

## PLATE UMPIRE POSITING

### Techniques/Mechanics

#### CALLING BALLS AND STRIKES

##### Definitions:

The Slot: The area between the catcher's head and the batter's body when the batter is in his natural stance and the catcher is in his normal crouched position.

Tracking: Observing the entire flight of a pitch with eye movement rather than head movement. See the ball the entire distance from the moment it leaves the pitcher's hand till it hits the catcher's mitt without any body or head movement.

Timing: Suppressing the natural tendency to react immediately, Insuring that a play or pitch is completely over before calling. Slow timing, is always better than fast timing though extremely slow timing can produce negative results also.

Plate Umpire Positioning: The PU shall assume a position partially behind the catcher in which he is able to see the entire strike zone. He should position his head in some portion of the SLOT at all times and insure that his head height stays above the catcher's. Ideally, the PU's chin should be even with the top of the catcher's head and positioned in the slot and his eyes should be focused on top of the batter's strike zone.

In order to Set his head in the proper position, the PU must position his feet properly. He should establish a solid foundation by spreading his legs slightly wider than shoulder width. When assuming his set position, he should establish the position of his front foot first in the slot and then position his free foot behind the catcher. The slot foot will point directly toward the mound and the free foot may angle up to 45' degrees.

The PU's front foot will be in line with or slightly in front of an imaginary line extended from the catcher's heels. Each individual umpire must determine how far right or left in the slot that foot should be. Remember that feet position determines head position laterally. Vertical head position is determined by the width the feet are apart and the amount of squat the umpire introduces into his stance.

The PU should position his head and shoulders relatively square to the plate. Angling the body and cocking the head to set the strike zone will present a distorted view and create unprotected areas of the body.

As the catcher adjusts to different batters, the PU will need to adjust to the new catcher positioning. if the catcher virtually eliminates the slot by working so far inside, the PU can work a little higher over the catcher's head. It may also prove beneficial to back up a little.

##### Plate Umpire Techniques:

establish a rhythm with the pitcher and catcher. Do not assume your set position behind

the catcher until he has set for the final time. Catchers generally set twice - once to give a signal and again to set the target.

When the pitcher is off the rubber, assume a relaxed position while keeping your eye on the ball. As he steps onto the rubber, you move into your ready position - your feet are not in their set position tracks but can instantly be established there. As he gets his sign and the catcher makes his final adjustments, you transition your feet into the exact location for your set position. As he starts the wind-up or his stretch, you instantly squat into your plate set position.

You remain set during the flight of the pitch tracking the ball with your eyes only as your body remains still.

### **Plate Umpire Mechanics:**

After tracking the pitch with your eyes into the mitt, it is time to make a decision. You must call either ball or strike. If your timing is good, you are much more likely to call more pitches consistently correct.

Balls are to be called while still down in your set position. Use a strong voice that can be heard by the catcher, the batter and the pitcher. No visual signal is given.

Strikes are to be called while coming up from the set position and The right arm is used to visually indicate strike. Use A strong voice to call a non swinging strike that can be heard by everyone. Swinging strike are non verbal and are indicated with same right arm motion used when calling a strike.

After every pitch step back and relax until the pitcher assumes his position back on the rubber. You then repeat your plate procedures.

### **The Strike Zone:**

The width of a strike zone is the area over home plate including the black edges.

The height of a strike zone is from the **hollow beneath the kneecap** and goes up to the **mid point** between of the top of the pants and the top of the shoulder.

Depending on the level of Little League Baseball you are umpiring you may need to make the strike zone a little wider on the out side edge of the plate and or higher but never smaller than the diagram.