

**Little League Baseball Headquarters** wants to sincerely thank all those Volunteer Umpires who made contributions to this publication.

John Ambler, Umpire-in-Chief Southern Region and Staff  
Frank Poficano, Umpire-in- Chief, Eastern Region and Staff  
Steve Sorenson, Umpife-in- Chief, Central Region and Staff  
Mike Wright, Umpire-in-Chief, Western Region and Staff

And especially Mario Garrido, Southern Region Staff Umpire who put forth a tremendous amount of time and effort to make this publication the valuable training aid it was meant to be for all the Volunteer Umpires.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

This publication has been written to assist the Little League Volunteer Umpires to better understand how to apply the rules of Little League Baseball and the proper mechanics of umpiring.

The material contained within has been taken from the Little League Rule Book, The Professional Baseball Official Rule Interpretations, The Umpire Development Manual (Professional Baseball), The National Baseball Congress of American Umpires Manual and existing Little League publications.

At no time should this publication be utilized in place of the Little League Official Rules for a game decision. This is not a recognized Little League rule book.

**PLEASE NOTE: ANY PLACE IN THIS PUBLICATION WHERE THE TERMS HE, HIM, HIS AND MEN ARE USED, WE ARE ALSO REFERRING TO SHE, HER, AND WOMEN.**

**LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL DOES NOT LIMIT PARTICIPATION IN ITS ACTIVITIES ON THE BASIS OF DISABILITY.**

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**CHAPTER 1**  
**THE VOLUNTEER UMPIRE**

Character, good judgment, ability to get along with youngsters and the desire to do the job well are the attributes of a good umpire. This is only part of what it takes to be a Little League umpire.

The adult volunteer is also a person who commands respect, knows the rules of the game and reacts intuitively to play situations which dictate the umpire's position.

Since the advent of baseball, the umpire has occupied a unique role. As sole judge and jury the umpires authority is unquestioned, but the dignity with which each umpire exercise duties, the good judgment and common sense they apply in the interpretation of the Rule Book are the hallmarks of an efficient and well respected official.

The theory that paying umpires guarantees competence is not only fallacious, but contrary to Little League policies. It is also a fallacy to believe, that because an umpire is a volunteer that he could not be as professional in his umpiring mechanics and knowledge of the rules as any major league umpire.

The Little League Volunteer Umpire could be one of the most important volunteers in the local league structure.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN UMPIRING AT ANY LEVEL**

**UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT**

The utmost importance to the novice, as well as the experienced umpire, is his or her uniform and equipment. Appearance is a solid attribute to good umpiring. The well-groomed umpire creates an atmosphere of respect and dignity. The approved uniform is light blue shirt and the Little League Umpire patch affixed to the upper left sleeve of the shirt. Navy blue, black or gray pants. Plate cap navy blue or black (short visor), base cap with (longer visor). Black belt and shoes with navy blue or black socks.

Standard equipment should include special shoes (for plate umpire) with instep protector and box toe; ball and strike indicator, small broom or brush for cleaning home plate, chest protector, protective cup, shin guards and face mask. The ball bag must also be navy blue, black or gray. Your ball and strike indicator was designed for your left hand not your right, and shin guards should always be worn under your pants leg.

It is very important to shine your shoes before every game and to keep both uniform and equipment immaculately clean. Sloppy dress will give the impression of sloppy work. Your uniform is a reflection of the pride you demonstrate in your umpiring. Proper fit and cleanliness are essential. Generally, the first impression people have of the umpire is his personal appearance. Your decorum is something you can control.

**FRATERNIZATION**

Umpires must not carry on idle conversations with manager, coaches or players during the progress of a game or with other umpires unless proper officiating of the game requires it. Actual conversation and contact between umpires during the game should be minimized; however, there are going to be times when umpires have a legitimate need to get together.

**HANDLING SITUATIONS**

Compare two umpires with nearly the same ability. One can have more success than the other simply because he is able to react to unusual situations. It is expected that the players, managers and coaches will become emotional. When the umpire

becomes emotional too, a critical situation is created. It is possible to keep your poise through trying situations.

### PROPER POSITION

Quite often a play will **call itself** if you are in proper position. it is impossible to make a call without guessing if you have the wrong angle on a play. Study and practice until you know what position you should be in and how to get there. It is impossible to be in the perfect position for all plays as the play does not always develop as **Three important factors to remember in positioning are ANGLE, DISTANCE ALVD TIMING.**  
**Angle is more important than distance!!**

### DESIRE

Perhaps the most important trait of an umpire is desire. A real umpire can show desire in a number of ways. With lots of hustle, honesty and understanding he is always willing to learn from others and his own mistakes. If he resents constructive criticism, then he is missing the most important trait, **desire.**

### DISAGREEMENTS AND EJECTIONS

All umpires are expected to be perfect at the start of each game and to get better as the game progresses. Because this is not always the case, there are bound to be disagreements. When emotions run high with players, coaches, and umpires, it must be the umpires that have control. Umpires must expect disagreements and remain calm in keeping control of players, coaches, and managers. A manager's disagreement can usually be handled in a firm but gentlemanly manner. Ejections from a game whether a player, manager, or coach should be a last resort, but umpires must control the game. If an ejection is necessary to maintain control, do it! Umpires must establish control with their decision making abilities, and respond to players and coaches in a firm but courteous manner. Extreme verbal and/or physical abuse must not and will not be tolerated. Report such incidents through proper channels so that these situations may be corrected.

### HANDLING DISAGREEMENTS

**THE FIRST STEP IN HANDLING DISAGREEMENTS IS BEING ABLE TO  
RECOGNIZE WHEN YOU'ARE MOST LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER THEM.**



\* Keep all personalities out of your work. You must be able to forgive and forget. Every game is a new game.

\* Cooperate with your partners and help each other. Don't hesitate to ask for assistance if you are blocked out on a play. The main objective is to have all decisions ultimately correct.

\* Avoid sarcastic comments. Don't insist on the last word. If, after an argument, a manager is walking away let him go!

\* Never charge a manager or follow him if he is moving away; and do not point your finger or use violent gestures during an argument.

\* Keep your temper. A decision or an action taken in anger is never sound.

\* Watch your language! Never use language toward a player, coach, or manager which, if directed at the umpire, would result in the player, coach, or manager being disciplined.

\* If the manager has a legitimate point to argue under the rules, it is your duty to listen to him. An umpire can do this with dignity and no loss of respect. Be understanding -- remember, the players are engaged in a heated contest. You are impartial judges and should maintain a calm dignity becoming the authority you have.

\* Keep active and alert on the field at all times.

\* Keep the game moving, a ball game is often helped by energetic and earnest work of the umpire.

\* Be courteous, impartial, and firm, and so compel respect from all.

\* Remember that you are the ONLY representative of Little League Baseball on the field. Act accordingly.

\* Don't think your blue umpire's shirt grants you immunity from having to take a little criticism. It's part of umpiring. Plan on it. Successful umpires know how much to take.

\* If a manager is on your back, but not enough to warrant an ejection, then stay away from him. This is especially true

between innings. Standing near an unhappy coach, just to **show him** will only lead to further tensions.

### TO ERR IS HUMAN

Umpires are human. Missed pitches or errors in judgment will happen. Umpires should do their best to have as few as possible, but when you boot a call or miss a pitch do not resolve to even the score. Once called that is it, it's over and done. A missed pitch or a booted call is just that. It's missed and gone forever.

### THE GOLDEN RULE

No umpire should ever criticize another umpire's decision.

## CHAPTER 3

### WORKING THE PLATE

THOUGH ALL PHASES OF UMPIRING ARE IMPORTANT, A PROSPECTIVE UMPIRE MUST PROVE HIS ABILITY TO CALL BALLS AND STRIKES IF HE IS TO EXCEL AND BUILD A SOLID REPUTATION AS THE *COMPLETE UMPIRE*. GOOD JUDGMENT IS NATURALLY A PREREQUISITE FOR ACCOMPLISHING THIS TASK. JUDGMENT ALONE, HOWEVER WILL NOT SUFFICE. ONE MUST UNDERSTAND THE MANY FACETS OF *WORKING THE PLATE*. THESE INCLUDE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE STRIKE ZONE, THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER POSITIONING, AND THE CRITICAL NEED FOR DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MECHANICAL TECHNIQUES.

#### INSIDE PROTECTOR

Assume a position behind the catcher looking between the catcher and the batter; you must be able to clearly see the pitcher, the entire plate and the batter's knees. To see all of those elements, it is important to move into "the slot" --that area between the catcher and the batter. The farther you are into the slot, the better you will see the strike zone. Two additional factors have tremendous impact on your view of the strike zone: head height and stability. Your head should be positioned so the bottom of your chin is even with the top of the catcher's helmet. If you work with your head lower, your view of the knee-high pitch at or near the outside corner of the plate will be restricted. The head is straight ahead looking at the pitcher. Your ear closest to the catcher should be just to the outside of the catcher's shoulder. These are good starting positions. From the moment the pitcher releases a pitch until the ball arrives in the catcher's glove, your head should remain absolutely still. If your head moves at all, your view of the strike zone will be blurred and your judgment will be inconsistent.

Assume your crouch when the pitcher is about to release the ball. You'll view the pitch from between the batter and catcher. Don't go down too early, for you will put unnecessary strain on your muscles. Relaxation between pitches is very important. Many umpires wear themselves out for the late innings by staying in a set position for long a period of time. The upper body should remain in an almost upright position.

One important note, don't kneel down to view the pitch. You must remember that in a two or three-man crew, the plate



umpire often covers third base. Going to third from a standing position is far easier and quicker than trying to get there from your knees. (It's true that some great umpires kneel; there are usually exceptions to every rule. But, unless you're an exceptionally fast umpire, stay in a crouch, not on a knee.) When kneeling, you give the impression that you are physically tired.

