



# Umpire Manual

Version 2.4  
Updated May 2023  
By: Brian Douros

## Umpire List of Knowledge

1. Be on time. Show up to scheduled games 10 minutes before Assignr start time.
2. Be prepared. Dress in uniform. Bring water to the game!! You WILL need a water bottle at all games. It will be extremely hot on certain days.
3. Avoid socializing with Coaches/Players/Fans. Be respectful at all times. Prepare yourself for negative comments from everywhere. Call the game, ignore the rest.
4. Pay attention to the game. Treat every play with the same alertness that you would as a player. HUSTLE! BE ALERT every play. Know where the ball is, how many current outs, and plate count at all times. You do not need to know the score.
5. Be consistent with the strike zone. It's where the ball crosses the plate, not where it lands in the catcher's glove. Strike/Ball zone MUST BE CONSISTENT for all players/teams in same league. Review the diagram before every game.
6. You must be LOUD and VISUAL when calling pitches. Raise right fist and yell "STRIKE". No visual or verbal call for Balls. After each pitch hold up count, balls on left hand, strikes on right hand, YELL IT OUT!!.
7. Know the foul line. The foul line is fair. Meaning that if any part of the ball lands or touches the foul line it is "fair". Hands up and yell "Foul" if outside line. Hands pointing in fair play if on/in line, no verbal call.
8. In the event of **THUNDER or LIGHTENING**, clear the field and wait 30min, if no additional thunder or lightening is heard you are clear to play
9. Read the rules thoroughly. This means both BGRA rules and MLB baseball rules. Read, review, and study the rules, it's part of your job.

# General Information

## **Timing:**

Timing is key to good umpiring. Decisions must be made confidently and promptly but an umpire must guard against calling a play too quickly. Nothing is more embarrassing than calling a runner out too quickly only to have the fielder drop the ball. A rule umpires should follow is to "take an image" of the play with your mind, review the image and then make the call. If in doubt, it is better to be too slow than too fast with your call. If you make a mistake on an early call you can correct your call.

## **Positioning and Responsibility:**

Know your responsibility on every play. Think ahead and know where you should be on certain plays. Remember umpiring is like "taking an image". If you get too close, you won't see the entire situation. If you are moving, the image is blurred. If you are not in position, you may miss the most important action. Between innings, stay in neutral ground.

## **Appearance:**

For Farm through Thoroughbred, the proper uniform for a BGRA umpire is the dark blue BGRA Umpire T-shirt and Hat and blue/black/gray or other dark pants. Shorts are not allowed. All umpires are required to wear shoes, sandals are not acceptable. All male umpires should wear a protective supporter when working behind the plate.

## **Equipment:**

A face mask with a throat protector, a balloon-style chest protector and shin guards will be provided by the league for each game. Never get behind the plate without equipment. Umpire mask, chest and leg protectors are located in each field equipment box.

Each umpire should own their own plate brush and indicator and always bring both to each game. Even if you are scheduled to be the Field ump, you need to be prepared to work the Plate if necessary.

The indicator should be used in the left hand. Practice so that you can change the balls, strikes and outs without looking at it. Get familiar with your indicator and learn how to use it properly.

Keep the plate clean. Clean it at the start of every half inning and more often if needed. Use your brush: Never sweep the plate with your shoes or chest protector.

## **Assignr Application:**

You will receive an email from our Assignr.com system. Please follow the instructions in that email to complete your registration. Once you have completed your registration you can set up your availability from the Assignr application. It will be your responsibility to keep your schedule updated in the system for the season. Please let me know if you have any questions. **You must keep your schedule updated for the next on going 10-14 days during the season.** <http://www.assignr.com>

## **COMMON PROBLEM RULES**

- Pitched ball hits the bat without the batter swinging - if ball travels fair, it's a fair hit. If ball is foul, it's a foul ball.
- Hit ball hits runner – runner is out
- Hit ball hits umpire – nothing, play continues
- Thrown ball hits runner – nothing, play continues
- Thrown ball hits umpire – nothing, play continues
- Umpire interferes with play – nothing, play continues
- Runner A passes another base Runner B – Runner A is out
- First thrown bat is a team warning, the next is an out
- Home plate and the foul lines are "fair" territory
- With two strikes, a ball is hit foul – is not a third strike or out, the count remains with two strikes
  - o Exception: Foul Bunt with two called strikes is a third strike and out

## **PRE-GAME RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Be on Time:**

Arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the starting time of the game. The game start time is what is listed in Assignr. Locate your partner and introduce yourselves. If you are assigned Plate Umpire the mask, chest and leg protectors are located in each field equipment box.

