcher's plate;
- The pitcher unnecessarily delays the game;
- The pitcher, without having the ball, stands on or astride the pitcher's plate or while off the plate, he feints a pitch;
- The pitcher, after coming to a legal pitching position, removes one (1) hand from the ball other than in an actual pitch, or in throwing to a base;
- The pitcher, while touching his plate, accidentally or intentionally drops the ball;
- The pitcher, while giving an intentional base on balls, pitches when the catcher is not in the catcher's box;
- The pitcher delivers the pitch from Set Position without coming to a stop.

Penalty for a balk: The ball is dead. 12u divisions and above pitchers will receive no warning. 10u and 11u will receive one warning per pitcher. Once a balk has been declared, each runner shall advance one (1) base without liability to be put out, unless the batter reaches first (1st) on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter, or otherwise and all other runners advance at least one (1) base, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk.

- Comment: In cases where a pitcher balks and throws wild, either to a base or to home plate, a runner or runners may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk.
- Comment: A runner who misses the first (1st) base to which he is advancing and who is called out on appeal shall be considered as having advanced one (1) base for the purpose of this rule.
- General Statement: Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the balk rule is to prevent the pitcher from deliberately deceiving the base runner. If there is doubt in the umpire's mind, the "intent" of the pitcher should govern. However, certain specifics should be borne in mind: Straddling the pitcher's rubber without the ball is to be interpreted as intent to deceive and ruled a balk. With a runner on first (1st) base, the pitcher may make a complete turn, without hesitating toward first (1st), and throw to second (2nd). This is not to be interpreted as throwing to an unoccupied base.
- Comment: In age divisions 10U and younger, pitchers will be allowed some leniency in regards to balks. Pitchers will be called for all major violations and warned for minor violations that do not affect the outcome of a play. In all other age divisions, balks will be strictly enforced without warning.

1.1 Mound visits

The following rules is adopted pertaining to the visit of the manager or a coach to the pitcher:

- This rule limits the number of visits a manager or a coach may make to any one (1) pitcher in any one (1) inning;

- A second (2nd) visit to the same pitcher in the same inning will cause this pitcher's automatic removal from the pitching position;
- The manager or a coach is prohibited from making a second (2nd) visit to the mound while the same batter is at bat, but
- If a pinch-hitter is substituted for this batter, the manager or a coach may make a second (2nd) visit to the mound, but must remove the pitcher. A manager or a coach is considered to have concluded his visit to the mound when he leaves the eighteen (18) foot circle surrounding the pitcher's rubber.
 - Comment: If the manager or coach goes to the catcher or infielder and that player then goes to the mound or the pitcher comes to him at his position before there is an intervening play (a pitch or other play) that will be the same as the manager or coach going to the mound. Any attempt to evade or circumvent this rule by the manager or coach going to the catcher or an infielder and then that player going to the mound to confer with the pitcher shall constitute a visit to the mound. If the coach goes to the mound and removes a pitcher and then the manager goes to the mound to talk with the new pitcher, that will constitute one (1) visit to that new pitcher that inning. In a case where a manager has made his first (1st) visit to the mound and then returns the second (2nd) time to the mound in the same inning with the same pitcher in the game and the same batter at bat, after being warned by the umpire that he cannot return to the mound, the manager shall be removed from the game and the pitcher required to pitch to the batter until he is retired or gets on base. After the batter is retired, or becomes a base runner, then this pitcher must be removed from the pitching position. The manager should be notified that his pitcher will be removed from the pitching position after he pitches to one (1) hitter, so he can have a substitute pitcher warmed up. The substitute pitcher will be allowed eight (8) preparatory pitches or more if in the umpire's judgment circumstances justify this.

Pitcher removal

A player removed from the pitching position (starting pitcher or subsequent relief pitcher) may not return to the pitching position for the remainder of the game.

Pitch Counts

There are no pitching inning or official pitch count limits (except for 8 and under). Managers are responsible for and **strongly** encouraged to keep pitch count limitations that are appropriate for their age group.

- For more information and guidance, go to the American Sports Medicine Institute at www.ASMI.org.