Which ever position you use, it is important that you do not put a hand on the catcher or position himself against the catcher. Your hands should be kept in front of you. You may hang them at the side of your legs, hold them together in front of you or hold on to your thighs. Don't put your hands over your shin guards at the knees or put them on the catcher. This practice always looks bad to the spectators.

### THE PLATE UMPIRE AT WORK

When working behind the plate or on the bases, use the indicator in your left hand. A little bit of experimentation will show that it was not made for the right. Use of the indicator in the left hand frees the right for use in calling strikes. It is very difficult to change the indicator with the right hand and there is danger of throwing it away while calling pitches.

The mask is removed as often as possible when the plate umpire is not actually engaged in calling balls and strikes. The left hand is used in removing the mask, shift the indicator so the thumb is free. Grasp the mask so that the thumb is at the side of or under the jaw. Remove the mask by lifting out first, then up. By using this method, you can be sure that your cap will remain on your head. By keeping the mask in your left hand you will avoid the danger of hitting a player with it or throwing it while calling a runner out. Most people feel that the out signal looks better if made with an empty right hand.

In calling a batted ball hit down the baseline, the plate umpire should remove his mask as soon as the ball is hit. Hustle up the baseline as far as possible(30/45 foot line is recommended). Be sure to stop before it is time to make your decision. On a hard hit ball the umpire may not have time to remove his mask or get to the baseline. Do the best you can.

The plate umpire should make the decision on the batter running inside/outside the three foot line and interfering with the first baseman taking the throw. This play occurs only on a bunt or slow roller down the first baseline, therefore,

he should be in good position while the base umpire probably will not.

AS the plate umpire, be sure to give the batter a chance to get set in the box before the pitcher pitches the ball. If the pitcher begins his motion while the batter is not ready and it is unintentional, call **"time"**. If he does it on purpose, call **"time"** and warn him. Each such pitch after a warning will result in an illegal pitch with the bases empty and a balk with the bases occupied. A quick pitch may be called without warning, but it is good mechanics to stop play the first time because of possible physical danger.

Under normal conditions, the plate umpire will have to go to third base to cover a play anytime a runner goes from first to third on a batted ball. He should go down the line in foul territory, then cross into fair territory as close to the base as possible. If there is an overthrow, the umpire(remain in fair territory) must beat the runner to home plate so he can call the play.

The plate umpire should leave his place behind the catcher on every batted ball. He should come out in front of the plate so he can get a better view of the plays taken place on the field. If there is a possible play at home, the plate umpire will need to move into position for the best possible view of the play.

### LEARNING TO DEAL WITH FLINCHING

Flinching is usually an erratic problem. It can irritate the umpire far more than it affect his umpiring. It's doubtful that flinching will make you miss pitches, but the umpire also is concerned and rightly so with his image, if noticed by the fans or players.

Remedies include forcing yourself to wait as long as you can before getting into the just-before-the-pitch stance. This shortens the time of stressful concentration. Also rest your eyes for a fraction of a second shortly before the pitch. Be sure to give yourself time to adjust for the upcoming pitch. It's a matter of timing, flinching usually does not stay with you for long.

Perhaps one reason for flinching is subconscious or even a conscious lack of confidence in the catcher.

### BRUSHING THE PLATE

Every gesture and motion of the umpire means something. There is even a correct way to dust the plate. The umpire should assume a position (as a courtesy to the fans) with his back to the pitchers mound.

The feet should be spread apart about the width of the shoulders. Bend at both, the knees and hips. Brush with a vigorous motion toward and away from the umpire.

The plate should be brushed before each half inning and as needed during play. Above all, do not allow the catcher (or other players) to brush the plate with hand or glove. Ask him to request that you do the brushing.

When a catcher is making remarks about your call, never let him turn around to protest more than once. Put a stop to it, warn him. A good way to do this without embarrassment to him is to brush the plate and look him in the eyes and explain your dissatisfaction. Take more stern action the next time it happens, if he is a slow learner.

### **BETWEEN INNINGS**

The first duty of both umpires between innings is to keep the players hustling on and off the field. He will then stay on that side of the plate to be out of the player congestion which may occur on the side of the field of the team coming to bat. A good spot to stand is just off the foul line, even with the plate. While at that spot, the umpire should attend such duties as counting warm-up pitches, replenishing his ball supply, inspecting the baseballs in his ball bag, and seeing that there is no equipment such as gloves or bats left on the field. The umpire should never lay his equipment on the ground between innings. (i.e., mask, chest protector, etc.)

## CHAPTER 4

### UMPIRING THE BASES

The same as working the plate, remember, **PAUSE, READ and REACT!!--on every play.**

Before calling any play it is absolutely necessary for you to stop and get set. Do this before the play happens. Never call a play when you are running to get into position, stop and get set, this way your eyes will not be moving and you will take a better **picture** of the play.

In getting set, bend at the knees and hips. Try to keep your upper body straight from the waist up. If you will put your hands on your knees it will help maintain balance as well as lock you into position. if possible, you should start all your calls this set position. As you make the out signal, it is wise to keep the left arm crossed in front of your body. If your left arm comes out away from the body it looks like you are calling the runner out with your right and safe with your left.

As the game begins, the base umpire should hustle from the home plate area down the first base line to his between innings position. The between innings position is down the first baseline in the outfield grass in foul territory. If there are spectators down the line, it is wise for the umpire to go into fair territory to stand rather than remain close to the fence. All umpires should avoid visiting with anyone between innings unless there is a problem between umpires which needs attention.

In getting into position at first base with no runners on base, the umpire should be about ten to fifteen feet behind the first baseman. Never allow the fielder to stand behind you. Another important point is on every pitch take one or two steps forward. This will put you in motion to bounce out into the infield dirt for your calls at first. when positioning yourself before the play, place your hands on your knees, thumbs on the inside, locked in to the set position; or let your arms hang loose at your sides. Do not fold your arms on your chest as this makes you look like you are loafing or bored.

When the ball is hit to the infield, the umpire should assume a position to first base and then to the fielder making the

throw, a right angle (90 degree) would be formed. Don't be lazy; hustle out there, maintain your original distance away from the base so you will have a good view of the fielder reaching for a high throw. If the ball is hit to the third baseman, run toward him until you have your angle. Do the same toward shortstop. When a ball is hit to the second baseman's right, move into fair territory so the angle will be as close to ninety degrees as possible. If the ball is hit to the second baseman's left or the first baseman, you will be in foul territory. Be sure to stay out of the runner's path even though it means distorting the angle slightly. Be sure to get set to call the play. Very important as you move to your position and get set, **(keep your eyes on the ball)keep** watching as the fielder throws the ball. Be sure to judge the quality of the throw. Take your eyes from the ball as it passes the mound and focus your attention on the base. Watch the runner tag the bag and the fielder's foot to make sure he keeps contact. Listen for the sound of the ball as it hits the first baseman's glove. Remember, you judge the runner safe or out when the first baseman has secure possession not when the ball first reaches him when he makes a juggled catch. To prevent calling the play too quickly, you must remember to use your eyes properly. After the play is complete, pause(develop the picture of the play), then call it. Practice will aid you in adapting and keeping the proper time interval between the play and the call. If the throw goes through the first baseman, don't make a call as there is not play to be called.

**THE PIVOT AT FIRST BASE IS SO IMPORTANT THAT IT MERITS SPECIAL DISCUSSION.**

With no runners on, a ball hit **through** the infield or a fly ball to the outfield which doesn't require that the base umpire go out, you should take a pivot across the baseline into the infield to get into better position to follow the action. As the ball is batted, run toward a spot on the baseline between first and second base which is approximately the same distance from the base as the between pitches position of the first baseman. Time your movement so that you will execute the pivot just as the runner rounds first base. The pivot is executed across the baseline. The movement should be timed so that the left foot is planted just before reaching the baseline. The right foot is planted just across the baseline. The umpire pivots on the right foot so that he is watching first base as he executes his turn to the left. Take your eyes off the ball as you approach the spot and watch the runner tag the bag as you make your pivot.

Do not do anything to give away the fact that the runner has missed a base. When you have entered the infield, move in either direction to call a play. You will find that it is easy to beat a runner to second base from this position. Some umpires allow the runner to pass in front of them. That umpire will then be behind the runner at second base. It is very difficult to call the play from behind the runner.



There are times when the base umpire should go into the outfield to rule on certain trap ball situations. An agreement must be reached by the umpires so that they will know their responsibilities (pre-game conference). Some umpires agree that the base umpire will go out when he senses trouble on any fly ball. **Rule of thumb:** On a Little League size field the base umpire will not go out on any fly ball.

The plate umpire should watch the base umpire, if he goes out the plate umpire covers for him on the bases. If the base umpire stays in, the plate umpire must make the decision on fly balls, while the base umpire follows the batter-runner to second and third base.

With a runner or runners on base, the base umpire should position himself on the outside edge of the infield behind the infielders. His position depends upon which base or bases are occupied. Examples: With a runner on first, he should be stationed behind the second baseman 4 to 5 feet on the first base side of second base. With a runner on first and second, second only, second and third or third only, he should position himself behind the shortstop 4 to 5 feet on the third base side of second base. From those positions with any ball hit **through** the infield or a fly ball to the outfield, he should move into the infield grass so that he will be able to see the ball, runner and the bases from this position. (See the diagram on next page)

Never position yourself on the infield in a Little League diamond before the pitch.

