

Official Baseball Rules

“No Infield Shift”

Regulates Infield Dirt
Eliminates 4-Man Outfield
Requires 4 Infielders, 2 on Each Side of Second Base

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2.01 Layout of the Field

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The grass lines and dimensions shown on the diagrams are those used in many fields, but they are not mandatory and each Club shall determine the size and shape of the grassed and bare areas of its playing field; provided, however, that the grass line of the outer boundary of the infield dirt shall be a 95-foot radius from the center of the pitcher’s plate. A Club will be considered to be in compliance with this provision if the average distance of the grass line of the outer boundary of the infield dirt is less than 96 feet but more than 94 feet, and no individual measurement is more than 96 feet or less than 94 feet.

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5.02 Fielding Positions

When the ball is put in play at the start of, or during a game, all fielders other than the catcher shall be on fair territory.

- (a) The catcher shall station himself directly back of the plate. He may leave his position at any time to catch a pitch or make a play except that when the batter is being given an intentional base on balls, the catcher must stand with both feet within the lines of the catcher’s box until the ball leaves the pitcher’s hand.

PENALTY: Balk.

- (b) The pitcher, while in the act of delivering the ball to the batter, shall take his legal position.

- (c) Infielder Positioning

Any fielder other than the pitcher and the catcher ~~Except the pitcher and the catcher, any other fielder~~ may station himself anywhere in fair territory, except as described below:

- (i) At the time the pitcher is on the rubber, the defensive team must have a minimum of four players (in addition to the pitcher and the catcher) on the infield dirt, each of which must have both feet completely in front of the outer boundary of the infield dirt;
- (ii) at the time the pitcher releases the ball for delivery to the batter, the defensive team must have a minimum of four players (in addition to the pitcher and the catcher) on the infield dirt, at least two of which must be positioned entirely on each side of second base; and
- (c) each Club must designate two infielders on each side of second base who may not switch sides during the course of the game, except in the event of a substitution for one of those infielders, in which event any infielder may switch sides at the time of that substitution.

Rule 5.02(c) Comment. Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the Infielder Positioning rule is to prevent the defense from having more than two infielders on either side of second base in an effort to anticipate where the batter will hit the ball prior to delivery of the pitch. If, in the judgment of the umpire, any fielder attempts to circumvent the purposes of this Rule 5.02(c), the umpire shall assess the penalty described below.

PENALTY: If the defensive team violates Rule 5.02(c), the pitch shall be called a “ball” and the ball is dead, unless the batter reaches first base 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 violation. If any other play follows the violation (e.g., sacrifice fly, sacrifice bunt, etc.), the manager of the offense may advise the plate umpire that he elects to decline the penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play.