

HIT BATTER PROCEDURE

One of the toughest calls for an umpire is deciding whether a pitch hit the batter or the bat. However, by following some guidelines, umpires can increase their accuracy considerably in getting the call correct.

- 1) **LISTEN**—Usually, a ball hitting the bat will have a sharp sound, whereas a ball hitting a batter will have somewhat of a duller sound.
- 2) **DON'T CALL IT TOO SOON**—The best thing to do is to just raise both hands slightly more than head high and announce, "Time!" At this point you have not committed yourself to anything. If you are sure the ball hit the batter, point him to first base. (Left hand is preferred). If you are not sure the ball hit the batter then:
- 3) **OBSERVE**—Watch the IMMEDIATE reaction of the batter. If he has been hit he usually will react (especially facially) immediately without thinking. If he does not react, or there is a noticeable delay in his reaction, it is quite likely the ball did not hit him.
- 4) **INSPECT**—Look at the batter's hand. Ask him to show you where the ball hit him. A ball hitting a batter's hand will usually leave some sort of a mark, whether he is wearing a batter's glove or not.
- 5) **CONSULT**—Don't be afraid to ask your partner(s). Although a considerable distance away, sometimes a base umpire has a perfect angle to see what happened. A base umpire must be 100% sure of what he saw before offering information to the plate umpire.
- 6) **BASE UMPIRE BE PROACTIVE**—If you are 100% you saw the ball hit the batter (foot, lower leg etc.) and the plate umpire does not react, go ahead and kill the ball. This can turn into a mess if the base umpire is 100% sure the pitch hit the batter and does nothing. Be proactive, when necessary, as the base umpire. This is a pregame discussion item.
- 7) **TAKING ONE FOR THE TEAM**—Be aware of the game situation. Note the speed of the pitch and what the batter does, if anything, to avoid the pitch. Many times, it is the batter who causes the contact by leaning or turning into the pitch. Sometimes batters will extend an elbow. Don't be afraid to call a strike if the batter sticks a knee out and the pitch hits him on the knee. A good response to a coach, when appropriate, is to tell him, "Coach the ball was over the plate when it hit your batter." Or, "Coach it was your batter who caused the contact with the ball."

Remember that on a fastball, the batter may not have time to react. Very few batters are willing to take a fastball in the ribs. Use good judgment here and, if you believe it is justified, award the batter first base even if he makes no effort to avoid the pitch.

By following the above steps umpires, more likely than not, will get the hit batter play right.