

Mukilteo Little League 2016 Umpire Guide



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Thank you for volunteering to serve as an umpire for Mukilteo Little League!

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

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

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

When you accept the responsibility of a volunteer Little League Umpire and are appointed by the league president, you should recognize and accept that you are a representative of the league and of Little League Baseball. You are authorized and required to enforce all the rules and regulations of Little League Baseball, Inc. Whether we agree with all the rules and regulations or not, we must enforce all of them to the best of our ability. We cannot pick and choose which ones we are going to enforce.

First and foremost, the safety of the children and integrity of the game must be number one in the umpire's mind and how he enforces and interprets the rules.

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

—From *LittleLeague.org*

Questions?

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2016 MLL Procedures

Training

The Head Coach and at least one adult volunteer from every MLL baseball and softball team (Farm and above) are required to attend one or more umpire training clinics in 2016. Many volunteers attended a training session in 2015 and thus fulfilled the requirements for the 2016 season as well (visit www.mukilteolittleleague.com/2015_ump_training_participants for a list).

Gameplay

For league (MLL vs. MLL) games, the Home team is expected to provide the Plate Umpire and the Away team is expected to provide the Field Umpire.

For interleague games at an MLL home field, the MLL team must be prepared to supply both the Plate Umpire and the Field Umpire. If the visiting team is willing to provide a Field Umpire, the coaches may agree to proceed at their discretion.

For both baseball and softball: Majors, Minors and Farm teams are expected to provide umpires from their team volunteers. Intermediate, Juniors, Seniors and Bigs teams will have limited additional umpire resources to help work their games, but should do their best to provide a trained umpire from their own team volunteers.

How to be a Great Little League Umpire

- **Care about your appearance.** Arrive at the game site early, and when you get there, be courteous to administrators and participants. Show them that you want to be there. A neat appearance projects authority and dignity and a respect that you are taking this game seriously. Little League players deserve the best from their coaches and umpires. Keep your gear clean and in good condition and wear it correctly. Your uniform is a reflection of the pride you demonstrate in serving as a Little League umpire.
- **Have a strong pregame.** Why would you want to get on the same page with your partner? So you don't crash and burn, for one thing. The time you spend with your partner confirming positions, rules questions, team tendencies and tactics will help you manage the game. It will help you on your individual responsibilities and your work as a team.
- **Control your emotions.** A mature umpire knows better than to let his emotions have free rein. No matter how good you may think it will feel to talk back to a coach or fan, it is not an option. You need to be the calming presence. Whether it's in response to remarks by a coach or if opponents get into it, umpires must be there and be ready to provide a level head (and consequences, if necessary).
- **Admit your errors.** Mistakes happen. If you never admit a mistake, you lose credibility. Often the best response to a coach who tells you, "You missed one," is to admit it, if you know the error occurred. The coach likely won't have much to say after that. It's hard to argue when you agree, after all.
- **Listen to coaches.** Tuning out worthless rants is a good thing. But for the most part, umpires should listen to what coaches say. They might offer a legitimate comment that deserves consideration, whether it's a measured criticism of a call or a suggestion to watch for a certain action. Many coaches understand the game, and if you tune them out completely, you might miss out on a chance to elevate your performance.
- **Consider whether to respond.** You're always listening, but you don't always have to respond. Not every challenge from a coach requires a response. In fact, if it's a statement instead of a question, it often doesn't. If you decide to respond to coaches' comments, sometimes the right response is non-verbal. Nod your head, glance in the direction of the coach, shake your head or hold up a stop sign. Those actions can often get your response across better than words and won't disrupt the game as much.
- **Talk to players.** It's tough to work a game well and not communicate with players. Whether it's an acknowledgment of sporting behavior by the player or a stern discussion with opponents over an issue, talking to players can be a good thing. But keep your teaching comments to yourself—you're not the coach and he may not be too pleased if you're acting like one.
- **Anticipate the play.** Former players turned umpires often have an advantage in anticipating a play. As long as you don't "anticipate the call" to follow, having a feel for what play is coming and adjusting your positioning accordingly will help you see the play better. As a result, you'll get it right more often.

Earning Incentives by Logging Games into Bonzi

NEW IN 2016: When you log games you've umpired in your Bonzi account, you'll earn credit to pick up your own umpire gear at Honigs.com!

