

How to Handle Batting Out of Order

Batting out of order doesn't happen very often, but when it does, it can be a very sticky situation.

The late Nick Bremigan, former major league umpire and umpire school instructor, devised a simplified batting out of order system for umpires to follow. Essentially, Bremigan broke down the wordy rule into three courses of action for the umpire:

Batting out of order discovered too soon

That happens when the defensive team appeals batting out of order while the wrong batter is still at bat. In that case there is no penalty. The proper batter is simply brought to the plate and assumes the improper batter's count.

Batting out of order discovered too late

That happens when a batting-out-of-turn appeal is made following the first pitch to the next batter. That pitch legalizes the improper batter. In that situation, no one is called out and the proper batter is the player who follows the legalized improper batter in the order.

Batting out of order discovered at the right time

That occurs when batting out of order is appealed immediately after the improper batter completes his turn at bat and before the next pitch. In that case, the proper batter is declared out and the next batter is the batter who follows the player just called out.

Outs made by ordinary

play stand after batting out of order is penalized except any out made by the improper batter is superseded by the out declared for batting out of order.

Play 1: R1 is on second and R2 on first with no outs. It is B3's turn to bat but B4 erroneously bats and hits a ground ball to F5. F5 steps on third to force out R1 and fires to F4 at second to force out R2. B4 is safe at first. The defensive team then appeals batting out of order. **Ruling 1:** That is a triple play. The outs on R2 and R1 stand and B3 is declared out for failing to bat in proper order. B4 will lead off the next inning (7-1-1, 7-1-2).

Play 2: The batting order is Abel, Baker, Charles, Daniel, Edward, Frank, etc.

It is Abel's turn to bat, but Charles bats and hits a double. Abel then comes to bat and strikes out. Baker follows and also strikes out. It is now Charles's turn to bat, but Charles is on second base. What's the ruling?

Ruling 2: Charles is left on second base, skipped over in the batting order and the proper batter is Daniels.

Play 3: With R1 on third and two outs, B5 (an improper batter) is at bat. R1 successfully attempts to steal home. The pitch is not strike three. The defense appeal the batting out of order, wanting R1 returned to third. **Ruling 3:** The proper batter must be brought to the plate, assuming the count on B5. R1's advance was on merit, not due to B5. R1's run stands. □