Question 1

You are the plate umpire. The batter hits the ball which bounces in front of the plate and rolls in fair territory up the first base line. Before the pitcher or catcher touch it, the ball spins across the first base line between home and first base. The ball stops completely in foul territory. You:

Correct Answer: **Put both hands up, palms out, and say clearly and firmly "FOUL".**

Rule 2.00 - 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.

So, by rule, before the ball passes first or third base, it doesn't matter where it has been before coming to rest or being touched. Even though it started in fair territory, we have to wait until the ball stops, or until it has been touched by a player or umpire, or until it touches an "object foreign to the natural ground" (like a bat, helmet, or fence) before we can decide if the ball is fair or foul.

The correct mechanic for declaring a foul ball is described in the answer. Remember: in an effort to prevent a coach or player mis-hearing your ruling, you only verbalize foul balls, never fair balls. Only say "foul", never say "fair".

Question 2

You are still the plate umpire. The batter hits a high fly ball which is slicing toward the left field foul line. The ball lands on the line and bounces further left into foul territory. You:

Correct Answer: **Point toward fair territory and say nothing.**

Rule 2.00 - A **FAIR BALL** is a batted ball that settles on fair territory 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 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.

So, by rule, after the ball passes first or third base in the air, it doesn't matter where it ends up; it matters where the ball first lands or is touched. This is almost the complete opposite of the fair/foul rule before the ball passes first or third. Instead of waiting for the ball to stop, we have to decide if it is fair or foul based on where it first hit the ground or was touched. Also note that the "foul lines" are actually "fair lines". If a ball first lands on a line past first or third base, or comes to a stop on a line before passing first or third base, it's a fair ball.

The correct mechanic for declaring a fair ball is described in the answer. Again, you never verbalize fair balls, only verbalize foul balls. This is to try to prevent a coach or player mis-hearing your ruling. Only say "foul", never say "fair".

Question 3

You are the plate umpire. The batter hits a bouncing grounder along the third base line that appears to be about a foot above third base as it passes the base and then bounces in foul territory into left field. You:

Correct Answer: **Point toward fair territory and say nothing.**

Rule 2.00 - A **FAIR BALL** is a batted ball that settles on fair territory 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 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.

So, by rule, if a hit ball touches the ground before passing first or third, then we judge fair or foul based on where the ball is as it passes first or third. The bases are in fair territory, so if the ball has bounced and goes over the base (or hits the base), then the ball is fair. This is a difficult judgment because it involves depth perception. You need to determine when the ball is passing the base, then determine if the ball is over fair or foul territory at that moment.

The correct mechanic for declaring a fair ball is described in the answer. Again, you never verbalize fair balls, only verbalize foul balls.

Question 4

You are the plate umpire. The batter hits a line drive toward first base. The first baseman jumps to her left. Her arm and glove are over foul territory but her legs and body are over fair territory. The ball glances off her glove and falls straight down in foul territory. You:

Correct Answer: **Put both hands up, palms out, and say clearly and firmly "FOUL".**

Rule 2.00 - 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.

It doesn't matter where the player is when the ball is first touched. It matters where the ball is. Since the ball is over foul territory, it is foul. Likewise, if the player had been in foul territory and reached into fair territory to touch the ball, then the ball would be fair.

The correct mechanic for declaring a foul ball is described in the answer. And remember - only say "foul", never say "fair".

Question 5

You are the plate umpire. There are runners on first, second, and third with one out. The batter hits a ground ball to the third baseman. The third baseman touches third base for out number 2. As he is throwing the ball to the second baseman, the runner from third touches home plate. The second baseman catches the ball and tags the runner from first for out number 3. The coach asks "Does that run count?" You:

Correct Answer: **Say "No, that run does not count."**

Rule 4.09 (a) - "One run shall be scored each time a runner legally advances to and touches first, second, third, and home base before three players are put out to end the inning.
EXCEPTIONS: A run is not scored if the runner advances to home base during a play in which the third out is made (1) by the batter-runner before touching first base; (2) *by any runner being forced out*; or (3) by a preceding runner who is declared out because that runner failed to touch one of the bases."

In this case, the third out was made on the runner from first base. He was forced to leave first base because the batter hit the ball and the batter was not put out, so his out is a force out. It doesn't matter that the runner was tagged instead of the base; it's still a force out. So the run doesn't count.

