



UMPIRE RESOURCE GUIDE

Zeeland Little League

2019

Table of Contents

SECTION I.....	2
Introduction	2
The Role of the Umpire.....	2
Punctuality	2
Appearance	3
Teamwork	3
Conduct	4
Hustle	4
SECTION II.....	5
Umpire Pre-Game Expectations.....	5
Game Advice	6
Tips for Success	6
Things to Avoid.....	6
SECTION III.....	7
The Two-Umpire System.....	7
Order of Priorities	7
Base Umpiring.....	8
Plate Umpiring	13
SECTION III.....	20
Rules and Rule Clarification	20
RULES BY THE NUMBERS.....	20
Handling Situations	25
BASEBALL vs SOFTBALL	26
MOST COMMON RULE MYTHS	27

SECTION I

Introduction

Umpiring can be extraordinarily rewarding for a number of reasons. Foremost among them is that as a Little League® umpire, you serve the children and families in your community. Also, as a volunteer umpire, you gain an even deeper knowledge of, and appreciation for, Little League. Once you start officiating games you gain an entirely new perspective on the role umpires play in the Little League experience. The decision to umpire is a testament to your character. Your willingness to work outside of your comfort zone sets a solid example for the league's children, whose development as players and people depends on their ability to expand their comfort zones. This guide serves to provide you with tips and information to prepare you for being a Little League Umpire.

If furthering your umpire skills beyond what you see in this guide is something you are interested in, ZLL highly encourages you to seek out other umpire training opportunities. When trainings are available in West Michigan, they will be posted on the ZL website and current umpires will receive an email notification about the event.

The Role of the Umpire

The umpire is fundamental to the games of baseball and softball. But, how the umpire presents himself or herself will go a long way in determining how coaches, players, and fans perceive and regard the entire crew. Imperative to an umpire is:

- Pnctuality at the site,
- Apppearance on the field,
- Teamwork with your partner,
- Conduct towards players and coaches, and
- Hustle and positioning on each call.

Always keep in mind, we are dealing with children. How they perceive our actions will go a long way in determining how they perceive the game, umpiring and the rigors of everyday life. Smile and enjoy yourself. **A umpire's goal is always to do right by the children!**

Punctuality

Umpires should always be early for their games. Managers and coaches develop opinions of the umpire based on all of these factors, particularly punctuality and appearance. Shined shoes, believe it or not, go a long way in how you are perceived. It's a little thing, but, immeasurable in creating your persona.

ZLL Umpire Guide

Starting the game on time, without rushing the teams, comes from being early for the game, disposing of the pregame discussions in an orderly and concise manner, and giving each team adequate time to warm up without overly delaying the playing of the game. Pregame discussions at home plate should never be mini-clinics. Accomplish what is necessary – the exchange of lineups and discussion of particular or peculiar ground rules. While making good eye-contact and exchanging handshakes, wish each Manager “good luck” and then play ball.

Appearance

Just as players make sure they look their best in their uniform when they hit the field, umpires who take their appearance seriously will get more respect from players, coaches, and fans. An umpire’s uniform is not high fashion, and you certainly don’t have to have supermodel looks, but outward appearance plays a huge part in umpires getting the respect they deserve on the field. A clean, properly-fitted and pressed shirt and pants, polished shoes, well-maintained equipment, along with having a respectful demeanor, are effective ways to show the teams that you respect them and the game.

Umpires should never go behind the plate without the proper protection. Properly-fitted shin guards, groin protection, chest protector, and a facemask or hockey-style helmet are all essential to a plate umpire’s safety. Take pride in your gear. Keep it clean and in good condition. A few minutes invested in “clean-up” after each game will extend the life of the equipment. Remember, you don’t have to buy everything at once. Zeeland Little League will provide gear for our umpires, but with that comes an expectation to take care of the gear everyone shares. Start with the basics to protect yourself behind the plate and in the field, and then you can add and replace as you go.

If you feel that you look good when you step between the lines, there is a solid chance that the players and coaches will notice. The next time you walk across the parking lot toward the field, listen to what the players have to say. Many times you can hear the teams say, “We have a real umpire today.” The goal of every umpire is to do right by the children. If you look good, have confidence, solid mechanics, and you take the field with only the game on your mind, you’re going to have fun, and be successful!

Teamwork

The first line of the rulebook states that baseball or softball is a game between two teams. There is a third team out there: the umpires. If you forget this, it’s going to be a long game. Work as a team, taking the calls that are yours, looking for help when needed. Remember, you make the call and change it, if necessary, after consulting with your partner or partners. The purpose is to get the call correct, but if you are sure, your call stands. Unless you need help, don’t seek it, and if you have not made the call, do not interfere unless particularly asked by your partner.

Every call that is changed leaves you open for many more to follow. “You didn’t get the last one right, Blue, what makes you think this one is any different.” Ever heard that one? You do not have to agree to every request from a coach to consult your partner on a call. Some coaches have used this tactic in the past when younger umpires make a call, and tell them they must ask their partner for help. The game

ZLL Umpire Guide

is meant to be played by the kids, and no one is playing if umpires are consistently pausing the game to discuss calls. Make the call with confidence, and if you need help ask your partner. Move on, and let's play ball!

Conduct

Know your catchers names. It builds their confidence as you work with them during the game. It also shows respect for them and they, in turn, will show respect for you. Don't forget, they are the only thing between you and the 70-mile-an-hour fastball. Be helpful and friendly, but don't chase the errant pitch for them. Someday, you just may chase the ball to the screen while someone is trying to score from third.

All Zeeland Little League coaches have been told to not question calls made by umpires. However, in an attempt for everyone in ZLL to improve, a coach may ask for a side discussion. This should be a rare situation where a coach is looking for clarification on a rule or call that was made. At no point will a coach, player, or parent yelling from the dugout or stands be tolerated. Umpires are advised to eject those who do this from the game, and the ZLL Board will handle further discipline.

Discussions with managers and coaches can be particularly trying. Our natural instinct when confronted with a question is to retaliate. This is when we are most vulnerable. Remember, take a deep breath, listen to the argument, evaluate its content and decide its validity. Calmness on your part can eliminate many confrontations. Remember, managers and coaches have a vested interest in the ruling. You, on the other hand, are only interested in getting it right. Use all tools in your arsenal to see that this happens, but never lower yourself to a confrontation.

Hustle

Positioning is most important. The call can be so much easier if you are at the proper angle from the throw to the base, and you are not moving while the ball, fielder, and runner are approaching the decision point. Emphasis on calls is also extremely important. There is no need to shout out or "Hollywood" a play where the runner is obviously out. What are we going to have left when we do have the bang-bang play? Remember, perception is reality. Grandma sitting in the bleacher knows the grandson or daughter was out by a mile, but she doesn't have a clue on the close one. That's when you have to convince her that you were right.

SECTION II

Umpire Pre-Game Expectations

- Arrive at the field with all necessary equipment at least 15 minutes prior to the start time.
 - If you need to use the shared equipment, be sure to give yourself time to get that first and still get to the field 15 minutes before start time.
- If you have a partner, make sure to talk with him/her prior to taking the field.
 - If you have never worked together, introduce yourself and be on the same page about who is making calls in different situations (see more about this in the Two Man Crew).
- 5 minutes before game time, hold a pre-game conference at home plate with one coach from each team
 1. Know who is the home team and away team. This information will be on the schedule.
 2. Request teams to return to their dugouts and for a coach or the manager to meet you at home plate.
 3. Introduce yourself to each manager/coach. Learn the first name of the manager for each team to establish a personable rapport.
 4. Collect, review, and confirm lineups. Ask if any players are ineligible to pitch based on the pitch count regulation. This is information the coaches should share with each other.
 5. Briefly review the unique rules based on the division of the game. Use the Ump Cards as a quick guide to know what rules to highlight, including time limits.
 6. Explain that time will not be granted for managers to discuss “judgment calls” made by umpires (safes, outs, balls, strikes, etc.)
 7. Do not leave the dugout until a proper time-out is called or granted by an umpire.
 8. When shaking hands to end the meeting, use their first name to wish each “good luck” in the game.
- Knowing what is to be discussed during the plate conference comes from practice and repetition. This is your first, best opportunity to set the mood for the game, and establish a positive, working dialogue with each team’s coaching staff. Be polite and respectful of their positions, and by all means necessary, avoid using a dictatorial tone or arrogant attitude. Lastly, avoid the phrase, “Are there any questions?” The plate conference is not the time or place for a clinic on the playing rules and regulations.
- After the home plate conference, let the home team know it is time to take the field and allow the pitcher to get 8 warmup pitches.
- **Announce the start time of the game after the pitcher is done warming up and has the ball. This will be the official start time in reference to any time limits on the game.**
- Tell the first hitter to step into the box, and announce PLAY BALL!