#### **HELPFUL HINTS WHEN WORKING THE BASES:**

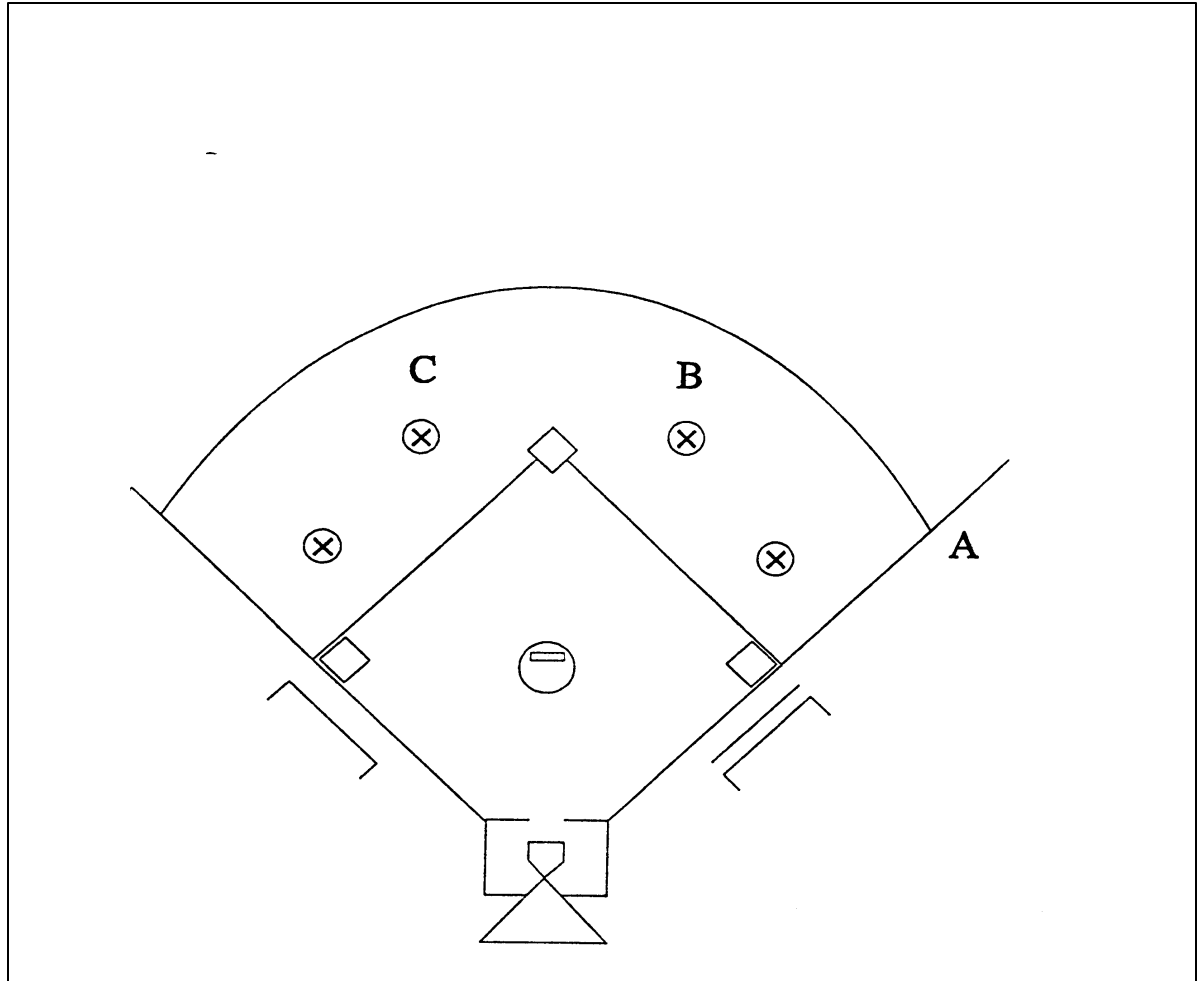
1. Always know where the ball is.
2. Never make a call on the move, get set and wait until the play is over before you make the call.
3. Tag plays - Do not try to outrun the runner to the base. Know the shortcuts available to you. Work for a 90 degree angle to see the whole play.
4. Get as close to the play as possible without interfering.
5. Run-downs - The best coverage in a run-down is by both umpires, on each end of the play, if possible. When the situation allows for both umpires to work a run-down, use

verbal communication to direct each umpire's coverage. **The call is to be made by the umpire who has the runner coming at him.** This demonstrates good team work and looks good to everyone. This requires good communication and eye contact.

6. Hustle to be in the best position to make all of your calls.

The positions that were listed were for a two umpire system. For more information, see the diagrams listed in the Little League Umpire Manual.

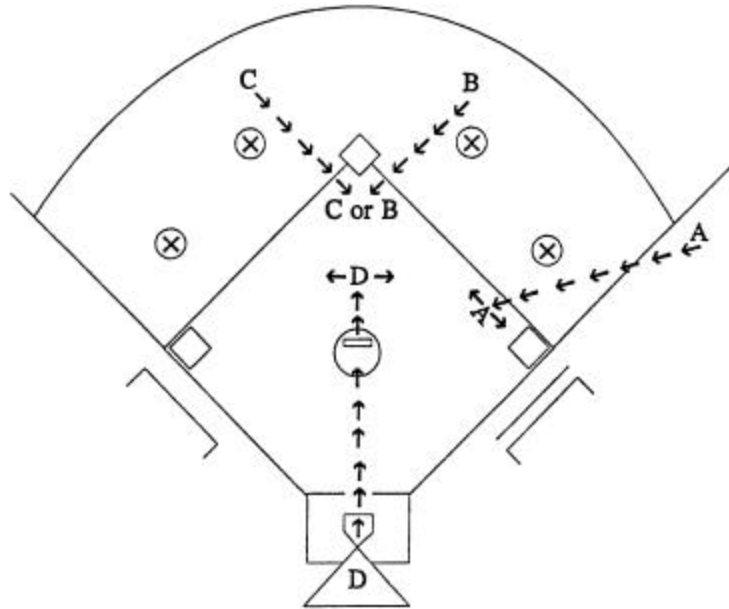
POSITION OF THE BASE UMPIRE FOR LITTLE  
LEAGUE BASEBALL  
(Two-Man System)



- A. BASES EMPTY
- B. RUNNER ON FIRST BASE
- C. RUNNER ON SECOND BASE
- C. RUNNER ON THIRD BASE
- C. RUNNERS ON FIRST AND SECOND BASE
- C. RUNNERS ON SECOND AND THIRD BASE
- C. RUNNERS ON FIRST AND THIRD BASE
- C. BASES FULL

DIAGRAM I

POSITION OF THE BASE UMPIRE FOR LITTLE LEAGUE  
BASEBALL  
(Two-Man System)



A. Bases empty and a ball hit to the outfield. That umpire does not have to go out on. Pivot into the infield so you can move ahead of the runner not behind.

B or C. When a ball is hit through the infield or a fly ball to the outfield that the umpire doesn't have to go out on move into the infield grass.

D. Any time the base umpire goes out to make a call on a fly ball in the outfield the plate umpire must move into the infield to cover all the bases. (As specified earlier the base umpire should not go out, however if the base umpire goes out be prepared.)

DIAGRAM 2

**CHAPTER 5**  
**WORKING WITH AN INEXPERIENCED PARTNER**

The pre-game conference, between the veteran umpire and the rookie, should include a discussion of what type of game you like: by-the-book, common sense, quiet-and-efficient, etc. Relax him with some anecdotes from your career. Make him understand that you and he are a team and that you have confidence in his ability to do the job.

A few maneuvers that may help you see your way through a game. First, before every pitch, catch your partner's eye. If he's in the wrong position, subtly move him. (Ideally, you discussed that on the way to the game.) Second, communicate out loud, obviously, firmly: **"I've got third", "Take it", "That one's mine."** All good umpires do that anyway. Third, don't talk with him between half-innings. Such meetings fuel everyone's inherent paranoia, especially if you and he confer after he's made an unpopular call.

Finally, protect him during rhabarbs. An umpire may be entirely right on a call, however because of the situation, he may take a lot of heat. One undeniable law of umpiring is that the amount of heat you take is in inverse proportion to how good you were on the call. In other words, if you were very good, you won't take much abuse. If you were very bad, you may grow gray listening.

After the game, the new umpire yearns to know what happened and why on certain plays and how he did. Tell him, start with all the calls he got right. Then, with honesty, and understanding, tell him what he did wrong in a positive manner. If a real umpire lurks somewhere beneath the uniform, he won't resent your constructive criticism.

**CHAPTER 6**  
**PRE-GAME CONFERENCE WXTH YOUR CREW**

Everyone knows that umpires should have a good pre-game conference so each will know his responsibilities. Failing to have a solid pre-game can lead to major problems.

**FAIR/FOUL COVERAGE**

Calling fair/foul, from home to first and home to third, **up to and touching the bag and a bounding ball over the bag** should always be called by the plate umpire. With the bases empty, down the line past the bag at first, the base umpire can make the call if you discussed that position in the pre-game. In a two-man crew with runners on base, the plate umpire has both foul lines from home to the fence.

**TAGUPS/TOUCHES**

The base umpire has all tagups/retouches, on first, second, and third, however, if there are multiple runners the base umpire normally has the trail runner(s) and the plate umpire, has third or lead runner.

**FLY BALLS TO OUTFIELD**

A. The plate umpire takes all fly balls and/or line drives on a Little League field.

B. If the base umpire goes out to rule fair/foul, catch/trap, on a **trouble ball** the plate umpire must be prepared to cover all the bases.

**BATTED BALL HITS BATTER**

The field umpire should yell, "**TIME**" when he sees that occur. For the ball is either foul (the ball hit the batter while in the box) or fair (the ball hit the batter when out of the box and he's out). In either case the ball is dead immediately. Signaling "**TIME**" allows the crew to discuss whether or not the batter was in or out of the box. If the base umpire should call the ball foul, a controversy could arise.

### CHECKED SWING

If the plate umpire has asked for your opinion, then you give it to him. **"Yes, he did" or "No, he didn't"** along with the signal. (See Checked Swing under Timing and Proper Mechanics.)

