



2023 and 2024 Baseball Rules Changes

The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee and the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel. All rule changes are effective with the 2023 season, unless otherwise noted.

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
1-2-c Wall Padding	<p>Recommend that padding be placed on all hard surfaces (backstops, sideline, and homerun fences) that a player is likely (commonly/reasonably) to collide with during play.</p> <p>Rationale: This proposal is intended to mitigate potential injury to student-athletes that may run or slide into or come into contact with hard surfaces during play.</p>
1-7 Size of First, Second and Third Base	<p>At non-institutionally owned baseball facilities, bases may be 18-inch square bases. Bases at an institution's owned stadium shall be 15 inches square.</p> <p>Rationale: This proposal will permit institutions to play contests at professional baseball stadiums (Minor League Baseball or Major League Baseball) without the need for a waiver, if the use of 15-inch square bases are not able to be used in that stadium.</p>
1-12-Penalty for a. and b. Illegal Bat	<p>Change first sentence of the penalty to read: "A bat without the proper bat testing sticker, that has been altered to improve performance, or that has become flattened or illegal due to continued use after bat testing has been completed is an illegal bat."</p> <p>Rationale: This change will update the language in the existing rules and will address concerns regarding bats that do not have a sticker from the bat testing process and how those bats are to be deemed illegal and handled during competition.</p>
1-16 Dugout Protective Fence or Netting	<p>Recommended immediately and required effective January 1, 2024, for Division I and January 1, 2025, for Division II and III, that facilities for collegiate baseball have protective fencing or netting on the field side of the dugout at a height not less than 3-feet from the field level.</p> <p>Rationale: This requirement is intended to provide a safe location within the team dugout for players not engaged in the competition or being treated by athletic trainers from foul batted balls or errant throws in the direction of the dugout.</p>

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
3-6-e; 4-4; 5-5; and App. E Coach Entering the Field of Play	<p>To require that the coach may only come to the middle point of their respective foul line when coming to the field to ask a question about a call in the field. To also require that the coach may not enter the dirt circle around home plate to ask a question about a call at the plate or when making a line-up change.</p> <p>Rationale: This proposal is intended to reduce the number of coach ejections during play. This rule has been in place as a waiver for the last two years for COVID-19 reasons. The committee believes that it has been an effective tool to reduce contentious situations and will reduce ejections.</p>
3-6 Umpires	<p>Permit that a game may be completed with only one (1) umpire.</p> <p>Rationale: The current playing rules note that the minimum number of umpires for a baseball game shall be two (2). This proposal is intended to permit a game to be completed if, during the game, the number of umpires is reduced to one (1) because of injury or extenuating circumstances. This proposal would not permit a game to begin with only one umpire.</p>
5-2-d Celebratory Props	<p>After a home run, scoring play or at the end of a half inning, teams shall not bring celebratory props onto the field of play. Celebratory props must remain in the team dugout during competition.</p> <p>Rationale: This proposal is intended to minimize potential acts of unsportsmanlike conduct directed at opposing teams or players on the field of play.</p>
5-8-g Tied Game – Extra Innings	<p>To allow, by conference rule or mutual agreement prior to the start of the game, teams to start each extra inning (10th inning in a 9-inning game or 8th inning in a 7-inning game) with a runner on second base.</p> <p>Rationale: This proposal is permissive and would allow teams to mutually agree to start extra innings with a runner on second base. This would be applicable to all extra innings.</p>
5-17	<p>To change the heading of Rule 5-17 Verbal Abuse (Bench Jockeying) to be more inclusive of unsportsmanlike acts such as use of props, signs, bat flips near or toward opponents, etc.</p>

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
Unsportsmanlike Conduct – Orchestrated Activities	Rationale: This proposal is intended to specify the types of behaviors that are subject to penalty under the current rule and to reduce potential acts of unsportsmanlike conduct directed at opposing teams or players.
6-4-b Runner Hit by Legal Pitch	<p>If a legal pitch hits a runner trying to score, all runners advance one base.</p> <p>Rationale: The current playing rule allows only those other runners who were stealing with the pitch to advance one base. This proposal would be consistent with other levels of baseball and provide easier guidance to umpires in not determining on their own if a runner was attempting to steal at the time of the pitch.</p>
7-11-h Inadvertent Deflection by Batter or Umpire	<p>Amend 7-11-h to add language for the following situation: Pitch is not caught by the catcher and rolls into batter's box or goes near the umpire. Umpire or batter unintentionally deflect (kick) the ball allowing a runner to advance. "If a pitch that is not caught remains in the vicinity of home plate and it is inadvertently deflected by the batter or umpire, that ball is a dead ball and the runner should return to the bases they occupied at the time of the pitch (unless strike three, batter is out)." Differentiate between the following scenarios: A. Baserunner stealing with pitch - he should not be sent back as he should not be penalized for an uncaught pitch as he would have advanced. B. Baserunner not stealing with pitch but tries to advance after the ball is uncaught/deflected – baserunner shall return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch.</p> <p>Rationale: If the runner was stealing with the pitch, the offense should not be penalized). If the runner is not stealing with the pitch, then the deflection has an impact on the play and the runner should return.</p>
8-4 Force-Play-Slide Rule	<p>To allow in Force-Play-Slide Rule situations, that a runner must slide in direct line between his position and the base (not always in a direct line between the two bases depending on the runner's position) and to allow judgment by the umpire to determine whether a runner slides or runs in a direction away from the fielder to avoid contact or is altering the play of the fielder.</p> <p>Rationale: This proposal is intended to alter the rule to preserve the safety and interference aspects but provide the runner the benefit of the doubt when safety and interference are not in play.</p>