Game Advice

Tips for Success

- Show respect for the game. As an umpire, your position commands respect and requires dignity. Do not make a mockery of it. Remember that in order to get respect, you must show respect.
- Always be professional. Understand that nobody came to watch you umpire. Wear the uniform correctly and look presentable. If you look like an umpire and act like an umpire, you will gain more respect as an umpire.
- Always conduct yourself as though you are being videotaped and expect it to show up on YouTube. Hold yourself to a higher standard than anyone else on the field.
- Keep the game moving along. Do not let the time between innings get away from you. One minute between innings, and enforce warmup pitch limits before innings.
- Learn how to handle situations with the least amount of friction and always keep an even temperament. Find the proper balance of being firm and also courteous.
- Go over any situation in which you have doubt with your partner. A smooth team of umpires has a direct impact on the coaches and players.
- Be LOUD and use proper mechanics when making calls. One of the most common complaints in ZLL is that players and coaches don't know when an umpire is calling a ball or strike. They will not argue the call, but you need to make sure they know what the call is!
- Be energetic on the field. When changing your position, run, don't walk. An umpire that hustles on the field will gain more respect for his/her effort.
- Pay attention and always be ready. Decisions must be made in a split second. Take your time in making calls. Pause, Read and React. Take 2 seconds to let the data penetrate your brain. Read the play. Then make your call. Safe or Out. Emphatically.
- When the play is routine, make a routine call. When the play is close, be emphatic. Make your call in a decisive manner that leaves no doubt as to the correctness of your judgment.
- **Understand that it is a game. These are kids. They came to have fun. Let's not detract from that. Let's make it fun.**

Things to Avoid

- Never, over-rule another umpire's call. This is never allowed. You should have discussed with your partner areas of responsibility during your pre-game meeting. Call your areas and let your partner call theirs. Ask for help if you feel you weren't sure or if your call is appealed and you feel you need to discuss it with your partner; but never offer help if it is unwanted or unasked for.

ZLL Umpire Guide

- Don't have an antagonistic attitude toward coaches, managers or fans. No matter how angry, loud or rude the crowd becomes, if you lose your temper, you will be part of the problem and add to the hostility.
- Never be sarcastic or try to get the last word in. If the coach or manager is walking away, let him or her go and never chase after them.
- Never follow or charge a coach, manager or player.
- Never point your finger or yell at coach, manager or player.
- Never make any adverse or negative comments regarding another umpire, no matter how you might feel about him or her.
- Never "socialize" with the participants of the game or the fans before, during or after the game. Remember, perception is reality.
- Don't worry! If you make a bad call, fix it if you can. If you can't, play on. If you have a rough game or a bad day, don't worry about it. Shake it off. Just move on. You will have bad days. Learn to let them go and learn from your mistakes.
- There are no such things as "make-up calls". Don't try to even out close plays for each team, as this leads to making more bad calls to compensate. Call each play individually as you see it, and do not factor in previous calls.

SECTION III

The Two-Umpire System

In Zeeland Little League, we primarily use the Two-Man system. The exception is AA where only one umpire is scheduled and designate as the plate umpire. You and your partner are a team. It is very important that you and your partner be on the same page and understand who has what responsibilities. Quality teamwork between umpires will improve the experience for only for you, but for players, coaches, and fans as well.

When it comes to mechanics, there are mechanics that apply universally, and there are mechanics that are specific to either base umpires or plate umpires. The "Mechanics" section will refer to some video resources to help you understand the proper motions depending on the situation. The links to these resources will be at the end in the resources section as well. This is a great way to learn some basics and grow your knowledge of umpiring. Although this guide will help, you will learn the mechanics on the field with repetition and proper feedback.

Order of Priorities

To better understand the Two-Umpire System, you need to familiarize yourself with the order of priorities. The first responsibility of any umpire is self-preservation. Do not put yourself in a position that could get you hurt or run over. When you are trying to get into the proper position, first consider the safety of yourself

ZLL Umpire Guide

and the players. As long as you do it safely, your positioning and what you are looking for will be based on the following priorities:

1. Fair / Foul Ball
2. Catch / No-Catch
 - a. Note: whichever umpire is calling fair/foul also has catch/no-catch.
3. Tag-ups
4. Plays at Bases (force and tag)
5. Overthrows
6. Interference / Obstruction
7. Touches of Bases

Base Umpiring

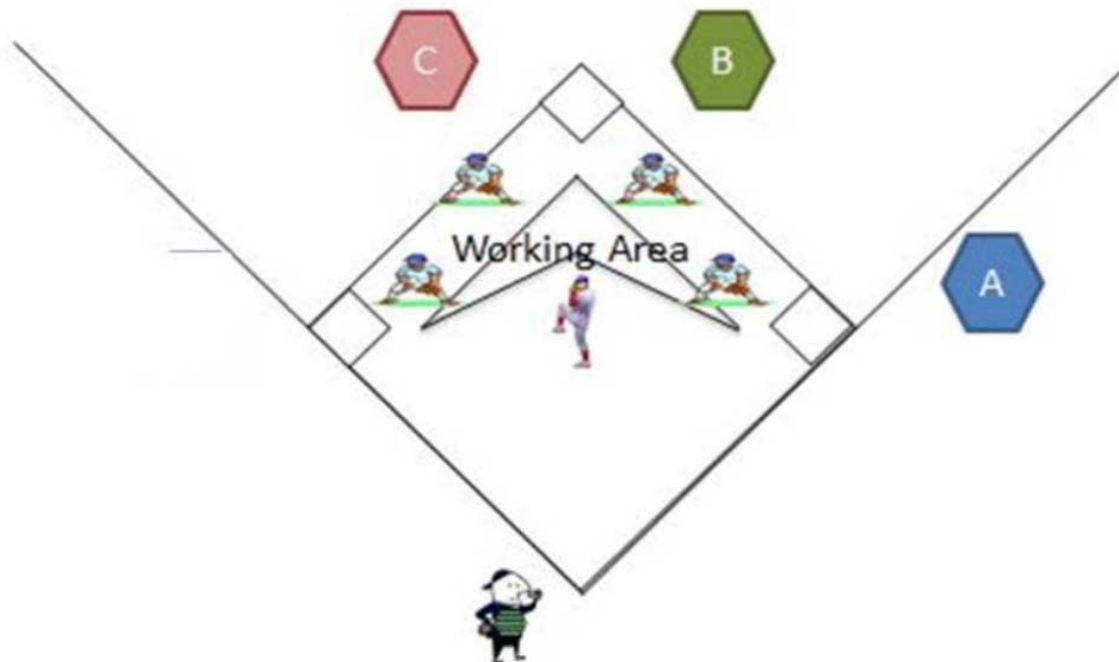
Your primary responsibilities as a base umpire involve runners and fielders. The most obvious and common part is calling runners safe or out. There is, however, more to it than just those two calls. The information that follows should help you understand the role and importance of the base umpire. Base umpiring requires an acute attention to each play of the game, anticipation, and situational awareness. Nobody wants to be caught not paying attention when a play happens. Also, as the base umpire, you don't want to miss an opportunity to make a call on appeal if asked, such as a check swing. Working the bases gives the beginning umpire a chance to get comfortable understanding the rules, making the calls and handling situations. ZLL suggests first-time umpires begin as the base umpire to get a feel for umpiring before handling games behind the plate.

The basics of the base umpire (BU) can be broken into five areas:

1. Where do I stand at the start of each play?
2. Which bases and runners am I responsible for?
3. How do I get into position to make the call on a runner?
4. How do I call a runner safe or out?
5. Besides safe and out calls, what are my other responsibilities?

1. Where do I stand at the start of each play?

There are three spots on the field that a base umpire will position oneself for a two-man crew. They are referred to as A, B, & C positions. Although Zeeland Little League games will only use a two-man crew, other positions exist when 3 or more umpires are being used for a game. This section will only cover the positions for the two-man crew.



A= 10-12 feet behind 1st base in foul territory

B= 2-3 steps behind and 2-3 steps to the left of the 2nd baseman

C= 2-3 steps behind and 2-3 steps to the left of the shortstop

Your starting position will depend on which base is occupied by the lead base runner.

- **No runners on base:** A position
- **Runner on 1st base:** B position
- **Runner on 2nd base:** C position
- **Runners on 3rd base:** C position

The lead baserunner will always determine the positioning of the base runner. As long as at least one runner is past 1st base, the base umpire will be in the C position. This means the C position is used with runners on: 2nd, 3rd, 1st & 2nd, 1st & 3rd, 2nd & 3rd, and with the bases loaded. It may be simpler to comprehend with the thought: *With no runners on, A position; with only a runner at 1st, B position; Any other scenario, C position.*

2. Which bases and runners am I responsible for?

For the two-man system, the Base Umpire will typically make calls at all bases except home plate. That could change, however, depending on how many runners are on base. There may be any number of scenarios, but keep it simple and know that the Base Umpire is responsible for all bases except home plate. On the 60-foot diamond, Little League recommends that the Base Umpire almost never goes out

ZLL Umpire Guide

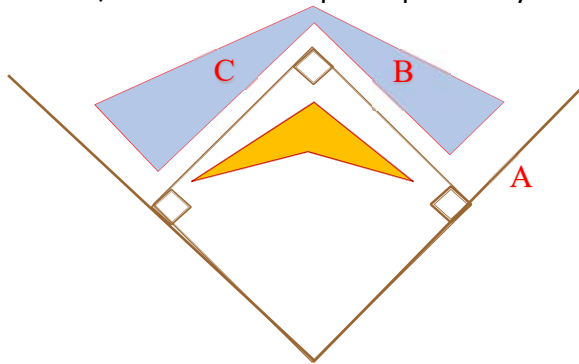
on a ball to the outfield, but rather always comes inside, pivots and prepares to take the batter-runner. The Plate Umpire has ALL Fair/Foul and Catch/No-Catch responsibility on balls to the outfield.