- Work 5 games: Earn a Little League Umpire pin
- Work 10 games: Earn \$50 credit at Honig's
- Work 20 games: Earn \$125 credit at Honig's
- Work 25 games: Earn \$200 credit at Honig's

You earn credit for ANY Mukilteo Little League game that you work, not just your own son or daughter's team.

How to Log a Game You've Worked

1. Register as an umpire for Mukilteo Little League.
 - » Visit your MLL Bonzi member account and select "Register Now-Umpire." Complete the very short registration process and you'll be "in the system" with access to log games that you've worked. (Note that it may take up to 24 hours for your registration to be confirmed so you can access your new Officials Management tools.)
2. Record Games You've Worked
 - » Log in to your MLL Bonzi member account
 - » Select "Officials Management"
 - » Expand the helpful "Filters" tab, where you can search by date range, field location, team name or coach's last name.
 - » Select "Assign me to this game" and choose Home Plate Umpire or Field Umpire, then select "Complete My Assignment."

MLL's Umpire Incentive Program is "on the honor system." Please record ONLY games in which you have served as a volunteer umpire. Incentive credit is "spent" once a threshold is reached and credit is requested-in other words, once you've requested a credit for X number of games, "the counter resets." For any questions on the incentive program or for assistance using Bonzi to record your games, contact MLL Umpire in Chief Jason Becker at umpires@mukilteolittleleague.com.

Steps Toward Becoming a Professional

On and Off the Field

1. Pay attention to your appearance
2. Stay in shape
3. Be positive and approachable
4. Know the rules and revere them
5. Be a role model for great sportsmanship
6. Learn the nuances of the game
7. Evaluate your performance after every game
8. Walk the Talk
9. Listen and learn from successful officials around you
10. Help others
11. Remember that how you behave off the field reflects on your fellow umpires

During Games

1. Make every game your masterpiece
2. Maintain the appropriate intensity and demeanor
3. Deal effectively with sportsmanship issues
4. Manage the pace of the game effectively
5. Keep conversations with coaches, players and partners to a minimum
6. If you've got no arm, let the catcher do your throwing
7. Work with your partners as a crew
8. Use your indicator as a tool, not a crutch
9. Avoid screaming out the obvious calls
10. Keep yourself in the game and off the fence line
11. Avoid making an issue of the wrong things

Pregame Preparation & Communication

Pre-Game: Items to Address with Your Umpire Partner

1. Fair/Foul Coverage – Who’s Got What and Where
2. Tag-ups/Touches
3. Fly Balls To The Outfield, Fly Balls To the Infield
4. Coverage Of Third Base
5. Live Ball (Restart after foul/dead balls)
6. Uncaught Third Strike (Majors/Intermediate/Junior/Senior/Big League Baseball and Senior/Big League Softball)
7. Batted Ball Hits Batter While In The Box
8. Half Swing (Checked Swing)
9. Umpire Positioning
10. Signals

Pre-Game: Plate Meeting with Coaches

- No less than three minutes before gametime
- Both teams in dugouts (don’t have your plate meeting while home team is warming up)
- Not a time to visit and chit-chat
- One coach from each team—the manager of record
- Introductions, shake hands, be positive, be clear that you’ll communicate and that you’ll ask for help in dealing with situations that arise if necessary
- Ask for lineup cards—check numbers, names and positions
- Mark ineligible pitchers on your lineup card
- Provide copy to opposing team, keep scorekeeper and umpire copy and give back team copy
- Ask Home team manager to “take us around the park” to note and explain any field rules or issues
- Ask if all players are properly equipped per Little League rules (get verbal affirmation)
- Remind managers to request “time” and wait until it is granted before leaving the dugout
- Explain that our goal is 60 seconds in between half-innings, so instruct coaches to hustle their players on and off the field and have a player ready with a mask and catcher’s glove if necessary

Managing Discussions and Handling Situations

In General...

- Your role is to be a calming influence on the game and in tough situations.
- You are expected not to argue.
- Do not ignore inappropriate behavior.
- Do not overreact to inappropriate behavior

“Chirping” from the coach or dugout:

- Let the coach know you have heard him. If necessary, have one on one conversation with coach letting him know that the behavior is unacceptable and needs to stop.
- If the behavior persists, advise coach they have already been warned and the behavior has to stop immediately. If it is serious, blatant, or personal: eject.

