



Babe Ruth League, Inc.

Umpire Guide

Pride & Honor
Respect & Camraderie



BABE RUTH LEAGUE,INC.

Babe Ruth League, Inc. is a non-profit, educational organization dedicated to developing better citizens by providing properly supervised baseball and softball competition for youth ages 4-18.

Promoting what is good for youth has been, and continues to be, the guiding principle of the Babe Ruth program which teaches basic skills, mental and physical development, basic ideals of sportsmanship and fair play.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Babe Ruth Baseball/Softball program, using regulation competitive baseball and softball rules, teaches skills, mental and physical development, a respect for the rules of the game, and basic ideals of sportsmanship and fair play. In all aspects, Babe Ruth League, Inc. is committed to providing our participants the very best educational, sports experience possible. It is our fundamental belief that every child with a desire to play baseball or softball be afforded that opportunity.

SPORTSMANSHIP CODE

Develop a strong, clean, healthy body, mind and soul.

Develop a strong urge for sportsmanlike conduct.

Develop understanding of and respect for the RULES.

Develop courage in defeat, tolerance and modesty in victory.

Develop control over emotions and speech.

Develop spirit of cooperation and team play.

Develop into real, true CITIZENS.

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(Where “he”, “him” or “himself” is used in this guide, the references are meant to be gender-neutral.)

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Foreword

Baseball and softball are games between two teams of nine players, each play on a field in accordance with the Official Baseball Rules or the Babe Ruth Softball Rules and Regulations, respectively, under the jurisdiction of one or more umpires. No team wins—or wins consistently—without coordinating its efforts and playing well as a team. If teamwork is important in playing the game well, then it is vital in umpiring the game correctly. Therefore, good umpires should not only know all the rules and their individual responsibilities, but learn how to work together as a team. There is an obvious demand for teamwork.

It is the purpose of this publication to give an insight on the basics of umpiring at the youth level, including mechanics and positioning.

Purpose of the National Umpires Association

Babe Ruth League, Inc. inaugurated the National Umpires Association to assist the local leagues affiliated with the program in improving the umpiring in their games. It was and is the intent of Babe Ruth League, Inc. to improve the quality of umpiring in youth leagues through innovative teaching and educational programs and superior educational resources.

Babe Ruth League, Inc. provides a national organization and network where individual umpires and local associations can promote professionalism, integrity and a love of the game.

Umpiring at the Amateur Level

Almost all professional players have risen from the ranks of amateur baseball and softball and for those who never make the professional leagues, playing baseball and softball helps develop friendships that stay with them for the rest of their lives. Amateur baseball and softball teach children to interact with others, as well as instill confidence in themselves. A good program will teach players to balance school, social and baseball/softball schedules that will prove to be an asset as an adult. That's why it's so important that you, as an umpire, give each game your best effort. It may not seem like a "big" game to you, but it is to the kids. Your attitude towards the kids is very important.

Learn to cooperate with the coaches, and at some levels, the role of the umpire may actually include coaching and teaching. Hustle and show enthusiasm. Players will respond to this and the tone of the game will be set.

Use common sense when making a rule interpretation. The lower the league, the more leeway you may have to give in enforcing a rule. Obviously, the higher the competition, the greater need for strict enforcement of the rules.

Basic Duties and Responsibilities of the Umpire

The umpires are responsible for officiating the game, including beginning and ending the game, enforcing the rules of the game and the grounds, making judgment calls on plays, and handling disciplinary actions.

There should be at least two umpires assigned for every Babe Ruth League game. In a game officiated by two or more umpires, the **umpire-in-chief** (or plate umpire) is the umpire who is in charge of the entire game. If another umpire leaves the infield to cover a potential play in foul ground or in the outfield, then the plate umpire may move to cover a potential play near second or third base.

The plate umpire calls balls and strikes, calls fair balls and foul balls short of first/third base, and makes most calls concerning the batter or concerning the base runners near home plate.

Other umpires are called **base umpires** and are commonly stationed near the bases. When two umpires are used, the second umpire is simply the base umpire. The base umpire(s) make most calls concerning runners on the bases and nearby plays, as well as in the middle of the outfield.

Umpires are the only official representative of baseball or softball on the playing field. Each has the authority to enforce all rules and to order a coach, manager, league officer to do or refrain from doing anything which affects the administering of the rules and to enforce the prescribed penalties.

Each umpire has authority to: A) rule on any point not covered in the Official Playing Rules. B) disqualify any player, coach, manager or substitute for objecting to decisions or for unsportsmanlike conduct or language and to eject such person from the playing field. If an umpire disqualifies a player while a play is in progress, the disqualification shall not take effect until no further action is possible on that play. C) To eject from playing field: 1) any person whose duties permit his presence on the field such as ground crew members, photographers, news people, broadcasting crew members, etc., and 2) any spectator or other person not authorized to be on the playing field.

Any umpire's decision which involves judgment, such as, but not limited to, whether a batted ball is fair or foul, whether a pitch is a strike or a ball, or whether a runner is safe or out, is final. No player, manager, coach or substitute shall object to any judgment decisions.

NOTE: Players leaving their positions in the field or on base, or managers or coaches leaving the bench or coaches box, to argue on **balls and strikes is not permitted**. They should be warned if they start for the plate to protest the call. If they continue, they should be ejected from the game.

If there is any doubt an umpire's decision may be in conflict with the rules, a manager or coach may appeal the decision and ask that a correct ruling be made. Such appeal shall be made only to the umpire who made the protested decision.

If a decision is appealed, 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.

The manager or the catcher may request the plate umpire to ask his partner for help on a half swing when the plate umpire calls the pitch a ball, but **not** when the pitch is called a strike. The manager or coach may not complain the umpire made an improper call, only that he did not ask his partner for help.

Field umpires must be alerted to the request by the plate umpire and quickly respond. Managers or coaches may not protest the call of a ball or strike on the pretense they are asking about information about a half swing. When an appeal is made on a half swing, the ball remains in play.

Remember, when it is time to “play ball”, you, the umpire, take over. The administration of the game and all it embraces is in your control. To keep control, you, the umpire, must know the rules, be alert, as well as combine discipline and courtesy. Once you possess these attributes as well as hustle, you will command respect as an “umpire’s umpire.”

Knowledge of the Rules

Umpiring is a skill, a craft, an art and a science. A true knowledge of umpiring lies in a complete understanding of the rules.

As a reminder, all Cal Ripken Baseball, Babe Ruth Baseball and Babe Ruth Softball games must be played in accordance with the Official Baseball rules and the Official Babe Ruth Softball Rules. The only exceptions are those listed in the Babe Ruth League or Babe Ruth Softball Rules and Regulations.

An umpire must be a student of the rules of the game. An easy way to learn rules is to simply read the rulebook on a regular basis. Know the rules and the intent of each rule. And, never stop learning. Keep up to date on rules that change or become non-existent.

A blend of common sense and rule knowledge makes for a good umpire.

Appearance, Equipment and Gear

Image is everything and you must **look the part**. You are in charge of the game. Your appearance must reflect your skills and confidence. If you arrive at the game with a clean and crisp uniform, shoes polished, and you are neat and well-groomed, you will immediately be accepted as a professional and command respect from the coaches, players and fans. If not, your knowledge of the rules will be in question before the first pitch is ever thrown.

Suggested equipment and gear:

UNDERWEAR:	OUTERWEAR:	ACCESSORIES:
Shin Guards	Plate Shoes	Indicator
Support Apparel	Base Shoes	Brush
Protective Cup	Socks	Pen
Inside Chest Protector	Plate Slacks	Ball Bag
	Base Slacks	Timer
	Ball Bag	Equipment Bag
	Belt	Misc. Items (first aid kit, bug spray, sun block, etc.)
	Jacket	Cooler stocked with ice/water
	Hat(s)	
	Mask	
	Sunglasses	

When purchasing gear/equipment, quality and safety should always be a concern.

Physical Fitness

Physical fitness is just as essential as knowing the rules. If you are not in top physical condition, you won’t be able to hustle or be on top of your plays. Exercise activity is valuable to many umpires, especially during the pre-season.

Proper Mental Attitude and Mental Focus

To have the proper mental attitude in the umpiring profession, you must know every rule and every interpretation. You must keep yourself updated on the latest, revised rules, and, most important, know how to apply the rules on the field of play. Beyond knowledge of the rules, you must realize the importance of your position. You are the representative of your umpire association, as well as the League President for whom you are working.

Even though you must hustle at all times, you must be careful not to over-react. Patience is also a most vital characteristic to be a good umpire. You can handle tense situations with minimum friction if you keep an even temperament. Be courteous at all times and keep personalities out of your work. To be a top-notch umpire, you cannot be argumentative, nor sarcastic. You must be able to forgive and to forget as everyday is a new day.

Tough situations on the field don't happen that often, but when they do, the manner in which you handle them is remembered by all involved for years after the incident. In tough situations, don't be too tense as this causes hasty and wrong decisions as it is important to get the call right. Don't pay too much attention to needing from players (however, when it becomes personal, abusive, or obscene, you must stop it.). If a player, a manager or coach asks a reasonable question, answer it, provided the question is asked in the proper manner. No matter what your opinion is of another umpire, whether it be on or off the field, never make any adverse comments. Don't downgrade your game or the persons associated with it. A good umpire reviews his work and recognizes his mistakes, and, **most important**, what caused them.

Situations in baseball and softball provide ultimate "teachable moments"; the problem is they can't be anticipated or staged, they just happen. By having the proper mental frame of mind, your actions are predetermined to an extent in either a positive or negative fashion. It's an attitude of how you approach things. Umpires with negative thoughts in their head are not likely to act in a way that exemplifies the principles of sportsmanship when handling a young boy or girl who is under stress demonstrating immature behavior on the ball field. Umpires with positive thoughts will take control of the situation and ask "in what way can I act to support and demonstrate proper behavior that reinforces sportsmanship."