### GETTING HELP

If you get blocked out of a play or you were not in position to make the call get help from your partner. The umpire making the decision, may ask another umpire for information before making a final decision. No umpire shall criticize, seek to reverse or interfere with another umpire's decision unless asked to do so by the umpire making it. (See Section 9.02(c) Rule Book.) **Remember you have certain responsibilities, do not get into the habit of asking for help on each and every close play. We don't want to see NFL official huddles on the ball field.**

### SIGNALS

Infield fly. The plate umpire initiates the signal; the base umpire acknowledges it. Different crews use different signals, so find out what signal is used. Communicate, be aware of your partner.

### GROUND RULES

Go over the ground rules with your partner and review any rules you do not understand.

### CODE OF CONDUCT

A discussion with your partner should include the ejections of player and coaches. In order to maintain control of the game, **ejections should be a last resort.**

### OTHER POINTS

There may be some points that are not listed that you may want to add to this list. Going over the above list before each game may seem like a boring exercise and one used by inexperienced umpires only, but it is important if you expect to have a good and smooth game with your partner.



**CHAPTER 7**  
**FAIR AND FOUL BALLS**

*There is a lot of confusion in the mind of the average baseball fan regarding the fair or foul ball situations.*

**DEFINITION: 2.00**

A fair ball is a batted ball that settles on fair ground between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that is on or over fair territory when bounding to the outfield past first or third base, or that touches first on or beyond first base or third base, or that, while on or over fair territory touches the person of an umpire or player, or that, while over fair territory, passed out of the playing field in flight.

**NOTE:** A fair fly shall be adjudged according to the **relative position of the ball** and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time such fielder touches the ball.

**HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

- A. A ball is in fair territory if any part of it is on or over any part of the foul line.
- B. A ball which stops rolling before it reaches first or third base is judged where it lies when it stops.
- C. A ball which is touched before it reaches the base is judged in regard to its position when touched.
- D. A ball which bounds into the outfield past first or third is judged relative to the base when it passes the base. If it goes over the base it is fair. If it is in foul territory as it passes the base, it is foul.
- E. A ball which is batted over the fence is judged according to its position with the foul line when it leaves the field.

**RULING EXAMPLES:**

- 1. A batted ball bounces up to hit the batter or his bat after he swings at it.

**Ruling:** This is a foul ball unless he was obviously out of the batter's box when the contact occurred.

2. The third baseman is careful to keep his feet in fair territory he fields a ball in front of the base.

**Ruling:** Judge the ball by its position not based on the position of the fielder's feet.

3. A line drive strikes the umpire who is straddling the foul line behind the first baseman.

**Ruling:** Judge the ball according to its position with the foul line when it touches the umpire. If fair, the ball is in play. The umpire must make sure he is entirely in foul territory so that any line drive striking him will be foul. He was out of position on this play.

4. A batted ball rolls down the first baseline. It stops with part of the ball on the foul line and most of it over foul territory.

**Ruling:** This is a fair ball. When it stops before reaching the base, it is fair if any part of the ball is touching the foul line.

5. A fly ball hits the foul pole.

**Ruling:** Fair ball. The foul pole is fair territory. If the pole is behind the fence, it is a home run. If inside the fence, it is a fair ball in play. If the ball hits the foul pole which is inside the fence and is deflected over the fence in foul territory, it is a two base hit.

6. A batted ball is rolling down the first baseline in foul territory. While it is rolling the umpire calls it "foul". The ball hits a dirt clod and rolls into fair territory where it stops.

**Ruling:** The umpire has committed the unpardonable sin of calling a foul ball too soon. The ruling must stand as all play stops on the call.

7. The batter hits the ball. It then strikes the plate and bounces into fair territory where it is fielded.

**Ruling:** Fair ball. The plate is entirely in fair territory.

8. The batter hits the ball. It then strikes the plate and bounces into foul territory where it is fielded before it reaches first base.

**Ruling:** Foul ball.

9. A line drive hits the pitching rubber and goes untouched into the dugout.

**Ruling:** This is a foul ball. A batted ball which touches first, second, or third base becomes a fair ball. The pitchers plate is considered the same as the ground around it. The location of the ball after deflecting from the plate would determine whether it is fair or foul.

10. A batted ball that comes to rest on home plate.

**Ruling:** The ball is fair and in play.

**CHAPTER 8**  
**APPEALS**

Appeal plays should be divided into two classes. The first covers batting out of turn.

**APPEAL PLAY I - BATTING OUT OF TURN**

**Rule:**       **6.07 LITTLE LEAGUE RULE BOOK**

This is different from other appeals because the appeal is made to the umpire in the form of a statement with no play necessary on the part of the team making the appeal. This is also the only type of appeal that can be made by the manager or coach.

If the appeal is made while the improper batter is batting, he is removed as the batter and the proper batter assumes the ball and strike count and completes the turn at bat. If a runner advances, while the improper batter is at bat, on a stolen base, balk, wild pitch or passed ball, such advance is legal.

If a pitch is made to the batter following the improper batter, or there is a play or attempted play, the improper batter's action is legalized and play proceeds as if he were the proper batter.

**Ruling:**     The umpire must examine his line up card. (He may consult the official scorer if he needs to.) If he finds the batter is out of order, he must call the correct batter out. He will remove the incorrect batter from base if he is on, and send all other runners back to the bases they held when the batter became a runner.

**APPEAL PLAY II**

**Rule:**       **7.10 LITTLE LEAGUE RULE BOOK**

The second class of appeal plays is the act of a fielder in claiming violation of the rules by the offensive team. These appeal play's concern those plays in which the appeal is made by tagging a runner or a base and appealing to the umpire. This type of appeal must be made by a defensive player only.

**Any runner shall be called out on appeal -**

A. After a fly ball is caught the runner fails to retouch the base, before said runner or the base is tagged.

B. With the ball in play, while advancing or returning to a base, the runner fails to touch each base in order before said runner, or a missed base, is tagged; 1) No runner may return to touch a missed base after a following runner has scored, 2) When the ball is dead no runner may return to touch a missed base or one abandoned after said runner has advanced to and touched a base beyond the missed base.

C. The runner overruns or over slides first base and fails to return to the base immediately, and said runner or the base is tagged.

D. The runner fails to touch home base and makes no attempt to return to that base, and home base is tagged.

Any appeal under this rule must be made before the next pitch, or any play or attempted play. If the violation occurs during a play which ends a half-inning the appeal must be made before the defensive team leaves the field. (The defensive team has left the field when no player remain in fair territory.)

An appeal is not to be interpreted as a play or an attempted play.

Successive appeals may not be made on a runner at the same base. If the defensive team on its first appeal errs, a request for a second appeal on the same runner at the same base shall not be allowed by the umpire. (Intended meaning of the word err is that the defensive team in making an appeal threw the ball out of play: For example, if the pitcher threw to first base to appeal and threw the ball into the stands, no second appeal would be allowed.)

Appeal plays may require an umpire to recognize an apparent **fourth out**. If the third out is made during a play in which an appeal play is sustained on another runner, the appeal play decision takes precedence in determining the out. If there is more than one appeal during a play that ends a half-inning the defense may elect to take the out that gives it the advantage. For the purposes of this rule, the defensive team has **left the field** when all players have left **fair territory** on their way to the bench or dugout.

**KEEP THE FOLLOWING POINTS IN MIND REGARDING APPEAL PLAYS:**

1. In order to make any appeal, the ball must be live and in play.
2. Any appeal under Rule 7.10 must be made before the next pitch or any play or attempted play.
3. If a pitcher balks when making an appeal, such act shall be considered a play. No further appeal will be allowed.
4. If the pitcher or any member of the defensive team throws the ball out of play when making an appeal, such act shall be considered an attempted play. No further appeal will be allowed.
5. An appeal should be clearly intended an appeal, either by a verbal request by the player or an act that unmistakably indicated an appeal to the umpire.
6. On all appeals the ball is live and runners may advance on their own peril.

**PLAY OR ATTEMPTED PLAY**

A play or attempted play shall be interpreted as a legitimate effort by a defensive player who has possession of the ball to actually retire a runner. This may include an actual attempt to tag a runner, or actually throwing to another defensive player in an attempt to retire a runner. A fake or a feint to throw shall not be deemed a play or an attempted play. (The fact that the runner is not out is not relevant.)

**PUTTING BALL IN PLAY AFTER BALL IS DEAD**

After the ball is dead, the plate umpire shall resume play by calling "**Play**" (pointing to the pitcher) as soon as the pitcher takes his place on the rubber with the ball in his possession.

**RULING EXAMPLES:**

Here are some different situations which may occur:

1. The runner on third leaves the base as the outfielder first juggles a fly ball. The fielder after completing the catch throws the ball to third base for the appeal.

**Ruling:** The runner is not out. He may leave the base when a fly is first touched and need not wait until the catch is completed.

2. The runner on first rounds second base on a deep drive to center field. The centerfielder makes a spectacular catch. The runner fails to retouch second base on his way back. The ball and makes the appeal. The second baseman calls for the ball and makes the appeal.

**Ruling:** The runner is out. Runners must touch all bases while advancing or returning to base while the ball is live.

3. With a runner on first base. A fly ball is hit to deep right field, the runner takes off to second base before the fly ball is caught thinking the fielder can never make the catch. The fielder in turn makes a spectacular catch, the runner seeing this starts running back to first base, the fielder throws to first and the throw beats the runner.

**Ruling:** The umpire should call the runner out. Under the circumstances given a verbal appeal of this action is not required. It is obvious why the ball is being thrown to a base to which a runner is returning.

4. Bases full. The batter hits an inside the park home run. The third baseman calls for the ball and touches third to appeal that the runner missed the base.