Discussions with a coach initiated by a call or action of the opposing team:

- Maintain neutral body language. Keep appropriate distance. Do not point your finger.
- Listen carefully to what is being said.
- Keep facial expressions neutral. Do not roll your eyes, grimace, smile or shake your head.
- Acknowledge what has been said. Respond appropriately. Try not to respond to statements. Answer questions directly.
- Never say or do anything that you would not accept from a coach or a player.
- Do not charge a player or coach and do not follow them if the discussion is over or he/she is walking away.
- Do not insist on the last word.
- Keep the discussion one on one. Your partner should calmly move close enough to see and hear what is going on, but not become part of the discussion.
- When discussion is over, explain only the question and your ruling to opposing coach, if needed.

When a discussion is over from your point of view:

- Tell coach you have answered his question. Ask for compliance and let coach know that you want to keep him in the game.
- Describe options and then confirm options and choices.
- Eject if necessary. At this point, keep your distance and be quiet. Your partner should step up and escort the coach from the field. Let your partner manage the coach's exit from the field.

2016 Area of Emphasis & Improvement: Pace of Play

Do the math: in a full six-inning game, there are eleven half-inning changes. Two minutes in between=22 minutes. Three minutes in between=33 minutes!

60 seconds in between innings is the Little League guideline (Rule 8.03) and the goal to strive for.

We want to play full games. The kids deserve to play full games. Unfortunate circumstances like the need to revert to a previous inning's score because of a time limit can be avoided by improving our pace of play. Incoming weather can be avoided by improving our pace of play. Playing in early-season darkness—a safety issue—can be avoided by improving our pace of play. There are so many good reasons to keep a game moving!

A good umpire will explain to both coaches at the pregame plate meeting that he will be looking to keep the game moving, and that is the coaches' responsibility to hustle players on and off the field.

The umpire owns sole discretion on when to limit warmup pitches in the interest of maintaining a reasonable pace of play if he feels that teams are not hustling, a pitcher isn't giving full attention to warming up, something else is going on, etc.

You're not expected to be militant or inflexible about the 60-second guideline; instead be forgiving, especially at lower levels of play and with younger kids or inexperienced coaches. But definitely do be mindful about the importance of keeping a game moving and do everything in your power to make it happen.

Practical Tips for Umpires & Coaches to Improve Pace of Play

- Coaches should have a player ready with a catcher's glove and helmet in case he is needed to warm up a pitcher when the regular catcher is gearing up.
- Wait until between batters (not in the middle of an at-bat) to receive balls that have gone out of play.
- Coaches are allowed one offensive time out per half inning (Rule 5.10). Adhere to this rule and do not allow multiple conversations between a third-base coach and his batters.
- On a passed ball, you may choose to toss the pitcher a new baseball and get the previous one from the catcher. Same with a foul ball—it's your choice whether to throw to the pitcher or hand to the catcher.
- Have enough game balls to avoid delays. You will most often get two new game balls to start—but it is exceedingly rare that you'll get through a game with just those two game balls. Ask the coach for some used but playable balls and keep them in a second ball bag, or at least have the coach ready with them when you request them. Don't be the umpire who stands helplessly at the plate, delaying the game, because of successive foul balls.

