



Subject: Calling Balls & Strikes

The Strike Zone

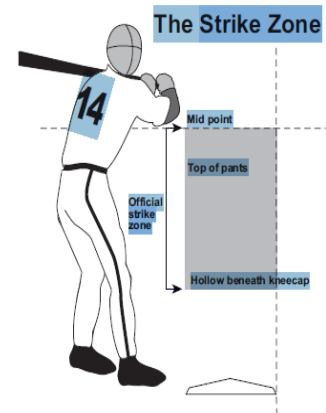
The strike zone as defined in the NFHS Baseball Rules book is:

That space over home plate, the top of which is halfway between the batter's shoulders and the waistline, and the bottom being the knees, when he assumes his natural batting stance. The height of the strike zone is determined by the batter's normal batting stance. If he crouches or leans over to make the shoulder line lower, the umpire determines height by what would be the batter's normal stance.

The strike zone as defined in the NCAA Baseball Rules book is:

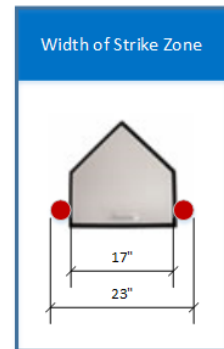
The area over home plate from the bottom of the kneecaps to the midpoint between the top of the shoulders and the top of the uniform pants. The strike zone shall be determined from the batter's stance as the batter is prepared to swing at a pitched ball

Notice the slight difference in defining the bottom of the zone.



How Wide Is the Strike Zone?

Home plate is 17 inches wide. A baseball is a shade under three inches in diameter. Because the definition of a strike specifies that any part of the ball passing over any part of the plate, from the bottom of the kneecaps to the mid-point between the top of the shoulders and the top of the uniform pants is a strike, we can conclude that **the strike zone is 23 inches wide**. Note that the black on the edge of the plate is not part of the plate.



How To Adjust for Age

On the right is a view of a batter with the strike zone drawn in to give you a conceptual view of how to adjust for age and level. These lines are not written in stone, so think of this as a generalized guideline.

- The strike zone can be expanded upward to adjust for age and ability – that is, until you reach the really young kids, roughly ten and under.
- Where necessary, you can expand the zone outward off the plate although be careful. Remember the strike zone is technically 23 inches wide already. We don't want to be calling unhittable pitches strikes.
- For the really young players you have to give quite a bit. You must keep the kids at the plate swinging the bat and to do this you pretty much adopt the position that any pitch that's hittable is a strike. Bring the top of the zone up.
- You must be consistent. I can't emphasize this enough. And sometimes this is hard to do. For example, you may have weak pitching on one team and quality pitching on the other. The temptation is to give the weak pitcher some help so you don't spend the entire day walking batters, but you must resist this temptation. If you give one pitcher some help on the outside, for example, then you must give the same leeway to the other pitcher.
- Don't forget the strike zone is three-dimensional. For the record, the strike zone is 17 inches deep. This is why breaking balls are challenging to call. This is even more so for the lollipop floaters you get from the young kids.

