

# Michigan District Six

## Umpire Clinic



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## **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this booklet is to provide individuals that are just beginning to learn the art of umpiring some useful information. It is mostly about umpire mechanics for Little League Baseball minor and major divisions that play on 60' diamonds. It provides some information on rules and conflicts at the end. Little League baseball and softball rules are covered in the Official Rule Books available From Little League Baseball & something you should receive upon signing up to be a Little League Umpire.

Umpire mechanics define how umpires move their bodies, position themselves on the field and make the proper calls and signals. Good mechanics is a skill that is required by all umpires. To learn proper umpire mechanics requires training, practice, thoughtfulness and discipline. The information provided in this booklet is only a reference that supplements the mechanics taught at umpire training clinics.

## ***Acknowledgment***

Information in this booklet was compiled from non-copyrighted materials. Michigan District Six would like to thank the many talented people that produced it

## **Working the Plate:**

The plate assignment is one of the hardest jobs in sports officiating. It normally requires more than two hundred (200) decisions in a two-hour period. It takes a great deal of concentration and common sense to perform. The same basics used on the bases, positioning, concentration, timing and selling the calls can be utilized at the plate as well. The slot position is the area between F2's head and the batter's body when the batter is in his natural stance and the F2 is in his receiving position. The purpose of the slot position is to give the plate umpire the best possible view of the strike zone while maintaining correct equipment protective abilities.

### **Positioning, Evaluating and Calling the Pitch:**

- The pitching process is cyclical – it goes through the same stages pitch after pitch.
- You may approach this problem by dividing this cycle (the pitch cycle) into phases: (1) Standing Position (Position A), (2) Set Position (Position B), (3) Pitch-Tracking, (4) Evaluation, (5) Signal and Call and (6) Relax between Pitches.

### **Standing Position (Position A):**

The standing position places our feet and bodies in the general location needed for calling the strike zone properly except for the fact PU is still standing.

- Proper positioning starts at the feet and works up from there.
- Ideally you want to drop from your standing position down into your set position.
- Develop a comfortable standing position behind F2.
- A wide stance encourages more stability.
- Keep your eyes centered on the pitcher.
- Position your eyes to line up with the inside line of the batter's box.
- Set your feet in a heel (of the F2) to toe (of the slot foot) and heel (of the slot foot) to toe (of the non-slot foot) pattern.
- Keep the slot foot straight and its protection forward.
- The back foot should flair up to 45 degrees for balance and fit behind the catcher.

### **Dropping to a Set Position (Position B):**

- Watch as F1 begins his motion, lifts his leg and reaches his arm back to deliver the pitch.
- Then, drop to a set position, like sitting in a chair and lock into position.
- Use your legs (not your back) to adjust your head height.
- Lean forward only enough to keep your balance.
- Drop into your set position by the time F1 releases the pitch.

### **Set Position Goals:**

- Your eyes should be three (3) or six (6) inches inside of the plate.
- Set your eyes a little (ball width) higher than the top of the batter's upper strike zone limit.
- Your chin should not be below the top of F2's head and never below his ear.
- Lock in your elbows into your body.
- Establishing the stillness of a locked position and open visual field readies PU for the pitch-tracking phase that begins by following the ball well with your eyes.

### **Pitch Tracking:**

- Follow the pitch with your eyes – not your head
- See the ball from the pitcher's release through F2's mitt with both eyes.
- Great observation leads to great evaluation.

### **Evaluation:**

- Maximize data gathering abilities - alignment of your visual field.

- Square your head and body comfortably to the plate
- Your natural tendency is to react immediately upon seeing a pitch. (PAUSE)
- Allow your eyes to perceive, process and evaluate all the visual input
- Then, display the result.

### Signal & Call:

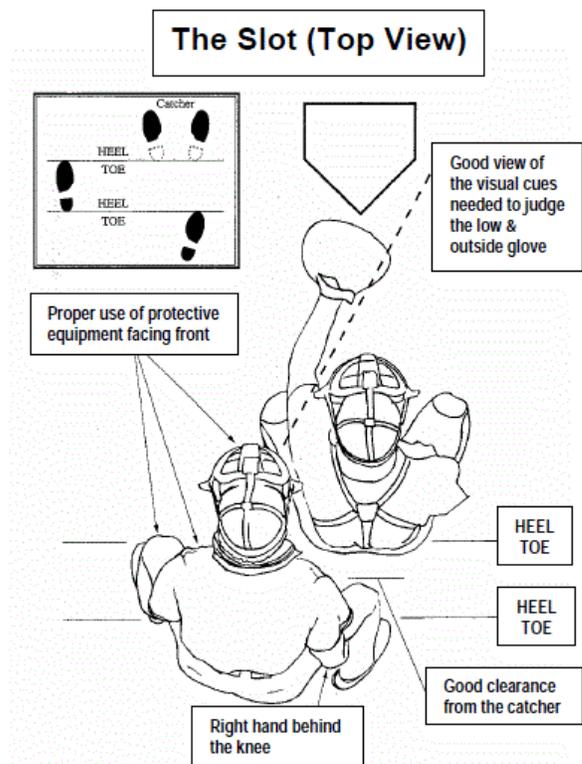
- After evaluation, make the call.
- If the pitch is a ball, remain in the set position and say "Ball".
- The distance from the zone will dictate how loudly you call the ball.
  - \* If it is a borderline or marginal (close) pitch, then yell out "ball" almost as loud as you say, "strike" in order to sell the call.
  - \* If it is in the dirt or obviously out of the zone, then a soft "Ball" or no call at all may be necessary because everyone in the park knows the pitch is a ball.
- If the pitch is a strike, then stand up tall, and simultaneously do the hammer strike mechanic and say "Strike".
  - \* Remember, all called strikes must be sold because you are increasing the batter's difficulty in battling the pitcher.
  - \* If the pitch is swung & missed, stand & merely give the strike mechanic without voice.
- Everyone in the park can see that the batter has swung at the pitch.
- Remain focused on the ball as you call the pitch.

### Relax Between Pitches:

- After each pitch, step back and relax until F1 is back on the rubber.
- Be sure to watch the ball at all times.

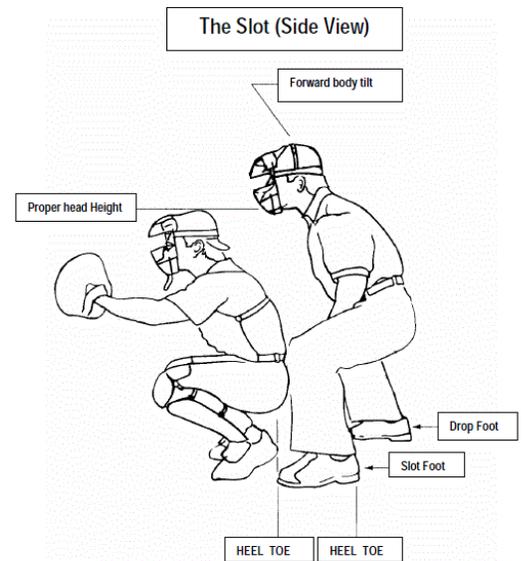
### Look for the following concepts displayed in the drawing (Overhead View):

- "Heel-Toe-Heel-Toe" (H/T/H/T) foot alignment squares the body and head comfortably to the strike zone without twisting
- H/T/H/T positions the plate umpire's head forward while leaving sufficient area between the catcher and umpire to prevent bumping or hindering the other's work
- "Slot" foot squared to the pitcher for protection & the back or "drop" foot (and knee) flair pointing to 1<sup>st</sup> base – produce an efficient "fit" or "clearance" behind the catcher
- Head is in the "slot" between the batter and catcher inside of the plate (slot-in) and forward (slot-forward) with H/T/H/T alignment – both angle the umpire's vision cleanly around the catcher's head & torso
- The umpire's body is comfortably in a "set" position behind and inside of the catcher
- Line of sight vision of the inside corner established by "slot-in"
- Slot in & forward allows vision past the outside corner for seeing the pitch caught
- Elbows are tight against the body and hands are comfortably positioned for the pitch.