**Ruling:** The umpire will make no ruling until the third baseman completes the appeal by stating which runner he is appealing. If the third baseman makes such a statement as "**He missed third base**" the umpire may say "**On which runner are you making the appeal?**"

5. The bases are loaded. The batter walks. The runner who is forced to score misses home plate.

**Ruling:** The runner has until he steps into the dugout to come back to touch the plate. If he does not,

the defense may put him out by appealing the missed base.

6. The batter hits a double, but fails to touch first base. The ball is thrown to the first baseman, who makes the appeal. The first base umpire calls the batter-runner out. The manager of the team at bat protests the game because the ball was not returned to the pitcher on the rubber before the appeal was made.

**Ruling:** The umpire was correct. The ball doesn't have to be returned to the rubber unless time has been called.

7. No runners. The batter doubles but misses first base. Time is called. The pitcher steps on the rubber with the ball and the umpire says "play". The pitcher legally steps off the rubber and checks the runner at second base. The pitcher's throw for the appeal gets past the first baseman, but remains in play. The runner advances to home as the ball is being retrieved. Can the defensive team still make its intended appeal at first base?

**Ruling:** Yes. Since the ball is live and in play, if the ball is retrieved and thrown to first base immediately, the appeal is allowed.



**CHAPTER 9**  
**THE INFIELD FLY**

The infield fly rule is one of the most confusing rules in the minds of the typical player and fan.

**DEFINITION: 2.00**

An infield fly is a fair fly ball (not including a line drive nor an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, when first and second, or first, second and third bases are occupied, before two are out. The pitcher, catcher and any outfielder stationed in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule.

When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall **immediately declare "infield fly"** for the benefit of the runners. If the ball is near the baseline, the umpire shall declare **"infield fly, if fair"**. The ball is live and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. If the hit becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul.

**SEVERAL POINTS MUST BE KEPT IN**  
**WHEN MIND INVOLVED WITH THIS RULE**

- A. First and second base must be occupied. Whether or not third base is occupied has no effect on the rule. There must be no outs or one out. The rule was created for the protection of the runners, not the fielder.
- B. A bunt may not be ruled an infield fly. By the nature of the play a penalty would be imposed on the offense rather than the defense.
- C. A line drive may not be ruled an infield fly, as the calling of an out in this situation would not protect the runners.
- D. The umpire must judge that the ball could have been caught with ordinary effort.

Exactly what is **ordinary effort**? That Little League shortstop and major league shortstops play under the same infield fly rule, but there's a universe of difference between their

**ordinary efforts.** This is only one of the many situations that you as the umpire must use your judgment in determining what is ordinary effort for the player.

E. The umpires must be alert for the possibility of an infield fly. They should have a signal between each other to make sure each one is aware of the situation. Normally, the infield fly is called by the umpire nearest the ball followed by all other umpires. This should be done in a loud tone with arm signals so that everyone involved in the play, as well as the spectators, know of the ruling.

**RULING EXAMPLES:**

1. A runner standing on second base or any base is struck by a fly which has been declared an infield fly.

**Ruling:** The batter is out, the runner is not. Should the runner have been off the base when struck, both he and the batter would have been declared out.

2. The bases are loaded with no outs. The infielders are playing in for a force play at the plate. A fly ball is hit which could have been easily caught if the infielder had been at normal depth. Because he is playing in, the infielder attempts to catch the ball while running with his back to the plate.

**Ruling:** This is not an infield fly. The position of the fielder, not the ball, is the determining factor in this case.

3. An infield fly is declared by the umpire. The shortstop catches the ball and throws it to second base before the runner who had left the base can return.

**Ruling:** A double play results. When an infield fly is declared the batter is out. The runners are not forced to run. The ball remains alive and in play in all other respects.

4. The **infield fly situation is** in effect. A fly ball is batted within the infield. No declaration is made by the umpire. All runners run. After the play is over, one of the umpires announces that he has applied the infield fly rule and the batter is out.

**Ruling:** This is a very serious mistake on the part of the umpire. An infield fly must be declared by the umpire as soon as he determines that the ball can be caught by the infielder with ordinary effort not after the play is over.

5. On a fly ball near the foul line in front of third base, the umpire calls "**infield fly**". The infielder lets the ball fall, it rolls into foul territory.

**Ruling:** Foul ball. The umpire should call "**infield fly, if fair**" on any doubtful fly ball. The omission does not change the fact that this is a foul ball.

**CHAPTER 10**  
**OBSTRUCTION**

**DEFINITION: 2.00 AND RULE 7.06 RULE BOOK**

Obstruction is the act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball and not in the act of fielding the ball, impedes the progress of any runner. A fake tag is considered obstruction.

When the obstruction occurs, the umpire shall call or signal "**obstruction**".

A. If a play is being made on the obstructed runner, or if the batter-runner is obstructed before touching first base, the ball is dead and all runners shall advance without liability to be put out, to the bases they would have reached, in the umpire's judgment, if there had been no obstruction.

The obstructed runner shall be awarded at least one base beyond the base last legally touched by such runner, before the obstruction. Any preceding runners forced to advance by the award of bases as the penalty for obstruction shall advance without liability to be put out.

B. If no play is being made on the obstructed runner, the play shall proceed until no further action is possible. The umpire shall then call "**time**" and impose such penalties, if any, as in the umpire's judgment will nullify the act of obstruction.

If a fielder is about to receive a thrown ball and if the ball is in flight directly toward and near enough to the fielder so he must occupy his position to receive the ball, he may be considered **in the act of fielding a ball**. It is entirely up to the judgment of the umpire as to whether a fielder is in the act of fielding a ball.

After a fielder has made an attempt to field a ball and has missed, he can no longer be in the **act of fielding** the ball. For example:

If an infielder dives at a ground ball and the ball passes him and he continues to lie on the ground and delays the progress of the runner, very likely has obstructed the runner.

In all cases of obstruction, the umpire calling the play should have the benefit of the advice of his partners. The umpire watching the obstruction will have difficulty in determining the position of other runners. It is recommended that when "time" is called on obstruction. If there is any doubt in the minds of the umpires about where the runner or runners shall be placed, the umpires shall confer.

**RULING EXAMPLES:**

1. Batter-runner is obstructed before reaching first base with no play being made on him. For example: On a ground ball hit to the outfield.

**Ruling:** Call the obstruction by pointing at the runner and calling, "**That's Obstruction**"; then impose such penalties, if any that will nullify the act of obstruction. If a fly ball is caught in this situation, batter-runner is out.

2. With bases loaded, batter hits a sharp ground ball which deflects off of the shortstop and he starts to go after the ball, runner from second collides into him.

**Ruling:** After the ball deflects off the shortstop, if the ball is ***within the fielder's immediate reach***, the runner must avoid the fielder, and if contact occurs under those circumstances, interference shall be called and the runner declared out. However, if the ball is not within reach of the fielder after it deflects off him (i.e., the fielder must chase after the ball), the fielder must then avoid the runner, and if contact occurs under those circumstances, obstruction shall be called. (Under Rule 7.06(b) Little League Rule Book.)

3. The runner is trapped between third and home. He is running back toward third when he collides with a fielder who doesn't have the ball.

**Ruling:** The runner scores. He is allowed at least one base beyond the last base legally touched when the obstruction occurred.

**CHAPTER 11**  
**INTERFERENCE**

**INTERFERENCE RULE**

**DEFINITION: 2.00 AND 7.09 RULE BOOK**

A. Offensive interference is an act by the team at bat which interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play. If the umpire declares the batter, batter-runner or a runner out for interference, all other runners shall return to the last base that was, in the judgment of the umpire, legally touched at the time of the interference, unless otherwise provided by these rules.

B. Defensive interference is an act by a fielder which hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch.

C. Umpire's interference occurs: 1) when an umpire hinders, impedes or prevents a catcher's throw attempting to prevent a stolen base, or 2) when a fair ball touches an umpire on fair territory before passing a fielder.

D. Spectator interference occurs when a spectator reaches out of the stands or goes on the playing field, and touches a live ball.

E. On any interference the ball is dead. **NOTE: The ball is not necessarily dead immediately.** For example, on a batter's interference, when a subsequent throw is made by the catcher, the ball is not immediately dead. The play is allowed to proceed. If the throw retires the runner, the ball is dead and the penalty is enforced.

**HELPFUL HINTS ON INTERFERENCE**  
**OFFENSIVE INTERFERENCE**

Note that under the rules, a fielder is protected while he is in the act of fielding a batted ball. In addition, a fielder is also protected while he is in the act of making a play after he has fielded a batted ball. If a runner hinders or impedes a fielder after he has fielded a batted ball, but before he is able to throw the ball, the runner shall be called out for interference. Furthermore, a runner who is adjudged to have hindered a fielder who is attempting to make

a play on a batted ball is out whether it was intentional or not.

#### **WILLFUL AND DELIBERATE INTERFERENCE**

Rules 7.09(g) and 7.09(h) were inserted in the rules to add an additional penalty when a base runner or a batter-runner deliberately and intentionally interferes with a batted ball or a fielder in the act of fielding a batted ball to deprive the defensive team of an opportunity to complete a possible double play. Keep in mind the rules provide that the runner or batter-runner must interfere with the obvious attempt to break up a double play. A runner from third willfully running into the catcher fielding a pop fly ball, or a runner on second base deliberately running into a ground ball or allowing the ball, to hit him to prevent a double play are examples that require the call of a double play under these rules.

#### **BATTER-RUNNER AND CATCHER COLLIDE**

When a catcher and batter-runner going to first base have contact while the catcher is attempting to field the ball, there is generally no violation and nothing should be called. This cannot be interpreted to mean; however, that flagrant contact by either party would not call for either an interference call or an obstruction call. Either one should be called only if the violation is flagrant in nature. A fielder has "right of way" to make a play, but an unavoidable collision cannot be construed as a violation on the part of either the runner or the catcher.

#### **BATTED BALL STRIKES BAT**

A. If the batter-runner drops his bat and the ball rolls against the bat in fair territory and, in the umpire's judgment, there was no intention to interfere with the course of the ball, the ball is alive and in play.

