

Official 2015 MLB Pitching Rules
Rule 5.07 and 6.02 are taken verbatim from the 2015 Official MLB Rulebook

5.07 – Pitching

5.07(a) – Legal Pitching Delivery

There are two legal pitching positions, the Windup Position and the Set Position, and either position may be used at any time. Pitchers shall take signs from the catcher while in contact with the pitcher's plate.

Rule 5.07(a) Comment: Pitchers may disengage the rubber after taking their signs but may not step quickly onto the rubber and pitch. This may be judged a quick pitch by the umpire. When the pitcher disengages the rubber, he must drop his hands to his sides. Pitchers will not be allowed to disengage the rubber after taking each sign.

1. The Windup Position

The pitcher shall stand facing the batter, his pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and the other foot free. From this position any natural movement associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without interruption or alteration. He shall not raise either foot from the ground, except that in his actual delivery of the ball to the batter, he may take one step backward and one step forward with his free foot. When a pitcher holds the ball with both hands in front of his body, with his pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate and his other foot free, he will be considered in the Windup Position.

Rule 5.07(a)(1) Comment: In the Windup Position, a pitcher is permitted to have his "free" foot on the rubber, in front of the rubber, behind the rubber or off the side of the rubber.

From the Windup Position the pitcher may:

- (A) Deliver the ball to the batter, or
- (B) Step and throw to a base in an attempt to pick-off a runner, or
- (C) Disengage the rubber (if he does he must drop his hands to his sides).

In disengaging the rubber the pitcher must step off with his pivot foot and not his free foot first. He may not go into a set or stretch position—if he does it is a balk.

2. The Set Position

Set Position shall be indicated by the pitcher when he stands facing the batter with his pivot foot in contact with, and his other foot in front of, the pitcher's plate, holding the ball in both hands in front of his body and coming to a complete stop. From such Set Position he may deliver the ball to the batter, throw to a base or step backward off the pitcher's plate with his pivot foot. Before assuming the Set Position, the pitcher may elect to make any natural preliminary motion such as that known as "the stretch." But if he so elects, he shall come to Set Position before delivering the ball to the batter. After assuming Set Position, any natural motion associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without alteration or interruption. Preparatory to coming to a set position, the pitcher shall have one hand on his side; from this position he shall go to his set position as defined in Rule 5.07(a)(2) without interruption and in one continuous motion. The pitcher, following his stretch, must (a) hold the ball in both hands in front of his body and (b) come to a complete stop. This must be enforced. Umpires should watch this closely.

Pitchers are constantly attempting to "beat the rule" in their efforts to hold runners on bases and in cases where the pitcher fails to make a complete "stop" called for in the rules, the umpire should immediately call a "Balk."

Rule 5.07(a)(2) Comment: With no runners on base, the pitcher is not required to come to a complete stop when using the Set Position. If, however, in the umpire's judgment, a pitcher delivers the ball in a deliberate effort to catch the batter off guard, this delivery shall be deemed a quick pitch, for which the penalty is a ball. See Rule 5.07(f)(5) Comment.

5.07(b) – Warm-Up Pitches

When a pitcher takes his position at the beginning of each inning or when he relieves another pitcher, he shall be permitted to pitch not to exceed eight preparatory pitches to his catcher during which play shall be suspended. A league by its own action may limit the number of preparatory pitches to less than eight preparatory pitches. Such preparatory pitches shall not consume more than one minute of time. If a sudden emergency causes a pitcher to be summoned into the game without any opportunity to warm up, the umpire-in-chief shall allow him as many pitches as the umpire deems necessary.

5.07(c) – Pitcher Delays

When the bases are unoccupied, the pitcher shall deliver the ball to the batter within 12 seconds after he receives the ball. Each time the pitcher delays the game by violating this rule, the umpire shall call "Ball." The 12-second timing starts when the pitcher is in possession of the ball and the batter is in the box, alert to the pitcher. The timing stops when the pitcher releases the ball. The intent of this rule is to avoid unnecessary delays. The umpire shall insist that the catcher return the ball promptly to the pitcher, and that the pitcher take his position on the rubber promptly. Obvious delay by the pitcher should instantly be penalized by the umpire.

5.07(d) – Throwing to the Bases

At any time during the pitcher's preliminary movements and until his natural pitching motion commits him to the pitch, he may throw to any base provided he steps directly toward such base before making the throw.

Rule 5.07(d) Comment: The pitcher shall step 'ahead of the throw.'" A snap throw followed by the step directly toward the base is a balk.

5.07(e) – Effect of Removing Pivot Foot from Plate

If the pitcher removes his pivot foot from contact with the pitcher's plate by stepping backward with that foot, he thereby becomes an infielder and if he makes a wild throw from that position, it shall be considered the same as a wild throw by any other infielder.

