

WOBL Sliding Rule

WHEN A RUNNER (OTHER THAN A BATTER-RUNNER APPROACHING FIRST BASE) IS APPROACHING A BASE WHERE A FIELDER EITHER HAS THE BALL OR IS ABOUT TO CATCH THE BALL, IT IS THE RUNNER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO AVOID CONTACT WITH THE FIELDER BY EITHER SLIDING OR ATTEMPTING TO EVADE THE FIELDER. A RUNNER WHO FAILS TO SLIDE OR ATTEMPT TO EVADE THE FIELDER MAY BE CALLED OUT EVEN IF HE/SHE IS NOT TAGGED OR THE BALL IS NOT HELD BY THE FIELDER. A FLAGRANT ATTEMPT TO CRASH INTO THE FIELDER TO BREAK UP THE PLAY MAY ALSO RESULT IN THE RUNNER'S BEING EJECTED FROM THE GAME.

The intent of this rule is to avoid injury. If a fielder has the ball and is waiting to make a tag, the runner must slide, return toward his previous base, or attempt to run around the fielder. This will prevent the fielder's being blindsided by the runner or the ball.

Please note that the rule does NOT say that the runner must slide. The runner must slide or attempt to avoid contact, which can be done by trying to return to a previous base or run around the fielder. Of course, in these instances, rules about running out of the baseline to avoid a tag still apply. There are going to be some times when the runner is going to be out and there isn't much he/she can do about it.

Even between bases, a runner must still attempt to evade a tag; he/she may not run into a fielder who has the ball or is attempting to play the ball.

If a fielder neither has the ball nor is playing the ball, the fielder must stay out of the runner's way. Otherwise, "obstruction" may be called.

In all cases, the invocation of this rule is a judgment called by the umpire. Umpires should be instructed to call this rule as firmly and consistently as practical, but it remains within the umpire's discretion not to invoke this rule when there is negligible, incidental contact.

If most cases where a play is about to be made on a runner, the runner is more likely to be safe if he/she slides, so the rule encourages good play as well as safe play. In any case, if players are instructed to slide at a base when there is any possibility that a play may be made on them, there will be very few instances of controversy.