

Notes on Field Preparation and Markings

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During a previous season some questions came up about how our fields should be marked. Several people mentioned it would be nice if we had a list of instructions for our volunteer “grounds crews.” When teams from the other Baja leagues come out to our park for inter-league games it would be great if they would see what correctly marked fields look like. And it helps both the umpires officiate and the girls to learn the game if our fields are set up correctly.

Here are some step-by-step instructions. If you see something that should be added or corrected, or if you have any questions, please drop a note to Umpire-In-Chiefs Dan Maness (uic@ovfps.org) or Chris LaPlante (uic@ovfps.org).

1. *Who does it?* This year (2013) the **home** team is responsible for **setting up** the field, and the **visiting** team is responsible for **tearing down** the field. (The home team is also responsible for supplying the game balls and the official scorer). However, when we are playing an inter-league opponent, the Oro Valley team is responsible for preparing the field (in addition to supplying the balls and official scorekeeper). During the Oro Valley Division tournaments, since coin flips at the home plate meeting determine home vs. visiting team status, **both** teams should supply at least one parent to work on field preparation before each game.
2. *Get out there early!* Field preparation and marking is particularly important if your team is playing the first scheduled game of the day on the field. In such a case, please have at least two parents lined up for the job. To do a good quality job, they need to start working on the field **at least 30 minutes before the game** (so, for instance, no later than 5:00 PM for a 5:30 PM start). We hold the home-plate meeting of managers, coaches and umpires about 5 minutes

before game time. By that time, the field must be properly marked and ready for play.

If your team's game is not the first one of the day on the field, then have your two-parent crew ready to jump out as soon as the two teams from the previous game are doing their end-of-game cheers and handshakes. If the field was properly prepared for the previous game, all you will need to do to get it ready for your game is : (a) adjust the pitching distance (if necessary) for your age group and redraw the circle, (b) rake any areas that have been heavily scuffed up, and (c) touch up the lines. If there's time, wetting down the field is a nice additional thing to do, especially if it's hot, dusty or windy.

3. *Put out the bases.* The bases are stored overnight in the metal storage ("Knaack") boxes. We use the double safety base at first. The orange base goes in foul ground to the batter/runner's right, with the white base in fair territory on her left.

There are three different sets of holes in which you can put the posts of the bases. Sometimes you have to do some digging around to find them, especially if the rubber caps were not inserted the night before.

6U : Baja rules says the bases should be spaced at **50 feet**. The innermost of the three positions for our bases is at 50 feet.

8U : Use the middle of the three positions, which is at **55 feet**.

10U, 12U, 14U : Use the outermost positions, which is at **60 feet**.

Important safety requirement: Make sure that the bottom, fixed part of each base is completely flush with the ground. If the edge sticks up, a girl could hurt herself jamming into it on a slide. Use the digging tool (kept on the top back shelf in the Knaack box) to pull dirt up and out of the pipes.

Install the temporary pitching plate. Our different age divisions use different pitching distances. Unless you are preparing the field for the 12U, 14U and 18U divisions (whose pitchers use the permanently installed 40-foot pitching plate), or for 6U (which does not require a pitching plate), you will need to measure

and install the temporary “rubber.” Use the tape measure, two big nails, and the hammer. There is also a metal pole that has marks for 10U and 8U. Extend the pole to the proper mark and put one end at the front of the permanent pitching rubber and the other end at the back of the temporary rubber.

Pitching distances are measured from the **back point** of home plate to the center point of the **front edge** of the pitcher’s plate.