The high road is always the most difficult, and the umpire is the one person on the field that can least afford to digress from the principles of good sportsmanship. The Official Rules bestow on the umpire, the responsibility of being the only official representative of baseball or softball on the field. It is a tall order to fill but nothing good ever comes easy. It is hoped that the youth of America will internalize these principles and pass them on to their children. With the task of representing baseball and softball on the field assigned to the umpires, a profound legacy can be bestowed upon the youth of America by the umpires who exemplify sportsmanship's principles in action and in word.

Umpiring is an activity that is 25% physical and 75% mental. Umpiring is a task that demands you occupy the proper head space in order to attain the best results. Focus is the ability to concentrate on relevant cues and to maintain that attention for the entire game. Relevant cues are often learned through game experience. Distracting cues, such as noises from the fans, must be blocked out. This way, you can attend to the key cues of the game. Focus must be maintained from the beginning to the end of the game. This means that all external factors, such as interruptions, delays, weather conditions, altercations, length of the game or physical fatigue must be overcome to maintain focus.

Needless to say it is a challenge to maintain proper mental attitude and focus from the beginning to the end of the game. These skills distinguish the excellent umpire from the good umpire.

Timing

Umpires have little control over how well teams will play from day to day. However, an umpire can certainly control his development of sound fundamentals. Understanding and always repeating the proper fundamentals becomes the foundation of a successful umpire. Fundamentals will be the foundation on which every call you make will be based. After many years, your fundamentals will be automatic. You won't even think about them when you are making calls. If your fundamentals are sound, your chances of calling pitches and plays correctly will be greatly enhanced.

Timing is recognized as a critical skill which all proficient umpires must develop. It is not only important to know the proper positioning, but it is equally important to develop a definite rhythm in making ALL calls and that rhythm should not vary. Only the emphasis of various calls will change. Missing pitches or plays often is a result of calling the pitch or play too quickly. If you call a play too soon, you are more than likely to guess ahead of time what is going to happen. Anticipating a call is one of the umpire's worst mistakes. Hesitation is just as bad as calling the play too soon. If you wait too long, people will think either you can't make up your mind or you are guessing.

When umpiring the game, you must envision yourself getting every pitch and every play correct. For example, the ball must be seen all the way into the catcher's mitt and then your eyes locked on to it for about one second before you make a decision—ball or strike. Practice your timing. There is probably no one thing that you can do which will immediately improve your performance as quickly as adopting good timing.

Pre-Game Conference/Ground Rules

No matter how many years you have been umpiring, it is a must that you and your partner have a pre-game conference. Nothing can be more embarrassing to a crew of umpires than to look at each other for a call that should have been discussed before the game. Here is a list of items that you should cover:

- **Tag-ups**
- **Missed bases**
- **Half Swings**
- **Fair/foul responsibility**
- **Catch/no catch**
- **Infield fly**
- **Live ball/dead ball**

- **Run downs**
- **Runner's lane violations**
- **Plays on the bases**
- **Pitched ball hits batter**
- **Batted ball hits batter**
- **Signals**
- **Appeals**

Always get to the field at least one-half hour before game time. The extra time is needed to put on your equipment, to meet with your partner and discuss situations likely to occur during the game, and to agree on how you will work to cover them.

When arriving at the field, the first thing to do is to inform the home coach or manager you have arrived. At the same time, secure the baseballs/softballs which you should "rub up" for use in the game.

Approximately five minutes before the start of the game, walk out to the plate together in a businesslike manner without talking with players, managers or spectators and meet with a representative of each team for the pre-game meeting. It is the duty of the home team's representative to explain the ground rules. However, it is the plate umpire's job to make sure all of the ground rules conform with the official playing rules. If a dispute arises over the ground rules, the plate umpire shall decide what ground rules will be observed. The plate umpire, as the Umpire-in-Chief, should handle the pre-game discussion. There is no need for comment by any other umpire unless questions on a certain situation arises. All ground rules should be thoroughly understood prior to the start of the game. The plate umpire should obtain three copies of each team's line-up and check to see all are identical. Exchange the line-up card with each team's representative and keep one for yourself. The one the plate umpire retains is the official line-up and batting order for the game.

The Plate Umpire

Basic Responsibilities:

- Takes full charge of, and is responsible for, the proper conduct of the game.
- Calls balls and strikes.
- Responsible for making the call on plays at home plate.
- Makes all fair and foul ball calls, except those reserved for the base umpire.
- Makes all decisions on the batter.
- Makes all decisions, except those reserved for the field umpire.
- Decides when a game shall be forfeited.
- Handles the pre-game conference.
- Keeps track of all substitutes who enter the game.
- Makes call on infield fly balls.
- Calls balks, time and illegal pitches in conjunction with the base umpire.
- Makes decisions on fitness of balls to be used in the game.
- Decides when play shall be suspended during a game because of inclement weather conditions or unfit conditions of the playing field. Also determines when a game shall be resumed or terminated after such suspension.

Home Plate Umpire Positioning

- Home Plate Positioning:
 - ◆ Directly Behind the Middle of the Plate: This requires looking over the head of the catcher and often results in the view of the plate being blocked by a moving catcher. This stance is high and often the bottom of the strike zone will get cut off by the catcher's movement.
 - ◆ The Slot: You work closer to the catcher, usually over his shoulder, and closer to the batter. You are able to get closer to the strike zone, which allows a taller strike zone. Positions your eyes centered down the inside of the plate that the batter is standing on. Positions umpire farther away from the outside corner, which requires you to learn where the outside corners are in order to call them correctly (a skill that must be practiced regularly).
 - ◆ The age and the size of the catcher is often the determining factor in deciding between the two positions.
- Prior to assuming the set position, the umpire should assume a ready position by properly placing the feet while waiting in a relaxed full upright stance. The proper time to drop the "set" position is immediately after the pitcher has taken the sign and has started the wind-up, but prior to the release of the ball. The umpire should never be moving to the set position while the ball is in flight toward the plate. It's important to know one can set too early, as well as too late.
- To assume the "set" position, bend your knees while keeping your back as straight as possible. Shoulders should be square with the pitch. Your eyes should be lined up at the top of the strike zone. By lining up slightly inside the inside corner and at the top of the strike zone, the umpire has eliminated two difficult pitches to judge. Always be able to see the plate and the batter's feet and hands.
- The eyes are usually at the batter's arm pits in a definite crouched position looking from slightly outside the strike zone, through the entire strike zone.
- In calling balls and strikes, it is generally most accepted to bring the pitch down or up into the strike zone and widen it out, making sure to give a good corner. The bench and spectators can see whether the pitch is too high or too low, however, they cannot tell whether it passed over the plate.
- Sometimes a catcher can be of help. If a pitched ball is around the knees, the catcher will tell you sometimes if it is low. In this case, the catcher might turn his glove upside down. So the better a catcher catches the ball, the more strike calls he will get.
- Make sure that you can see the ball the entire way. From the release point all the way to the plate. If you cannot see the release point, the ball seems to explode if it crosses home plate and the strike zone. So you deflect a moment your concentration and maybe you loose your strike zone.

Plate Umpire Stances

There are several stances to choose from, the box, the kneeling, the scissors and the slot.

The Box Stance

- This is similar to a wrestler preparing for their first standing round.
- One foot slightly forward, knees flexed, back slightly bent, completely balanced.
- To take this stance, move to your place (slot or center) behind the plate and catcher.
- Keep one foot, the foot on the side the batter stands on, slightly forward of the other foot.
- As the pitcher moves forward, drop smoothly in a crouch.
- Many umpires move their eyes down to a line at the top of the strike zone, some go slightly below that line, some stay quite high.
- If you are working the center of the plate, you will normally remain quite high in the stance, which will result in being blinded by the catchers helmet on many pitches in the last 20 feet or more. This tends to get worse as the game progresses and the umpire gets more and more tired.

The Kneeling Stance

- Umpires working the slot will often kneel down on one knee.
- The knee behind the catcher is on the ground.
- Advantages include relieving pressure on the back, and allows the umpire to get very low in the strike zone.
- Disadvantages include increased pressure on the legs and muscles as you stand, it decreases mobility.
- Often leads to becoming a lazy umpire because umpire fails to get up after each pitch.
- It can be effective, but requires an extra effort on the umpires part

The Scissors Stance

- The umpire, instead of kneeling, extends his leg backwards.
- This stance has all the advantages of the kneeling stance without nearly as much leg strain and without requiring that extra second to come up from the ground.
- The disadvantages are that it must be carefully developed and implemented. It is the stance with the most leg movement and therefore the most likely to provide a small instability in the umpire.
- It is the best if a stance has a “lock-in” point. This is the most difficult aspect to achieve in the scissors stance.
- There is an increased amount of neck strain due to the weight of the mask, and the potential of injury should a foul ball strike the mask could occur.

The Slot Stance

- It is similar to the wrestler stance except the outside foot is one shoe length in front of the trailing foot, which is behind the center of the catcher.
- The base of the stance is slightly wider and the stance has a comfortable feel to it, using and not abusing muscle groups.
- The drop (A to B) is simple.
- Your head should end up in the slot between the catcher and the batter.
- The eye level can be positioned slightly higher than the catchers head.
- Back should have very little bend forward.

Regardless of what stance you choose, pay close attention to your hands and their protection. The first lesson taught to a young catcher is to curl their fingers to avoid potential injury. The second lesson is to keep their hands out of the way as much as possible. Both of these lessons hold true to umpires as well. Also, remember to keep your elbows tucked into the body. Keeping the elbows close to the body and at an angle will reduce direct impact on the elbow.