If you are the Base Umpire, and you read a trouble ball and decide to go out on it, stay out. Once you have made the decision to go out, the Plate Umpire has all the bases. Thus, you must communicate with you partner and let him or her know if you are going out.

3. How do I get into position to make the call on a runner?

The easy answer is to get the best angle on the play. It is important that you hustle to get yourself into position to see the play. Making accurate calls starts with getting to the right place at the right time and where you have a better view of the play than anyone else. Favor angle over distance.

Track the ball and anticipate where the play is going. You'll want to quickly decide where the play is going and make sure you stay out of the way of the ball as you move into position. Use the "inside/outside" technique to position yourself in the best location to view the play.



- If the ball is hit and fielded in the **infield**, stay "outside" the base path to make your call. **BLUE AREA**
- If the ball is hit and fielded in the **outfield**, run "inside" the base path (into the Working Area) to make your call. **ORANGE AREA**

When moving to a position, keep your chest facing the ball and plant yourself to make the call. Regardless of your position to a play, try to be stationary at the time the play happens. The only thing moving is your head and eyes following the ball.

Ideally, try to be about 10 feet from a play being made on a runner and at about a 90-degree view angle of the play on the runner and from where the ball is being thrown. Sometimes the ideal is not possible so **favor angle over distance**, and **be stationary at the time the play happens**. You want to be firmly set, not moving, when it's time to make your call.

Refer to these videos provided by Little League for some examples:

[Making calls from the A Position](#)

[Pivot Mechanics from the A Position](#)

[Making Calls from the B Position](#)

[Making Calls from the C Position](#)

4. How do I call a runner safe or out?

Calling a runner safe or out involves a verbal and hand/body signal. The verbal signal is a loud “He’s out!” or “She’s safe!”, sometimes with additional information. The hand/body signal involves a closed fist action to signal an “out”, and double arm sweeping motion to indicate “safe”.

The most important thing to remember prior to making a call is to **pause, read, and react**. There is going to be a tendency to want to rush your call. You’ll think if you don’t call it immediately it looks like you don’t know what to call or are guessing. When the call is close (“bang-bang” plays), a good tip is to replay what you saw in your mind, then make the call. The hesitation should only last a second or two, but it will help you to make the call with confidence. Watch the play, process what you saw, then make your call. Pause, read, and react.

In some instances, the safe or out call should be followed up by a second mechanic. These situations include: 1) A runner is tagged out in a force out situation; 2) A runner is safe because the fielder dropped the ball on a force or tag out; 3) A runner is safe because the fielder’s foot was not on the base in a force out situation. In each of these scenarios, the standard “out”/“safe” call is made followed by an additional verbal and hand signal. When making these calls, the umpire should make the verbal and hand signal at the same time. The mechanics are summarized below:

Scenario	Verbal Signal	Hand Signal
Runner is tagged in a force out situation	“Out...on the tag”	Out, followed by pointing at the fielder with the ball
Runner is safe because of a dropped ball in a force or tag out	“Safe...balls on the ground”	Safe, followed by pointing at the ball on the ground
Runner is safe because the fielder was not touching the base on a force out	“Safe...off the bag”	Safe, followed by a double hand sweeping motion to the same side of the body

Although these are the common scenarios to include additional mechanics, other instances may occur where further explanation is needed. Umpires should feel comfortable adding explanation to a call, but only when needed for unique situations. Routine plays only require the basic mechanic. Close, or “bang-bang” plays, still only require the basic mechanic, however the umpire can add more enthusiasm into the call. None of these require further explanation with either verbal or body signals.

Refer to this link for videos on each of the scenarios described above: [Base Umpire Mechanics](#)

5. Besides out and safe calls, what are my other responsibilities?

When no runners are on base, and the Base Umpire is in the “A” position, the base umpire may be responsible for fair/foul calls on the first base line prior to the base. It is important to review this responsibility with the plate umpire in the pre-game meeting. This way you avoid both umpires making the same call at the same time, or worst each umpire making a different call. Whatever is decided, make sure to stick to that responsibility and let the appropriate umpire make the call.

ZLL Umpire Guide

The base umpire has several other responsibilities on the field as well. When there are multiple base runners to track, focus your attention on the lead runner. The play will usually gravitate that way; however, do not assume. Keep your eyes on the ball and let the fielder guide you to the play, and use your peripheral vision to help track the runners.

During the course of the game, you will most likely observe plays that are not your responsibility to make the call on. Always make sure to take care of your responsibilities first! If you happen to observe a different play, you should only discuss it with your partner if he/she asks for help. Let your partner know what you saw, and work together to make the right call. By taking care of your responsibilities first, and working as a team when multiple things are happening, you will be in a much better position for success.

Plate Umpiring

Much like base umpiring, working behind “the dish” is a challenging role with several responsibilities. As the home plate umpire, you will typically be the Chief Umpire for that game. That may not always be the case. There may be situations where the Base Umpire is the Chief for that game depending on experience. However, typically, the Plate Umpire is the Chief Umpire for that game.

As the Plate Umpire, you will find that you are in the middle of everything. You are involved in every pitch, right in the middle of the action. You are responsible for the entire game. You have certain responsibilities that require good judgement and discernment. In cases where there is no base umpire, the plate umpire is responsible for all calls. This section will focus on the primary role of the plate umpire assuming there is also a base umpire. It is important to understand, however, that the plate umpire would also be responsible for calls normally assigned to the base umpire if the plate umpire is working alone. This will always be the case for AA-division games which are only assigned one umpire, unless a parent or other volunteer requests to help.

Like the Base Umpiring Section, this section will cover these five questions:

1. What should my strike zone be?
2. How should I position myself behind home plate?
3. How do I make calls from behind home plate?
4. What safety precautions should I take?
5. Besides calling the game, what are my other responsibilities?

1. What should my strike zone be?

The Little League Rule Book defines the strike zone as: “The strike zone is that space over home plate which is between the **batter’s armpits and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural stance**.” The umpire shall determine the strike zone according to the batter’s usual stance when that batter swings at a pitch.”



Zeeland Little League managers and coaches are told that the umpire’s strikezone will be based on the Little League rulebook definition. If you get the question from someone on either side, “what is your strike zone?” the way to answer that is to simply state the definition is in the rulebook. If you say anything else, you open yourself up to additional unnecessary scrutiny. Coaches and umpires should be on the same page, and this shouldn’t be a question that comes up.

The key to the strike zone is consistency. During each game, the consistency of the strike zone will play a huge part of how the coaches, players, and fans critique you

ZLL Umpire Guide

as an umpire. Your strike zone doesn't have to be perfect to the rulebook, but being consistent is crucial.

Some key factors in determining your strike zone:

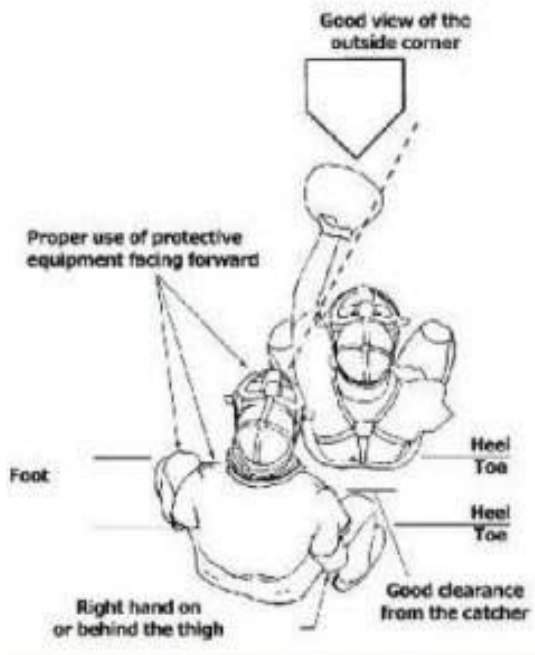
1. The natural stance of the batter; does he or she crouch a lot or a little? Adjust accordingly to the natural stance when they swing. The batter cannot crouch aggressively and expect a ball when they swing from a less aggressive crouch.
2. The age of the players might make a difference. The younger they are, the bigger and more liberal the strike zone should be. The point here is to get them swinging the bat. Nobody wants a walk-fest and strikes keep the game moving.
3. Strike zones might be larger at the beginning of the season and become smaller as the season progresses and pitchers become more proficient. This is more likely the case in the older divisions.

There are two considerations when adjusting your strike zone. First, the vertical adjustment. Get the vertical adjustments made early in the game. Get that vertical high and low established and stick with it. You might start tight and work your way up and/or down. The height of a pitch is easily seen by the dugouts and stands. The second consideration is the horizontal adjustment. This one is a little easier to change if you need to. Nobody else has the perspective you do. Your margin of error horizontally is more easily adjusted throughout the game if needed.

2. How should I position myself behind home plate?

Over the years that have been many different views and thoughts on where to position yourself behind the plate. Currently, what is referred to as the Slot Position will give you the best view of the ball all the way to the catcher's mitt.

The Slot Position is the area just behind the catcher, where you are lined up in the open space between the batter and the inside corner of the plate. You will line up to the left or right of the catcher depending on whether the batter is batting right or left handed. Your feet will be slightly staggered with your inside foot slightly in front, about heel to toe. The outside foot will be lined up right between the catcher's feet. It is tempting for beginning umpires to stand directly behind the catcher. It may feel safer, or you may feel that you have a better view of the ball coming across the plate; however, if you are directly behind the catcher, the lower portion of the strike zone is obscured by the catcher. The graphic below shows the proper positioning for the Plate Umpire assuming a right handed batter.