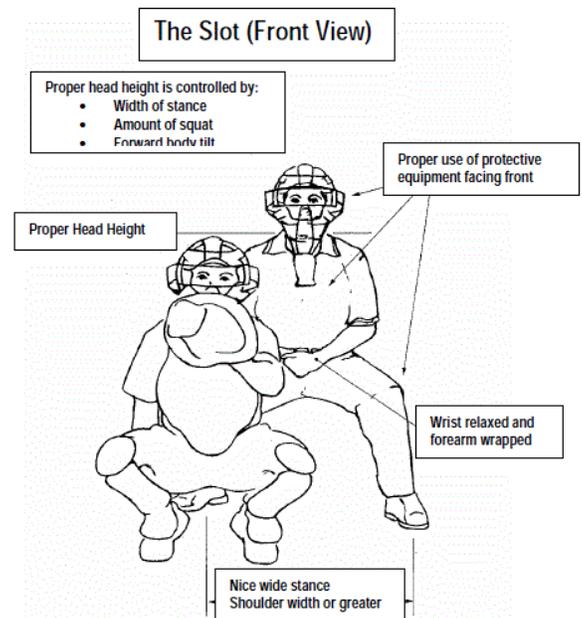
**Look for the following concepts displayed in the drawing (Side View):**

- Heel-Toe-Heel-Toe (H/T/H/T):
  - \* Slot foot is Square to the pitcher
  - \* Drop (back) foot is pointing to 1<sup>st</sup> base (45 degree angle from the pitcher)
  - \* The umpire fits behind & around the catcher while maintaining clearance
- The stance is balanced over the feet without twisting or leaning
- The umpire is locked into a stable “set” position
- Head height (established by: Foot width, squat & lean) is umpire’s chin at the top of the catcher’s head
- Protective equipment is mostly forward



**Look for the following concepts displayed in the drawing (Front View):**

- The feet are placed well and are wide apart
- Wide foot width helps establish a solid base for your stance and is the most important element to establishing head height
- The umpire has great squat (the next most important element to head height)
- There is very little lean forward (best used for balance purposes – too much lean reduces the slot-in by pushing the head back into the plate)
- The umpire’s head is set up inside of the catcher toward a right handed hitter (slot-in) – establishing vision without being blocked by the batter’s body
- The head height is correct – umpire’s chin is at the top of the catcher’s head
- The head height, slot-in and slot forward all are necessary to see above and around the catcher’s head and torso on those down & away pitches
- Notice the arm placement – bicep & elbow are kept tight against the body
- Again, see that the protective equipment is mostly forward



## **Strike Zone Philosophies:**

### **“New” Umpires Tendencies:**

- Believe the rule book dictates the strike zone for all levels of play.
- Think the strike zone as a "magic space" as defined in Rule 2.00.
- Believe in literal interpretation of the strike zone.
- “Ball” a pitch that misses the zone by the slightest distance.
- Have a tendency of “balling” marginal pitches when unsure.
- They lack confidence in their officiating.

**Problem** – These characteristics lead to fewer strikes, fewer swings and fewer bat-ball contacts, miring games in long counts and walks. The solution is merely to adjust your thinking.

### **Nature of our dilemma:**

- Calling the zone is not an exact science.
- The strike zone was written for professional baseball.
- Youngsters don't possess the arm strength and accuracy of professional ballplayers.

### **Think strikes - Assume strikes until proven a ball!**

- The strike zone provides the balance between offense and defense.
- View the strike zone as a concept, not an absolute.
- On the questionable pitch, give the benefit of the doubt to the pitcher. **THINK STRIKES!**
  - \* Assume the pitch is a strike unless convinced otherwise.
- To advance, batters must hit aggressively.
  - \* Aggressive strike zones keep teams focused on hitting, fielding & pitching but not walking.
  - \* Motivate the offense to swing the bat by stretching your zone as liberally as feasible.
- The strike zone becomes much easier to call when batters aggressively swing the bat.
  - \* Each pitch swung at gets one more strike without PU making a decision.
  - \* A swing may put the ball in jeopardy – results in action, excitement and outs.
  - \* Aggressive play greatly reduces the number of decisions at the plate.

### **Importance of “Timing”:**

- Don't just freeze frame or photograph the pitch at the front of the plate.
- Judging strikes isn't a reaction or instantaneous judgment as the ball breaks through a pane of glass
- It is a time/distance interval process of evaluation.
- Evaluate the area from just in front of the plate through the catcher's mitt - evaluate all the evidence.

### **Teams Need to Adjust to Your Zone:**

- Batters and coaches must adjust to your strike zone.
- Experienced coaching staffs will observe your zone and adapt after an inning or two.

### **Continue To Evaluate How The Offense Is Swinging The Bat:**

- Monitor how their counts are developing.
- If you find batters taking more pitches that are around the zone, you may be a little tight with your zone – evaluate and determine if you have been "tight" on marginal pitches. If so, then adjust your calls on the marginal pitches.
- If, however, the pitching is erratic you will have nothing to work with – it will be a long day.

**Importance of Finding a Strike on A 2-0 Count:** On a 2-0 count, look aggressively for strikes. If the pitch is "balled", the batter will probably wait for the 3-2 count to hit the ball. That almost certainly adds two more pitches per occurrence to the length of your game. But, if you ring a strike to make it a 2-1 count, the batter will be less choosy and more likely to swing the bat on all succeeding pitches. Encourage game flow and tempo.

### **Things to remember about The Slot Position**

- Proper Head Position is controlled by:
  - \* The width of the stance
  - \* The amount of the squat
  - \* Forward body tilt
- Proper foot location: From the catcher – Heel – Toe – Heel – Toe
- Track the ball to the glove with your eyes: Don't move your head.
- When calling a Ball: Stay down in the squatted position.
- When calling a Strike: Rise out of the squat position, raise your right fist high in front of you and call **"STRIKE!"**
- After each pitch: Step back and relax.

