

Fair/Foul

If the field is lined, the line is used to judge if a ball is fair or foul – it doesn't matter if the line is straight or crooked, goes around or through the base, the line is "official."

Whether or not there is a line, the umpire decides whether a ball is fair or foul.

The line itself is in fair territory, any part of a ball touching the line is considered fair.

Please line the fields to aid your players and the umpires in the conduct of the game:

Running Out of the Baseline

- This is perhaps the most misunderstood rule in baseball. Simply put, a runner cannot run more than three feet away from his/her baseline to avoid being tagged unless they are avoiding interference with a fielder fielding a batted ball. If this occurs, a runner should be called out.
- *A runner's baseline is only established when a tag attempt occurs and is a straight line from the runner to the base to which he/she is attempting to reach.*
- If, in running to a base, a tag attempt is *not* made on the runner, there is no baseline established. The runner can run to the outfield fence and back if they so wish. A practical example of this is when a runner is rounding a base, they often stray more than three feet away from the line connecting the two bases.
- This rule is fully explained in Rule 7.08(a) (1) of the Little League Rules and Regulations.

Runners Lane Violation

- The runner's lane is defined as a three foot wide lane outside of (to the right of) the first base line. The runner's lane starts half way down the first base line and extends to the back of first base. The lines marking the lane are considered part of the lane and the batter-runner is required to have both feet within the lane or on the lines marking the lane.
- If, when running the last half of the distance to first base, while the ball is being fielded to first base, the batter-runner runs outside (to the right of) the three-foot lane, or inside (to the left of) the first base line, *and in the umpire's judgment in so doing interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base*, the ball is declared dead and batter is out.
- There is an exception to this rule – the batter-runner may run outside (to the right of) the three foot lane or inside (to the left of) the first base line to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball. Additionally, the batter-runner is permitted to exit the three-foot lane by means of a step, stride, reach or slide in the immediate vicinity of first base for the sole purpose of touching first base.
- This rule is fully explained in Rule 6.09(j) of the Little League Rules and Regulations.

Hit By Pitch (Little League Rule 6.08(b))

A batter that is hit by a pitch is entitled to first base. A batter can be hit by a pitch even if a ball first bounces in the dirt and then hits the batter. A pitch touching any part of the batter, including just grazing the uniform, constitutes a hit by pitch.

There are some exceptions, however:

- If the batter swings, it is a strike and not a Hit By Pitch;
- The ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter; or
- The batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched by the ball.

If the batter is hit on the hands and the batter's hands are not in the strike zone, it is a hit by pitch. The hands are not part of the bat!

Illegal Pitch and Quick Pitch (Little League Rule 8.05)

Per the Little League rulebook, An Illegal Pitch is (1) a pitch delivered to the batter when the pitcher does not have the pivot foot in contact with the pitcher's plate; (2) a quick return pitch, or (3) any other act meeting the criteria established in Rule 8.05.

An illegal pitch in Little League is similar to a balk when base leads are allowed. There are a number of situations where an illegal pitch may be called. The most common situation is when there are runner(s) on base and a pitcher starts and stops his/her pitching motion. In this situation, the umpire should call "Time" and call an Illegal Pitch – a ball is then added to the count.

Some other examples of an illegal pitch that you may come across in the course of a game when runners are on base (and a ball is added to the count) are:

- Feinting a throw to first base from the pitcher's plate (also known as the rubber) and not completing the throw;
- While touching the pitcher's plate, failing to step directly towards a base when throwing to a base;
- While touching the pitcher's plate, throwing or feinting a throw to an unoccupied base (except for the purpose of making a play); and
- The pitcher, while touching the pitcher's plate, accidentally or intentionally, drops the ball.
- With or without Runners on Base

There are some instances where an illegal pitch results in a ball added to the count whether or not there are runners on base:

- A quick pitch; or
- The pitcher makes a pitching motion without his/her foot on the pitcher's plate.

Umpires will judge a quick pitch as one delivered before the batter is reasonably set in the batter's box.

Rule 8.05 of the Little League Rules and Regulations explains in great detail of other examples of an illegal pitch and the resultant penalty.

Pitching Signs

Pitchers may disengage the pitcher's plate after taking their signs but may **not** step quickly onto the pitcher's plate and pitch. This may be judged a quick pitch by the umpire. When the pitcher disengages the pitcher's plate, he/she must drop the hands to the sides.

The pitcher may take signs from the manager or coach while on the pitcher's plate as long as he/she does not "unnecessarily delay" the game. This is also to prevent the pitcher from throwing a "Quick Pitch" by taking the sign while off the pitcher's plate and quickly walking through the pitching motion and it also allows any base runners to be able to pick up where the ball is located.

Chantilly Little League has implemented a Local Rule (Rule 13.13(2)) regarding the calling of pitches by a manager or coach - *The pitch must be called/signaled into the catcher for relaying to the pitcher.* This allows the catcher to know what pitch is coming.

Must Slide Rule (Little League Rule 7.08)

There is **no** "must slide" rule in Little League.

This is probably the single most misunderstood and misapplied rule in Little League. There are a multitude of variations of the "must slide" myth. "The runner must always slide at home." "The runner must slide if the defense is making a play on him." "The runner must slide once he's been put out during a double play attempt."

Rule 7.08 states "When the fielder has the ball and is waiting to make the tag, the runner has two options: 1. Slide; or 2. Attempt to get around the fielder. The runner must not deliberately or maliciously contact the fielder, but he is **NOT** required to slide.