B. If after hitting or bunting a fair ball, the batter's bat hits the ball a second time in fair territory, the batter is out and the ball is dead.

#### **THROWN BALL STRIKES HELMET OR BAT**



If a thrown ball strikes a helmet or bat accidentally (no intent on part of runner to interfere) in fair or foul territory, the ball remains in play the same as if it had not hit the helmet or bat.

If, in the umpire's judgment, there is intent on the part of a base runner to interfere with a thrown ball by dropping his helmet or bat or by throwing either at the ball, then the runner would be out, the ball dead, and runners would return to the last base legally touched.

#### **BATTED BALL STRIKES RUNNER**

A. Under 7.09(m) a fair ball touches the batter or runner in fair territory before touching a fielder. The batter or runner will be called out and the ball is dead.

B. If a fair ball goes through or by, an infielder, and touches a runner immediately back of him, or touches the runner after having been deflected by a fielder, the umpire shall not declare the runner out for being touched by a batted ball. In making such decision the umpire must be convinced that the ball passed through, or by the fielder, and that **no other fielder** had the chance to make a play on the ball. If in the umpire's judgment there was another fielder that could have made a play on the ball, he would then in turn call the runner out for interference.

#### **INTERFERENCE ON THE BATTER-RUNNER**

In running the last half of the distance from home base to first base while the ball is being fielded to first base, the batter-runner runs outside (to the right of) the three foot line and, in the umpire's judgment, interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base or attempting to field a batted ball.

One important point to remember is that this is another judgment call.

**Comment:** The batter-runner **does not** have to be **hit** with the ball in order to interfere with the play. Interference can be called if in the umpire's judgment the batter-runner on his way to first base and by being inside the three foot line distracted the fielder.

#### **RULING EXAMPLES:**

1. Bases loaded, no outs, ground ball to shortstop. Anticipating a double play, runner from second intentionally crashes into the shortstop and grabs him just as the shortstop is beginning his throw to second.

**Ruling:** Runner from second is guilty of willfully and deliberately interfering with a fielder with the obvious intent to deprive the defense of the opportunity to make a double play. Runner from second is declared out and so is the batter-runner. Runners return to first and third.

2. Runner on second base, one out. The batter hits a ball on the ground toward the hole. The third baseman charges in on the grass to try to cut it off as the shortstop breaks deep toward the hole while the runner is advancing. The ball gets past the third baseman without being touched by him and strikes the runner in the basepath. The shortstop had a play on the ball.

**Ruling:** Runner from second is out and the batter-runner is awarded first base. The ball passed by an infielder other than the pitcher before striking the runner. However, another fielder behind the runner was deprived of an opportunity to field the ball.

3. Runner on third, no outs. Batter hits sharp ground ball down third base line which strikes runner on third base in fair territory while runner is still in contact with third base. Runner was not attempting to intentionally interfere, and third baseman is playing behind the runner.

**Ruling:** Runner is declared out. Ball is dead, and batter-runner is awarded first base. The fact that the runner had contact with the base when struck with the batted ball has no bearing on the play. (An exception to this is when the runner is hit by an infield fly while on base. (See Infield Fly section in this manual.)

4. The shortstop is playing deep. The runner-on second has to jump over the batted ball to avoid being hit with it. The shortstop fumbles the ball.

**Ruling:** No interference. The ball is in play.

5. Same play as above. The runner hesitates in front of the ball until it is almost to him. Then he continues to run.

**Ruling:** Interference. The runner is out. The batter is awarded first base. The ball is dead and all other runners remain on the base they occupied at the time of the pitch unless forced.

6. With a runner on second base, the batter swings at a pitch and misses. The catcher catches the ball and attempts to throw to third base to retire the runner who is trying to steal. The ball hits the batter or the batter's bat and rebounds. In the umpire's judgment, there was no attempt to interfere by the batter.

**Ruling:** The ball remains in play and the runner may advance at his own risk. If the batter had moved purposely to interfere with the throw, he would have been declared out with the runner returning to second base.

7. The catcher attempts to throw out a runner stealing second base. The umpire touches his arm while giving a strike signal. The ball is overthrown into the outfield.

**Ruling:** The runner must return to first base. Had the throw resulted in a putout regardless of the interference, the interference would have been ignored. It is important for the umpire to take a position that will never interfere with the catcher.

8. The catcher bumps into the umpire as he turns to chase a foul ball, causing him to miss the ball.

**Ruling:** This is not interference according to the rules.

9. The pitcher dives at a batted ball as it streaks by him. He fails to touch it. The ball hits the umpire standing behind him.

**Ruling:** The ball is dead. The batter is awarded first base. No other runners advance unless forced.

(The umpire should not station-himself behind the pitcher in a Little League infield.)

10. The pitcher deflect a batted ball into the umpire who is standing behind him.

**Ruling:** The ball is in play. (The umpire again should not station himself in a Little League infield.)

11. The batter bats and while he is running toward first base (to the left of the foul line) the ball is fielded and thrown toward first base. It hits the runner in the back of the head.

**Ruling:** The runner is out and the ball is dead.

**CHAPTER 12**  
**THE PITCHER**

**RULE: 8.00 RULE BOOK**

This is one of the most confusing sections of the Little League Rule Book. This rule requires constant study by the umpire in order to make the immediate rulings which are necessary in its administration. Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the balk rule is to prevent the pitcher from deliberately deceiving the base runner.

**INTENTIONALLY PITCHING AT THE BATTER**

If, in the umpire's judgment, the pitcher intentionally pitches at the batter, the umpire shall warn the pitcher and his manager that another such pitch will mean immediate expulsion of that pitcher. At the same time, the umpire shall warn the opposing manager that such an infraction by his pitcher shall result in that pitcher's expulsion.

**QUICK PITCH**

Umpires should judge a quick pitch as one delivered before the batter is reasonably set in the batter's box. The quick pitch is dangerous and should not be permitted.

**RULING EXAMPLES:**

1. No one on base. The pitcher begins his pitching motion and seeing the batter step out of the box stops his motion.

**Ruling:** No rule is broken. Had the pitch been delivered the umpire would have called it a ball or strike. (Under Rule 6.02(b) Little League Rule Book.)

2. With a runner on base, the batter steps out of the box after pitcher has begun his motion, the pitcher stops.

**Ruling:** Not a balk. The pitcher is not penalized because he and the batter have violated a rule. The umpire shall call "TIME". Runners advancing would have to return to the base they occupied at the time the pitcher started his motion. (Under Rule 4.06(3) Little League Rule Book.)



3. The pitcher, while touching the rubber to take his sign accidentally drops the ball.

**Ruling:** Balk, with runners on base. No penalty if bases are empty.

4. The pitcher is standing behind the rubber in the 10 foot circle without the ball in order that a fielder may attempt the hidden ball play.

**Ruling:** This is legal. It is a balk if he stands on or astride (straddles) the rubber without the ball.

5. With runners on base, the pitcher brings his pitching hand in contact with his mouth while in the 10 foot circle surrounding the rubber.

**Ruling:** Call "Ball". It makes no difference whether the bases are occupied or not. This is not a balk with runner on base.

6. Rule 8.01 states "Pitchers shall take signs from the catcher while standing on the rubber." What is the intent of the rule?

**Comment:** The intent of the rule is to ensure that the pitcher does not quick pitch the batter after receiving the sign from off the rubber.

7. Is it an illegal pitch or balk when the pitcher takes his sign while off the rubber?

**Comment:** No. It is not a balk or illegal pitch. The rules specify no penalty for this violation. The pitcher may be removed for unsportsmanlike conduct if he persists in this action after being properly warned. However, since the ejection of player is something we want to stay away from, if the pitcher is taking his signals from off the rubber, but not quick pitching, do not create a problem for yourself, but ignore the fact and don't call anything.

**CHAPTER 13**  
**TIMING AND PROPER MECHANICS**

**Timing and mechanics are very important in umpiring**

**TIMING**

Timing can best be described as the proper use of your eyes. Each player and fan watches the play then looks to the umpire to see his or her call. If the call is made too soon, the fan is sure to know. It is impossible for the umpire to call a play as it is happening without guessing what is going to happen, before it does. Anticipating the call is one of the umpire's worst mistakes. If each umpire were to analyze each questionable call that umpire would realize that poor timing was the cause of whether or not the call was correct.

Hesitation, in calling plays, is just as bad as calling them too soon. If you wait too long, people will think you can't make up your mind. many major league umpires seem to take a long time in calling plays. They call all plays with this same timing so they are not suspected of guessing. Practice your timing. You owe it to yourself to be at your best in this phase of umpiring. **Proper use of your eyes promotes good timing.**

**BALLS AND STRIKES**

In calling balls and strikes, watch the ball as it crosses the plate. Follow the ball all the way to the catcher's glove. Make your decision after the ball crosses the plate, and above all do not call the pitch until the catcher has caught the ball. It is very embarrassing to call the pitch and then have the batter swing at it. Above all, don't anticipate.

Practice in calling the pitchers with proper timing will help your judgment. Again the proper use of your eyes will improve your plate work. Deciding what the pitch will be before it crosses the plate will result in guessing. In calling strikes, a vigorous motion of the right hand is used, while no signal is given in calling balls. There are many possible motions which may be used in calling strikes. Some examples are: 1) Raising the open hand, then pointing it to the side. This signal is most often used with the inside system. 2) Raising the open hand, then making a fist and crossing your left arm in front of your body. It is important that the strike motion be decisive and clear to everyone. The use of a decisive



strike signal can help an umpire to convince the fans of his competence. Some umpires call balls so that .they can be heard by both ducrouts and strikes loudly so the stands can hear the call. Others call strikes loud, but not balls. There is a definite advantage to calling both balls and strikes loudly. If no voice signal is used in calling balls, the timing factor will change. Players and fans will also get the idea that the umpire missed a strike call because of his hesitancy.