### **Check List and Topics to Discuss**

#### **Proper Uniform:**

- Clean, Shined Shoes
- Black (not white) Socks
- Gray Pants (plate, bases, combo)
- Black Belt (wide)
- Dark Undershirt (blue, black, red — not white)
- Umpire Jersey (LL patch —left shoulder)
- Cap (clean)
- Plate umpire
  - \* Protective Gear (shoes, leg guards inside pants, chest protector, mask, throat guard, cup)
  - \* Ball Bag(s) — if you are base umpire do not wear
- Base umpire in LLB minors or majors
  - \* Red Flag

**Be at game field 30 minutes before game time.**

**Umpire to Umpire conference:**

- Introductions
- Fair/Foul coverage
- Catch/No catch responsibility
- Tag-ups/Touches
- Fly balls to outfield
- Fly balls to infield
- Base umpire goes to outfield
- Coverage at 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> bases
- Live ball (restart after foul balls)
- Batted ball hits batter while in box
- Half swing (check swing)
- Umpire positioning
- Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike (Juniors/Seniors/Big League)
- Runners lane violation
- Overthrows and awarding bases
- Infield fly
- Timing plays
- Umpire hand signals
- Pick-offs, steals
- Leaving base early (Majors and Minors - 60 foot diamond)

**Pre-Game Conference at home plate:**

- Inspect equipment in dugouts (safety check)
- Introductions at Home Plate
- Collect, review and confirm line-ups
- Review playing field ground rules
- Review Player/Coach rules

**To Players:**

- No throwing bats or equipment
- Helmets must be worn at all times for all offensive players on the field
- No jewelry (except for Medical Alert)
- Hustle on and off the field

**To Manager/Coaches:**

- Are all players properly equipped?
- No arguing judgment calls by an umpire
- Do not leave the dugout until a proper time-out is granted
- Stay in dugout between innings (except on-deck batter)

**Post-Game**

- Be positive (do not criticize)
- Be open minded to your partners input
- Review important plays
- Assist with ejection report

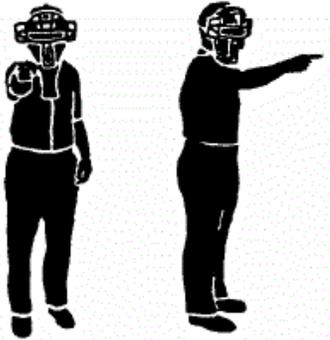
## Umpire Communication during a game

It is very important that umpires clearly communicate with everyone, including each other, throughout the game. They do this with calls and hand gestures called signals.

### Calls

These communicate what is happening during a game and are intended for everyone to see. Some calls are voice only, some are signal only with no voice, and some are both voice and signal combined.

- Play
- Balls
- Strike
- Time
- Safe
- Safe, off the bag
- Out
- Out on the tag
- Fair
- Foul
- Foul tip
- No catch
- Catch
- Infield fly
- Interference
- Obstruction
- Obstruction with time
- Runner leaves base early
- Home run



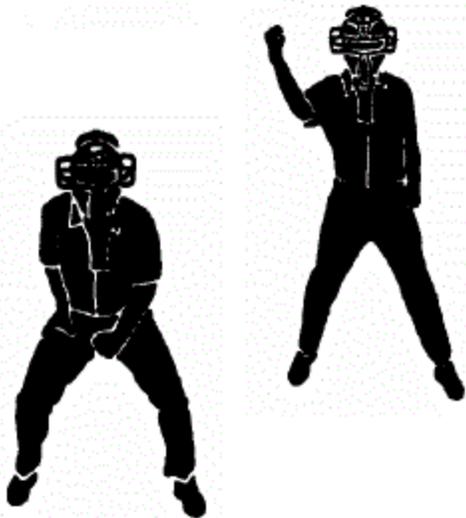
#### “Play”:

This is called by the plate umpire only. Starts the game or resumes the game when time is out.



#### “Ball”:

This is called while down with no arm signal. It is called with the number. “Ball 1, . . . 2, . . . 3, . . . 4” Not as loud as strikes. There should be no vertical or lateral body movement to indicate location.



### **“Strike”:**

This is called after rising up from the squat position.

Strikes are called loud enough to be heard in the stands.



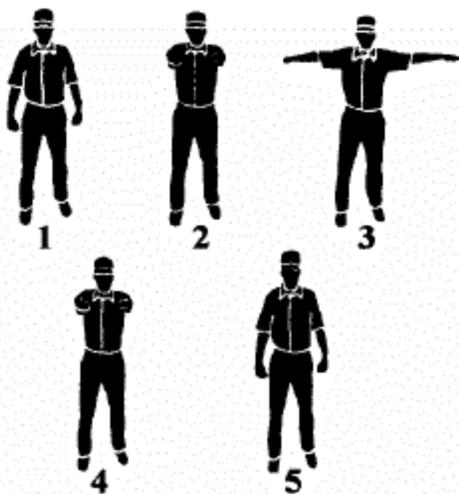
**Base Umpire**

**Plate Umpire**

### **“Time”:**

This is called by plate or base umpire.

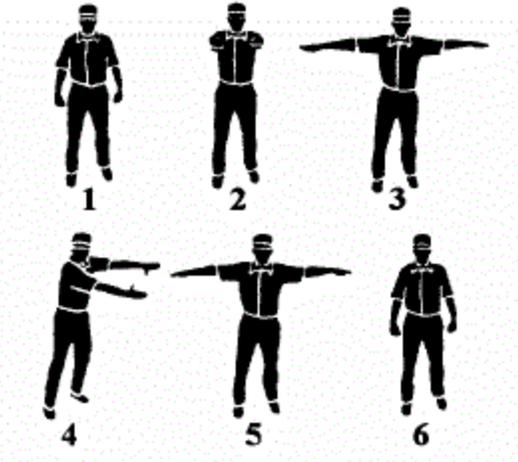
It is called loud and clear.



### **“Safe”:**

Safe calls originate from the hands-on-knees set position and end with a return to a hands-on-knees set position after the safe call.

After making this call remain set with eyes on ball in case there is an immediate play following the safe call.



**“Safe... off the bag”**

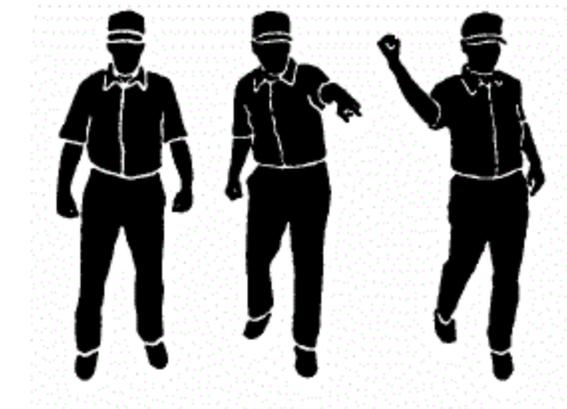
It is called on a play that pulls the fielder off the base and accompanied by a sweeping motion to indicate the call. After making this call, remain set with eyes on ball in case there is an immediate play following the safe call.



**“He’s out!”**

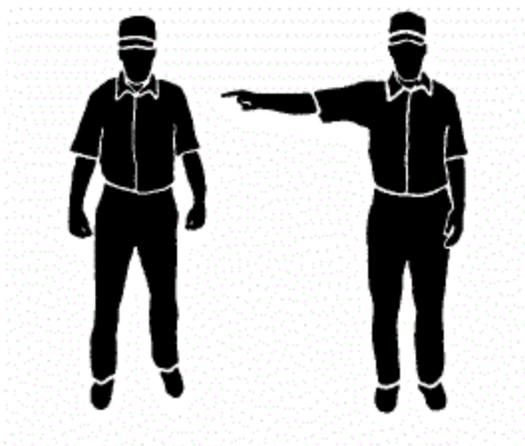
Out calls originate from the hands-on-knees set position.

Make the call in a standing position.



**“On the tag, He’s out!”**

On close plays when the first baseman tags the batter runner, point to the spot of the tag and aggressively signal this call.