### **Pre-game Conference with the Managers:**

The umpires should take their place at home plate 5 minutes before game time and initiate the pregame conference with the manager from each team. The umpires should initiate this conference to establish authority over the game. Introduce yourself to each manager.

## **PLATE UMPIRE ROLE DURING THE GAME**

### **Responsibilities:**

The plate umpire is the umpire-in-chief. He is responsible for announcing "Play" and giving the hand signal to start the game or to resume play after a dead ball. He is responsible for calling balls, strikes, fair and foul balls and to make all decisions on the batter. When the base umpire is covering a fly ball in the outfield, the plate umpire is responsible for observing whether or not certain runners have tagged up.

The plate umpire is responsible for calling fair/foul on all batted balls down each line unless the base umpire is positioned on the foul line (no runners on base). In that situation, the base umpire will be responsible for all batted beyond first base to the foul pole.

The two most important habits for a Plate Umpire to strive for are:

1. Do not move until the ball is in the catcher's mitt or passed the catcher. It is possible that you will be hit with a ball but that is what the umpire protective gear is for. You have a far greater change of injury if you move, exposing unprotected parts of your body.

2. Delay your call: Never make a strike or ball call until the ball is in the catcher's mitt, has hit the catcher's mitt or has passed the catcher. This is very important. Timing (delay of the call) will become more important as you advance in umpiring.

### **Position Behind the Plate (Diag 3):**

The plate umpire will position himself behind the catcher. The set position for the plate umpire is as follows:

- Directly behind the catcher and slightly to the batter's side of him
- Chin approx. 6 inches higher than the top of the catcher's head
- Feet spread slightly more than shoulder width apart and on a direct line
- Chest facing the pitcher
- Shoulders square, flexed knees. Bend slightly forward. Do not kneel down since it is difficult to move quickly out of the way.
- Elbows in and hands behind the chest protector.
- Be certain to protect your throat by pressing the top of the chest protector firmly against the underside of your chin.

### **Calling the Pitch (Diag 2):**

Develop a consistent strike zone. This will take time.

When the pitcher is ready to deliver, get into your stance. Do not move your head to see the ball enter the catcher's glove. Use only your eyes to follow the ball. Head movement will distort your view of the strike zone.

Watch the ball enter the catcher's glove. "Take an image" of the pitch with your mind. Review the image, then make the call. Remember, never hurry your call.

### **Hustle:**

Hustle on all batted balls. Remove your mask and move from behind the plate. The mask should be removed with your left hand so that your right hand is free to make a signal if necessary.

## **BASE UMPIRE ROLE DURING THE GAME**

### **Responsibilities:**

- The base umpire is responsible for most calls on the bases
- With no runners on base, he is responsible for fair/foul balls down the right field line
- He is responsible for determining that the pitcher delivers the ball legally
- He is responsible for final say on half swings that are not called strikes
- Assists in making a call when the plate umpire asks for help
- Observes the batter touching first and any runner touching second

## Positioning (Diag 4):

The base umpire positions himself depending on the base runner situation:

With no runners on base, use **the "A position"**. Position yourself 10 feet behind the first baseman, in out of play area, with the right foot touching the foul line. If the first baseman is playing in front of the base, position yourself 10 feet behind the first base (same line position). Do not let the first baseman block your view.

If there is a runner on first base only, use **the "B" position"**. This is about halfway between first base second base, 5-8 feet to the first base side, behind the infielder near the edge of the grass.

If there is a runner on second or third base, or bases are loaded, use **the "C" position"**. This is halfway between third base and second base, 5 - 8 feet to the third base side, behind the infielder near the edge of the grass.

At the time of the pitch, the base umpire should be in a hands on knee set position. Don't fold your arms. Never umpire from a knee position.

Always keep your eyes on the ball. Not much is going to happen in a baseball game without the ball being involved.

Stride with the pitch, taking a step toward the batter. This helps you get in motion so that you can move with the play.