You should be balanced and prepared to move quickly from this position. When the catcher needs to move to retrieve a live ball, you should pivot on your front foot to “open the gate” and allow the catcher free movement past you.

When in the slot position, follow the ball with your eyes only (not your head) as it leaves the pitcher’s hand until it arrives in the catcher’s mitt. You should be looking diagonally across the plate as the ball crosses it to help you better see the strike zone, including that hard to see low and outside portion of the plate.

When there is no action, you can stay in a standing position. When the catcher is set for a pitch, you should place your feet in the appropriate spot. When the pitcher begins his/her motion to pitch, squat into the slot position and remain still from the time the pitch is thrown until you

make your call. As the pitch comes in, do not rush to make a call. Make your call after the pitch has reached the catcher, and be aware of the batter. Sometimes newer umpires will call a ball that was clearly going to be a ball as it came in, but the batter swung at it anyway.

Just like the base umpire, you should pause, read and react. Be patient in making your calls. Try to be consistent with the timing and develop a rhythm between the ball hitting the catcher’s glove and making your call.

3. How do I make calls from behind home plate?

Making calls from behind home plate is much like making calls as a base umpire. Some are made with hand and arm signals and some without. Some are made with a verbal call, and some without. The key is to make your calls with in a demonstrative and consistent manner in order to make sure that all the players, managers, coaches, scorekeepers and the fans know what your call is.

As stated before, don’t be in a hurry to make your calls. Take a couple seconds between the time you see a completed pitch or play and the moment you make your call. Pause, Read and React. This is especially important for calls like foul balls and time outs that immediately stop further play or otherwise create a dead ball situation.

The mechanics for the various calls made as a plate umpire are covered below. As a reminder, **if your call requires a verbal call, make it loud enough for everyone to hear, and if your call requires a visible signal, make your signal clear.**

1. Strike

- The mechanic is either a hammer motion with your raised fist or a clear point to either side. This can be the same mechanic for calling an out.
- A Called-Strike carries a verbal call, “Strike!” along with the mechanic.

ZLL Umpire Guide

- A Swinging-Strike does not require a verbal call, just the mechanic.
- If it is the third strike, many umpires will include a more exaggerated arm/fist mechanic and use “strike three” for the verbal call on a non-swinging strike.
 - For leagues where the dropped-third-strike rule is in effect, be sure the catcher cleanly catches the ball before making an out mechanic or signal.

2. Ball

- The mechanic is only a verbal call, “Ball!”
- For pitches that are obviously balls, no mechanic or verbal signal is needed.
- Don’t get into the habit of calling where it was a ball. “Ball, outside” or “Ball, low”. Just call, “Ball”.
- On the 4th ball (a walk), avoid pointing to first base and telling the batter to take is base. The point may be misread as a strike call.

3. Fair/Foul Ball

- It is important to wait for the ball to either be touched or settle in the infield; we often see a ball that initially lands in foul territory but rolls into fair territory or vice versa
- If the ball is deemed foul, raise your hands to signal dead ball, and call, “foul ball” loudly enough for everyone to hear.
- If the ball is deemed fair in the infield, no mechanic or verbal signal is required, just get into position to make the call on the play. For a ball that is extremely close to the line, the umpire may choose to point into fair territory similar to the fly ball mechanic mentioned below.
- For a fly ball in the outfield close to the foul line, straddle the foul line and look to the outfield, waiting for the ball to fall. If it is deemed fair, simply point in the direction to fair territory. No verbal signal is made for a fair ball.
- A foul tip is not the same as a foul ball, and is located below.

4. Catch/No-Catch

- If you have the Fair/Foul responsibility, you also have Catch/No-Catch. These two always go together. They cannot be separated.
- If it is caught, the verbal call is, “That’s a Catch” along with the hand signal for an out.
- If it is not caught, the verbal call is, “No catch!” along with the Safe Signal.

5. Safe

- A safe call is made in the same manner as the base umpire.
- The verbal signal is “Safe” and the mechanic is a double arm sweeping motion.

6. Out

- The out call is made in the same manner as the base umpire.
- The verbal signal is “Out” and the mechanic is raising or pumping a closed fist.

7. Foul Tip

- The mechanic for a foul tip is to extend your right arm up and to a 45-degree angle, swiping your right arm with your left arm. There is no verbal call. A foul tip is NOT a foul ball... it is a strike and a live ball. If you say anything, particularly if you shout, "Foul Tip!" it could prematurely kill a live play. When runners hear "Foul..." they will immediately tend to stop and go back assuming a dead ball, when the ball is actually still alive and in play.

4. What safety precautions should I take?

The general umpire safety gear will be provided for every game. The locations for umpire equipment varies based on field. The provided equipment includes a chest protector, a mask, and shin guards.

ENTER LOCATIONS OF UMPIRE GEAR

Besides the provided safety gear, as the plate umpire there are some additional components that you should include in your attire. First, an athletic cup. The ball can come in pretty fast and change course quickly. If a catcher is inexperienced, or the ball takes an odd course off the bat or ground, it can and end up causing serious damage if you are not properly protected. A cup is highly recommended as part of the minimum safety gear. Also, steel toed shoes of some sort are recommended as well. For the same reason, a pitch or foul ball can rapidly change direction right into your foot.

Beyond safety gear, there are actions at the plate that can help you stay safe as well. First, mask safety is very important to protect your head and face. It is advised to have your mask on anytime on the field during the game, and especially before you take your position behind the catcher. It is not unusual for kids to throw unexpected warm-up pitches between innings when you are not ready. It is just better to have the mask on at all times when behind the plate. Although the mask is there to protect you, proper positioning in the slot will also help keep your head safe from back swings. Be sure to give yourself enough room behind the catcher and the batter to avoid getting hit by a bat.

You'll want to protect your hands from the ball as well. In the younger divisions, you can pretty much watch the ball come in and move out of the way as you need to. As you umpire games in the upper divisions, Intermediates and Juniors... and even sometimes in Majors, the ball comes in pretty fast and you may not have time to react. Make sure your hands are out of the way. One hand should be behind your back and the other (the one with the clicker) is often tucked in at about the belt buckle, or sometimes tucked in behind the thigh. If you're not going to wear a cup, the hand in front can act to protect the groin area.

There are a couple of other safety precautions to consider:

- Make sure you send both teams back to the dugout before starting your plate meeting. There should not be anyone on the field still warming up. During your plate meeting, your attention as well as the attention of everyone involved will be on the meeting and not on the errant throw that might hit you, your partner or one of the managers in the back of the head.
- When you need to brush the plate, make sure the ball is dead and you have called 'time.' Then, be sure to send the batter a good distance away. You don't want to take a practice swing or ball to the head while you're brushing the plate.

5. Besides calling the game, what are my other responsibilities?

Typically, the plate umpire is considered the Umpire-in-Chief for that game. That means that you are responsible for overall game management and you have the final word on questions related to rules. Responsibilities of the plate umpire include but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Lead the pre-game meeting with your partner, scorekeepers and managers
 - Prior to the game, you should meet with your partner to discuss roles and responsibilities, such as who is responsible for which bases; fair/foul calls; catch/no-catch situations, etc.
2. Manage the overall flow of the game:
 - As you gain experience, you will develop different techniques for moving the game along and reducing wasted time
 - Specifically, you should enforce the 1 minute between innings rule. The rule is 8 warm up pitches for a new pitcher, and 5 for a pitcher who pitched the prior inning, or 1 minute, whichever comes first. Stick to it. You can use some discretion if it is a new pitcher, but remember, unless it is an unexpected pitching change due to injury or illness, the incoming pitcher had plenty of opportunity to get warmed up before taking the mound.
 - Encourage hustle on land off the field, encourage batters into the batter's box if they are moving slowly; encourage managers to have their catchers geared up and ready.
3. Enforce the rules
 - The expectation from players, coaches, and fans are that you know the rules. There will be times when you are asked about potential rule violations and penalties, many times when emotions are running high and under the challenge of a coach or manager.
 - Coaches should ask for clarifications with a level head, and your response should also be respectful. Remember, the game is for the kids! Time should be spent playing the game and not reviewing unique rules or judgement calls.
 - Understanding the rules and applying them in your style takes experience.
 - Be sure to know the "House Rules" for the league you are umpiring. Most umpires will umpire across different sports and divisions. Be sure to know the particular differences in the rules for each level of play. The Umpire Cards are available to remind you of those unique House Rules.
 - The next section is an overview of the Little League Rule Book. However, being more familiar with the entire rulebook will help you be more comfortable umpiring the game.
4. Back up your partners
 - Whenever possible, observe every play as though you were going to make the call yourself. Sometimes you may have a more advantageous position to make the call than your partner does. Still, DO NOT OVER RULE YOUR PARTNER... EVER.
 - You may have observed a call differently than he or she did; however, in these situations, the Base Umpire still owns that call. They may opt to consult with you and ask for help after the play, but they are not required to and you should NOT offer assistance unless it is asked for.

