



UMPIRE GUIDEBOOK

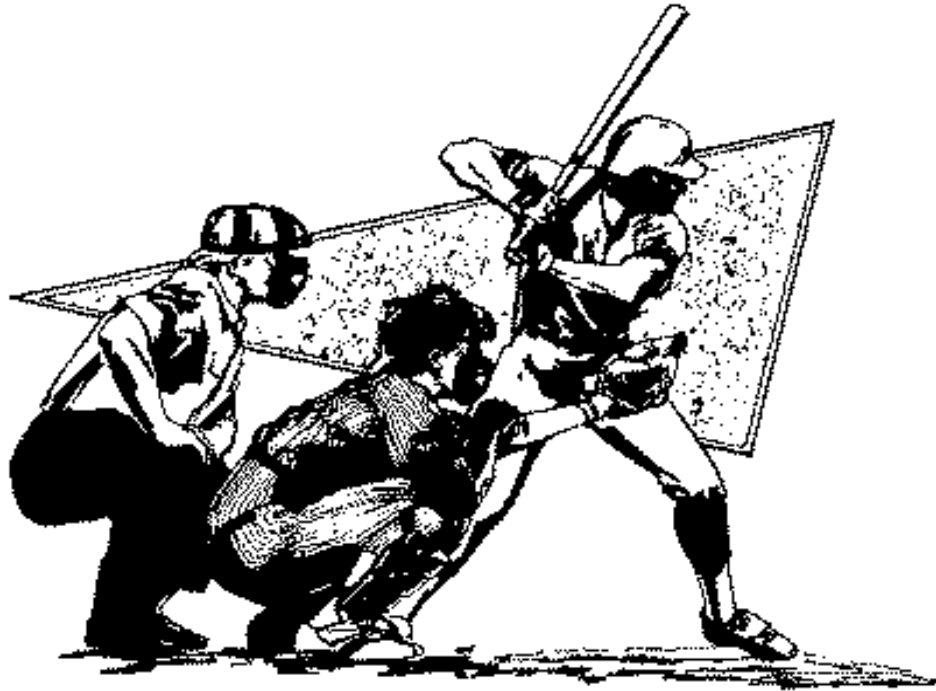


Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Ten Commandments of Umpiring	2
I: Rules Interpretations	3
Fair/Foul	3
Catch/No Catch	5
Out/Safe	6
Offensive Interference	9
Obstruction	14
Appeals	16
Award of Bases	17
Scoring Runs	19
Infield Fly Rule	21
Batting Out of Order	22
Illegal Pitches & Illegal Acts	23
Starting and Ending the Game	25
II: Special Little League[®] Rules	27
III: Common Myths	29
IV: Communications	31
V: Mechanics	33
Umpire-in-Charge Responsibilities	33
Base Umpire Responsibilities	37
Controlling the Game	39
VI: Case Studies	40
VII: Web Sites	54

Introduction

This Guidebook introduces many common situations that you will experience as an umpire. Some will occur each game; others will happen just once or twice a season. The key to success is to know what the likely plays are for each game situation—which may vary every pitch, and anticipate how to react.

This guide will help you position yourself on the field, know in advance what each umpire's responsibilities are, and allow you to develop a sense of self-confidence that is a primary requirement of an effective umpire.

Umpires are required in baseball; it's not a game without us. In fact the first Little League® rule (1.01) is: "Little League Baseball is a game between two teams of nine players each, under the direction of a manager and not more than two coaches, played on a regulation Little League field in accordance with these rules, under the jurisdiction of one or more umpires." So be proud, take it seriously, have fun and enjoy the best view in the ball park.

The first three sections of the Guidebook interpret and provide examples of Little League® rules. We will discuss common situations and how the rules apply. Of course, nothing substitutes for reading and knowing the rule book.

The fourth section deals with communications and signals, both to the players and fans, and to your partner.

When you're part of a two-person umpiring team there's a lot of ground to cover. Both umpires, the home plate ump (sometimes called the umpire-in-charge) and the base ump have different roles and responsibilities. By working as a team the two of you can watch all the plays on the field, and not get caught missing a play. How you move, position yourself, and make calls is called "mechanics." Sections V and VI discuss mechanics, which will help you learn where to position yourself at the start of the play, and how to adjust to situations that may occur when the ball is put in play.

The last section lists some of the best web sites we've found. You can use them to learn even more about umpiring.

This Guidebook was written by Dave Borrebach (d.borrebach@attbi.com). Tom Hewitt and a number of others have provided reviews, critiques and advice which helped clarify interpretations and for which I am very grateful. Responsibility for inaccuracies is mine alone. If you have comments or suggestions for revisions please let me know.

Ten Commandments of Umpiring

1. Do not call plays too quickly: Read - Pause - React

Read the play and take a mental picture. Pause to judge the action, saying to yourself what the call is. Only then react and make the call.

2. Do not lose your temper.

Be quick to think, slow to anger. A decision made in anger is never sound.

3. Be courteous, impartial, and firm.

Let players or managers explain their point of view, but don't allow yourself to be pushed around.

4. Do not even up.

If you miss a call, continue trying to do your best. Do not make a call in favor of the other team to make up for the one you missed.

5. Get help if necessary.

Get the call right; if you are unsure ask your partner for help.

6. Hustle into position.

Don't race the players, but get an angle on the play. Look sharp.

7. Work as a team.

Cooperate with your partner, and do your part of the job. Communicate with each other. Do not be critical of fellow umpires.

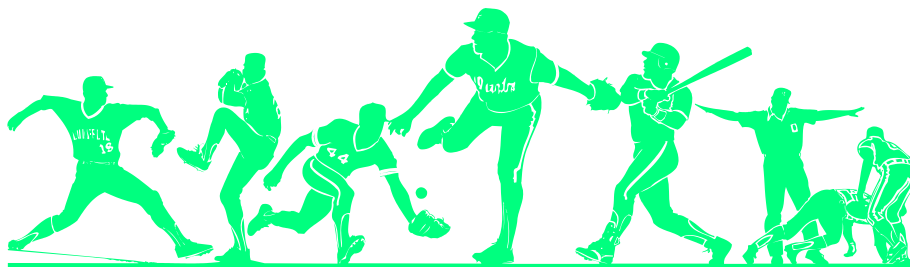
8. Dress the part.

Take pride in your work, and show it in the way you look. Sloppy dress will be interpreted as sloppy performance.

9. Be confident in yourself.

Remember that confidence comes from knowing the rules and being in correct position for each play.

10. Learn something every game. Read the rule book after the game to be clear about any unusual play that may have occurred.



I: Rules Interpretations

This section elaborates rules of Little League League® Baseball, and is organized by type of situation. References to the Little League® rule book are given, so you will be able to check exact rule book language.

Fair/Foul

When the ball is hit calling it fair or foul is the first priority. In the IFPAA, using two-person umpire teams, the initial call always belongs to the home plate ump. You should indicate fair or foul if the ball is within about 10 feet on either side of the foul line.

When a ball is foul, throw both of your hands up and out and call “Foul ball!” Then point to foul territory. Use your right hand to point foul if the ball was foul off the first base line, and use your left hand to point foul if the ball went foul off the third base line.

If the ball is fair, say nothing, because anything you say may be misinterpreted by a player. Just point to fair territory.

Always judge fair and foul by the position of the ball, not the player. If a player stands in fair territory and touches a ball in foul territory, the ball is foul.

The best place for the plate ump to make the call is straddling the first or third base line. If the ball is hit in the infield, the plate umpire can position on the first or third base line extended. This is the imaginary line that extends the base line through home plate and into foul territory. So when you stand on the extended base line you’re standing behind home plate.

Umpires use a set of abbreviations to make it easier to describe and diagram plays. For example, when talking to another umpire you can say something like “R2, one out,” and the other ump would know the game situation: a runner on second with one out.

UIC = Umpire-in-Charge, or home plate umpire

BU = Base Umpire

BR = Batter-runner

R1 = Runner occupying first base at the beginning of a play

R2 = Runner occupying second base at the beginning of a play

R3 = Runner occupying third base at the beginning of a play

F1 through F9 = Fielders, numbered following baseball convention (e.g., Pitcher = F1, catcher = F2, First baseman = F3, etc.)

IFPAA

The first and third base foul lines are in fair territory. If a ball hits on a foul line, the ball is fair. Don't rush the call if the ball is rolling in foul territory, but hasn't yet passed first or third base and hasn't been touched by a fielder. Baseball fields are often uneven. If an untouched ball in foul territory hits a bump in the ground and rolls into fair territory between home plate and first or third base, it's a fair ball.

Similarly, if the ball starts in fair territory and rolls untouched into foul territory before passing first or third base, it's a foul ball. Any ball that bounces past or over first or third base in fair territory is fair, as is any fly ball past first or third base that initially lands in fair territory. A ball that hits first, second or third base and then deflects into foul territory is a fair ball.

Home plate is in fair territory. A ball that bounces off of home plate is no different than a ball that bounces off of the ground around home plate. If a ball is bunted and comes to rest on home plate, it is a fair ball. The pitcher's rubber has no special status; if a ball hits off of the rubber and bounces into foul territory before passing a base or being touched by a fielder it is a foul ball.

Call fair or foul based on the location of the ball. The fielder's position in fair or foul territory does not matter—it's where the ball is. So if a fielder is standing in fair territory, and touches a ball that's in foul territory, it's a foul ball. LL Rule 2.00

Unless the ball has already passed first or third base in fair territory, a ball is foul if it hits a helmet or bat lying in foul territory, bounces off a base coach, or hits either the batter-runner or runner on third base in foul territory. (If you judge that the batter dropped the helmet or bat and intentionally touched the ball in foul territory, then the batter is out for interference. See the "*Offensive Interference*" discussion later in this section.)

Foul Tips

In the event of a foul tip (the ball hits off the bat and goes "sharp and direct" into the catcher's mitt), the ball is live and it is *always* a strike. Signal foul tip by running your right hand over the back of your left, and then signal the strike. Don't say anything other than "Strike!" (The moment you say "Foul *anything*" the play is killed.) If the ball hits off the bat and the catcher misses it, it is a foul, *not* a foul tip: Throw up your hands and say "Foul ball!"

A foul tip must hit the catcher's mitt first, and be caught before touching the ground. If the ball hits off of the catcher's mitt, bounces off the catcher, and is caught before it hits the ground, it is a foul tip. If it falls inside the catcher's chest protector, it is a foul ball. Any batted ball that bounces off of the home plate umpire is a foul ball.

There are no guidelines for judging a foul tip other than the ball goes "sharp and direct" into the catcher's mitt. If the ball pops into the air and is caught before it hits the ground, the batter is out. Remember: never say "Foul tip."

Catch/No Catch

A legal catch is a ball is caught on the fly in the hand or glove and held by the fielder until released voluntarily. It's also a legal catch if the ball bounces off of one defensive player and is caught by another *without* touching the ground, or any object, offensive player or umpire. A fielder may not use a cap or uniform pocket to make a legal catch, although a ball trapped under an arm becomes a catch if the fielder is able to hold the ball in hand or glove before it falls to the ground.

A fielder must maintain control of the ball until the momentum of the catch is completed. If a player gloves a fly ball, hits the ground, and does two somersaults, but the ball falls out of the glove involuntarily, it is not a catch. If a caught ball is dropped when the fielder is in the act of throwing it, the catch stands. Judgment is required: you need to determine if the fielder meant to release the ball, and if so, a catch was made. LL Rule 2.00.

If a fielder tries to catch a fair ball and it bounces off the fielder and over the outfield fence in fair territory it is a home run. LL Rule 6.09(g)

If the fielder tries to make a catch near an out-of-play area (marked by line, rope, or fence), the catch must be completed and the ball in the fielder's control *before* the fielder steps out-of-play. A juggled ball is not a catch until the fielder holds the ball. After the catch is made, momentum may subsequently carry the fielder out-of-play, but the ball is live unless the fielder falls down. If the fielder falls in out-of-play territory, the ball is dead and runners advance one base. LL Rule 5.10(f).

If the ball is bobbled in the act of catching it, base runners only need to tag up at the time the ball is touched for the first time. LL Rule 7.08(d).