Question 6

You are the plate umpire. There are runners on second and third with one out. The batter hits a fly ball to left field. The left fielder catches the ball for out number 2. The runner at third tags up and runs home. The runner at second does not tag up and runs to third. The left fielder throws the ball third base, but the runner gets there first and is safe. The runner from third touches home. The third baseman throws to the second baseman who touches second base and the base umpire calls the runner out for not tagging up. The coach asks "Does that run count?" You:

Correct Answer: **Say "Yes, that run counts."**

Rule 4.09 (a) - "One run shall be scored each time a runner legally advances to and touches first, second, third, and home base before three players are put out to end the inning.
EXCEPTIONS: A run is not scored if the runner advances to home base during a play in which the third out is made (1) by the batter-runner before touching first base; (2) by any runner being forced out; or (3) by a preceding runner who is declared out because that runner failed to touch one of the bases."

In this case, the third out was made on the runner from second base, so exception (1) doesn't apply. He was not forced to leave second base, so exception (2) doesn't apply. He was declared out for failing to tag up after the catch of a fly ball (7.08(d)), not for failing to touch a base, so exception (3) doesn't apply. Since none of the exceptions apply, and the runner from third scored before the third out was made, the run counts.

Question 7

You are the plate umpire. The pitch is low and bounces just in front of the batter's box, then hits the batter's foot as he tries to get out of the way. The batter did not swing at the pitch. You:

Correct Answer: **Put both hands up, palms out, and say clearly and firmly "TIME" and point the batter to first base.**

Rule 2.00 - "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, the batter shall be awarded first base*. If the batter swings at such a pitch and misses, it is a strike."

When a pitch touches the ground it's still a pitch and the ball is still live. That makes sense since runners usually try to advance when a pitch bounces in the dirt and gets by the catcher. When a pitch hits the batter, the ball becomes dead, and the batter will almost always be awarded first base, and this case is no different.

Question 8

You are the plate umpire. The pitch is inside (not in the strike zone) and hits the batter's hand as she tries to get out of the way. The batter did not swing at the pitch, but the ball bounces into fair territory and stops in front of home plate. You:

Correct Answer: **Put both hands up, palms out, and say clearly and firmly "TIME" and point the batter to first base.**

Rule 6.08 - "The batter becomes a runner and is entitled to first base without liability to be put out (provided said runner advances to and touches first base) when - (b) the batter is touched by a pitched ball which the batter is not attempting to hit unless (1) The ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter, or (2) the batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched by the ball".

There is a common myth that "the hands are part of the bat". If that were true, then this would be a fair ball. However, the rule book does not say the hands are part of the bat. The rule book says the hands are part of the batter. And per rule 6.08(b), when the batter is touched by a pitch, she is awarded first base (unless the ball was in the strike zone or she attempted to hit it or she didn't try to get out of the way).

Also, by rule 5.09(a), the ball is dead whenever a pitched ball touches a batter.

Question 9

You are the plate umpire. The right handed batter is crowding the plate. In fact, his left elbow is hanging over the plate. The pitch is right down the middle but hits the batter's arm as he turns away from the pitch. You:

Correct Answer: **Put both hands up, palms out, and say clearly and firmly "TIME, STRIKE" and keep the batter at bat.**

Rule 6.08 - "The batter becomes a runner and is entitled to first base without liability to be put out (provided said runner advances to and touches first base) when - (b) the batter is touched by a pitched ball which the batter is not attempting to hit unless (1) _The ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter_, or (2) the batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched by the ball".

You can't penalize the pitcher for throwing a strike. The batter is at fault here for positioning himself in the strike zone. If this had been strike three, the batter would be out, the ball would be dead, and the pitch would not qualify as an uncaught third strike.

Question 10

You are the plate umpire for a Majors game. The count is 2-2 with no outs and no runners on base. The batter swings at and misses at a pitch that is in the dirt. The catcher catches the pitch on the bounce. You:

Correct Answer: **Put up your fist and say clearly and firmly "STRIKE THREE" then signal safe and say "NO CATCH".**

Rule 6.05 - "A batter is out when - (b) (2) a third strike is not caught by the catcher when first base is occupied before two are out. APPROVED RULING: When a batter becomes a runner on a third strike that is not caught, and starts for the bench or his/her position, that batter may advance to first base at any time before entering the bench. To put the batter out, the defense must tag the batter or first base before the batter touches first base".

