

# Three Man Umpiring Mechanics - Eight Simplified Concepts

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## Introduction

The three man umpiring system provides better coverage for fly balls, double plays and other situations that make the two-man system difficult. Players, coaches, fans and administrators feel that by putting three umpires out there the game will be better covered. We need to prove them right.

Coordinating the three man system can be difficult to do if an umpire does not have the eight basic concepts down and especially since he has been working the two man systems for several months.

However, understanding the two man concepts when the plate umpire covers third and when he stays home will make the rotations of the three man system easier. In all other situations the base umpires handle the calls on the bases.

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## Concept #1: Positioning

Position of base umpires at time of pitch with bases occupied and primary reason:

### **1st base umpire on line & 3rd base umpire inside:**

Runner on 1st only:

- 1st base umpire at 1st - pick offs at 1st and double play coverage.
- 3rd base umpire in either deep "C" or deep "B" - steals and double play coverage.

Runner on 3rd only:

- 1st base umpire on line - plays at 1st.
- 3rd base umpire on line - pick offs at 3rd.

Both umpires on base hits and balls that stay in the infield if runner on third commits to home treat this like no runners on base.

If runner on 3rd does not commit to home 3rd base umpire must stay and cover any plays at 3rd while 1st base umpire will cover plays at 1st and 2nd.

Runners on 1st and 2nd:

- 1st base umpire on line - pick offs at 1st and double play coverage.
- 3rd base umpire in deep "C" position - double play coverage, picks offs at 2nd and steals. 3rd base umpire will cover double steal just like in the two man system.

Bases loaded:

- 1st base umpire on line - pick offs at 1st and double play coverage.
- 3rd base umpire in deep "C" position - double play coverage and pick offs at 2nd and 3rd.

### **1st base umpire inside & 3rd base umpire on the line:**

Runner on 2nd only.

- 1st base umpire in deep "B" position - pick offs at 2nd.
- 3rd base umpire on line - steals.

Runners on 2nd and 3rd.

- 1st base umpire in deep "B" position - pick offs at 2nd.
- 3rd base umpire on line - pick offs at 3rd.



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### Concept #2: Ball Stays in Infield

Just like two man system.

- Base umpires cover base or bases they are responsible for.
  - Plate umpire only comes up 1st base line with bases empty. All other situations stay home, watch the action, rule on 1st base runner path interference and be ready for plays at the plate.
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### Concept #3: Fly Ball Coverage - Bases Empty

One of the base umpires will go out and cover all fly balls. When an umpire goes out to cover the fly ball he will stay out and the other two umpires will revert to the two-man system.

To cover fly balls base umpires will:

- Split outfield in half.
  - 1st base umpire will take fly balls center fielder to right field line. This includes center fielder going straight back or straight in. Pause, read and react. If you don't go out to cover fly ball take the batter-runner around the bases.
  - 3rd base umpire will take fly balls center fielder to left field line. If ball is hit to center field read what 1st base umpire is doing. If he goes out you come in and head towards 2nd taking the batter-runner into 2nd and 3rd.  
If 1st base ump doesn't go out you will go out.
  - Plate umpire: If 1st base umpire goes out you will head toward 1st base and make any calls at 1st. If batter-runner commits to 2nd base go back home and be ready for any calls at home.
  - If 3rd base umpire goes out 1st base umpire will take batter-runner around the bases and plate umpire will stay at home and be ready for calls at home.
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### Concept #4: Fly Ball Coverage - Bases Occupied

We will use the 10/40/50 coverage. That is:

- Plate umpire has fly balls down the line that a base umpire is not at. This is the 10% coverage.
  - Umpire on the line has fly ball coverage from center fielder to your line. This is the 50% coverage. This includes the center fielder coming straight in and going straight back. You will go out!!! When an umpire goes out to cover the fly ball he will stay out and the other two umpires will revert to the two man system.
  - Umpire inside the diamond will take fly balls with the center fielder to the empty line unless the plate umpire calls you off. This is the 40% coverage. If you read a "trouble fly ball" work to get a good angle but don't exit the inside.
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### Concept #5: Tag Up Coverage

Tag up coverage is similar to the two man system: That is:

- With runners on 1st and 2nd and the batter hits a fly ball with no umpires going out to cover it (fly ball in the 40% coverage area) and runner on 2nd is going to tag. The umpires will "rotate", like the two man system, the plate umpire will commit to 3rd base, 1st base umpire will head home and 3rd base umpire will move into "B" position.
  - In all other situations umpires will cover tags according to "line of sight" according to positions at time of pitch and location of fly ball.
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**Concept #6: Rotation** The rotation is done when a **batted ball** gets through the infield. This includes line drives in the gaps.

Rotation will depend on bases occupied at time of pitch and is based exactly on the two man system when the plate umpire must head to 3rd.

- Runner on 1st only at time of pitch.
- Runners on 1st and 3rd at time of pitch.

The rotation is:

- The plate umpire heading and committing to third, DO NOT come back home
- The 1st base umpire will move to a position between home and 1st watching the batter-runner touch 1st. If the runner that just went to 2nd commits to 3rd you will head home. **Key off this runner at 2nd - if he goes to 3rd you go home.** If he stays at 2nd you will stay at 1st in a position between 1st and home to be ready for any throw backs at 1st.
- The 3rd base umpire will also key of the runner at 2nd. If the runner heads to 3rd you will release him to the plate umpire and head toward 1st base taking the that runner back into 1st or if he goes to 2nd, into 2nd. This is very important. Don't stay in the "C" position area watching the runner go to 3rd. You must move into the "B" position to cover the runner on 1st better.

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**Concept #7: Reverse Rotation** The reverse rotation is done when 1st base umpire is on the line and the 3rd base umpire is inside and a base hit and the ball gets through the infield. This includes line drives in the gaps.

The reverse rotation will depend on bases occupied at time of pitch and it is based exactly on the two man system when the plate umpire must stay home.

- Runner on 2nd only at time of pitch.
- Runners on 1st and 2nd at time of pitch.
- Runners on 2nd and 3rd at time of pitch.
- Bases loaded.

The reverse rotation is:

- The plate umpire stays at home to cover plays at home.
- The 1st base umpire moves to the "B" position inside the diamond and takes the batter-runner at 1st and into 2nd.
- The 3rd base umpire moves into the "C" position takes batter-runner into 3rd and releases him to the plate umpire once he commits to home and following runners but not batter-runner into 2nd, and all runners including batter-runner into 3rd.

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**Concept #8: Staying Put** Umpires will stay put when the 1st base umpire is inside and a base hit and the ball gets through the infield. This includes line drives in the gaps.

Staying put is:

- The plate umpire staying at home to cover plays at home.
  - The 1st base umpire is inside the diamond he will take calls at 1st and 2nd.
  - The 3rd base umpire is on the line he will stay there and make calls at third base.
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### Conclusion

Reading and understanding these concepts is only 1/3 of the battle. You must go out and umpire games using the three-umpire system. You will stumble, end up in the wrong place at times, or other mistakes, but the key is to learn from those mistakes.

To minimize the mistakes communication among the crew is essential. That is communication before each and every situation and during the play. Communicating using signals and voice is important.

There are advanced three man mechanics. Before you can move onto to those you must have these eight concepts down cold.

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