

2015

VIRGINIA LITTLE LEAGUE

DISTRICT 16

UMPIRE MANUAL





Virginia District 16 Little League



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Virginia District 16 Little League



From our District 16 Administrator

Dear Little League Umpire,

Welcome to District 16! Thank you for stepping up and serving as a volunteer umpire for our Little League Baseball and Softball players!

Having been formed in 2009 as **Virginia's newest Little League District**, we have continued the tradition of service and excellence on and off the field that has become the benchmark of volunteer youth sports officials in Virginia, and the entire Southeast Region.

Joining our ranks of volunteer umpires and participating in our training programs tells us, **the players and the community that you're** committed to the success of our leagues and the enjoyment of all of the players, parents and grandparents by working hard to become the best umpire you can be!

District 16 umpires are known throughout the state and the Southeastern Region as hard-working, dedicated volunteers who understand that they fulfill an important role in each Little Leaguers story – a story that should be filled with many great memories of their **'days in Little League!'**

The District 16 staff is committed to doing everything we can to make sure your memories of being a Little League volunteer umpire are equally fulfilling to you!

If you see me, or any member of the District staff at the ball field, please walk up and introduce yourself – **you're an important part of our success and we'd like to say, "Thank you!"**

Now, let's.... Play Ball!

LaMott

LaMott Smith
District 16 Administrator





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An Open Letter to Little League Youth Umpires

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Dear Little League Umpires,

You're finally finished. Take a deep breath; the season is over.

You're so young, just thirteen or fourteen sometimes. You give hours and sweat at those ball fields.

You stand there, often looking up as grown men shout at you about a call they think you missed. It's sad, isn't it, that the younger the players, the more fired up the coaches and parents are. So you make a bad call in a 5-year-old T-ball game and get chewed out by the men who are supposed to show you what a man looks like. That must be confusing. And the stands aren't any better. Many parents think they know the rules better than you do (and some are right), but they feel it necessary to shout the rules to you from the stands.

What? That's not helpful?

And I know sometimes your parents come too. They stand behind the backstop and watch. No pressure, huh?

I can't imagine what it must feel like to have all eyes on you, just waiting on a mistake.

I don't hear people congratulate you for all the good calls you make.

Nope, just the ones you miss, at least according to them.

Your efforts aren't in vain.

We see you stand your ground when others may try to intimidate you.

We see you gently line up the four-year-olds feet when he just can't figure out what his coaches are telling him to do at the plate.

We see you there pre-game, fixing scoreboards and asking nicely if someone will please work it during the game.

(continued)



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We see you laughing with the batters when there's a delay in the game; they think you're the coolest.

We see you move the bats out of the baseline so the kid running home doesn't trip.

We see you come out night after night with a good attitude, giving those little boys your best as they make lifelong memories.

We see you.

Here's the thing: adults aren't perfect.

We're supposed to show you how to operate in the world, and sometimes we mess that up.

Sometimes we act like the five-year-old T-ball game is the World Series.

Sometimes we think we must be right, which means you must be wrong.

Sometimes we've had a long day at work and bring our frustrations to the ball fields.

Sometimes when our kid finally gets his first hit but you call him out at first on a close call, we hurt so much for him that it comes out as anger toward you.

I'm sorry for all of that, on behalf of all the grown-ups at the ballpark. Please forgive us.

We see you.

Our boys played baseball in the front yard last week, and I heard a little of their conversation. It started like this: "All right, Boys, you know the rules. Hats on straight, shirts tucked in..."

They see you, too.

Thank you for your hard work.

Thank you for caring for our kids, even when you're dodging wild pitches and thrown bats.

Thank you for your patience when little ones hit the ball and run to third and when the big ones start to think they are major leaguers.

Thank you for having the character to look past the adults to do your best for the kids.

I see you.

See you next spring.

A Grateful Mom



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WELCOME!

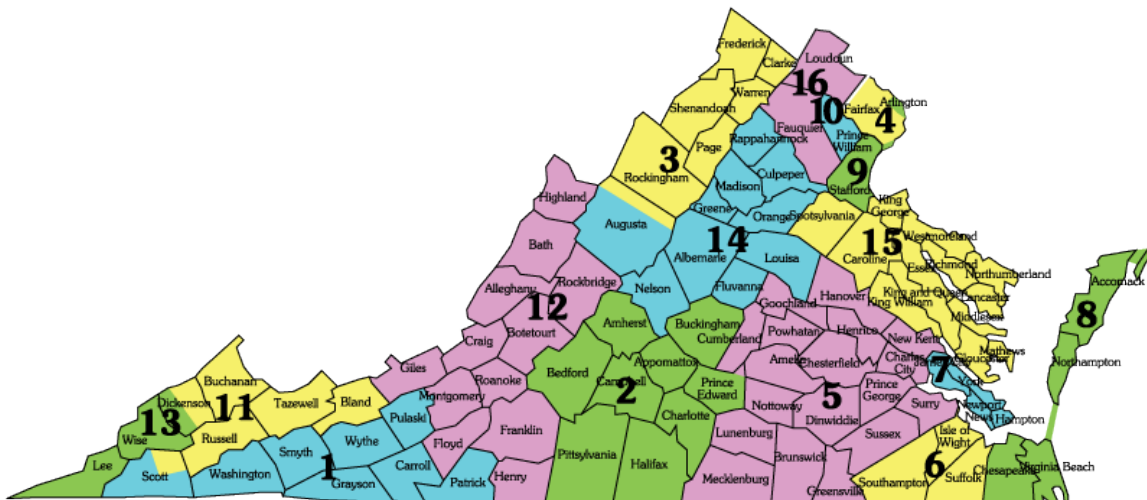
“Play Ball!” The best phrase in baseball...

Welcome to District 16!

Who or What is “District 16”?

The mechanics and rules we’ll be helping you learn in this Manual, come all the way from Little League Headquarters in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. While there is always room for a little ‘individualization’ in umping, the core set of standards are passed on from HQ, to the Region (Southeastern Region, for us); from the Region to the State, (our State organization is the **Virginia State Tournament Umpire’s Association, VSTUA**), down to the District and League Level. We are District 16, the newest Little League District in the Commonwealth of Virginia. District 16 encompasses all of Loudoun and Fauquier Counties.

Here’s is a map of all of the Districts in Virginia:



Each District is comprised of a group of Leagues. District 16 includes the following Leagues:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Central Loudoun Little League | Loudoun Girls Softball L.L. |
| Dulles Little League | Loudoun South Little League |
| Fauquier Girls L.L. Softball | Lower Loudoun Little League |
| Greater Fauquier Baseball L.L. | Upper Loudoun Little League |



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District 16 Staff

Each District also consists of a group of volunteers at the District Level, called District Staff. The District 16 Staff consists of the following:






-  **District Administrator: LaMott Smith**
-  Pam Brooks, Softball Programs
-  Mark Buchen, Safety Officer
-  Lynn Davis, Challenger Program
-  Gene Gotimer, Assistant District Administrator
-  Jill Gotimer, Assistant District Administrator
-  **Mary Beth Pittinger, Big Field Programs (50'/70' and 90')**
-  Kerry Rice, Secretary
-  Nancy Stopper, Staff Member At Large
-  Jim Vincent, Umpire Consultant (Umpire-In-Chief, or UIC)

The goal of the District 16 Staff is to support its Member **League's** and foster the Mission of Little League Baseball to help ensure that everyone who participates – players, coaches, **parent's, grandparent's and yes, even umpires, takes great memories with them from one season to the next!** This Manual will provide you with an overview of what we expect from our umpires, and the specific skills necessary to become the best umpire you can be.

What will I Learn in this Manual?

If you've never been an umpire before, this Manual will help you learn the basics of umping.

It will focus on:

-  Field Decorum (How to look, act and feel like an Umpire)
-  Rules & Interpretations
-  Call Mechanics (How to call a Strike, Ball, Out, Safe, etc.)
-  Field Mechanics (Where to be and how to get there).
-  **Rule Myths (We'll dispel a few old baseball 'tales'...)**

If you've got some previous experience, whether it's in another youth baseball or softball program, or with a Little League program, this Manual will allow you to brush up on your skills and sharpen your mechanics, specifically for Little League.



Virginia District 16 Little League



Umpire 101

The Basics

Are there some Basic Things I should know?

Yes! And here they are...

Uniforms

The commonly accepted uniform shirt for a Little League Umpire is a navy blue pullover shirt with red and white trim on the collar and sleeves, with a red undershirt. It's not uncommon, however, to see other color shirts based upon the League's preference, or the Tournament Level at which the umpire is working. For example:



Light blue (sometimes called Powder Blue) pullover shirt with blue and white trim on the collar and sleeves with a navy undershirt;



Cream pullover shirt with black trim on the collar and sleeves with a black undershirt;



Generally, umpires are expected to provide their own uniform, but for new umpires, or umpires who start in the younger age divisions, some leagues may choose to provide t-shirts or other pullover style shirts to help defray costs for new umpires. Check with your League UIC. Depending upon the Supplier, you may want to order the shirt you plan to wear behind the plate one size larger than you normally wear to allow extra room for your chest protector.

The entire crew, whether two, three, four or six-person crews, should wear a matching shirt/undershirt color combination.



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The United States flag patch, if worn, should be worn on the rear of the shirt, centered at the base of the collar.

Each shirt shall have a Little League Baseball Umpire patch affixed to the left sleeve, two inches down from the seam and centered. These patches are often pre-attached to the shirts that many of the online suppliers sell, but individual patches may be available from your League.



Little League Umpire Patch



American Flag Patches

Heather gray slacks for both the base and plate. Charcoal slacks may only be worn if ALL members of a crew have them.

All belts shall be black with small buckles. No bright, shiny, or fancy buckles.





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Most umpires wear what's called a "Combination Cap" or hat. It's made with a slightly shorter bill, so that it can be **worn with a mask**. If your League doesn't provide a hat, most suppliers have a good selection from which to choose. Hats are usually navy blue, but can also be black.



Plain Hats



District 16 Hat

Proper shoes are very important in preventing injuries and also ensuring comfort – **you'll** be on the field and on your feet for the better part of two hours, so comfort is very important. Both field and plate shoes are a very personal decision, but there are some basics that apply:



Field shoes shall be black and have minimal markings on them.



Plate shoes shall also be black. They should have a steel toe or other type of toe protection and should also protect the top of your foot. They should be of a type that you can clean and polish.



Black socks (if you need to wear a white athletic sock, then wear a black pair over them, but be sure to have both pair on when you try on shoes).



Base Shoe



Plate Shoe

Finally, with the exception of a wedding band and medical alert bracelets or necklaces, no other jewelry (including watches) shall be worn.