On a batted ball, pause, read or anticipate the play, then react to get into the proper position. Always keep your chest square to the ball, never turn your back to the ball. Watch the ball and glance at the runner to determine where the play will be. On throws, let the ball turn you to the play, turning as the ball passes you.

Always position yourself at the proper angle and distance to see the play. Angle is more important than distance.

The action in a play can change quickly. Be prepared to adjust your position if the play does not develop as you originally anticipated.

Always be in a set position when the play occurs. If you are moving, your view of the play will be distorted. Get as close to the play as time allows, get in a set position and call the play. Remember TIMING. "Take an image" of the play, review it in your mind and then make the call.

With a two person umpire crew the "D Position" is not used.

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND SIGNALS:**

(Diag 1) Communication and signals are very important aspects of umpiring. Decisions are relayed to the players, managers and spectators by their use. The manner in which a signal is given determines, at least to a degree, its acceptance. Good mechanics and signals lend a credibility that says, "This guy knows what he's doing." It is also important that umpires communicate with each other.

## Take Your Time Making The Call:

Whether a safe or out call, ball or strike, fair or foul, catch or no-catch, calling time ... don't hurry your call.

Take a few extra seconds to allow for the unexpected like a dropped ball by a fielder making a tag or a ball swerving from fair to foul territory. Wait a moment after the pitch reaches the catcher to process the trajectory of the ball through the batter's strike zone. The extra time will help you from calling what you THINK is about to happen instead of the true outcome.

Delaying your call also gives others confidence that you're umpiring diligently and thoughtfully, making them less likely to contest your call. It's especially important for dead ball calls like a foul ball, which requires that all play immediately stops. A premature, incorrect foul ball call cannot be undone, and could impact whether runners advance and/or score!

## Make Your Call with Confidence (Verbally and Visually):

You signal most calls with a hand/arm gesture and by shouting it out loudly. It's important to do both, so everyone (players, coaches and fans), both far and near, understand your call and respond accordingly. For example, runners will stop and return to their bases when they hear your foul ball and time out calls. A distant base coach will read from your arm gesture that a third out was called and thus refrain from sending a runner. The closer the play - strike or ball, out or safe, fair or foul – the more confident you need to be! If you don't know what the right call is – be even more confident!! A meek, so-so whimper of a call, will usually invite a dispute by a coach. Veteran umpires call this "selling your call". So be outwardly confident in your calls, especially when you're not actually so confident! This section deals with the proper communication and signals on plays for the plate umpire and base umpire and for communications between partners.

## Strike Zone:

The strike zone is the space over the plate which is between the chest area and the knees of a batter. The exact strike zone for your league can be determined from the diagram in appendix. Farm strike zone is larger than Stallion. Stallion strike zone is larger than TBread...etc. You should consider these factors in determining your strike zone for each game **and be consistent**.

- Farm – Bellow chin to bellow knees, extra ball and half wide
- Stallion – Top of forward shoulder to bellow knees, extra ball wide
- Thoroughbred – Under forward arm pit to top of knees, standard wide
- Palomino – Center chest to top of knees, standard wide

## Call a Strike:

1. Let the pitch hit the catcher's glove before making call
2. Stand up from your stance, continuing to keep your eyes on the ball
3. Bring your right arm up, arm extended, bend the elbow 90 degrees close your hand into a fist
4. Motion your right arm forward and back

5. Declare loudly, "Strike" as you motion your right fist. Verbalize the call so that you can be heard in the outfield.
6. On swinging strikes, the motions are the same, but it is not necessary to yell strike since everyone has seen the batter swing.
7. On a strike out, don't call "Strike three, you're out". No sense adding insult to injury.
8. On checked swings, the base umpire should use the same hand signal when calling strike

Remember the base umpire does not rule on checked swings unless requested by the plate umpire.

## **Call a Ball:**

1. Let the pitch hit the catcher's glove before making call
2. Stand up from your stance, continuing to keep your eyes on the ball
3. There is no signal for a pitch that is a ball

You are under no obligation to explain or signal why each pitch is a ball. It is not necessary to call "Ball, low", "Ball outside." If a catcher asks where a certain pitch was, tell him. The catcher should not ask repeatedly. A batter may inquire on a pitch he did not swung at and was a called strike. Give him the information he asks for. "No, it was high". Make it short.

