

## Appeals in Little League

An **appeal** is simply a process by which the defense may *challenge* a call on the field. Appeals must be made by a defensive player, NOT a coach or manager. The coach or manager can verbally tell his defense to make the appeal, but it must be executed properly by the players. The nature of the appeal must be unmistakable, i.e. clear to the umpire what/who is being appealed. Also note that once a subsequent play of any kind occurs, the defense forfeits its rights to appeal the preceding play. Appeals must also be made with the ball in play. Appeal situations are limited to check swings; leaving the bag early on a tag up after a caught fly ball and a runner not touching a base when advancing.

1. **CHECK SWING:** The most common appeal situation is the 'check' swing where the plate umpire judges the batter did not make an attempt to hit a ball out of the strike zone despite the bat moving forward, ruling a 'BALL'. Appealing this call only be done when there is a base ump. The proper way to make the appeal is to have the catcher ask the plate ump: "did he go?". It is up then to the plate ump to ask for help. In some cases, the plate ump may NOT request help, particularly if it is felt that the attempt wasn't even close.

**Coaches tip:** make sure you have and practice a system to alert your catchers to appeal an attempted swing, a simple 'hey Johnny, ask if he went' will work, let the catcher take it from there.

2. **RUNNER LEAVING EARLY, FLY BALL:** Another appeal situation involves a runner tagging up on a caught fly ball. By rule a runner cannot advance on a caught fly ball until it touches a fielder. Umpires are trained to be on the lookout for this. A runner that violates the rule is in jeopardy of being called out, on appeal. The appeal can be made by a simple throw to the base in question by the fielders, or after the play, by making a clearly announced 'runner X left base Y early' and either tagging the runner in question with the ball or throwing the ball to a fielder to touch the base in question, but it must be announced what is being appealed.

**Coaches tips:** practice having your players announce an appeal. "*Runner X on base Y left early*". If you need to, take a defensive time out to coach them prior to making the appeal. Train your infielders and catcher to watch for the early departure as well. Note that an umpire working solo may not be able to see all runners, if more than one, at the time of the catch and is trained to focus on the lead runner. If an umpire does not see a play, they will NOT rule against the runner on appeal, just a practical matter.

3. **Runner misses base:** A runner is required to touch the bases in order both advancing and retreating, failure to do so puts the runner in jeopardy of being called out on appeal. To appeal a runner for missing a base, the runner or base missed must be tagged, after the intent of the appeal is announced, "*runner X missed base Y*". Umpires assume runners have touched the base for sake of a timing play, even at first.

**Coaches tips:** most games involve several missed bases, Train your infielders to be on the lookout, without obstructing, or announcing it. Catchers are in good position to see a lot. Alerting the runners many times results in their quick fix of the problem. Practice appealing a runner for missing a base.