Out/Safe

The batter is called out when:

1. A third strike is caught or not caught by the catcher. In Little League®, the batter may *not* try to run to first base on a dropped third strike. LL Rule 6.05(b)
2. The ball is bunted foul on the third strike. LL Rule 6.05(c)
3. The batter is touched by the ball on a third strike. This occurs if the ball hits the batter in the strike zone, or the batter is hit by the ball while swinging at it. The hands are not part of the bat. If the batter swings at a pitch and the ball hits the batter's hands, the ball is dead and the pitch is ruled a strike. (See the discussion on "*Calling Balls and Strikes*" in Section V.) LL Rule 6.05(e)
4. A fair or foul fly ball is legally caught. (See the preceding discussion "*Catch/No Catch*") LL Rule 6.05(a)
5. The Infield Fly rule is called. (See the discussion on infield flies later in this section) LL Rule 6.05(d)
6. An infielder intentionally drops a fair fly ball or line drive with first, first and second, first and third, or first, second and third bases occupied and less than two out. The ball is dead and runners return. (Fielders intending to drop the ball usually look around the field before intentionally dropping the ball.) In this situation the batter-runner is not out if the ball falls to the ground untouched, unless an Infield Fly was called. LL Rule 6.05(k)
7. First base is tagged or the batter-runner is tagged before the batter-runner reaches first base. LL Rule 6.05(i)
8. The batter hits a ball, fair or foul, while the batter's foot is entirely outside of the batter's box. This may happen when the batter squares around to bunt. If the batter's foot is outside the box and the batter swings and misses the ball, it is a strike. In order for this rule to apply, the batter must hit the ball and the batter's foot must be completely over the line. LL Rule 6.06(a)
9. The batter steps from one batter's box to the other while the pitcher is ready to pitch. (If the pitcher is not on the pitcher's rubber, the batter is free to move from one side of the batter's box to the other.) LL Rule 6.06(b)

In a variety of situations the batter is called out for interference, as discussed below in "*Offensive Interference.*"

A runner is called out when:

1. The runner tries to avoid being tagged by running more than three feet outside of a line between the runner's position and the base. The line is between the runner's position and the base where the tag play would occur. You can estimate three feet with the fielder's outstretched arms. This rule only applies when the runner is trying to avoid being tagged—if no play is being made on the runner, the runner may choose any path to the base. LL Rule 7.08(a)(1)

Example: On a hit to the outfield the batter-runner rounds first base widely and ends up near the outfield grass between first and second. Before the batter-runner reaches second base the ball is thrown to the second baseman. If the batter-runner continues to try to reach second base, the three foot rule is in effect because the second baseman has the ball and is trying for a tag play. The straight line is from the batter-runner's current position and the base where the tag play will be made. On the other hand, if the batter-runner retreats to first base the three foot rule is not in effect because there is no tag play in effect at first (the ball is still at second base). The batter-runner's initial position on the outfield side of the straight line between first and second does not matter.

2. The runner does not slide or try to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make a tag. This is sometimes erroneously interpreted as a "must slide" rule; see the discussion of "*Special Little League® Rules*" in the next section.
3. The runner slides head-first while advancing. This is also a special Little League® safety rule, and is discussed in Section II.
4. The runner is called out for interference. (See the "*Offensive Interference*" discussion later in this section.)
5. The runner is tagged with a live ball while off the base. If the base is dislodged, the runner is safe if in your judgment the runner is either touching the dislodged base, or the spot where the base was originally anchored. LL Rule 7.08(c).
6. LL Rule 7.08(c) and (j) are the rules that protect the batter-runner when overrunning first base. The overrun can occur on a hit, a base on balls, or a hit batsman. No out is called if the runner returns immediately to first base. However, if the runner takes a single step towards second, then the protection ends.

Sometimes the defensive team will throw the ball to the first baseman, who tries to tag the runner when returning to first base. If the runner has not made an earlier move toward second, but tries to evade the tag, call the runner safe unless the runner takes off for second base.

7. After a fair or foul fly ball is caught the runner fails to retouch the base before the base or the runner is tagged with the ball. Runners can advance after tagging up if a foul ball is legally caught.

IFPAA

If the ball is bobbled but ultimately caught, runners can leave as soon as the ball is touched for the first time. LL Rule 7.08(d).

8. The runner fails to reach the next base on a force play before the base or the runner is tagged with the ball. LL Rule 7.08(e).
9. The runner is touched by a batted ball before it has been touched by all infielders who have a play on the ball; see “*Offensive Interference*” on the next page.
10. The runner passes a preceding runner before the preceding runner is out. For example, with a runner on first the batter-runner hits a fly to the outfield. The runner on first holds up, and the batter-runner runs past. The batter-runner is out whether or not the ball is caught. LL Rule 7.08(h)

If a trailing runner passes a preceding runner after a home run is hit, the out occurs as soon as a runner passes a preceding runner. If there are two out, this creates a time play situation. For example, if there are runners on first and third with two outs and the batter hits a home run, no runs score if the batter-runner passes R1 before the R3 touches home plate. See the discussion “*Scoring Runs*” later in this section.

11. The runner misses home plate and does not immediately try to touch the plate, and the catcher holds the ball while standing on the plate and appeals to the umpire for a decision. If the runner attempts to touch home plate, the runner is only out if tagged before the runner touches the plate. LL Rule 7.08(k).

As in any appeal play, if the defense does not appeal to the umpire, the umpire says nothing to indicate that the runner missed the plate.

12. A runner may also be called out for interfering with the defensive team’s ability to complete a play. (See the next section, “*Offensive Interference.*”)

Offensive Interference

Offensive interference describes any of the offensive team's actions which "obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play." (LL Rule 2.00, Definition of Terms). This is one of the most confusing calls, because interference rules appear in different sections of the rule book and they always require umpire judgment. Interference may be called on the runners, batter, coaches, or even teammates sitting in the dugout.

The penalty for offensive interference is that the runner or batter is out and the ball is dead. Runners go back to the base they held at the time of the interference. If the batter-runner doesn't reach first base safely, runners go back to the base they held at the time of the pitch.

Batter's Interference

In cases of batter's interference, the batter-runner is out, the ball is dead and no runners can advance.

1. The batter-runner is out if, after hitting the ball into fair territory, the ball hits the batter-runner before the ball is touched by a fielder. LL Rule 6.05(f)
2. If a batter hits a ball and interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base by running outside the three-foot lane in the last half of the distance from home plate to first base, the batter-runner is out. However, if the fielder is making a play in or near the three-foot lane, the runner must avoid interfering with the fielder. LL Rule 6.05(j)

If the batter-runner, moving out of the batter's box, collides with the catcher who is attempting to make a play there is no interference unless you rule that the collision was intentional.

3. If the batter hits a fair ball, the bat cannot be used to hit the ball intentionally a second time. Use judgment in making this call; if the ball is bunted straight down and it bounces up and hits the bat, call a foul ball. LL Rules 6.05(g); 7.09(b).
4. The batter is out and runners return if a dropped bat hits a fair ball. If the bat is not moving and the ball hits off it, and the umpire judges that there was no intent to interfere, then the ball is alive and in play. The basic ruling is, if the bat is moving and hits the ball, the batter is out; if the ball is moving and hits the bat, the ball is alive. LL Rule 6.05(g)
5. A batter cannot intentionally deflect the course of a foul ball in any manner. LL Rule 6.05(h); 7.09(c).

Example 1: The batter hits a ball that rolls foul along the first base line. The batter drops the bat in foul territory, and the ball bounces off of it. If you judge that the batter did not

IFPAA

intend to deflect the ball, call “Foul” as soon as the ball hits the bat. If you judge that the batter intended to deflect the ball, then call time and call the batter out for interference.

Example 2: The batter hits a ball that rolls fair along the first base line. The batter drops the bat in fair territory, and the ball bounces off of it. If you judge that the batter did not intend to have the ball hit the bat, the ball is live and in play. As in the example above, if you judge that the batter intended to deflect the ball, the batter is out for interference.

6. The batter may also be called out when a play is being attempted on a teammate. This type of interference occurs during a stolen base attempt. If a batter moves outside the batter’s box and interferes with the catcher’s fielding or throwing the ball when attempting a play on the runner, the batter is out. The ball is dead, and runners return to the base they held at the time of the pitch. No judgment of intention is required.

There are two exceptions when the batter is not called out. In the first case, if a runner trying to advance is put out, then the batter is not out. The second case occurs when a runner tries to score and the batter interferes and there are less than two outs. In this case the runner is called out for batter’s interference. When a runner tries to score the batter’s box is not a “safety zone.” This means that the batter must get out of the way. LL Rules 6.06(c), 7.08(g), and 7.09(d).

Example: Runner on third, one out. When the catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher the runner on third base tries to score. If the batter prevents the catcher from making the play, the runner is out. If there are two outs, then the batter is called out. In neither case does a run score.

Runner’s Interference

The primary LL Rule covering interference of a runner is 7.09. In three major cases interference is called whether or not the act was intentional or deliberate on the part of the runner.

1. If a runner who has just been put out hinders or impedes a following play on another runner, the other runner is out because of the interference of a teammate. This rule guides your call when a runner breaks-up a double play by not sliding or otherwise getting out of the way of the fielder. LL Rule 7.09(f).

For example, with a runner on first base, the batter grounds the ball to the shortstop, who starts the first half of a double play by throwing the ball to the second baseman. If the runner from first slides or runs into the second baseman, and the runner is not close enough to second base to touch it with hand or foot, then the batter-runner is also out.

If the runner from first interferes before being put out, you will need to judge if interference was intentional. A runner or batter-runner may not deliberately interfere with a batted ball, or a fielder trying to field a batted ball in order to break up the double play.

If a runner intentionally interferes in a double-play situation, both the runner and the batter-runner are out. LL Rule 7.09(g).

For example, with runners on first and third with one out the batter hits a potential double play ball between first and second. If R1 intentionally blocks the fielder from making the play, or intentionally allows him or herself to be hit by the batted ball, then R1 is out, and so is the batter-runner.

There is a related rule that applies if the batter-runner intentionally interferes with the ball or fielder in a double-play situation. In this case both the batter-runner and the runner closest to the plate are out. The runner closest to home is called out even if no play would have been possible on that runner. LL Rule 7.09(h).

2. Intention usually doesn't matter if a runner is hit by a batted ball. The runner is out if hit by the ball before it goes through or by all infielders who could possibly field the ball. If the ball is touched by a runner *after* it has gone past all infielders or has been deflected by a fielder, then the runner is out only if you judge that the runner intentionally touched the ball.

For example, with runners on first and second BR hits a ground ball towards the second baseman. If R1 is hit by the ball before F4 has a chance to field it, the runner is out. The ball is dead, R2 stays on second, and the batter is awarded first base. But in a similar situation, if R1 is hit by a ball deflected by the pitcher, then interference is not called unless you rule that the runner touched the ball on purpose. LL Rule 7.09(m); the batter's award of first base is covered in LL Rule 6.08(d).

The base does not protect the runner unless an infield fly is called. For example, if a runner on third is hit by a batted ball while standing on the base, one of three calls can be made: if the ball hits the runner in foul territory, the ball is foul. If the ball is in fair territory, and the third baseman or shortstop has a play on the ball behind the base, then the ball is dead, the runner on third is out and the batter-runner is awarded first base. If the third baseman is in front of the base and no other infielder has a play on the ball, then the ball is live and in play. Of course, if in your judgment the runner intentionally touched the ball, the runner is out. LL Rule 7.08(f).

3. The third case where intention doesn't matter is when a runner bumps into or gets too close to a fielder trying to field a batted ball. The runner must avoid the fielder, and if a collision occurs the runner is usually out. In some cases the runner tries to avoid the fielder, but the fielder rapidly changes direction and moves into the runner's path. When this occurs there may be a collision without interference. LL Rule 7.09(l).

Coach's Interference

A first- or third-base coach, like any member of the offensive team, cannot act in a manner that obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play. Like other cases of interference, the runner is out and the ball is dead.

A coach may not physically assist a runner returning to or leaving first or third base. It is okay for a coach to slap or shake hands with a player after a home run. LL Rule 7.09(i).

A coach may not leave the coach's box and act in any manner that would draw a throw with a runner on third. LL Rule 7.09(j).

You may encounter a coach who calls out misleading instructions to the defensive team. This is not permissible, and is an act of offensive interference. If this happens remove the coach from the coaching box. LL Rule 4.05.

Defensive Interference

Defensive interference describes a defensive player's actions which "hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch." This is sometimes referred to as catcher's interference, although defensive interference could also be called on a fielder who gestures or otherwise tries to distract the batter (see LL Rule 4.06(4)). Usually, though, the bat hits the catcher's mitt, and that's catcher's interference.

Defensive interference causes a "delayed dead-ball" situation. A delayed-dead ball situation means that you should wait until the play is over, and then take action depending on what happened. With catcher's interference there are three possibilities: 1) If the ball is not hit, the ball is dead and the batter gets first base. Runners only advance if forced. 2) If the ball is hit and the batter reaches first base and all other runners have advanced at least one base, the play stands as if no interference had occurred. 3) If some other set of events occurs the manager can accept the play as it occurred or take the interference call and the positioning of players as described in situation #1. LL Rule 6.08(c).

Examples of Defensive Interference:

1. Runner on third, one out. Catcher interferes with the batter, but the ball is put in play and the batter is put out at first base, R3 scoring. After the play ends, the offensive manager may accept the play (2 outs, one run in) or the interference (R3 at third, BR at first, one out, no runs).
2. Same situation, but BR reaches first safely. In this case the play stands, and the manager has no choice of alternatives.

Umpire's Interference

There are two types of umpire's interference. An umpire who hinders a catcher trying to prevent a stolen base creates a delayed dead ball situation similar to catcher's interference. Wait until the play ends and see if the runner was called out. If so, the out stands and no interference call is made. If the runner was not called out, then the ball is dead, and runners return to their original bases. LL Rule 5.09(b).

If a batted ball hits an umpire in fair territory before passing an infielder who has a chance to field the ball, the ball is dead and the batter is awarded first base. Runners advance only if forced. If the batted ball hits an umpire after passing by the infielders, then the ball is alive and in play. As discussed later in the "*Mechanics*" section, on a Little League® field with 60 foot base paths the base umpire's position at the start of a play should always be behind the infielders, so this situation shouldn't occur. If the ball hits an umpire after passing an infielder, the ball is live and in play. LL Rule 5.09(f).