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
8-5-d Runner Interfering with Fielding a Foul Ball	To add language to address a runner interfering with a fielder fielding a batted foul ball. Rationale: This proposal will add clarification to situations where interference occurs, and the batted ball is foul.
8-5-i-Note 2 Pushing Runner Off Base	Add Note 2 regarding a runner being pushed off a base to read as follows: <i>“Note 2: If in the judgment of an umpire, a runner is pushed or forced off a base by a fielder, intentionally or unintentionally, at which the runner would have otherwise been called safe, the umpire has the authority and discretion under the circumstances to return the runner to the base he was forced off following the conclusion of the play.”</i> Rationale: This proposal is intended to provide fairness to a runner who may be forced off a base.
9-2-d Pitcher Going to the Mouth	A pitcher shall be issued one (1) warning when they go to the mouth and neglect to wipe before touching the ball or engaging the pitcher’s plate. Subsequent violations would result in a ball added to the count. Rationale: This proposal is intended to provide a warning to a pitcher for the first violation of neglecting to wipe before touching the ball after going to the mouth. Currently, there is no warning, and a ball would immediately be issued to the count.
9-3-g-Note No Pitch Resulting from Batter Action	Change wording to indicate "If a pitcher, with or without a runner on base, stops or hesitates the delivery or throws the ball in a manner that the umpire judges is clearly not intended to be a pitch to the batter (such as a ball thrown into the ground or dropped) because the batter steps out of the box, holds up his hand or uses any other actions as if calling time, it shall not be a balk if runners are on base, or an illegal pitch if no runners are on base." Rationale: The current "Note" only addresses a situation with runners on base and doesn't address if the batters action results in a pitcher stopping or hesitating the delivery if no runners are on base.
Appendix E	Add hit by pitch to the list of plays that an umpire crew can conference about in Section 1, Getting the Call Right Without the Use of Video Review.

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
Getting the Call Right Without Video – Hit by Pitch	Rationale: This proposal is consistent with the premise of Appendix E to get the call correct. There are several factors that could result in a base umpire having a better view to help determine if a batter was hit or if the batter intentionally moved to get hit by the pitch.
Appendix E Getting the Call Right – Umpire Discretion	Add that the umpire or video review official may use their discretion in the placement of runners after changing a call from “catch” to “no catch” or “no catch” to “catch”. If any doubt, follow the existing guidelines as currently stated. Rationale: Discretion is needed at times to be fair to the offensive team, especially after a change of “no catch” to “catch” deep in the outfield.
Appendix E Getting Call Right with Video – Malicious Contact	Add plays involving any potential malicious contact to the list of reviewable plays without a challenge. Rationale: This proposal is intended to review any potential malicious contact plays to properly enforce the appropriate penalty, which is an ejection that carries a suspension. The review of potentially malicious contact would allow an umpire to review the contact and potentially rescind the ejection if malicious contact had not occurred.
Appendix F Pitch Between Innings Timing	To add in the between inning timing protocol, that if the pitcher/DH is either on base or makes the last out of an inning, the umpire should give additional time for warm-up, if requested. Rationale: This change is intended to provide some benefit, if requested by the defensive team, to allow the P/DH additional time if they are on base or at bat during the last out of the inning.
Appendix F 20-Second Action Clock	To change the action clock rule with runners on base to the following: The pitcher is required to start the motion to deliver the pitch or attempt a pickoff prior to the 20-second time limit. A pitcher shall be limited to one step-off or “fake” move toward a baserunner per batter to reset the clock. A request for “time” by a defensive player would constitute a step-off. The first violation of the 20-second clock will result in a ball to the count.

Rule	Rules Change and Rationale
	Rationale: This change is intended to allow pitchers to maintain a level of defensive strategy, while also emphasizing action take place. Similar rules have been implemented in Minor League Baseball and have improved the length of game by 18-25 minutes per game over the previous two seasons.
Appendix F Visible Action Clock	To require for Division I by January 1, 2024, and for Divisions II and III by January 1, 2025, the use of a visible clock(s) during all times of the game to enforce all timing rules equitably. Rationale: The proposed requirement is intended to effectively and equitably enforce the 20-second action clock and between innings clock rules of NCAA baseball. These playing rules are intended to improve the pace of play and have been effective at the Minor League Baseball level at improving the length of the game by 18-25 minutes over the previous two seasons. A visible clock is necessary to properly administer the playing rule.