Don't award a walk. Pointing to first base is not necessary. A player/coach should have his head in the game enough to know he was walked. This may not be true with your younger players so use your judgment. It is your discretion if you would like to verbally signal "BALL FOUR".

## **Call an Out:**

1. Begin in a set position
2. Bring your right arm up, similar to strike call
3. Keep your thumb tucked in
4. Declare "Out" loudly then return to set position

The closer a play is the more *it* will be necessary to "sell your call". On close plays, step towards the play when calling "Out". Remember, TIMING. You are not required to call close plays faster. However, you may want to call them louder.

## **Call Runner Safe:**

1. Begin in set position, shoulders square to the play
2. Extend both arms straight out, parallel to the ground in front of your chest. The fingers of each hand should be straight out. Sweep both hands out and back together once and loudly declare. "Safe".
3. Drop your arms and resume a set position

On close plays you may want to do the motion twice, declaring loudly "Safe, Safe" to sell the call.

## **Foul Ball:**

1. Move as close to the ball as the play will allow, then straddle the foul line
2. Come to a standing set position before the play happens, don't be moving



3. Extend both arms over your head, slightly more than shoulder width apart, palms forward
4. Loudly declare "Foul" then point to foul territory

It is not necessary to yell loudly on balls hit into the backstop or out of the playing field. Everyone knows it is foul.

### **Fair Ball:**

1. Move as close to the ball as the play will allow, then straddle the foul line
2. Come to a standing set position before making the call
3. Point to fair territory
4. There is no verbal sign on a fair ball

### **Catch/No Catch:**

On difficult fly balls it is necessary for the umpire to indicate whether the ball was caught. The signal for a catch is the same as the out call while declaring "I have a catch". The signal for "no catch" is the same as the safe call while declaring loudly "No catch, no catch".

### **Dead Ball/Time:**

1. Extend both arms over your head, similar to the foul signal
2. Declare "Time"

Remember, in any dead ball situation, only the umpire can put the ball back in play. This is done by pointing at the pitcher when he has the ball on the mound, and declaring "Play". Until then the ball is dead and no action can take place.

When one umpire calls "Time" his partner should echo him by also calling "Time." It is important that all players, coaches, manager and spectators know that the ball is dead and no further action can take place.

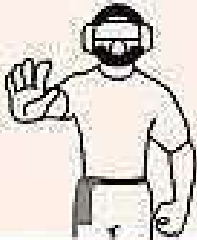

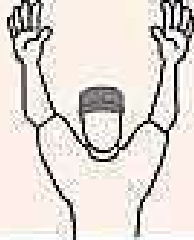
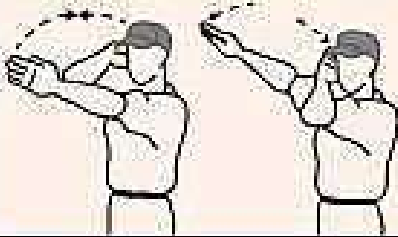
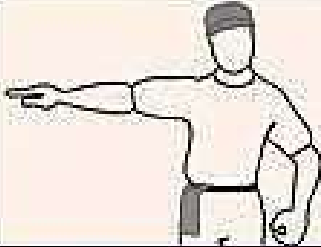
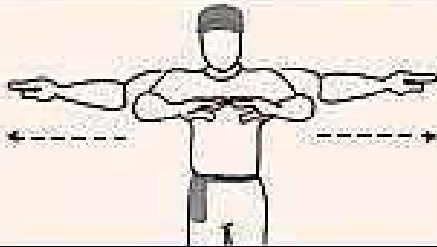
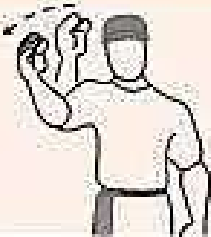



### **Infield Fly (Thoroughbred and up):**

With less than two out and runners on first and second, or bases loaded, the infield fly is effect. On a fly ball that can be caught by an infielder with normal effort, the umpire should point at the ball and declare "Infield Fly, If Fair". If the ball is fair, the batter is out, even if the ball is not caught. The ball is alive and the runners may advance at their own risk. When an infield fly situation is in effect, the umpires should signal each other prior to the pitch to make sure they both are aware that the infield fly is in effect. The signal can be simple, like touching the tops of your head. The umpires should agree on the signal during their pre-game meeting.

