

DP/Flex Chalk Talk

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Introduction

Unlike most PowerPoint slides that are designed for group presentations, this chalk talk is intended to allow you to independently scroll through the basic goals, tenets, and substitution processes for using the DP/Flex and seven of the more popular strategies for its use. In addition, the final two slides are printable summaries of the key information provided for quick on-field reference.

Everything you need is provided in print on the slides so there are no accompanying note pages or audio supplements as are often found in projected presentations.

Disclaimer

But before we get to the details, a few words of caution that the information in this chalk talk is based on the **2014-2015 NCAA Softball Playing Rules and Interpretation Book** and may not be entirely applicable to other rule codes or future NCAA softball rule books.



Additionally, while it is correct in what is included, it is not inclusive of all the possibilities so don't be afraid to create your own strategy.

Why Use The DP/Flex Rule?

The primary purpose of the Designated Player (DP)/Flex rule is to create flexibility in the lineup that allows you to compete with 10 players:

eight players who will play both offense and defense and two players who will be specialists--one playing just offense and one playing just defense.

When NOT To Use The DP/Flex Rule

When you have only 10 players available to play, using the DP/Flex rule is a risk because all your players would begin the game in the lineup.

So if anyone other than the DP or Flex is unable to continue to play offense for any reason (such as by injury), the game will be forfeited.

Remember, NCAA rules do not allow a team to play short handed.

Who Are The DP (Designated Player) and Flex?

The DP is the player who is initially listed on the lineup card in the team's batting order but not in the defensive lineup. She is always an offensive player but can also play defense.

The Flex is the player who is initially listed in the 10th spot on the lineup card. She is always a defensive player, can play any defensive position but can also replace the DP in her spot of the batting order.




Who Is The OP (Offense Player)?

The OP is any player in the batting order who is not currently playing defense because the DP has entered to play defense for her.

Unlike the DP and Flex, the OP does not have a spot in the starting lineup and OP could refer to any number of different players throughout the course of the game.

Start With The Logistics of Creating a Lineup

There are three common methods for creating an initial lineup using the DP/Flex rule:

-  Determine the nine offensive players and supplement with the Flex who will play defense only;
-  Determine the nine defensive players and supplement with the DP who will play offense only; or
-  Match up specific skills of a DP and a Flex then select eight players who will play both offense and defense.

Determining The Offensive Nine

- ✎ Decide the 10 players who will be starters.
- ✎ List the nine players you want in the batting order on lines one through nine of the lineup card in the order in which you want them to bat.
- ✎ List the remaining player on the 10th line; she will be the Flex and not be in the initial batting order.
- ✎ Fill in the defensive positions and list the player not initially playing defense as the DP. Note-a specific position is required next to the Flex's name (i.e. 2 or catcher; not the word "Flex").

Determining The Defensive Nine

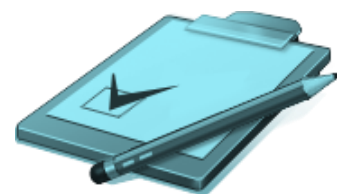
- Decide the 10 players who will be starters.
- Determine who will play each defensive position; the remaining player will be the DP.
- Determine the batting order among the players who will bat and list them on lines one through nine of the lineup card.
- List the remaining player on the 10th line; she will be the Flex and not be in the initial batting order.
- Fill in the defensive positions and list the player not initially playing defense as the DP. Note-a specific position is required next to the Flex's name (i.e. 1 or pitcher; not the word "Flex").

Matching Up Skills

- Pair up any two players, for example when:
- ✍ one has a strength that can diminish another's weakness (good hitter with defender who does not hit);
 - ✍ their strengths match up well (good hitter/average runner with fast runner/average hitter);
 - ✍ one is a multi-position player and the other can play both offense and defense;
 - ✍ there's an abundance of batters or runners but only a few of the other; or
 - ✍ a starting player is also the team's relief pitcher.

Legal Lineup Changes

Now that you have decided on the process for building your lineup, preview your goals using the principles for line-up changes. Mentally walk through the changes you plan to make and confirm that they will be legal.



You can use the sections of Rule 8.2 or a summary such as the two which follow but whatever you use, each must be used intact... you cannot mix and match parts from one with parts of another.

Legal Lineup Changes Concept 1:

1. If the DP/Flex is used, the DP must be listed in the batting order and the Flex must be listed in the 10th spot of the lineup card presented at the pregame meeting.
2. Only one (DP or Flex) may play offense at a time and it must be in the DP's spot in the batting order.
3. Both (DP and Flex) may play defense at the same time by having the DP replace any defensive player on the field (that player then remains in her spot in the batting order and becomes known as the OP).
4. The DP may replace anyone on defense any time, any number of times while the Flex may replace the DP any time, any number of times.
5. Like any other player in the batting order, when the DP is not on offense, she is out of the game. Uniquely, when the Flex is not on defense, she is out of the game.