Obstruction

Obstruction occurs when a fielder blocks the progress of a runner, unless the fielder has the ball or is in the act of fielding a ball. Obstruction occurs when a fielder is standing in the base path without the ball. A fake tag is also obstruction, by definition. LL Rule 2.00.

If a play is being made on an obstructed runner, or if the batter-runner is obstructed before reaching first base, the ball is dead. You should immediately call “Time” by putting both arms overhead. Then point to the obstruction and say “That’s obstruction.” Use judgment to place the runners on the bases they would have reached if no obstruction had occurred. The obstructed runner must be awarded at least one base beyond the last base touched before the obstruction, and any preceding runners are advanced if forced. LL Rule 7.06(a).

No player may block the base path without holding the ball or being “in the act of fielding the ball.” This is also true of the catcher, who cannot block the plate or stand in the base path unless possessing or fielding the ball. A thrown ball should be in flight directly toward the fielder, and near enough that the fielder must be in position to catch the ball. If the fielder had a play on the ball and missed, then the fielder is not longer in the act of fielding the ball and must get out of the runner’s way. Whether or not a fielder is in the act of fielding a ball is a judgment call by the umpire.

Obstruction often occurs during a run-down. Take, for example, a rundown between first and second. The first baseman has the ball and chases the runner towards second, then throws the ball to a team mate covering second base. The runner changes directions, and collides with the first baseman. Time is called immediately, and the runner is awarded second base, even though the runner was moving back towards first at the time of obstruction.

If no play is being made on the obstructed runner, you should point at the obstruction and say “That’s obstruction,” but allow play to proceed until all action stops. Then call “Time” and impose any penalties needed to nullify the act of obstruction. This is a “delayed dead ball” situation. LL Rule 7.06(b).

Examples of Obstruction

1. The batter-runner hits a fly ball into the outfield and is obstructed before reaching first base. Point to the obstruction and say “That’s obstruction.” Let the play continue and if the ball is not caught impose penalties (if any are needed) that will nullify the obstruction. If the fly ball is caught, the batter-runner is out without regard to the obstruction.
2. With a runner on second, a ground ball is hit to and bounces off of the shortstop. As the shortstop goes for the ball, the shortstop and the runner from second collide. In this case you should call “Time” immediately and make a judgment call regarding the play. If the ball is in the shortstop’s immediate reach, the call is interference and the runner is out. If the shortstop needs to move towards the ball, then the fielder must avoid the runner. If contact occurs, it’s obstruction.

3. With a runner on first, there is a base hit to right field. As R1 rounds second base there is a collision with the shortstop. As a result, the runner retreats to second. In your judgment the runner would have easily made third base if the collision hadn't occurred. When the collision occurs, you should point and call "That's obstruction." After the play concludes award R1 third base.

If the ball had been thrown back to second base and there had been a play on the runner when returning to second, call "Time" immediately and send the runner to third base. In either case of obstruction place the batter-runner at the base that would have been reached, in your judgment, if no obstruction had occurred.

Appeals

If a runner misses a base or fails to tag-up the defensive team may appeal the play. An appeal must be made while the ball is in play. The appeal may occur at the end of a play before “Time” is called, or it may be the first action after the ball is put in play after a call of “Time.” The defensive team must either orally appeal to the umpire, or unmistakably show through their actions that an appeal is being made.

If “Time” has not been called, the defensive team has three options if they think the runner missed a base. The defensive team may 1) touch the ball to the runner who they believe committed the infraction, or 2) touch the ball to the base they think the runner missed. If the runner left early, they may also touch the ball to the base they believe the runner left. In any of these cases the team should appeal to you for a call.

If “Time” was called, the pitcher must hold the ball on the pitching rubber and the plate umpire must put the ball in play. (See Section IV, “*Communications*”). The pitcher then must step off the rubber, and make the appeal with the ball. If the team tries to appeal while “Time” is called, tell them to put the ball in play, and appeal again.

The defense loses its right to an appeal if any other play occurs after “Play” has been called. For example, if on an appeal the ball is thrown out of play, the opportunity to appeal is lost.

If an appeal is being made at one base, a runner on another base may attempt to advance because the ball is in play.

If a base is dislodged from its anchor, no play can be made on a runner if the runner reached the base safely. If action continues, call the runner safe if the runner occupies the spot where the base is normally placed, or if the runner touches the base regardless of location. LL Rule 1.06.

If a runner misses home plate, is not tagged by the catcher, and does not immediately try to touch home plate, the catcher may appeal to the ump for a decision. To do this the catcher needs to stand on home plate with the ball while making the appeal. See “Out/Safe” earlier in this section.

One of the most common appeals is for a checked swing. Checked swing appeals are discussed in Section V.

There is also an unusual appeal that can cause a “fourth out” to be recognized; see the “*Scoring Runs*” discussion later in this section.

Award of Bases

Award Each Runner One Base:

1. When a pitched ball goes out of play or goes over or through a field fence or backstop. The ball is dead. LL Rule 7.05(h).
2. When a pitched ball lodges in the catcher's or umpire's equipment. If this occurs on ball four, the batter-runner gets first base, and all other runners advance one base whether or not they are forced. LL Rules 5.09(g); 7.05(i).
3. When a fielder catches a fair or foul fly ball and then falls down out of play. LL Rule 7.04(c).
4. In some cases runners move up one base when they are forced to because the batter is awarded first base. This occurs when:
 - The batter receives a base on balls.
 - The batter is hit by a pitch that is not a strike.
 - The catcher or a fielder interferes with the batter.
 - A batted ball hits a runner or umpire in fair territory before the ball has passed infielders who have a play on the ball. LL Rule 7.04(b).

Award Each Runner Two Bases:

1. When a fair ball bounces or is deflected out-of-play, or rolls under or through a field fence, or sticks in the fence. (This is usually called a ground-rule double.) LL Rule 7.05(f).
2. When a thrown ball goes out of play. If the throw is the first play by an infielder and all runners have not advanced at least one base at the time of the throw, then the award of bases is from where the runners were standing at the time of the pitch. In all other cases, the award of bases depends on where the runners are standing *when the ball is thrown*. If the first throw is by an outfielder or the throw occurs after the first play in the infield, the award of bases is from the runner's position at the time of the throw. LL Rule 7.05(g).

For example, runner on first. The batter hits a ball that bounces off of home plate and goes high in the air to the third baseman. The third baseman tries to throw the ball to first base, but the throw is high and the ball goes out of play. If BR has not crossed first base at the time of the throw, and R1 has not advanced past second base, then the runners are given two bases from their positions at the time of the pitch: R1 is awarded third base and the batter is placed on second base. However, if the ball is thrown after the batter passed

IFPAA

first base and the R1 passed second base, then R1 is awarded home plate and BR is awarded third base.

In the same situation, if the ball was hit to the outfield, then the award of bases is from the runners' positions at the time of the throw.

In some cases the positioning of one runner will prevent you from awarding the other runners two bases. For example, a high fly hit into the outfield with a runner on first base. R1 goes half-way to second base, and before the throw is made the batter-runner rounds first and pulls up behind R1. The outfielder misses the catch, and hurries the throw back into the infield. In doing so, the throw is wild and goes out of play. If R1 had not passed second base at the time of the throw, R1 is awarded third base, and BR is placed on second.

3. When a fielder deliberately touches a thrown ball with a cap, mask, or any part of the uniform detached from its proper place on the fielder, or deliberately throws a glove at and touches a thrown ball. Runners get two bases from their position at the time of release of the throw. The ball is still live, and runners can advance beyond two bases at their own risk. LL Rule 7.05(d) & 7.05(e)

Award Each Runner Three Bases:

1. When a fielder deliberately touches a batted ball with a cap, mask, or any part of the uniform detached from its proper place on the fielder, or deliberately throws a glove at and touches a batted ball. The ball is still live, and runners can advance beyond three bases at their own risk. LL Rule 7.05(b) & 7.05(c).

Award Each Runner Home Plate:

1. When, in your judgment, a ball that would have been an over-the-fence home run is deflected by a fielder who throws a glove, cap, or any other part of the uniform. LL Rule 7.05(a).

Scoring Runs

By definition, a run scores when a batter becomes a runner and legally touches all bases in sequence before being put out.

With less than two outs, there generally isn't much of a question about whether or not a run scores if first, second and third were properly touched. About the only case occurs when the runner misses home plate and does not immediately try to touch it. In this case the runner can be called out on appeal; see the "*Out/Safe*" and "*Appeals*" discussions earlier in this section.

When there are two outs things get more interesting.

No run scores if the third out is made by any runner prior to reaching the base to which that runner was forced.

Examples of force out situations occur when:

1. A batter or runner is called out for interference prior to reaching the base to which the batter or runner is forced.
2. A runner is forced to a base, but misses it on the way to the next base and an appeal is made.
3. In a dead ball situation a runner is called out on appeal for missing the base to which the runner was forced. See the discussion on the next page.

If the third out occurs at first, second, or third and is not a force play, a run scores so long as the runner crosses home plate before the third out is made.

This type of call is a "time play." A time play requires that you be aware of which event occurs first. If a time play occurs and the out is made on the bases before home plate is touched, the run does not count. As the home plate umpire, try to line yourself up so you can see both plays in a straight line.

Here are three specific kinds of situations:

- 1) If a runner leaves a base before a caught fly ball is first touched, and an appeal is made before the runner returns to the base to tag up, runs score up until the time that the out is made. Even though the runner must return to the base to tag up, the appeal is a time play, not a force play. See LL Rule 2.00, Force Play.
- 2) Other time play situations include outs made by a following runner who passes a preceding runner, runners who slide head-first while advancing, runners called out for

IFPAA

running outside of the baselines, and runners called out for not sliding or attempting to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make a play.

- 3) In some time play situations a very unusual play can occur in which a “fourth out” must be recognized. For example, with one out and runners on first and third the batter hits a fly ball deep into the outfield, which is caught for the second out. Both runners try to advance. The runner from third left before the fly ball was first touched, and crossed home plate before the defensive team tagged out the runner at second (for the third out). Because of time play rules, the run would normally count. However, if an appeal is made at third base before all players leave fair territory on their way to the dugout, then a “fourth out” is called on R3 and no run is scored. LL Rule 7.10, Note (1).

Remember that time plays never occur in a force out situation.

If a successful appeal is made on a runner at a base where no force play exists, runners ahead of the appealed runner score, but the appealed runner and any following runners do not score.

This can occur in either a live or dead ball situation. For example, with the bases loaded the batter hits an inside the park home run. R1 misses third base, and the defensive team appeals at the end of the play. Because R1 was the third out, neither R1 nor the batter scores. However, both R2 and R3 score on the play.

Dead ball situations occur on a ground rule double, a home run, or when a fielder throws the ball out of play. Because the ball is dead, the defensive team can't do anything about base running infractions until a new ball is put in play. If the defensive team properly appeals at a base to which the runner was forced (for example, if they appeal that the batter missed first base) then the appeal is a force out and no runs score. If the appeal is made at any other base, then preceding runners score, and the trailing runners do not. LL Rule 7.10(b).

Infield Fly Rule

The infield fly rule is in effect when there are runners on first and second, or on first, second and third with less than two outs. The infield fly rule prevents the defense from taking advantage of a runner's need to tag-up after a fly ball. Without the infield fly rule, the defensive team could let an infield fly drop to the ground and then turn a double play at second and third bases.

To be an infield fly the ball must be:

- Hit in the air in fair territory.
- Catchable by an infielder using ordinary effort.

An infield fly is not called on a line drive or if the batter bunts the ball.

When a possible infield fly is in effect, signal your partner by placing your hand over your heart with your thumb up. Then, if the ball is hit in the air, watch the flight of the ball and judge where it is going to land. If the ball can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort point to the sky with your right hand and call "Infield fly." Try to make the call when the ball is at its highest point in the sky.

When an infield fly is called the batter is automatically out whether or not the ball is caught, and all force plays are removed. The ball is live during an infield fly, and runners can advance at their own risk. Once you call an infield fly you have to stick with the call, so it's important to be right the first time.

If the ball is hit near the foul lines, point to the sky and say "Infield fly if fair." If the ball is not caught and lands near the foul lines it may or may not be an infield fly, depending on where it is when first touched by a fielder. For example, if a possible infield fly drops untouched in fair territory and then rolls foul (before passing first or third base), then it is ruled a foul ball. If a possible infield fly drops in foul territory and rolls untouched into fair territory (before passing first or third), then the batter is out.

You will need to use judgment to rule on an infield fly if the ball is hit into the short outfield. For example, if a potential infield fly is hit into short left field, and the shortstop drifts out and could easily catch the ball, call infield fly even if the left fielder comes in and calls the shortstop off the ball. The shortstop's position in the outfield does not matter.

A runner is not out if standing on a base when hit by an infield fly; if the runner is off the base and is hit then both the runner and batter are out. LL Rule 7.08(f).

Batting Out of Order

Problems with players batting out of order sometimes seem harder than they are. Here are the basic guidelines to help keep things straight.