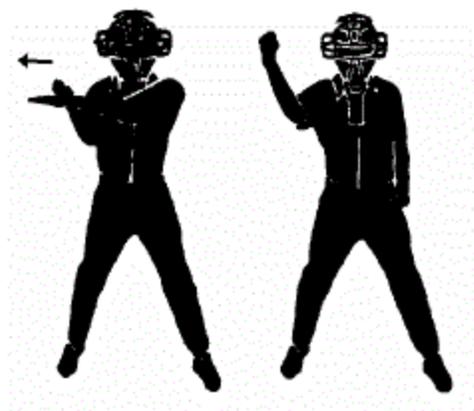
### Fair Ball

No voice is used to indicate a fair ball. It is indicated by pointing onto the field of play. Emphatically "pump" the signal on close calls. The call is made from the standing set position.



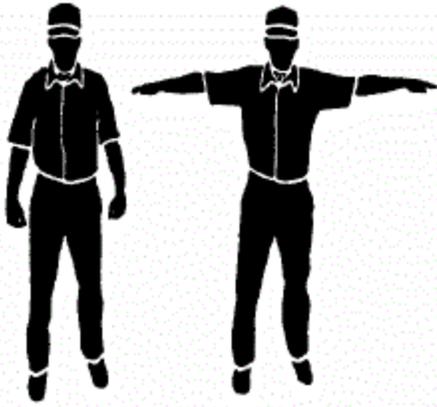
### "Foul"

Raising both arms above the head and make the call. The closer it is the more emphatic the voice and motion. When a hit ball is caught on the fly by a fielder of fair territory do NOT say anything and complete the foul signal and catch signal.



### Foul Tip

This is a non-verbal call used with a "strike" hand motion.



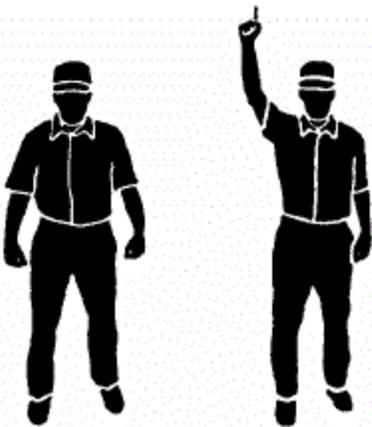
### **“No Catch”**

Called loud and clear by the umpire that has the responsibility to make the call.



### **“That’s a catch”**

It is called by plate or base umpire.  
It is called loud and clear.



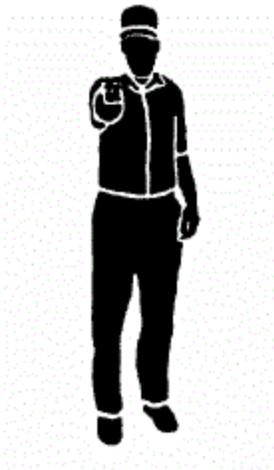
### **“Infield fly” or Infield fly, if fair”**

It is called by plate or base umpire.  
Call when the ball reaches peak height. Echo your partner if they call it.



**“Time ... That’s interference”**

It is called by plate or base umpire.  
It is called immediately when it happens.  
Follow up verbally with any base awards.



**“That’s obstruction”**

It is called by plate or base umpire.  
Call it loud and clear. Point at offender  
and let play continue. Any base awards  
are done after play concludes and time  
is called.



**Time! That’s  
obstruction.”**

It is called by plate or base  
umpire.  
It is called loud and clear.  
Base awards are done  
immediately.



### **Runner leaves base early**

It is called by base umpire only.

Drop red flag from pocket. This is a nonverbal (no voice) call. Let play continue.



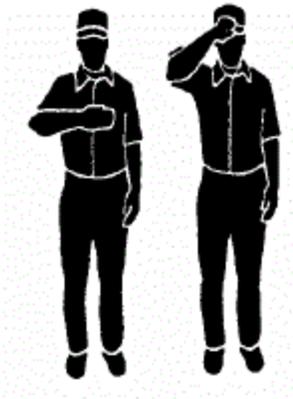
### **Home Run**

It indicates that the hit ball went over the fence.

### **Umpire to Umpire Signals**

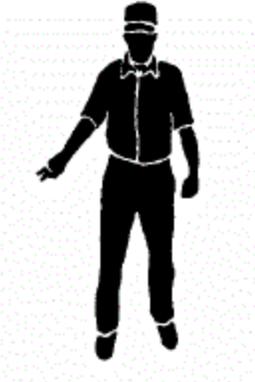
Umpires communicate with each other primarily through signals. This is because contact between umpires during a game, even between innings, should be minimized. Umpire to umpire communication should be done discretely from their normal positions whenever possible. Always echo the signal back to your partner to acknowledge you have received their signals and to confirm you agree.

- Infield fly situation
- Number of outs
- Timing play situation
- What is the count?
- The count is
  
- Plate umpire will cover 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Plate umpire will stay at Home
- Check swing
- Umpire clap



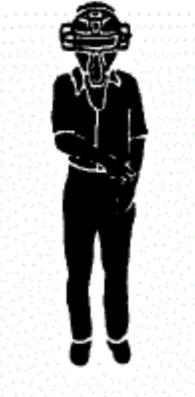
### **Infield fly situation**

It indicates 3 different ways to signal your partner that all the infield fly conditions exist.



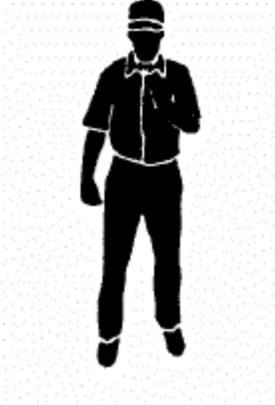
### **Number of outs**

It is done with every new batter when runner(s) are on base(s).



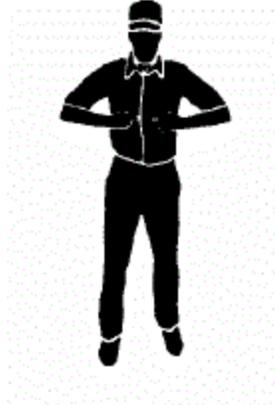
### **Timing play situation**

It indicates to your partner that you both must be aware the timing between when a runner reaches home plate and when the third out is made.



### **What is the count?**

Discretely asks your partner to tell you what they have for the current count of ball and strikes.



### **The count is**

Discretely tells your partner what you have as the current count of balls and strikes.



### **Plate umpire will cover 3<sup>rd</sup>**

It indicates to the base umpire that the plate umpire will handle any calls at third base.



### **Plate umpire will stay at home plate**

It indicates that the plate umpire intends to only cover home plate.



### **Check swing**

Plate umpire steps out from behind catcher, points to base umpire with left hand, and asks, "Did he go?"



### **Clap**

Tells your partner that you think they did a good job or made a good call.

## Key Communication Terminology

### Batting:

**"Ball, no he didn't go"**

Plate Umpire: Check swing — not a strike — give count

**"Yes, he did"**

Plate Umpire: Check swing — Point with Left Hand, strike, with hand signal — give count

**"Did he go?"**

Plate Umpire: Left hand pointing to partner

**"Yes he did" or "No he didn't"**

Base Umpire: Do hand signal for out or safe at the same time.

### Ball hit down right field line: (80 or 90 foot diamond)

**"I'm going out"**

Base Umpire: Go out on Trouble Ball, Fair/Foul, close Catch/No Catch

**"I've got the plate" or "I'm at home"**

Base Umpire: Gone out and comes back to cover home

### Infield Fly:

**"Infield fly, the batter is out"**

Either Umpire: Echo your partner. Make sure runners hear you.

