

# Official ODC Rules Guidance

2023 Fall Season

## Topic: Avoiding Collisions in TeeBall

To promote player safety and development, the official ODC rules for collisions have been clarified in advance of the Fall 2023 season. The rule is Article VII-X “Discouraging Collisions” and is included in its entirety here:

### X. Discouraging Collisions

- a. In the interest of promoting player safety and discouraging collisions, a player must clearly possess the ball in order to block any base, including first base (1B), or home plate.

*Note: For clarity, the MLB rule that allows a player to block the base when he is in “imminent possession” of the ball was considered, but not chosen. In addition to the subjectiveness of what constitutes “imminent,” the rule of clear possession is more appropriate for promoting player safety at the recreational baseball level.*

- b. If a defensive player does not clearly possess the ball prior to arrival of a baserunner, that defensive player must position his body in a way to give an approaching runner an acceptable, in the opinion of the umpire, path to the base. If a defensive player fails to do so, it is obstruction and the umpire shall call the runner safe at that base. Any attempted *further* advancement of that runner beyond that base is subject to the umpire’s normal discretion.
- c. A baserunner must slide to avoid a collision with a defensive player attempting to make a play at all bases excepting first, where the running lane in foul territory must be used instead. Failure to slide will result in the umpire calling the baserunner out.
- d. For both offensive and defensive interference, the interference *need not be intentional* to be called by the umpire.

We add the following guidance for coaches, parents, and umpires:

**Possession** – possession is defined in Baseball as having complete physical control of the ball. We know this can be unclear at lower levels of the game. The intent here is that the player should show they are in control of the ball by being able to move the glove (e.g. for a tag) without dropping the ball or have the ball clearly in their non-glove hand (e.g. for a force-out).

**Incidental Contact** – incidental contact is defined in most sports as contact that is not dangerous in nature.

**Collision** – physical contact that is dangerous in nature. Generally, this will involve contact between the legs, body, or head of the player(s), and will result in a change in direction of motion.

The ODC Rules committee believes that players should begin to learn to slide beginning with their first exposure to the sport as this is a critical skill that takes time to develop. We also understand that it’s hard to get a 5 year old to understand that they need to slide. We therefore provide the following guidance for how to apply and interpret rule X-c.

The umpire must determine - in the event of *contact* between the defensive and offensive players, does that contact meet the level of a collision? That is to say – does the umpire believe the contact to be dangerous? Has the possibility of imminent contact caused a player to not make their intended play?

Next, the umpire should determine if the defensive player has clear possession and as such can block the bag (rule X-a)? If not having possession, has the defensive player allowed a lane for the baserunner (rule X-b)? If either of these conditions are met, then the baserunner *should* slide to avoid contact under rule X-c – but the baserunner should only be called out by the umpire if in their sole opinion the contact meets the level of a collision.

Finally, contact that is initiated by the defender attempting to make a baseball play (e.g., tagging the baserunner with their glove while in possession of the ball) is typically not interpreted to be a collision and the defensive player must maintain control of the ball to obtain an out. An aggressive or overly forceful tag may however be deemed malicious contact.

These plays may not be challenged during games, and we will monitor the application of this rule during the season and welcome your feedback on how it is being applied.

Finally, ODC has ZERO-TOLERANCE for coaches and parents who encourage players to initiate contact (eg, run through the defender). The intent of these rules is to keep the players safe and we appreciate your help doing so.