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Equipment

The primary collection of equipment for an umpire consists of:

-  Face Mask (with dangling throat guard)
-  Chest Protector
-  Ball Bag (Black or Navy. 2 Recommended. Solid Color, No Patches or large logos)
-  Ball/Strike/Out Indicator
-  Plate Brush
-  Shin Guards





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Abbreviations/Definitions/Terminology

Abbreviations

UIC = Umpire-In-Chief

Umpires (Two-Umpire Crew)

U1 = Home Plate Umpire

U2 = Base Umpire

Umpires (Three-Umpire Crew)

U1 = 1st Base Umpire

U3 = 3rd Base Umpire

U4 = Home Plate Umpire*

Umpires (Four-Umpire Crew)

U1 = 1st Base Umpire

U2 = 2nd Base Umpire

U3 = 3rd Base Umpire

U4 = Home Plate Umpire*

Umpires (Six-Umpire Crew)

U1 = 1st Base Umpire

U2 = 2nd Base Umpire

U3 = 3rd Base Umpire

U4 = Home Plate Umpire*

LF = Left Field Foul Line Umpire

RF = Right Field Foul Line Umpire

Base Runners

R1 = Runner on 1st Base

R2 = Runner on 2nd Base

R3 = Runner on 3rd Base

BR = Batter-Runner

Field Positions

F1 = Pitcher

F2 = Catcher

F3 = 1st Baseman

F4 = 2nd Baseman

F5 = 3rd Baseman

F6 = Shortstop

F7 = Left Fielder

F8 = Center Fielder

F9 = Right Fielder

*Some Leagues use the acronym "PU" for Plate Umpire, instead of U4.

Verbally, the four positions are often referred to as "U1", "U2", "U3" and "the Plate" or "Plate".

For example, "With a runner on 1st and a ball hit to right field, what is U1's responsibility and where is the Plate going?"

Throughout this manual, "U4" will be used to refer to the Plate Umpire.



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Definitions

Beginning In this Section & continuing throughout the remainder of this Manual, the following conventions are used.

Red Text is Directly from the Official Regulations & Playing Rules of Little League.

Purple Text is Directly from the Make the Right Call booklet, 2014 edition.

Green Text is a helpful interpretation or Tip.



Appeal Play – Is [the] act of a fielder in claiming a violation of the rules by an offensive player.

There are some violations that an umpire ignores unless a defensive player appeals. These are the most common:

- ❖ Failing to tag up when required;
- ❖ Failing to touch a base or home plate;
- ❖ **Batting out of order (Manager's appeal);**
- ❖ **Batter using an illegal Bat (Manager's appeal),**



Appeals must be made while the ball is in play (Live Ball).



The fielder must either tag the offending runner with the ball, or touch the base where the violation occurred with the ball in hand.



The appeal must be obvious; no “accidental appeals.” This is especially important at 1st Base, where the Batter-Runner is presumed to have touched the base, unless U1 specifically sees the BR miss the base.



The Defense loses the right to appeal once the next pitch is delivered, or the defense makes or attempts to make a play, or once the Defense leaves the field.



Ball – A pitch which does NOT enter the strike zone in flight and is not struck at by the batter.



If the pitch touches the ground and bounces through the strike zone it is a “ball.” If such a pitch touches the batter, the batter shall be awarded first base. If the batter swings at such a pitch and misses, it is a strike.



In **Major/Intermediate/Junior/Senior/Big League Baseball**: If the batter swings at such a pitch (a ball that bounces prior to reaching home plate) after two strikes, the ball cannot be caught, for the purposes of Rule 6.05(b) and 6.09(b). [In other words, it is considered a ‘dropped third strike.’]



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Balk – An illegal act by the pitcher with a runner or runners on base entitling all runners to advance one base (**Intermediate/Junior/Senior/Big League**).

A Balk is NOT called in Majors and below (See “Illegal Pitch”).



Battery – A term describing the Pitcher and Catcher.



Catch – The act of a fielder in getting secure possession in the hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it before it touches the ground. In establishing the validity of the catch, the fielder shall hold the ball long enough to prove complete control of the ball and that release of the ball is voluntary and intentional.



If the fielder has made the catch and drops the ball while in the act of making a throw following the catch, the ball shall be adjudged to have been caught.



A catch IS legal if the ball is finally held by any fielder, even though juggled, or held by another fielder before it touches the ground.



It is NOT a catch, however, if simultaneously or immediately following contact with the ball, the fielder collides with a player, or with a wall, or if that fielder falls down, and as a result of such collision or falling, drops the ball.



It is NOT a catch if a fielder touches a fly ball which then hits a member of the offensive team or an umpire and then is caught by another defensive player.



Runners may leave their bases the instant the first fielder touches the ball.



Dead Ball – Is a ball out of play because of a legally created temporary suspension of play.



Fair Ball – 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, second or third base, or that first falls on fair territory on or beyond first base or third base, or that, while over fair territory, passes out of the playing field in flight. [a Home Run]



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. [In other words, Fair or Foul is determined by the balls position when it is touched, not by the position of the fielder when he/she touches the ball.]



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Fair Territory – Is that part of the playing field within, and including the first base and third base lines, from home base to the bottom of the playing field [outfield] fence and perpendicularly upwards.



NOTE: Home plate, first base and third base and ALL foul lines are IN Fair Territory.



Force Play – Is a play in which a runner legally loses the right to occupy a base by reason of the batter becoming a runner.



NOTE: Confusion regarding this play is removed by remembering that frequently the “force” situation is removed during the play.

Example: Runner on first, one out, ground ball hit sharply to first baseman, who touches the base and the batter-runner, is out. The force is removed at that moment and the runner advancing to second must be tagged. If there had been a runner at second or third, and either of these runners scored before the tag-out at second, the run(s) would count. Had the first baseman thrown to second [prior to touching first] and the ball had been returned to first, the play at second would have been a force-Out [if the ball beat the runner to second], making two outs, and the return throw to first [if it beat the batter-runner] would have made the third out. In that case, no run would score.



Foul Ball – Is a batted ball that settles on foul territory between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that bounds past first or third base on or over foul territory, or that first falls on foul territory beyond first or third base, or that while on or over foul territory, touches the person of an umpire or player, or any object foreign to the natural ground.



A foul 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. [In other words, Fair or Foul is determined by the balls position when it is touched, not by the position of the fielder when he/she touches the ball.]



Foul Tip – Is a batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher’s hands and is legally caught. It is NOT a foul tip unless caught and any foul tip that is caught is a strike, and the ball is IN play. It is NOT a catch if it is a rebound unless the ball has first touched the catcher’s glove or hand. A foul tip can only be caught by the catcher.



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Illegal Pitch – Is (1) a pitch delivered to the batter when the pitcher does not have **the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate**; (2) a **quick return pitch**, or (3) in Little League (Majors)/Minor League: any other act meeting the criteria established in Rule 8.05.



Intermediate/Junior/Senior/Big League: An illegal pitch with runners on base is a Balk.



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.

The infield dirt and the outfield grass do NOT form a boundary line for Infield Fly purposes. An outfielder can catch a declared Infield Fly.

Example: Runners on 1st and 2nd, one out. The Left Fielder is between the Shortstop and 3rd Baseman, just one step onto the grass. Batter hits a fly ball that is called for by the Left Fielder. **RULING: The umpire shall call, "Infield Fly! The Batter is out!"**



If a declared Infield Fly is allowed to fall untouched to the ground, bounces foul and remains foul before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball.



If a declared Infield Fly falls untouched to the ground, outside the baseline, and bounces fair before passing first or third base, it is an Infield Fly.



This Rule does not apply in Tee Ball.



Pitch – Is a ball delivered to the batter by the Pitcher.








Little League (Majors)/Minor League Exception: For the purpose of maintaining a pitch count, an illegal pitch shall count as one pitch; even if a pitch is not actually thrown.



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Strike – Is a legal pitch which meets any of these conditions –

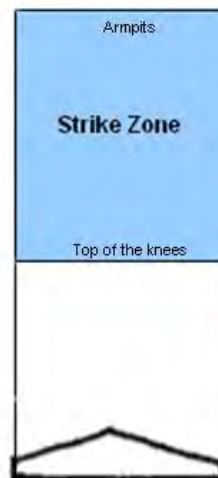
-  Is struck at by the batter and is missed;
-  Is not struck at, if any part of the ball passes through any part of the strike zone (See Strike Zone);
-  Is fouled by the batter when there is less than two strikes;
-  Is bunted foul (batter is out and the ball is dead, if the batter bunts foul on the third strike);
-  Touches the batter's person as the batter strikes at it (dead ball);
-  Touches the batter in flight in the strike zone: or
-  Becomes a foul tip (ball is live and in play).



Strike Zone – Is that 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.



Little League Strike Zone



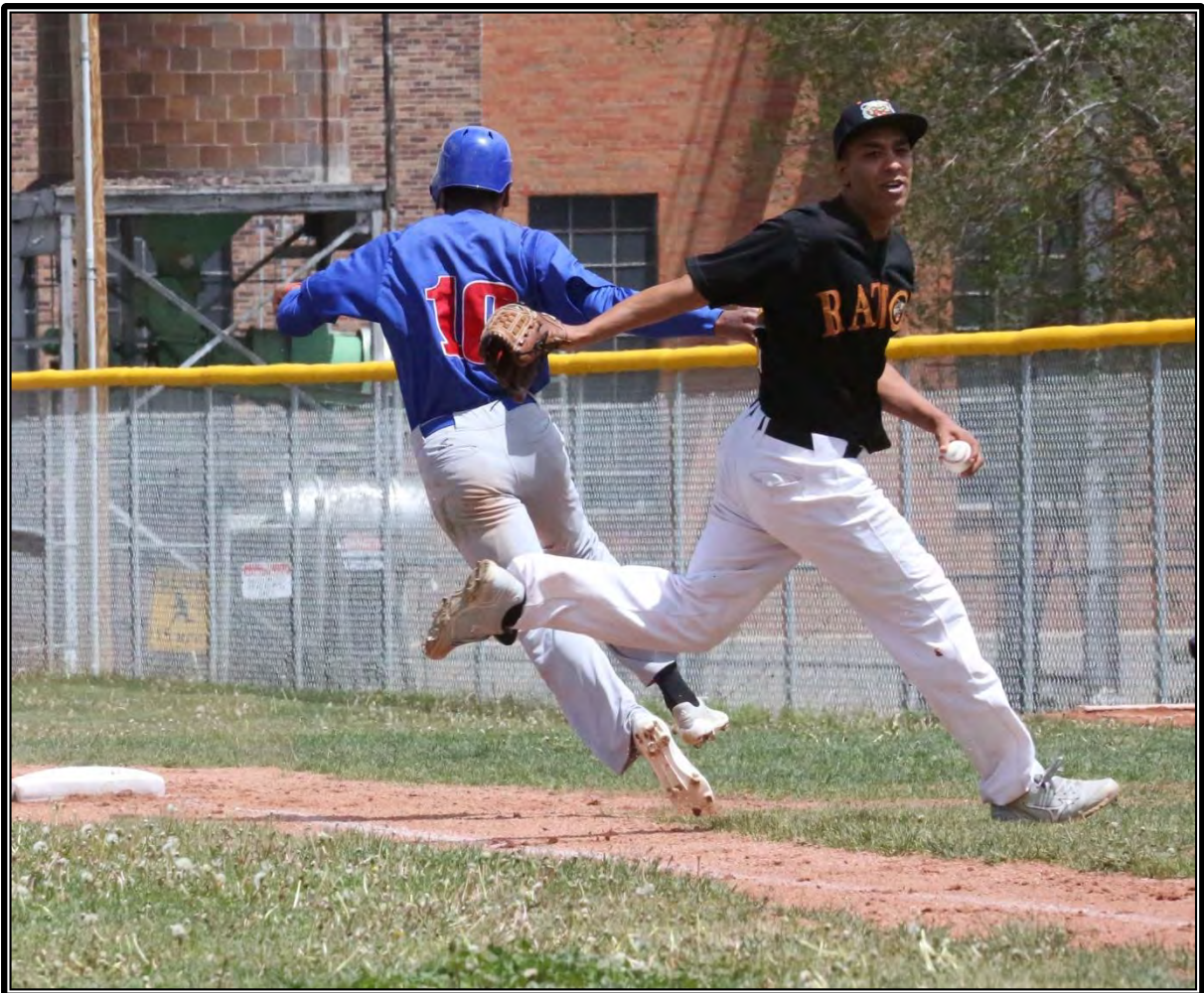


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Tag – Is the action of a fielder in touching a base with the body while holding the ball securely and firmly in the hand or the glove; or touching a runner with the ball or with the hand or glove holding the ball, while holding the ball securely and firmly in the hand or glove.