ZLL Umpire Guide

- While you may be the Umpire-in-Chief for that game, ALL umpires on the field have the same authority.
- With no runners on, trail the batter-runner to first base. Observe the play at first. Watch for a pulled foot or swipe tag. DO NOT MAKE A CALL ON IT. Whatever you observe, keep it to yourself until you are asked for help from your partner. If asked, tell him what you saw. If you are not asked, say nothing, no matter what you saw.
- On balls hit to the outfield, come out from behind the plate, move in the direction of the ball. You have Fair/Foul responsibility. Then you have Catch/No-Catch responsibility.
- Also, while your partner has the runners, watch for interference or obstruction. Call it if you see it. But, DO NOT call any plays at the bases.

SECTION III

Rules and Rule Clarification

This section will cover some of the common rules of baseball and softball, some misconceptions, and compare some of the differences between baseball and softball. This section is not all inclusive and covers how Zeeland Little League interprets most of the rules. This section will not cover the entire rule book, but will cover some of the most commonly misunderstood rule situations in Little League. The rules mentioned below will apply across all divisions based on the Little League Rule Book.

The intent here is not to teach the rules. Instead, it is so that officials are on the same page with regard to the Little League Rule Book. This section will cover common interpretations and the authority of the umpire to call games based upon these rules.

RULES BY THE NUMBERS

Rule 1.00 – Objectives of the Game

Rule 1.00 covers many of the sportsmanship rules. It also covers the field and equipment rules. It talks about pitchers not wearing anything distracting, such as wrist bands; it talks about players not wearing jewelry, it talks about legal bats; it talks about the requirement for catchers to wear a mask/helmet during games and warm-up.

As umpires, it is our responsibility to ensure that each team is properly and legally equipped and if there is unserviceable or illegal equipment, that it is removed. During regular season play, you will more likely just ask the managers during your plate meeting to confirm that their teams are “properly and legally equipped.” In the post season, you may and should, actually do a gear inspection.

1.10 – The bat must be a baseball bat which meets Little League specifications and standards as noted in this rule.

1.11 – Equipment and uniform requirements, including players must not wear jewelry...

1.17 – ...All catchers must wear a mask, "dangling" type throat protector, and catcher's helmet during infield/outfield practice, pitcher warm-up, and games.

Rule 2.00 – Definition of Terms

Rule 2.00 provides definition for many of the terms used in baseball. Knowing how these terms are defined will help you understand and interpret the rules that these definitions impact.

We'll briefly touch on a few that have common misconceptions associated with them. We'll cover this in alphabetical order.

BALL – A BALL is a pitch which does not enter the strike zone in flight and is not struck at by the batter. (NOTE: If the pitch touches the ground and bounces through the strike zone it is a "ball." If such a pitch touches the batter, this is treated like a "hit by pitch". If the batter swings at such a pitch and misses, it is a strike.

BUNT – A BUNT is a batted ball not swung at, but intentionally met with the bat and tapped slowly. The mere holding of the bat in the strike zone is not an attempted bunt.

- ““If no attempt is made to make contact with a ball outside the strike zone while in the bunting stance, it shall be called a ball. The batter must offer at the pitch for it to be a strike.”

CATCH – A CATCH is the act of a fielder in getting secure possession in the hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it before it touches the ground providing such fielder does not use cap, protector, pocket, or any other part of the uniform in getting possession. It is not a catch, however, if simultaneously or immediately following contact with the ball, the fielder collides with a player, or with a wall, or if that fielder falls down, and as a result of such collision or falling, drops the ball. It is not a catch if a fielder touches a fly ball which then hits a member of the offensive team or an umpire and then is caught by another defensive player. If the fielder has made the catch and drops the ball while in the act of making a throw following the catch, the ball shall be adjudged to have been caught. In establishing the validity of the catch, the fielder shall hold the ball long enough to prove complete control of the ball and that release of the ball is voluntary and intentional. A catch is legal if the ball is finally held by any fielder, even though juggled, or held by another fielder before it touches the ground. Runners may leave their bases the instant the first fielder touches the ball.

FAIR BALL – A FAIR BALL is a batted ball that settles on fair ground between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that is on or over fair territory when bounding to the outfield past first or third base, or that touches first, second, or third base, or that first falls on fair territory on or beyond first base or third base, or that, while on or over fair territory touches the person of an umpire or player, or that, while over fair territory, passes out of the playing field in flight.

NOTE: A fair fly shall be adjudged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time such fielder touches the ball.

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

NOTE: A foul fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on foul or fair territory at the time that fielder touches the ball.

FOUL TIP – 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.

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 stationed 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 umpire shall immediately declare "Infield Fly" for the benefit of the runners. If the ball is near the baseline, the umpire shall declare "Infield Fly, if fair."

The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of that ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on 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 foul and remains foul before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball. If a declared Infield Fly falls untouched to the ground outside the baseline, and bounces fair before passing first or third base, it is an Infield Fly.

Infield Fly Summary:

- Runners on 1st and 2nd or bases loaded & Less than two outs
- The dirt and/or grass do not determine the infield, the rule is for "infielders"
- Any player stationed in the infield, including an outfielder playing in, may be considered an infielder for the purposes of this rule.
- To be an infield fly, the ball can be caught with ordinary effort, which is umpire judgement

INTERFERENCE – Interference is an offensive infraction whereby a runner or the batter-runner interferes with a defensive player attempting to field a batted ball or make a play. The act does not have to be intentional for it to be interference on a batted ball; however, on a thrown ball, the act must be intentional for interference to be called. There are different types of interference such as umpire interference, catcher's interference or spectator interference. Read and understand the definition of interference; it is quite complex. How the rule is put into action and penalized is under Section 7.00.

OBSTRUCTION – Obstruction is a defensive infraction whereby a fielder not in possession of the ball impedes the progress of any runner. This rule can also get complex and should be read and understood in application and ruling in Section 7.00.

Rule 3.00 – Game Preliminaries

Rule 3.00 covers game preliminaries, substitutions, the umpire's authority with regard to weather conditions and calling games. Umpires should work with coaches when making determination on game delays or cancellations due to weather during a game. Each division in

ZLL has house rules regarding subs. This section is more important for umpires that work All-Star games, and should be understood for those games when responsible for rosters.

Rule 4.00 – Starting and Ending the Game

This section covers the general rules leading up to the beginning of the game, and what qualifies as the ending of the game. There are House Rules for each division as far as mercy-rules, time limits, and total innings for a complete game.

Rule 5.00 – Putting the Ball in Play – Live Ball

Rule 5.00 covers when the ball is alive and in play and when it is deemed a dead ball. It covers when an inning is over, batters hit by a pitch and more. This is important for umpires because as an umpire, you have to be acutely aware of when the ball is alive or dead. After a ball is deemed dead, you must deliberately put the ball back into play with the simple action of pointing to the pitcher and calling, “play!”

Rule 6.00 – The Batter

Rule 6.00 covers all things regarding the batter. This includes, but is not limited to, the batter’s box and the batter’s position in the box; what constitutes an out; the uncaught third strike rule; interference with regard to running out of the running lane half way to first base; batting out of turn; what constitutes the batter getting a base including base on balls, batter hit by pitch and catcher’s interference.

Note: The rules cover specific ways that a batter may be put out. Umpires do not get to call batters out for anything that is not one of these specific ways. Umpires cannot make up ways for a batter to be out.

Rule 7.00 – The Runner

Rule 7.00 covers all things regarding the runners. This includes but is not limited to, two runners occupying the same base, the two different types of obstruction (Obstruction A and Obstruction B; 7.06(a); 7.06(b)).

When Obstruction occurs, the umpire will call, “That’s Obstruction!” -

Obstruction A - 7.06(a) - “If a play is being made on the obstructed runner, or if the batter is obstructed before touching first base, the ball is dead and all runners shall advance without liability to be put out, to the bases they would have reached, in the umpire's judgment, if there had been no obstruction.”

Obstruction B - 7.06(b) - “If no play is being made on the obstructed runner, the play shall proceed until no further action is possible. The umpire shall then call "Time" and impose such penalties, if any, as in that umpire's judgment will nullify the act of obstruction.”

Rule 7.00 also covers situations when a runner would be out, including baseline violations, being tagged or for intentionally interfering with a thrown ball, or hindering a fielder making a play on a batted ball, whether intentional or unintentional.

Rule 8.00 – The Pitcher

Rule 8.00 covers all things about the pitcher, such as legal pitching positions, things the pitcher cannot do, illegal pitches and balks.

8.02 – Things the pitcher cannot do including:

- Bringing the pitching hand to the mouth while on the mound or in the circle
- Spitting on or adding any foreign substance to the ball
- Rubbing the ball on their glove, person or clothing
- This list is not all inclusive; be familiar with this rule

8.03 – at the beginning of each inning, the pitcher is allowed eight warm-up pitches that should not consume more than one minute.

8.05 – covers illegal pitches and the penalties for such. In Minors and Majors infractions are considered illegal pitches; in Intermediates and above infractions are called a balk.

Balks shall not be called in Majors and below for any reason. Illegal pitches may be called if they apply. Balks only apply at Intermediates and above and are one of the most commonly misunderstood rules.

Rule 8.05 NOTE: “Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the balk rule is to prevent the pitcher from deliberately deceiving the base runner. If there is doubt in the umpire's mind, the "intent" of the pitcher should govern.”

Regulation VI also covers Pitchers and when players are allowed to pitch. Coaches should be enforcing the pitch count rule along with the rule involving playing the pitcher and catcher positions in the same game.