Tips for Working the Plate

- Assume a position so that you can see the entire strike zone.
- Follow the ball all the way to the catcher's mitt—stay stationery. Let the ball come to you.
- To be accurate on your calls, you must actually be able to follow the ball all the way to the catcher's mitt.
- Be relaxed and don't call your pitches too soon. Wait until the pitch hits the catcher's mitt to establish good timing. Remember, it is nothing until you call the pitch.
- Have a consistent strike zone—consistency is the secret of good umpiring.
- Don't call swinging strikes, just indicate strike by raising of right arm.
- Support all called strikes with a strong voice, especially on third strike—call strikes louder than balls.
- Never say “strike three, you're out”, but be emphatic on called third strike.
- Yes, there is a correct way to brush the plate. The umpire should assume a position with his back to the pitcher's mound. The feet should be spread apart about the width of the shoulders. Bend at both knees and hips. Brush vigorously toward and away from the umpire. The plate belongs to you so you should brush at the start of the game, before each half inning and as needed during the play. It is a sign of a lazy umpire if you have a dirty plate.
- Between innings, get away from the plate, avoid problems and remove your mask. Hustle the teams between innings.
- When calling foul balls, use voice and “pointing” motion.
- When calling fair balls, **do not** use voice. Indicate the fair ball with pointing motion toward fair territory.
- Don't call ground balls hit along the first-third foul lines, fair or foul, too soon.
- When calling “time”, yell loudly with both hands extended above head—leave no doubt with your partner.
- Don't call the infield fly too soon, especially on wind days.
- Always know where the ball is at all times.
- On batted balls, move out in front of the plate to be ready to assist your base umpire.
- Make sure everyone knows when a balk is called. Be sure the infraction has been committed.
- Don't be too hasty in terminating games due to weather conditions and remember you must wait at least 30 minutes. Don't be afraid to consult with your base partner before making your decision. Never let the manager sway you one way or another.
- Protests can only be made on rule interpretations, not on your judgment.
- If a game is protested and you are not sure of the ruling, make sure you consult with your partner before continuing with the game.
- If a game is protested, be sure and notify the other team before proceeding with play and have it announced.
- Only the plate umpire can forfeit a game; however, he should exhaust every means at his command to prevent it.
- Exercise patience and forbearance in the ejection of players—don't insist on the last word in an argument.
- Always hustle, be neat, alert, use common sense and you will gain the respect due you.
- Check swing—appeal may be made when umpire calls pitch a ball—on a checked swing, the plate umpire shall make an immediate call and only appeal to the base umpire if requested by the defensive team.
- If you see your partner trying to cover a play and you feel he cannot get there in time and you can, be sure and wave him away and take the call.
- On fly balls to the outfield with a runner on third base, be sure to back off from home plate—obtain the proper vision for watching base runner tag up.
- Don't allow a pitcher to wear a batting glove while pitching. Other defensive players may wear a batting glove on their hand but they shall not rub the ball with the batting glove.
- When unusual plays are called, they should be explained to the press box—usually between innings.
- Make sure you receive line-up cards from each manager at home plate prior to the game. Once the home team's batting order is handed to the umpire-in-chief, the umpires are in complete charge of the game.

The Base Umpire

Basic Responsibilities:

- Makes all decisions on the bases, except for those specifically reserved for the plate umpire.
- Fair/Foul, after the bag (if agreed upon). Catch/No Catch (if going out on a “trouble” ball).
- Tag on batter/runner in the running lane. Tag up of any runners from 1st or 2nd base.
- All rundowns, unless plate umpire takes one half.
- Has equal jurisdiction with the plate umpire in calling time, balks and illegal pitches.
- Helps in making decision of fitness of balls to be used in the game.
- Assists the plate umpire in every manner in enforcing the rules, and excepting the power to forfeit the game, shall have equal authority with the plate umpire in administering and enforcing the rules and maintaining discipline.
- Assists plate umpire in the calling of half-swings and batted balls which hit batter in batter’s box.
- Keeps own record of count on balls and strikes and the number of outs.
- Before the game, helps check the entire field for loose equipment or any other safety hazards.

Base Umpire Positioning

Serving as the base umpire will require considerably more mobility on your part. With no runners on base, situate yourself directly along the first base line, a few feet into the outfield. This will put you in the best position to see any plays at first base, as well as to make fair or foul calls on balls hit down the line. You also have the best angle to assist the home plate umpire in determining check swings. If the batter launches an extra-base hit, you need to trail him for a potential call at second or third base.

When there’s a runner on first base, move onto the infield grass. Stand behind the pitcher to the right side of second base, and try not to obscure the second baseman’s view. From here, you’ll be close enough to the pitcher to call pick-off plays and balks. This is also the best position to get a good view of plays at second and first base. Also, remember that if the ball is hit deep to the outfield, you’ll need to hustle out there as far as you can in order to get a look at the play.

With all other runner combinations, you want to stay on the infield grass so that you can be close to a play at any base. However, move over to the left side of second base in order to stay ahead of the lead runner. Stay relaxed and focused. You can hunch forward a bit and rest your hands on your knees, but stay on the balls of your feet so you can move quickly if you need to.

Base Umpire Set Positions

- **The Standing Set** is most commonly used when you are on the baseline. It is a relaxed position, standing erect, feet slightly apart, hands at your side. From this position you can quickly shift and move onto the field or down the baseline if needed. The “relaxed” calls are made from this set position.
- **The Hands-On-Knees Set** creates a feeling of being locked into the play. With your legs spread slightly wider than shoulder width and your hands resting on your knees, the umpire is not in a position to suddenly run a great distance. However, the umpire is on a solid platform which can rotate and move forward or backward, one or two steps, to make the call. Hands on the knees, not pressed into the knees allows you to focus your vision towards the play. It stabilizes the whole picture you have of the play. It should be used anytime you are in the infield or have taken a few steps and are about to make a close call. The closeness of pickoff plays demands this consistent support.
- **The Kneeling Set**, taken while a play is developing, is rarely seen in a two-man system since many argue it decreases mobility. In truth it only takes about one second to go to or from the kneeling position. It can however provide the umpire with a better focus on a play, particularly when you are in close proximity to the play. Unskilled umpires should be careful not to use this set position with multiple runners on base when the ability to quickly pivot and step towards the next play cannot be limited. When working with a single runner on an uncomplicated play, it can be effective.

Tips for Working the Bases

- The biggest key to umpiring is learning to pause, read, react.. These are probably the most essential elements of successful umpiring. Good timing is also essential. Observe the ball, pause to read the situation, see the developing action and react in the appropriate manner. The few extra moments can be the difference between proper reaction and running off in the wrong direction. You'll be a better umpire, have fewer problems and will avoid some of those embarrassing situations, such as making an out call and then seeing the ball rolling away on the ground.
- Before a pitch is made the base umpire has two responsibilities: make sure that the pitcher's foot is in contact with the pitching rubber, and watch any runners to see if they leave the base early.
- Always keep your eye on the ball—nothing can happen until the ball gets there.
- After the ball is hit the base umpire needs to move into different positions depending on the play. When moving into position, remember "Inside/Outside." If the ball is in the infield, the base umpire will generally be outside the baseline. If the ball is hit to the outfield, you should move to the infield side of the baseline.
- Strive to get in front of all plays and obtain the best possible angle.
- Make sure all plays are finished before making your call—avoid a common fault of young umpires of making calls too soon. Never anticipate your calls.
- Make sure fielder has ball under control. Get as close to tag play as you can without interfering. You must get an angle where you can see between the base runner's foot or hand and bag.
- On all plays, get down low and support your close calls with a strong voice.
- Indicate your out calls with a brisk move of the right arm outward.
- Indicate your safe calls with both arms, stretched outward and apart—palms of hand downward.
- On wide open plays just indicate safe or out with a mild gesture.
- Never call a play on the run—it is better to be further away from the play and call it in a stationary position. Remember, in a two-man system, it is not always possible to be on top of every play.
- The base umpire calls all trapped balls in the outfield and should make every effort to get as close to the outfielder as possible and obtain the proper angle to see the entire play. Don't run directly at the ball as the angle is very important to see trap or catch.
- Always be alert to avoid being hit by batted or thrown balls. Being in an upright position and moving a step forward or backward on each pitch will enable you to keep from being hit.
- Do not turn your head too quickly on the first part of a possible double play or any other play. Follow the ball.
- Make sure the bases are secure and in proper position.
- Be ready to assist the plate umpire with half swings and batted balls hit off a batter's foot.
- Remember being out of position is inexcusable and never forget that hustle, common sense and mental readiness is always important in good umpire. Think of what could happen on the next play. Always be alert.

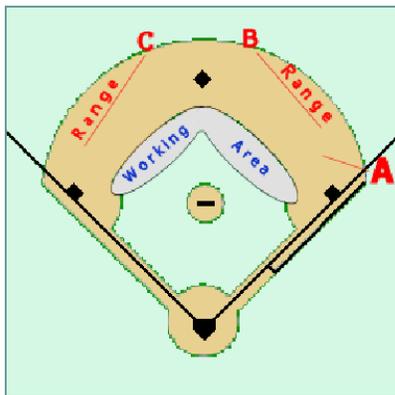
Positioning and Mechanics (Basics for Two-Man System)

Abbreviations

Home Plate Umpire = **U1**
 Base Umpire = **U2**
 Bases = **1B, 2B, 3B, Home**
 Runner on 1B = **R1**
 Runner on 2B = **R2**
 Runner on 3B = **R3**
 Batter-runner = **BR**

Abbreviations

F1 = Pitcher
F2 = Catcher
F3 = 1st Baseman
F4 = 2nd Baseman
F5 = 3rd Baseman
F6 = Shortstop
F7 = Left Fielder
F8 = Center Fielder
F9 = Right Fielder



The start positions for the Base Umpire are simple:

No runners on base, Position A

With R1 only, Position B

In all other situations, Position C

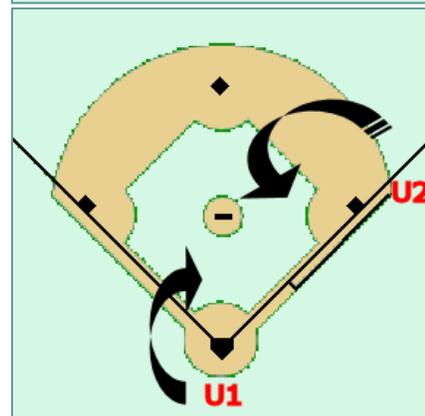
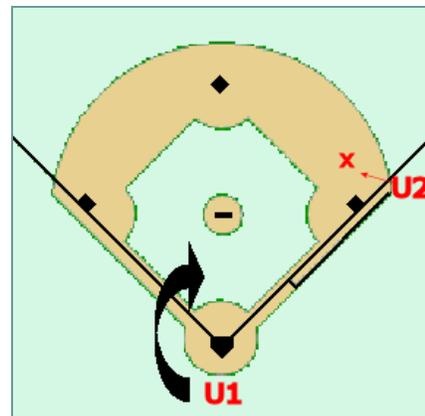
NO RUNNERS ON BASE

Ball to the Infield

- **U2** starts in **A**. On hit, break to sweet spot for play at 1B
- On overthrows at 1B, watch for ball out of play
- If BR continues beyond 1B, break inside and stay with the BR
- Be sure to **see all base touches**—

Ball to the Outfield

- Break inside and pivot in the working area; pick up the ball but watch 1B for base touch
- You have ALL bases except home; stay with the BR if he advances beyond 1B.
- Your primary responsibility is BR, but from the corner of your eye **always know where the ball is**—this lets you *read the play* as it develops
- Take BR all the way to 3B, then release



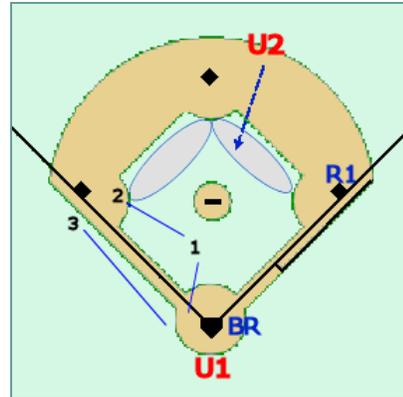
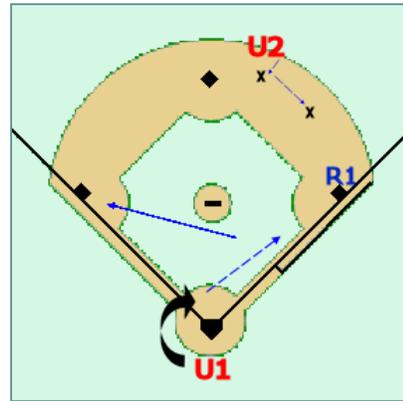
RUNNER R1 (1st/3rd)

Ball to the Outfield

- **U2** starts in **B**. On hit, slide in your range to sweet spot; the play could be at 1B or 2B, so read the play and be in position
- Be alert to the double play
- Be sure to see all base touches
- Watch for obstruction of the BR rounding 1B

Ball to the Infield

- Break inside to the working area, pivot
- Pick up the ball and stay read the play as the ball returns to the infield. **Follow the ball to the play. Read and react.**
- If the ball is caught, look **immediately** at R1 to see tag-up if the runner advances.
- If R1 advances to 3B, **U1** covers 3B and Home (**U2** stays with BR).



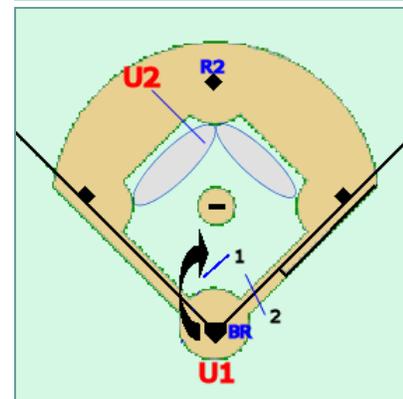
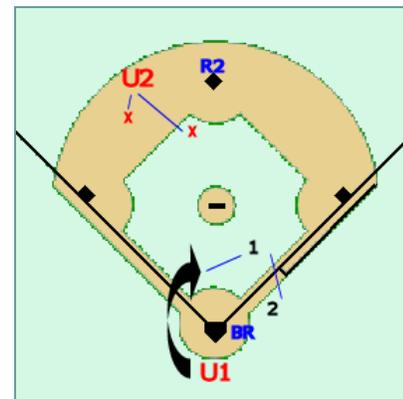
RUNNER R2

Ball to the Outfield

- **U2** starts in **C**. Read and react, follow ball to play
- If at 1B, take a few steps in and set for call
- If play is on R2 (either advancing, or returning to 2B), pick up ball and set for play. Watch for obstruction.
- If a caught line drive, look immediately at R2 for the pick-off play –**OR**, for tag-up if R2 advances

Ball to the Infield

- Break inside, pivot, and pick up the ball
- If caught, look at R2 to ensure he tags up before advancing
- If not caught fly, **read and react**. Slide in your working area and stay with the ball as it returns to the infield.
- After R2 passes 3B, release R2 to U1 and pick up the BR



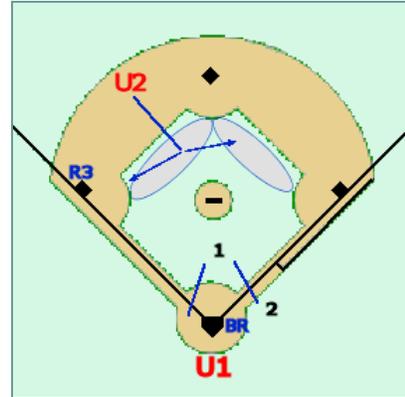
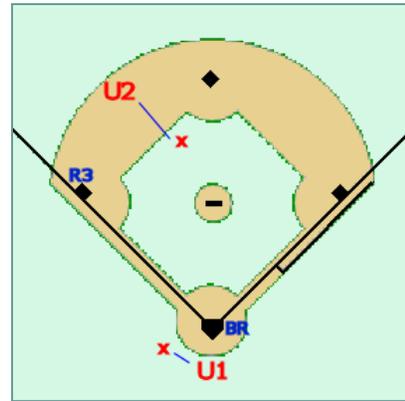
RUNNER R3

Ball to the Infield

- **U2** starts in **C**. Take steps toward 1B and set for call, AND, sneak a look at R3 to see if he is going.
- Follow ball to the play. If caught line drive, look immediately at R3 for tag up or pick off.
- If BR breaks for 2B trying to draw the throw, allowing R3 to steal home, stay with the ball and know where your runners are. Stay with BR and let U1 handle R3.

Ball to the Outfield

- Break inside, pick up the ball; keep the ball in the corner of your eye, but focus on the runners.
- **See all base touches** and watch for obstruction
- On caught fly ball, look *immediately* at R3 to see the tag up.
- If not caught, release R3 and focus on the BR. You have the BR all the way to 3B.



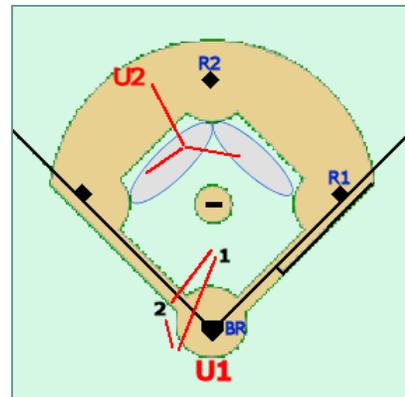
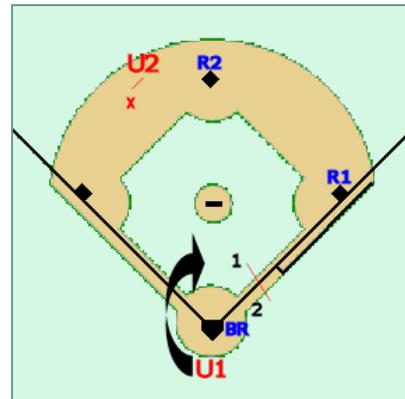
RUNNERS R1, R2

Ball to the Infield

- **U2** starts in **C**. You have forces at all bases, so read and react –and follow the ball to the play.
- Be alert for double play.
- On a caught line drive, look immediately at runners for tag-up and pick-off plays.
- Remember that with fewer than two outs, R1, R2 is an **infield fly situation**. If pop-up to infield, point and call "Infield fly...batter out."

Ball to the Outfield

- Break inside, pivot, and pick up the ball so you can see runners and still know where the ball is.
- If caught fly ball, look *immediately* to see that runners tag up before advancing.
- If not caught, track the ball –read and react. **You have all runners at all bases.**



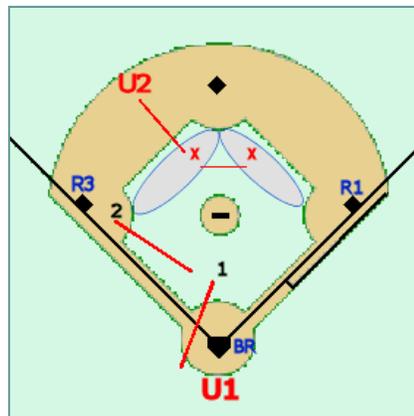
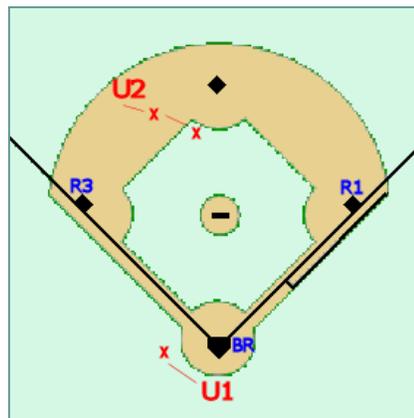
RUNNERS R1, R3

Ball to the Infield

- **U2** starts in **C**. Be flexible. Take a couple of steps and get set for the play at 1B. However, the play could just as easily go to 2B (on R1).
- Stay with the ball, then read and react and follow the ball from the first to the next play.
- If it's a caught line drive, immediately look at both runners to see a tag up or pick-off play. If you have agreed with your partner that U1 has the tag up at 3B, then focus on R1.

