



**Footwork for calling a  
double play  
While working  
the B or C position**



## This can be hard to do

- ▶ First, understand that this is hard. Probably the hardest thing a base umpire must do in a two-man system...mechanically speaking. Many umpires don't know how to do this properly.



# Understanding the footwork

- ▶ Second, understand what the footwork is trying to do. It is trying to get you in the best possible position (from your initial starting position) to see the "money play".
- ▶ The "money play" is the play at first base. Usually (not always, but usually) the play at second base is not that close, but the backend at first base is often a "whacker"....and often that backend can determine whether a run scores or an inning ends. So, we need footwork mechanics that gets the base umpire into the best position to see the play at first.



## What it involves

- ▶ The basic footwork steps that we **MUST** work on are:
  - ▶ Stepping up and opening to the ball
  - ▶ Some basic steps backward
  - ▶ Crossing our feet over and never losing sight of the ball



**The biggest mistakes  
made by umpires  
make are:**



## Starting too deep

- ▶ (1) Their initial starting position in "B" or "C" is too deep. The proper depth is halfway between the back edge of the pitching mound and the dirt/grass line in the second base cutout. (It is not halfway between the back of the mound and second base.) If you start too deep, it doesn't matter how good your footwork might be. You will have no chance to get a good angle for the play at first base.





## Don't chase the play

- ▶ (2) They chase the play into the second base cutout. If you do this, you have no chance to see the pulled foot/swipe tag at first base. (The pulled foot/swipe tag is the BASE umpire's call...not the plate umpire's call. The plate umpire can HELP after the play is over (after you have made a call) if you elect to get help...but this is the base umpire's primary call.)







## We can't be lazy

- ▶ (3) When starting in "C", they get lazy and do not bust behind the back of the mound (to get to the first base side of the infield) while the ball is being fielded. You should come set to see the play at second base from the first base side of the mound. Also make sure the fielder touches the base, while having control of the ball.





## See the release

- ▶ (4) They don't see the release of the ball by the middle infielder as he throws to first. As soon as they see the play at second, they turn too quickly to first.
- ▶ This will get you into trouble when the ball ends up on the ground, the throw to first is never made, and you have no clue how the ball ended up on the ground.