- You do not need to deal with players batting out of order unless the defensive team appeals to you that the offensive team has batted out of order.
- As soon as a single pitch is made to a batter, the preceding batter becomes legal. If the offensive team completely messes up its batting order, all you need to be concerned with is the batter immediately before the current batter. Try to remember the number of the past batter until the next batter comes to bat.
- If the defensive team appeals that a batter is out of order while that batter is still at bat, the proper batter comes in to bat and assumes the existing ball-strike count.
- Any actions by base runners are not affected by the batter's incorrect appearance at the plate. There is no effect on a runner who advances because of a stolen base, a wild pitch or passed ball, or who is caught stealing while the incorrect batter was at the plate.
- If the defensive team appeals that an improper batter has just concluded a time at bat (and the appeal is made before the first pitch to the next batter), then the proper batter is called out and the improper batter is removed from base. Any base runners return to the base they were on at the time of the last pitch to the illegal batter. The next legal batter in the order comes to bat.
- If the batting order gets so confused that the next legal batter is on base, that batter is skipped without penalty.

Examples:

The legal batting order is Able, Baker, Charles, Davis, Edwards, and Frank.

1. Able is the legal batter but Charles comes to bat. The defensive team appeals before Charles has completed a time at bat. Able comes up to bat with the same ball-strike count as Charles. Any actions by base runners while Charles was at bat are legal and runners remain in position.
2. Same situation, but this time Charles safely reaches base. Before the first pitch to the next batter, the defense appeals. Able, the proper batter, is called out; Charles is removed from base, and runners return to the base they occupied at the time of the last pitch to Charles. Because Able was called out the next batter is Baker.
3. Same situation, Charles reaches base safely and the defense does not appeal. As soon as a single pitch is made to the batter after Charles (whether or not it is the proper batter), Charles' at bat is legalized, and Davis is the proper batter.

Illegal Pitches & Illegal Acts

Since we don't call "the balk rule" (LL Rule 8.05) in the IFPAA, the pitcher is free to use any motion. However, there are some rules that govern legal and illegal pitches.

Illegal Pitches

There are two kinds of illegal pitches in addition to those defined in LL Rule 8.05: 1) The pitcher pitches the ball when the pivot foot is not in contact with the rubber. 2) A quick return pitch, in which the ball is pitched before the batter has sufficient time to get ready for the pitch. The penalty for an illegal pitch is a ball. If the batter puts the ball in play, the play stands so long as the batter advances to first base, and all base runners advance at least one base without being put out. The manager does not have an option to accept the penalty or the play. If an illegal pitch hits the batter, the batter is awarded first base. LL Rule 8.01(d).

Illegal Acts on the Ball

The pitcher cannot bring the pitching hand in contact with lips or mouth while standing inside the ten foot circle surrounding the pitching rubber. If this occurs, immediately call a ball, and warn the pitcher that repeated violation can cause removal from the game. However, if a pitch is made and the batter reaches first base on a hit, error or hit batsman, and no runner is put out before advancing at least one base, then the play stands. LL Rule 8.02(a)(1).

If it is a cold day and both managers agree you may permit pitchers to blow on their hands.

The pitcher cannot:

- Apply a foreign substance of any kind to the ball
- Expectorate on ball, hand or glove
- Rub the ball on glove, person, or clothing
- Deface the ball in any manner.

If any of these four acts occurs, call a ball and warn the pitcher. If the ball is put in play, the offensive manager may elect to accept the play or have the batter return to the plate. LL Rule 8.02(a)(2-6).

Other Illegal Acts

The pitcher may not intentionally pitch at the batter. If this occurs, you can either expel the pitcher from the game or warn the pitcher and managers of both sides that another such pitch will cause the pitcher to be ejected from the game. LL Rule 8.02(c).

With the bases empty, if the pitcher delays a pitch by more than 20 seconds after receiving the ball, call a ball. The purpose of this rule is to avoid unnecessary delays. LL Rule 8.04.

Manager's Visits to the Pitcher

The manager or coach can only make three visits to any single pitcher during the same inning, and only four visits to the same pitcher during the entire game. Only two visits can be made while the same player is at bat. On the third visit in an inning, or the fourth visit during the game, the pitcher must be replaced. When a new pitcher comes in, the visit count resets.

Visits to the pitcher are not defensive conferences; only the catcher can join the pitcher and manager. LL Rule 8.06.

Starting and Ending the Game

The game officially starts when the home team takes the field and the first batter is ready to hit. At that time the home plate umpire calls “Play!” and the game begins.

The home plate umpire takes charge of the game at the home plate meeting with managers that occurs just prior to the start of the game. (In the IFPAA managers do not give umpires copies of the lineups.) LL Rule 4.01(d).

Prior to the meeting both managers must agree on the fitness of the playing field. After the meeting the umpire-in-charge has sole responsibility for judging when play is suspended because of unsuitable weather or field conditions. If play is suspended, the game should not be called until after 30 minutes from the beginning of the suspension of play. LL Rule 3.10.

Regulation Game

A regulation game consists of 6 innings, unless the home team is leading after 5½ innings. If the home team scores the winning run in the bottom of the sixth, the game ends immediately. If the score is tied after 6 innings, additional innings are played unless prohibited by league rules.

When additional innings are played, the visiting team wins if it has scored more runs at the end of a complete inning than the home team. The home team wins if it scores the winning run during its half of an incomplete inning. In this case the game ends immediately when the winning run is scored.

Called Games

If the game is called before 6 innings are completed, it is a regulation game if:

- 1) The visiting team is ahead after 4 or 5 complete innings of play.
- 2) The home team is ahead after 3½ or more innings of play.

After 4 innings, if the home team is not ahead and the game is called during a partial inning, the game ends at the end of the last completed inning. This happens when:

- 1) The visiting team scores one or more runs to tie the score in the incomplete inning, and the home team does not score in its half of the incomplete inning.
- 2) The visiting team scores one or more runs to take the lead in the incomplete inning, and the home team does not tie the score or take the lead in their half of the incomplete inning.

If a game is called prior to the completion of one full inning then the entire game is replayed. Pitchers in the called game have an inning charged against their weekly total.

IFPAA

If the game is called after at least one inning, then the game is resumed exactly from where it left off. This will happen in two cases: less than 4 have been played (3½ innings with the home team ahead), or the score is tied after 4 or more innings. LL Rule 4.10(d); 4.11(e).

A league may adopt the use of the “10 Run” rule. This is a Little League rule that takes effect after 3½ innings if the home team is ahead, or 4 innings if the visiting team is leading. If the visiting team is leading, the home team must complete its at-bats in the bottom half of the inning. In the IFPAA, we use the 10 run rule only for tournament games. LL Rule 4.10(e).

II: Special Little League® Rules

There are a few rules that are unique to Little League®, and do not exist at more advanced levels. Some of those you are likely to encounter are discussed below.

Leaving too soon: LL Rule 7.13

A runner may not leave the base until the ball reaches the batter. If a runner leaves early, drop a flag and let the play go on. (The flag should be about 12 inches square, and preferably made out of red material.) The penalty for leaving early is assessed after the play ends.

This rule takes effect when the pitcher is on the rubber with the ball, and the catcher is in the catcher's box ready to receive the ball.

If a runner leaves early and you drop a flag, but the ball is *not* put in play and no runner advances, pick the flag up and put it back in your pocket.

When one runner leaves early all runners are guilty. Once a runner leaves early, the runner cannot undo the penalty by going back to the base (such as in a tag-up situation).

The penalty is to put all runners back on the bases they held at the beginning of the play, with one exception: If the batter has a clean hit, the batter is awarded that base, and the runners advance only if forced. As the umpire, you need to judge if the clean hit is a single, double, or triple. The batter only gets the bases resulting from the clean hit, not a following throw or play. If BR makes the third out and a runner left early, no runs score because all runners would have been put back on their original bases.

There is one particularly unusual part of this rule. It occurs when the bases are loaded, any runner leaves early, the ball is bunted or hit *into the infield* and the defensive team gets no runner out. If this happens the runner on third does not score, and is removed from base without an out being charged. The bases are still loaded, and the next batter is up.

Here is a set of examples. All begin with a runner on second who leaves early:

- If BR hits a single, R2 is placed back at second base.
- If BR hits a double and remains at second base, R2 is placed on third.
- If BR hits a double, but is thrown out trying for third, R2 is placed back on second.
- If BR hits a triple and remains at third base, R2 scores.
- If BR hits a triple and is thrown out trying for home, R2 is placed back on second.
- If BR makes the third out, no run scores.
- If BR hits a single and goes to second on an attempted play on the lead runner, BR goes back to first and R2 is placed at second.
- If BR flies out, and R2 goes back to second base, tags-up and advances to third, R2 is placed back on second.

IFPAA

Head-first slide: LL Rule 7.08(a)(4)

A runner is automatically out for a head-first slide while advancing. This is not a force play, which can create a time-play situation if another runner is trying to score. That is, if a runner slides head first and becomes the third out, no run can score after the head-first slide occurs.

If the runner is moving back to the base then a head-first slide is allowed. For example, the batter runner hits a clean double and rounds second base. When the throw comes into second the runner dives back to the base. Because the runner had already passed second, the play is legal.

Must slide or avoid contact: LL Rule 7.08(a)(3)

A runner is not permitted to run into a fielder who has the ball and is ready to make a tag. If the runner does not slide, be sure that contact is avoided and that the runner does not interfere with the fielder who is trying to make a play on another runner. Refer back to the earlier discussion of interference.

No jewelry: LL Rule 1.11(j)

No player may wear watches, rings, pins, jewelry, earrings or other metallic items. The only exception is Medical Alert items.

Third strike is always an out. LL Rule 6.05(c)

In Little League®, a third strike is always an out, whether or not the catcher catches the ball. The batter-runner may not try to reach first base on a dropped third strike.

Maximum length of the bat is 33 inches, and the maximum diameter is 2¼ inches. LL Rule 1.10

Occasionally a batter will try to use a bat designed for Pony League play which has a larger diameter. If this happens tell the batter to get a new bat.

III: Common Myths

Many baseball fans believe in “rules” that aren’t in the rule book. Here’s a few of the most common.

If a batter’s foot touches home plate when a ball is hit the batter is automatically out.

NOT TRUE

Batters who step on home plate when hitting a ball are often out, but not always. The actual rule is that a batter is out for an illegally batted ball when one or both feet are on the ground “entirely outside of the batter’s box.” The lines defining the batter’s box are within the batter’s box. LL Rules 2.00; 6.03.

The line of the batter’s box is four inches away from home plate on a Little League® field. If a batter has a foot 10 inches long, the player’s heel could be on the batter’s box line, while toes of the same foot are on the plate. A ball hit by this batter would be a legal hit. But if the entire foot is over the line and the ball is hit, then the batter is out. While waiting for the pitch, the batter must have both feet within the batter’s box.

The rule for Little League® is the same as pro rules, but high school rules are different. Under high school rules, a batter is out if they hit the ball when touching the plate with their foot. You may need to explain this to a coach who thinks the rules are the same.

A ball that bounces off of home plate is foul.

NOT TRUE.

The triangular corner at the back of home plate is on the foul line; the plate itself is in fair territory. So a ball that chops off the plate is fair unless it bounces and stays foul before passing first or third base.

A batter attempting to bunt must pull the bat back or it’s a strike.

NOT TRUE

Just placing the bat in the strike zone doesn’t mean that the batter offered at the pitch. The ball is a swinging strike if you judge that the batter attempted to hit the ball.

IFPAA

A pitch that bounces in the dirt is a dead ball.

NOT TRUE

A legal pitch is one that the pitcher releases while in contact with the pitching rubber that crosses the first or third base foul line. If the pitch bounces, it's still a pitch. If a bounced pitch hits the batter, the ball is dead and the batter gets first base. The batter may swing at a bounced pitch, and if hit the ball is in play.

On a ball thrown out-of-play the runner gets "one-plus-one."

NOT TRUE

Often it works this way, but the rule (LL Rule 7.05(g)) is that the runner gets two bases from the runner's position at the time the ball was thrown. Refer back to the discussion on awards of bases in Section I.

The batter-runner must turn right when overrunning first base.

NOT TRUE

LL Rule 7.08(c) states the batter-runner cannot be tagged out after overrunning or oversliding first base if the batter-runner returns immediately to the base. This is true on both hits and walks. However, LL Rule 7.08(j) will result in the batter-runner being called out if there is an attempt to run to second and the batter-runner is tagged with the ball. Usually a single step towards second is enough to indicate intent to run.

Sometimes the first baseman will try to tag the runner with the ball when the runner is returning to first. Do not call the runner out just for trying to avoid the tag.

Neither rule says that the batter-runner has to turn right. If you judge that the batter-runner is trying for second, then the batter-runner is out if tagged with the ball.

IV: Communications

Signals for Players and Fans

Safe

Extend both arms straight out in front on you, parallel to the ground, then spread them open to your sides. Return your arm to the front position, then drop them to your sides and go back to a set position.

Out

Signal all outs. Clench your right fist and make a short hammering motion with your arm held at 90°. If the play isn't close a hand signal is enough; if the play is close sell the call by a loud call of "Out!"

Play

Signal that the ball is live and in play every time that time is called. Point at the pitcher, and say "Play!" The batter and catcher key on this signal, and so will your partner.

Strike

Strikes are always signaled by the right hand. Start by using the same signal as used for an "out" call. After you become comfortable behind the plate you can personalize the call.