In calling balls and strikes, the difference in tone should be audible to the stands. A good system is using a deep snappy voice on balls and a higher voice with longer sound on strikes. Strike three, ball four and pitches close to the edge of the strike zone should be more **emphatic** than the rest. There is a difference in being **emphatic** and being a showboat. The umpire should give the ball and strike count at least once per batter. He may however, give it more than once. The balls are indicated with the fingers of the left hand, while the strikes are indicated by the right. Never use your two closed fists to indicate a full count, use the correct number of fingers.

If the batter swings at a pitch, the strike motion should be given, bu no audible sound. On a half swing situation, if the batter strikes at the pitch, use the hand motion for strike and say to the batter, **"Yes, he went!"** or something similar. It is a mistake to say **"No, he didn't go."** Call the pitch a ball instead.

Call'em, don't explain'em. Your ball and strike calls are not to be routinely explained such as **"ball low", "ball inside", or "strike caught the corner."** If the catcher asks where a certain pitch was, tell him. The catcher should not ask repeatedly "Where was the pitch?" If he does, you should tell him that you're not goin g to explain every pitch to him. Agree with the catcher if he should ask for example, "Was it low?" answer "Yes" without comment.

A batter from time to time will inquire if what he swung at and missed was a strike. Give him the information he asks for, such as "No, I thought it was a little high", if that is what you thought. Make it short and don't editorialize.

#### **FAIR AND FOUL CALLS**

When the ball is foul, raise your hands overhead and yell in a loud and clear voice **"Foul ball!"** If the ball is fair, merely

point toward fair ground. Signal vigorously several times if the players are in doubt or if the call is close. If some unusual play happens, where the ball is "fair", but everyone assumes its "foul", do not yell "**Fair ball!**" Continue to point toward fair ground. You never say "**Fair ball**"

### THE OUT CALL

Each umpire has his own distinctive signal for out calls. There are lots of accepted ways of calling outs.

A. Raising the open hand, then making a fist while crossing your left hand in front of the body.

B. Another consists of shooting the right fist out as in a jab and bringing it back above the head.

C. Punching the right fist out in an arc as if to punch the player out.

D. A quick raise of the open hand then making a fist may also be used.

E. A good umpire always develops a rhythm and signal on every out call. The closer the play, the more vigorous may be the signal of the umpire. On obvious plays do not demonstrate, but make the call.

F. In all out calls the umpire should give the out signal and say loudly and clearly "**OUT**" or "**HE'S OUT.**"

### THE SAFE CALL

The safe signal seems to be more universal. The umpire begins by crossing his arms in front of the chest then brings them straight out to the side. The palms should remain down throughout the motion. The hands should be kept at shoulder level. The hands should be pointed and in a straight line with the arms with no bend at the wrist.

With every safe call the umpire should give the safe sign and say loudly and clearly "**SAFE**" terms as "YOU'RE IN THERE" and "NO, NO" should not be used. Do not call the runner safe unless there is an actual play on him. If there is an actual

play, make the call, but again, do not demonstrate unless it is close. When there is a play and the umpire doesn't make a call, it looks as if he wasn't watching the play.

### INTERFERENCE CALL

On any interference the ball is dead. The umpire should raise both hands overhead while calling loudly and clearly **"INTERFERENCE, THE BALL IS DEAD"**. (See Rule 7.09 and Chapter 8 in this manual regarding immediate dead ball or delayed dead ball)

### OBSTRUCTION CALL

If a play is being made on the obstructed runner (Rule 7.06{a}), the umpire shall signal the obstruction by immediately calling time (both hands overhead) and then pointing laterally at the runner while calling loudly and clearly, **"THAT'S OBSTRUCTION"**.

If no play is being made on the obstructed runner (Rule 7.06{b}), the umpire shall signal the obstruction by pointing laterally at the runner while calling loudly and clearly, **"THAT'S OBSTRUCTION"**. Note that under this section of the obstruction rule, the umpire shall not call time until all play has ceased and no further action is possible.

### BALK CALL

In calling a balk, the umpire shall point at the pitcher and call loudly, **"THAT'S A BALK"**. Time is to be called only when play stops. The ball is not dead automatically when a balk is called. For the purpose of the balk rule, play is considered stopped as soon as a fielder has possession of the ball. (Delay dead ball situation)

### CATCH OR NO CATCH

If the catch is made, a raised arm with closed fist is the only needed sign. No sign is needed when the batted ball is not caught except in a case of doubt as to whether it hit the ground first or was legally caught. If the ball is not caught, give the safe motion with a couple of waves of the arms. Say **"NO CATCH"** rather than **"SAFE"**, as the fact that the catch was not made does not insure the batter being safe. (Definition 2.00 - Catch)

### TIME CALL

When **time** is called by the umpire the ball is dead. The umpire should raise both hands overhead while calling loudly and clearly "TIME".

**NOTE:**        *Know How and When to Call Time Out.*

**Don't overdo time-outs.** Let them play unless there is a valid reason for calling time. Don't call time too quickly when it would prevent the completion of play. Don't grant a player's request for the time unless he has a **bonafied** reason. For instance, if a relay-man wants time so he can throw the ball to the pitcher, don't grant it. The offensive team has a right to any error made on the throw. An injury is not an automatic time-out. As soon as the play is completed call time.

### CHECKED SWINGS

When in doubt the plate umpire should check with the base umpire in position before making his decision, however, if a call is made of "ball" the plate umpire may still go to the base umpire for help if he deems it necessary (recommended). The plate umpire steps to the side of the catcher and points to the base umpire when he wants help on a checked swing (half swing). The base umpire raises his arm for the strike signal and gives the safe signal to show no swing. There should also be verbal communication. The plate umpire asks "Did he go?", the base umpire says "Yes, he went", or "No, he didn't go". If the base umpire responds "Yes, he went" the plate umpire should indicate "Then it's a strike" and give the count.

### INFIELD FLY

Umpires must pre-determine the possible play with a signal. The signal is an open hand with the palm on the chest area.

### HOME RUN SIGNAL

The home run signal is pointing the right arm overhead and making a circular motion (once or twice) above your head.  
(Verbalize call)

### FOUL TIP

When a foul tip is legally caught, the umpire should give a foul tip signal. The signal is to brush the palms of the hands

above the head as they pass each other. Most of the foul tips can't be detected at a distance. If the foul tip is not caught it becomes a foul ball. (Use foul signal)

**PROPER SIGNALS ARE VERY IMPORTANT**

You will want to watch experienced umpire, including the professionals if possible, and then experiment to see which signals fit you best. Good mechanics will go a long way in creating a good impression. But remember that there are basic principles of umpiring and that sometimes even the professionals, due to their experience or the fact they are working 4-man crews, may not follow the basics a less experienced umpire should follow. Also don't learn to umpire by using the guru theory. Develop a mental check list similar to that a pilot might use, then when you find yourself getting off track you can return to that check list and correct your problem.

One of the most profitable means of practice is with the use of a full length mirror. Study your own actions from as many angles as possible.

**CHAPTER 14**  
**INSTRUCTIONS TO UMPIRES**

**RESTRICTIONS ON PITCHERS WARMING UP**

When a pitcher takes position at the beginning of each inning, that pitcher shall be permitted to pitch **NOT TO EXCEED** eight preparatory pitches to the catcher during which play shall be suspended. Such preparatory pitches shall not consume more than one minute of time. If a sudden emergency causes a pitcher to be summoned into the game, the umpire-in-chief shall allow the pitcher as many pitches as the umpire deems necessary. (Remember an inning starts the moment that the third out is made, completing the preceding inning.)

**BATTER'S POSITION IN BATTER'S BOX**

The lines defining the batter's box are considered within the batter's box. When the batter assumes his position in the batter's box, he shall have both feet completely within the batter's box; (i.e., no part of either foot may extend beyond the lines defining the box when the batter assumes his position).

An illegally batted ball is one that a batter hits with one or both feet on the ground **entirely** outside the batter's box, he shall be declared out. (Any ball hit fair, foul, or a foul tip - **See 6.03 Rule Book.**) Remember this is going to be very very difficult to see if the umpire is concentrating on the pitch, as he should be.

**BATTER STEPPING OUT OF BATTER'S BOX**

Once a batter has taken his position in the batter's box, and the pitcher starts his windup or comes to a set position with a runner on, he does not go through with his pitch because the batter has stepped out of the box, it shall not be called a balk. Both the pitcher and batter have violated a rule, and the umpire shall call time and both the batter and pitcher shall start over from **scratch**.

If the pitcher delays once the batter is in his box and the umpire feels that the delay is not justified, he may allow the batter to step out of the box momentarily by calling **"Time."**

**THE STRIKE ZONE**

The strike zone is the space over home plate which is between the batter's armpits and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural stance. The umpire shall determine the strike zone according to the batter's usual stance when that batter swings at a pitch.

The batter's stance becomes a problem to many umpires. Sometimes a batter will move up and down in the box with the ideas of confusing the pitcher. It is wise to call any doubtful pitch a strike in this case. It is beneficial to everyone for all umpires to be aggressive in calling strikes. **Think strikes** and those borderline pitches will take care of themselves. The umpire must be consistent in his calls if he is to maintain control of the game and gain the respect of all players, managers, and coaches.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS IN GETTING THE PITCH RIGHT:

1. Get a good view of the ball coming in.
2. Wait (timing) Proper use of eyes.
3. Concentration.
4. Consistency on your calls.

#### ARGUING BALLS AND STRIKES

No manager, player, or coach should be permitted to leave the bench (nor can the coach leave his position in the coaching box) to question an umpire's decision on the calling of balls and strikes. If he does, he will be warned. If he continues he will be ejected.

