

An illegal pitch occurs when the pitcher does something not permitted by rule, including putting a foreign substance on the ball.

Before the pitch the pitcher must: (This sequence cannot start until the catcher is in position to receive the pitch and the batter is in the batter's box.)

1. Have the hands separated with the ball in either the hand or the glove.
2. Have both feet on the ground within the 24-inch width of the pitcher's plate. The shoulders must be in line with first and third. The pivot foot must be in contact with the pitcher's plate and the non-pivot foot (sometimes called the stride foot) either in contact with the pitcher's plate or behind the pitcher's plate.
3. While in contact with the pitcher's plate (with the ball still in the separated hand/glove) the pitcher must take or appear to take a signal.
4. The pitcher must bring the hands together. While doing so, she is allowed (but not required) to take a backwards step with the non-pivot foot. This backwards step may be done before, simultaneous with, or after the hands have been brought together.

The pitch starts when the pitcher separates the hands.

The following are in effect once the pitch starts:

- After making any pitching motion, the pitcher must deliver (pitch) the ball to the batter.
- After separating the hands, the pitcher may not bring the hands together again.
- The pitcher may not make two revolutions of the pitching arm.
- The pitcher must deliver the ball underhand with the hand below the hip and the wrist not farther from the body than the elbow.
- The ball must be delivered on the throwing arm side of the body (not behind the back nor through the legs).
- After starting the forward motion, the pitcher may not stop or reverse direction. The release of the ball and follow through must be in the forward direction.
- The pitcher must take one forward step with the non-pivot foot, and the step must be within the 24-inch width of the pitcher's plate.
- The pivot foot may be slid along the pitcher's plate or may be turned to push off the pitcher's plate provided the pivot foot remains in contact with the pitcher's plate. Lifting the pivot foot off the pitcher's plate and returning it to the pitcher's plate is illegal.
- Pushing off with the pivot foot from anywhere other than the pitcher's plate is illegal. Once the pitcher pushes off with the pivot foot, the pivot foot is allowed to remain in contact with the ground or may become airborne.
- After releasing the ball the pitching arm may not make another revolution.
- The pitcher shall not deliberately drop, roll, nor bounce the ball to prevent the batter from hitting it.
- The pitcher has 20 seconds to release the pitch after receiving the ball or after the umpire indicates "play ball."

Note: if the ball slips from the pitcher's hand during the delivery it is not an illegal pitch but rather (1) the ball remains live, (2) there will be a ball on the batter, and (3) runners may advance at their own risk.

Illegal pitch penalty:

1. If the batter reaches first safely and each other runner advances at least one base, the illegal pitch is ignored.
2. If (1) above is not satisfied then, following completion of the play, the offensive coach may choose the result of the play, or may choose the standard penalty for an illegal pitch: a ball on the batter and all runners return to the base occupied at the time of the pitch (cancelling any outs or advancement). If forced by the batter receiving ball four, runner(s) would, of course, be advanced.
3. If the batter is hit by an illegal pitch (which is not a strike), the batter is awarded first base with runners remaining on the base occupied at the time of the pitch (unless forced to advance). There is no choice to the offensive team.

An illegal pitch is a delayed dead ball.

Which umpire is responsible for calling an illegal pitch? The responsibility is shared as follows:

- The plate umpire is responsible for:
  - the hands
  - stepping outside the 24-inch width of the pitcher's plate, and
  - for using a foreign substance on the ball.
- The base umpire is responsible for
  - the feet (other than the 24-inch width requirement), and
  - for using a foreign substance on the ball.

When calling an illegal pitch, the calling umpire shall give the delayed dead ball signal and say "Illegal" loud enough for the closest player to hear. Once the play is completed, if the illegal pitch penalty may be enforced, "time" will be called and the offensive coach given the opportunity to choose between the result of the play or the standard illegal pitch penalty.

If the defensive coach wants an explanation of the illegal pitch, the calling umpire should give the explanation. As with any explanation, this should be done using rulebook language; without confrontation; and in a professional, courteous, and expeditious manner.

If there is an illegal pitch and a runner leaves the base prior to the release of the pitch, both are penalized, as follows:

- The runner is out and the ball is dead.
- There is a ball on the batter.

If there is an illegal pitch and interference, the interference penalty is enforced first, then the illegal pitch may be taken into account (unless batter reached first and all runners advanced one base). The offensive coach is given the choice of the result of the play or the standard illegal pitch penalty (which

will reverse the interference). If the interference was unsportsmanlike, the offending player is ejected even if the interference penalty is reversed due to the illegal pitch penalty.