**"Infield fly, if fair"**

Either Umpire: Echo your partner. Make sure runners hear you.

### Rundowns:

**"I've got it all"**

Plate Umpire: Rundown with multiple runners between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>

**"I've got this half"**

Plate Umpire: Rundown with multiple runners, handle one runner. Rundown with single runner, handle one base.

### Runner 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>

**"I've got 3<sup>rd</sup>, if he comes"**

Plate Umpire: Watch R1 if he turns 2<sup>nd</sup> – stay in foul territory

**"I've got 3<sup>rd</sup>"**

Plate Umpire: As play develops at 3<sup>rd</sup> – be ready at 3<sup>rd</sup>

**"I've got the ball"**

Plate Umpire: Going down 3<sup>rd</sup> base line on a fly ball

**"I'm on the line"**

Plate Umpire: going down 1<sup>st</sup> base line on fly ball and will not be at 3<sup>rd</sup> should the runner advance to 3<sup>rd</sup>

### Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> and fly ball to outfield: (80/90 foot diamond)

**"I've got 3<sup>rd</sup> if he tags"**

Plate Umpire: your call only if fly ball is caught

**"Going home"**

Plate Umpire: As soon as ball not caught.

### Timing Plays:

**"Run scores. Run scores. Score that run!" or "Score two runs"**

Plate Umpire: Point at home plate to let scorekeeper know

**"No run. No run"**

Plate Umpire: Wave off – not a safe signal – let scorekeeper know

### **Close plays on fly balls:**

#### **"No catch. No catch"**

Proper Umpire: On a close play give safe signal

#### **"That's a catch"**

Proper Umpire: On a close play – really sell it – give out signal

### **Miscellaneous:**

#### **"That's a balk" (not in Minor or Major Divisions)**

Base Umpire: Stand — Point at pitcher — Back to hands on knees set

Plate Umpire: Hold position - Do not stand up

#### **"On the tag, He's out!"**

Base Umpire: Only on swipe tag

#### **"Safe, off the bag, SAFE!"**

Base umpire: Make the call — explain

#### **"Safe, no tag, SAFE!"**

Base Umpire: Make the call — explain — sell it

#### **"Foul"**

Plate Umpire: Hands forward and up above head, palm forward

#### **"Play"**

Plate Umpire: Right hand point at pitcher

### **Obstruction/Interference:**

#### **"That's obstruction"**

#### **"Time, that's obstruction"**

#### **"Time, that's interference"**

### **Special Terminology:**

#### **"Backswing hit the catcher"**

#### **"Illegal Pitch"**

#### **"That's a ball! You went to your mouth!" or "Pitcher went to his mouth!"**

## **Handling Conflicts**

### **What separates the top umpires from other umpires?**

Their abilities to handle people well

### **What is the one thing that separates umpires from everyone else?**

They don't care who wins

### **What are the 5 reasons a Manager will come out to discuss a call?**

- Thinks you missed a play
- Misinterprets a rule
- To protect or support a player
- Wants the umpire to bail his team out of a mistake
- Wants to impress the crowd

### **What are the worst things you can do when a Manager does come out?**

- Say, "You can't come out here it's a judgment call"
- Say, "I don't know" or, "I did not see it"

### **What are some things an Umpire can do when a Manager does come out?**

- Calm them down "I'm not going to listen if you are going to YELL at me"
- Listen without interpretation and keep eye contact
- Don't ask confrontational questions "What did you say"
- Ask them, "What is the rule that applies to this situation"

### **Should you ever admit you missed a call?**

- Be careful (know who you are talking to/as a general rule)
- DO NOT admit you missed a call or did not see it
- Here are some possible answers "Right or wrong that's the call and I am not going to change it", "From where I had to make the call that's what I saw", "It was a tough call, I did the best I could with it" or "In my judgment that is the right call"

**NOTE:** If a Manager gets angry you might say, "OK you had your say, now please go back to the dugout and continue the game" and walk away. If he follows, warn him back to the dugout if necessary eject him. Remember that Managers that disagree with a rule call can file a protest and continue play without delay. No arguing or protesting of judgment calls is allowed per the rules.

- First time, look at dugout, mask on, & maintain position
- Next time, remove mask, look at dugout, & maintain position
- Next time, remove mask, a couple of steps, "I've heard enough". Do not threaten.
- If it is from a player don't eject anyone unless you know for sure that they are the guilty one. Ask the Manager to deal with his players. Sit them down on the bench and warn to be quiet

### **What should you do about sniper fire from the dugout?**

- First time, look at dugout, mask on, & maintain position
- Next time, remove mask, look at dugout, & maintain position
- Next time, remove mask, a couple of steps, "I've heard enough". Do not threaten.
- If it is from a player don't eject anyone unless you know for sure that they are the guilty one. Ask the Manager to deal with his players. Sit them down on the bench and warn to be quiet

### **When should you go for help?**

- If everyone starts going nuts after a call.
  - \* Example: Play at the Plate. Dropped ball - Plate umpire did not see drop. Manager comes out. If you (base umpire) saw what happened, stop the Manager. Get together with partner and tell what you saw. Not changing his call, just providing information he may not have. If the call is changed DO NOT let the other Manager get involved because you did not allow the first Manager to come out. You can say, "what are you doing out here?"
  - \* Example: If Manager does come out and you go for help. Say, "I'm going to ask my partner if he saw it differently. If he did I will change the call, but if he didn't then we are done and you going back to the dugout."
- Go for help if you are totally screened out of the play.
- Don't let your partner die with an obvious wrong call such as dropped ball on a tag or pulled foot at 1<sup>st</sup> base.

### **What should you do about Zoo Situations?**

- Umpire should not make a call putting a runner into jeopardy. Example: runner at first, catch/no catch, no one makes a call, now two runners at 1<sup>st</sup>, runners hung up!
  - \* Call time, get umpires together and reconstruct the play around what could have been expected to happen if umpires would have made the catch/no catch call immediately. Then get both coaches together and tell them what the ruling is (right or wrong - no discussion that's what we have). Try to give them each a "piece of the pie"
- Eject a player for language and Manager asks what he said.
  - \* "I will tell you, but if you repeat it or you act in a manner that you agree with him you are going with him. Now do you still want me to tell you what he said?"

**What should you do about a pitcher showing emotion?**

- Call time, brush the plate and quietly send a message through the catcher
- Get the Manager and pitcher together between innings
- Last resort — Warning next incident ejection

**What should you do about a batter drawing lines or other displeasure?**

- Don't embarrass yourself— get into his head
- Resolve right away

**What should you do about a catcher holding pitches and other displeasure?**

- Stop it immediately
- Don't let him turn around on you
- If Manger asks, "where was that pitch catcher?" — Inform catcher you are going to tell him what to say
- Let the catcher talk to the Manager, he has more credibility