The Basic Six



Strike



Ball



Out



Safe



Time or Foul



Foul



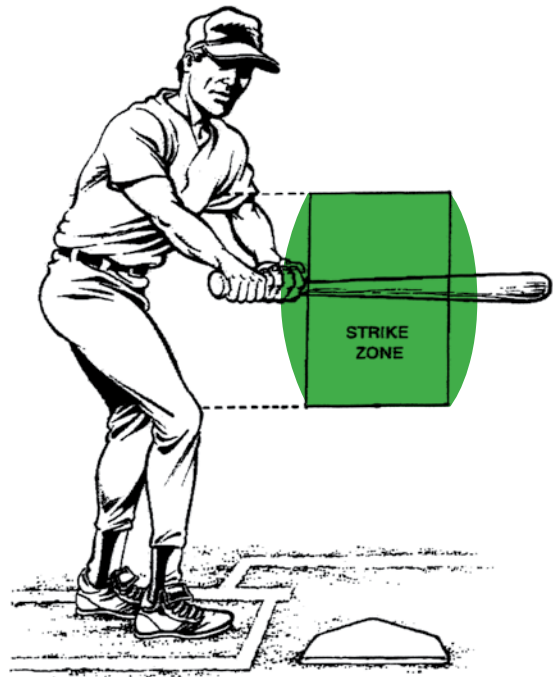
Calling Balls and Strikes

The Strike Zone

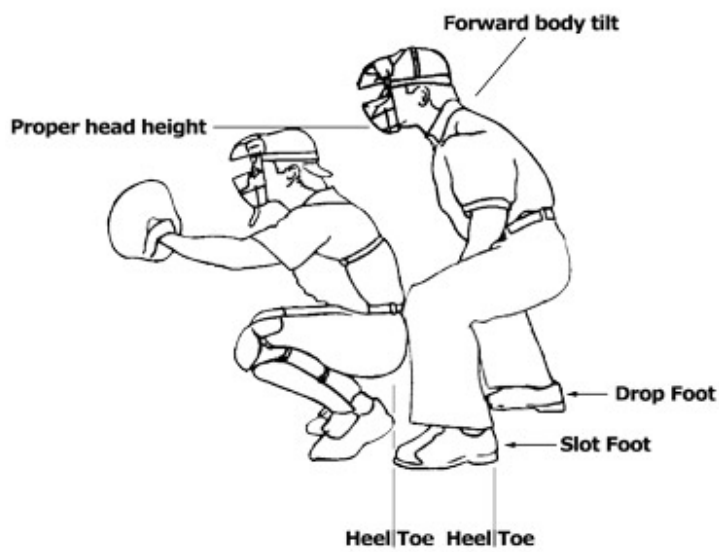
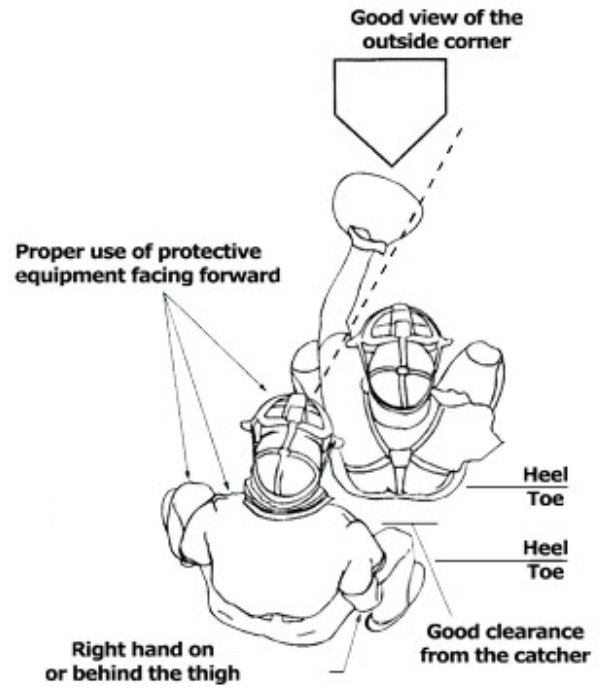
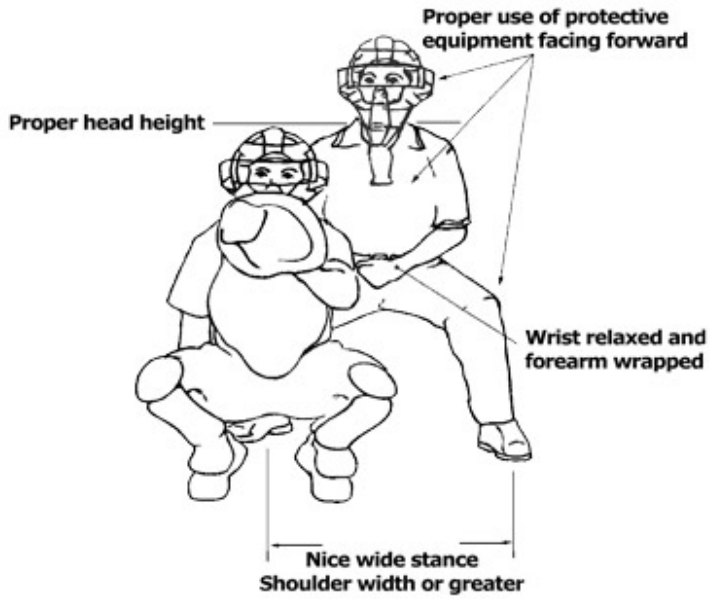
- A strike: any part of the ball passes through any part of the strike zone
- The strike zone = the area between the hitter's armpits and the top of their knees, directly above the plate when the hitter is in a natural hitting position
- It is beneficial to everyone for all umpires to be aggressive in calling strikes.
- Strive to develop a reasonable strike zone. Give a pitcher credit if he/she can consistently nail the outside corner. Be cognizant of the time of year and the level of play (perhaps in the first Farm game of the year, the consideration is "can the batter hit this pitch with something resembling a normal baseball swing?")
- It's important to call strikes on borderline pitches. Hitters should come up to the plate ready to swing the bat. Always "think strikes" and make the pitch convince you that it is a ball, and those borderline pitches will take care of themselves.
- Realize your strike zone won't really be a rectangle. Rather, it will be wider in the heart of the zone from just above the knees to just above the sternum. Your strike zone should resemble a barrel more than a rectangle (see illustration).