Ball

There is no hand signal for a ball, but you should say "ball." After the fourth ball say "ball four!" Don't point to first, because some of the fielders may think it was a strike. Don't be a play-by-play announcer by indicating the location of a ball.

Time

Indicate time by raising both hands in the air and calling "Time!" On some plays the fielders may keep on going, so give the call several times. If your partner calls time, echo the call.

Fair and Foul

As discussed in Section I, fair and foul calls in the IFPAA are the responsibility of the home plate umpire. If the ball is fair, say nothing, but point fair. Use your left arm to point fair when the ball is hit up the first base line; use your right arm to point fair if the ball is hit up third.

If the ball is hit foul, throw your hands up as you would to indicate "time," call "Foul ball!" and then point foul with your right arm, if the ball is near the first base line, and with your left arm if the ball is near the third base line.

IFPAA

The Count

Whenever you put up the ball-strike count between pitches indicate balls with your left hand, strikes with your right. Give the call after the second or third pitch, and every pitch thereafter. Also call the count out loud at the same time: “Two balls, two strikes!”

Interference and Obstruction

Point at the guilty player and say “That’s interference!” or “That’s obstruction!” Depending on the play, the ball may or may not be delayed dead. See the discussions on interference and obstruction in Section I.

Infield Fly

When an infield fly is called point straight up into the air with your outstretched right arm. At the same time call “Infield Fly!” If the ball is near the foul line, call “Infield Fly if fair!” See Section I for more on the infield fly.

Communications Between Umpires

There are times that you’ll need to signal to your partner. One of the common signals is to clarify how many outs there are. To ask your partner for the number of outs, tap your right pant leg with your closed right fist. Answer the request by holding the appropriate number of fingers, pointing downwards, against your right pants leg. If you’re the plate umpire, you can also signal the number of outs by touching the appropriate number of fingers against the side of your mask.

If the home plate ump gives the ball and strike count after every pitch there won’t be much need for you to ask your partner for the count. If you do need to check, make a circular motion with your two index fingers as if you were indicating traveling in a basketball game. The partner responds with the count, balls on the left hand and strikes on the right.

It’s also common to signal that a possible infield fly is in effect. Put your hand over your heart, with your thumb pointing up.

Checked swing appeals also require communications between you and your partner. See “*Umpire-in-Charge Responsibilities*” in Section V.

Vocal communications are also necessary between umpires. This is especially true of coverage at third base. After a play has been made at another base, the home plate ump may take responsibility for coverage of a following play at third base. If you’re the home plate ump when this happens, you must tell your partner “I have the play at third!” Put enough volume in your voice so that your partner hears you. That way your partner will be able to stay closer to plays at first and second. Also, you won’t have the embarrassing situation of you and your partner making opposite calls on the same play.

V: Mechanics

An umpire's *mechanics* are physical actions. Mechanics refers to how you move, act, look, and communicate with partners, players, and spectators.

There are four fundamental mechanics that are required for any play:

- Take a set position for all plays. If you are moving during a play, your body's motion will not allow you to make accurate calls. This is true for calls on the bases, and for ball and strike calls behind the plate.
- The primary goal is to get the calls right. Don't rush your calls; or anticipate the play before it happens. Follow a three-step sequence:
 - _ *Read*—Observe the play. Make sure you are in a set position, and that your head is not moving.
 - _ *Pause*—Make your decision and say your call silently to yourself.
 - _ *React*—Signal and make the call aloud.
- Sacrifice distance for angle. The best angle is usually 90° to the play. For example, on a force play at first the best angle is 90° to the direction of the throw. On a tag play, it's 90° to the line between the fielder and runner, because that is the slot in which the tag is going to be made.
- Communicate with your partner. New umpires often overlook communications, but they are vital to calling a good game. See Section IV.

Umpire-in-Charge Responsibilities

The plate umpire's responsibilities include putting the ball in play, calling strikes and balls, calling fair or foul, and calling all initial plays on fly balls.

To start the ball game and anytime after "Time" is called point at the pitcher and say "Play" to make the ball live. This procedure is actually in the rule book; LL Rule 5.02. The fielders, and your partner in the field will find it easier to know when the ball is in play if you call "Play" aloud each time that "Time" is called.

Calling Balls and Strikes

The strike zone is the space over home plate that is between the batter's armpits and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural stance. A pitch is a strike when any part of the ball passes through the strike zone. If the pitch is on the corner, and only a half-inch of the ball is in the strike zone, it is still a strike.

In Little League[®] think strikes. Call a strike if any part of the ball is over the black of the plate and is between the batter's knees and armpits. If you umpire young players who are just learning to pitch, widen the strike zone. (This is practical advice: if you call too tight a strike zone the batters will quit swinging and the game will last all night.)

Low pitches are hard to judge, so watch where the catcher's glove is when the pitch is caught. Unless a pitch has excessive arc or is a nasty curve, if the catcher's glove is below the catcher's knees it's probably a ball. It's also usually a ball if the catcher's glove-hand fingers are pointed towards the ground.

Some players adopt an excessive crouch when they wait for a pitch, and then straighten up when they swing. You should judge the strike zone according to the batter's stance when swinging at a pitch.

If you use an outside protector you should center yourself behind the plate and look over the catcher's head. If you don't work from this position you will have a poor lower strike zone, and be inconsistent on outside pitches.

Don't move your head or body when the pitch is thrown—follow it only with your eyes. If you move your head the strike zone will move with you, and you won't make consistent calls. Watch the pitch all the way to the catcher's glove, and watch the location of the catcher's glove when the ball is caught. Then decide whether the pitch was a strike or a ball, say the call silently to yourself, and then make the call out loud.

Checked Swing Appeals

As the plate umpire you can ask your partner for help on a checked swing. The defense can also request an appeal. NO appeal can be made if "Strike!" is called by the home plate ump.

If you're the plate umpire and you want your partner to help with a checked swing call, point at your partner and ask aloud, "Did the batter swing?" or "Did he (or she) go?"

- If the batter checked the swing, the base umpire answers with a safe sign and says "No swing!" or "He didn't go!"
- If the batter swung at the pitch, the base umpire makes an out sign and says "Strike!"

As plate umpire, echo the call of "Ball!" or "Strike!" Then give the count out loud.

Equipment

One requirement of keeping your head motionless is to believe in your equipment. If you use good equipment you'll be able to hang in, make the call and not worry if the ball hits off of your equipment. An umpire cannot duck out of the way of a pitch: hang in there, remain motionless, and take it if the pitch gets back to you. If you're the plate umpire you must wear mask, shin guards, and a chest protector. If you're male, you must wear a protective cup. LL Rule 9.01(a).

Don't wear a catcher's chest guard. Unlike the catcher, an umpire doesn't wear a glove, and balls will hit you. Because a catcher's chest guard doesn't have plates to protect the shoulders, you could end up with a broken collarbone or a bruised shoulder joint.

Stances

To keep your head steady you'll need to adopt a consistent position or stance that you get used to dropping into. There are three types of set positions behind the plate.

Square Stance: This stance is the easiest to use with an outside protector, and it is easy to keep your head steady. It's the stance most beginning umpires should use. Spread your feet slightly more than shoulder width apart, keeping your weight evenly on the balls of your feet. Keep your shoulders square to the pitcher. As the pitch is made, bend at the knees and lean forward slightly.

Scissors Stance: The foot closer to the batter (called the slot foot, referring to the narrow slot between the batter and the catcher) is in front, with the other leg fully extended behind. Be sure to fully extend your back leg; if both knees are bent you'll be unable to hold yourself steady. As the ball is pitched lean forward. Your front knee will bend to nearly a 90° angle, and your back foot will go up on the toe. This stance is hard to hold without movement because most of your weight is on one leg, so you will need to practice.

Kneeling Stance: To move into the kneeling stance place your slot foot about half a step in front of the other. As the pitcher delivers the ball, lean forward and drop onto your knee. This stance provides good balance, but at a cost. The thigh on your kneeling leg is unprotected, and even though it is usually behind the catcher's back, an occasional pitch or foul will land on you. You may find that you are not tall enough to see over the catcher. And it takes an extra few moments and extra effort to stand up after each pitch.

Whichever stance you adopt, make sure your head does not move when the pitch is made. Hold the outside protector snug against the bottom of your chin. With this protection, the balls can hit you, but they won't hurt. Your position should be centered over the plate, with your chin no lower than the catcher's helmet so that you can see the whole plate.

Move into your stance when the pitcher commits to the plate. Don't drop into your stance too early (you'll tire yourself out) or too late (you'll be moving when the pitch reaches the plate).

Communications

Call both strikes and balls out loud. Some umpires stay in their stance when they say that a pitch is a ball, and stand up before calling and signaling strike. The same tone of voice should be used for calls of both balls and strikes. Don't signal balls, but indicate strikes by making an "out" signal with your right arm and hand.

After the third pitch give the ball and strike count after each pitch. That way both players and managers will learn to listen for your call, and you won't be pestered by persistent requests for "What's the count, ump?" Depending on the way you hold the chest protector you may be able to indicate the number of balls and strikes with your fingers. Indicate the number of balls with your left hand, and the number of strikes on your right.

The indicator always goes in your left hand. When you first start to use the indicator practice counting balls and strikes on your indicator during a ball game you watch as a spectator, live or on TV. Try to develop an automatic ability to move the ball and strike wheels without looking at the indicator.

After the Ball is Put Into Play

When the ball is put in play clear the catcher by taking one step backward. Then read the play and move around the catcher to the best position to view the action and make the calls that are yours. On a 60 foot Little League® field, the plate umpire has responsibility for all fly ball out calls, and for all fair/foul ball calls. As you will see in the set of illustrations in the next section, both the Umpire-in-Charge and base umpire need to move in reaction to the ball.

Difficult Situations

Pop-ups. From your position behind the plate and with your head still it is almost impossible to see where a pop-up goes. Don't try to locate the ball, rather watch the catcher's and infielders' reactions. By watching the catcher's head and shoulders you will be able to pick up the ball.

Batter hit by a batted ball. A sharply hit ball that bounces in the dirt may kick back up and hit the batter. Make sure you ask your partner to keep an eye out for these situations, because they are hard to see from behind the plate. Either umpire can and should stop play immediately when a batter is hit by a batted ball. (The ball is dead as soon as this occurs.) Then you need to judge if the batter still had at least one foot in the batter's box or was in foul territory. If so, then it is a foul ball. If the batter was out of the batter's box and was hit in fair territory, then the batter is out.

Base Umpire Responsibilities

Positioning

The base umpire stands in one of three starting positions, depending on the position of the runners:

No one on base: stand about 10 - 12 feet behind first base, just in foul territory. This is called Position A. If a line drive were to hit you in Position A, the ball would be foul.

Runner on first: stand behind the second baseman, on a line drawn between home plate and the first base edge of the pitcher's mound. This is Position B.

All other combinations of base runners: stand behind the shortstop, on a line drawn between home plate and the third base edge of the pitcher's mound. This is Position C.

In any of these positions you need to adjust to the fielders' positions. If you are behind first base and the first baseman is playing back, you will need to move towards the outfield along the first base line.

In Little League® the starting position is in the outfield side of the diamond. There are two reasons for using positions on the outfield side of the base paths: These positions allow the base umpire to see any runner that leaves early. Also, a 60' field is so small that playing inside the base paths obscures the fielder's view, and makes it more likely that you won't be able to get out of the way of a batted ball.

Set Positions

There are two basic stances or set positions: the standing set, and the hands-on-knees set. In the standing set, your feet should be about shoulder width apart and your chest and shoulders square to the play. Your knees should be slightly bent, and your hands at your sides. The hands-on-knees set is similar, but the arms are locked and the hands placed on the knees. Your back should be straight and your head up. Don't put too much weight on your arms, or you will reduce your mobility when the ball is put in play. In both positions your shoulders should be square to the action, and your head and body should be still.

Use either the standing set or hands-on-knees set when in position A waiting for the pitch. Use the hands-on-knees set when waiting for a pitch with runners on base. After the pitch use either set as plays develop.

Before the Pitch

Before a pitch is made the base ump has two responsibilities: make sure that the pitcher's foot is in contact with the pitching rubber, and watch any runners to see if they leave the base early. If a runner leaves early, drop a flag to indicate the infraction. See "Leaving Too Soon" in Section II, Special Little League® Rules.

After the Ball is Hit

After the ball is hit the base umpire needs to move into different positions depending on the play. A set of case studies are given in the next section that shows how the base umpire should react to the play. When moving into position, remember "Inside/Outside." If the ball is in the infield, the base umpire will generally be outside the baseline. If the ball is hit to the outfield, you should move to the infield side of the baseline.

When the ball is hit make sure it is a legitimate hit. Help your partner by watching to see if the ball hits the batter. If the batter is hit by a batted ball while at least one foot is inside the batter's box, it's a foul ball. If the batter is outside the batter's box when hit the ball is dead. Call "Time" and, if the ball hit the batter in fair territory, call the batter out. If the runner was hit in foul territory the ball is foul. Of course, if the batter intended to be hit by the ball, the batter is out. In any of these cases make your call immediately to shut down the play.