**When you get together with the other umpire in middle of a game you are signally everyone:**

- You don't know what happened
- You don't know what to do with it

**Guidelines to avoid trouble**

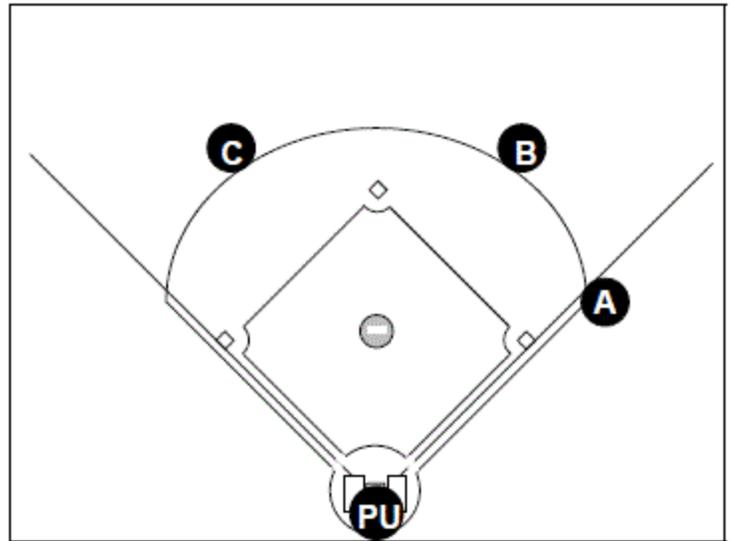
- Dress and act professionally, it will make you look right, even if you are not.
- Do a pre-game meeting at the plate
- You MUST keep calm even when others are not. If you lose your cool you lose everything!
- Let a Manager have their say — be approachable
- When you are done, walk away.
- If you warn someone, follow through or you lose credibility. The other dugout and fans are watching you
- Do NOT be a tough guy or smart aleck.

## Field Positions

### Position of Base Umpire when batter is up

Major and minor leagues only

- A. Bases empty
- B. Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> base
- C. Runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base
- C. Runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> base
- C. Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>
- C. Runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>
- C. Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>

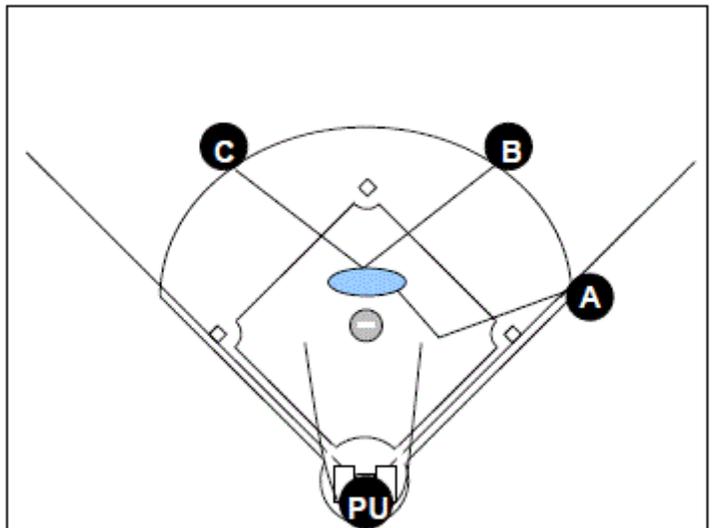


### Position of Umpire when ball is hit to the outfield

Major and minor leagues only

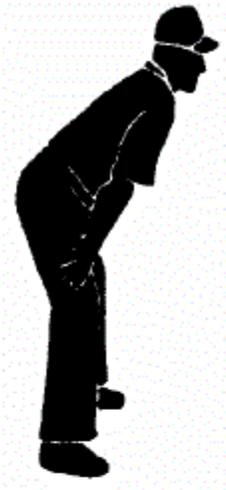
Base umpire moves into the infield and watches the runners tag bases and pivots to stay ahead of the runner, not behind.

Plate umpire moves into the infield, in the direction of the ball, only if the base umpire goes out.

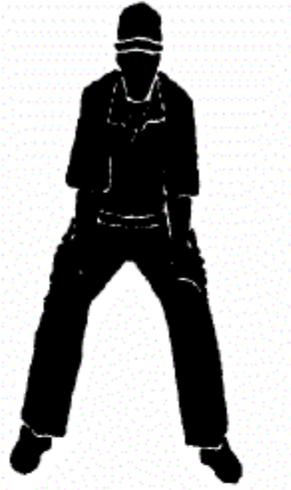


**Set Positions**

Hands on Knees Set Position:



Side View

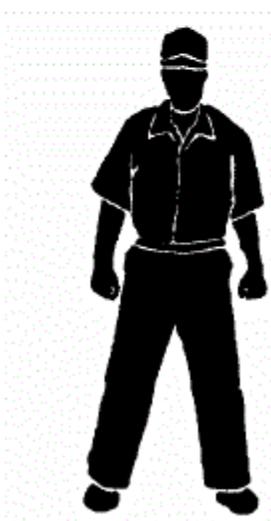


Front View

Standing Set Position:



Side View



Front View

## Batting Out of Order

<b>Discovered while improper Batter is at bat</b>	<b>Discovered after Improper batter is at bat, and before next pitch, play or attempted play</b>	<b>Discovered after improper Batter is at bat and after Next pitch, play or Attempted play</b>
Either offense or defense can appeal	Only defense can appeal	Only defense can appeal
Proper batter takes place In batter's box and assumes Count	Proper batter is called out	Improper batter and his/her Actions are legal
All base runners advances Are legal	Base runners advances Dues to actions of Improper batter are Nullified – other advances Are legal	All base runner advances Are legal
All base runners advances Are legal	Next batter is the one Whose name on the lineup follows that of the proper batter who was called out. <b>Never reorder the lineup</b>	Batting order continues with Batter following legalized Improper batter. <b>Never reorder the lineup</b>

## 10 Commandments of Umpiring

1. Keep your eyes on the ball.
2. Keep all personalities out of your work. Forget and forgive.
3. Avoid sarcasm. Don't insist on the last word.
4. Never charge a player, and above all, no pointing your finger and yelling.
5. Hear only the things you should hear — be deaf to others.
6. Keep your temper. A decision made in anger is never sound.
7. Watch your language.
8. Take pride in your work at all times. Respect for an umpire is created both off and on the field.
9. Review your work. You will find that 90% of the trouble is traceable to not hustling or staying focused.
10. No matter what your opinion is of another umpire never make an adverse comment regarding them. To do so is unprofessional.

## **Principles of Umpiring**

### **Pause, Read, and React**

Read the position of the fielders to help determine the play.

### **Pivot**

Enables you to get into position on the field

### **Watch the ball, glance at the runners**

You must know when to take your eyes off the ball.

### **Chest to ball**

Always face the ball at all times.

### **Angle/Distance**

Angle first! Get as much distance as play will allow.

### **Be Set**

You must be set to see the play. You must see the play to make the call.

### **Timing**

Proper use of the eyes - wait until you see it all happen.

### **Adjust**

Do this constantly t every play.

### **Open the gate**

Know when to do it.

### **Echo your partner**

Know responsibilities for balks, overthrows, & time out means less confusion on the field.

# Baseball & Softball Myths

## 1. The hands are considered a part of the bat.

The hands are and have always been a part of a person's body. If a pitch hits the batter's hands the ball is dead... **period**... end of discussion. If the pitch is swung at and it hits the hands (or any part of the body), a strike is called (NOT a foul) and the ball is dead for striking the batter's person. If the batter was avoiding the pitch, the batter is awarded first base, as long as the batter was not struck while the ball was in the strike zone.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 Definition of Terms: PERSON, TOUCH, STRIKE (e)

## 2. The home plate umpire can overrule any other umpire at any time.

**No** umpire may overrule another umpire's call! **EVER!!** Once an umpire has made a call, he may ask another umpire for additional information, but it is always up to the umpire that made the original call to reverse his decision, if appropriate.