Rule 9.00 – The Umpire

Rule 9.00 covers all things about the umpire. This should be of special interest to this group. This sections covers the importance and the authority of the umpire.

9.01(b) states, “Each umpire is the representative of the league and of Little League International, and is authorized and required to enforce all of these rules.”

9.01(c) states, “Each umpire has authority to rule on any point not specifically covered in these rules.” As an umpire, you may come across situations which are not covered in the rule book.

9.01(c) grants the authority to make a judgement.

- Be careful not to inadvertently make up rules under the guise of Rule 9.01(c).

Rule 9.02(a) states, “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 such judgment decisions.”

- This could be one of the most important rules in the rule book
- Judgment calls cannot be appealed, challenged or objected to
- Notice that it says “any umpire’s decision which involves judgment...”
- Also, notice that it says, “such as, but not limited to...”
- That means that these are examples of judgment calls, but the list is not all inclusive

No manager, coach, player or otherwise shall object to or challenge any call involving judgment including but not limited to:

- Whether batted ball is fair or foul
- Whether a pitch is a strike or a ball
- Whether a runner is safe or out

The umpire’s call is final. It cannot be challenged. As umpires, you should be prepared for managers and coaches to squawk somewhat about what you call as strikes, ball, safe or out. Some of this is just the game; however, you as the umpire have a responsibility to keep order on the field and cannot let it go on. Rule 9.01(a) says that each umpire has the responsibility for “...maintaining discipline and order on the playing field during the game.”

Handling Situations

This brings us to the final point with regard to Rule 9.00. Situations. Umpires have the authority under Rule 9.01(d), to “...disqualify any player, coach, manager, or substitute for objecting to decisions or for unsportsmanlike conduct or language, and to eject such disqualified person from the playing field.”

Let me say that nobody wants anyone to be ejected from a game; however, in the rare occasion when a manager, coach or player pushes too much or objects to decisions to the point of unsportsmanlike conduct, uses foul language or directs personal attacks toward any umpire, there may need to be an ejection. It is the responsibility of the umpire to maintain order and discipline on the field and removing someone may be the required action. This should not be taken lightly. With great power comes great responsibility. Please read and understand Rule 9.00 and how it relates to ejections and responsibilities.

Before we ever get to the point of ejecting someone, we should consider the following steps:

Ignore, Acknowledge, Respond, Warn, Eject

ZLL Umpire Guide

That is not to say that it could not go directly to warn or directly to eject, but ejections should not be used liberally and should not be taken lightly. The ejection brings with it a one game suspension. The ejected person should leave the field area.

Rule 4.07 states: “When the manager, coach or a player is ejected from a game, they shall leave the field immediately and take no further part in that game. They may not sit in the stands and may not be recalled. A manager or coach ejected from a game must not be present at the games site for the remainder of that game. Any manager, coach or player ejected from a game is suspended for his or her team’s next physically played game and may not be in attendance at the game site from which they were suspended.”

For the purposes of this rule, Little League defines “game site” is any place where the person would be considered:

1. A participant in the game in question (coach, umpire, player, etc.), or,
2. A viewer/spectator of that game. The local league should take care, however, to ensure that any non-adult who is ejected from a game will not be unsupervised as a result of the ejection.

Additionally, there are reports and judgments that must be made when someone is ejected. This rule should be available to umpires and used by umpires when appropriate, but should not be abused. We would much prefer that everyone get a long and remember that this is Little League Baseball and Softball, not competitive ball, there are no college scouts in the stands, and the pennant is not on the line.

BASEBALL vs SOFTBALL

Baseball and softball rules are very similar but there are some differences. As an umpire, you should be familiar with the differences.

1. How are runners affected by the pitcher’s circle?

Baseball: There is no such circle in baseball

Softball: A runner must immediately advance or retreat to a base when the pitcher has the ball within the circle. Failure to do so is an out on that runner unless a play is attempted on the runner.

2. When is a runner allowed to leave a base?

Baseball: At the Majors and below, a runner may leave a base once the ball reaches the batter.

Softball: Majors and above, a runner may leave a base once the ball is released by the pitcher. At the Minors level, a runner may leave a base once the ball reaches the batter.

3. What is the penalty for these runner violations?

ZLL Umpire Guide

Baseball: In the case of a runner leaving early, the runner is not called out. In most situations, the runner returns to his base. If one runner is guilty, all are guilty.

Softball: In the case of a runner leaving early or a circle violation, the runner is out.

4. How do I handle these runner violations?

Baseball: Once you spot the runner leaving early,

- Toss a red flag or some other marker, a few feet from where you're standing to signal the violation.
- The runner is allowed to proceed and play continues.
- Once play is stopped, call, "Time – Runner Left Early!" and point to the runner who left early.
- Instruct that runner to return to his original base unless he was put out. In that case, the out stands.
- A runner leaving early affects all other runners, ahead and behind him.

Softball: Once you spot either of these two violations (runner left early or circle),

- Immediately call, "Time – Runner's out! She left early! Or "Circle Violation!"
- The ball is dead and all play stops.
- You instruct all other runners to return to the last base touched prior to when you called time.

MOST COMMON RULE MYTHS

1. The Hands Rule Myth – The hands are considered part of the bat

- This is false. The hands are part of the person, not the bat. If a pitch touches the batter's hands the ball is dead. If the batter swung at the pitch, a strike is called (not a foul ball). If he was avoiding the pitch, and the hands were not in the strike zone (over the plate) when hit, the batter is awarded first base.
- Rule 2.00 - Person, Touch, Strike
- 6.08(b) and Note

2. The Right Turn Rule Myth – The batter-runner must turn to his/her right after over-running first base.

- The batter-runner may turn left or right, provided that if he or she turns left he or she does not make an attempt to advance. An attempt is a judgment made by the umpire. The requirement is that the runner must immediately return to first base after over-running or over-sliding it. • Rule 7.08(c)(j)

3. Check Swing Rule Myth – If the batter breaks his wrists when swinging, it's a strike.

ZLL Umpire Guide

- A strike is a judgment by the umpire as to whether the batter attempted to strike the ball. Breaking the wrists, or the barrel of the bat crossing the plate are simply guides to making the judgment of an attempt; these are not rules.
- Rule 2.00 - Strike

4. Hit Plate Rule Myth – If a batted ball hits the plate first it’s a foul ball

1. The plate is in fair territory. There is nothing special about it. If a batted ball hits it, it is treated like any other batted ball.
2. Rule 2.00 – Fair Territory

5. Batter’s Box Interference Rule Myth – The batter cannot be called out for interference if he/she is in the batter’s box.

- The batter’s box is not a safety zone. A batter could be called out for interference if the umpire judges that interference could or should have been avoided.
- The batter is protected while in the box for a short period of time. After he/she has had time to react to the play, he/she could be called out for interference if he or she does not move out of the box and interferes with a play.

- Many people believe the batter's box is a safety zone for the batter. It is not. The batter may be called out for interference even though he or she is in the box. The key words are: impede, hinder, confuse or obstruct. If these apply, then the batter should be called out for interference.
- An umpire must use good judgment. The batter cannot be expected to disappear. If he/she has a chance to avoid interference after he/she has had time to react to the situation and does not, he/she is guilty. If he/she just swung at a pitch or had to duck a pitch and is off-balance, he can't reasonably be expected to then immediately avoid a play at the plate. However, after some time passes, if a play develops at the plate, the batter must get out of the box and avoid interference. The batter-runner should always be called out when he makes contact and is outside the box.
- Rule 2.00 – Interference
- Rule 6.06(c)

6. The Foul Tip Rule Myth – The ball is dead on a foul tip.

- A foul tip is not a foul ball. If the ball tips off the bat and goes sharply and directly to the catcher's mitt or hand and is caught, this is a foul tip by definition. A foul tip is a strike and the ball is alive. It is the same as a swing-and-miss. If the ball is not caught, or dropped by the catcher, it is a foul ball and the ball is dead. If the deflected ball hits the catcher somewhere other than in the mitt or hand, it is not a foul tip and is a foul ball. • Rule 2.00 – Foul-tip, Strike

7. Switch Box Rule Myth – The batter may not switch batter's boxes after two strikes.

- The batter can switch boxes at any time, provided he does not do it after the pitcher is ready to pitch.
- Rule 6.06(b)

8. Out of Order Rule Myth – The batter who batted out of order is the person declared out.

- The PROPER batter (the one who should have been at bat) is the one declared out. Any hit or advance made by the batter or runners due to the hit, walk, error or other reason is nullified. The next batter is the one who follows the proper batter who was called out. • Rule 6.07(b)1

9. Over-run First Base Rule Myth – The batter may not over-run first base when he gets a base-onballs.

- The Little Rule Book states that the batter must return immediately after over-running first base. It does not state any exceptions as to how the player became a runner. It could be a hit, walk, error or dropped third strike (Majors and above).

- To over-run the base means that the runner's momentum carried him or her straight beyond the base after touching it. It does not mean to turn and attempt to advance. Nor does it mean that he or she stepped over the base or stopped on the base and then stepped off the base.
- Rule 7.08(c) Exception – A.R.
- (Approved Ruling 1- This includes a batter-runner who over-runs first after being awarded a base on balls.)
- Rule 7.08(j)

10. Dropped Third Strike Rule Myth – The batter is out if he starts for the dugout before going to first after a dropped third strike.