It is NOT a tag if a fielder has the ball firmly in the glove and touches the runner with the other hand or any other part of the fielders body, nor is it a tag if the fielder has the ball firmly in the hand and touches the runner with the glove hand or any other part of the fielders body. The fielder must touch the runner with the hand or glove hand in which the ball is held.





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Terminology

Angle Over Distance! This is the **Silver Rule** for Umpires
(See Inside/Out; Outside/In for the Golden Rule.)

You can't be everywhere at once! From Position C you'll have to make calls at first base from 75 feet away! Getting the proper angle on a play is more important than getting close. The proper angle on a play is a viewing position that is, to some degree, perpendicular to the direction of the play **AND** your view isn't obstructed by any other players, **AND** permits you to see the tag.

Don't get "straight-lined" by runners (See "Straight-Lined" on page 14).



Echoing a Signal

The practice of echoing (or joining in) another umpire's call.

There is only ONE call that should be "Echoed:" The Infield Fly.

Example: The batter hits a pop fly within the infield. When the ball reaches its apex (highest point) U2 adjudges it to be an Infield Fly and begins to shout, "Infield Fly! Batter's Out!" This call should be joined by the Home Plate Umpire, and any other umpires on the field.



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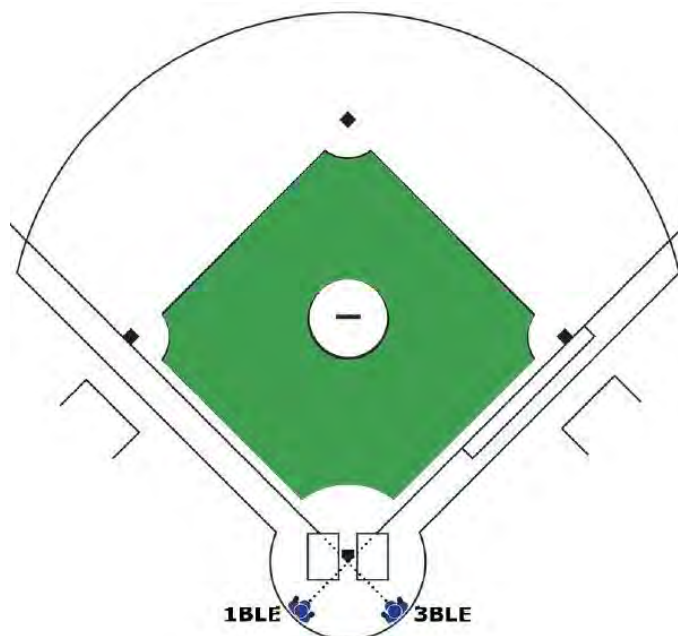


Flashing Back Signals

This is the practice of a base umpire mimicking certain **signals back** (“flashing back”) to the Home Plate Umpire as a way of acknowledging that you saw his/her signal and are aware of the situation. Some Home Plate Umpires like every signal they **make flashed back to them. Others only want certain ‘situational’ signals** (“Infield Fly,” “Timing Play,” etc.) **flashed back to them; and, some will also want the number of outs flashed back to them when they display them between batters.** This should be worked out during the Pre-game meeting while dressing or preparing for the game.

First Base Line Extended/Third Base Line Extended

First base line extended (1BLE) is an imaginary line representing an extension of the first base foul line 8-10 feet into foul territory on the home plate end. This is the preferred position for collision plays at the plate when the catcher is attempting to block the runner off the plate. This position enables the umpire to see the ball, the tag attempt, and the aftermath of the play. In many other situations it is the preferred position for fair/foul decisions when a runner is attempting to score from third base or a bunt is close to the line near the plate. Third base line extended (3BLE) is an imaginary line representing an extension of the third base foul line 8-10 feet into foul territory on the home plate end. This is the preferred position for swipe tag plays at the plate when the catcher will be reaching to tag the runner rather than blocking him off the plate. This position enables the umpire to see the mitt, to verify the tag, and to see the runner touching the plate





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Inside/Out: Outside/In! This is the Golden Rule for Umpires!

On hits to the Infield, the Base Umpire remains OUTSIDE the diamond.

On hits to the Outfield, the Base Umpire moves INSIDE the diamond.

On the Rubber

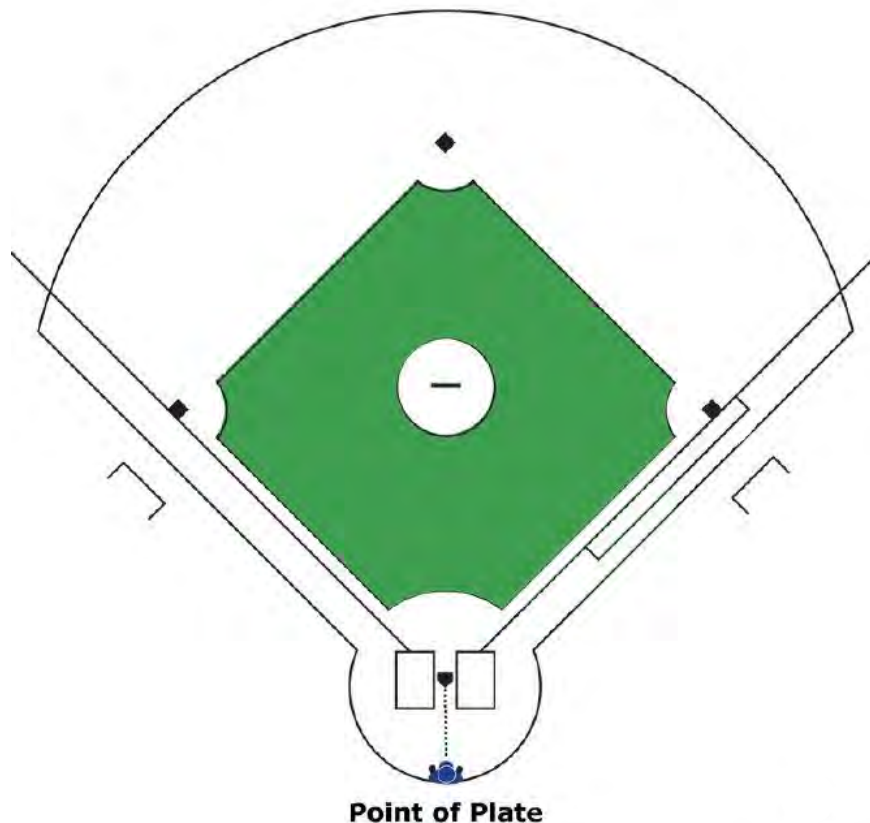
This phrase describes the Pitcher's position when he/she is in contact with the Pitching Plate and is ready to receive signals from the catcher and ready to pitch.

Point of the Plate

The point of (home) plate is the starting position from which the plate umpire will read and evaluate the type play that is imminent.

It is located 10-12 feet from the physical point of home plate on an imaginary line drawn directly from the rubber through the point to the backstop.

From this starting position, the plate umpire will adjust either to his right or left to develop angle and distance for the ensuing play.





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Timing Play

A situation wherein there are two outs and a runner or runners in scoring position (**second or third base**). **It's important that** all umpires recognize this situation to ensure proper positioning and vision to determine if a runner scores (crosses home plate) or did not score (did not cross home plate) before the third out (non-forced) is made.

Stadium Calls (“No Kidding”)

Stadium Calls are those calls that are obvious to everyone at the game (in the ‘stadium’), and don’t need to be verbalized.

For Example: A foul ball goes up and back, clearing the backstop and landing in the stands or the parking lot. Everyone in the ‘stadium’ knows it’s a Foul Ball. **There’s no need for U4 to stand up and shout “Foul Ball.” (“No Kidding Blue – are you sure?”)** Just reach in your ball bag, throw a ball out to the pitcher and get ready to put the ball back in play.

Note: Similarly, **U4 doesn’t** need to verbalize a swinging strike. Everyone in the ‘stadium’ (who is watching the game) and certainly all of the players and coaches know the batter swung and missed. All that’s needed is to stand up and execute the proper mechanic. There’s no need to shout, “Steeeeeerike!”





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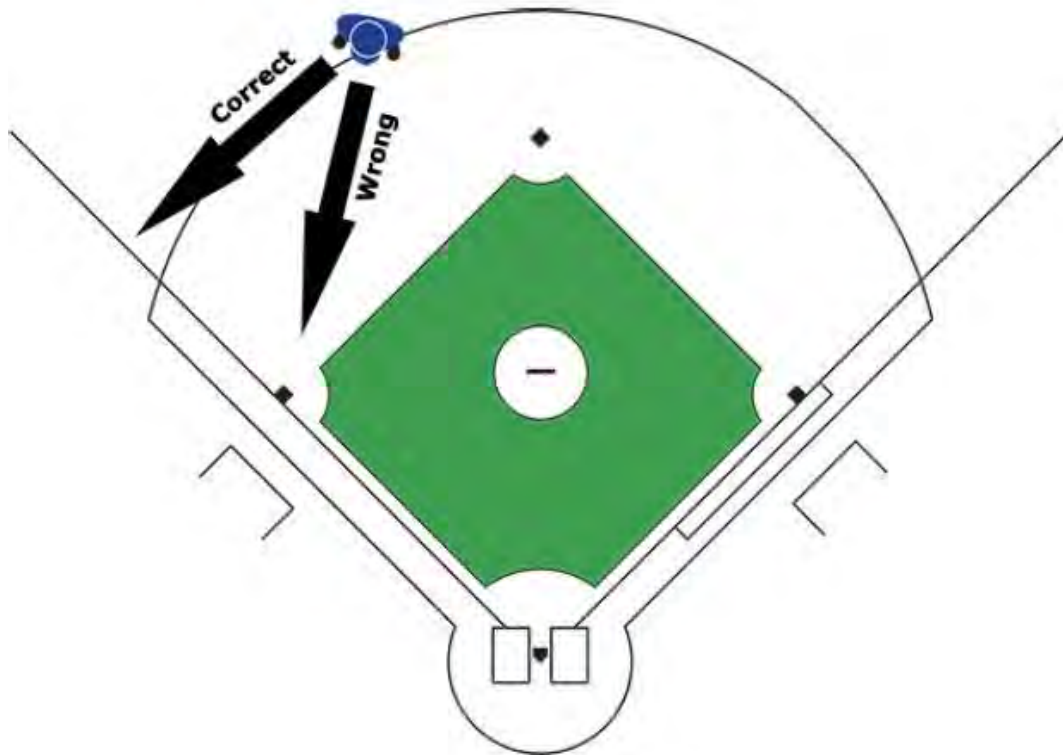
Straight-Lined

An umpire is said to have been **straight-lined** if a runner or a fielder blocks the umpire's view of a play.