If the ball is hit fair, the base umpire concentrates on the runners. The base ump has responsibility for calling the first play at first, second, or third base. The base umpire needs to watch to see that the bases are touched by the runners. Since the plate umpire has all fly ball calls, the base umpire needs to check that runners tag-up before advancing on a fly out. And the base umpire needs to watch for interference or obstruction.

Plays at a Base

Whenever a play is made be sure you are not in motion, and take a standing or hands-on-knees set. When a force play occurs there isn't enough time to watch the ball hit the glove and then look for the runner's foot. Instead, watch the base and the runner's foot and listen for the pop of the ball in the mitt. Then make sure the fielder has maintained control of the ball, and make the call.

If the play pulls a fielder off the base on a force play, call and signal "Safe!" and then sweep your arms to the right while saying "Off the bag!" Similarly, if the fielder is bobbling the ball, call safe and make a juggling action with your hands.

On tag plays, watch the glove. If the glove touches the runner before the runner touches the base, look to see if the fielder has the ball in the glove. If the ball is there, make the "Out" call.

Controlling the Game

Even before you walk onto the field there are things you can do to get ready for the game. Dress appropriately, with a clean shirt and pants. Arrive at the field at least 15 minutes before the game will begin. Since you'll be making rapid starts and stops, it's best to stretch out. If you're the home plate ump, get your gear on. Also, review responsibilities with your partner.

You and your partner are the third team on the field, and both of you have specific roles and responsibilities. For example, if you're the plate umpire you are responsible for fly balls into the outfield. Your partner on the bases is responsible for determining if runners leave the base early or miss a base. If you both watch the ball in the outfield you'll miss important plays in the infield.

About five minutes before the start meet with both managers at home plate. Review any ground rules, such as out-of-play lines. Also, ask the managers if their players are properly equipped with required safety equipment. In fact, assuring that the game takes place in a safe manner is one of the most important responsibilities of an umpire.

When you take the field start the game promptly and keep it moving. Little League® rules allow only 8 pitches between innings during a one minute time period (LL Rule 8.03). Hold the pitchers to the time. If the catcher comes out late or takes too much time putting on equipment, encourage a substitute to warm up the pitcher. If a minute elapses, start the inning.

Note that if a pitcher is injured and is replaced during an inning, the replacement pitcher is given as many pitches to warm up as the umpire deems necessary.

Umpire Authority

There is a rule (LL Rule 9.01(c)) that gives umpires the authority to rule on any point not specifically covered in the rules. However, baseball has been played for a long time, and there are few situations that haven't occurred before. As a result, read the rule book and consult other sources to learn about possible situations that may occur, and how they should be treated.

In the IFPAA we don't have many situations of unsportsmanlike conduct. However, if a manager or player objects to judgment decisions, uses inappropriate language, or otherwise demonstrates unsportsmanlike conduct, you have the authority to disqualify and eject them from the field. Players are ejected into the dugout; adults to their car. LL Rule 9.01(d).

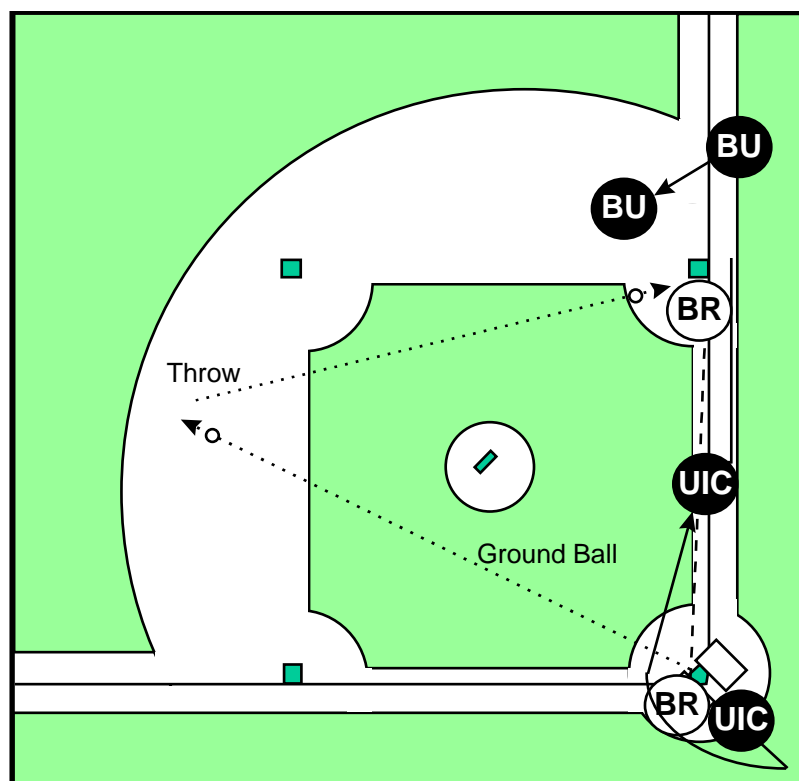
While your judgment cannot be questioned, your interpretation of the rules can be challenged. Respond by asking the manager to show you the rule that is the basis for the challenge and by conferring with your partner. LL Rule 4.19.

VI: Case Studies

This section shows how the Umpire-in-Charge and the Base Umpire move during a variety of situations and plays. As you read through the cases, you'll notice that patterns emerge and that certain fundamental mechanics repeat. The starting positions are always Positions A, B, or C as described a few pages earlier in the "Base Umpire" section.

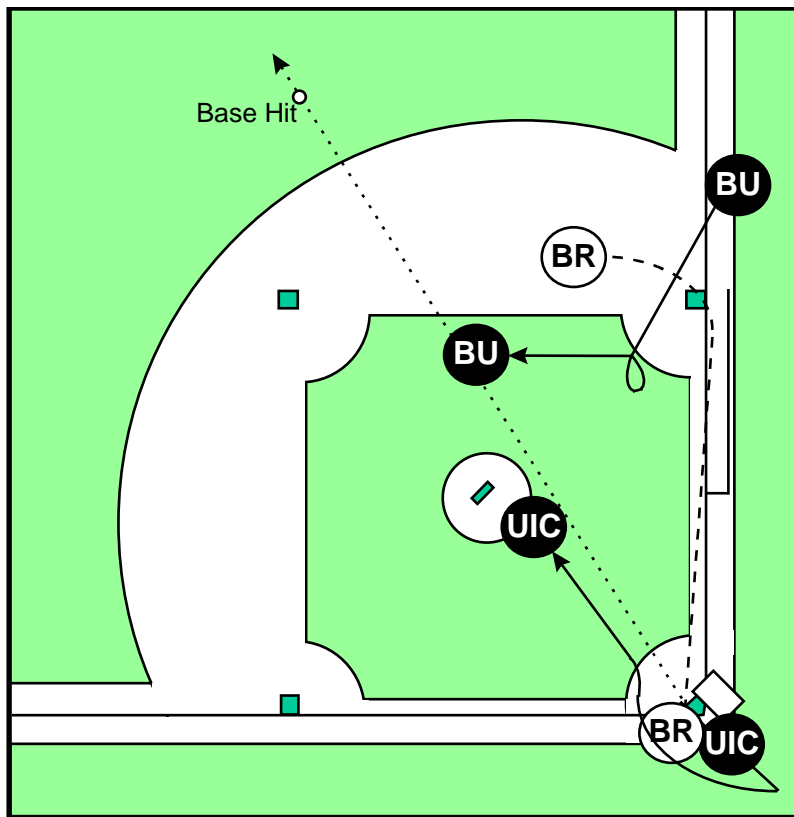
The plays diagram the starting position and the following positions if the ball is hit as diagrammed. If the ball is hit to another location in the field, you will need to adjust.

Also, remember that Little League® ballplayers are unpredictable. You need to stay aware of alternative plays, and not over-commit to one play. If you do, the players will catch you off-guard and out of position. As you read the case studies, think about alternative plays and how you would respond to them.



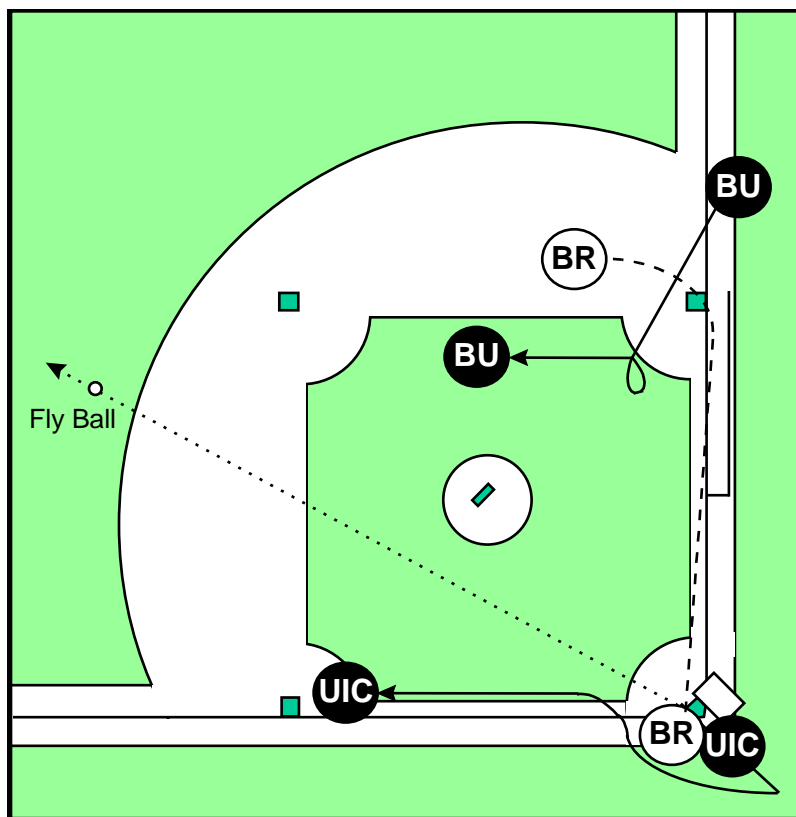
No one on base, ball hit on ground to the infield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Position yourself about 10 - 12 feet behind first base, just in foul territory. (If you took one step to your right, your foot would land in fair territory.) Before the pitch, make sure the pitcher's foot is properly positioned on the pitching rubber.</p> <p>When the ball is hit on the ground to the infield, move into fair territory at a 90° angle to the direction of the throw and about 10 - 12 feet away from the base.</p> <p>On a good throw, go into a set position and focus on the play. Watch the fielder's and batter-runner's touch on first, and listen for the ball hitting the fielder's glove. Make sure the fielder has control of the ball, then make your "Safe" or "Out" call. If you are not sure about a swipe tag or pulled foot ask for help from the UIC before making the call.</p> <p>If the play breaks down be prepared to follow the runner to second base.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line either in front of or behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving around the catcher. Hustle down the line 20 - 30 feet, or until the throw is made. Take a set position, and watch the play at first.</p> <p>Be alert for the fielder's foot pulled off the bag, and for a swipe tag.</p> <p>Provide help to the base umpire if needed.</p>



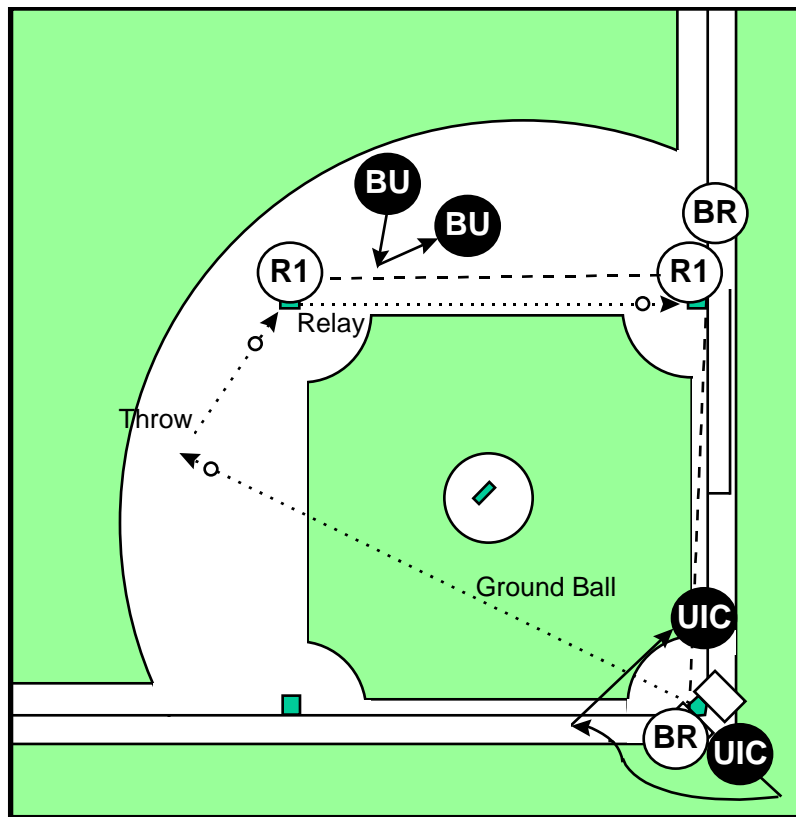
No one on base, base hit to the outfield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Position yourself in Position A. Before the pitch, make sure the pitcher's foot is properly positioned on the pitching rubber.</p> <p>When the ball is hit on the ground to the outfield, move into the infield in fair territory.</p> <p>Watch BR touch first base, moving your feet to keep your chest pointed to BR at all times. This will result in a "pivot," which is essentially a 360° turn.</p> <p>If a play develops at second base, run towards second base while staying on the infield side of the baseline. Stop and take a set position before calling the play.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line either in front of or behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving around the catcher. Move out towards the pitcher's mound. Take a set position, and watch the play unfold.</p> <p>Provide help to the base umpire if needed.</p>



