



# UIC PROGRAM GUIDE



## SESSION 2: BALL/STRIKE (PLATE) WORK

## PRACTICE PLAN #2- BALL/STRIKE (PLATE) WORK

### Skill Outcomes:

After the session, umpires can, to Baseball Canada standards:

- set up in the proper location to call balls/strikes
- communicate strike and ball call
- call time and put the ball in play
- properly take off and put on their mask
- clean home plate
- conduct a plate meeting

### Trainer Tips:

- When calling pitches, reinforce tracking the ball from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's glove before deciding on the pitch.
- Stress timing of the calling of the ball/strike; keep it uniform

### Warmup time:

- 7-10 minutes

Skill Instruction	Engagement/ connection	Drill	Covid/ Modifications
Heel/toe stance	Demonstration	Drill 1 - plate stance	<b>Replace:</b> Skill 1/2/3 plate stance w/ Skill 1/2/3a: ball/ strike umpire <b>Drill 1: Plate stance</b> w/ <b>Drill 1a: Ball strike</b> <b>umpire set</b>
Slot location			
Set			
Strike call	Demonstration	Drill 2 - balls/strike matrix	
Ball call			
Other strikes			
Calling time	Demonstration	Drill 3 - calling time and play	
Putting ball in play			
Take on/off mask	Demonstration	Drill 4 - cleaning the plate	
Clean the plate			
Plate meeting	Demonstration	Drill 5 - plate meeting	

### Fun Activity:

Trainers demonstrate their punch outs (called strike three (3)). Give each umpire an opportunity to share theirs. Give feedback when necessary.

### Summary/Closure:

Around the horn – What was one thing you learned about base umpiring that you found interesting, important or enjoyable?

## SKILL IN PICTURES: 1 HEEL AND TOE



For a right-handed batter, the right foot is pointed toward the point of the plate.



Then, the left foot is pointed toward the space between the batter and the inside part of the plate (slot, which we describe later).



For a right-handed batter, the heel of the left foot is in line with the toe of the right foot. Square your upper body to face the pitcher.



For left-handed hitters, the feet are opposite. The heel of the right foot is in line with the toe of the left foot.

### Tips for the trainer:

- Emphasize the heel-toe footwork should set up the umpire on the inside corner of the plate between the catcher and batter with back foot behind the catcher
- Demonstrate both left and right-handed batters

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**FROM RESOURCES → MINUTE MECHANICS**

- 10. Plate Stance



## SKILL IN PICTURES: 2 SLOT POSITION



For right-handed batters, use the heel/toe stance with your back foot behind the catcher.



Step forward with the front foot; you should be between the batter and the catcher.



Your head should be over the inside corner of the plate; your chest up and facing towards the pitcher/2<sup>nd</sup> base.



For left-handed batters, the slot will be on the opposite side between the catcher and the batter.

### Tips for the trainer:

- Reinforce the use of doing heel/toe; demonstrate both left and right-handed batters
- Emphasize rotating the upper body to be square to the pitcher; not being square makes you vulnerable to injuries from wild pitches and foul balls.

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**FROM RESOURCES → MINUTE MECHANICS**

- 10. Plate Stance

## SKILL IN PICTURES: 3 COMING LOCKED AND SET



When the pitcher is on the pitcher's plate (rubber), set up in the proper heel/toe stance.



When the pitcher becomes set, you lock your stance in the slot.



As the pitcher begins their delivery, lock your stance with your chin in line the top of the catcher's head.



Lock I: tuck your hands behind your knees; rotate your body towards 2<sup>nd</sup> base with your chest and head up.



Lock II: place your batter side fist below your belt buckle; lock your catcher side hand on your knee.



Watch the ball (track) leave the pitcher's hand and follow it into the catcher's glove. **Do not move your head.**

