



## 2025 and 2026 Baseball Rules Changes

*The following rules changes were approved by the NCAA Baseball Rules Committee and the Playing Rules Oversight Panel. All rules changes are effective with the 2025 season.*

*NOTE: The rule references listed below are reflective of the 2025 and 2026 rules book.*

Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
	<b>Rule 1</b>
First, Second and Third Bases 1.7.b	<p>To permit the use of the double first base in post-season competition.</p> <p>“b. The double first base may be used during regular-season competition and post-season competition.”</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> To allow the Division I, Division II and Division III Baseball Committees the option to permit the use of the double first base in their respective NCAA Championships.</p>
Bat Testing 1.12.g/Appendix G	<p>For Division I, require all nonwood bats used during competition be reviewed by baseball bat testing conducted prior to the start of play of each date of competition. For Divisions II and III, require all nonwood bats used during competition be reviewed by baseball bat testing conducted prior to the start of play of each series or single date of competition.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> To ensure compliant bats are being used during NCAA competition.</p>
Bat Testing 1.12.g/Appendix G	<p>To require the bat testing sticker(s) for each day of competition of each team be placed on the lineup card given to the umpire.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> To allow the umpire to easily identify the bat sticker being used for that day of competition.</p>
The Bat 1.12.e	<p>Remove the discoloration of the ball language from Rule 1-12-e.</p> <p>“e. It is mandatory that all bats have an identification mark 18 inches from the end of the handle. No foreign substance that <del>will in any way discolor the ball</del> may be added to the surface of the bat beyond 18 inches from the end of the handle.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> The rule change would now include clear substances that may not discolor that ball but any foreign substance added to the barrel of the bat beyond 18 inches from the end of the handle.</p>

Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
	<b>Rule 2</b>
Ejection and Post-Participation Ejection 2.26.e	<p>To separate the pitcher and relief pitcher suspensions served after an ejection. A player listed as the starting pitcher will remain at a four-game suspension and a relief pitcher will now serve a two-game suspension following an ejection.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> The current rule specifies that a pitcher (regardless of starting or relief) who is ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct shall be suspended for a total of four games should be amended to distinguish between a relief pitcher and a starting pitcher. As a practical matter, relief pitchers operate and are available to participate in a manner more similar to a position player, who is only suspended for one game for an ejection due to unsportsmanlike conduct, than a starting pitcher.</p>
	<b>Rule 5</b>
Electronic Devices 5.16 Note 1  (2023/2024 Rule 5.2.f Note 1)	<p>To amend the language to Rule 5-2-f Note 1 to allow a one-way electronic communication device to be used from the dugout, the coaches' boxes or a position player on the field for the purpose of relaying the pitch or play call.</p> <p>“Note 1: Video and communication equipment used to transmit information between coaches, coaches and players, scouts or other team personnel shall not be allowed for intercollegiate competition. Video or electronic data used for scouting, training or teaching purposes may be recorded from any unmanned camera location. No video or electronic data may be transmitted from manned or unmanned sources for scouting, training or coaching purposes during the contest. An exclusively one-way electronic communication device <del>from the dugout to the field</del> <u>from the dugout, the coaches' boxes or a position player on the field</u> for the purpose of relaying the pitch or play call is permitted. The use of an in-ear communication device shall be limited to the defensive position of the catcher.”</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> The rule change would allow for play calling on the offensive side to occur outside of the dugout.</p>
Electronic Devices 5-16 Penalty  (2023/2024 Rule 5.2.f Penalty)	<p>To amend the language to Rule 5-2-f Penalty as follows:</p> <p><del>PENALTY for f.— The umpire first should warn the violator(s). The violator(s) and the head coach shall be ejected from the contest. If the violator(s) does not immediately comply with the rule, the individual(s) shall be removed from the stands or shall receive a post-participation ejection.</del></p>

Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
	<p><b>Rationale:</b> The rule change increases the penalty to align with the NCAA baseball code of ethics and the expectation of compliance wholeheartedly with the intent and spirit of the rules.</p>
<p>Fight Rule 5.15.c  (2023/2024 Rule 5.16.c)</p>	<p>To amend Rule 5-16-c as follows:</p> <p>“c. Team personnel leaving their position to participate or incite a verbal or physical altercation (e.g., pushing, shoving, bumping or a fight (see 5-16-a) shall include players, coaches and team personnel). The position of various team members is determined by where the individual is located (e.g. dugout, bullpen, coaching box, on base, at bat, defensive position) at the time a confrontational situation develops. Team personnel who have not left the bench area (e.g. apron of the dugout) or bullpen area shall be considered to have remained in their position. <u>Players already on the field in the vicinity of the potential altercation will not be penalized if they are judged not to be participating in escalating or inciting the altercation.</u>”</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This proposal aims to eliminate existing ambiguity within the "fight rule" to ensure a more consistent understanding/application within the rules and to eliminate undue ejections and suspensions for players in the vicinity who do not participate or incite a fight. As a result, only players already in the vicinity who are deemed to have participated (including through the use of video review, when available) in a verbal or physical altercation shall be penalized.</p>
<b>Rule 7</b>	
<p>Batter’s-Box Rule 7.1.d and 7.1.e</p>	<p>To eliminate the batter's box rule (Rules 7-1-d and 7-1-e) which requires the hitter to stay within the batter’s box.</p> <p>“d. Batter’s-Box Rule. This rule is designed to speed up play by controlling the actions of the batter between pitches.</p> <p>1) The batter must keep at least one foot in the batter’s box throughout the time at bat.</p> <p>Exceptions—A batter may leave the batter’s box but not the dirt area surrounding home plate when:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The batter swings at a pitch.</li> <li>b) The batter is forced off balance or out of the box by the pitch.</li> <li>c) A member of either team requests and is granted time.</li> <li>d) A defensive player attempts a play on a runner at any base.</li> <li>e) A batter feints a bunt.</li> <li>f) A wild pitch or passed ball occurs.</li> <li>g) The pitcher leaves the dirt area of the pitching mound after receiving the ball.</li> </ol>

Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
	<p>h) The catcher leaves the position to give defensive signals.</p> <p>PENALTY 1 for (1)—If the batter intentionally leaves the batter’s box and delays play, and none of these exceptions applies, the plate umpire shall award a strike without the pitcher having to deliver the pitch. The ball is dead and no runners may advance.</p> <p>PENALTY 2 for (1)— If the batter does not enter the batter's box and become alert to the pitcher and ready to hit with 10 seconds or more remaining in the time limit, the umpire shall award a strike. The ball is dead, and no runners may advance.</p> <p>2) The batter may leave the batter’s box and the dirt area when time is granted for the purpose of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Making a substitution.</li> <li>b) A charged offensive conference.</li> <li>c) A defensive timeout for a pitching change.</li> <li>d) An injury or potential injury.</li> </ul> <p>e. If the batter’s-box penalty is applied, and the batter then refuses to reenter the batter’s box, the umpire shall award an additional strike. The ball remains dead and no runners may advance.”</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This rule change aligns with the action clock and timing requirements.</p>
	<b>Rule 8</b>
<p>Batter Becomes Base Runner 8.2.e Exception</p>	<p>To amend the language to Rules 8-2-e Exception to as follows:</p> <p><del>“Exception—If there is catcher’s interference on a squeeze play or a steal of home, the batter is awarded first base, the run scores and all other runners advance one base on the balk created by the interference. If, with a runner on third base and trying to score by means of a squeeze play or a steal, the catcher or any other fielder steps on, or in front of any part of home base without possession of the ball, or touches the batter or their bat, the pitcher shall be charged with a balk, the batter shall be awarded first base on the interference and the ball is dead.”</del></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> A clarification for what is considered stepping in front of home plate during these types of play situations.</p>

Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
<p>Force-Play-Slide Rule 8.4.c Penalties</p>	<p>To amend the language for Rule 8-4-c Penalties:</p> <p>PENALTIES for 1-5—(1) <u>Delayed dead ball until the play is completed.</u> With less than two outs, the batter-runner, as well as the interfering runner, shall be declared out and no other runner(s) shall advance.                      (2) With two outs, the interfering runner shall be declared out and no other runner(s) shall advance.                      (3) If the runner’s slide or collision is flagrant, the runner shall be ejected from the contest.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> To allow the play to continue after the call of force-play-slide rule as this is a reviewable play. If this call is overturned it would allow the play at first base on the batter-runner to remain.</p>
<b>Rule 9</b>	
<p>Pitching Positions 9.1.a</p>	<p>To amend Rule 9-1-a to as follows:</p> <p>“a. The Windup. The pitcher shall stand facing the batter with their pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and other foot free. In the windup position, a pitcher is permitted to have their "free" foot on the pitcher's plate, in front of the pitcher's plate, behind the pitcher's plate or off the side of the pitcher's plate. The pitcher may not take a second step toward home plate with either foot in the delivery of the pitch.                      From this position, any natural movement associated with the delivery of the ball to the batter commits the pitcher to pitch without interruption or alteration. The pitcher shall not raise either foot from the ground, except that in the actual delivery of the ball to the batter, the pitcher may take one step <del>backward or sideward</del> <u>without gaining ground toward home plate and one step forward toward home plate with the free foot.</u>”</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> To add clarifying language of gaining ground towards home plate.</p>
<p>Pitching Violations 9.2.b Penalty</p>	<p>To amend Rule 9-2-b Penalty as follows:</p> <p>PENALTY—With no one on base, if the ball drops or slips out of the hand, intentionally or accidentally, <del>it is no pitch if the ball does NOT cross the foul line. If it does cross the foul line,</del> it is a ball. If there is a runner(s) on base and the ball is dropped, it is a balk.</p>

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	<p><b>Rationale:</b> To simplify the penalty for the ball being dropped while in contact with the pitcher’s plate and follows the requirements of the pitch clock rule.</p>
<p>Pitching Violations-Foreign Substances 9.2.e Penalty</p>	<p>To amend the penalty for Rule 9-2-e to include the head coach, along with the pitcher, to be ejected from the present contest. (Note: Everyone other than the head coach will have a suspension following the ejection.)</p> <p>“PENALTY for e. —Eject the pitcher <u>and the head coach</u> from the game. If the pitcher expectorates on their hand, ball or glove or rubs the ball on the glove, person or clothing and, in the judgement of the umpire, the pitcher did not intend to alter the characteristics of the baseball, then the umpire may, at the umpire's discretion, warn the pitcher in lieu of ejecting the pitcher from the game. If the pitcher persists in violating this rule, the umpire shall then eject the pitcher and <u>the head coach</u> from the game.”</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> The rule change increases the penalty to align with the NCAA baseball code of ethics and the expectation of compliance wholeheartedly with the intent and spirit of the rules.</p>
<p>Pitching Violations 9.2.i</p>	<p>To allow the pitcher to throw unlimited warm-up pitches between innings within 120 seconds.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This rule change provides the pitchers the opportunity to determine the amount of warm-up pitches deemed necessary within the prescribed between-innings time period (120 seconds).</p>
<p>Pitching Violations 9.2.i Pitch/Between Innings Clock Protocol Appendix F</p>	<p>To allow a relief pitcher unlimited warm-up pitches within 150 seconds.</p> <p><i>Note: The timer shall begin when a new pitcher who is entering the game, either at the start of an inning or as part of a mid-inning pitching change, crosses the warning track (or otherwise leaves the bullpen area if the bullpen is on the playing field). A pitcher warming-up in the bullpen must immediately leave the bullpen when signaled by the umpire. If the pitcher does not immediately leave the bullpen when signaled, the umpire shall signal for the timer to start.</i></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This rule change provides relief pitchers the opportunity to determine the amount of warm-up pitches deemed necessary within the prescribed between-innings time period (150 seconds).</p>

Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
<p>Removing Pitcher 9.4.b Note 2</p>	<p>To amend Rule 9-4-b Note 2 to allow relief pitchers to warm-up in the bullpen or the game mound in the case of an injury or an ejection.</p> <p><i>“Note 2: The relief pitcher, when called from the bullpen by the umpire, must proceed immediately to the mound. <del>Any additional pitches thrown in the bullpen will be subtracted from the eight preparatory pitches permitted on the mound.</del> In the case of an injury or an ejection to the current pitcher, the substitute pitcher may take <u>warm-up pitches from the bullpen or game mound.</u> <u>Should some warm-up pitches be taken from the bullpen and the pitcher has moved to the game mound to complete their warm-up, the relief pitcher change timing protocols shall be followed.</u>”</i></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This rule change provides relief pitchers entering the game the opportunity to determine the location to warm-up (e.g. the game mound or the bull pen) in the case of an injury or an ejection.</p>
<p>Pitch/Between Innings Clock Protocol Appendix F, #9</p>	<p>To amend the time in which the hitter must be alert and ready to hit from 10 seconds to 8 seconds remaining on the pitch clock.</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This two-second change promotes the safety of hitters by not requiring them to be alert to the pitcher so early, and for so long, in the sequencing of the 20-second pitch clock.</p>
<p>Pitch/Between Innings Clock Protocol Appendix F, #11</p>	<p>To amend the 20-Second Action Clock Limit language of Appendix F, #11 to as follows:</p> <p><u>“11. If a pitcher starts a preliminary motion or a motion to deliver the pitch before the batter is alert and ready to hit, the umpire shall call “Time” and issue a warning the first time a pitcher does this. A pitcher shall only receive one (1) warning.</u></p> <p><u>A) With no runner on base, the warning will be assessed and any further violations will result in a ball.</u></p> <p><u>B) With any runner on base, the initial warning is also the reset for that at-bat. Any further violations by that pitcher will result in a ball.”</u></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> The rules change addresses situations when a pitcher is starting the preliminary motion or a motion to deliver the pitch before the batter is alert and ready to hit.</p>

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<p>Pitch/Between Innings Clock Protocol Appendix F</p>	<p>The following timing rules for pace of play may be permissive by conference rule or mutual agreement prior to the start of the game:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between Batters. A 30-second timer shall start at the conclusion of the prior play as indicated by the ball being in the possession of the pitcher in the proximity of the mound. In the event the batter/runner ends an at bat on second base and needs to hand protective equipment to a coach, the timer should start when the batter-runner hands his equipment to the coach.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: NCAA rules regarding the stop and enforcement of the pitch clock shall apply (e.g. pitcher must begin motion to pitch prior to expiration of the clock and hitter must be alert to the pitcher and ready to hit with 8 or more seconds remaining).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mound Visit. A 30-second timer shall begin when a coach crosses the foul line or when a defensive player leaves their position to visit the pitcher's mound. The home plate umpire shall proceed to the mound when the timer reaches nine (9) seconds. Unless the coach signals for a pitching change, the coach must leave the mound when (or before) the timer expires. If the coach has not left the mound or signaled for a pitching change by the time the clock expires, the umpire shall break up the visit and direct the coach back to the dugout or to signal for a pitching change. If a coach does not immediately leave the mound or signal for a pitching change upon being directed by the home plate umpire, a warning shall be issued for a first offense with a ball automatically awarded to the batter for any subsequent offense.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: The mound visit clock shall not operate when a doctor or trainer accompanies a coach to evaluate a medical issue. Upon expiration of the clock, the 20-second NCAA pitch clock shall commence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offensive Timeout. A 30-second timer shall begin when an offensive timeout is granted by an umpire to a player or coach. The home plate umpire shall proceed to conclude the timeout when the timer reaches nine (9) seconds. Upon expiration of the clock, unless a substitution has been signaled, any visit must conclude and/or the batter must enter the batter's box. If the visit does not immediately conclude or the batter immediately enter the box upon being directed by the home plate umpire, a warning shall be issued for a first offense, with a strike automatically awarded to the batter for any subsequent offense.</li> </ul>



Rule	Recommendation and Rationale
	<p><i>Note: The offensive timeout clock shall not operate when a doctor or trainer accompanies a coach to evaluate a medical issue.</i></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> To further enhance pace of play within college baseball by cutting time during certain "dead ball" activities which, in turn, allows the rhythms of the game during "live ball" action to remain uninterrupted.</p>
<p>Pitch/Between Innings Clock Protocol Appendix F</p>	<p>***FOR DIVISION III RESPONDENTS ONLY***</p> <p>Effective January 1, 2025, the use of one or more visible clocks will be permissible during the game to enforce all timing rules for Division III.</p> <p><i>Note: All pitch/between innings clock timing requirements shall continue to be followed and enforced during play.</i></p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Due to the potentially burdensome expense for purchasing, installing and operating/staffing the visible action clock, as well as feedback during the original adoption of the required action clock, permitting the use of the visible clock for institutions that wish to use it is sufficient for the effective application of the playing rule.</p>