

# NINE INNINGS of BRAIN SAFETY in BASEBALL

BALL	STRIKE	OUT	H	E
●●●	●	●		
INNING	8	9	FINAL	
GUEST	0	5		
HOME	0	2		



## 1ST INNING: KNOW THE FACTS

- A helmet that fits well and is in good condition can help protect a baseball player from the most serious kinds of brain or head injuries. But, **NO** helmet or other form of head protection is concussion-proof —that's where *Smarter Play* comes in!

## 2ND INNING: SUPPORT SMARTER PLAY

- Whether in the field or at bat, athletes need to know the importance of avoiding hits to the head to help reduce their chances of getting a concussion or other serious brain injury. They should always wear the proper protective equipment and, even in the dugout, have their eyes on the ball at all times.
- If you think that an athlete has a concussion or other serious brain injury:
  1. Remove the athlete from play right away.
  2. Make sure the athlete is evaluated by a physician or other licensed healthcare provider. Do not try to judge the seriousness of the injury yourself.
  3. Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the known or possible concussion and give them the *Heads Up Baseball Fact Sheet for Parents* on concussion.
  4. **DO NOT** allow the athlete to return to play the day of the injury. An athlete should return to play only after a qualified and informed medical provider says it's ok.

## 3RD INNING: FIND THE RIGHT HELMET SIZE

- The athlete's head size should be measured by wrapping a soft tape measure around the head, just above the eyebrows and ears. The tape measure should be level from front to back. (If a soft tape measure is not available, string can be used and its length measured against a ruler.)
- Helmet sizes often vary from brand-to-brand, so it's important to check the helmet brand's fit and sizing charts to find out which helmet size is right for the athlete's head size.

## 4TH INNING: GET A GOOD HELMET FIT

- The athlete should be present when buying a new helmet to make sure it fits properly. If possible, have the athlete wear his or her hair as he or she would while playing. Helmet fit can change if the athlete's hairstyle changes.
- The athlete should be asked how the helmet feels when worn. Although the helmet should fit snugly, a helmet that is too tight can cause headaches.
- **Batter's helmet:**
  - A batter's helmet should fit snugly all around, with no spaces between the pads and the athlete's head.
- **Catcher's helmet:**
  - Catchers use a special helmet, which usually comes in either a one-piece style that looks like a hockey goalie mask or a two-piece style that includes a separate mask. Whichever style helmet is used, it should fit snugly all around, with no spaces between the pads and the athlete's head.
- Athletes should **NOT** wear anything under their batter's or catcher's helmet, unless recommended by a physician. This includes a baseball cap. Wearing a cap under the helmet will likely prevent the helmet from fitting properly.

## 5TH INNING: CHECK HELMET COVERAGE

- **Batter's helmet:**
  - A batter's helmet should not sit too high or low on his or her head. To check, make sure the ear holes line up with the athlete's ears. When the athlete is looking straight forward, the bill of the batter's helmet should be parallel to the ground, and the bottom of the pad inside the front of the helmet should be one inch above the athlete's eyebrows.
- **Catcher's helmet:**
  - Regardless of which style is used, a catcher's helmet should not sit too high or low on his or her head. To check, make sure the catcher's mask rests flat on the front of the catcher's helmet. For the older, two-piece style, you can tighten or loosen the straps on the sides and top of the face mask to adjust how tightly they grip the helmet.



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HEADS UP BASEBALL  
for Coaches and Parents

## 6TH INNING: ENSURE GOOD VISION

- Make sure that you can see the athlete's eyes and that he or she can see straight forward and side to side while wearing the helmet.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion)

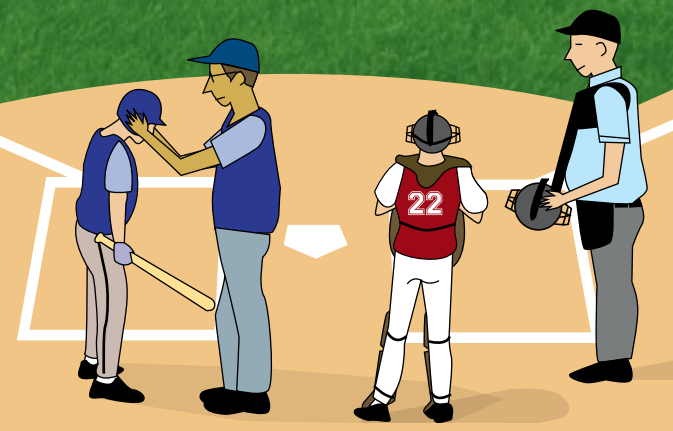
<sup>1</sup> National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment: [www.nocsae.org](http://www.nocsae.org)

<sup>2</sup> National Athletic Equipment Reconditioning Association: [www.naera.net/](http://www.naera.net/)

## 7TH INNING: CARE FOR THE HELMET

- DO NOT allow the athlete to use a cracked or otherwise damaged helmet or a helmet that is missing any padding or parts. Check for missing or loose padding both before the start of the season and regularly during the season. Be sure to replace bent face masks on a catcher's or batter's helmet.
- Regularly clean the helmet inside and out with warm water and mild detergent. DO NOT soak any part of the helmet, or use strong cleaners.
- DO NOT let anyone sit or lean on the helmet.
- DO NOT store a catcher's or batter's helmet in a hot location or car. Store the helmet in a room where the helmet is away from direct sunlight.
- DO NOT decorate (paint or put stickers on) or alter the helmet without first checking with the helmet manufacturer, as this may affect the safety of the helmet. This information may also be listed on the instruction label or on the manufacturer's website.

**SAFER PLAY IS SMARTER PLAY –  
BE A BRAIN SAFETY MVP!**



## 8TH INNING: LOOK FOR LABELS

- Look for a batter's or catcher's helmet with labels that:
  - Have the date of manufacture. This information will be helpful in determining when the helmet should be replaced or in case the helmet is recalled.
  - Say NOCSAE<sup>1</sup> certified. That label means that the helmet has been tested for safety and meets safety standards.

## 9TH INNING: WHEN TO REPLACE A BATTER'S OR CATCHER'S HELMET

- Be sure to follow all instructions on the helmet's safety labels regarding replacement. Some batter's or catcher's helmets have a label that says that the helmet should not be 'reconditioned'; helmets with this label will also include how long the helmet can be used. However, some of these helmets may need to be replaced sooner, depending on how they are used.
- Reconditioning involves having a properly-licensed company examine, recondition and recertify helmets. Their services include repairing cracks or damage, replacing missing parts, testing the helmet for safety, and approving it for continued use. If you decide to have your helmets reconditioned, choose a licensed NAERA<sup>2</sup>-member.