Rule 5.07(e) Comment: The pitcher, while off the rubber, may throw to any base. If he makes a wild throw, such throw is the throw of an infielder and what follows is governed by the rules covering a ball thrown by a fielder.

5.07(f) – Ambidextrous Pitchers

A pitcher must indicate visually to the umpire-in-chief, the batter and any runners the hand with which he intends to pitch, which may be done by wearing his glove on the other hand while touching the pitcher's plate. The pitcher is not permitted to pitch with the other hand until the batter is retired, the batter becomes a runner, the inning ends, the batter is substituted for by a pinch-hitter or the pitcher incurs an injury. In the event a pitcher switches pitching hands during an at-bat because he has suffered an injury, the pitcher may not, for the remainder of the game, pitch with the hand from which he has switched. The pitcher shall not be given the opportunity to throw any preparatory pitches after switching pitching hands. Any change of pitching hands must be indicated clearly to the umpire-in-chief.

6.02 – Pitcher Illegal Action

6.02(a): Balks

If there is a runner, or runners, it is a balk when:

1. The pitcher, while touching his plate, makes any motion naturally associated with his pitch and fails to make such delivery;

Rule 6.02(a)(1) Comment: If a left-handed or right-handed pitcher swings his free foot past the back edge of the pitcher's rubber, he is required to pitch to the batter except to throw to second base on a pick-off play.

2. The pitcher, while touching his plate, feints a throw to first or third base and fails to complete the throw;
3. The pitcher, while touching his plate, fails to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base;

Rule 6.02(a)(3) Comment: Requires the pitcher, while touching his plate, to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base. If a pitcher turns or spins off of his free foot without actually stepping or if he turns his body and throws before stepping, it is a balk. A pitcher is to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base and is required to throw (except to second base) because he steps. It is a balk if, with runners on first and third, the pitcher steps toward third and does not throw, merely to bluff the runner back to third; then seeing the runner on first start for second, turn and step toward and throw to first base. It is legal for a pitcher to feint a throw to second base.

4. The pitcher, while touching his plate, throws, or feints a throw to an unoccupied base, except for the purpose of making a play;

Rule 6.02(a)(4) Comment: When determining whether the pitcher throws or feints a throw to an unoccupied base for the purpose of making a play, the umpire should consider whether a runner on the previous base demonstrates or otherwise creates an impression of his intent to advance to such unoccupied base.

5. The pitcher makes an illegal pitch;

Rule 6.02(a)(5) Comment: A quick pitch is an illegal pitch. Umpires will judge a quick pitch as one delivered before the batter is reasonably set in the batter's box. With runners on base the penalty is a balk; with no runners on base, it is a ball. The quick pitch is dangerous and should not be permitted.

6. The pitcher delivers the ball to the batter while he is not facing the batter;
7. The pitcher makes any motion naturally associated with his pitch while he is not touching the pitcher's plate;
8. The pitcher unnecessarily delays the game;

Rule 6.02(a)(5) Comment: Rule 6.02 (a)(8) shall not apply when a warning is given pursuant to Rule 6.02 (c)(8) (which prohibits intentional delay of a game by throwing to fielders not in an attempt to put a runner out). If a pitcher is ejected pursuant to Rule 6.02 (c)(8) for continuing to delay the game, the penalty in Rule 6.02 (a)(8) shall also apply. Rule 5.07 (c) (which sets a time limit for a pitcher to deliver the ball when the bases are unoccupied) applies only when there are no runners on base.

9. The pitcher, without having the ball, stands on or astride the pitcher's plate or while off the plate, he feints a pitch;
10. The pitcher, after coming to a legal pitching position, removes one hand from the ball other than in an actual pitch, or in throwing to a base;
11. The pitcher, while touching his plate, accidentally or intentionally has the ball slip or fall out of his hand or glove;
12. The pitcher, while giving an intentional base on balls, pitches when the catcher is not in the catcher's box;
13. The pitcher delivers the pitch from Set Position without coming to a stop.

PENALTY: The ball is dead, and each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out, unless the batter reaches first 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 balk.

APPROVED RULING: In cases where a pitcher balks and throws wild, either to a base or to home plate, a runner or runners may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk.

APPROVED RULING: A runner who misses the first base to which he is advancing and who is called out on appeal shall be considered as having advanced one base for the purpose of this rule.

Rule 6.02(a) Comment: Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the balk rule is to prevent the pitcher from deliberately deceiving the base runner. If there is doubt in the umpire's mind, the "intent" of the pitcher should govern.

However, certain specifics should be borne in mind:

- (A) Straddling the pitcher's rubber without the ball is to be interpreted as intent to deceive and ruled a balk.
- (B) With a runner on first base the pitcher may make a complete turn, without hesitating toward first, and throw to second.

This is not to be interpreted as throwing to an unoccupied base.

6.02(b): Illegal Pitches with Bases Unoccupied

If the pitcher makes an illegal pitch with the bases unoccupied, it shall be called a ball unless the batter reaches first base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter or otherwise.