Legal Lineup Changes Concept 2:

The game must start using DP/Flex and...

1. The DP is an offensive position so she:

must occupy her spot in the batting order and not play defense or
must occupy her spot in the batting order and play defense for any
fielder, any number of times (without counting as substitutions).

2. The Flex is a defensive position so she:

must play any defensive position and not play offense or
must play any defensive position and play offense in the DP spot of the
lineup, any number of times (without counting as substitutions).

3. The remaining eight players

must be on offense in their original spots in the batting order and play
defense anywhere on the field or
must be on offense in their original spots in the batting order and be
replaced on defense by the DP (therefore becoming the OP).

4. In all cases

if neither applies, she is considered out of the game and if a starter,
has one re-entry.

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Playing 10 or Nine Players

No matter which logistics and lineup changes you use, you can substitute for the DP and Flex individually and continue to play 10 players.

Or you can enter your DP to play defense for the Flex (or conversely, enter your Flex to play offense for the DP) which results in playing nine players.

And you can go from 10 to nine to 10 as often as you want as long as starting players only re-enter once.

Reporting Changes

Regardless of the strategy, whether it is one of the examples that follows or not, be clear on reporting your lineup changes (both substitutions and defensive position swaps).



Regardless of what is said to the plate umpire, changes are officially what he/she records on the team's lineup card so it is in your best interest to clearly articulate your intentions and watch that they are correctly recorded.

Substitutions and Re-entries

In making a substitution or re-entry for the DP, Flex or OP, be clear if the new player is entering to play just offense, just defense or both.

- For example, the Flex, who is the right fielder, entered to run the bases for the DP who just safely singled but she is picked off to end the inning. The unhappy coach tells the plate umpire to: "re-enter my DP for the Flex".

Without more information, the umpire will guess if the coach wants:

- the DP to re-enter for the Flex on offense only so the Flex will play right field and there will be 10 players in the lineup; or
- the DP to re-enter for the Flex who is now out of the game so there will be nine players in the lineup with the Flex on the bench.

Making a clear statement such as "I am re-entering my DP but my Flex remains on defense" makes your intentions clear.

Entries at the Pregame Meeting

Similarly, be clear about your intentions about lineup changes made at the pregame meeting.

- For example, in entering the DP on defense once the lineups are made official at the pregame meeting, the home team coach now states: "I am putting my DP into the pitching position."

Without more information, the umpire will guess which of these options is intended:

- If the Flex is listed as the pitcher, the team could be contracting from 10 to nine players in the lineup but
- It is equally possible that coach wants to use 10 players by having the Flex play defense elsewhere on the field (thus making another player the OP).

Had the home coach stated "my DP is entering for the Flex and will pitch" or "my DP will pitch and the lineup now goes from 10 to nine", there would be no question as to what was intended.

Final Words on DP/Flex Substitutions

If you want to remove a substitute who has replaced the starting DP or Flex and the starting player still has her re-entry privileges, you can either:

- Re-enter the starting DP or Flex into her original spot in the lineup or
- Enter a second substitute into the DP or Flex spot without re-entering the original DP or Flex. Your starting DP or Flex still retains her re-entry privileges.

Sample Strategies

The first slide of each strategy gives a short explanation of its goal or the appropriate roster qualities.

The second slide provides the details on how to use the strategy and a typical sequence of how it will unfold as the game progresses.

Strategy 1

Allows you to replace the weakest batter of the defense (often a pitcher) with the best batter from the bench.

Strategy 1 Details

- After determining the defensive lineup, add the best batter not yet in the game to the batting order as the DP to replace the weakest batter who will become the Flex and therefore not be in the batting order.
- Throughout the game, the DP (and any batter substituted for her) plays offense only while the Flex (and any fielder substituted for her) plays defense only.

Strategy 2

Maximizes flexibility for a team with a small roster with some substitutes who can play both offense and defense and some who can only play one of the two. If you do not begin the game using DP/Flex, all your starters and substitutes must play both ways.

Strategy 2 Details

- Determine the 10 players you want in the game with the eight players you want on both offense and defense in the lineup and your next best batter or weakest fielder as the DP and the remaining player as the Flex. Also works with eight players playing both ways and your next best fielder or weakest batter as the Flex and the remaining player as the DP.
- Typical sequence-As the game progresses, you can play a substitute on both offense and defense in any spot in the batting order. But if you use a substitute who is only an effective batter, enter her for the DP and if you use a substitute who is only an effective fielder, enter her for the Flex.

Strategy 3

Allows you to pair up a fast runner who is a weak batter (Flex) with a good batter but slow runner (DP).

Note this strategy works best with at least one other good batter on the bench so if the DP has used her re-entry and is out of the game, a substitute strong batter is still available.

