

STRIKE ZONE

2.35 (NFHS definition)

The strike zone 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.

If an official calls the strike zone as written it will bring dissatisfaction from both the teams and the fans, with the perception that the umpire called pitches low and as low as 'in the dirt'. If an umpire chooses to do so, he may be 'technically' correct but the perception and judgment of that umpire is not going to be good. If you're doing 8 year olds (and not all of them...some travel teams are a step above) where the catcher is back quite a distance from home plate...you will have to call some pitches that are practically in the dirt by the time the catcher receives the ball.

It is expected for the 'battery' to perform as a unit.

In upper level ball, the successful umpire may utilize the way the catcher receives the ball to help determine whether a ball or strike. Catchers usually work within their knees and frame of their body.

Many umpires have what is called 'tunnel vision' where they determine the pitch just before it reaches the batter. Umpires with 'tunnel vision' on a breaking pitch will be accused of 'giving up on the pitch'. In clinics across the country, tracking the baseball from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's mitt is taught consistently. There are several reasons for that, one, it helps with an official's timing. The other, it helps the umpire to call a consistent game because he utilizes the way the catcher caught the ball; the perception of the ball going through the zone is presented by the catcher. Did he frame it or did he 'pull' the pitch? Did he stab at it, pushing glove down below his knees?