### Tips for the trainer:

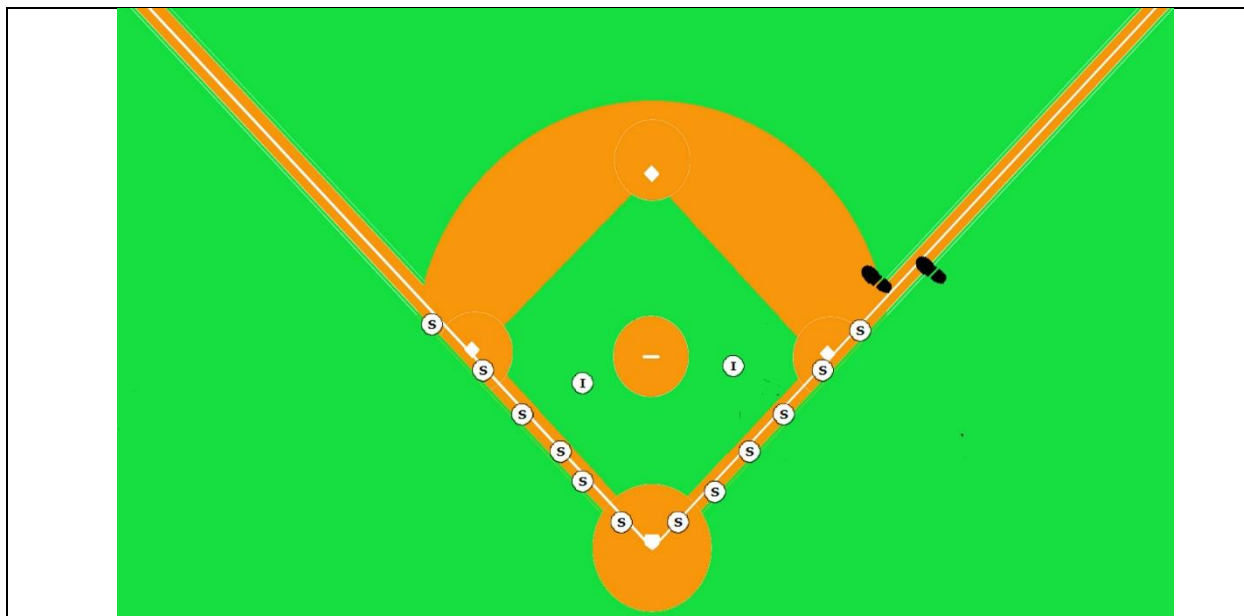
- State there are two ways to lock into your plate stance, demonstrate both
- Reinforce previous skills of heel/toe and slot position (foot behind catcher)
- Explain the importance of the lock because it keeps the head still to track the ball

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**FROM RESOURCES → MINUTE MECHANICS**

- 10. Plate Stance

[Catchers](#) photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

## DRILL 1 – PLATE STANCE



### SET-UP:

- Place plates along baselines

### EQUIPMENT:

- Throw-down home plates

### DIRECTIONS:

- Utilize the baselines, each umpire works individually practicing heel/toe
- Right foot has toe on the line; left foot has heel on same line; feet more than shoulder width apart; bend at waist and knees
- Break group into pairs (PU and F2)
- Instructor directs umpires PU to step behind F2, lead foot forward (Heel/toe). Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.
- After umpires are comfortable, go into set position with proper head height (chin to top of F2's head)
- Instructors walk around and observe; correct positioning and head height; use ball on stick
- Change sides of plate; repeat. Switch PU and F2. Repeat.

### DRILL TIME:

- 8 – 10 minutes

### TIPS FOR THE TRAINER:

- Stress keeping the head still and tracking the pitch
- Make sure the eyes are on the inside corner of the plate
- Check to make sure the chin is level to the top of the catcher's head

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN A GAME



### KEY POINTS

#### NEW MECHANICS:

- Slot position:  
*step in with foot behind F2 – middle of F2s back (1 foot); heel/toe; set (chin to top of F2s head)*



## SKILL IN PICTURES: 4 STRIKE CALL



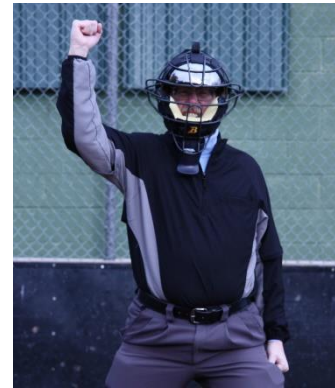
Without moving your head (track the ball), watch the ball hit the catcher's glove. Pause, read (where was it?)...



(in the strike zone)... React (it's a strike). Stand up tall. Look confident and certain.



Raise your right arm, triceps parallel to the ground, elbow pointing at a 45° angle, right hand makes a fist.



While verbalizing "STRIKE" in a loud voice, use your fist to "knock on the door" (swing forward as in an OUT call from session 1).