In the illustration below, if the umpire takes the “**wrong**” path in getting an angle to make a call at third base, there is the possibility that the umpire could be **straight-lined** by the runner.

This would occur if the tag is made at third and the umpire could not see the play because the **runner's** body was in the way.

Remember—**Angle Over Distance**. In this case (“**wrong**” angle), the umpire was **straight-lined** because he/she gained distance, but did not get the proper angle.





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Field Decorum & Safety

Safety Before & During the Game

During Warm-ups before the game, any player standing next to a manager or coach when the manager or coach **is hitting grounders and flies must have on a catcher's helmet and mask, with a dangling throat guard.**

In General, there is no on-deck hitter allowed from Little League (Majors) down through the younger divisions. The exception to this safety rule is during the change-over from offense to defense between half-innings. Depending upon local league rules, in Majors (and sometimes the Minor League Division immediately below Majors), the first batter due up for the offense at the beginning of the inning may stand in a designated area while the defensive team and pitcher are warming up. Only ONE batter is permitted to do this.

Intermediate/Junior/Senior/Big League. Depending upon local league rules, an on-deck batter may be permitted, but should always be on the same side of the field as the batter regardless of which dugout his/her team is occupying; in other words, if the batter is in the right-handed batters box, then the on-deck batter would be in the designated area on the 3rd Base side of the field. This puts the on-deck batter **'behind'** the batter and greatly reduces the chances of him/her getting hit with a foul ball off of the end of the bat.

If a problem arises because an On-deck batter is stationed in front of or near the other teams dugout (verbal exchanges, etc.), remove the on-deck batter from the field (send **him back to his/her dugout**) until it's his/her turn at bat. If, in your judgment, this **becomes necessary, don't address the on-deck batter directly.** Call time and walk over to the on-deck batters' Manager (or Coach) and let him know about the problem and that he needs to send his on-deck batter back to the dugout until it's his/her time at bat. **If you do this, don't let the Manager (or Coach) change your mind. If the Manager tries to talk you out of it, just say, we'll see how it goes the next time he/she is the on-deck batter, but for this inning he/she IS going back to the dugout.** Remember that it takes two to tango, so between the half-inning, let the other Manager know that his team also needs to stop engaging the on-deck batters when they are in front of his teams dugout.

If the problem persists, call both Managers out to you during the change-over between half-innings and let them both know that on-deck batters will not be permitted outside the dugout for the rest of the game.

All of this communication should be done calmly and directly with the respective Manager, at close proximity. DO NOT yell to a Manager or Coach in the dugout or a base coaches box from behind the plate!



Virginia District 16 Little League



Between innings, any player may warm-up the pitcher, but that player must have on the **catcher's helmet and mask, with a dangling throat guard. Shin guards and a chest protector** are not mandatory for warming up a pitcher.

Adults may not warm-up a pitcher during the game.

Players should remain in the dugout except when they are playing. Also, make sure players **aren't standing in the dugout opening** where they could be hit by a foul ball or errant throw.

Depending upon local league rules, ONE Manager or Coach may be permitted to take a position standing or sitting (usually on a bucket) in the opening of the dugout to enable them to communicate with their team. Rarely are any Managers or Coaches allowed to stand in front of the dugout.

Players DO NOT handle bats in the dugout. EVER! The batter coming up should grab his/her bat as he/she exits the dugout to approach the plate (or the on-deck circle).

ALL Batters and runners MUST wear batting helmets. Any player who is coaching bases must also wear a helmet.

All Catchers masks MUST have a dangling throat guard attached to the mask – even hockey-style helmets/masks are still required to have a dangling throat guard.



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Heat & Humidity: Danger

High heat with humidity form dangerous combination for players, even at practice

Most coaches understand they need to take breaks between innings of games when the temperatures soar, giving their players a chance to rehydrate and dissipate their extra body heat. But be careful with practices, too.

High school to professional athletes have died of heat illness in the last several years during practices in hot, humid weather. Cory Stringer of the Minnesota Vikings NFL team is the most famous case, but the combination of high heat and humidity can create an atmosphere where the athletes' bodies cannot properly dissipate the heat they generate in even normal activities. Take breaks every 20 minutes for water and rest in the shade or with cool, wet clothes to drape over necks and promote evaporation to help the skin cool the body's interior.

Take a cooler with ice and water for players to use throughout practice and games. In severely hot areas like southern California, Arizona and New Mexico, some leagues have set up misters in the dugouts to spray a light water mist over the players to help cool them each inning. Children's heat regulating processes are not fully developed, and their skin surface is proportionately greater than that of an adult's. So don't expose players to prolonged workouts or games in high heat, or moderate heat with high humidity; it's a risk you shouldn't take.

Because their body surface to weight ratio is high, a child's skin actually works against them, taking in more heat than they can absorb internally; so where an adult's temperature might slowly climb as they become overheated, on a hot, humid day a child's will skyrocket, leaving little time to react.

		Relative Humidity (%)															
		40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100	Heat Index (Apparent Temperature)		
Air Temperature °F	110	138															
	108	130	137														
	106	124	130	137													
	104	119	124	131	137												
	102	114	119	124	130	137											
	100	109	114	118	124	129	136										
	98	105	109	113	117	123	128	134									
	96	101	104	108	112	116	121	126	132								
	94	97	100	103	106	110	114	119	124	129	135						
	92	94	96	99	101	105	108	112	116	121	126	131					
	90	91	93	95	97	100	103	106	109	113	117	122	127	132			
	88	88	89	91	93	95	98	100	103	106	110	113	117	121			
	86	85	87	88	89	91	93	95	97	100	102	105	108	112			
	84	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	94	96	98	100	103			
	82	81	82	83	84	84	85	86	88	89	90	91	93	95			
	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84	84	85	86	86	87			

To protect players from heat illnesses — heat stress, heat exhaustion and heat stroke — make sure all your players are properly hydrated before games and practices. Make sure your coaches know to schedule drink breaks every 15 to 30 minutes during practices on hot days, and to encourage players to drink between every inning.

When to Play

With All-Star games nearly upon us, make sure coaches aren't overscheduling practices. Practices should occur in the morning before noon or in the evening, as temps start to drop. On hot days, many leagues have a mandatory break every three innings for all participants — especially needed for umpires, catchers and pitchers — to cool off and rehydrate. On especially hot days, take a break more often.

What, When to Drink

- Drink 10 to 16 ounces of cold fluid about 15 to 30 minutes before workouts.
- Drink 4 to 8 ounces of cold fluid during exercise at 10 to 15 minute intervals.

With Prolonged Exposure and/or Physical Activity

Extreme Danger

Heat stroke or sunstroke highly likely

Danger

Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion likely

Extreme Caution

Sunstroke, muscle cramps, and/or heat exhaustion possible

Caution

Fatigue possible

- Drink a beverage that contains a small amount of sodium and electrolytes like potassium and chloride.
- Start drinking early in your workout because you will not feel thirsty until you have already lost two percent of your body weight; by that time you will already be significantly dehydrated.
- Avoid carbonated drinks, which can cause gastrointestinal distress and may decrease the fluid volume.
- Avoid beverages with caffeine due to its diuretic effect.
- Research has found that sports drinks containing between 6% and 8% carbohydrate (sugars) are absorbed into the body as rapidly as water and can provide energy to working muscles that water cannot.



Virginia District 16 Little League



Lightning Safety

Keeping The Game Safe: NOAA Teams With Little League on Lightning Safety Awareness (A news release from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.)

When the thunder that Little Leaguers hear is not the roar of the crowd, it is time to get inside, because lightning may be close **behind. That's why the NOAA National Weather Service** is teaming up with Little League Baseball and Softball to provide valuable life-saving information regarding the dangers of lightning.

"NOAA is proud to partner with Little League on our effort to educate the public on the dangers of lightning, particularly the coaches, umpires, parents and children who are involved with Little League Baseball and Softball," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "Lightning is an underrated killer, claiming, on average, more lives than either tornadoes or hurricanes."



Little League has been proactive in providing lightning-safety information to officials across the country through their safety newsletter, ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program). In a recent newsletter, Little League included a copy of a **"Coach's and Sports Official's Guide to Lightning Safety,"** developed by the NOAA Weather Service. Previously, the April 2002 issue of ASAP included an article written by NOAA on lightning safety.

"The safety of our players, parents, coaches and spectators is of utmost importance to us," said Stephen D. Keener, president and chief executive officer of Little League International. **"Lightning is one of our greatest concerns on the field, and we appreciate the safety information that NOAA provides to us. We want everyone involved in Little League Baseball to understand the dangers of lightning so that they will take the appropriate action when thunderstorms threaten."**

"The bottom line is that if you hear thunder, you need to get inside immediately," said retired Air Force Brig. Gen. David L. Johnson, director of the NOAA National Weather Service. **"Lightning can strike up to 10 miles from a thunderstorm, which is about the distance that the sound of thunder can travel and be heard. All thunderstorms produce lightning, and each lightning strike is a potential killer."**



Virginia District 16 Little League



Conducting Yourself

To successfully enforce the rules, you must look and act like an umpire – your appearance and demeanor are very important.

You need to:











Look like an umpire. Dress sharp & look professional. Keep your uniform clean and free of wrinkles. Clean your shoes after each game and wipe them down if necessary before a game. Have your slacks hemmed to the proper length. Tuck your shirt in.

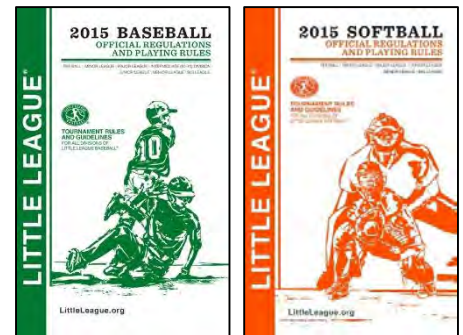


GET A RULEBOOK! Join the Little League Umpire Registry so you'll get free copies of the rule books (Baseball & Softball). Some leagues provide rule books for their umpires. Check with your UIC.