The runner has two options — he or she may slide, or he or she may attempt to get around the fielder. The choice is up to the runner. Second, notice that the rule says that, if the runner does not elect to slide, that he or she must attempt to get around the fielder. It does not say that the runner must not contact the fielder. Consider a common play:

The catcher is standing just off the line as the runner approaches. The catcher fields the ball, and starts to step across the line to tag the runner. The runner swerves to his right, trying to avoid the catcher, but the catcher continues his motion toward the runner, and the two collide.

The fact that contact occurred does not mean that the runner is automatically out. In this situation, by swerving, the runner satisfied the rule — he or she attempted to get around the fielder. Of course, if the runner goes more than three feet to either side attempting to avoid a tag, then he or she can be called out under Rule 7.08(a)(1), but that is another matter entirely.

Finally, read the last half of the rule again. For this paragraph to even apply, the fielder must have the ball and be waiting to make the tag. Thus, for example, if the runner arrives just as the ball is hitting the catcher's glove, this rule probably doesn't apply either. Only once the catcher is in position to make the tag does the runner acquire the obligation to slide or attempt to avoid. In fact, if contact occurs before the fielder has the ball, then the fielder is probably guilty of obstruction.

The first part bears emphasizing:

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Catcher's Interference (Little League Rule 6.08c)

If you're behind the plate, you're bound to come across Catcher's Interference. Catcher's Interference is just what it sounds like – the catcher has interfered with the batter's ability to hit the ball.

How do you know when to call Catcher's Interference? Make sure the batter is in the box, and if the batter swings and the bat hits the catcher's glove, then it's Catcher's Interference. This usually occurs when the catcher reaching for a pitched ball or is playing up to close to the plate. His/her glove is hit with the bat as the batter swings.

When Catcher's Interference occurs, one of two calls can occur:

- If the ball is not put in play, i.e. hit fair, the play becomes dead ("Time" is called), the plate umpire announces "I have catcher's interference" and the runner is awarded first base and all runners forced to advance.
- If the ball is hit in play, there is now a "delayed dead ball", meaning that the umpire allows the play to continue until a point where no further action is possible and *then* calls "time" and enforce such penalties or awards, as required.
- What's important in the situation described in the second bullet, above, is that if the ball is put in play following the interference:
 - If at least one runner is on base at the time of the interference, the plate umpire asks the offensive manager, after informing him/her of the interference, that they have the option to accept the play as is or the result of interference.
 - If no one on and batter achieves a base, any base, no interference is called.

Leaving a Base Early (Little League Rule 7.13)

So when can a baserunner leave the bag? It's all in the rule: "When a pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate AND in possession of the ball AND the catcher is in the catcher's box READY TO RECEIVE delivery of the ball, base runners shall not leave their bases until the ball has been delivered and has

REACHED THE BATTER.” Well coached baserunners know how to time their departure, do NOT nitpick this call, it must be an obvious leaving early!!

“Ready to receive” means the catcher must have his equipment on (including his helmet) and be in the catcher's box facing the pitcher. He does NOT have to be squatting. The batter does not have to be in the batter's box. Because the batter may not be in the box, the catcher is not required to squat.

“Reached the batter” means literally that. If the batter is standing in the front of the box the pitch reaches him at a different time than when he is standing in the back of the box. It is NOT when the pitch crosses the plate or when the catcher catches the pitched ball.

As a field umpire, you signal the runner leaving the base early by dropping a red flag on the field. There's no need to throw it like an NFL Official, just dropping the flag signals that a runner has left early. Do not announce that a runner has left early, let the play develop.

If the ball is not hit and put in play, look for the runner to return to the base when the pitcher takes the mound for the next pitch. If they do return, pick up the flag and put it back in your pocket. If they do not, call “TIME,” loudly announce “RUNNER LEFT EARLY” and place the runner(s) back to their starting positions. ***What's important is that if one runner is guilty of leaving the base early, all runners are all guilty and must return to their original bases.***

If a runner is taking a lead before the pitcher steps back on the rubber, he/she may either 1) attempt to advance to the next base (stealing) or 2) return to the base. Once the pitcher is on the rubber, the runner cannot “dance” around off the base, the runner must advance or return to the base.

If a batter walks and continues to run to second base while the pitcher is on the mound, as long as the batter is making one continuous movement to advance past first base, he/she is not frozen by the action of the pitcher and/or catcher. The batter/runner may continue on to second base and the pitcher has the option to make a play on the batter (throw he/she out) or disregard the advancement of the batter/runner and allow the base to be stolen.

What if the ball was hit?

If a runner or runners are forced to advance and have left early and the batter gets a "clean" hit, no penalty is imposed. A "clean" hit means it was a single, double or triple in the umpire's judgment. However, if the ball was hit and there was an error or an advance on the throw, the batter should be sent back to the appropriate base as a result of the error or overthrow and all runners must go back to the bases they originally held or the one nearest the batter. Any time a base becomes available after a hit, runners must be sent back.

To try and simplify this:

1. As an umpire, you move the batter-runner back to where you judge the value of the clean hit. Any advance made by him, beyond his scored hit, is nullified.

2. Place all runners back on their original bases whenever possible. Put them as close as possible to the batter-runner after placing the batter-runner at the base judged to be the clean hit.
3. If any bases become empty due to any runner or the batter-runner being put out, return the runners to those bases. For example, runners on first and third, runner on first leaves early, flag is thrown, batter gets to first, play stops. The runner that was on first gets second and the runner on third, even if he scored, gets returned to third, since its unoccupied.

So in conclusion, leaving early is the field umpire's call and is enforced first by dropping the flag and then, if necessary, calling "time" and placing the runners as appropriate.