Steps to Calling the Pitch

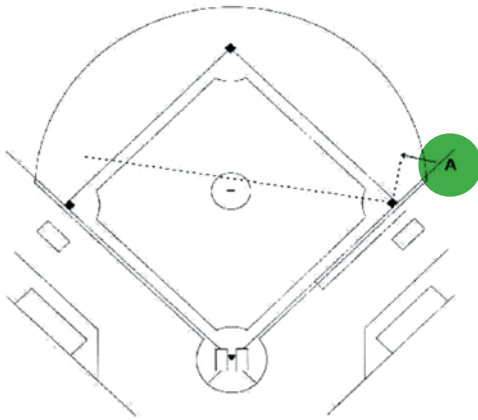
1. On the rubber (realize a pitch is about to ensue)
2. Set (drop to your set position)
3. Tracking (pick up and follow the pitch from the pitcher's hand to the catcher's mitt. Pretend you have to catch the pitch and then catch it with your eyes.)
4. Read (take a preliminary read on the status of the pitch)
5. Hold (make your final read only after the catcher receives the ball)
6. Call it (announce your final read)



The Slot Position

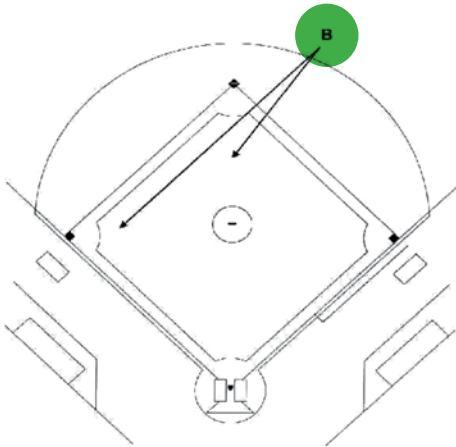


Field Umpire—Positioning and Duties



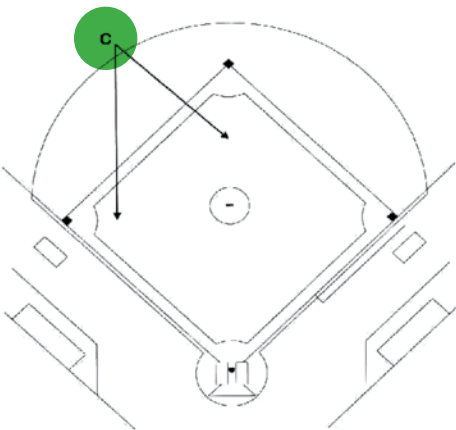
Position A: Bases Empty

When the ball is hit to the infield, the umpire should assume a position to first base and then to the fielder making the throw such that a right angle (90 degrees) is formed. Hustle out there, maintain your original distance away from the base (10–12 feet) so you will have a good view of the fielder reaching for a high throw. If the ball is hit to the third baseman, run towards him until you have your angle. Do the same toward the shortstop. When a ball is hit to the second baseman's right, move into fair territory so the angle will be as close to ninety degrees as possible. If the ball is hit to the second baseman's left or the first baseman, you will be in foul territory. Be sure to stay out of the runner's path even through it means distorting the angle slightly.



Position B: Runner on 1st Only

With a runner on 1st base only, the base umpire will position himself midway between the second baseman and the 2nd base bag approximately 30 to no more than 40 feet from the 1st base bag. The umpire's body should be square to the front edge of home plate. From this position he will be in a good starting position for help on half-swings and for checking to see if the runner leaves early. This initial positioning with a runner on 1st base only is very important, and umpires should make sure that they are not too deep towards the outfield or too far to the first base side so as to be blocked from seeing the plate by the second baseman. If the umpire is positioned as described in the previous sentence, he will be in a good starting position for the runner leaving early as well as for double plays.