And Rule 6.09 - "The batter becomes a runner when- (b) the third strike called by the umpire is not caught, providing (1) first base is unoccupied or (2) first base is occupied with two out".

This answer describes the proper procedure for calling an uncaught third strike with first base unoccupied or when there are two outs. First, you call the strike out loud to make sure the catcher and batter know it's a strike. This is especially important on checked swings. Next you call "no catch" out loud so the catcher and batter know it is an uncaught third strike situation.

The uncaught third strike rule is only in effect for baseball and softball Majors and above. In the Minor divisions, the correct answer is: **Put up your fist and say clearly and firmly "STRIKE THREE, SHE'S OUT".**

Question 11

You are the plate umpire for a Majors baseball game. The count is 2-2 with no outs and a runner on first base. As the ball reaches the batter, the runner on first attempts to steal second. The batter swings at and misses a pitch that is in the dirt. The catcher catches the pitch on the bounce. The batter starts running to first. You:

Correct Answer: **Put up your fist and say clearly and firmly "STRIKE THREE, HE'S OUT, HE'S OUT".**

Rule 6.05 - "A batter is out when - (b) (2) *a third strike is not caught by the catcher when first base is occupied before two are out*. APPROVED RULING: When a batter becomes a runner on a third strike that is not caught, and starts for the bench or his/her position, that batter may advance to first base at any time before entering the bench. To put the batter out, the defense must tag the batter or first base before the batter touches first base". And Rule 6.09 - "The batter becomes a runner when- (b) the third strike called by the umpire is not caught, providing (1) *first base is unoccupied* or (2) *first base is occupied with two out*".

First base is "occupied" even though the runner on first starts to steal second before the uncaught third strike.   It is not illegal for the batter to run to first. However, you should immediately say "He's out! He's out!" or "Batter's out! Batter's out!" so the catcher knows he doesn't need to make a play on the batter.

With two outs, it doesn't matter that first base is occupied. The correct answer for this situation with 2 outs is: **Put up your fist and say clearly and firmly "STRIKE THREE" then signal safe and say "NO CATCH".**

Question 12

You are the base umpire. The batter hits the pitch to the shortstop. The shortstop's throw gets past the first baseman. The runner, after touching first base, slows, turns to his left (toward second base), and starts back towards first base. Before he reaches the base, the first baseman picks up the ball and tags the runner. You:

Correct Answer: **Spread your hands apart at waist level and say "SAFE".**

Rule 7.08(c) - "Any runner is out when - (c) that runner is tagged, when the ball is alive, while off a base; EXCEPTION: A batter-runner cannot be tagged out after overrunning or over sliding first base if said batter-runner _returns immediately to the base_."

It is a common myth that the runner can be tagged out if he turns to his left (toward second base) after overrunning first base. The real rule involves umpire judgment. The rule says the runner can't be tagged out if he returns immediately to the base. This is interpreted to mean that any movement toward second base, other than just turning around, is an attempt to advance and makes the runner vulnerable to be tagged.

Question 13

You are the base umpire. The batter hits the pitch to the shortstop. The runner from second base runs behind the shortstop so she doesn't interfere with the shortstop fielding the ball. You:

Correct Answer: **Make no signal and say nothing.**

Rule 7.08(a)(1) - "Any runner is out when - (a) (1) running more than three feet away from his/her baseline to avoid being tagged, _unless such action is to avoid interference with a fielder fielding a batted ball_. A runner's baseline is established when the tag attempt occurs, and is a straight line from the runner to the base to which he/she is attempting to reach".

The fielder has the right to go anywhere when fielding a batted ball. The runner must avoid the fielder in this situation, otherwise she would be out for interference. Since the runner did not interfere with the fielder, and the fielder did not attempt to tag her, you make no signal about safe or out.

Question 14

You are the base umpire. The batter hits a ground ball toward third base. The ball hits the runner standing on third base. You:

Correct Answer: **Raise both hands, palms out, and say "TIME". Then point at the runner with your left hand, raise your fist and say "HE'S OUT".**

Rule 7.08(f) - "Any runner is out when - (f) touched by a fair ball in fair territory before the ball has touched or passed an infielder. The ball is dead and no runner may score, no runners may advance, except runners forced to advance; EXCEPTION: If a runner is touching a base when touched by an Infield Fly, that runner is not out, although the batter is out. NOTE 1: If a runner is touched by an Infield Fly when not touching a base, both runner and batter are out."