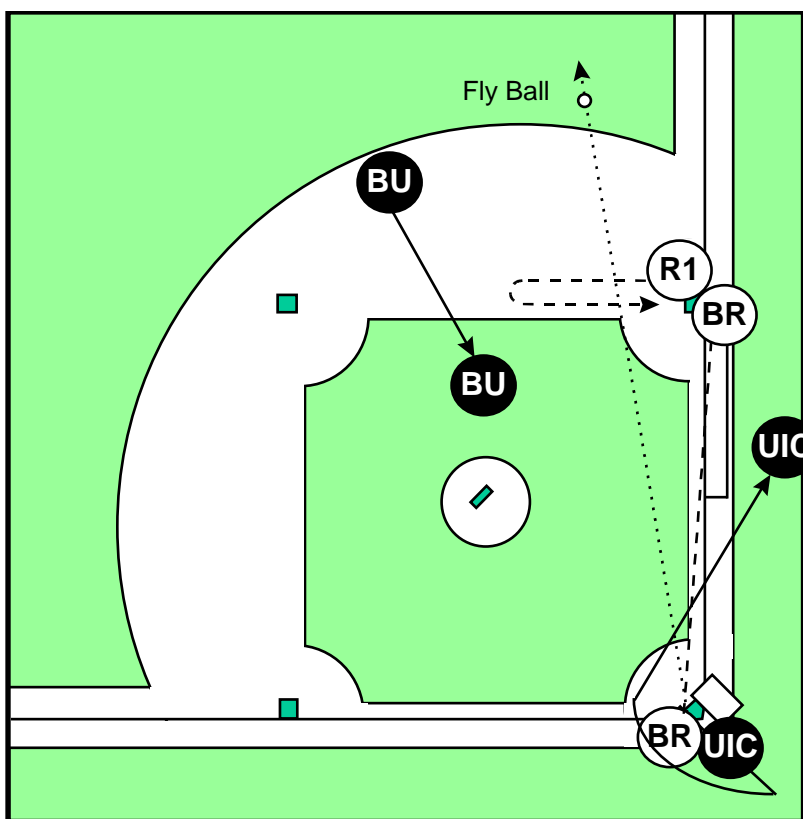
No one on base, fly ball to the outfield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Position yourself in Position A. Before the pitch, make sure the pitcher's foot is properly positioned on the pitching rubber.</p> <p>When the ball is hit on the fly to the outfield, move inside the baseline in fair territory.</p> <p>Watch BR touch first base, moving your feet to keep your chest pointed to BR at all times. This will result in a "pivot."</p> <p>If the ball is not caught, watch BR. Move towards second base or retreat towards a position between the pitcher's mound and first base. You have the call at any base.</p> <p>If a play develops at any base stop and take a set position before calling the play.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line either in front of or behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving around the catcher. Move towards third base so that you have an angle on the play. Take a set position, and watch the play unfold.</p> <p>If the ball is caught easily, signal and say "Out." A difficult catch should be accompanied with a loud "Out" call. If no catch is made, call "No catch! No Catch!" while signaling "Safe."</p> <p>If the play breaks down, be prepared to cover a possible play at home.</p>



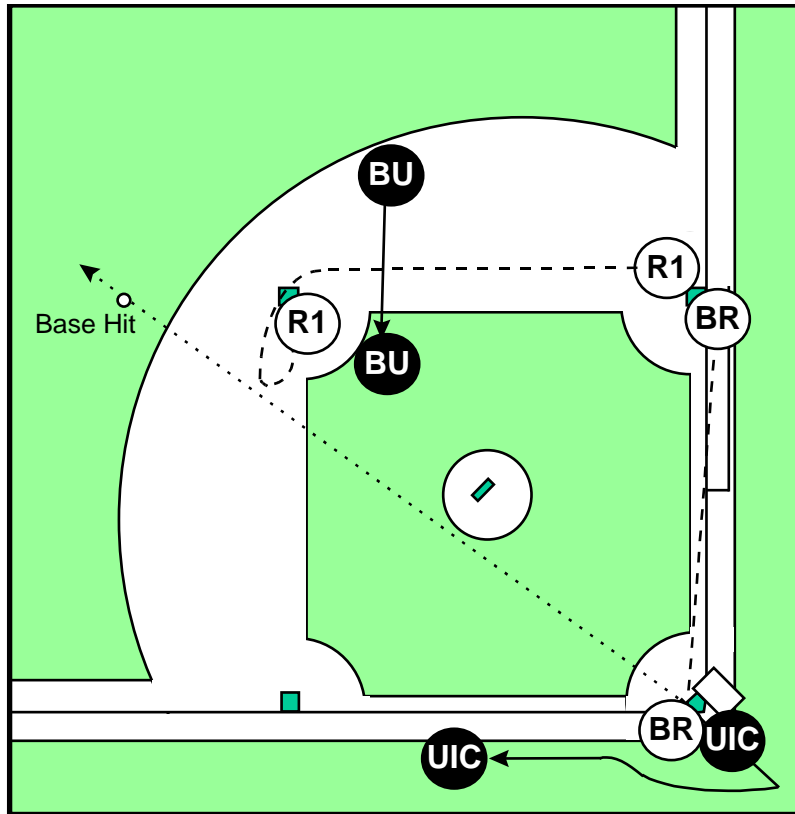
Runner on first, ball hit on ground to the infield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Start in Position B, behind the second baseman, on a line drawn between home plate and the first base edge of the pitcher's mound. If R1 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>When the ball is hit on the ground to the infield read the play. Since the ball is fielded by an infielder, stay on the outfield side of the baseline.</p> <p>If the play is at second, move toward second base, maintaining a 90° angle to the throw. Adopt a set position, and watch the play. Determine safe or out, being sure that the fielder has control of the ball.</p> <p>While watching the rest of the play at second, move 2 or 3 steps towards first. Angle is more important than distance. With the throw to first, adopt a set position and determine safe or out. Be sure that the fielder controls the ball, and make the call.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line either in front of or behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving around the catcher. Move towards third base so that you have an angle on the play. Take a set position, and watch the play unfold. If R1 is able to advance to third you are responsible for the call.</p> <p>If R1 is ruled out at second move towards the first base line to support your partner. Adopt a set position and watch the play for interference by BR, a pulled foot or a swipe tag.</p>



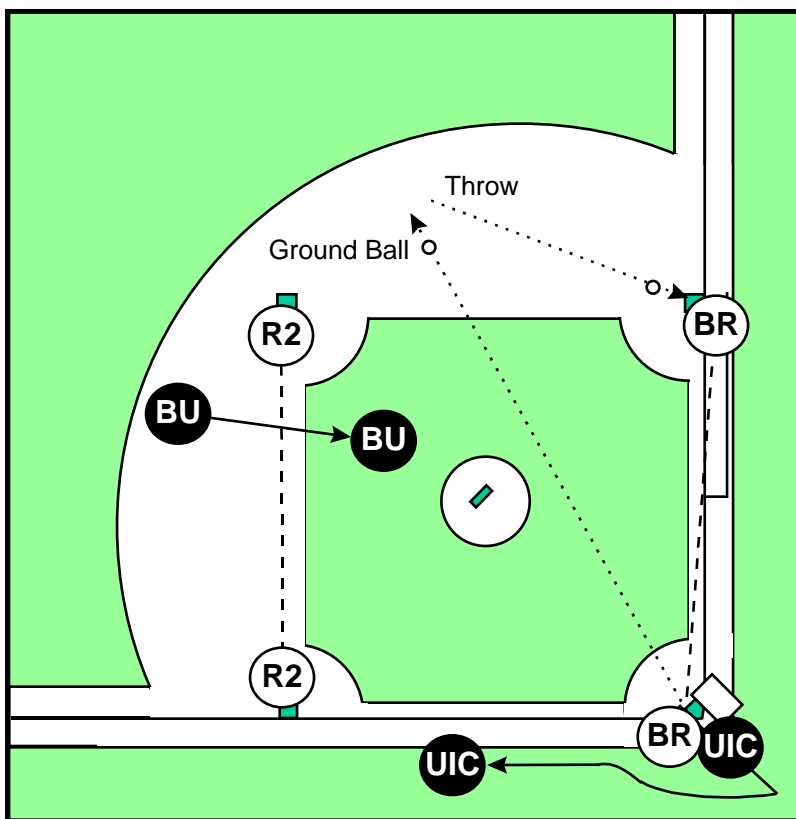
Runner on first, fly ball to the outfield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position B. If R1 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>When the ball is hit in the air to the outfield move inside the baseline towards the pitcher's mound.</p> <p>Watch both R1 and BR. If a catch is made, observe R1. If R1 has gone half-way, move to a point half way between first and second and read the throw back to the infield. If the throw is accurate, R1 will retreat to first base. If the play breaks down, follow R1 to second base.</p> <p>If R1 is tagging to advance, support your partner by watching the tag-up at first base while moving towards second. Adopt a set position before the play occurs.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line either in front of or behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving around the catcher. Move towards the first base dugout (third base dugout if the ball is hit to left field) so that you have an angle on the play. Watch the play from a set position.</p> <p>If the ball is caught easily, signal and say "Out." A difficult catch should be accompanied with a loud "Out" call. If no catch is made, call "No catch! No Catch!" while signaling "Safe."</p> <p>After the catch, watch a potential tag-up at first base.</p> <p>If the play breaks down, be prepared to cover a possible play at home.</p>



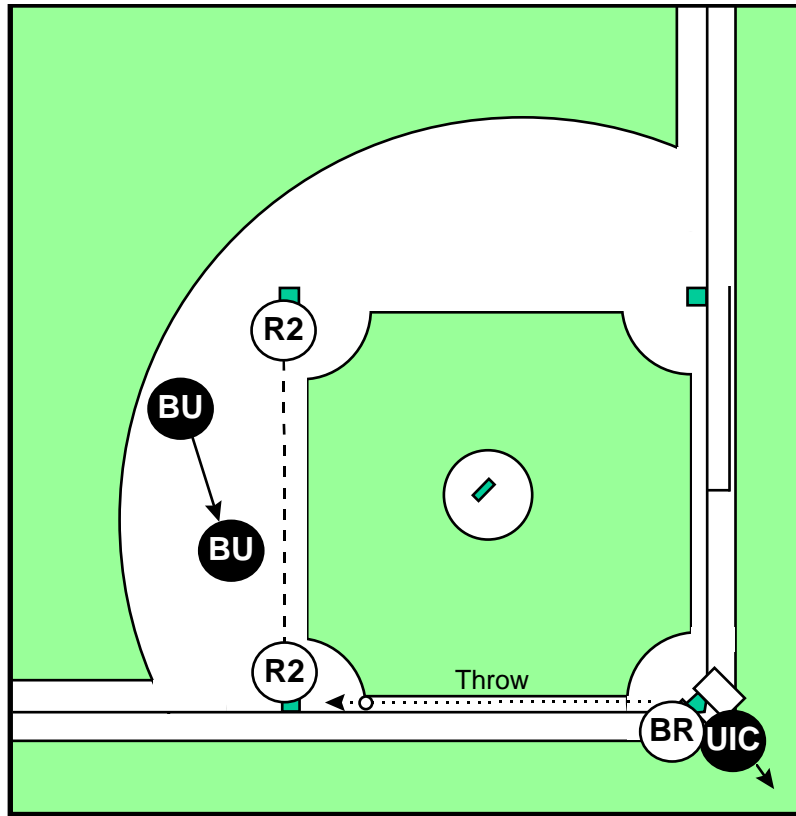
Runner on first, base hit to the outfield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position B. If R1 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>When there is a base hit to the outfield move inside the baseline towards the pitcher's mound.</p> <p>Watch both R1 and BR, being alert to their touch of the bases.</p> <p>Read the throw in from the outfield. You are responsible for any play at first or second base.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line either in front of or behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving around the catcher. Move about half-way up the third-base line. Tell your partner "I've got third!" Watch R1 advancing from second base. You have responsibility for a play at third or home.</p>