Position C: Runner on 2nd or 3rd

Position yourself two to three steps behind the shortstop and two to three steps off of the shortstop's left shoulder. Never more than 30 feet from 2nd base and never closer than 15 to 20 feet to 2nd base. From this location you will be able to easily get into position for any play on a lead runner. From this position, with any ball hit through the infield or a fly ball to the outfield, you should move into the infield grass so that you will be able to see the ball, runner, and bases. Note that with runners on base, the base umpire should make all of the calls on all of the bases (including 3rd base). The plate umpire may be called upon for assistance on a close play but it should be your call.

How to Help Your Partner

The two-umpire system is a system of angles, compromises, communication, cooperation, dedication and hustle. Each umpire should strive to help his or her partner without unnecessarily inflicting himself or herself on the game. Here are some ways to improve your coverage.

- **Batter is struck by batted ball.**
If as a base umpire you see a batted ball strike the batter, call, "Time" from the bases. Only make this call if you're 100% sure you saw what actually happened. But give the plate umpire a chance to make this call—this is the plate umpire's primary responsibility and the base umpire's secondary responsibility.
- **Trailing the batter-runner.** The plate umpire will trail the batter-runner about one-third of the way to first base just to the left of the foul line. The plate umpire's responsibilities include watching for a pulled foot and runner's lane interference.
- **Tag made on a batter runner going to first.** The rule of thumb is the plate umpire takes the first half of the distance to first and the base umpire takes the last half of the distance.
- **Pulled foot at first.** The plate umpire views the action and remains silent unless the base umpire asks for help.
- **Swipe tag at first.** The plate umpire views the action and remains silent unless the base umpire asks for help.
- **Double play backup at second.** The plate umpire will observe the fast and furious action at second and call interference when he or she sees it.
- **Help at third on a base hit.** Whenever a runner advances 120 feet from first base on a hit, the plate umpire must call the base umpire off third. However, base umpires should consider all base calls their responsibility unless the plate umpire calls them off.
- **Second play in infield at third base.** By the book, the second play in the infield at third base is the plate umpire's responsibility, but he or she still must call the base umpire off third. When the runner going to third starts at second, the plate umpire will stay in foul ground and after observing the action at first, he or she will move in foul territory to the "library" near third base. The plate umpire will move to fair territory for the call at third only when both the runner and the ball are coming to third.
- **Checked swings.** Watch for this whenever possible (most often when in Position A). Focus on whether the batter made an attempt to hit the ball. Be ready on ball calls to rule on checked swings.

Asking For Help and Reversing Calls

- Don't necessarily honor the coach's request to go for help just to appease the coach, or if you strongly believe your partner wouldn't have credible information to contribute.
- Be convinced there is a reasonable possibility that you may have missed an element of the play and be convinced that your partner may have valuable information to offer.
- If you decide to meet with your partner to seek his opinion, tell the coach you will go for help, but he or she must return to the dugout to await your decision. Inform the coach you will come to the dugout with your final decision but there will be no further discussion about the situation as there is nothing more you can do. However, do accept an official protest as applicable to the protest guidelines.
- If you seek the opinion of your partner, consider any solid information as likely to be correct since you already have some doubt or you would not have sought his assistance.
- If you reverse the call, you must be prepared for a possibly strong argument from the opposing coach. Exhibit some restraint, as you *have* reversed your original call. However, that does not give the coach license to engage in unsporting behavior.

(discuss with coach)

"Coach, I'm going to ask you to return to your dugout area, and then I will go and share what you've told me with my partner. After that we will come up with a final decision."

(discuss with partner)

"Here's what I saw, here's what coach saw, what did you see?"