Rule 6.02(b) Comment: A ball which slips out of a pitcher's hand and crosses the foul line shall be called a ball; otherwise it will be called a no pitch. This would be a balk with men on base.

6.02(c): Pitching Prohibitions

The pitcher shall not:

1. While in the 18-foot circle surrounding the pitcher's plate, touch the ball after touching his mouth or lips, or touch his mouth or lips while he is in contact with the pitcher's plate. The pitcher must clearly wipe the fingers of his pitching hand dry before touching the ball or the pitcher's plate.
Exception: Provided it is agreed to by both managers and the umpires prior to the start of a game played in cold weather, may permit the pitcher to blow on his hand
Penalty: For violation of this part of this rule the umpires shall immediately remove the ball from play and issue a warning to the pitcher. Any subsequent violation shall be called a ball. However, if the pitch is made and a batter reaches first base on a hit, an error, a hit batsman or otherwise, and no other runner is put out before advancing at least one base, the play shall proceed without reference to the violation. ~~Repeat offenders shall be subject to a fine by the League President.~~
2. Put expectorate on the ball, either hand or his glove;
3. Rub the ball on his glove, person, or clothing;
4. Apply a foreign substance of any kind to the ball;
5. Deface the ball in any manner;
6. Deliver a ball altered in a manner prescribed by Rule 6.02(c)(2) through (5) or what is called the "shine" ball, "spit" ball, "mud" ball or "emery" ball. The pitcher is allowed to rub the ball between his bare hands.
7. Have on his person, or in his possession, any foreign substance.
Rule 6.02(c)(7) Comment: The pitcher may not attach anything to either hand, any finger or either wrist (e.g., Band-Aid, tape, Super Glue, bracelet, etc.). The umpire shall determine if such attachment is indeed a foreign substance for the purpose of Rule 6.02(c)(7), but in no case may the pitcher be allowed to pitch with such attachment to his hand, finger, or wrist.
8. Intentionally delay the game by throwing the ball to players other than the catcher, when the batter is in position, except in an attempt to retire a runner.
Penalty: If, after a warning by the umpire, such delaying action is repeated, the pitcher shall be removed from the game.
9. Intentionally pitch at the batter. If, in the umpire's judgment, such a violation occurs, the umpire may elect either to:
(A) Expel the pitcher, or the manager and the pitcher, from the game, or
(B) May warn the pitcher and the manager of both teams that another such pitch will result in the immediate expulsion of that pitcher and the manager. If, in the umpire's judgment, circumstances warrant, both teams may be officially "warned" prior to the game or at any time during the game.
Rule 6.02(c)(9) Comment: Team personnel may not come onto the playing surface to argue or dispute a warning issued under Rule 6.02 (c)(9). If a manager, coach or player leaves the dugout or his position to dispute a warning, he should be warned to stop. If he continues, he is subject to ejection. To pitch at a batter's head is unsportsmanlike and highly dangerous. It should be — and is — condemned by everybody. Umpires should act without hesitation in enforcement of this rule.

Rule 6.02(d): Penalty for violation of any part of 6.02(c)(2) through (7)

1. The pitcher shall be ejected immediately from the game and shall be suspended automatically. In ~~National Association Leagues, the automatic suspension shall be for 10 games.~~
2. If a play follows the violation called by the umpire, the manager of the team at bat may advise the umpire-in-chief that he elects to accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play. However, if the batter reaches first base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batsman, or otherwise, and no other runner is put out before advancing at least one base, the play shall proceed without reference to the violation.

3. Even though the team at bat elects to take the play, the violation shall be recognized and the penalties in subsection 1 will still be in effect.
4. If the manager of the team at bat does not elect to accept the play, the umpire-in-chief shall call an automatic ball and, if there are any runners on base, a balk.
5. The umpire shall be sole judge on whether any portion of this rule has been violated.

Rule 6.02(d)(1) through (5) Comment: If a pitcher violates either Rule 6.02 (c) (2) or Rule 6.02 (c) (3) and, in the judgment of the umpire, the pitcher did not intend, by his act, to alter the characteristics of a pitched ball, then the umpire may, in his discretion, warn the pitcher in lieu of applying the penalty set forth for violations of Rules 6.02 (c) (2) through 6.02 (c) (6). If the pitcher persists in violating either of those Rules, however, the umpire should then apply the penalty.

Rule 6.02(d) Comment: If at any time the ball hits the rosin bag it is in play. In the case of rain or wet field, the umpire may instruct the pitcher to carry the rosin bag in his hip pocket. A pitcher may use the rosin bag for the purpose of applying rosin to his bare hand or hands.

Neither the pitcher nor any other player shall dust the ball with the rosin bag; neither shall the pitcher nor any other player be permitted to apply rosin from the bag to his glove or dust any part of his uniform with the rosin bag.