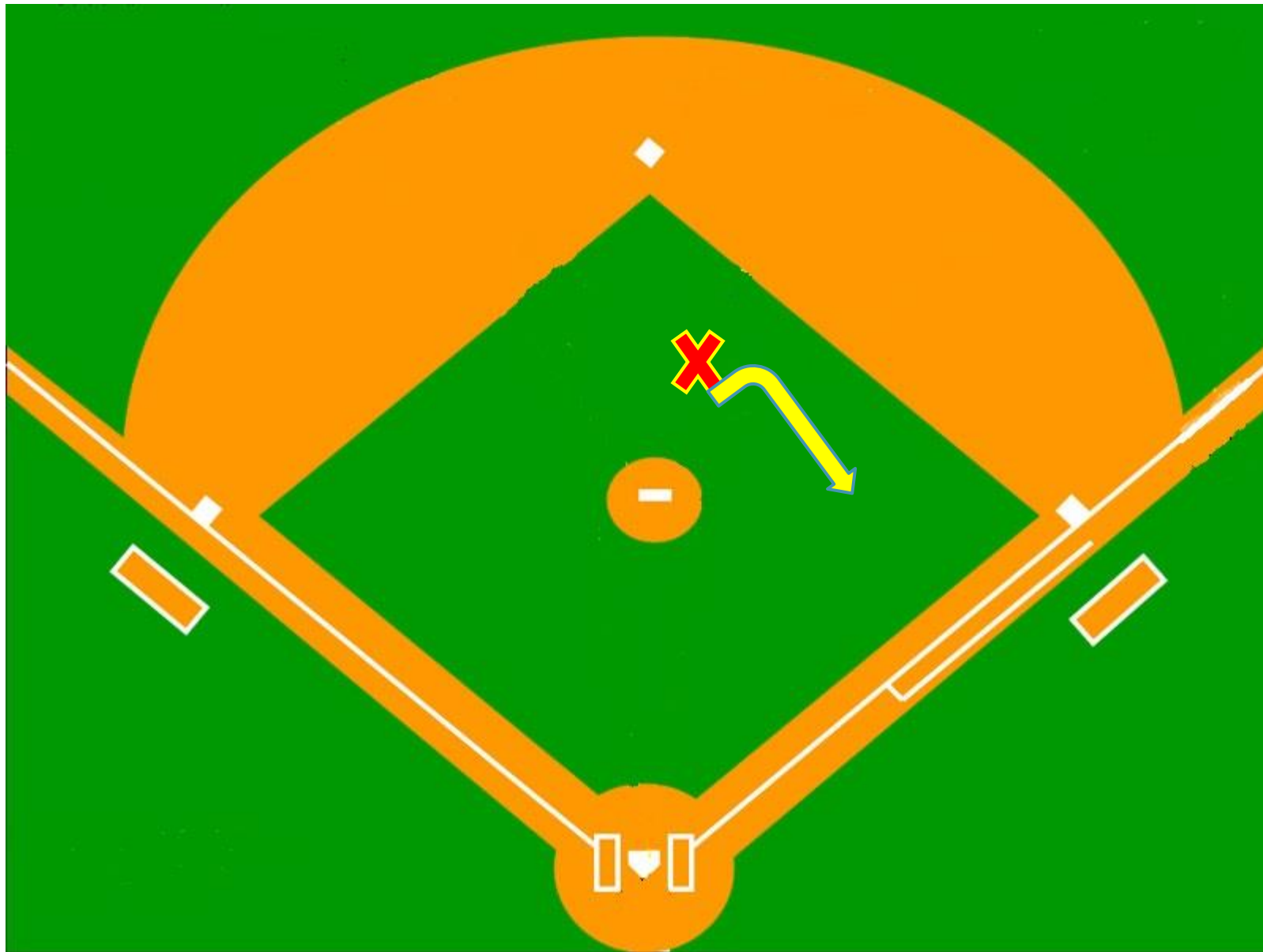
## Remember first base

- ▶ (5) They get so worried about #4 above, that now they keep their head on second base too long and by the time they turn to first base, the play explodes on them. The key to handling #4 and #5 is to watch the release of the throw by the middle fielder...as you're beginning to move toward the 45-foot line...and once you see the release AND see that the throw is "true" then you focus on first base. There is a "magic window" to properly turn your attention away from second base and toward first base. Do it too early...you'll miss a dropped ball by a middle infielder. Do it too late, and the play at first will explode on you.











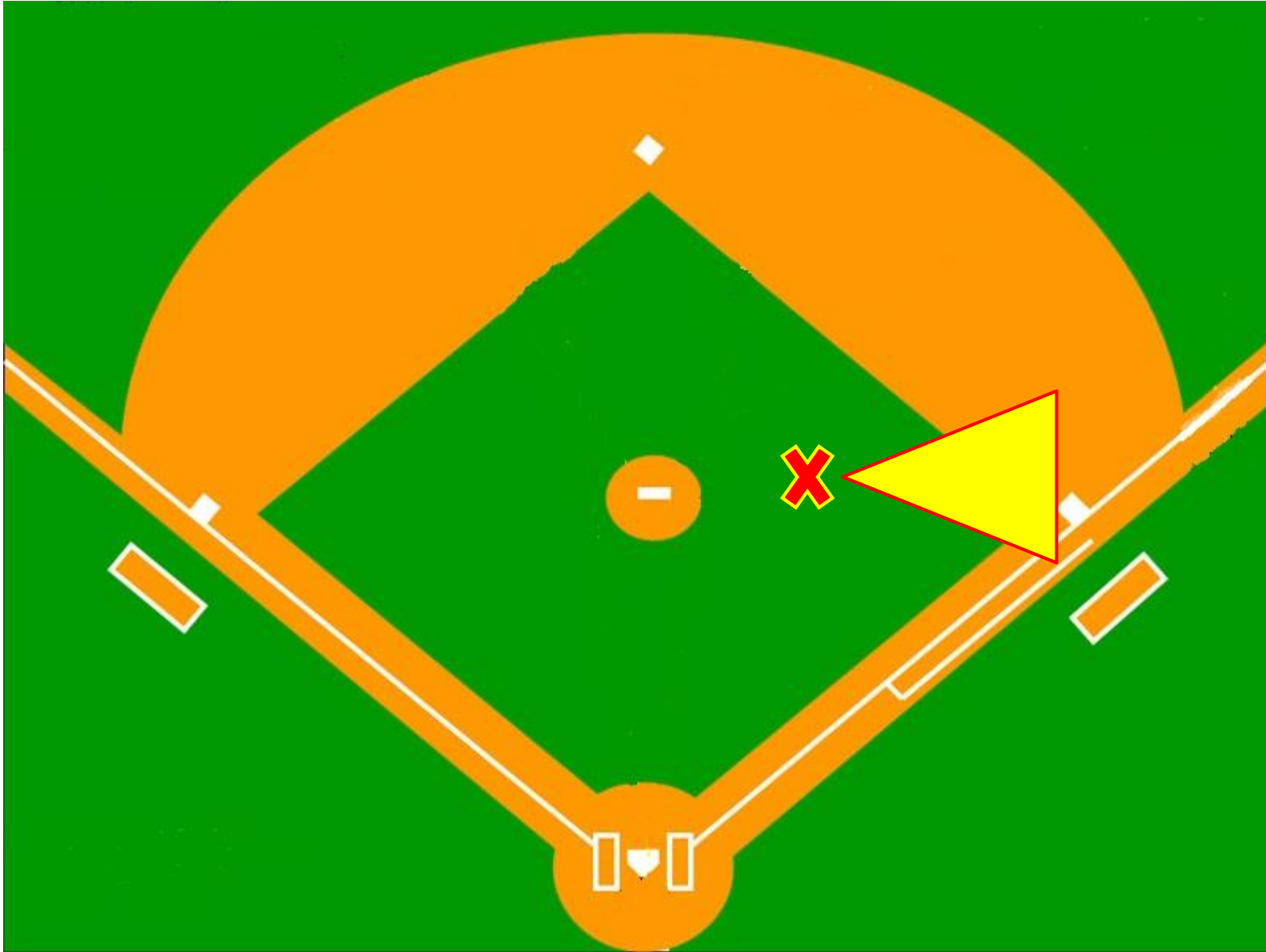
## Make the call while moving

- ▶ (6) They signal and vocalize their call on the play at second base while standing still...rather than while they're moving to get into position for the play at first base. You must be stopped and set to see the play at second base, but you vocalize and signal your call on the play at second as you're moving to get into position for the play at first. If you wait, the play at first will explode on you.



## Get an angle

- ▶ (7) When they move to get into position for the play at first base (after having coming stopped to view the play at second base), they move toward first base rather than toward the 45-foot line. If you move toward first base, you will have no angle to see the pulled foot/swipe tag.





Questions ?