One-Umpire Mechanics & Expectations

- When working a game alone, you can't possibly cover everything that happens on the field. When it comes to watching someone touch a base or knowing where the ball is, always keep your eyes on the ball.
- Tell coaches at the pre-game meeting you'll work the game as hard as you can. As long as you are hustling and giving your best effort, you won't need to worry about complaining from coaches and players about your positioning or calls. If you do get complaints, the best response is "Coach, I am working as hard as I can for you" and then walk away.
- Whenever you brush off home plate, always call time. Be sure all play has stopped before you turn your back to the field.
- Anytime the ball is hit in fair territory, you must move out toward the center of the infield. If the ball is hit down the line, you must stay on the line to make a fair/foul call. After you make a fair call, you should move out toward the center of the infield.
- On long-distance calls, the general guideline is, if the ball beats the runner and the tag is down, call the runner out.
- Always know where the ball is and who has it.
- When a ball appears to be going out of play, wait before making your call. Be sure it's out of play. Once you call time and stop play, there is no going back.
- If you have a rules interpretation problem, don't be influenced by a coach who tells you how some other umpire handled the same play. If a coach wants to protest, explain the situation to the other coach and see what he thinks about whatever the ruling is. If he knows the rule, it's to his advantage to have you get it right. Do this **ONLY** after the other coach announces he is protesting the game. In any event, if you are stumped, do whatever you think is fair, and then get the game moving. Don't allow the game to get bogged down with long discussions.
- HUSTLE, HUSTLE, and HUSTLE.
- Good luck—in a one-man game, you'll probably need a lot of it!

Rules & Procedures “Outside” of Gameplay

- Ensure coaches request “Time” and that you grant it before allowing them out of the dugout.
- A coach who wishes to discuss a call should discuss it with the umpire who made that call.
- Eight warmup pitches for new pitchers, five for a returning pitcher.
- Weather: coaches agree to start a game, but once a game had begun, the umpire has final authority on when to stop play. Umpires are welcome and encouraged to collaborate with coaches on these types of decisions, but if there is disagreement it is the umpire’s final decision.
- Coaches: three allowed in dugout, no more. Must always be one adult coach in the dugout. Players may coach bases wearing batting helmets.
- No adult may warm up a pitcher during the game or before the game on the field or in the bullpen. Players may warm up pitchers as long as they have a mask and catcher’s glove.
- Any player coming on to the field of play to retrieve a bat must be wearing a helmet.
- Verbalizing the count: NOT after every pitch. Do it after “meaning” pitches, or after “events” like a foul ball or a play on the bases. Who are you verbalizing the count for? The pitcher and the batter. Do provide the count at the request of a coach or scorekeeper, but not a request from the stands.
- Players may not wear any form of jewelry except for a Medical ID bracelet. All earrings, bracelets and necklaces (including pro-style titanium) must be removed. Adult coaches may wear wedding rings.
- Address sportsmanship issues directly but never embarrass a child when doing so.
- Plate umpire position between innings=eight to ten feet up the baseline looking out at the field. Field umpire=behind first base in foul territory, watching for errant throws. Casual conversation and contact between umpires during the game should be minimized.

Answers to Common Scenarios

Is a foul tip an automatic dead ball?

No. A foul tip is a live ball. *Rule 2.00: 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, unless the ball has first touched the catcher's glove or hand. A foul tip can only be caught by the catcher.*

Thus, it is only a foul tip if the catcher catches the ball. A ball that hits the bat and goes straight back to the backstop is a foul ball, not a foul tip.

Is the runner automatically out if he turns left after crossing first base and is tagged?

No. The direction in which the batter-runner turns in overrunning first base is completely irrelevant.

Rule 7.08(c): A batter-runner cannot be tagged out after overrunning or oversliding first base if said batter-runner returns immediately to the base.

Thus, the critical thing is not the direction in which the batter-runner turns, but what he does as, or immediately after, the turn. If the batter-runner makes any movement towards second, he has forfeited his or her protection. If he comes directly back towards the base, however, he is protected until the base is touched, or until some other move towards another base is made. This is a judgment made by the umpire.

Is home plate in foul or fair territory?

All of home plate is in fair territory, so if a batted ball touches it, it has merely struck part of fair territory.

What if the pitch bounces?

If a pitch bounces, the only thing that changes is that it can no longer become a called strike. With this single exception, the pitch is alive and in play.

- If the batter swings at the pitch and misses, it is a strike.
- If the batter hits the ball in fair territory, the batted ball is alive and in play.
- If the batter hits the ball foul, it is simply a foul.
- If the bounced pitch hits the batter, all the standard hit-by-pitch rules apply.

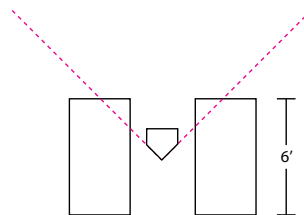
Answers to Common Scenarios (continued)

What if the batter's box and/or baselines are lined incorrectly?

