

## THE BALK REFERENCE

This document will not attempt to cover everything regarding balks. It will cover the most frequently asked questions.

First, a bit about the basics of the balk rule.

The purpose of the rule is to limit what the pitcher is allowed to do in an attempt to pick off a runner. Basically, it is pretty simple: **He cannot fake one thing and then do another.**

He cannot fake a pitch and then throw to a base, or fake a throw to a base and then pitch. If he starts either action, he must finish that action without hesitation or alteration. The rule specifies many specific actions, but it is a judgment of the umpire as to whether one action was started and not completed or not.

- The pitcher does **not** have to step off the rubber to throw to a base. (You don't want to throw to a base after stepping off. If the throw goes out of play it is a 2 base award. If the throw goes out of play when throw is from the rubber it is a 1 base award.)
- The pitcher may throw from the rubber to a base from the windup position. (It must be done before **any** movement that is part of the normal motion that is part of his windup.)
- The pitcher may fake a throw to second or third base from the rubber, but not to first base. This may be done from the windup or the set position. (You do **not** have to step off the rubber to fake to 2nd or 3rd. Only if you fake to 1st.)
- A jump turn is legal and considered being in contact with the rubber.
- The pitcher may place his hands in a different set location before each pitch. He must come to a set before pitching to the batter, but not before throwing to a base. He may not set twice before the pitch.
- A stretch move prior to the set is optional.
- He must disengage the rubber with his pivot foot first.
- He must step in the direction of the throw and prior to the release of the throw.

Once he is on the rubber he may do one of three things:

Throw to a base

Deliver a pitch

Disengage the rubber (pivot foot first)

In (1) and (2) above, the move must be completed without interruption or alteration, except for a fake to 2nd or 3rd.

The ball is not immediately dead if a pitch or throw is completed after the umpire yells "That's a balk."

Example play:

A runner is on second, 2-2 count. The pitcher stretches, but doesn't come to a set before delivering the pitch. The umpire yells "Balk!", but the pitch is thrown and the batter hits a grounder to shortstop. F5 looks the runner back and throws to first too late to get BR. What's the call? Where do you place the runners?

Answer: R2 is awarded third and the batter returns to the plate with the count 2-2.

In Pro rules, and Little League®, the ball is not immediately dead when a balk is called. If the pitch is thrown or a pick-off attempt is made the ball is still live. (Sometimes called delayed dead ball.) The ball becomes dead when all play has ended after the balk call or when the pitch or pick-off throw is caught.

Rule 8.05 - PENALTY: The ball is dead, and each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out, unless the batter reaches first on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter, or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk.

APPROVED RULING: In cases where a pitcher balks and throws wild, either to a base or to home plate, a runner or runners may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk.

It took me a long time to understand the wording in this rule. What it means in simpler terms is: When the play ends, the ball is dead. When a balk is committed and a pitch is thrown, if all offensive players advance at least one base on the play; ignore the balk. If ANY runner is put out BEFORE he advances one base or does not advance during the play; put everyone back where they were before the play began and then award all runners one base. If a runner is put out after all runners have advanced one base, the out stands and the balk is ignored.

The ball becomes dead when the catcher catches the pitch. If it is a passed ball or wild pitch, the ball remains alive until all play ends. When the balk is made in a pick-off attempt, the ball is dead when the fielder catches the throw. If the throw is wild, play continues.

Example: Runner on first. The pitcher balks during his throw to first and the ball gets away from the first baseman. The runner attempts to get to third and is thrown out. The out stands. He made the one base he would have been awarded and went beyond it at his own risk. If he had been thrown out at second the out would not count and he would be awarded second because of the balk

Rule 8.05 covers balks. (Little League® Rule Book.)

**Scott The Ump.**®