8U: 32 feet

10U: 35 feet

12U, 14U and 18U: 40 feet

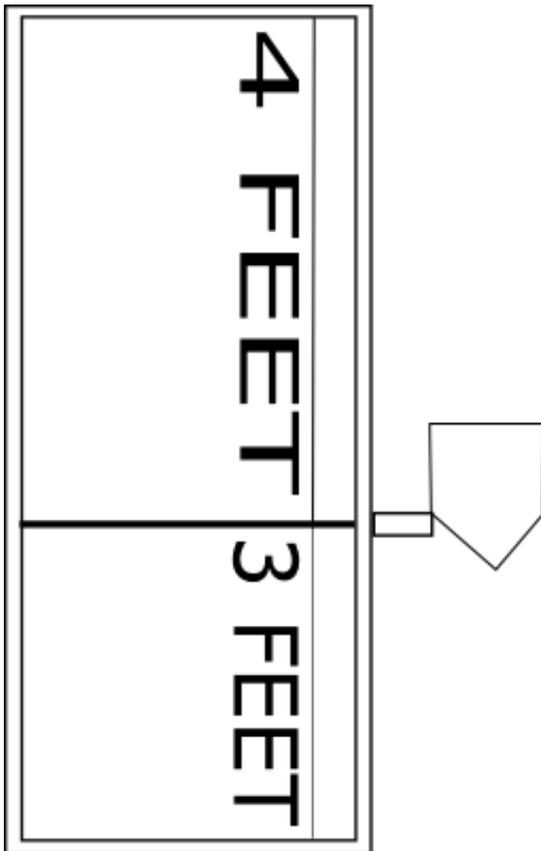
4. *Chalk the foul lines.* Fill the chalker with chalk. Use the string (unwound from around the can) to make nice straight lines. You can keep it in position either by hammering a nail into the ground through the loop at the end of the string; by weighting it down with the hammer; or by tying it to the metal batter’s box marking frame. Your partner can pull it tight while you are pushing the chalker along the string line.

The string should start at the back point of home plate, extend down flush along the outer edge of first or third base, and continue out until at least the outfield grass is reached (even better if you can get it all the way out to the foul poles!). Don’t mark the first four (4) feet or so of line near home plate where it would cut across the batter’s box. The line should begin where it intersects the outer sides of the batter’s boxes. Note that when properly drawn, the batter’s box sticks out a few inches farther toward the pitcher than where it meets the foul line. Because the “foul” line actually lies in fair territory, put the chalk down on the inside of your string line. The chalk line gets interrupted by the outer edge of third base and by the middle of the double first base. The outer edge of the chalk line and the outer edge of the bags (the white one at first) should be aligned.

5. *Mark the batter’s boxes.* Use the big metal frame (stored overnight behind the Knaack box, between the box and the fence) to make an impression in the dirt that you can follow around with the chalker. Notice there is a short (6-inch) stub jutting out from the central part of the frame. This is to space the box six (6) inches away from the plate. **It should be aligned with the “bend” in the**

middle part of home plate – the 135-degree angle where the squared-off part of the plate ends.

Also very important: **The front part of a softball batter's box is the longer part!** Put the longer 4-foot section of the frame toward the pitcher, the shorter, 3-foot part back toward the catcher. This is to allow room for slap-hitters to run up in the box. Note that the foul line comes close, but does not quite line up, to the front corners of the box.