READ THE RULEBOOK. There are over 100 pages in the Official Little League Rulebook (Baseball & Softball) – BUT, there are really only 40 pages of rules that an umpire needs to be familiar with; and that includes six pages of definitions and a two-page Index.

Here are the rule sections that every umpire should spend time studying:

-  Section 2.00: Definition of Terms
-  Section 3.00: Game Preliminaries
-  Section 4.00: Starting and Ending the Game
-  Section 5.00: Putting the Ball in Play – Live Ball
-  **Section 6.00: The Batter, pages 81-87**
-  **Section 7.00: The Runner, pages 88-97**
-  **Section 8.00: The Pitcher, pages 98-102**
-  Section 9.00: The Umpire, pages 103-106



Most of the situations an umpire deals with involve Sections 6, 7 & 8. Read them and use a highlighter and a pencil to make notes in the margin.

NEVER CARRY A RULE BOOK WITH YOU ONTO THE FIELD.



Develop a loud and crisp voice for calling strikes, fouls, dead balls, out/safe, and other calls;



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NO UMPIRE SHALL EVER OVERTURN ANOTHER UMPIRE'S JUDGEMENT CALL!

If, after asking another umpire for help on a call, or getting together with the entire crew, you decide you need to change a call you made, give the signal (out or safe) and THEN give the signal indicating the reason for the change (pulled foot, swipe tag, bobbling ball, voluntary release, obstruction, etc.). This is a TWO-SIGNAL MECHANIC, first indicate the call, and then indicate the reason. This way, when the **coach who doesn't like your changed call comes out to talk to you**, you can simply verbalize the same thing you just indicated, for example, "He pulled his foot off the bag coach", rather than just appearing to change your call because the rest of the crew "talked you into it."



Discussing a Call with a Manager or Coach.

During the game, remember that your goal is to **GET THE CALL RIGHT**. Be receptive to a Manager or Coach who **respectfully** asks for time to discuss a call with an umpire. Be willing to discuss potential rule violations and/or illegal players; a pulled foot or swipe tag; but do not converse about judgment calls. If necessary, get all members of the crew together to see if anyone saw anything that may affect the call in question. If so, and the umpire who made the call agrees, it is the responsibility of the umpire who made the original call to indicate any reversal of that call (See previous paragraph).



ALWAYS...

- 👂 Be a good listener
- 👂 Be respectful
- 👂 Talk in a low tone of voice
- 👂 **Use HALF the intensity of the Manager or Coach.**





Virginia District 16 Little League



ALWAYS SAY...

- ☛ “Please” and “Thank you”...
- ☛ Ask, “Coach, what did you see?” or “Coach, tell me what you saw.”
- ☛ “Coach, I am listening to you.”
- ☛ “Coach, let me make sure I understand what you’re saying...”
- ☛ “I will listen to you, but I won’t listen to you yell at me.”
- ☛ “If you won’t answer my question, then we’re playing ball.”
- ☛ “Tell me how the rule applies.”
- ☛ “Coach, by rule, what you just told me is wrong; let’s play ball.”
- ☛ If a Manager or Coach (or catcher) asks, “What was wrong with that pitch?!”
just ignore him or her. If the catcher asks, just let the catcher know what was wrong, but keep it between you and the catcher.





Virginia District 16 Little League



Don't spend time between innings chatting with coaches, players and spectators.



Between Innings, Plate Umpires should only be near the backstop if a Manager or Coach is making lineup changes. Otherwise, you should be take a position facing the field on the foul line about 8-10 feet up the line from home plate on the side of the field from which the defense just took the field. This puts you in a position of being able to hustle them out onto the field, watch the pitcher warm up and keep an eye on the dugout and players on the opposite side of the field.

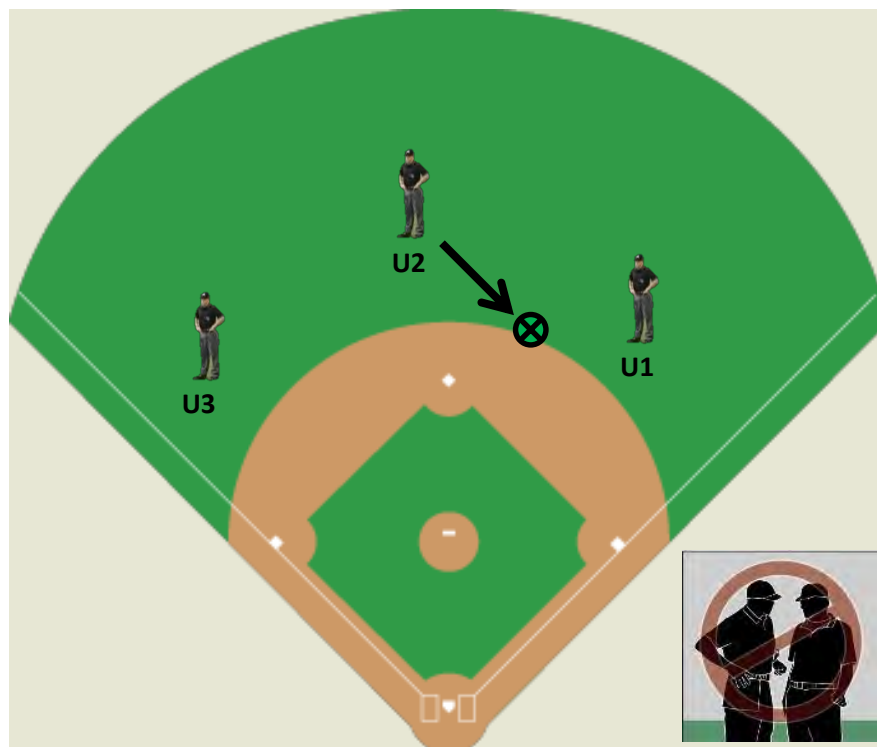


Virginia District 16 Little League



Between innings, field umpires should take a position a few steps into the right field grass. If you want to take a drink of water, walk over to the fence, retrieve the water bottle and walk back out just across the foul line. When you've finished, run the water bottle back over to the fence (or toss it), and return to your between-inning position. If U4 is busy with line-up changes or other between inning activities, then one of the field umpires, generally U2, should move to the edge of the outfield grass and keep track of the warm up pitches and be able to communicate how many pitches remain once U4 returns.

When the catcher releases the ball on the throw-down to 2nd Base, field umpires should move briskly (jog) back to their respective positions.



Avoid the temptation to get together with the Plate Umpire between innings – especially if you've just had a close or controversial call. To everyone on the field, and the spectators, it looks like you're "getting your story straight."

If you have a question or something to discuss, get together, discuss it, then break apart and return to your between-inning positions.



Virginia District 16 Little League






The “Mechanics” of Being an Umpire

Stances – Plate Umpire

There are two basic stances for the Plate Umpire. The Box Stance and the Scissors Stance.

Box Stance (This is the stance that is taught and preferred in District 16)

The box stance is the easiest for beginning umpires because it provides very good balance and it distributes stress evenly between the legs. To set up in the box stance:





-  Feet are spread slightly more than shoulder width apart,
-  Feet are placed in a heel-toe configuration, with your slot foot (left foot for a right-handed batter) slightly ahead of your back foot, and
-  Weight evenly distributed on the balls of your feet.



As the pitcher delivers, bend at the knees, keeping shoulders square to the pitcher, lean slightly forward into the pitch to establish head height and stability

Scissors Stance

The scissors stance provides stability as it prevents umpires from floating with the pitch. To set up in the scissors stance:

-  Legs will be fully open, similar to an open pair of scissors,
-  Feet directly behind each other one full stride apart.
-  The slot foot (left foot for a right-handed batter) is positioned approximately six inches behind the catcher's inside foot,
-  Back leg is fully extended, and



Knee straight, with the ball of the foot on the ground and the heel elevated.

When the pitcher delivers, the slot-leg knee is bent at a 90-degree angle; the vast majority of the weight is on the bent leg; keeping your shoulders square to the pitcher, lean forward dramatically into the pitch and established height and stability.

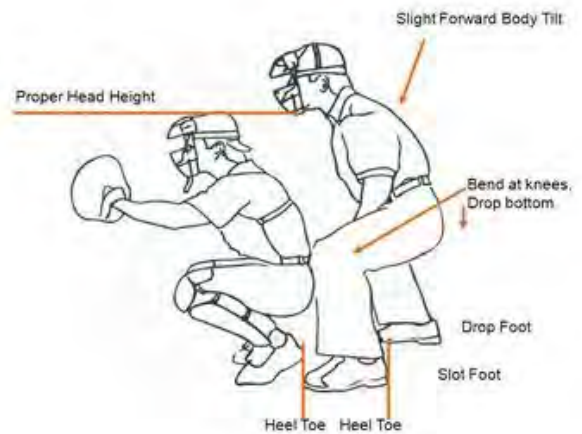
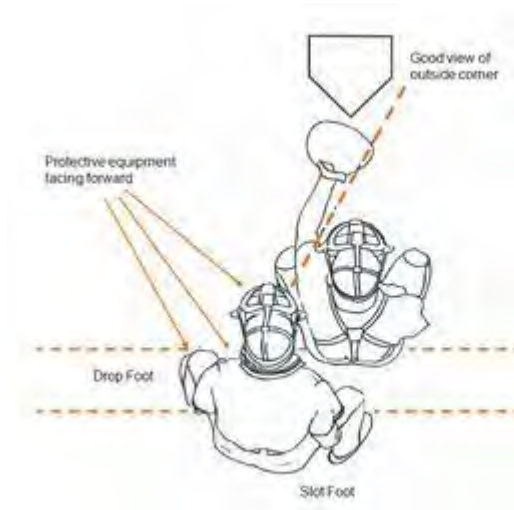


Virginia District 16 Little League



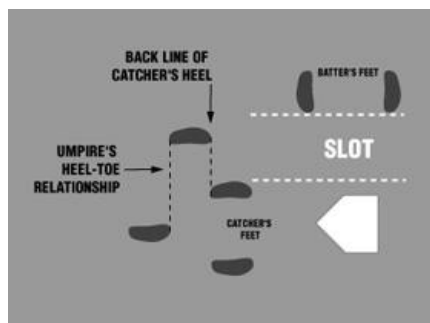
The Slot

The Slot position is the area just behind the catcher, where you are lined up in the open space between the batter and the inside corner of the plate. You will line up to the left or right of the catcher depending upon whether the batter is batting on the left or right side of home plate.



In the illustration on the left above, the umpire has taken a position that is called **“aggressively in the slot.”** Some umpires choose to stand a bit further back from the catcher as shown in the illustration above, on the right.

Both are correct – as long as you have an unobstructed view of the outside of the plate – this will be easier if you keep your front foot a bit forward of your back foot to gain a better viewing angle across home plate.