**LL Playing Rules:** 9.02 (c)

## 3. Tie always goes to the runner.

There are NO ties in baseball. The runner is either out or safe, this is a judgment call by the umpire.

**LL Playing Rules:** *There is no mention of a tie in the Little League Rules*

*NOTE: A general rule of thumb here is to "watch" for the ball entering the glove and "listen" for the foot hitting the bag.*

## 4. In baseball, if the batter does not remove the bat from over home plate on a bunt attempt, it's a strike

A strike is an attempt to hit the ball. Simply holding the bat over the plate is not an attempt. A bunt is a batted ball not swung at, but INTENTIONALLY met with the bat and tapped slowly. The key words are "intentionally met with the bat" If no attempt is made to make contact with a ball outside the strike zone while in the bunting stance, it should be called a ball. An effort must be made to intentionally meet the ball with the bat.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 Definition of Terms: Bunt

*NOTE: As of 2010 this is not the case in any level of Softball. In softball, if a batter who does not withdrawal the bat on a bunt attempt, it is a strike.*

## 5. The batter/runner is "in jeopardy" to be put out if he or she turns left after overrunning first base.

The batter/runner may not be tagged out after overrunning or over-sliding first base if he or she returns **immediately** to the base. The direction of the turn is not important as long as there is **no intent** to advance.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.08 (c) - EXCEPTION

## 6. The batter can never be called out for interference if he is in the batter's box.

The batter is not protected in any way by being in the batter's box. A batter may be called out for making any movement that hinders the catcher's play at home plate. This **does not** have to be intentional.

**LL Playing Rules:** 6.06 (c)

## 7. It is a strike anytime the barrel of the bat crosses the front of the home plate on a checked swing.

This is a judgment call by the umpire! How far the bat traveled or "breaking the wrists" are simply guides to use when making this judgment call. These are **not** rules.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 Definition of Terms: STRIKE (a)

**8. A batter who bats out of order is always the person declared out.**

The important concept here is the PROPER batter. The PROPER batter is the one who may be called out, on appeal, for failing to bat in his or her proper order. When an appeal is made (before the next pitch to a batter of either team, or the next play OR attempted play), any advances of base runners because of the actions of the improper batter shall be nullified. Advances made by any runner due to mistakes by the defense (passed ball, wild pitch, balk, etc.) will be allowed.

**LL Playing Rules:** 6.07 (a, b)

**9. The batter is out if he or she hits the ball with their foot touching home plate.**

A batter is out if they hit the ball with one or both feet on the ground entirely outside the batter's box. It's possible the toe could be on the plate and the heel could be touching the line of the box, which means the foot is not entirely outside the box.

**LL Playing Rules:** 6.06 (a)

*NOTE: If the ball is hit with a foot entirely outside the batter's box, whether fair OR foul, the batter is out.*

**10. The batter may not overrun first base when he or she gets a base-on-balls.**

Nothing prohibits a batter/runner from overrunning first base on a base on balls, as long as they return immediately to the bag. Again, any "intent" to advance beyond first base would place the batter/runner in jeopardy.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.08 (c and j)

**11. A runner is out anytime he or she makes contact with a base coach.**

The runner is out ONLY if the coach PHYSICALLY ASSISTS the runner, by touching or holding him or her in returning to or leaving the base.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.09 (h)

*NOTE: Hand slaps, back pats or simple touches are not physical assists.*

**12. The runner must always slide when the play is close.**

There is **NO** "must slide" rule in Little League. The rule states a runner is out when they do not slide or attempt to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag. The key here is "fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag." A fielder *without* the ball should never be blocking a base or home plate!

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.08 (a)(3)

**13. The batter is not awarded first base if he or she gets hit by a pitch after it bounces.**

A batter is awarded first base anytime he or she is hit by a pitched ball unless the pitch is swung at, the pitch is in the strike zone when it hits the batter or the batter makes no attempt to avoid the pitch. What happens to the pitch on the way to the plate plays no role in the award.

**LL Playing Rules:** 6.08 (b)

*NOTE: Young players have a tendency to "freeze" when they see a ball heading their way. You should not interpret this as not making an attempt to avoid.*

**14. The runner is safe if they are hit by a batted ball while standing on a base.**

All three bases are in *fair* territory. A runner is out when hit by a fair batted ball before the ball has passed a fielder other than the pitcher. There is nothing special about any base that will protect a runner in this situation. **Exception:** A runner is not out if standing on a base and he or she is touched by an infield-fly.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.08 (f)

**15. A runner is safe if the fielder tags the base with his or her glove while holding the ball in their bare hand.**

A runner is out anytime a fielder "tags" the runner or the base with secure possession of the ball in a hand or glove. This is no different than tagging the base with the foot while the ball is in the glove.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 TAG; 7.08 (e)

**16. The batter-runner is always out if he runs outside the three-foot running lane after a bunted ball.**

The batter/runner is out when running the last half of the distance between home plate and first base, while the ball is being fielded if he or she is outside the three-foot lane and interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base. The key point here is that the batter/runner **must** interfere with the fielder taking the throw. If there is no throw, there cannot be a violation. If the throw is not a quality throw or is not catchable; there is no violation.

**LL Playing Rules:** 6.05 (j)

*NOTE: It is possible the batter/runner could be called for interference even while in the three-foot lane, if he or she does something that in the umpire's judgment prevents a fielder from making a play.*

**17. The batter is out anytime a batted or bunted ball hits the bat a second time.**

A batter is out when "after hitting or bunting a fair ball, the bat hits the ball a second time in fair territory." The key point in this rule is whether the bat hits the ball or the ball hits the bat. The batter is out in the first instance. If a batter drops the bat and backspin, or some other action, causes the ball to hit the bat a second time the ball is alive and in play.

**LL Playing Rules:** 6.05 (g)

**18. The batter may not switch the side of the plate he or she is hitting from after two strikes.**

The batter is out when "stepping from one batter's box to the other while the pitcher is in position ready to pitch;" otherwise he or she is allowed to switch sides whenever they wish.

**LL Playing Rules:** 6.06 (b)

**19. A batted ball that hits home plate is a foul ball.**

Home plate, as well as all of the bases, is all completely in fair territory, however it is treated a little differently than the other three bases when it comes to fair and foul. A batted ball hitting home plate can be foul or fair depending on the path of the ball after it hits home plate. In the event a batted ball should "settle" with any part of the ball touching home plate it is a *fair ball*.