### Tips for the trainer:

- Emphasize that we use a different call for a looking strike three call, which umpires call their punch out.
- Umpires verbalize the number of strikes: "STRIKE ONE," "STRIKE TWO" and "STRIKE THREE" on calls
- Review that the "hammer" is not in front of the umpire's face or off to the side

**DIGITAL DEMONSTRATION ON [BCBUAEDUCATIONPORTAL.NET](http://BCBUAEDUCATIONPORTAL.NET)**  
**FROM RESOURCES → MINUTE MECHANICS**

- 12. Calling a Strike
- 14. Strike Three Mechanic

## SKILL IN PICTURES: 5 BALL CALL



Without moving your head (track the ball), watch the ball hit the catcher's glove. Pause, read (where was it?)...



(outside the strike zone)... React (it's a ball). Stay in your crouched position (lock).



WITHOUT STANDING UP, say "Ball" in a loud enough voice that people can hear.



Now, stand up and step back, prepare for the next pitch

### Tips for the trainer:

- Reinforce staying down until calling "Ball." Standing up then calling "Ball" looks like you are not sure of the call.
- While it may not be as loud as your strike call. Still stay "Ball" in a confident and certain tone of voice. Make no doubt it was a ball.

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**FROM RESOURCES → MINUTE MECHANICS**

- 15. Calling a Ball



## SKILL IN PICTURES: 6 OTHER STRIKE CALLS



**Swinging strike:** no verbal just the strike mechanics (hammer with right hand).



**Checked swing:** point at the batter with the closest hand (left/right); say "you went."



**Checked swing:** Gives a non-verbal strike (hammer) call.



**Foul tip:** No verbal, only bring your left arm at an angle in front of your chest



**Foul tip:** slide your right hand over the forearm to your fingers.



**Foul tip:** after swiping your arm, make a non-verbal strike (hammer) mechanic.

### Tips for the trainer:

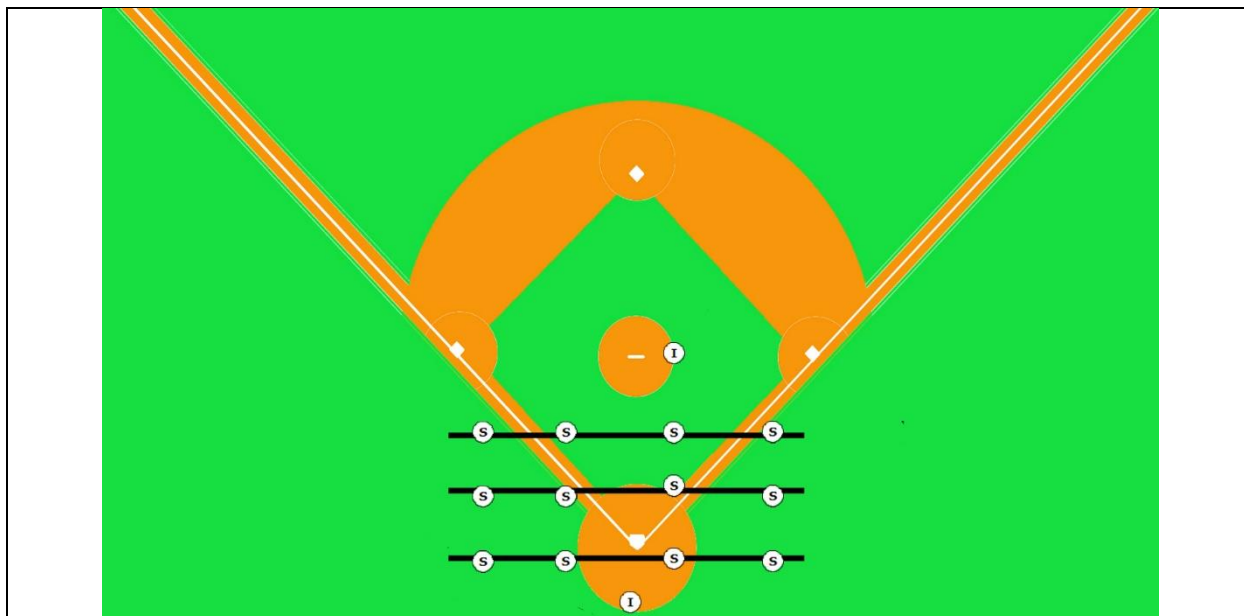
- Reinforce proper strike (hammer) mechanic; elbow 90°, triceps parallel to the ground
- State the mechanics for swinging, checked and foul tip strikes do not change for strike three. NO punch outs.