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In contrast to the Slot position, it's tempting for beginning umpires to stand directly behind the catcher because it feels "safer" – but your view from behind the catcher, especially in the lower portion of the strike zone, is obscured by the catcher. A good rule of thumb is if you find yourself getting a little grief from both coaches during the game about your calls on the low outside part of the strike zone, you're probably not completely in the slot and can't see that portion of the strike zone – so you're tracking the ball but having to decide whether or not it's a strike when it's still three to five feet in front of home plate because you can't see whether or not it actually crosses through the strike-zone.

From the Slot position, follow the ball with your eyes (not head) as it leaves the pitcher's hand and arrives into the catcher's glove. You should look diagonally across the plate as the ball crosses it to help you better see the strike zone including the outside portion of the plate. Stay still from the moment the pitch is thrown until you make your call.

Five Keys to Good Plate Mechanics



HEAD HEIGHT



Chin no lower than the top of the Catcher's head. This is controlled by the width of the stance and a good "Lock" position.



AGGRESSIVE IN THE SLOT



Establish your position in the area between the batter & the plate – Find "The Slot".



Don't hide behind the Catcher



GOOD LOCK



Must have a solid upper body "Lock" when dropping into the Set Position.



TRACKING THE BALL



Track the ball from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's mitt moving ONLY your eyes. Keep your head steady.



Avoid "Tunnel Vision"



TIMING!!!



See every pitch from the hand to the mitt, then make your decision ("That was a..."), then make the call.



If you think you're taking too long, you're probably still too quick...

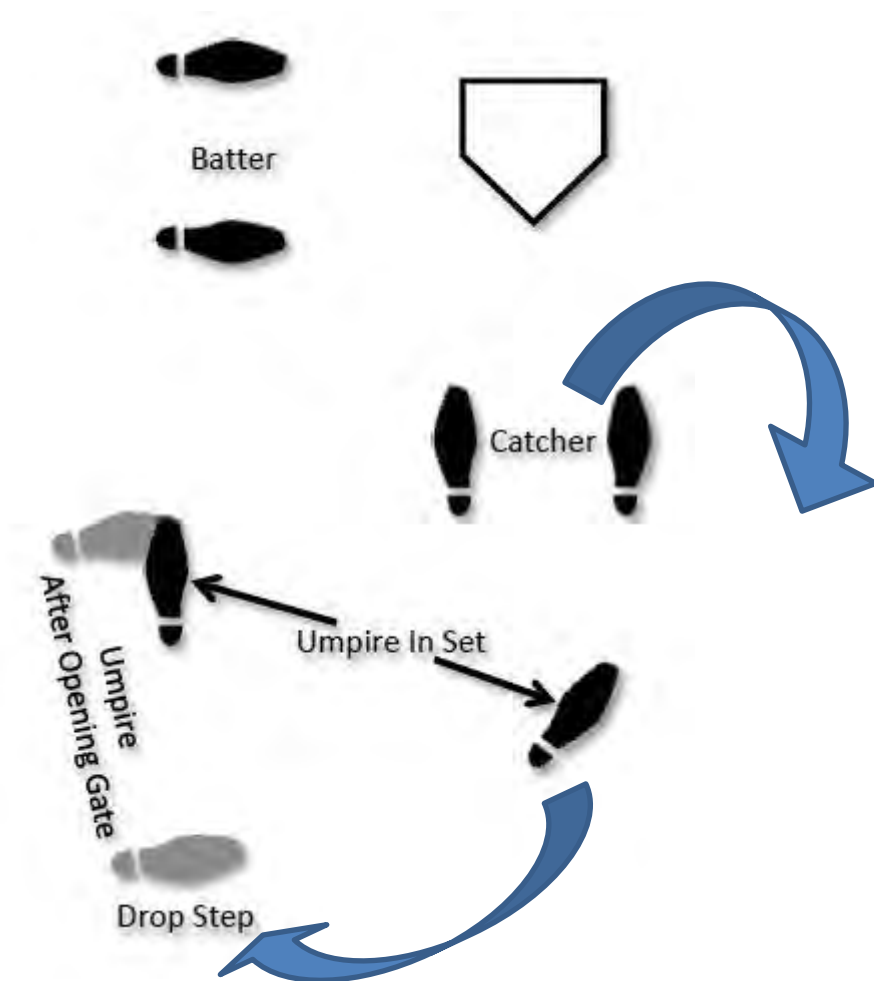


Virginia District 16 Little League



Opening The Gate

When the catcher needs to move quickly behind you to retrieve a live ball, you should reverse pivot on your front foot to allow the catcher to quickly get past you. This technique is called “opening the gate.”





Virginia District 16 Little League



Stances – Field Umpire










There are two Stances used by Field Umpires;

-  The Hands-on-**Knee's** (H-o-K) Set Position; and,
-  The Standing Set Position.

Any time a Field Umpire is in Position B or C, the H-o-K Position **MUST** be used once the pitcher is in contact with the pitching plate and looking in for the signal from the catcher.

Any time there is at least one runner on base, **ALL** Field Umpires **MUST** use the H-o-K Position once the pitcher is in contact with the pitching plate and looking in for the signal from the catcher. All Field Umpires should discuss exactly when they are going to drop into the H-o-K Position so that everyone drops in unison.

Alternately, and **ONLY** with No Runners on Base, the Field Umpire or when there are two or three Field Umpires, U1 (1st Base Umpire) and U3 (3rd Base Umpire) may use the Standing Set Position.

-  To create a solid Hands-on-Knees set position:
 -  Spread legs slightly farther than shoulder width apart.
 -  Squat straight down; do not bend from the waist.
 -  Bend slightly forward from the waist (torso lean).
 -  Position your hand slightly above the knees with fingers **together gripping the legs outside the knees with a “V”** formed between the thumb and index finger with your thumb on the inside of the your knees.
 -  The arm should form a virtual straight line and be relaxed.
 -  Keep your chin parallel to the ground do not drop your head.
 -  Relax your shoulders to dissipate physical tension.
 -  Keep your weight forward to enhance agility.





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A Standing Set is assumed by squaring to the play with feet firmly planted slightly more than shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent.

Your weight favors the balls of the feet thereby providing a more athletic stance.

From this position you can lean one way or the other or take a quick step or two either direction in order to adjust to a non-routine play.

The Standing Set shall be used for fair/foul, catch/no catch, interference, obstruction, overthrows, tags between bases and any other play in which a follow-up play is likely (e.g. front-end of double-play).

Since there are a variety of plays that can occur at home plate and late adjustments are often necessary, it is recommended that the plate umpire take all plays at the plate in a standing set.

An alternate to the Standing Set Position shown below, is a more aggressive position created by putting one foot slightly ahead of the other (usually the foot closest to the Foul Line), **and slightly leaning towards the plate. This position is also called a “Walking Set”** position as some umpires will actually take a step or two down the line towards home as the pitch is delivered. Both are acceptable.



3rd Base Foul Line



1st Base Foul Line



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Signal (Call) Mechanics

Umpires signal most calls with a hand/arm gesture and by shouting it out. It's important to do both, so everyone (players, coaches and fans), both far and near, understand your call and respond accordingly. For example, runners will stop and return to their bases when they hear your foul ball and time out calls. A distant base coach will read from your arm gesture that a third out was called and thus refrain from sending a runner.

The closer the play – out of safe, fair or foul – the more emphatic you need to be! If you **don't know what the right call is** – be even more emphatic! A meek, so-so whimper of a call will usually invite a dispute by a coach. Veteran umpires call this “selling the call.” Be outwardly confident in your calls, especially when you're not actually so confident!

Take your time making your call. Whether a Safe or Out call; ball or strike; fair or foul, catch or no-catch, or calling Time – **DON'T HURRY YOUR CALL!**

Take a few extra seconds to allow for the unexpected – like a dropped ball by a fielder making a tag or a ball swerving from fair to foul territory. Wait a moment after the pitch **reaches the catcher to process the trajectory of the ball through the batter's strike zone.**

The extra time will help keep you from calling what you THINK is about to happen instead of the true outcome.

Delaying your call also gives others **confidence that you're umping** diligently and thoughtfully, making them less likely to contest your call. **It's especially important for dead ball calls** like a foul ball, which requires that all play immediately stops. A premature, incorrect foul ball call cannot be undone, and could impact whether runners advance and/or score!















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Communicating with your partner is critically important; learn the following guidelines:

-  U4 gives the signals; U1 flashes back.
-  Make eye contact with your partner at every new batter, and whenever the situation changes (i.e., a steal).
-  Learn and Use the following Signals:
 -  Number of outs, if any;
 -  Infield Fly Situation;
 -  Timing Play;
 -  **“I’ve lost track of the count (Balls & Strikes), what’ve you got?”**
 -  U4 is Staying Home;
 -  U4 has the tag-up on R3;
 -  U4 has 3rd Base on the 1st-to-3rd (Runners R1 or R1 & R3)





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Plate Umpire Call Mechanics

Putting the Ball In Play

The game starts when the Plate Umpire puts the ball “In Play” by calling, “Play!” or “Play Ball!” Both of these are acceptable. Putting the ball *In-Play* is always done from a Standing Set Position. The mechanic is simply to raise your right arm till its parallel with the ground, point at the Pitcher and say, loudly and firmly, “Play!” See the image below.



The ball **MUST** be put back in play after EVERY foul ball and any other suspension of play resulting from one of the umpires calling “Time!”



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Ball

Balls are called from the crouch or down position. There is no movement, just a verbal call. After the call, you should stand, take a couple of steps back away from the plate and relax. When the pitcher is on the rubber, return to the slot.



Strike

Strikes are called from a standing position. This mechanic consists of two moves. First, once the pitch has been determined to be a “Strike,” stand straight up (don’t move your feet); then the second part of the mechanic is the actual call; extend your right hand in a motion that resembles hammering a nail into a wall just above the level of your head.



NOTE: This same mechanic is used to call an “Out!”



Time

Calling time from behind the plate, especially when the pitcher is in contact with the rubber, must be immediate and leave no doubt that play is suspended. By using this mechanic, the umpire physically moves out of the slot and away from the plate. The mechanic is the same whether in the down, or crouch position, or standing behind the catcher preparing to drop into the Slot.

In one continuous motion, stand straight up as you raise your **arms to the “time” signal** (hands in front of the body shoulder width apart) and **call out “TIME!”** as you do a crossover step where the slot foot crosses in front of the drop foot. Continue the motion by taking one more step with the drop foot while holding the time signal.



Above, the “Time” mechanic when called from Slot Position.



Above, the “Time” mechanic when called from a standing position, behind the catcher, prior to settling into the Slot.



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Foul Ball

As you learned in the earlier Chapter on Definitions, a Foul Ball is a batted ball that settles on foul territory...

This mechanic looks the same as calling “Time” except that there will be times when you have to move out from behind the plate before you make the call. *It is also the same, regardless of whether the Plate or Field Umpire is making the call.*

The different positions from which you’ll make a Foul Call are:

-  From the Slot (Note: The second mechanic below is not performed from the Slot);
-  From 1st or 3rd Base Foul Line Extended (See Page 15)
-  From up the 1st or 3rd Base Foul Line as you follow a bunted or slow rolling hit.

Fair or Foul should ONLY be called when straddling the foul line.