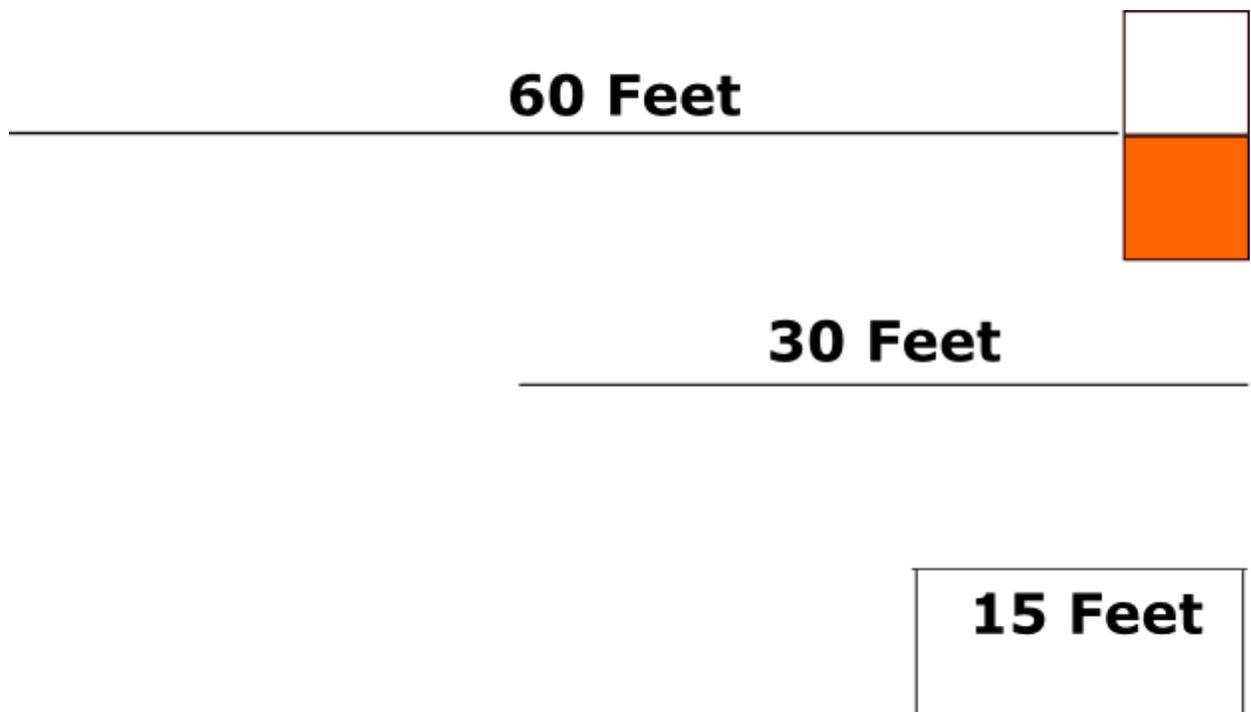


Trivia! A baseball batter's box is only 6-feet long, while a softball one is 7-feet long!

6. *Mark the Running Lane.* While you've still got your string strung out along the first base line, it is a good time to mark the runner's lane. The lane should be **3-foot wide** and begin halfway down the line from home to first (30-feet). It continues for 30 feet to a point lined up with the outfield edge of the double

first base. There is no need to mark in a connecting perpendicular line at the beginning of the lane.

7. *Mark the Coaches Box.* The coach's boxes are supposed to be 15 feet long – that is, they extend in towards home plate from a point lined up with the outfield edges of first and third bases. Rules specify that they be **8 feet back from the foul lines**. Thus, the first base coach's box is a full five (5) feet farther back from the line than the line marking the right-hand side of the runner's lane. Very commonly these "boxes" are marked too close to the foul lines. The perpendicular ends of the boxes should extend 3 feet farther into foul territory.



8. *Mark the Pitcher's Circle.* Using the tape measure or a measured length of string, scratch into the dirt a circle of **8-foot radius** from the center of the **front edge** of the pitcher's plate. Then go over the circle with the chalker.

There is a pole with a string on it that attaches to the small chalkers. Put the bottom of the pole at the front center of the pitching rubber. Attach the end of the string to the chalker. Extend the string and chalk the circle.

9. *Mark On-Deck Circles.* These should be just outside the dugout gates close to the fence and well away from home plate. Officially they have a 2-foot 6-inch radius (meaning: 5-foot diameter). Include a smiley face or team initials as a bonus!
10. *At the End of the Game.* The visiting team is responsible for putting the equipment away at the end of the game. However, when we are playing an inter-league opponent, the Oro Valley team is responsible for putting the equipment away. If there's another game following yours, all you need to do is clear your teams and equipment out of the dugouts as quickly as possible. If yours was the last game of the day, or if there is a gap in the schedule (as happens sometimes after the morning games on Saturday), take the bases and pitching rubber and put them on the shelves in the Knaack box. Take the base plugs (orange or black rubber plugs) and put them in the base anchors at 1st, 2nd and 3rd bases. Lock the Knaack box.