

Thankfully, batting out of order happens very rarely. The rules on this infraction have changed over the years in subtle ways so it is important that the umpires know the current rules accurately.

The batting order is the order specified on the line up card and is given to the umpires at the beginning of the game. (Hopefully, scorekeepers have the same batting order in their books; however the line up is official.) Naturally, substitutions modify the batting order by replacing one player with another player.

At the beginning of the game, the player listed first in the batting order bats first. After that (with only one exception) the player who is listed next (following the batter who just completed her turn at bat) is the next proper batter.

Batting out of order happens when the wrong player comes to bat. This situation is an appeal play. (Umpires are not allowed to rule until it is brought to their attention.)

If batting out of order is discovered while the improper batter is still at bat (by either the offense or the defense) the proper batter continues in place of the improper batter, assuming the ball and strike count that the improper batter had when the error was discovered. There is no penalty. All runner advancement (e.g. stolen base) and runner outs (e.g. caught stealing) stand.

The statute of limitations to appeal a batting out of order ends with the next pitch (legal or illegal), ends when the pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory, ends when the umpires have left the field at the end of the game. Batting out of order is a dead ball appeal (by any infielder, pitcher, catcher, or any defensive coach).

If batting out of order is appealed after the improper batter has completed their turn at bat, but before the statute of limitations has expired, the following happens: (1) The turn at bat by the improper batter is nullified – the improper batter is removed from base or any out made is cancelled. (2) The proper batter is called out. (3) Any advancement made by any runners is cancelled (they are put back to the base occupied at the time of the last pitch to the improper batter). And, (4) any outs by the runner(s) stand. The next proper batter is the one who followed the player called out (who should have batted). All runner advancement that happened prior to the last pitch to the improper batter (e.g. stolen base) and runner outs (e.g. caught stealing) stand.

If batting out of order is discovered/appealed after the statute of limitations has expired, it is ignored. The next proper batter is the player who follows the improper batter in the batting order.

The only exception to following the batting order happens when the proper batter is on base when their turn at bat occurs. How can this happen? If there was an undiscovered batting out of order! Simply skip over the player(s) who is on base, without penalty.