Once you’re straddling the line, the call is actually two mechanics.

First, once you’ve determined that the batted ball is a Foul Ball, stand straight up (don’t move your feet), or if you’ve had to move to one of the 1st or 3rd Base Foul Line positions listed above, come to a Standing Set Position. Then raise both hands slightly above your head with hands in front of the body slightly more than shoulder width apart. The arms should be just above parallel to the ground while verbalizing “Foul!” The second mechanic is to then drop your arms back down to your sides, then raise the appropriate arm and point into Foul Territory.



Above, the first Foul Ball Mechanic
“Call It”

Above, the second Foul Ball Mechanic
“Point”



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Foul Tip

As you learned in the earlier Chapter on Definitions, a Foul Tip **Is a batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught. It is NOT a foul tip unless caught and any foul tip that is caught is a strike, and the ball is IN play. It is NOT a catch if it is a rebound.**

First, once you've determined that the batted ball is a Foul Tip, stand straight up (don't move your feet); then raise your left hand as shown in Figure 2, below; then take your right hand and use a sweeping motion across the top of your left hand, as shown in Figure 3, below. Hold this position for a two count. There is NOTHING to verbalize on this call because the ball is live (in play). The second mechanic is to then drop your arms back down to your sides (Figure 4), then raise your right arm and signal the Strike Mechanic, as shown in Figure 5, below.



Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5



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Base Umpire Call Mechanics

Out

The Mechanic for calling an “Out!” in the field is the same as the “Strike Mechanic” behind the plate, except that it starts and finishes with the Hands-on-Knees (H-o-K) Set Position. See “Safe” (Next Page) for a helpful Tip.)

In the illustration below, the base umpire is in the H-o-K Set Position (Figure 1); Stands up (Figure 2), then makes the “hammering” motion with his right hand (Figures 3 & 4) and verbalizes “Out!” (Figure 5) After holding the call for a moment (two count), he drops his arm back down to his side (Figure 6), and then, if there’s a possibility of further play, from the standing set position, turns his chest to the ball, and is prepared to for any additional plays.

If the out is the only play, then the umpire returns to Position A, B or C, as appropriate, and either the H-o-K or Standing Set Position, once the Pitcher is on the Rubber.

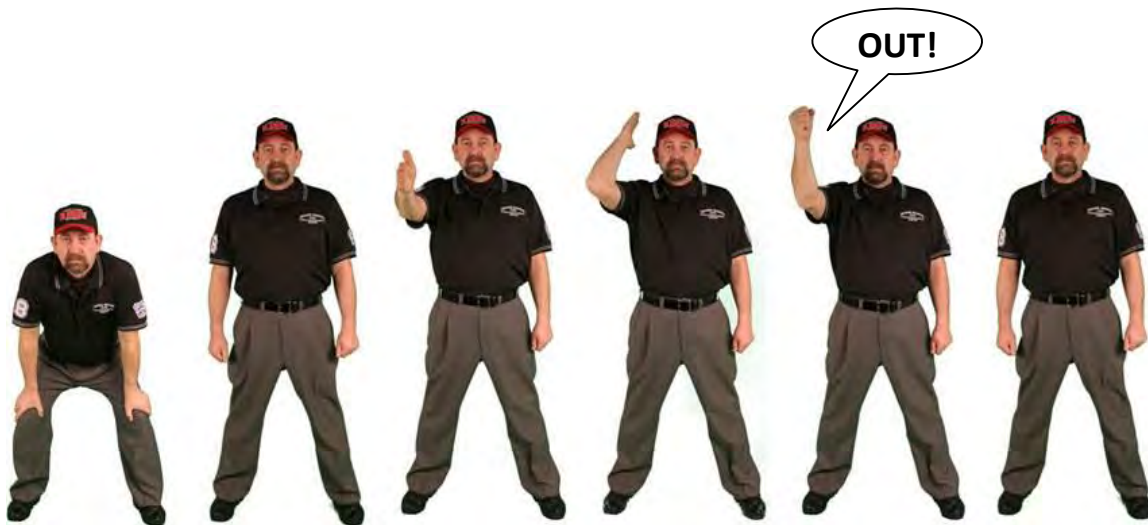


Figure 1 | Figure 2 | Figure 3 | Figure 4 | Figure 5 | Figure 6






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Safe

The “Safe” call should always be made from a **Standing Set Position**. The proper mechanic starts with determining whether or not the runner was Out!

[Tip: It’s always easier to get the call right if you don’t have too many things to think about as the play is developing. One way to simplify your decision making process is to look for just one outcome when you have two possibilities. For example:

-  Did you see an Out? If not, then the runner is Safe;
-  Did you see a Strike? If not, then it must be a Ball;
-  Did you see a Rule Violation? If not, then “I got nothin” and there’s no penalty to apply.

This approach also reduces indecision and second guessing, especially on bang-bang plays and out-right missed calls – which, of course, D-16 Umpires NEVER have happen!]

From the Standing Set Position, raise both arms in front of you, parallel to the ground shoulder width apart, as shown in Figure 3, below. Then move your arms straight out to the side, parallel to the ground while verbalizing “Safe!” (Figure 4) Hold this for a two count unless it was a very close play and you need to “Sell the Call,” and then, drop your arms back down to your side (Figure 5). If there’s a possibility of further play, from the standing set position, turns his chest to the ball, and is prepared to for any additional plays.

If the out is the only play, then the umpire returns to Position A, B or C, as appropriate, and either the H-o-K or Standing Set Position, once the Pitcher is on the Rubber.



Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5



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Safe – Off the Bag!

NOTE! For Clarity, this mechanic is illustrated from RIGHT-TO-LEFT, as if you were viewing it from home plate, looking up the 1st Base Foul Line.

This mechanic is used on a force play to indicate that the fielder pulled his/her foot off of the bag before catching the throw, and did not re-establish contact with the base before the runner touched the base. It is two separate mechanics.

The first mechanic is the same as a routine “Safe!” call, as demonstrated by the first four images, from **RIGHT-TO-LEFT**, below (Figures 1 through 4).



Figure 6 | Figure 5 | Figure 4 | Figure 3 | Figure 2 | Figure 1

After completing the “Safe” call and dropping both arms back down to your side (Figure 4), then execute the second mechanic, as illustrated by Figures 5 and 6, above, by leaning slightly to your left, raising your right arm across your body, parallel to the ground, palm out; and bending your left arm at the elbow and slightly up, palm out – similarly to the right hand; and then while executing a cross-step with your left leg, sweeping both arms across your body and upward to your right, turning your palms over so they face away from you and to your right, while verbalizing “Off The Bag!”



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Umpire 102

Working The Game

Pre-Game Umpire Meeting

Following these guidelines for a Pre-Game Umpire Meeting – usually out in the parking lot as the Plate Umpire dresses – will improve your chances of having a smooth, incident-free game.

-  Arrive at the game site at least 30-45 minutes prior to scheduled game time and locate your Crew Chief to inform him/her that you are there.
-  Always meet away from the field (usually in the parking lot) and walk on the field ***together***.
-  It's important that the crew talk about how you will umpire the game. Talk about fair/foul coverage, fly ball and line drive coverage (Outfield/Infield), rotations, when the plate umpire will cover third base, touch and tag-up responsibilities, dropped third strike, batted ball hits batter, half swing (checked swing), umpire positioning, and signals that will be used to communicate.
-  Approximately 15-20 minutes prior to scheduled game time, walk the field to ensure there are no holes in the fences, extra balls on the field, and that any potential safety hazards are identified and mitigated.
-  After walking the field, an equipment check must be completed. Here are the items to check:
 -  Bats
 - 🕒 **33" or Less** (Majors & below)
 - 🕒 BPF 1.15 or Less (Majors & below)
 - 🕒 No Cracks, flat spots or large dents (use the bat ring)
 -  Helmets
 - 🕒 All helmets must carry the NOCSAE Label
 - 🕒 Check for cracks and damage
 -  **Catcher's Helmet**
 - 🕒 **Must have a "dangling" throat guard**
 - 🕒 Check for cracks and damage
-  Identify the Official Scorekeeper and the Official Pitch Counter (Home Team)
 -  Ideally, this should be two different people, **but it doesn't always work out that way.**











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Plate Conference

DO...

-  Introduce yourself and your partner to each Manager
-  Ask, “Are all of your players properly equipped according to Little League Rules?”
Remind the Manager’s that the players are not allowed to wear jewelry, except for Medical Alert Items).
-  Make sure you get a verbal response from BOTH Managers. A “Nod” is **not** acceptable.
-  Ask, “Are there any local ground rules for this field?”
-  Ask, “Are you using continuous batting order?”
-  Let the Manager’s know that all changes must be made through you (Plate Umpire).
-  Let the Manager’s know if they have a question, they should ASK for time, and once it’s granted, approach the Umpire who made the call.
-  Let the Manager’s know that you will be keeping the game moving by making sure the time between innings doesn’t drag on, so if they huddle with their team before sending them out on the field, they will be cutting into their pitchers warm-up time.

TIP: The rules allow for 8 warm-up pitches OR 60 seconds between half innings, whichever is shorter. Obviously, for the younger age divisions, this is more difficult to manage, but in a six inning game, there are eleven (11) half inning breaks, so if each one is **three minutes longer than it should be, you’re allowing the game to drag on for an additional thirty-three (33) minutes!**





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Plate Conference

Do... (Continued)



Communicate Game Time Limits at the Plate Conference. Confirmation of a time limit will eliminate misunderstandings and avoid potential complaints by the team **that's behind if the game is unexpectedly called due to a time limit.**

TIP: There are numerous reasons for game time limits. Your League may have a time limit on school nights and for younger divisions of play. There may be multiple games scheduled back-to-back on Saturdays and thus a lengthy or extra-inning game would wreak havoc on scheduling.

If a game time limit is in effect, express it in terms of:



When no new inning will begin;



The hard-stop time when all play (and the game) officially ends.

For example: No new inning after 2 hours and the game ends at 2 hours 15 minutes from the beginning of the Plate Conference.

Plate Conference

Don't...



DON'T answer questions about "where your strike zone is..."



Once each Manager has handed you his/her line-up, **DON'T** allow last-minute changes – Tell the Manager or Coach that he/she can make them as the situation arises.



DON'T allow players on the field at all.



DON'T ask the Manager or Coaches if they have any questions – this may open the floodgates!

Remember, the Plate Conference should not take more than 2-3 MINUTES!

Shake Hands and...





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Effective Game Management

Developing the following practices will help you manage the game and keep it moving along.



Managers shall request time from the dugout and only come out when time is granted. Time may be granted only after play has stopped or in the case of a base on balls, all runners advance at least one base and play stops.

TIP: Check that all play has stopped before granting time. Only an umpire can call time and there are many reasons to do so:

- A Pitching Change;
- A Defensive Huddle or Trip to the Mound;
- An injury;
- A Pitch Count check;
- Confusion in the batting order;
- Illegal equipment;
- Huddling with the other umpire(s) to discuss a rule or call;

And so on...