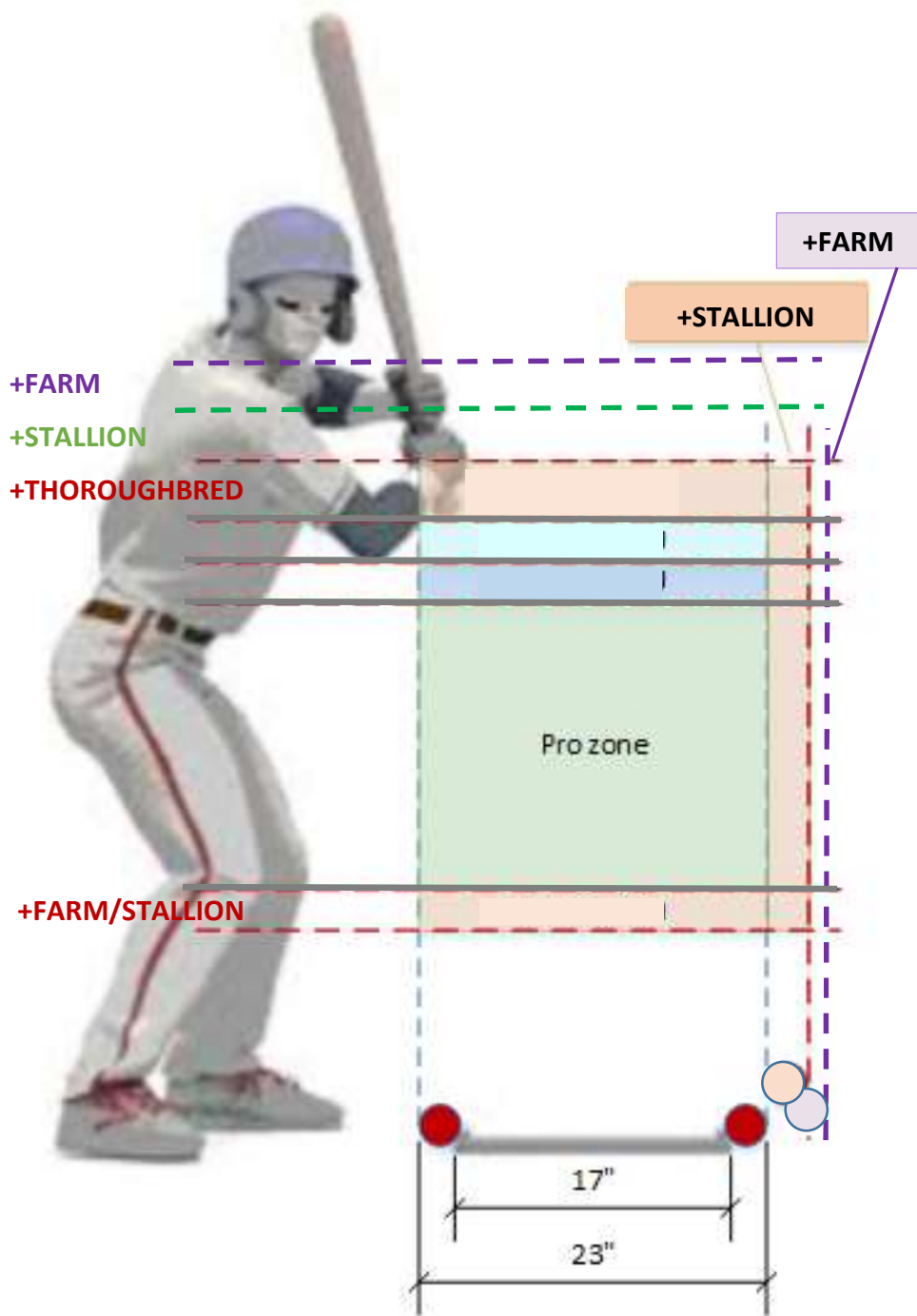
### **Dropped Third Strike (Thoroughbred and up):**

When there is a baserunner on first base and less than two outs, a dropped third strike is an automatic out. Any other time, a dropped third strike is considered a live ball, the batter may run and normal play continues.