Touching a base gives the runner protection only if you declare an infield fly. Since this was not an infield fly, as long as the plate umpire judged the ball to be in fair territory when the runner was hit, then the runner is out and all other runners return to their bases occupied at the time of the pitch. What about the batter? Rule 6.08(d) says the batter is awarded first base. If there had been a runner on first, he would move to second to make room for the batter.

Question 15

You are the plate umpire. The batter hits the pitch to left field. The runner on third runs home. The catcher, without the ball, steps between home plate and the runner. The runner bumps into the catcher, accidentally knocking him down, before he touches home. The left fielder throws the ball to the cut off man. You:

Correct Answer: **Make no signal and say nothing.**

Rule 7.08(a)(3) - "Any runner is out when - (a) (3) the runner does not slide or attempt to get around a fielder _who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag_".

The runner has the right to the base path (unless the fielder is fielding a batted ball). In this case, the catcher was not fielding a batted ball and was not attempting to catch a thrown ball. The catcher had no legitimate reason to be in the base path. The runner is safe, but you don't need to signal it since there wasn't a play on the runner. If the runner had deliberately plowed the catcher down, you could judge this action unsportsmanlike conduct and eject the runner, but you can't call the runner out.

If the throw from the left fielder had been to the catcher, and the catcher had to move into the base path to receive the throw, and the runner ran into the catcher while trying to get to the base, then this would be a "train wreck". Both runner and fielder were doing what they were supposed to do. Again, no out in this case.

If the catcher receives the throw and the runner has time to slide or attempt to avoid the catcher but does neither of these, then you call him out. If you think the contact was "malicious" (intended to hurt the catcher), you can also eject the runner for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Question 16

You are the base umpire. There are runners on first and second with no outs. The batter hits a fly ball to left field. The runner from first goes to second but the runner on second stays on second. The left fielder catches the ball for out number 1. He throws to the second baseman. Both runners are standing on second base. The second baseman tags the original runner on second and then tags the runner from first (now standing on second). You:

Correct Answer: **Point at the original runner from first with your left hand, raise your fist and say "HE'S OUT".**

Rule 7.03 - "Two runners may not occupy a base, but if, while the ball is alive, two runners are touching the base, the following runner shall be out when tagged. The preceding runner is entitled to the base. (a) If two runners are on a base and both are tagged, then the lead runner is out if forced."

To determine who is out, you first need to determine if there is a force in effect. Since the batter flew out, no runners are forced anymore, so (a) does not apply. Therefore, the preceding runner (the one originally on second) is safe and the following runner (the one from first) is out.

If the left fielder did not catch the ball, the runner on second stayed on second and the runner from first ran to second, then the force would still be in effect. In this case, clause (a) does apply. The lead runner (originally on second) would be out and the following runner (from first) would be safe.

Question 17

You are the base umpire. There is a runner on second. The batter hits a double to left field. The runner hurrying from second steps over third base then continues to and touches home. You:

Correct Answer: **Do and say nothing.**

Rule 7.10(b) - "Any runner shall be called out _on appeal_ if - (b) with the ball in play, while advancing or returning to a base, the runner fails to touch each base in order before said runner, or a missed base, is tagged".

A runner is not automatically out when he misses a base. The defense must tag either the missed base or the runner and tell the umpire who missed which base. As an umpire, you are responsible to know whether or not the runner touched the base, but you cannot tell the defense when a base is missed. Only when the appeal is made can you call the runner safe or out.

While the ball is alive, the runner may return to a base he missed to correct the mistake as long as (1) he doesn't pass any other runners still on base and (2) a following runner has not scored.

Question 18

You are the base umpire. There are no runners on the bases. The batter hits the ball into left field. The first baseman goes to first base. The batter runs into the first baseman while rounding first and continues to second. You:

Correct Answer: **Point at the first baseman with your right hand and say "THAT'S OBSTRUCTION".**

Rule 2.00 - "OBSTRUCTION is the act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball, impedes the progress of any runner."

And Rule 7.06(b) - "When the obstruction occurs, the umpire shall call or signal "Obstruction." (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. NOTE 1: When the ball is not dead on obstruction and an obstructed runner advances beyond the base which, in the umpire's judgment, the runner would have been awarded because of being obstructed, the runner does so at his/her own risk and may be tagged out. This is a judgment call. NOTE 2: If the defensive player blocks the base (plate) or base line clearly without possession of the ball, obstruction shall be called. The runner is safe and a delayed dead ball shall be called."