Strategy 3 Details

- Assuming your pitcher can bat for herself, maximize the use of the exceptional runner (Flex) by having her run the bases whenever the person in the DP spot in the batting order gets on base. If the DP has used her re-entry, substitute additional batters or let the Flex bat.
- Typical sequence: DP hits safely, Flex enters to run for her, DP re-enters and hits safely, Flex enters to run for her, sub #1 hits for DP (since the DP already used her 1 re-entry), Flex enters to run for sub #1, sub #2 hits safely, Flex enters to run for her...

Strategy 4

Works well for a roster with several quick, but expendable, runners (DPs) who pair with one good batter (Flex).

Strategy 4 Details

- Assuming your pitcher can bat for herself, maximize the use of the good batter (Flex) with quick running of the DPs by alternating DP and Flex.
- Also used for a good batting pitcher (Flex) who you do not want running the bases other than when she is the batter-runner.
- Typical sequence: As the spot in the batting order comes up, enter the Flex who hits safely, re-enter the DP to run, enter the Flex who hits safely, sub #1 enters to run (since the DP already used her 1 re-entry), enter the Flex who hits safely, sub #2 enters to run...

Strategy 5

Useful for a starting player who will bat the entire game even if she is replaced by a substitute who does not bat. Most often this is a starting pitcher who will bat for a weaker or non-hitting relief pitcher.

Strategy 5 Details

- Assuming your pitcher can bat for herself, pair up your starting pitcher as the DP with a player you don't intend to play or with your relief pitcher (Flex).
- Typical sequence: At the pregame meeting, as soon as the lineups are accepted, enter your DP to pitch (you now have nine players who are all playing both offense and defense). As the game progresses and relief pitching is needed, enter the relief pitcher (or re-enter her if she was listed as the starting Flex player) for the Flex and allow the starting pitcher to continue batting and running in the DP spot in the batting order. Note-either the DP can run following her hits or the Flex can run the bases.

Strategy 6

Use if your roster has a great athlete who is a starting defensive player needed in the line-up but is also your relief pitcher.

Strategy 6 Details Example 1

- Assuming you do not want your pitcher to bat, list your great athlete as the DP and the starting pitcher as the Flex.
- Typical sequence- At the pregame meeting, as soon as the lineups are accepted, enter your DP to play any defensive position other than pitch (the player replaced on defense is now the OP). As the game continues, it appears the great player may be needed to pitch so report the OP as returning to her defensive position and send the DP to warm-up. If the DP spot in the batting order comes up, the great player will need to bat or a substitute may be entered. When the great player is warmed up, she replaces the Flex on the mound or if she was substituted for in the batting order as noted above, she re-enters in the DP spot and also goes to pitch which drops the active players from 10 to nine. If the score becomes lopsided in either direction, the Flex can re-enter to pitch and the great player then remains as the DP in the batting order and can play any other defensive position or no defensive position. At that time, the team returns from nine to 10.

Strategy 6 Details Example 2

- Create your lineup with your great player playing both offense and defense and your DP batting for the weakest batter who is in the starting defensive lineup (who therefore becomes the Flex).
- Typical sequence- As the game progresses, it appears the great player may be needed to pitch so enter the DP to play defense for the great player (making the great player the OP who is now able to warm-up in the bullpen). If the great player's spot in the batting order comes up, she will need to bat or a substitute may be entered. When the great player is warmed up, she relinquishes her OP role and returns to playing both ways but this time to pitch rather than her original defensive position. The DP can continue to play defense in the aforementioned defensive position, the Flex or her substitute may assume that position or the other defenders in the game can exchange positions.

Strategy 7

Designate your best multi-positional player as the DP to allow her to be in the batting order and play a variety of positions giving the team depth and position security.

Strategy 7 Details Example 1

- Determine your lineup with the multi-positional player as the DP. Sometime in the game when you want a substitute batter or runner somewhere else in the batting order, you can substitute someone in for the one task and then take her out for the rest of the game OR use this strategy and enter the substitute for the intended task and leave her in the lineup by having the DP play defense for her (making the substitute the OP).
- Typical sequence: As the game progresses, you need a batter to replace your batter in the seventh spot of the batting order. Enter the substitute; at the end of the half inning, enter the DP to play defense for the substitute (who is now the OP). When the seventh spot comes up in the batting order again, the OP can continue to bat, the original player can re-enter, or a new substitute can be entered.

Strategy 7 Details Example 2

- Determine which of the 10 players will be the Flex and not start in the batting order. If you have several “banged up” players or difficult weather/field conditions, designate the best utility player as the DP because she can play defense for various players in various innings to give them rest opportunities without using a substitution/reentry.
- Typical sequence: As the game progresses, the DP plays centerfield in the 3rd and 4th innings for the centerfielder who has a mild ankle sprain giving her an opportunity to ice and have the ankle re-taped. Then an inning later, the DP plays left field for the left fielder who was hit by a pitch in her at bat and needed a few minutes to collect herself. Finally in the last inning, the DP plays first base to allow the first baseman, who is going to be the starting pitcher in the second game of the doubleheader, to warm-up in the bullpen.