**LL Playing Rules:** 1.05; 2.00 - FAIR BALL

*NOTE: Anytime a batted ball hits any of the other three bases it is **always** a fair ball!*

**20. The ball is always dead on a foul-tip.**

A Foul Tip is a "batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught." The ball must be caught to be a foul tip and any foul tip that is caught is a strike and the ball is in play.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - FOUL TIP

**21. The batter is out if he starts for the dugout before heading to first base after a dropped third strike. (Major League and above)**

The batter becomes a runner when a third strike is not caught when first base is unoccupied with less than 2 outs, or with first base occupied if there are 2 outs. The batter does not forfeit his/her opportunity to advance to first base until he/she enters the dugout or other dead ball territory.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - CATCH; 6.09 (b)

*NOTE: The definition of a catch requires it be caught "in flight." Any pitch that bounces before reaching home plate is not considered to have been caught in this situation and a batter may advance if permitted anytime this happens on a third strike.*

**22. All runners get two bases from the time of the throw when a thrown ball goes out-of-play.**

When a wild throw is the first play by an infielder, the awarding of bases, shall be governed by the position of the runners at the time the ball was pitched; in all other cases (the second throw by an infielder or a throw or relay from the outfield) the award shall be governed by the position of the runners at the time the wild throw was made.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.05 (g)

*NOTE: If all runners, including the batter-runner have advanced at least one base when an infielder makes a wild throw on the first play after the pitch, the award shall be governed by the position of the runners when the wild throw was made.*

**23. A runner is out anytime he or she runs the bases in reverse order.**

A runner is out for running the bases in reverse order for the purpose of confusing the defense or making a travesty of the game. A runner may indeed run the bases in reverse order to correct a base running mistake, (a missed base, returning on a tag or in a rundown, etc.). If necessary, the runner MUST retrace his steps and retouch each base in reverse order.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.08 (i); 7.10 (b)

*NOTE: Should the batter/runner get in a rundown between first base and home plate and return and touch home plate, he or she is OUT.*

**24. A runner may never steal on a foul tip.**

As previously mentioned, a Foul Tip is a "batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught." The ball must be caught to be a foul tip and any foul tip that is caught is a strike and the ball is in play. Nothing prevents the runner from attempting to steal on a foul tip.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - FOUL TIP

**25. An appeal on a runner failing to touch a base can never be a force out.**

A runner is out when he or she fails to touch the next base after that runner has been forced to advance by reason of the batter becoming a runner. An appeal that a runner missed second on a single by the batter would indeed be a force play.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.08 (e)

*NOTE: If the previous situation were to happen with two outs, the appeal would be the third out, and since it was a force play and no runs would be allowed to score.*

**26. A runner is out anytime he or she runs more than three feet out of the baseline.**

A runner is only out when: "running more than three feet away from his/her baseline **to avoid** being tagged." A runner is out for interference who does not avoid a fielder attempting to field a **batted** ball.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.08 (a)(1); 7.09(l)

**27. No runners may advance when an infield fly is called.**

The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of being caught or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any other fly ball. The only difference between an Infield Fly and another fly ball is that the runners are never forced to advance because the batter is out whether the ball is caught or not.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - INFIELD FLY

**28. A batter may not hit a pitch that bounces before it reaches home plate.**

A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. A batter may always attempt to hit any pitch that is delivered by the pitcher.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - PITCH

**29. If the pitcher starts his windup and then stops it is always considered a ball on the batter.**

Almost all instances (see NOTE, below) of an illegal pitch (Penalty: a ball on the 60 foot field, a balk for Junior League and above) can only occur with a man on base. As above, a pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. If the ball is not delivered, it is not a pitch and hence can't be called a "Ball." If the ball slips from the pitchers hand and crosses the foul line it is considered a pitch, and called a "Ball," unless it passes through the strike zone. If no runners are on base and a dropped ball do not cross the foul line it is "No pitch."

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - PITCH; 8.05 (a - m)

*NOTE: A "Quick Pitch" (any pitch delivered before the batter is reasonably set) or if a pitcher makes any motion naturally associated with the pitch while not touching the pitcher's plate should ALWAYS be ruled an illegal pitch, in Junior League and above; a ball with no runners on base or a balk if runners are on base.*

**30. The pitcher must always come to a set position before attempting to make a pick-off throw.**

In Junior League and above, it is an illegal pitch (balk) if the pitcher delivers the pitch from Set Position without coming to a stop. There is nothing that requires a pitcher to stop before attempting a pick-off throw.

**LL Playing Rules:** 8.05 (m)

**31. The batter/runner is out if he high-fives other players before crossing the plate after hitting a homerun over the fence.**

"Each runner including the batter-runner may, without liability to be put out, advance to home base...if a fair ball goes out of the playing field in flight." *Keep in mind that many Little Leaguers cannot act like "They've done it before!"*

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.05 (a)

**32. If the third out is called on a runner failing to tag-up on a fly out, no previous runner may score.**

Once a fly ball is caught, the batter is out, thus removing any force play on the runners. This now becomes a "timing play." If a runner on third tags and scores BEFORE a trialing runner is called out on appeal for failing to tag up, the run will count.

**LL Playing Rules:** 4.09 (a) - APPROVED RULING

**33. The pitcher must always step off the rubber before attempting a pick-off throw.**

When the pitcher is properly touching the pitching plate in either the Windup or Set position, he or she has several options, one of which is "step and throw to a base in an attempt to pick off a runner."

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.08 (a and c)

*NOTE: A pitcher who does step of the rubber properly as detailed in the rest of Rule 7.08 is now considered a fielder, and the penalties for balls thrown into dead ball territory are different than if the pitcher throws the ball into dead ball territory while on the rubber.*

**34. "Time" is immediately called when a pitcher commits a balk.**

Almost all instances of a balk are a delayed dead ball. When a pitcher commits a balk, simply call "Balk" and let the play or pitch proceed. If there is a pitch following a balk and the batter reaches first base AND ALL runners advance at least one base, the play will proceed without reference to the balk. If the batter

does not swing at the pitch it will be NEITHER a ball nor a strike UNLESS it is ball four awarding the batter first base and forcing ALL other runners to advance. If a pitcher balks and throws wild to a base, the runner or runners may advance at their own risk, however if put out at a base beyond which they are entitled, the out stands.

**LL Playing Rules:** 8.05 (a - m)

**35. The ball must always be returned to the pitcher before any appeal can be made.**

The most important requirement for an appeal is that the ball be "Live." If so, there is no need for the ball to first go to the pitcher. If an appeal is made any time after "Time" has been called, then the ball or a new ball must be returned to the pitcher and the umpire must call "Play" before any appeal could be attempted.

**LL Playing Rules:** 7.10 (d)

**36. If a player touches a ball while his feet are in fair territory, it is always a fair ball.**

A ball is always judged fair or foul based on the position of the ball and not the fielder at the time the ball is touched. The position of the player's feet or any other part of the body has no bearing on the ruling of fair or foul.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - FAIR (NOTE)

**37. If a fielder catches a fly ball in the field of play and then falls over the fence in fair territory, it is a homerun.**

As long as the fielder maintains control of the ball in the glove or hand and "voluntarily" releases the ball this is a legal catch. If the fielder remains on his feet in dead ball territory after the catch, the ball is alive, runners may advance and the fielder may make a play.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - CATCH; 7.04 (c)

*NOTE: If a fielder falls (i.e. no longer on their feet) into dead ball territory after making a catch with less than two outs all runners are entitled to advance one base.*

**38. If a fielder takes two steps after catching a fly ball it is considered a catch.**

The two important factors in determining a catch are first, the fielder must have SECURE possession of the ball in flight in either the hand or glove and second the release of the ball must be voluntary and intentional. Regardless of how many steps or how much time elapses, a fielder who loses control of a ball after falling, diving, making contact with a fence or another player will not be judged to have made a catch.

**LL Playing Rules:** 2.00 - CATCH

**39. The ball is dead anytime an umpire is hit by the ball.**

The ball is only dead if an umpire is hit by a batted ball before it passes a fielder, other than the pitcher (this should **NEVER** happen at the Little League level or below.) If a batted ball hits an umpire after passing a fielder, or a thrown ball hits the umpire, the ball is "Live" and in play.

**LL Playing Rules:** 5.09 (f)

*NOTE: The ball also remains live when an umpire interferes with the catcher's throw attempting to retire a batter. If the catcher is able to complete the throw and retire the runner, the out stands, otherwise all runners return to the base previously occupied*