



**NCAA BASEBALL  
CLOCK OPERATION GUIDE  
UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2024  
20-Second Action Clock & Between Innings Time Limits  
SUMMARY**

**20-Second Action Clock Limit**

When the ball is “dead”, the pitcher must engage the pitcher’s plate with possession of the ball before the ball can be put into play.

First pitch of each half-inning OR After “Time” is called OR Ball becomes “dead” (for example, a foul ball or pickoff throw goes out of play)	Pitcher <b><u>engages pitcher’s plate</u></b> with possession of ball AND Catcher in catcher’s box AND Batter in batter’s box	Start time limit when plate umpire signals “Play”
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When the ball remains “alive” between batters or between pitches, the time limit begins when the pitcher has possession of the ball in the circle surrounding the pitcher’s plate.

First pitch of any subsequent at-bat  (Give batter opportunity to get to the plate and be in the box for the first pitch.)	Pitcher has possession of ball <b><u>in the circle</u></b> surrounding the pitcher’s plate AND Catcher in catcher’s box AND Batter in batter’s box	Start time limit when plate umpire signals “Play”. (Point at pitcher or use twirling signal used to reset the clock.)
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After each pitch during an at-bat (following the first pitch) when ball remains alive and batter remains at bat	Pitcher has possession of ball <b><u>in the circle</u></b> surrounding the pitcher’s plate AND Catcher in catcher’s box	No signal is required. Start the time limit when the pitcher receives the ball and is on the mound
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If the catcher or other defensive player intentionally delays getting the ball to the pitcher on the mound so that the time limit doesn’t start, or if the pitcher delays taking their position on the mound, the plate umpire may point to have the 20-second time limit started.

The timer shall stop under the following circumstances:

- The pitcher begins the windup motion or, from a set position, begins the motion to deliver the pitch.
- The pitcher makes a pickoff attempt (throw) to any base.
- With runners on base, the pitcher steps off the pitcher's plate to get a new sign or to feint a pickoff attempt. This action counts as a "reset" and is allowed one time per at-bat.
- The catcher leaves the catcher's box to give defensive signals or to confer with the pitcher from a distance (in which case the timer shall stop, reset, and start again after the catcher returns to the catcher's box). This action counts as a "reset" and is allowed one time per at-bat. If game situations arise during an at-bat with runners on base that warrant defensive adjustment or signaling (i.e., change in runner position, full count, potential bunt play, etc.), the catcher may step out in front of home plate and quickly give defensive signals without causing a charged reset for this at-bat. This must be done in a timely manner within the first few seconds after the ball has been returned to the pitcher. If the batter has already entered the batter's box and is alert to the pitcher (8 seconds remaining on the clock), the catcher's actions would not be deemed timely, and a charged reset would be recorded for that at-bat. If the reset has been used during this at-bat, a charged defensive conference would be required to stop the action clock and allow further signals or communication.
- The umpire calls "time" for any legitimate reason.

With runners on base and after the 20-second time limit has started, the defensive team is allowed only one "reset" per at-bat.

When there are no runners on base, if a pitcher steps off the pitcher's plate before starting a windup motion or beginning the motion to deliver the pitch, the time limit (or clock) does not stop unless the umpire grants the pitcher "time" for a legitimate reason.

### **Time Limit (or Clock) Between Innings**

- Between innings, 120 seconds (or 150 seconds for a relief pitcher) to be ready for first pitch.
  - Pitcher holding the ball and touching the pitcher's plate.
  - Batter standing in the batter's box alert and ready to hit.
- Starts when all defensive players have started to leave their positions after the last out has been made.
- Stops when the umpire calls/signals "Play" for the first pitch of the next half-inning.
- If no visible clock is being utilized, with 30 seconds left the base umpire keeping the timing device will visually cue the plate umpire by extending one hand/arm above his head. The plate umpire will announce "30 seconds" and summon the lead-off batter to the plate. At 15 seconds left, the base umpire will lower his arm to parallel with the ground, and point at the plate umpire when the time limit expires.

- At the beginning of a game (first inning for each starting pitcher) or for any subsequent relief pitcher who enters the game, the pitcher is entitled to unlimited warm-up pitches within 150 seconds.
- If the catcher is the third out or on base when the third out is made, the offensive team should have someone ready to warm up the pitcher. If the game catcher is not out of the dugout with 30 seconds left in the time limit and another player is warming up the pitcher, hold the pitcher with one warmup left and wait for the game catcher arrive to throw down following the last warmup pitch.
- If the P/DH is the third out or on base when the third out is made to end the inning, allow the P/DH to get their glove before starting the 120-second or 150-second time limit.
- Enforce the rule and use common sense.

*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.*

For further information, refer to Appendix F.