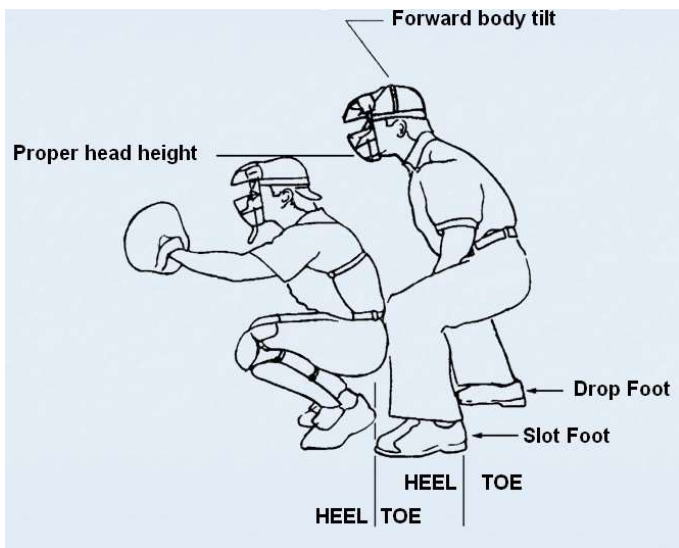
# HAND SIGNALS (Diag 1)

Baseball Signals			
			
Do Not Pitch	Play Ball	Time-Out, Foul Ball or Dead Ball	
			
Foul Tip		Fair Ball	Safe
			
Strike or Out	Infield Fly	Count	Time Play

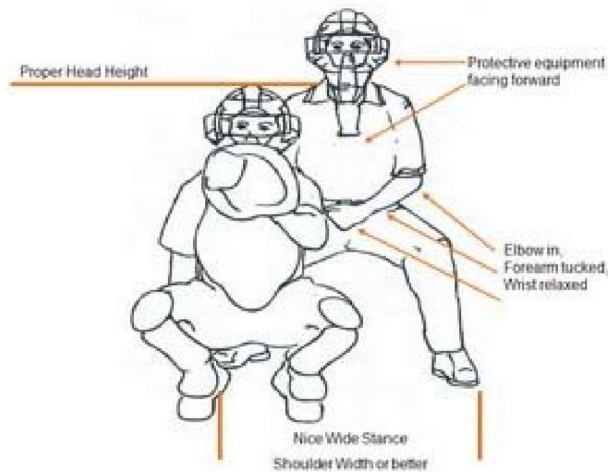
# STRIKE ZONE (Diag 2)



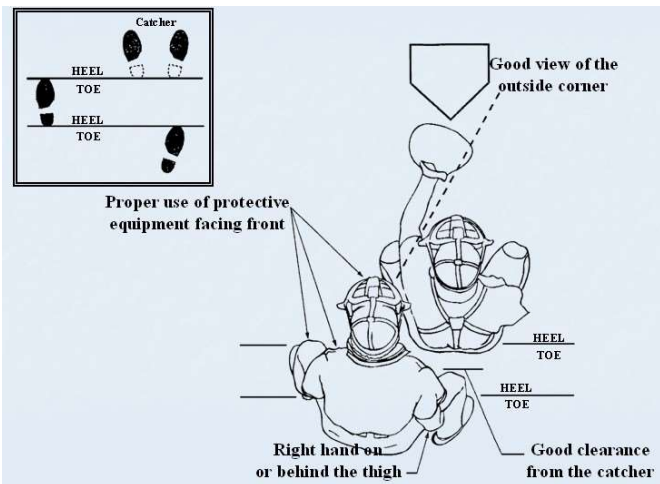
# HOME PLATE UMPIRE STANCE (Diag 3)