- The batter may attempt first base any time prior to entering the dugout or a dead ball area. The batter becomes a runner when the third strike is not caught. Therefore, if there are two outs and there is a runner at first, first and second or bases are loaded, the batter creates a force by becoming a runner. These runners are all forced to advance and an out may be obtained by making a play on any one of them. If the bases are loaded, the catcher may step on home or throw to first, second or third base.
- Rule 6.05(b) A.R.
- Rule 6.09(b)

11. Bunting Strike Rule – If the batter does not pull the bat out of the strike zone while in the bunting position, it is an automatic strike.

- A strike is defined as an attempt to hit the ball. Simply holding the bat over the plate is not an attempt. The umpire must make a judgment as to whether the batter made an attempt at the pitch or not.
- A Bunt is defined as "...a batted ball not swung at, but intentionally met with the bat and tapped slowly. The mere holding of the bat in the strike zone is not an attempted bunt." The key words are "intentionally met." If no attempt is made to make contact with a ball outside the strike zone, it should be called a ball. An effort must be made to intentionally meet the ball with the bat. If the pitch goes through the strike zone but does not contact the bat, it should be called a strike.
- Rule 2.00 – Strike
- Rule 2.00 – Bunt

12. Second Bat Hit Rule Myth – The batter is out if a bunted ball hits the ground and bounces back up and hits the bat while the batter is holding the bat.

- There are two questions that must be answered before we can make this call. 1) when the bat was hit the second time was it in fair or foul territory? And 2) was there intent to interfere or hit the ball a second time?

- If the batter was still in the batter's box when the ball bounced back up and hit the bat, and in the umpire's judgment there was no intent to interfere, this is simply a foul ball and the ball is dead.
- The definition of a foul ball, in part says, "...or that while on or over foul territory, touches the person of an umpire or player, or any object foreign to the natural ground." Since most of the batter's box is in foul territory, a batted ball touching any part of the batter or his/her bat is considered a foul ball.
- If the batter was not still in the batter's box, then we must consider batter's interference. Batter's interference is a judgment call.
- The same questions apply: was there intent to interfere with the course of the ball? And where was the bat when the second contact was made? If in the umpire's judgment, there is any intent to hit the ball a second time or intent to interfere, the batter should be called out for interference.
- If the bat is thrown into fair territory and hits the ball a second time, the batter is out and the play is dead.
- If the bat is dropped in fair territory and the ball rolls into the bat, and in the umpire's judgement there was no intent to interfere with the course of the ball, the ball is alive and in play.
- Also, note the Approved Ruling: "If a bat is thrown into fair or foul territory and interferes with a defensive player attempting to make a play, interference shall be called, whether intentional or not." This is a judgment call by the umpire. • Rule 2.00 – Foul Ball
- Rule 6.05(g)A.R.
- Rule 6.05(h)
- Rule 7.09(b)

13. Foot Touches Plate Rule Myth – The batter is out if his foot touches the plate.

- To be out, the batter's foot must be entirely outside of the box when he contacts the pitch and the ball goes fair or foul. He is not out if he does not contact the pitch. There is no statement about touching the plate. The toe could be on the plate and the heel could be touching the line of the box. Since the line of the box is considered in the box, the foot would not be entirely outside the box.
- Rule 6.03AR
- Rule 6.06(a)AR

14. Running Lane Rule Myth – The batter-runner is always out if he runs outside the running lane after a bunted ball.

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- The runner must be out of the lane AND cause interference to be called out for a running lane violation. He is not out simply for being outside of the lane. He could be called out for interference even while in the lane. This is a judgment call. The runner may step out of the lane

a step or two before the base if he moves from within the lane to out of it. If he is out of the lane the whole distance to the base and is hit with a throw, he should be called out. • Rule 2.00 – Interference

- Rule 6.05(j)

15. High Five Rule Myth – A runner is out if he slaps hands or high-fives other players, after a homerun is hit over the fence.

- The ball is dead on a homerun over the fence. You can't be put out while the ball is dead except when you pass another runner.
- Rule 5.02
- Rule 7.05(a)

16. Tie Goes to the Runner Rule Myth – The tie goes to the runner.

- There is no such rule. The umpire must make a judgment as to whether the runner is safe or out. Judging what to the naked eye seems to be a tie is much like judging the strike zone. You just have to make a judgment call and stick with it. If it is that close, make your call emphatically and animated... and stick by it.
- To get into the nitty gritty of the rule book, there are two different rules that govern two different runners.
- Rule 6.05 – A batter is out when:
 - “after hitting a fair ball, the batter-runner or first base is tagged before said batterrunner touches first base...”
 - The key to Rule 6.05(i) is that the batter-runner or first base is tagged BEFORE said batter-runner touches first base... thus, in the case of a tie, the batter-runner or first base was NOT tagged BEFORE, but at the same time and thus would technically be safe.
- Rule 7.08 – A runner is out when:
 - (e) “failing to reach the next base before a fielder tags said runner or the base after that runner has been forced to advance by reason of the batter becoming a runner.”
 - The key to Rule 7.08(e) is that the runner has to reach the base BEFORE the runner or base (if forced) is tagged. Thus, in this case, if there is a tie, the runner is out because he/she did not reach the base BEFORE the tag.
- These two rules are should not be argued. A safe/out call by an umpire is a judgment call and cannot be appealed. It is not up for debate. The call made is the call. Again, if it's close, make the call emphatically, animated and loud. Be sure of yourself and stand your ground.

17. Out of Play Ball Rule Myth – The runner gets the base he's going to plus one on a ball thrown out of play.

- When a fielder other than the pitcher throws the ball into a dead ball area, the award is two bases. The award is from where the runners are at the time of the pitch if it is the first play by an infielder before all runners have advanced or from where each runner was physically at the time the ball left the thrower's hand on all other plays.
- Rule 7.05(g)

18. Coach Touch Rule Myth – Any time a coach touches a runner, the runner is out.

- The simple act of touching a runner does not constitute the runner being called out. The rules preclude a coach from PHYSICALLY ASSISTING a runner.
- Hand slaps, high fives, a pat on the back or helmet are not physical assists and do not constitute an out.
- Rule 7.09(h)

19. Reverse Base Running Rule Myth – Runners may never run the bases in reverse order.

- In order to correct a base running mistake (missed base), the runner MUST retrace his steps and retouch the bases in reverse order. The only time a runner is out for running in reverse is when he is making a travesty of the game or trying to confuse the defense.
- Rule 7.02

20. Must Slide Rule Myth – The runner must always slide when the play is close.

- There is no “must slide” rule. When the fielder has the ball in his possession, the runner has two choices: slide OR attempt to get around the fielder. He may NOT deliberately or maliciously contact the fielder, but he is NOT required to slide.
- If the fielder does not have possession of the ball but is in the act of fielding, and contact is made, it is a NO-CALL unless the contact was intentional or malicious.
- Rule 7.08(a)3, AR

21. Hit By Ball on Base Rule Myth – The runner is always safe when hit by a batted ball while touching a base.

- The bases are in fair territory. A runner is out when hit by a fair batted ball while touching a base except when hit by an in-field fly or after the ball has passed a fielder and no other fielder had a play on the ball.
- If the runner is touching first or third, he is not out unless the ball touches him over fair territory. If one foot is on the base and the other is on the ground in foul territory, and he is hit on the foul ground foot, he is not out. It is a foul ball.
- Rule 5.09(f)

- Rule 7.08(f)

22. No Steal on Foul-Tip Rule Myth – A runner may not steal on a foul-tip.

- A foul-tip is not a foul ball; it's a strike. If the ball nicks the bat and goes sharply and directly to the catcher's mitt and is caught, the pitch is called a strike and the ball is alive. It is the same as a swing-and-miss. If the ball is not caught, then it is a foul ball.
- Rule 2.00 – Foul-Tip
- Rule 2.00 – Strike

23. Fly Ball Force Out Rule Myth – It is a force out when a runner is called out for not tagging up on a fly ball.

- A force play is when a runner is forced to advance because the batter became a runner. When the batter is out on a fly, all forces are removed. An out on a failure to tag-up is NOT a force out. Any runs that cross the plate before the out will count.
- Rule 2.00 – Force Play
- Rule 4.09(a)(AR)

24. Missed Base Appeal Rule Myth – An appeal on a runner who missed a base cannot be a force out.

- A runner must touch all of the bases. If the runner misses a base to which he was forced because the batter became a runner and is put out before touching that base, the out is still a force play. If this is the third out, no runs may score. The base can be touched or the runner can be tagged, either way it's a force out. Thus, if the runner missed the bag and has to come back to the base to touch it, it's still force out.
- Rule 2.00 – Force Play
- Rule 2.00 – Tag
- Rule 7.08(e)
- Rule 7.10(b)

25. Out of Baseline Rule Myth – A runner is out anytime he runs outside of the baseline.

- The runner is only out for running out of the baseline if he or she is attempting to avoid a tag. If the runner runs outside of the baseline in order to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball, he is not out, because the runner MUST avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball or be charged with interference.
- Rule 7.08(a)
- Rule 7.09(j)

26. No Advance on Infield Fly Rule Myth – Runners may not advance when an infield fly is called.

- An infield fly is no different than any other fly ball in regard to the runners. The only difference is that they are never forced to advance because the batter is out whether the ball is caught or not.
- Rule 2.00 Infield-Fly
- Rule 6.05(d)
- Rule 7.10(a)

