

2026 SRI BULLETIN #1

With the 2026 baseball season less than two weeks away, I wanted to focus on the topics specifically related to Pace-Of-Play. This involves several factors and giving special attention to these areas will assist with the flow of the game:

- EXCESSIVE PLAYER CONFERENCES
- TIME BETWEEN INNINGS
- BATTER STEPPING OUT OF BOX
- UMPIRE TIME MANAGEMENT

EXCESSIVE PLAYER CONFERENCES

Beginning with the 2026 season, each team, when on defense, may be granted **not more than one** player-to-player meeting per inning.

A new definition was added to Rule 2 stating a “Player-to-player defensive meeting includes two or more players”. (2-10-3)

The team still has 3 defensive conferences per game (no change here).

If any player requests a second player-to-player meeting in the same inning, the umpire will not allow this saying, “You’ve already taken your meeting this inning”. However, they may use one of their three defensive conferences for a second player-to-player meeting.

TIME BETWEEN INNINGS

There is a long-standing rule (6.2.2c, Exception) wherein the pitcher, after the first inning, may warm up by using not more than five throws completed in one-minute (timed from the third out of the previous half inning). We acknowledge that 60-second represents a stringent time line and would suggest the timing window start when the last defensive player crosses the foul line towards their dugout. It is also my belief the mere presence of the watch will be a visual reminder to keep the game moving.

This is an area that has been difficult to police/enforce with no timing mechanism. Beginning this year, the base umpire (U3 in a three umpire crew) will carry a stopwatch, Ref-Smart, etc. in order to accurately manage this time.

While the crew has some flexibility in how they coordinate this, here is a suggested method;

- U1 will carry the timing device and conspicuously start it at the appropriate time
- With 30 seconds remaining, U1 will gesture to the PU and begin moving toward their position on the foul line
- At this point the PU assumes control of the Pace-of-Play
- By the expiration of the 60 seconds, the pitcher should have the ball on the mound, and the batter and catcher should be in their respective positions

If there are extenuating circumstances, for instance, the catcher or pitcher were on base, use your best judgement and give flexibility to the 60 second transition between innings.

If this is not occurring, the plate umpire should communicate to the Head coach that 60 seconds have passed and need your help and cooperation in this occurring next inning.

PITCHER:

- MUST pitch, make a play, or legal feint within 20 seconds (Rule 6.2.2c)
- This is timed from them receiving the ball until the beginning of their pitching motion, a play (pick off) or legal feint. This is entirely PU judgement
- Failing to do so will result in a warning to the pitcher & head coach for delay of game
- Pitcher may NOT begin their motion to deliver the pitch until the batter is alert (eyes up) to the pitcher
- If the pitcher does Quick Pitch, call "Time" & warn the pitcher
- Any further violation results in a Ball being added to the count

However, the ***burden of this readiness is not only on the pitcher***. The batter has responsibility as well. The details shown here will add the batter readiness guidelines for the PU. It is felt the PU has the wherewithal to monitor the 20-seconds between pitches without the burden of an actual timing device. The PU needs to be aware of the 20-second duration and take steps to ensure this is being consistently applied throughout the game with a warning when necessary.

BATTER:

- Must be in the batter's box, alert to the pitcher & ready to hit
- If the batter is not alert, in the PU's judgement, they have violated the 10 second rule & will receive a warning
- The batter may – within these limits – step with ONE FOOT out of the batters box
- Any subsequent delay by the batter will result in the plate umpire directing the batter to get back in the box and be ready to hit

The final piece in Pace-Of-Play is the umpire crew. In addition to the specifics outlined above, umpires are expected to perform the duties shown below.

UMPIRE TIME MANAGEMENT:

- The Plate Umpire (PU) will manage the inning changeover by counting warmup pitches
- They shall notify the pitcher when there are two (2) pitches left and then the on deck batter when one (1) pitch is left
- The Base Umpire will manage the time in between innings
 - At 30 seconds they will hold one arm up above their heads verbalize "30 seconds left", and begin moving toward the foul line
- The Plate Umpire at that time will instruct the batter to step in the box and the pitcher to "play"
- The internal 20-second will then be started by the PU

The goal of these timing rules is to consistently apply those that already exist, and for us to use in keeping the game moving. By its very nature, baseball has time gaps. It is our job to minimize those gaps and keep the game moving while ensuring the players have a consistent and fair environment in which to play the game.

See you at the yard!