Ball to the Outfield

- Break inside, pivot, pick up the ball; read and react.
- If a caught fly ball, look immediately at R1 to ensure he tags up before trying to advance to 2B. U1 has the tag-up on R3.
- If the ball to the outfield is not a caught fly ball, forget about R3. Pick up the ball, watch all runners (R1 and BR) touch bases, then read and react to the ball coming back to the infield.



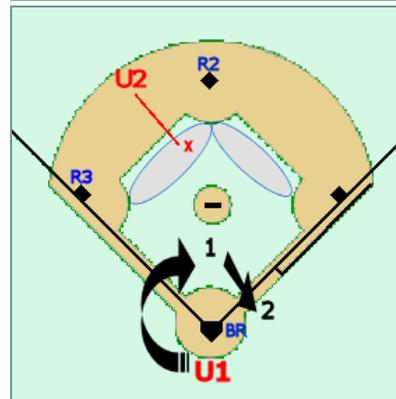
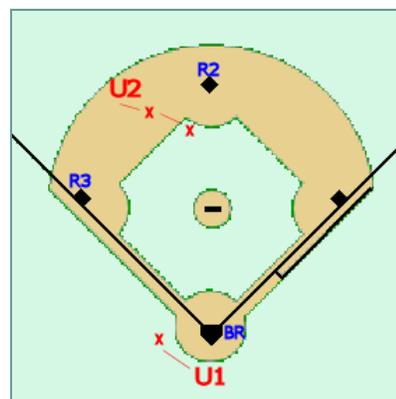
RUNNERS R2, R3

Ball to the Infield

- **U2** starts in **C**. No force, so your first move should be toward 1B. However, watch for snap throws on R2 and R3 if they have moved off their bases.
- If play does go to 1B, expect R2 and R3 to advance, so follow the ball to the next play.
- If a caught line drive, look at R2 to see a tag up. With R2/R3, you have the tag up on R2 while U1 has the tag up on R3.

Ball to the Outfield

- Break inside and pivot. Pick up the ball and read the play as you follow the ball back to the infield.
- If ball is caught, look at R2 for the tag-up. U1 has the tag-up at 3B.
- If ball is not caught, release R3 to U1 and concentrate on R2 and BR. Be sure to see all base touches.



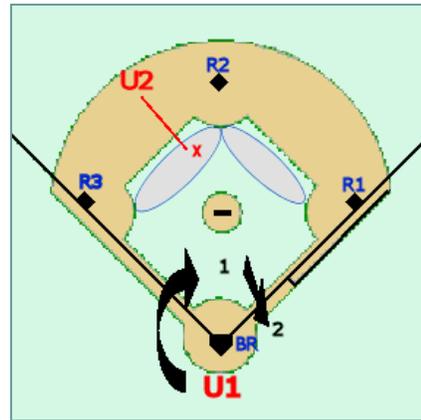
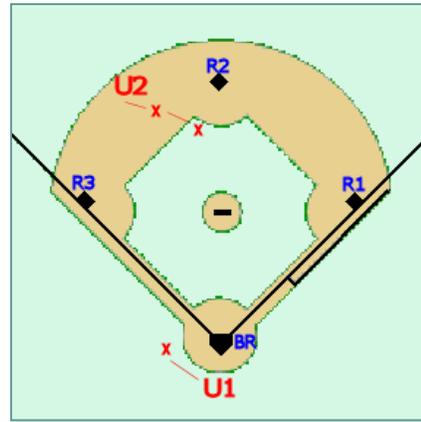
RUNNERS R1, R2, R3—Infield Hit

Ball to the Infield

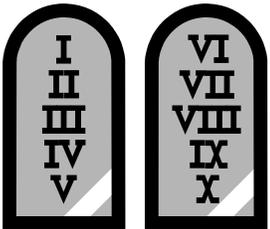
- **U2** starts in **C**. Pick up the ball immediately and follow it to the play. We have forces at all bases, so the ball could go anywhere
- Be alert for double play. Stay with the ball and stay out of the way
- If a caught line drive, look immediately for the snap throw on R1 or R2
- If ball is mishandled and gets through the infield, come inside and pivot.

Ball to the Outfield

- Break inside and pivot. Pick up the ball and move to a spot to you see R1 and R2 for tag-ups if the fly ball is caught.
- If no catch, pick up the ball coming back to the infield. **Stay with the ball**, and stay out of the way.
- See all base-touches. This is **very** important. With bases loaded, everyone is forced.



The Ten Commandments of Umpiring



I – Keep your eye on the ball.

II – Keep all personalities out of your work. Forget and forgive.

III – Avoid sarcasm. Don't insist on the last word.

IV – Never charge a player and above all no pointing your finger and yelling.

V – Hear only the things you should hear – be deaf to others.

VI - Keep your temper. A decision made in anger is never sound.

VII – Watch your language.

VIII – Take pride in your work at all times. Remember, respect for an umpire is created off the field as well as on.

IX – Review your work. You will find, if you are honest, that 90% of the trouble is traceable to loafing.

X – No matter what your opinion of another umpire, never made an adverse comment regarding him.

Umpire Communication

Communication on the field is vital. There's a standard set of signals used to convey each type of call. In order to be a good umpire, you need to know every single one. The signs and signals insure that every umpire on the field is focused on the task at hand, that the count is consistent and everyone knows what might occur on the next play.

Listed below are the Basic Six Signals:

Strike

Always signaled with the right hand, each umpire develops a personalized system for signaling a strike. Some do the tradition bang-the-door clenched fist, some indicate the strike out to the side with a pointed finger. Some umpires face forward, some turn. Some call strike, then signal and others do simultaneously. One essential element is not to turn away from the action.



Ball

Calling a ball requires no physical signal. It's sort of the default call. If you don't do anything, people will assume you called a ball. To make it simple, just stand up out of your crouch and say "Ball" aloud.

Out

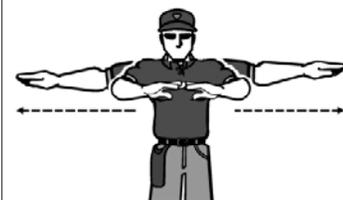


The umpire should bring the right hand out similar to the start of shaking another person's hand. Having the palm open and fingers together, bring the right hand up even to the face. Then bring down the hand making a fist in front of the body. The motion is similar to "banging the door" with the bottom of the fist. The umpire's verbal mechanic should be at the same time the umpire is giving the out signal..."Out!" Most umpires use this technique for all out calls, regardless of how it may seem. For closer calls, most umpires will not modify the motion at all; rather they will simply make the motion swifter, harder and perhaps with an

extended follow through.

Safe

The umpire's fingers must be together and elbows locked as the arms come up parallel to the ground. The arms are not to go higher than the umpire's shoulders. Keeping the arms parallel to the ground, extend the arms outward. The umpire verbal mechanics should be at the same time the umpire is giving the safe signal..."Safe!" The key to the same mechanic should be: Crisp, Confident, Smooth and Visible.



Time

The signal for a timeout is similar to that of a foul ball. Simply raise both arms up in the air and shout, "Time!" It's also a good idea to move out from behind the plate while you make the call so the pitcher (and everyone else) can easily see that the ball is dead.



Foul Ball

Use the same signal as "Time" but the call becomes "Foul". Some umpires add a point into foul territory with one hand after giving the signal.



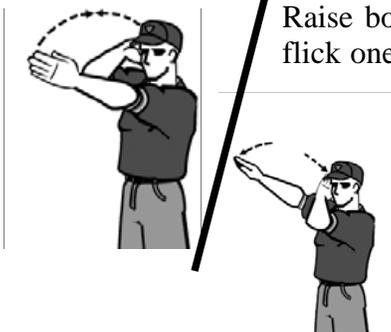
Other Signals:

Play

The umpire points the ball back in play (pointing to the pitcher or the plate) with the right hand and calling “Play!” This call is essential for your partner, the pitcher, the catcher, defense and offense so they know exactly when a ball is back in play.



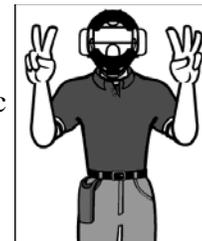
Foul Tip



Raise both hands up to shoulder height, touch your fingers together, and then brush or flick one hand over the other to signal a foul tip. You can follow this up with a “strike” sign to show that the foul tip counts as a strike.

Giving the Count

Hands up around eye level with the appropriate number of fingers extended. Proper mechanic is to state “3 and 2” or “3 balls, 2 strikes”, not a fist and not “Full count.”



Fair Ball



There is never a verbalization for a fair ball. The appropriate umpire simply points into fair territory with either his left or right arm to indicate that the ball is fair.

Strike Out

The umpire is to use the same sign as “Strike”. However, **never say “Strike Three—You’re Out!”** In some leagues the third strike does not have to be caught while in others it must be caught. An umpire should only call “Strike Three.” In play where the batter is not entitled to advance if the third strike is not legally caught, the plate umpire should follow the strike three call with “Batter is Out!”

Ball Four

“Ball Four” is announced clearly. You should NEVER point to first base even with the left hand. Just say “Ball Four”. If the umpire points to first after the pitch and the defense thinks it’s strike 3 and starts to leave the field, chaos will abound.

No Pitch

Right arm straight out with palm outward and fingers up. The call is “No Pitch” and the ball is dead. If you are the plate umpire, step away from the plate. You will use this call most often in a softball game. It is used to indicate a leading off violation in some leagues. The call is a clear “No Pitch” and the “Runner is Out!” with a point and Out signal.



Infield Fly



All umpires point into the air with their right hand. On some crews every umpire on the field echoes the infield fly call, on others the gesture is echoed. This should be dealt with in the pre-game conference. The plate umpire will usually announce the verbal portions of the signal, echoed by the other umpires.

Time Play

Place two fingers of the right hand on the left wrist, as if on top of a watch. This signal will only be used in two-out situations where a time play involving a potential run is likely.