Slot Profile Side

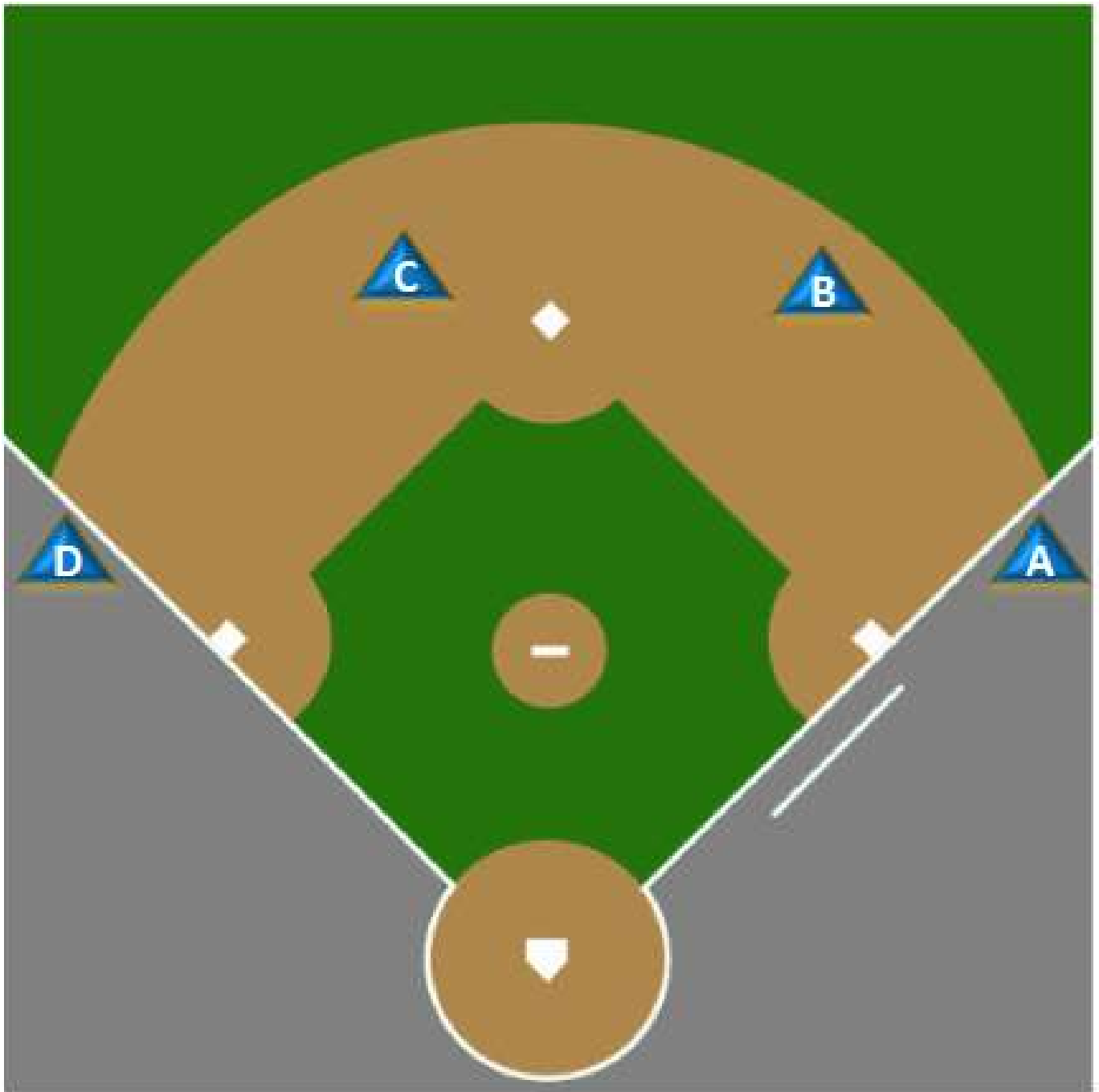


Slot Profile Front



Slot Profile Top

## FIELD UMPIRE POSTION (Diag 4)



## **More Information**

BGRA Website: <https://www.bgrabaseball.org/>

BGRA Umpire Page: <https://www.bgrabaseball.org/umpires>

Umpire Assignr Application: <https://www.assignr.com>

VP of Umpires Email: [umpires@bgrabaseball.org](mailto:umpires@bgrabaseball.org)

President of BGRA Email: [president@bgrabaseball.org](mailto:president@bgrabaseball.org)

Treasurer of BGRA Email: [treasurer@bgrabaseball.org](mailto:treasurer@bgrabaseball.org)

Farm League Director Email: [farm@bgrabaseball.org](mailto:farm@bgrabaseball.org)

Stallion League Director Email: [stallion@bgrabaseball.org](mailto:stallion@bgrabaseball.org)

Thoroughbred League Director Email: [tbred@bgrabaseball.org](mailto:tbred@bgrabaseball.org)

Palomino League Director Email: [palomino@bgrabaseball.org](mailto:palomino@bgrabaseball.org)