### DIGITAL DEMONSTRATION ON [BCBUAEDUCATIONPORTAL.NET](http://BCBUAEDUCATIONPORTAL.NET)

#### FROM RESOURCES → MINUTE MECHANICS

- 13. Swinging Strike
- 17. Foul Tip Mechanic
- 16. Giving the Count
- 19. Foul Ball Mechanic

## DRILL 2 – BALL/STRIKE MATRIX



### SET-UP:

- Set up umpires into three rows (matrix)

### EQUIPMENT:

- none

### DIRECTIONS:

- Demonstrate signal for called strike, swinging strike and foul tip; stand up and strong hammer mechanics.
- Demonstrate signal for calling ball, remaining stationary for a second, rising up and relaxing.
- Umpires put on mask properly; Heel/toe on line, set and call pitches... ball, strike 1, ball, strike 2, ball, strike 3 (louder, but not punch out).
- Repeat commands and ask for count periodically; Umpires reply with correct fingers.
- Use "on the rubber, set, call it" to simulate pitch; repeat multiple times; focus time on this skill.

### DRILL TIME:

- 12-15 minutes

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN A GAME



### KEY POINTS

#### EXISTING SKILLS:

- Heel/toe; head height

#### NEW MECHANICS:

- Signals for strikes
- Signal for balls

### TIPS FOR THE TRAINER:

- Only hammer style (like an out) strike call; no pointing to the side
- Coming up for strikes; staying down for balls

## SKILL IN PICTURES: 7 CALLING TIME/PLAY



Time: Stand tall; bring your hands above your head and say, "TIME" in a loud voice.



Time: Your hands should be in front of your head, but not in your face.



Play: Check to be sure everyone is ready: fielders and batter



Play: with right index finger, point at the pitcher and say, "PLAY" in a loud voice.

### Tips for the trainer:

- Stress the hands for calling time are fingers together, thumbs out pointing in
- Correct play calls that look like pistols; only hand in fist, except for index finger.
- Call time when you are replacing baseballs.
- Emphasize putting the ball into play for the beginning of every inning, after all foul balls, and after changing a baseballs in an inning.

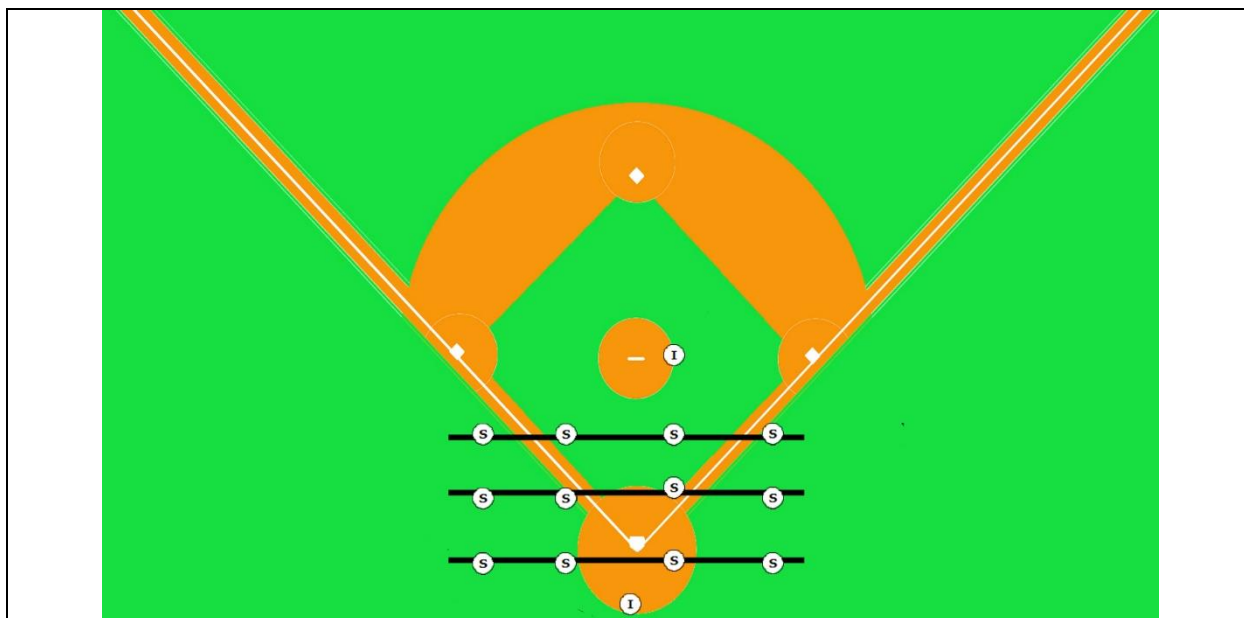
**DIGITAL DEMONSTRATION ON [BCBUAEDUCATIONPORTAL.NET](http://BCBUAEDUCATIONPORTAL.NET)**