#### CHECKED SWINGS

An appeal may be made when the umpire calls a pitch a **ball** on a checked swing. In such an instance, the umpire may appeal to the appropriate base umpire if requested by the defense. The plate umpire may - on his own volition - ask for help from the appropriate base umpire if in doubt on a checked swing. (If the pitch was called a strike there is no appeal.) Always make sure that your mechanics for checking with your partner, on a check swing is different from any other mechanic.

#### BASE COACHES

Do not begin an inning unless both base coaches of the offensive team have taken their positions in the coaching boxes.



### LINEUPS

The home team manager and the visiting manager shall give the batting order in duplicate to the umpire-in-chief. The umpire-in-chief shall make certain that the original and duplicate copies are the same, then provide a copy of each batting order to the opposing manager. The original copy retained by the umpire shall be the official batting order.

As soon as the home team's batting order is handed to the umpire-in-chief, the umpires are in charge of the playing field and from that moment have sole authority to determine when a game shall be called, halted or resumed on account of weather or the conditions of the playing field. (Rule 4.01 Little League Rule Book.) All umpires should get used to handling the lineups.

### CURFEW

In Little League games, no inning shall start after 10:00 p.m. prevailing time. It will be held that an inning starts the moment that the third out is made, completing the preceding inning. ***(no one in the local league has the power or authority to extend or shorten the curfew of any Little League game.)***  
(Umpires responsibility - See Rule 9.00.)

### PROTESTING GAME

A. Protest shall be considered only when based on the violation or interpretation of a playing rule or the use of an ineligible player. No protest shall be considered on a decision involving an umpire's judgment. Equipment which does not meet specifications must be removed from the game and shall not be the basis for a protest.

B. The managers of contesting teams only shall have the right to protest a game (or in their absence, coaches). However, the manager or acting manager may not leave the dugout until receiving permission from an umpire.

C. Protests shall be made as follows:

1. The protesting manager shall immediately, and before any succeeding play begins, notify the umpire that the game is being played under protests.

2. Following such notice the umpire shall consult with the associate umpires. If the umpire is convinced that the decision is in conflict with the rules, the umpire shall reverse that decision. If, however, after consultation, the umpire is convinced that the decision is not in conflict with the rules, said umpire shall announce that the game is being played under protest. Failure of the umpire to make such announcement shall not affect the validity of the protest.

D. Protests made due to use of an ineligible player may be considered only if made to the umpire before the final out of the game. Whenever it is found that an ineligible player is being used, said player shall be removed from the game, and the game shall be continued under protest or not as the protesting manager decides. **(An ineligible player refers to age, residence, pitching eligibility or Rule 3.03 substitution.)**

E. Any protest for any reason whatsoever must be submitted by the manager, first to the umpire on the field of play and then in writing to the local league president within 24 hours. The umpire-in-chief shall also submit a report immediately.

F. A committee composed of the president, player agent, umpire-in-chief and one or more other officers or directors who are not managers or umpires shall hear and resolve any such protest as above, including playing rules. If protest is allowed, resume game from exact point when infraction occurred.

**NOTE 1:** This does not pertain to charges of infractions of playing rules or regulations such as field decorum or actions of league personnel or spectators which must be considered and resolved by the Board of Directors.

**NOTE 2:** All Little League officials are urged to take precautions to prevent protests. When a protest situation is imminent, the potential offenders should be notified immediately.

**Example:** Should a manager, official scorer, league official or umpire discover that a pitcher is ineligible at the beginning of the game, or will become ineligible during the game or at the start of the next inning of play, the fact

should be brought to the attention of the manager of the team involved. Such action not be delayed until the infraction has occurred.

### RUNNER LEAVES A BASE ILLEGALLY

When a pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate and in possession of the ball and the catcher is in the catcher's box ready to receive delivery of the ball, base runners shall not leave their bases until the ball has been delivered and has reached the batter.

The violation by one base runner shall affect all other base runners.

If a runner leaves a base illegally, play can be made on that runner. If the runner is out, the out stands; but if the runner reaches base, that runner is advancing in to safely, that runner shall be returned to the base occupied before the pitch was made and no outs results. **"Time"** will be called and no play can be made during the return to bases. However, should a runner leave a base too soon and the batter hit the pitched ball safely, then the only advance allowed to all runners is to the nearest base beyond the one occupied by the batter through the batter's clean hit.

In no event shall the batter advance beyond first base on a single, error, second base on a double or third base on a triple. The umpire-in-chief shall determine the base value of the hit ball.

If more than one base is occupied and any one of the runners leaves too soon, such illegal action shall prevent the advance of all runners except those forced to advance by a batter becoming a base runner.

When a base runner has left a base too soon and the batter hits the ball and advances beyond first base as the result of a play being made on another runner; the batter shall be entitled only to as many bases as i credited to that batter for a **clean** hit, no error involved, and each base runner shall be returned to the unoccupied base nearest the one each left.

When the umpire detects a runner illegally leaving the base too soon, he shall drop a **signal flag** (or handkerchief) immediately indicating what has happened, but continue to move into position himself for the call on that play. **(The signal flag should be red.)**

After the play has been completed **time** should be called. Then the rule violation should be announced after which the batter

and base runners will be advanced to the bases to which they are entitled. Be sure to recover the signal flag.

When any base runner leaves the base before the pitched ball has reached the batter and the batter bunts or hits a ball within the infield, no run shall be allowed to score. If three runners were on the bases and the batter reaches first base safely, each runner shall advance to the base beyond the one they occupied at the start of the play, except the runner who occupied third base, which runner shall be removed from the base without a run being scored. (Exception: If at the conclusion of the play there is an open base, paragraphs (A) and (B) of Rule 7.13 will apply.)

### **BATTING OUT OF ORDER**

In batting out of order situations, there are four (4) fundamentals to keep in mind:

1. If an appeal is made while the improper batter is batting, he is removed as batter and the correct batter assumes the ball and strike count and completes the turn at bat. Any advances on the bases by wild pitches, passed balls, stolen bases, etc., while the improper batter was batting are legal.
2. When a player bats out of order, the **proper** batter is the player called out on appeal.
3. If the appeal is made after completion of the improper batter's turn, but **before** the pitch to the following batter (or play or attempted play), the batter who should have batted is called out (proper batter). The improper batter is removed from base, if he is on as the result of the action.
4. If a pitch is made to the batter following the improper batter (or play or attempted play), the improper batter's action is **legalized** and play proceeds as if it were the proper batter. (See Rule 6.07 and Approved Rulings.)

### **THREE-FOOT LINE**

Any runner is out when running more than three feet away from a direct line between bases to **avoid being tagged**, unless such action is to avoid interference with a fielder fielding a batted ball.

**Two** helpful hints in making the right call:

1. If the fielder does not have the ball and the runner runs outside of the imaginary three-foot line, this rule does not apply because the runner was not avoiding a tag.

2. A runner establishes his base line when the umpire determines a play will be made on said runner. Base line is not always direct from base to base. (See Rule 7.08 (a)(1).)

### **THE RUNNER DOES NOT SLIDE**

Any runner is out when the runner does not slide or attempt to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag.

### **HELPFUL HINTS IN MAKING THE RIGHT CALL:**

1. In order for the rule to apply the fielder must have possession of the ball and **waiting** to make the tag.

2. If the fielder is **waiting** with the ball to make the tag, the runner now has to do one of two things, that runner must **slide** no matter if he is ten feet from the base or **"attempt"** to get around the fielder. In his attempt to get around the fielder, the umpire must be sure that the runner does not go outside of the imaginary three foot line for if that runner does, he will be called out.(Under Rule 7.01 (a)(1).)

### **RULING EXAMPLES:**

1. With a runner on third base. The pitcher throws a wild pitch, the catcher runs after ball and recovers it, the runner advances to home plate and the catcher runs back to tag the runner out, but the catcher and runner get to home plate at the same time; the runner runs into the catcher and the catcher drops the ball and the runner touches home plate.

**Ruling:** The runner is safe, and the run scores. (Rule 7.08 (a) (3) does not apply because the catcher was **not waiting with the ball to make the tag.**)

2. A runner on first base attempts to steal second base, the catcher throws the ball to the second baseman who is standing waiting about five feet in front of the base. As the runner gets close to the second baseman who is going to tag him, he jumps around the second baseman brushing his glove and knocking the ball out of the glove without going outside the imaginary three foot line.

**Ruling:** The runner is safe at second. (Rule 7.08(a)(3) does not apply because the runner made an

**attempt** to get around the fielder without leaving the three foot line.)

### UMPIRE REPORTS

In writing your reports (i.e., fights, protested games, ejections, etc.) remember that they are actually legal documents and that others may be privileged to examine them. Tell precisely what happened and the exact language that was used. Be sure of your facts and confine your report to the facts only not **personal opinions**.

Take extreme care in writing your reports. Make sure spelling and punctuation are correct. Always proofread the report to make sure it is free of errors and clear to the reader.

Always keep a copy of the report for your own records.

The report should be submitted to your local league President, and/or the Umpire Consultant within 24 hours after the incident.

In cases of a violent nature (bumping incidents, assault on an umpire, confrontation off the field, etc.) should be reported to the District Administrator.

### INJURED PLAYERS

When a player becomes injured during a game, your job is to inform the player's manager or coach and essentially do nothing further. While this may appear unsympathetic, especially when a player is in severe pain. Remember, you are there to officiate, not to attend to the player's medical needs.

When a player is injured in a game, you are umpiring in, do the following: 1) stop the game as soon as possible; 2) report the injury to the player's manager; 3) report the injury to a league official; 4) do not touch, move or assist in moving the injured player; 5) do not resume the game until the injured player (if he is able to continue to play) is pronounced ready to play by the manager or medical personnel or is removed from the playing field; 6) be patient because in many circumstances, you may have to wait for medical personnel to arrive at the game site to attend to or remove the injured player.