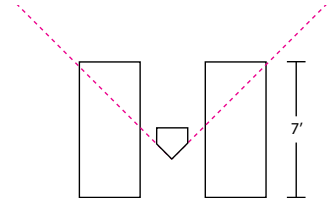
Insist that the field be lined correctly before starting the game. Having the field correctly marked may alleviate issues later in the game. Helpfully remind coaches of the proper way to line batter's boxes and baselines:



Correct: a guideline string run from the back tip of home plate to the outside of first and third base.



A correctly lined BASEBALL batter's box. Note where the foul line emerges from the batter's box—NOT from the corner.



A correctly lined SOFTBALL batter's box. Note where the foul line emerges from the batter's box—CLOSE to the corner.

Are the "hands part of the bat?"

No. The hands are not part of the bat. When a player is hit on the hand by a pitch, the umpire must evaluate the situation just as he would if the pitch had hit him elsewhere:

- If the pitch was in the strike zone the ball is dead, runners return to the last legally touched base, and the batter gets a strike. If that was the third strike, the batter is out.
- If the batter was in the process of swinging, just as in the previous case, the ball is dead, runners return to the last legally touched base, and the batter gets a strike. If that was the third strike, the batter is out.
- If the pitch was not in the strike zone and the batter was not swinging at it, but the batter makes no attempt to get out of the way, the ball is dead, runners return, a ball is charged to the batter and he/she must continue to bat. (Unless that was ball four.)
- If none of the above conditions apply, the ball is dead, the batter is awarded first base, and runners advance only if forced.

Remember—when a batter is hit anywhere by a pitch, the ball is immediately dead, whether or not a base award is made.

Does the "tie go to the runner?"

Bill Klem, a Hall of Fame umpire who worked the National League from 1905 through 1941, and then served as Chief of National League Umpires until his death in 1951, has been quoted as saying, "There's no such thing as a tie—it's either this, or it's that!" Like Bill Klem, MLL umpires should generally not recognize the existence of a tie—the runner either beat the throw, or he did not, and that's that.

Answers to Common Scenarios (continued)

Is a ball that is touched on a baseline foul or fair?

Fair. Baselines/foul lines/foul poles are in fair territory. A ball is in fair territory if any part of it is on or over any part of the foul line. Important: a fly ball is judged to be fair or foul according to the ball's location when it is touched by a fielder, NOT where the fielder is when he make contact with the ball.

Does a baserunner have to slide?

There is never any situation in which a runner is required to slide. *Rule 7.08(a)(3) — Any runner is out when ... the runner does not slide or attempt to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag;*

There is no "must slide rule" in Little League. The rule is, "slide or attempt to get around." The key in this situation is "fielder has the ball and is waiting to make a tag." If the fielder (any fielder, not just the catcher) does not have the ball, and there is a collision, you can not call the runner out. However, if the umpire determines that the runner deliberately attempted to make contact or injure the fielder, the umpire could eject the runner for unsportsmanlike conduct.

What if the batter makes no attempt to avoid a pitch that hits him/her?

The ball is dead and the pitch is ruled a ball [Rule 6.08(b)]. Use this rule extremely sparingly: to make this call you must be 100% convinced that the batter made no attempt whatsoever to avoid the pitch.

What if the player makes a catch but then drops the ball before throwing it?

A catch is legal only when the umpire judges that the fielder demonstrates complete control and voluntary release of the ball.

What if a base becomes dislodged during play?

A young baserunner likely won't know what to do in this scenario, so as long as in your judgment he touches/occupies either the bag itself or the spot where the bag is supposed to be, he should not be called out. *Rule 7.08(c): If a base is dislodged from its position during a play, any following runner on the same play shall be considered as touching or occupying the base if, in the umpire's judgment, that runner touches or occupies the dislodged bag or the point marked by the original location of the dislodged bag.*

Credits

- 2016 Little League Baseball Official Regulations, Playing Rules, and Policies
- 2016 Little League Softball Official Regulations, Playing Rules, and Policies
- Make the Right Call 2016: The Casebook of Little League Baseball and Softball
- Little League Baseball and Softball Field Mechanics Manual
- California District 31 Umpire Manual
- Mukilteo Little League Baseball Manager/Umpire Interaction (M. Lechnar)
- Mill Creek Little League Parent & Coaches Umpire Basics Clinic (T. Mackay)
- Western Region UIC Clinic Participant Materials (J. Miner, J. Sternberg, others)
- Washington District 1 Little League Umpire's Clinic (B. Miele)
- www.littleleague.org
- www.stocktonumpires.com
- www.llumpires.com