In this case, the first baseman has committed obstruction. A play is not being made on the runner, so 7.06(b) applies. We see that we don't call time, but let the play proceed. You need to determine how the obstruction affected the end result of the play. If the runner was tagged out in a very close play at second, and you think the runner would have been safe if the obstruction hadn't occurred, then you would say "THAT'S OBSTRUCTION ON THE FIRST BASEMAN" and award the runner second base.

If the runner was tagged out by a wide margin at second, and you think he would have been out even without the obstruction, then you would say "HE'S OUT". The benefit of the doubt should go to the runner, since the defense made the mistake.

Question 19

You are the plate umpire. There is one out and a runner on third. The pitch is in the dirt and gets by the catcher. The batter stays in the batter's box. The runner attempts to steal home. The pitcher comes in to cover home. The catcher retrieves the ball and tosses it toward the pitcher but the ball hits the batter. The runner scores. You:

Correct Answer: **Point at the batter with your left hand, say "THAT'S INTERFERENCE", and call the runner out.**

Rule 7.09(c) - "It is interference by a batter or runner when - (c) before two are out and a runner on third base, the batter hinders a fielder in making a play at home base; the runner is out".

Also, Rule 7.08(g) - "Any runner is out when - (g) attempting to score on a play in which the batter interferes with the play at home base before two are out. With two out, the interference puts the batter out and no score counts."

The batter is usually protected from interference if he stays in the batter's box. However, the batter is not protected when there is a play at the plate and you decide the batter had time to leave the area but failed to do so. This is called "willful indifference". The batter should have known and had time to get out of the way, but did not, and in doing so hindered a fielder making a play at home. Thus the runner is out and the batter stays at bat. If there would have been 2 outs when the interference occurred, you would call the batter out instead of the runner.

Question 20

You are the plate umpire at a Majors Softball game. The count on the batter is 1 ball, 1 strike. As the pitcher releases the ball, the runner on first attempts to steal second. The batter swings at the pitch and "nicks" it. The ball goes straight back and the catcher catches it. The runner slides safely into second. You:

Correct Answer: **Make the "foul tip" signal by brushing the back of your left hand with the palm of your right hand and say nothing.**

Rule 2.00 - "A **FOUL TIP** is a batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught. It is not a foul tip unless caught and any foul tip that is caught is a strike, and _the ball is in play_."

There is nothing foul about a foul tip. Treat this situation as if the batter completely missed the pitch, except you make a funny signal after the catcher catches it. Just like a regular swinging strike, the ball is alive and runners can attempt to steal.

If the catcher had not caught the ball, then it is not a foul tip, but a normal foul ball. In this case, the ball is dead and the runner must return to first.

If the ball had not gone "sharp and direct" to the catcher, but had some arc to it before the catcher caught it, then this would have been a foul ball caught in flight. The batter would be out and the runner would need to tag up after the catch before attempting to advance. Whether the ball goes "sharp and direct" to the glove or not is umpire judgment.

Question 21

You are the plate umpire for an AAA baseball game. After the third out in the top of the fifth inning, the visitors are ahead 16 to 1. The coach for the leading team says "We are ahead by 15 runs so the game is done, right?" You:

Correct Answer: **Say "Nope. The home team gets to bat."**

From the Supplementary Rules for AAA Baseball - "5) "Mercy Rule" if after four (4) complete innings, one team is ahead by fifteen (15) or more runs, the game is to be called complete. (This is mandatory)." And rule 4.10(e) - "NOTE: (1) If the visiting team has a lead of ten (10) runs or more, the home team must bat in its half of the inning."

The Supplementary Rule changes the Little League mercy rule (4.10(e)) from 10 runs to 15. But the note in 4.10(e) still applies, so the game is not done yet.

This is fair, since each team should have the same number of chances to score runs before applying the mercy limit. In this case, the visitors had 5 innings on offense and the home team had only 4 innings on offense. So the home team should get one more chance.

On the other hand, if the home team goes ahead by 15 or more runs in the bottom of inning 4 or 5, then the game ends immediately since both teams have had the same number of innings at bat. If the home team is ahead by 15 or more runs after the visitors have batted in the top of the 4th or 5th inning, the game ends immediately since the visitors have had one more chance to bat than the home team and haven't been able to overcome the 15 run difference.