In Closing

Hopefully these slides have provided you with a foundation of the logistics of creating a lineup, the basic tenets of lineup changes, and processes for making substitutions that will allow you to develop your own strategies for taking advantage of the strengths of your roster. The sample strategies can be used with the simple substitutions and position swaps as presented but they can also be customized to involve more players for more creative results.

Last Words

As you develop your own strategies (and maybe have to defend them to umpires as you utilize them), you might find the next two print-friendly slides a helpful insert for your NCAA Softball Rulebook. Best of luck.

Dee

DP/Flex Summary

Legal Lineup Changes Concept 1:

1. If the DP/Flex is to be used, the DP must be listed in the batting order and the Flex must be listed in the 10th spot of the lineup card presented at the pregame meeting.
2. Only one (DP or Flex) may play offense at a time and it must be in the DP's spot in the batting order.
3. Both (DP and Flex) may play defense at the same time by having the DP replace any defensive player on the field (that player then remains in her spot in the batting order and is known as the OP).
4. The DP may replace anyone on defense any time, any number of times while the Flex player may replace the DP any time, any number of times.
5. Like any other player in the batting order, when the DP is not on offense, she is out of the game and when the Flex player is not on defense, she is out of the game.

Legal Lineup Changes Concept 2:

The game must start using DP/Flex

1. The DP is an offensive position so she:
 - must occupy her spot in the batting order and not play defense or
 - must occupy her spot in the batting order and play defense for any fielder, any number of times (without counting as substitutions).
2. The Flex is a defensive position so she:
 - must play any defensive position and not play offense or
 - must play any defensive position and play offense (bat/run) in the DP spot of the lineup, any number of times (without counting as substitutions).
3. Each of the eight players in the batting order who has a defensive position:
 - must be on offense in her original spot in the batting order and play defense anywhere on the field or
 - must be on offense in her original spot in the batting order and be replaced on defense by the DP (thus becoming the OP).
4. In all cases
 - if neither applies, she is considered out of the game and if a starter, has one re-entry.

DP/Flex Strategies

- 1) Replace the weakest batter of the defense (often a pitcher) with the best batter from the bench. After determining the defensive lineup, add the best batter not yet in the game to the batting order as the DP to replace the weakest batter who will become the Flex and therefore not be in the batting order.
- 2) Maximize flexibility within a small roster with some substitutes who can play both offense and defense and some who can only play one of the two. Determine the 10 players you want in the game with the eight players you want on both offense and defense in the lineup and your next best batter or weakest fielder as the DP and the remaining player as the Flex. Also works with eight players playing both ways and your next best fielder or weakest batter as the Flex and the remaining player as the DP.
- 3) Pair up a fast runner who is a weak batter (Flex) with a good batter but slow runner (DP). Note this strategy works best with at least one other good batter on the bench so if the DP has used her re-entry and is out of the game, a substitute strong batter is still available. Assuming your pitcher can bat for herself, maximize the use of the exceptional runner (Flex) by having her run the bases whenever the person in the DP spot in the batting order gets on base. If the DP has used her re-entry, substitute additional batters or let the Flex bat.
- 4) Works well for a roster with several quick, but expendable runners (DPs) with one good batter (Flex). Assuming your pitcher can bat for herself, maximize the use of the good batter (Flex) with quick running of the DPs. Also used for a good batting pitcher (Flex) who you do not want running the bases unnecessarily.
- 5) Useful for a starting player who will bat all game even if replaced by a substitute who does not bat. Most often this is a starting pitcher who will bat for a weaker hitting relief pitcher. Assuming your pitcher can bat for herself, pair up your starting pitcher as the DP with a player you don't intend to play or with your relief pitcher (Flex).
- 6) Use if your roster has a great athlete who is a starting defensive player needed in the line-up but is also your relief pitcher. Assuming you do not want your pitcher to bat, list your great athlete as the DP and the starting pitcher as the Flex OR create your lineup with your great player playing both ways and your DP batting for the weakest batter who is in the starting defensive lineup.
- 7) Designate the best multi-positional player as the DP to allow her to be in the batting order and play a variety of positions giving the team depth. When you want a substitute batter or runner somewhere else in the batting order, you can substitute someone in for the one task and then take her out for the rest of the game OR use this strategy and enter the substitute for the intended task and leave her in the lineup by having the DP play defense for her (making the substitute the OP) OR if you have several "banged up" players or difficult weather/field conditions, insert the DP for various players in various innings to give them rest opportunities without using a substitution/reentry.
- 8) Add your own-