**FROM RESOURCES → MINUTE MECHANICS**

- 2. Calling Time
- 11. Putting the Ball in Play



## DRILL 3 – CALLING TIME/PLAY



### SET-UP:

- Stay in matrix formation (ball/strike drill)
- Three rows, evenly separated

### EQUIPMENT:

- none

### DIRECTIONS:

- Demonstrate play and time mechanics
- With the umpires still in rows; one instructor says:
  - "Call time"
  - "Put the ball in play"
- Repeat until every umpire is doing both confidently

### DRILL TIME:

- 3-4 minutes

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN A GAME



### KEY POINTS

#### EXISTING SKILLS

- Foul calls (similar to time calls)

#### NEW MECHANICS

- Time and play mechanics

### TIPS FOR THE TRAINER:

- NO pistols; just index finger extended with verbal "play" or "play ball" for putting the ball in play
- Note that an umpire calls time to replace a baseball or to clean the plate
- Stress that the ball has to be put into play after a foul ball, start of each inning, and any other situation where time is called.

## SKILL IN PICTURES- 8 TAKING OFF/ON MASK



Off: With thumb, index finger and middle finger of your left hand, grip the front of the mask at the chin pad.



Off: Pull the mask away from your face, then lift it up over your head to free the mask from your head. Your cap should stay on.



On: Holding the mask in your left hand, use the right hand to pull the mask harness and place straps behind your head.



On: Pull the mask down over your face until the bottom pad sits on your chin. If necessary, adjust the mask with both hands to place it in the right place.

### Tips for the trainer:

- Explain the indicator is also held in the left hand, so practice taking it off with an indicator
- Reinforce that when you take off your mask during a play, do not take your eye off the ball

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**FROM RESOURCES → MINUTE MECHANICS**

- 20. Plate Umpire Equipment – Putting Mask on/off

## SKILL IN PICTURES: 9 CLEANING THE PLATE



Call "TIME," if it hasn't been called.



Remove your mask; Step to the left of home plate (exit left) as you access your brush.



Move to the front of the plate, pivot on your right foot to face the plate with your back to the pitcher's mound



Clean the plate. Then pivot with your left foot, stand to the right side of the plate, facing the field.



Put on your mask and put your brush away. Observe the field to see if everyone is ready.



Move back behind the catcher by exiting to the left of the plate. Double-check everyone is ready, and call "PLAY."

### Tips for the trainer:

- Summarize when cleaning the plate is done correctly, the umpire will have gone around the plate.
- Suggest umpires keep their brushes in an easy place to access like their ball bags or back pockets.
- Reinforce NEVER cleaning the plate with your backside to the fans