Sometimes in the heat of the moment, Managers and Coaches might get overly anxious for play to stop, and begin walking onto the field with arms flailing, shouting “Time Blue!” or “Time Ump!” toward the nearest umpire and barking directions to players.

Don’t get swept up in the ensuing frenzy by prematurely calling time before all play has stopped.

A premature time-out call could prevent a key play from happening – and once time **has been called, the umpire can’t undo it. For example, a runner** on his way to a base would have to return to the last base legally touched prior to the time-out call.

You can expect ensuing, colorful conversation with the Manager of the team that was negatively impacted by a premature time-out call.

How to handle time out requests:

1. When asked for Time, raise a hand toward the Manager to signal that you heard the **request and that he is not to proceed onto the field. “One moment Coach.”**
2. Check where the ball is; that all runners have reached their intended bases including a base on balls; and that all action has stopped.
3. **When you’re satisfied that all play (current & potential) has stopped, grant the request by executing the “Time” mechanic. (Page 38).**



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Managers/coaches shall make player changes when they happen, in other words, when a pitcher is placed on the mound, a batter is coming to bat, a special pinch runner is used, or defensive changes are made as a team takes the field in their defensive half of the inning. **Do not** allow any changes prior to them actually happening.








The Plate Umpire will listen to all lineup changes while being given to the official scorer. He/she may record them if they desire. After the coach has finished giving the changes to the Scorekeeper, always remember to check to see that the Scorekeeper is ready before proceeding.



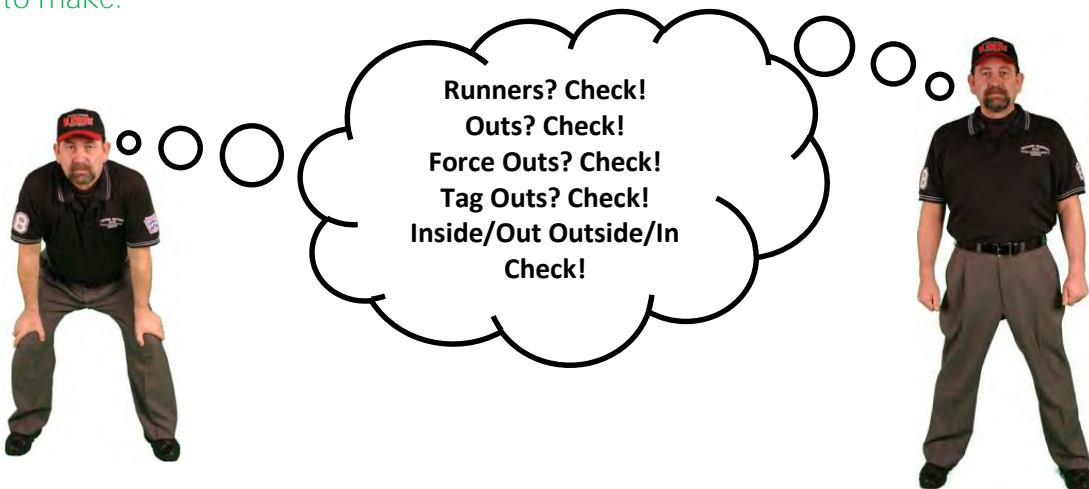
Keep the game moving between innings and when foul balls occur!!!!

TIP: Base Umpire's should "Check-In" before each pitch. Run the potential plays through your head before each new pitch so you're mentally prepared to react.

At first, don't try to anticipate every possible situation. Consider these questions initially and add to them with more experience:

-  Where are the runners (on which bases)?
-  How many outs are there? (The number of outs should be flashed between umpires before each new batter);
-  Are there force outs or tag outs (or both) in effect at my assigned bases?
-  Where will I move to if the ball is hit into the infield?
-  Where will I move to if the ball is hit into the outfield?

Asking yourself these questions before each pitch will help you anticipate where the next play might happen, which part of the field you move to and the calls you might need to make.





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Mandatory play is the responsibility of the Manager.



Ensuring pitchers do not pitch more **than they can legally pitch** is the Manager's responsibility.



Three steps for dealing with a problem pitcher:



Subtly send the Catcher out to talk to the Pitcher;



Walking out and asking the Pitcher for the ball is a good way to have a quick chat with the Pitcher;



Get the Manager involved.

Ejecting a Manager, Coach or Player

Ejecting anyone from a game should be a last resort, but, unfortunately, sometimes it's necessary. The penalty that Little League rules now impose on someone ejected from a game is fairly severe and impacts **that person's ability to participate in the teams' next game.**



Any contact judged to be malicious **will** result in the player being ejected.



If, **in anger**, any player throws a bat or helmet, they are subject to ejection without a warning, at the discretion of the umpire.

Remember... “Personal, Profane & Prolonged” will get a Manager or Coach ejected – but before you eject them... Try these...



Ignore...



Acknowledge



Warn



Eject



WALK AWAY. Absolutely DO NOT make a scene and get demonstrative and try to emulate a professional umpires' “ejection mechanic!” In Little League, there IS NO EJECTION MECHANIC! Simply, calmly, in a normal tone of voice, tell the person they've been ejected (“Coach, you've just ejected yourself from this game.”), then, let your partner know so he/she can escort the person from the field.

An ejected Coach or Player MAY NOT stay in the stands and watch the game. They must leave the field. Be careful about insisting that a player must leave the field after an ejection



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unless the player's parent or league official is available to take care of the player. If not, just have the player stay in the dugout until a parent or other adult, designated by the parent, can pick them up from the field.



Ending the Game

Little League (Majors) and below, play 5-½ or 6 innings. If the Home Team is ahead after 5-½ innings, then the game is over.



Intermediate/Junior/Senior/Big League Divisions play 6-½ or 7 innings. If the Home Team is ahead after 6-½ innings, then the game is over.

All divisions use the “Mercy Rule,” sometimes called the “10-Run Rule.”

For Little League (Majors) and below;

-  If the Home Team is ahead by 10 or more runs after 3-½ or 4-½ innings, then the game is over.
-  If the Visiting Team is ahead by 10 or more runs after 4 or 5 innings, then the game is over.



For Intermediate/Junior/Senior/Big League Divisions;

-  If the Home Team is ahead by 10 or more runs after 4-½ or 5-½ innings, then the game is over.
-  If the Visiting Team is ahead by 10 or more runs after 5 or 6 innings, then the game is over.

If it is too dark or raining too hard for you to see balls and strikes, or if the field is too **muddy to play on**, **discuss the situation with your partner and, if necessary, “Call”** or postpone the game.

Remember, when considering calling a game, weather and darkness ARE NOT reasons to call a game – Player Safety IS!

If the game you're working has a time limit, make sure you tell the Official Scorekeeper to let you know when the time reaches these thresholds:

-  30 minutes before the time limit on starting a new inning;
-  15 minutes before the time limit at which point all play and the game must stop.



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Baseball Myths

“The hands are part of the bat!”

No, the hands are not part of the bat. To prove this, ask a player to pick up a bat and hold it like he normally would. Then ask him to drop it. If the hands stay with the bat, then, indeed, they are part of the bat.

This most often comes up when a batter is struck on the hands with a pitch that isn't in the Strike Zone.

If a batter is hit on one of the hands by a pitched ball, he/she has been hit by a pitch and is awarded 1st Base.

In Little League, there are two exceptions to this rule”

1. If the batter's hands are in the Strike Zone when the ball hits them, it is a Strike and the ball is dead; and,
2. If the batter swings at a pitched ball, attempting to hit it, and is hit by the ball, it is a strike.

“An Infield Fly must be caught within the infield area!”

An Infield Fly is a fair fly ball (NOT a line drive or an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ORDINARY EFFORT, when 1st & 2nd, or 1st, 2nd and 3rd bases are occupied, before two outs.

The ball is live and runners may advance at the risk of being put out if the ball is caught, or retouch (tag up) and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball.

NOTE! This rule says “Caught **by an infielder**” **NOT** “Caught **within the infield**.”

“A tie goes to the runner!”

On a force play, by definition, the runner is out if the ball gets to the base (meaning, is caught by the fielder at the base) before the runner touches the base. So, if the ball and the runner arrive at the base at exactly the same time, then the ball didn't beat the runner to the base, and therefore the runner isn't out.



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“A check swing is a strike if the barrel of the bat crosses over home plate...”

or,

“A check swing is a strike if the 1st base umpire can see the end of the bat...”

The very first definition of a Strike is, “...a legal pitch which meets any of these conditions – (a) is struck at by the batter and is missed...”

This means for it to be a strike on a check swing, the umpire must make the judgment that the batter “Offered at the ball” or, in other words, “Struck at the ball.” If not, and the pitch is outside the Strike Zone, then it’s a Ball.

“The Catcher can appeal to the first base umpire on a check swing.”

In Little League, only the Plate Umpire can ask the 1st Base Umpire for assistance on a check swing; so if a Catcher thinks the batter swung and wants to appeal to the 1st Base Umpire, the **Catcher must ask the Plate Umpire, “Can you check that swing Blue?”** or something similar. Then, the Plate Umpire may do one of two things: 1) he/she may step from behind the plate and ask the 1st Base Umpire, “Did he/she go?” or, 2) the Plate Umpire may choose to say to the Catcher, “I don’t need help on that, he/she didn’t swing, let’s play ball.”

Always give the count after an appeal.

“My pitcher throws with both arms, so after he/she throws “x” number of pitches with his/her right arm, he/she can switch arms and the pitch count starts over.”

No, a pitch count is credited to a pitcher, not to an arm. If a pitcher throws twenty (20) pitches with one arm, then switches gloves and throws twenty (20) pitches with the other arm, the pitcher has still thrown forty (40) pitches.



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What's Wrong With This Picture?

Good or Bad?

Can you tell what, if anything, is wrong with the umpire in each of these photo's?



“The Pointer”



He is pointing with the wrong hand.

He only has one ball bag.

He's not wearing a throat guard.

His facemask is too bright and will distract the pitcher.

He's looking to see where he's pointing.

There's nothing wrong.



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U1, Hands-on-Knees Set Position



He's carrying an indicator as a field umpire.

He shouldn't be wearing glasses.

He only has one ball bag.

He's bent over too far.

He's wearing the wrong jacket.

There's nothing wrong.



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U2, "Safe!"



- He's not looking at the play.
- He only has one ball bag.
- He is moving (right foot in the air).
- He shouldn't be in the infield for this call.
- There's nothing wrong.



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Awaiting the pitch.



He's too far behind the catcher.

He only has one ball bag.

He's behind the catcher.

His head is too low.

He must not be wearing a cup.

His slacks are too short.

His jacket number is on the wrong sleeve.

He isn't "locked."

There's nothing wrong.



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The Call at the Plate



Hi mask is in the wrong hand.

He only has one ball bag.

His hat is on backwards.

His shin guards are on the outside of his slacks.

His right foot should be in front of his left foot.

He's "behind" the play.

He's too far away from the plate.

There's nothing wrong.

There are so many things **wrong** in this photo that there's not enough space on this page to list them all.

END OF MANUAL