27. No Run on Third Out Rule Myth – No run can score when a runner is called out for the third out for not tagging up.

- Yes, it can. This is not a force play. A force play is when a runner is forced to advance because the batter became a runner. When the batter is out on a caught fly ball, all forces are removed. An out of a failure to tag-up is NOT a force out. Any runs that cross the plate before this out will count.
- Rule 2.00 – Force Play
- Rule 4.09(a)(AR)
- Rule 7.10(a) O

28. No Hit on Bounced Pitch Rule Myth – A pitch that bounces to the plate cannot be hit.

- A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. It doesn't matter how it gets to the batter. The batter may hit any pitch that is thrown.
- A pitch that bounces before reaching the plate may never be called a strike; including a legally caught third strike.
- Rule 2.00 – Pitch – If the ball does not cross the foul line, it is not a pitch

29. No First Base on Bounced Pitch Rule Myth – The batter does not get first base if hit by a pitch after it bounces.

- A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. It doesn't matter how it gets to the batter. If the batter is hit by a pitch while attempting to avoid it, he is awarded first base.
- There are three reasons a batter hit by a pitch would not be awarded first base:
 - The batter swings at the pitch he or she is hit by
 - The batter is hit by a pitch that is in the strike zone
 - The batter makes no effort to avoid the pitch
- Little League International takes the unofficial position that in the Majors and Below, kids are likely to freeze when a pitch is coming at them instead of trying to avoid it.
- Thus, the unofficial stance is that even if there is no attempt to avoid being hit, in the Majors and Below, the hit batter is still awarded first base.
- Rule 2.00 – Pitch
- Rule 2.00 – Strike (e)(f)
- Rule 6.08(b), NOTE, AR

30. Two Second Catch Rule Myth – If a fielder holds a fly ball for two seconds it's a catch.

- A catch is legal when the umpire judges that the fielder has COMPLETE control of the ball.
- Also, the release of the ball must be voluntary and intentional.
- Rule 2.00 – Catch

31. Foot Tag Rule Myth – You must tag the base with your foot on a force out or appeal.

- You can tag a base with ANY part of the body.
- Rule 2.00 – Force Play, Person, Tag

32. Dead Ball on Balk Rule Myth – The ball is always immediately dead on a balk.

- A balk is a delayed dead ball. Only in high school rules does a balk immediately cause a dead ball.
- If a pitch or throw is made after the balk call, play continues until the play is complete. At the end of the play the balk may be enforced or not depending on what happened.
- On a throw, if ALL runners advance on the play, the balk is ignored. If not, the balk award is enforced from the time of the pitch.
- On a pitch, if ALL runners INCLUDING the batter, advance on the play, the balk is ignored. If not, it is a no-pitch and the balk award is made from the time of the pitch.
- Rule 8.05
 - Penalty for an Illegal Pitch (Majors & Below) – The penalty for an illegal pitch in the Majors and below divisions is that the pitch is called a ball, even if the ball is not thrown.
 - Penalty for a Balk (Intermediates and above) – The penalty for a balk is that each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out.
- NOTE: “Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the balk rule is to prevent the pitcher from deliberately deceiving the base runner...”

33. Fair Feet Fair Ball Rule Myth – If a player's feet are in fair territory when the ball is touched, it is a fair ball.

- The position of the player's feet or any other part of the body is irrelevant. A ball is judged fair or foul based on the relationship between the ball and the ground at the time the ball is touched by the fielder.
- Rule 2.00 – Fair, Foul

34. Appeal Rule Myth – The ball must always be returned to the pitcher before an appeal can be made.

- An appeal may be made anytime the ball is alive. The only time the ball must go to the pitcher is when time is out. Once the ball is called dead, it cannot go live again until the pitcher has the ball while on the rubber and the umpire says, "Play!" If time is not out, the appeal can be made immediately.
- Rule 2.00 – Appeal
- Rule 5.11
- Rule 7.10

35. False Windup Rule Myth – With no runners on base, it is a ball if the pitcher starts his windup and then stops.

- This one can be confusing because it differs between different leagues. OBRs call this a no-pitch when there are no runners on base.
- In Little League Rules, however, with no runners on base, the penalty for an illegal pitch (Majors & Below), is that a ball is awarded to the batter, regardless of whether or not the pitch is actually thrown.
- See #32 above
- Rule 8.05 – Penalty

36. Must Set to Pick Rule Myth – The pitcher must come to a set position before a pick-off throw.

- The pitcher is required to come to a complete stop in the Set position before delivering the pitch, not before making a throw.
- Rule 8.05(m)

37. Must Step Off the Rubber to Pick Rule Myth – The pitcher must step off the rubber before a pickoff throw.

- If the pitcher steps off the rubber, he is no longer the pitcher; he is a fielder. He can throw to a base from the rubber, provided he does not break any of the rules under 8.05. • Rule 8.05(b)(c)(d)

38. Fielder Over the Fence Homerun Rule Myth – If a fielder catches a fly ball and then falls over the fence it is a homerun.

- As long as the fielder is not touching the ground in dead ball territory when he catches the ball, it is a legal catch if he holds onto the ball and meets the definition of a catch.
- If the catch is not the third out and the fielder falls down in dead ball territory after catching the ball, all runners are awarded one base. If the fielder remains on his feet in dead ball territory after the catch, the ball is alive and he may make a play.
- Rule 2.00 – Catch
- Rule 5.10(f)

- Rule 6.05(a)
- Rule 7.04(b)

39. Dead Ball When Umpire is Hit Rule Myth – The ball is dead anytime an umpire is hit by the ball.

- If an umpire is hit by a batted ball before it passes a fielder, the ball is dead. On any other batted or thrown ball, the ball is alive when the umpire is hit with the ball.
- Umpire interference also occurs when the plate umpire interferes with the catcher's attempt to prevent a stolen base.
- Rule 2.00 – Interference
- Rule 5.09(b)(f)

40. Home Plate Umpire Rule Myth – The home plate umpire can overrule the other umpires at any time.

- The umpire who made the call or ruling may ask for help if he or she wishes, but has no obligation to.
- No umpire may overrule any other umpire's call.
- All umpires have equal authority on the field.
- Rule 9.02(b)(c)

41. The Thrown Bat Rule – The batter is out if he throws his bat.

- There is no such rule in baseball.
- The batter would only be out if the bat is thrown into fair or foul territory and the bat interferes with the defense making a play or it hits the ball.
- Rule 6.05(g)AR

42. Deflected Home Run Rule Myth – A fly ball that is deflected over the fence is a ground ruled double.

- If a fly ball is first touched by a player in fair territory and then goes over the fence, it is a home run.
- When the batted ball was touched by the player in fair territory, the ball automatically became fair. The ball remains in flight until it touches the ground; touching a player does not alter this. • Rule 7.05(a)

43. Scorekeeper Notifying the Umpire Rule Myth – If a batter is batting out of order the scorekeeper should notify the umpire.

- While the scorekeeper should call the umpire's attention to an unannounced substitution, he or she should remain silent in a batting out of order situation. The two can be distinguished by the fact that an unannounced substitution occurs when a player not currently in the lineup comes

to bat, while a batting out of order situation occurs when a player already in the lineup comes to bat, but not when he or she is supposed to.

- Rule 6.07 NOTE: “The umpire and scorekeeper shall not direct the attention of any person to the presence in the batter's box of an improper batter. This rule is designed to require constant vigilance by the players and managers of both teams”
- Rule 6.07 RULING: NOTE

44. Automatic Strike for Backing Out Rule Myth – When the batter backs out of the box when a pitch is delivered, it’s an automatic strike.

- The batter should not leave the batter’s box once the pitcher has come to the set position in baseball or when the pitcher has started the windup in softball.
- The penalty for such an action is simply that the umpire will call a ball or strike at the case may be if the pitch is thrown.
- The generally accepted ruling is that the umpire should give the pitcher the benefit of the doubt since the batter backed out when he or should was not supposed to.
- Rule 6.02(b) Penalty

45. Appealing Judgment Calls Rule Myth – Umpire judgment calls can be appealed if the manager feels that the umpire missed the call.

- The word “appeal” is often misused. Judgment calls by umpires are not subject to question or objection by manager or coach.
- The only “appeal” of this nature that a manager may make under the rules is if the manager feels that the umpire has misapplied a playing rule.
- Rule 9.02(a) ○ “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 such judgment decisions.”
- Rule 9.02(b) ○ “If there is reasonable doubt that any umpire's decision may be in conflict with the rules, the manager 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.”
- Rule 9.02(c) ○ “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.”
- Rule 9.01(d) ○ “Each umpire has authority to disqualify any player, coach, manager, or substitute for objecting to decisions or for unsportsmanlike conduct or language, and to eject such disqualified person from the playing field.”

46. Umpire Interference Rule Myth – If a fielder runs into an umpire while chasing a fly ball, this is interference and the batter should be called out.

- There are two and only two types of umpire interference:
 - When an umpire hinders, impedes or prevents a catcher's throw attempting to retire a runner, or
 - When a fair ball touches an umpire in fair territory before passing a fielder
- In any other situation, the umpire is considered part of the field. While getting into a position where a fielder runs into an umpire may be poor umpiring mechanics, it does not constitute interference and the ball remains alive an in play.
- Rule 2.00 – Interference (c)