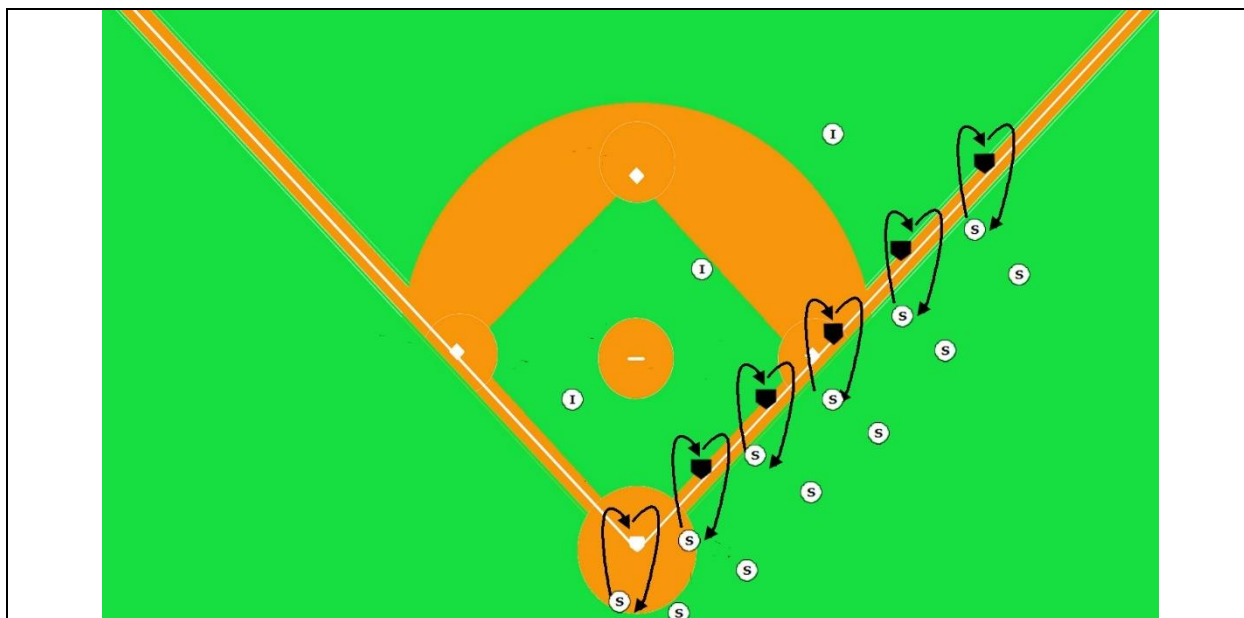
### DIGITAL DEMONSTRATION:

FROM LEVEL 1 RESOURCES ON [BCBUA.CA](http://BCBUA.CA) –

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## DRILL 4 – CLEANING THE PLATE



### SET-UP:

- Place as many home plates as you can along the foul lines
- Split group into 2: half are catchers (F2) and half are plate umpires (PU)

### EQUIPMENT:

- Drop down plates
- Masks and plate brushes

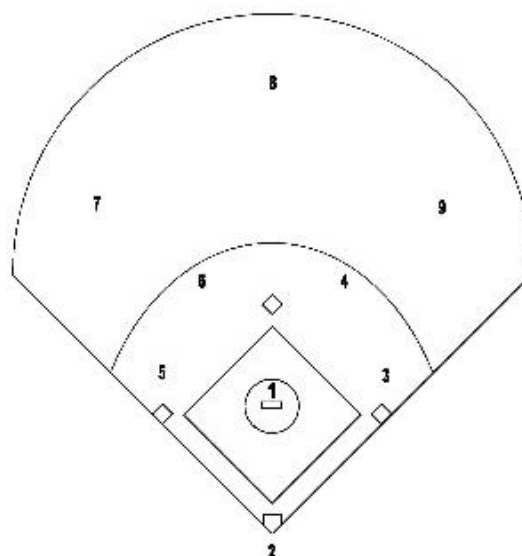
### DIRECTIONS:

- PU and F2 take normal positions behind the plate
- Instructor chants: "Mask off," "Exit left," "Turn around," "Sweep plate," "Turn and face," "Mask on," "Behind catcher."
- Umpire perform each step chanted by the instructor
- Repeat several times; Switch PU and F2.
- Repeat drill multiple times again.

### DRILL TIME:

- 8-10 minutes

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN A GAME



### KEY POINTS

#### EXISTING SKILLS

- Take off/on mask

#### NEW MECHANICS

- Exit left
- Cleaning the Plate

### TIPS FOR THE TRAINER:

- Make sure backside is to the pitcher
- Reinforce proper taking off/on of mask

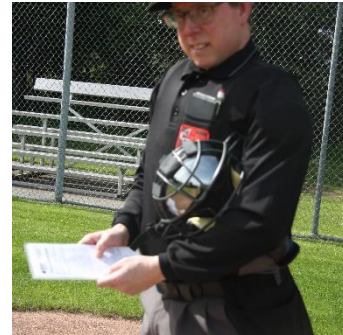
## SKILL IN PICTURES: 10 PLATE MEETING



Umpires walk purposely to the plate; plate umpire stands at the point of the plate, Base umpire(s) stands in fair territory



While facing each other, wait for both coaches. Plate umpire introduces the umpires to the coaches.



Accept the home team's line up first, then the away team's line up. Examine for duplications (numbers or names) or errors.



After checking both cards, exchange a copy to the opposite team. The plate umpire keeps a copy of each.