Check-Swing or Appealed Strike



The plate umpire does not have to be asked for help, he can simply request it themselves. Step away from the plate, and with your left arm, gesture clearly to the base umpire and ask “Did he swing? Or Did he go?” If the answer is yes, the base umpire signals strike while saying “yes, he went!” If the answer is no—a safe sign with “no he did not go!”

Balk/Interference/Obstruction

The base umpire will always point at the situation and call, “That’s a balk!”, “Illegal Pitch”, “That’s Interference!” or “That’s Obstruction!” as the case may be. On a delayed dead ball situation, it lets everyone know that you saw an incident occur although penalization may not take place until a later time. Depending on the circumstances, the point and call may be preceded by or followed by the Time signal and call.



Ground Rule Double



The signal is the right arm with first two fingers extended overhead. Keep in mind that the ball has left the field and is dead, even if it should bound back onto the playing area

Home Run

The signal is the right arm with index finger extended overhead in a circular motion. There is no voice call associated with the home run signal. The umpire then watches the bases to insure that runners legally touch the bases. Unlike the ground rule double, it is not necessary to indicate that the ball is dead.



Catch/No Catch

Out mechanic with verbal “That’s a catch” or Safe mechanic with verbal “No catch—No catch.”

Run Scores

Used for a time play when there is a question as to whether or not the run counts. Point to the plate and then the press box or scorer and state “The run scores, score that run” as you do so.

Run Does Not Score

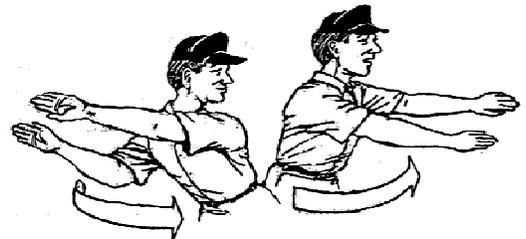
Also used for a time play when there is a question as to whether or not the run counts. Point to the press box or scorer and state “No run scores, no run scores” while raising your arms above your head in a sweeping “X” motion.

Base Awards

The appropriate umpire points at the runner to be awarded and states, “You—2nd base”, or “You-score” while continuing his gesture toward the base being awarded. When multiple runners are to be given awards, the umpire should begin with the runner closest to home plate and work back from there.

Off the Bag

This signal is an explanatory one used on plays in which the ball beat the runner but the fielder came off the bag to make the catch. It is used after the Safe signal and call has been made to indicate the umpire’s reason. It is vocalized as, “He’s off the bag!” The sweeping motion should be made in the direction the fielder moved and pulled himself/herself off the base.



Enforcement/Ejection



The Enforcement signal always follows a Time signal/call, then the pointing signal. It is the act of awarding a runner additional bases predicated upon a violation by the defensive team. The call is made as follows: Point at the runner and call, “You!” Then make the Enforcement signal towards the base you’re awarding and call, “Third Base!” (or whichever base you’re awarding to the runner.

The **Ejection** signal is NEVER used in conjunction with the Pointing signal. Make sure you do not contact anyone or come exceptionally close to anyone with your gesture. Be positive, strong and aggressive but DO NOT showboat. Keep your words simple as the call is merely, “You’re gone!” Maintain your composure and professionalism. Remember, the most vicious arguments can occur after the ejection.

Using signals on the field is important because even if you can’t be sure everyone will hear what you say, you can make sure everyone sees what you’re calling. Memorize the signs and practice them in front of the mirror.

Rules-Rules-Rules—Review

Balk

A balk is an illegal act by the pitcher with a runner or runners on base, entitling all runners to advance one base.

Fair/Foul

When the ball is hit calling it fair or foul is the first priority. Always judge fair and foul by the position of the ball, not the player. If a player stands in fair territory and touches a ball in foul territory, the ball is foul. When a ball is foul, throw both of your hands up and out and call “Foul ball!” If the ball is fair, say nothing because anything you say may be misinterpreted by a player. Just point to fair territory.

Foul Tips

In the event of a foul tip (the ball hits off the bat and goes sharp and direct into the catcher’s mitt), the ball is live and it is always a strike. If the ball hits off the bat and the catcher misses it, it is a foul, NOT a foul tip. A foul tip must hit the catcher’s mitt first, and be caught before touching the group. If it falls inside the catcher’s chest protector, it is a foul ball. Any batted ball that bounces off of the home plate umpire is a foul ball. Signal foul tip by running your right hand over the back of your left, and then signal the strike. Never say “Foul tip.”

Batting Order

Once you have accepted the original batting orders for each team, it is the responsibility of the plate umpire to keep them accurately revised as the game progresses. When changes are made during the game, take the time to properly write them in. Never trust your memory. When two or more changes are made by the defensive ball club, make sure you get the batting positions of the new players entering the game. The manager of the defensive team has the right to insert a new player at any position in the batting order left vacant by players being replaced. You must disregard the fielding positions and pay attention only to the batting positions. Remember, the pitcher named in the original batting order must pitch to the first batter until he has been retired or reached first base, unless the pitcher becomes ill or incapacitated. It is the umpire-in-chief’s responsibility to determine whether the pitcher is able to continue in the game.

Batting Out of Order

Simply stated:

- You do not need to deal with players batting out of order unless the defensive team appeals to you that the offensive team has batted out of order.
- As soon as a single pitch is made to a batter, the preceding batter becomes legal. All you need to be concerned with is the batter immediately before the current batter. Remember the number of the past batter until the next batter comes to bat.
- If the defensive team appeals that a batter is out of order while that batter is still at bat, the proper batter comes in to bat and assumes the existing ball-strike count.
- Any actions by base runners are not affected by the batter’s incorrect appearance at the plate. There is no effect on a runner who advances because of a stolen base, a wild pitch or passed ball, or who is caught stealing while the incorrect batter was at the plate.
- If the defensive team appeals that an improper batter has just concluded a time at bat (and the appeal is made before the first pitch to the next batter), then the proper batter is called out and the improper batter is removed from base. Any base runners return to the base they last occupied at the time of the last pitch to the illegal batter. The next legal batter in the order comes to bat.
- If the batting orders gets very confusing that the next legal batter is on base, that batter is skipped without penalty.

Infield Fly

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 who stations themselves 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 plate umpire should make the call stepping out in front of the plate where he can be easily seen by everyone. The base umpire should also immediately make the same call. This does not mean the base umpire has no right to call the infield fly, however, he should allow the plate umpire a reasonable length of time to make the call. All such calls should be made with this protective qualification, "Infield fly if fair." On the infield fly, the umpire is to rule some arbitrary limitation such as the grass or base lines. The umpire must also rule that a ball is an infield fly even if handled by an outfielder, if in his judgment, the ball could have been as easily handled by an infielder. With an Infield Fly the ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball it touched, the same as any fly ball. If the hit becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul. If a declared Infield Fly is allowed to fall untouched to the ground and bounces 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.

Obstruction

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. No one is allowed to obstruct a base runner by getting in his way or by tripping or otherwise blocking him, unless the fielder involved is in the act of making a play. Unless he is in the base runner's path to make a play, the fielder must at all times be out of the runner's way.

Interference

- 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 the rules. (In the event the batter-runner has not reached first base, all runners shall return to the base last occupied at the time of the pitch.)
- Defensive interference is an act by a fielder which hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch.
- 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.
- Spectator interference occurs when a spectator reaches out of the stands, or goes on the playing field, and touches a live ball.
- On any interference, the ball is dead.

Overthrows

On all overthrows to bases or plate and on wild pitches or passed balls, attempt to keep the ball in play—do not make unnecessary ground rules. Unless it passes from the playing field into a dead area, the ball shall remain in play, and the runners will advance at their own risk. If a **pitched** ball sticks in the screen or goes in the stands or dugout, the umpire shall permit the base runners to advance one base only and declare the ball dead. When a **thrown** ball sticks into the screen, the base runners shall be entitled to advance two bases and the ball is dead. If a pitcher throws a ball from a pitching position to a base runner on a pick-off attempt and it gets away going into a dead area, all runners shall be entitled to advance one base, and the ball is dead. If the pitcher makes such a wild throw while off the rubber and it gets away in the same manner, all runners shall be entitled to advance two bases as the pitcher is now considered an infielder.

Pitching

There are two legal pitching positions, the Windup Position and the Set Position, and either position may be used at any time. When the bases are unoccupied, the pitcher shall deliver the ball to the batter within 20 seconds from receiving it. If the pitcher delays the game by violating this rule, the umpire shall call a ball. Intent of this rule is to speed up the game by preventing unnecessary delays. Good umpiring takes place when the umpire insists the catcher return the ball promptly and the pitcher take his position on the rubber without delay. When the pitcher on the rubber comes to a set position, the batter is not allowed to step out of the box for any reason. If he does, it is at his own risk, and the umpire shall call either ball or strike in accordance to where the ball was pitched relative to the batter's strike zone.

Illegal Pitches and Illegal Acts

An illegal pitch is (1) a pitch delivered to the batter when the pitcher does not have his pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate; (2) A quick return pitch. An illegal pitch when runners are on base is a balk.

(Comment—In a Windup Position, a pitcher is permitted to have his “free” foot on the rubber, in front of the rubber, behind the rubber or off the side of the rubber.)

(Comment—With no runners on base, the pitcher is not required to come to a complete stop when using the Set Position. If, however, in the umpire's judgment, a pitcher delivers the ball in a deliberate effort to catch the batter off guard, this delivery shall be deemed a quick pitch, for which the penalty is a ball.)

The pitcher cannot bring his pitching hand in contact with his mouth or lips while standing inside the circle surrounding the pitching rubber. *(Exception: Provided it is agreed to by both managers, the umpire prior to the start of a game played in cold weather, may permit the pitcher to blow on his hand.)*

The pitcher cannot expectorate on the ball, either hand or his glove; cannot rub the ball on his glove, person or clothing; cannot apply a foreign substance of any kind to the ball; cannot deface the ball in any manner; cannot deliver a ball altered in a manner as prescribed in this paragraph or what is called the “shine” ball, “spit” ball, “mud” ball or “emery” ball. The pitcher **is allowed to** rub the ball between his bare hands.

