

Here are some things that work for me: **might I suggest the 2-4-6 theory.**

Nothing besides an umpire's strike zone gets more scrutinized than **close plays at first base**. Why do umpires miss calls at first base? The biggest reason for this is that the umpire is not set with his eyes on the base and listening for the catch by the first baseman. Use the 2, 4, 6 method to help you. When the ball is hit, the first base umpire needs to be moving into his position to make the call. Two steps for a ground ball to the second baseman. Four steps for a ground ball to the short stop, and six steps for a ground ball to the third baseman. This will help an umpire get the 90-degree angle on where the first baseman is receiving the throw from. As we move into position to make the call, we watch the infielder catch and throw the ball to first base. This is critically important because we have to read the throw very quickly and determine if it is online. Sometimes the first baseman's foot is pulled off the bag. The umpire needs to move in a direction closer to the line to ensure being able to visualize this occurring. Sometimes the throw takes the first baseman in a different direction to catch the throw. The same theory applies here, we need to move our feet to make sure we see the first baseman's foot stay in contact with the bag. While all this is happening, we need to make sure we are concentrating on what happened first. Did the runner beat the throw, or did the throw beat the runner?

After reading the throw quickly, we have to get set and move our eyes to first base. This is where many umpires get in trouble because they follow the flight of the ball too far and do not get their eyes back to first base in time. The play happens, the throw arrives, and we truly have no idea what happened. The play blows up on us. This is never a good feeling for an umpire. We guess at the call and too many times, we guess incorrectly. We need to make sure that we get our eyes back to the bag quickly. We are watching the bag for the batter/runners touch and listening for the catch of the ball by the first baseman.

Use good timing. No matter how good the play is by the infielder or how fast the batter, does not really matter. We simply need to slow down, watch and listen.

What happened first? Did the runner's foot hit the bag before the catch, or was the ball in the first baseman's glove before the touch of the bag by the runner?

By using the 2, 4, 6 method, getting set with our eyes on the bag quickly, we will improve our chances of getting more calls right at first base. Have a great 2018 season.

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