Go over the ground rules (holes or openings in the fence). Remind teams of any important rule(s).



Ask "any questions." Wish both teams, "good game."

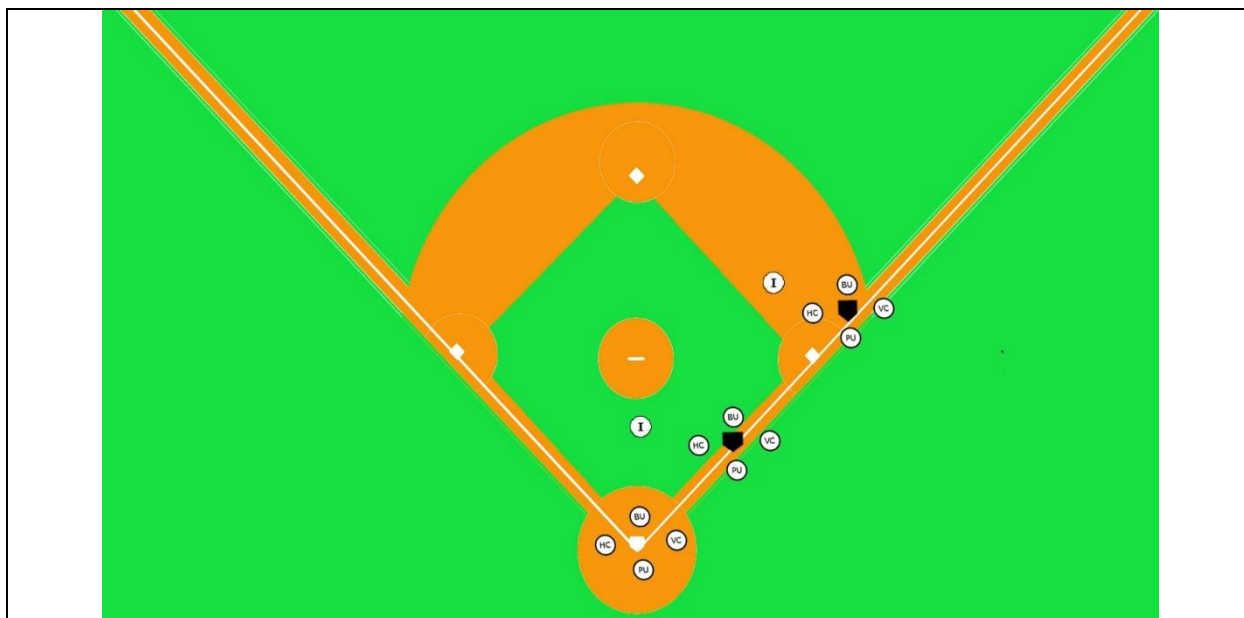
### Tips for the trainer:

- Stress plate umpire ensures all coaches' names/numbers are on the line up card.
- Remind the umpires they must be on the field and having the plate meeting no later than five (5) minutes before game time.
- Comment that the plate umpire should not have to call the coaches, but at some levels, they may have to for the game to start on time. If so, call "Coaches."
- Stress being polite and respectful. However, umpires do not talk about strike zones, previous games or calls of other umpires at the plate meeting.

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**FROM RESOURCES → MECHANICS**

- Plate Meeting

## DRILL 5 – PLATE MEETING



### SET-UP:

- Place throw down plates on the foul lines
- Separate into groups of four (plate umpire; base umpire; home team manager; road team manager)

### EQUIPMENT:

- Throw down plates
- Line up cards

### DIRECTIONS:

- Describe the purpose of the plate meeting; what is to be talked about, and what you NEVER talk about
- Demonstrate a plate meeting
- Send each group to a Plate; have assistants monitor the group
- Use lineup cards to ensure they are properly presented in the right order; use plate meeting card to guide umpires through what to talk about
- Rotate until everyone has had a chance to be PU

### DRILL TIME:

- 10-12 minutes

### What it looks like in a game



### KEY POINTS

#### EXISTING SKILLS:

#### NEW MECHANICS:

- Pre-game responsibilities
- Plate meeting procedures

### TIPS FOR THE TRAINER:

- Stress only three tasks at the plate meeting: introduction, exchange of line up cards and going over ground rules.
- Demonstrate the plate umpire takes the home team's line up card first; checks it and then takes the away team's line up card and checks it. Then, the line up cards are exchanged.