The Umpire-in-Chief shall make decisions relative to the conduct of a pitcher. This does not mean that the base umpire has no authority to call pitching infractions, however, again, the plate umpire should be the first one to detect these infractions as the pitcher belongs to him. If the pitcher is doing something wrong on the mound, never suggest to the catcher that he correct it. You must order him directly to cease and desist or impose the proper penalties.

Calling Balls and Strikes

Get as close to the catcher as you can without touching him. Do not work too low or get into the habit of weaving and dropping with the pitch as it approaches. To be accurate on your calls, you must actually be able to follow the ball into the catcher's mitt. Do not get into the habit of dropping down behind the catcher, thus, blocking your own vision. Be relaxed, not rigid, and don't be moving when the ball approaches the plate. Remember, the pitch is nothing until you call it, therefore, do not call your pitches too soon.

Tag Plays

A tag is the action of a fielder in touching a base with his body while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove; or touching a runner with the ball, or with his hand or glove holding the ball, while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove. Get as close to a tag play as you can without interfering. You must bet the angle where you can see between the base runner's foot or hand and the bag. Do not call the play too soon. Wait until it is completed before you make your call. A base runner is out only if the fielder firmly holds on to the ball when making the tag.

Arguments and Ejections

Arguments are inherent to the game of baseball. The “easy way out” for an umpire is to eject the player or coach. Ejections should always be the last resort. The proper way to handle arguments is to listen to their side of the story, give a courteous reply and then walk away. If the coach or player continues to persist, then a warning should be issued. Continued arguing can only lead to their ejection. Once a warning is issued you must enforce it or you will not gain respect and this could lead to you losing control of the game. If a participant directs a personal insult at you, pushes or touches you or kicks dirt, etc., he should automatically be ejected. There’s no place in the game for this type of behavior. Remember, an umpire must earn respect, it doesn’t just come because you’re an umpire.

Protested Games

Whenever a manager protests a game because of alleged misapplications of the rules, the protest will not be recognized unless the Umpire-in-Chief is notified at the time the play under protest occurs and before the next pitch is made or a runner is retired. When an umpire receives a protest from one team, he must notify the manager of the other team before proceeding with play. Anytime a game is protested, the umpires should get together and make sure they have made the right decision or interpretation of the rules. If a wrong decision has been made, the umpire should definitely correct the decision with the proper call to avoid the protest. A written report following the game should be made by the Umpire-in-Chief with the League President. The umpire must always accept a protest, whether he feels there are any legal grounds for it or not. He should also announce to the fans himself or through the public address announcer that the game is being played under protest.

Calling Time

Either umpire may call time. Remember, a player has the right to request time, however, time is not out until the umpire grants it. Time should be called only when necessary as it definitely slows up a game if granted after every play. Make sure no further play is possible before you grant time. When you must call time, do it loudly so everyone hears. Remember, your partner must know instantly the moment you grant time.

Strike

A strike is a legal pitch when so called by the umpire which:

- Is struck by the batter and is missed.
- Is not struck at, if any part of the ball passes through any part of the strike zone.
- Is fouled by the batter when he has less than two strikes.
- Is bunted foul.
- Touches the batter in flight in the strike zone.
- Becomes a foul tip.

The Strike Zone is that area over home plate the upper limit of which is a horizontal line at the midpoint between the top of the shoulders and the top of the uniform pants, and the lower level is a line at the hollow beneath the kneecap. The Strike Zone shall be determined from the batter’s stance as the batter is prepared to swing at a pitched ball.

Babe Ruth League Special Rules and Regulations

Re-Entry Rule (All Divisions)

Any of the nine starting players may withdraw and re-enter once, provided such player occupies the same batting position whenever he/she is in the lineup. A substitute who is withdrawn may not re-enter. The starting pitcher is governed by the provisions of Official Baseball Rule 3.05, and Babe Ruth Softball Rule, 3.05.

Please note the following interpretations of this rule.

- This rule applies to both local league and tournament play.
- Each of the nine starting players may be withdrawn from the game and re-entered once.
- When re-entered, the player must occupy the same batting position as he/she occupied when starting the game, i.e., a starting player and his or her substitute cannot be in the game at the same time.
- A pitcher withdrawn from the game may re-enter immediately if withdrawn while a batter or base runner, if he/she was one of the nine starting players. If withdrawn while he/she is on the mound pitching, his/her substitute must fulfill Official Baseball Rule or Babe Ruth Softball Rule 3.05(b) before he/she is permitted to re-enter the game.
- All other starting players may be withdrawn and re-entered immediately.
- A substitute withdrawn from the game can never re-enter the game.
- A substitute may replace a substitute and the starting player may still re-enter for the substitute, i.e., starting player Jones is replaced by substitute Smith; substitute Smith is replaced by substitute Clark. Starter Jones is eligible to replace Clark.
- A starting player withdrawn from the game more than once cannot re-enter.
- Withdrawal and re-entry takes place only when a player has been removed from the game.
- If the pitcher is removed from the game because of a second trip to the mound in the same inning, he/she may re-enter the game in any position, other than pitcher, if he/she was one of the nine starting players.

Re-Entry of Used Player – Babe Ruth League, Inc. will allow re-entry of already used players in both baseball and softball if all substitutes have been used and an injury occurs or a player is ejected. Selection of this substitute must be made by the opposing manager. This type of re-entry can only take place when an injury prevents a player from continuing in the game or a player is ejected. The injured or ejected player, once removed from the game, cannot re-enter.

Baseball—Local League Play (All Divisions)

Refer to Official Baseball Rule 1.09. The local league must use a baseball stamped as an Official Babe Ruth League Baseball. The leagues may select from the following baseballs to be used in their local league games: a cushioned cork rubber pill center or a rubber pill center. A softer baseball may be used for Cal Ripken Baseball, Rookie and T-Ball local league play. The official baseballs include deBeer, Diamond, J.P. Sports, MacGregor, Pro-Nine, Rawlings, Trump, Wilson and Worth.

Tournament Baseball (All Divisions)

Rawlings is the only official Tournament Baseball to be used for all District, State, Regional and World Series competition. Rawlings baseballs marked BRL or RBRO are to be used for all 13-18 tournament competition. The Rawlings baseballs marked CAL or RCAL are to be used for all Cal Ripken Baseball tournament competition.

Softball—Local League and Tournament Play

Refer to Official Softball Rule 1.09. The league must use a softball stamped as an Official Babe Ruth League Softball. The official softballs for local league play include Trump, Diamond, Worth and Rawlings. The 12” ball shall be used for 12U, 14U, 16U and 18U regular season and tournament competition. The 11” ball is recommended for 10U regular season play, and required for 10U tournament competition. Rawlings is the official brand of softball that must be used for tournament competition.

Baseball Bat Rule (Local League and Tournament Competition)

CAL RIPKEN BASEBALL DIVISION

The bat may not exceed 33” in length, and the bat barrel may not exceed 2 ¼” in diameter. Only 2 ¼” barrel non-wood bats marked BPF 1.15 will be allowed. Wood 2 ¼” barrel bats are allowed.

13-15 BASEBALL DIVISION

The bat may not exceed 34” in length, and the bat barrel may not exceed 2 ⅝” in diameter. All aluminum/alloy barrel bats and all composite handle (only) aluminum/alloy barrels are allowed. Only composite barrel bats certified and marked BBCOR .50 will be allowed. Wood barrel bats conforming to the specifications of Official Baseball Rule 1.10 are allowed.

16-18 BASEBALL DIVISION

The bat may not exceed 34” in length and the bat barrel may not exceed 2 ⅝” in diameter or be greater than a -3 length to weight ratio. Only metal/composite bats certified and marked BBCOR .50 are allowed. Wood barrel bats conforming to the specifications of Official Baseball Rule 1.10 are allowed.

PENALTY

- If the illegal bat is discovered prior to a batter completing his “at bat” the bat is simply removed from play and the “at bat” continues.
- A player who uses an illegal bat or non-conforming barrel dimension and hits a fair ball will be ruled out. No advancement on the bases will be allowed, and any outs during the play shall stand. This is an appeal play. The “at bat” will be considered legal once a pitch is thrown to the next batter.
- Any bat discovered prior to the game that does not conform to the above rule shall be directed to be removed immediately and not be allowed for use during the game.

Softball Bat (Local League and Tournament Competition)

Refer to Official Softball Rule 1.10. The bat shall not be more than 34 inches long, and not more than 2 ¼” in diameter at its largest part. The bat, in its entirety, shall not exceed 38 ounces in weight.

Protective Headgear (All Divisions)

Shall be worn on deck, at bat, while a base runner, and by players in the coach’s box, during practice and all games. Such headgear must cover the top of the head and have extended earflaps, which covers both ears, and properly fit the player wearing it. PENALTY—If a player refuses to wear headgear, he shall be removed from the game.

Catcher’s Mask, Helmet and Throat Protector

Any player, manager or coach warming up a pitcher at home plate shall wear a mask and it is recommended anyone warming up a pitcher at any location wear a mask. A throat protector is considered part of the catcher’s mask. PENALTY— If the catcher refuses to wear this equipment, he shall be removed from the game. (For the Cal Ripken Division, the catcher’s helmet must cover the ears. Hockey style masks are approved.

Trips to the Mound (All Divisions)

Refer to Official Rule 8.06 with the following exception: the second trip in the same inning to the same pitcher shall automatically result in the removal of that pitcher from the game as a pitcher only.

Contact Rule (All Divisions)

If a runner attempting to reach home plate intentionally and maliciously runs into a defensive player in the area of home plate, he will be called out on the play and ejected from the game. The objective of this rule is to penalize the offensive team for deliberate, unwarranted, unsportsmanlike action by the runner for the obvious purpose of crashing the defensive player, rather than trying to reach home plate. Obviously, this is an umpire's judgment call.

Tobacco (All Divisions)

Babe Ruth League, Inc. prohibits the use of all tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco, for both local league and tournament competition. This rule applies to all field personnel, which includes managers, coaches and umpires.

Official Baseball Rules NOT Applicable to Cal Ripken Major/60 Division

Base Running—Rules 5.09(h), 6.09(b), 7.04(d) and 7.07

Third Strike—Official Baseball Rule 6.05(c)- the batter is out when a third strike is caught or not caught by the catcher. (60 ft. Major)

Regulation Games

Cal Ripken Division—A regulation game shall consist of 6 innings or 4 innings if the game is called or if the home team has scored more runs in 3 ½ innings than the visiting team has scored in 4 complete innings. Tournament Rule 11.05, paragraphs 7 and 8 applies for tournament play.

13-15 and 16-18 Divisions—Refer to Official Baseball Rule 4.10 with the following exception: a Babe Ruth League Regulation Game shall consist of 7 innings. Therefore, where referenced in Official Baseball Rules, here or elsewhere, is made to nine inning, substitute “7” for “9”. Tournament Rule 11.05, paragraphs 7 and 8 applies for tournament play.

Softball—Refer to Official Softball rule 4.10. A regulation game for 14U, 16U and 18U consists of 7 innings, unless extended because of a tie score, or shortened because the home teams needs none of its half of the 7th inning or only a fraction of it, or because the umpire calls the game. In the 6U, 8U, 10U and 12U divisions, a regulation game shall consist of 6 innings or 4 innings if the game is called or if the home team has scored more runs in 3 ½ innings than the visiting team has scored in 4 complete innings.

Pitching Limitations

- The calendar week of Babe Ruth League, Inc. is Monday through, and including Sunday. Refer to Babe Ruth League Rule 0.06.
- A Cal Ripken Baseball pitcher, regardless of age, may pitch six (6) innings per calendar week.
- A Babe Ruth 13-15 pitcher, regardless of age, may pitch seven (7) innings per calendar week.
- In Softball 12U and younger, a pitcher, regardless of age, may pitch in no more than 10 innings per calendar week.
- There are no pitching restrictions for the Softball 14U, 16U and 18U divisions (however see “Local League Options” for 14U and 16U pitching alternatives).
- Although there are no written restrictions as to the use of pitchers in 16-18 baseball local league play, Babe Ruth League, Inc. strongly cautions extreme care be used so an individual player is not overextended.
- A Cal Ripken or Babe Ruth 13-15 pitcher must have two (2) calendar days rest between pitching assignments. Each game in which a pitcher pitches is considered an assignment. If a pitcher delivers one (1) pitch in an inning, they shall be charge for one (1) inning pitched.

Helpful Hints To Become A Superior Umpire

- Umpires must be:
 - Neatly dressed
 - Prompt and on time
 - Approachable
 - Well educated in the rules (knowledge of the rules is important, but more important, is the understanding of their purpose, and the ability to interpret and enforce these principles)
 - Clear in making calls
 - Poised, in control and in charge on the diamond
 - Consistent
 - Able to display good judgment and make accurate calls
 - Able to explain and clarify the rules and rule interpretations
 - Confident
 - Prepared
 - Flexible
 - Hustling all the time
 - Decisive
 - Able to display rapport
 - Unbiased and objective
 - Able to make the tough call
 - Enforce the rules in an unbiased fashion
 - Respectful to the sport and its participants
- Your uniform speaks volumes about you. If your shoes are shined, your shirt is crisp, you have your belt, and you are well groomed, you will immediately be accepted as a professional. The managers, coaches, players and fans will respect you from the time you step on to the field. If your shoes are scuffed and worn, your shirt is faded and wrinkled, you didn't bother with a belt or a shave, you could be the most knowledgeable umpire in the sport of softball, but no one will believe it. Every close call will be questioned. It will be assumed that your mechanics, like your uniform, are sloppy. Make sure the way you dress when you step onto that field says that you are a professional umpire and that your game that day will be professional too.
- Learn from your peers – good and bad. The things you learn from your peers you will never find in a rulebook. One aspect of the game that veterans can teach you best is game management. Game management is simply the skill of keeping the game moving, anticipating problems, and handling those problems as they arise. It is often helpful to ask your peers for a critique after the game. It may sting a little, but it will benefit you in the long run. On the other hand, some things you learn from others aren't always the things that you want to repeat, such as sloppy mechanics, poor attitude and lousy appearance. Don't let this get to you. All you can do in this instance is support your partner and do the best job you can with what you have. For everything you learn from a fellow umpire, you will probably learn one thing that you should not do.
- When we talk about professionalism, we take about a confidence and knowledge that should be carried by all umpires. This confidence isn't arrogance; it is a confidence in knowing that when you walk onto that field, you are there to do a job as defined by your rulebook and to enforce your rules as defined by common sense and the interpretation of those rules. As an umpire, you have one of the least forgiving, least understood and most underappreciated jobs in the world. You must be prepared before you walk onto that field for anything to happen, and expect that anything to happen on every pitch.
- You should be physically fit at the start of the season and keep yourself in condition.

- There are no excuses when you miss a play due to lack of hustle. If you and your partner both hustle, the players will do likewise and the game will be administered in a professional manner.
- It is a must for you to be decisive on close calls—be patient—let the play happen before you make the call. This will help your judgment, and good judgment is a must in order to be a respected umpire.
- One of the quickest ways to get into trouble is to be an inconsistent umpire. True, different umpires vary in their strike zones, and different umpires have a tendency to call more balks or see obstruction and interference plays differently. It is important once you start working, especially behind the plate, that you treat each pitch as if it was the deciding pitch of the game. Establish consistency of the strike zone so both the batter and pitcher know what to expect. If you miss a pitch or a play—forget it—know why you missed it and put it out of your mind. This is a must so it doesn't affect your next call. Remember, you can never even up a missed pitch or call or you will have two mistakes, plus quickly lose respect.
- Correct positioning is in the simplest terms, angle and distance. Understand that having a proper angle is more important than being five feet from the play. Most umpires use two-man mechanics and it isn't always possible to be standing directly behind the bag to make every call. Know where you need to be, get a good angle, see the play, and make the call.
- Proper mechanics allow you as an umpire to correctly communicate with your partner, and to allow yourself as an umpire to be in the best possible position to see the play.
- Always stay focused on the game. If you want to count the spectators or admire the scenery, do it between innings. Your lack of focus is noticed, and sooner or later you will get a late start or miss a play.
- Umpires are an important part of the game, but not bigger than the game. No one comes to the game to see the umpires. Never embarrass or humiliate a player. With the players there is no game. The best compliment an umpire can receive is that no one even knew you were there. You don't need to be told when you've done a good job. You will know it.
- All of the fundamentals of umpiring cannot be discussed and understood in a short time, but they can be mastered if you stay with them until they are firmly set in your mind.
- Adopt a style of umpiring that suits your personality. Develop techniques that are decisive, appealing and efficient.
- Umpire as many games as you possibly can. Don't be afraid or too proud to work practice games. Above all, make each umpiring situation a learning experience.
- Be honest. We all miss them once in a while.
- Work hard every pitch of the game. It means something to somebody.
- Cooperate with your peers, don't compete.
- Strive to get better. We still have not called the perfect game.
- Umpire because it's fun and because you love the game.
- Post Game Critique—Since in most cases you do not have a supervisor watching you work your games, it is important you and your partner have a post game critique to help each other improve your umpiring skills. Always be honest with your partner and make sure he knows you want the truth from him. Learn from each other.

Review Your Work

Ask yourself these questions in order to review your work.

- Had your shoes been shined?
- Had your trousers been pressed?
- Did you arrive at the game site on time?
- Time enough to start the game on time?
- Did you communicate well with your fellow umpires during the game?
- Did you always keep your eyes on the ball?
- Did you keep the game constantly moving at an active pace?
- Did you misinterpret any rules?
- Working the plate—did you let players, managers or coaches criticize your calls for balls and strikes?
- Were you in charge of the game?
- Did you always place your eyes at the strike zone level?
- When you had to move towards a base, were you in a good position or angle to make the call?
- Did you take the set position?
- Did you arrive before the ball and runner?
- How many pitches did you miss in the game?
- Did you give the changes to the official scorer properly?
- Working the bases—how often were your calls criticized?
- Did you wait a little (at least a second) before calling the play?
- Did you always get the right angle approximately 90%?
- Did you always call your plays in a set position—not on the run?
- Were you often in the way of fielders?
- Did you announce “safe” or “out” in a strong voice?
- Did you “sell” your calls on the close plays?
- Did you have difficult situations well in hand?
- Did you position the runners quickly and with authority if/when there were wild throws?

Now take it a step further:

- Have I improved as an umpire?
- Have I corrected my faults?
- Do I avoid acting like a big boss on the field?
- Do I keep my temper under control?
- Is it possible that I could have been wrong?
- Did I attend the necessary clinics?
- Do I cooperate with my fellow umpires?
- Do I stay alert on the diamond?
- Am I firm in my decisions?
- Do I keep the game moving by hustling myself and the participants?
- Am I considerate and courteous?
- Does dignity govern my voice and manner on the field?



Reasons to Join this Acclaimed Association

- Affiliation with the world's largest regulation baseball program and the finest softball program.
- Speedy rule interpretations
- Eligible to be selected as a member of the Babe Ruth League World Series Umpiring Crew
- Professionally produced Umpire Guide
- Access to Batter-Up e-newsletter, which includes "Hey Blue", regularly featured column, providing umpire information and tips
- Receive Babe Ruth Baseball or Babe Ruth Softball Rulebook
- Membership Certificate and ID Card
- Handsomely embroidered Babe Ruth Baseball or Babe Ruth Softball National Umpires Association Patch.
- Access to online BULLPEN Magazine
- Regional, State or District Clinics by Umpire Consultants



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