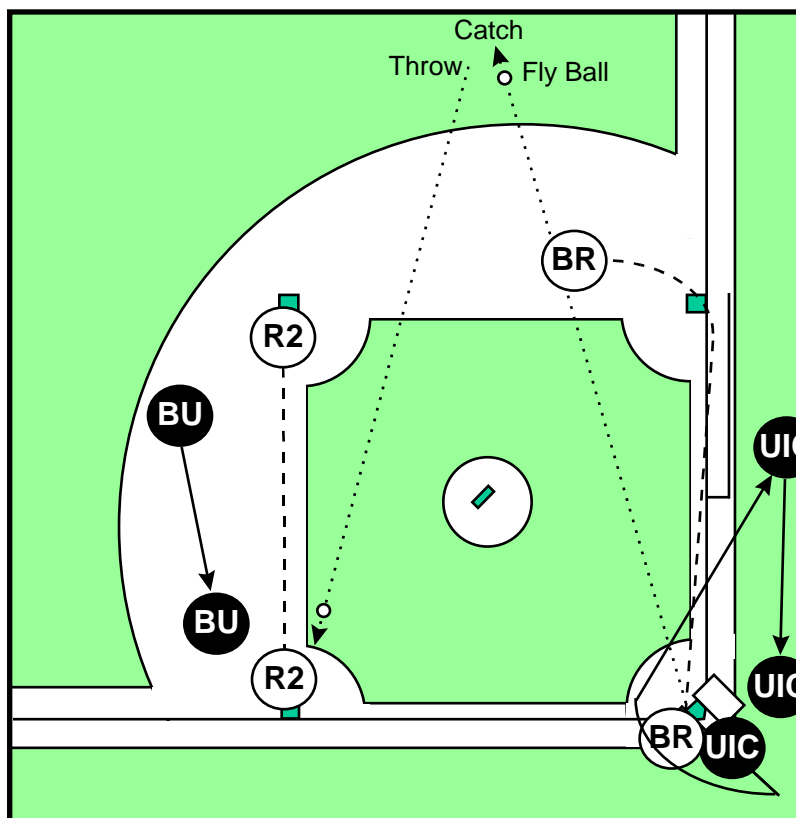
Runner on second, ball hit on ground to the infield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position C. You will be behind the shortstop, on a line drawn between home plate and the third-base edge of the pitcher's mound. If R2 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>If the ball is hit on the ground to the right side of the infield move inside the baseline towards the pitcher's mound. If the play goes to first base (as it usually will), move towards first. Before the play is made adopt a set position and observe the play. After a play at first move towards the center of the infield to observe any subsequent play on R2.</p> <p>If the first play is on R2, turn with the ball and move towards second or third base depending on where the play is made. Watch the fielder's glove to determine if a tag is made, and make sure the fielder maintains control of the ball before making an "Out" call.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line either in front of or behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving around the catcher. Move 10 - 15 feet up the third-base line. If the first play is at first base, watch for interference by BR, a swipe tag or pulled foot.</p> <p>If R1 breaks for third during the play at first base, move quickly towards third base, staying in foul territory. Watch the fielder's glove to determine if a tag is made, and make sure the fielder maintains control of the ball before making an "Out" call.</p> <p>You are also responsible for any play that develops at home plate.</p>



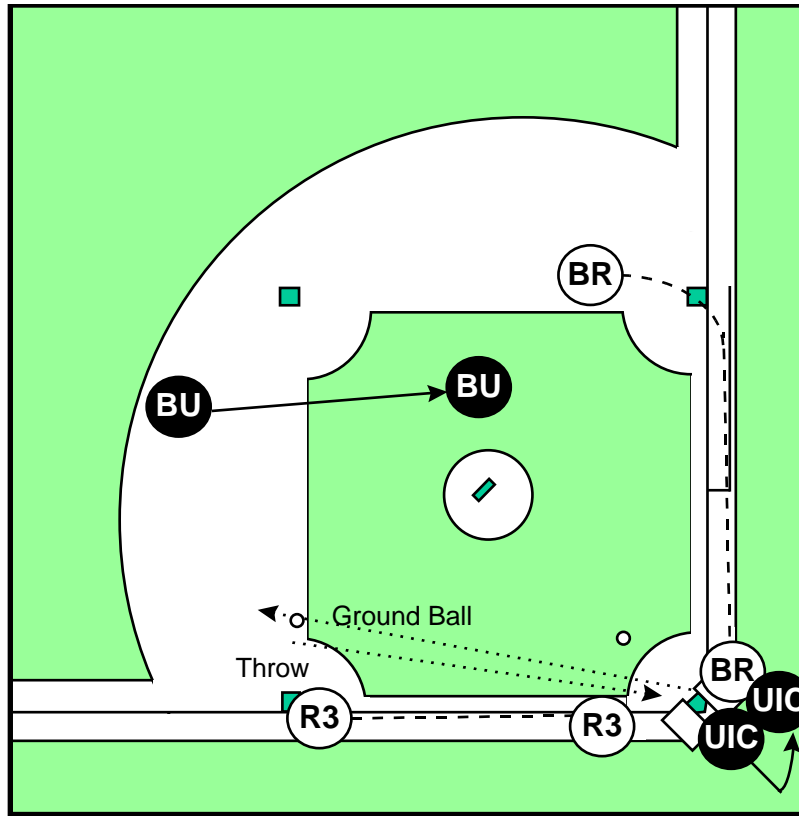
Runner on second, third-base steal

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position C. If R2 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>As R2 breaks for third move towards a point about 10 feet behind third base. This will give you a 90° angle to the runner's path towards third base.</p> <p>Set and observe the play. Focus on the fielder's glove, and determine if the glove tags the runner before the runner touches the base. If the tag is in time, wait until you see that the ball is in the glove before calling the runner out.</p>	<p>Call the pitch ball or strike.</p> <p>Observe the catcher's action at home plate: is the batter guilty of interfering with F2's throw? If so, the runner is out if there are less than two outs. If batter's interference occurs with two outs, the batter is out and no run scores.</p> <p>If the play breaks down at third base, move to foul territory on the third base side of the plate. You have responsibility for any play at the plate.</p>



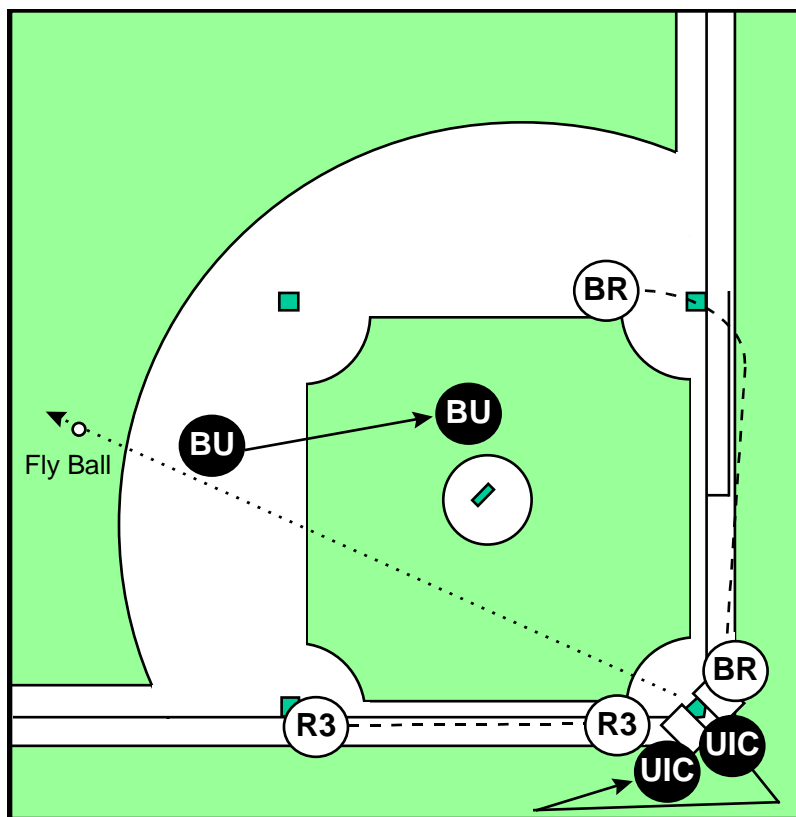
Runner on second, fly ball to the outfield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position C. If R2 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>When the ball is hit in the air to the outfield move inside the baseline towards the pitcher's mound.</p> <p>Listen to your partner's call of "out" or "no catch." If the ball is caught, support your partner by observing R2 tag-up. Move with the runner towards third base. Don't go too hard towards third, because you have any play that develops at second base if the runner retreats.</p> <p>Adopt a set position before the play occurs.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line either in front of or behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving around the catcher. Move towards the first base dugout (third base dugout if the ball is hit to left field) so that you have an angle on the play. Take a set position, and watch the play unfold.</p> <p>If the ball is caught easily, signal and say "Out." A difficult catch should be accompanied with a loud "Out" call. If no catch is made, call "No catch! No Catch!" while signaling "Safe."</p> <p>After the catch, watch a potential tag-up at second base, then return quickly to cover a possible play at home.</p>



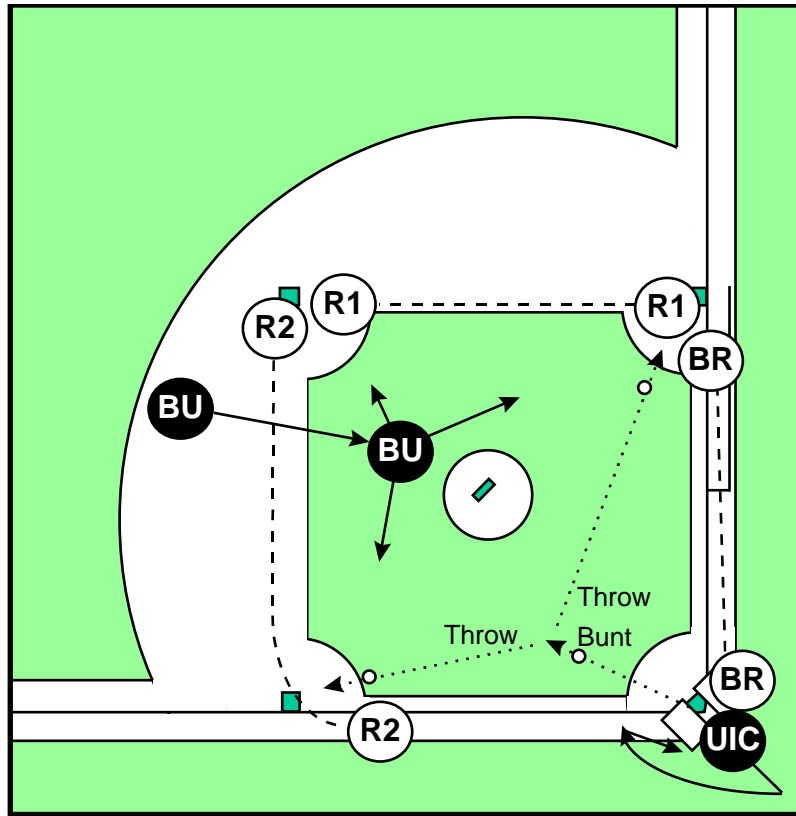
Runner on third, ground ball with play at the plate

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position C. If R3 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>When the ball is hit on the ground to the infield move inside the baseline towards the pitcher's mound.</p> <p>Read the play. If the first play is at the plate watch the action. If there is a follow-up play at first, move towards first; stop and adopt a set position before the play occurs.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the base line behind home plate. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher by backing up and moving towards the third base line extended. If a tag play occurs at the plate, watch the fielder's glove to determine if a tag is made on the runner. Make sure the fielder maintains control of the ball before making an "Out" call.</p>



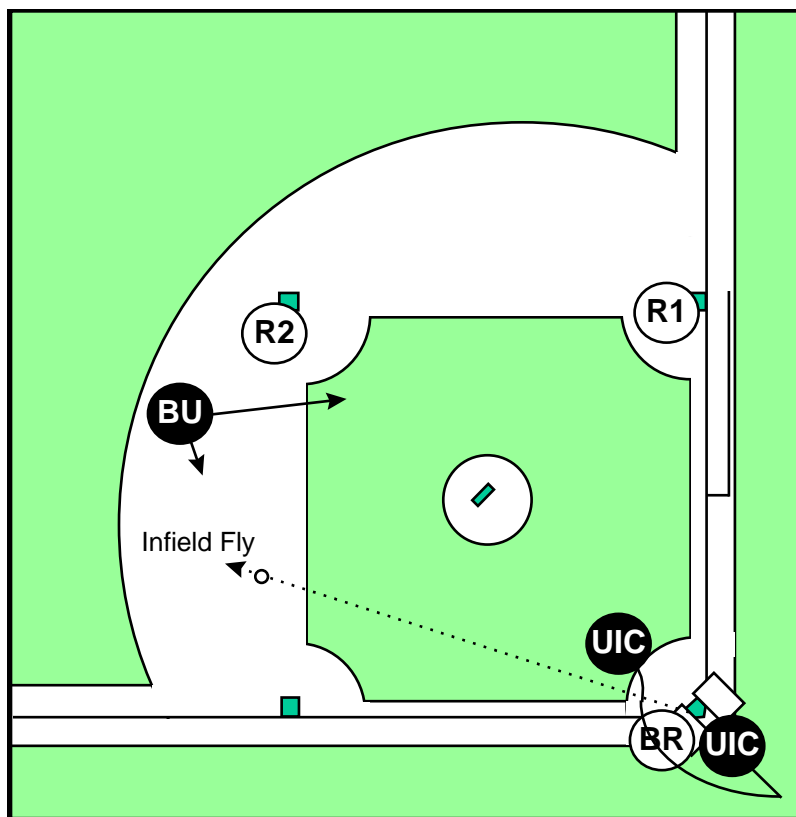
Runner on third, fly ball to the outfield

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position C. If R3 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>When the ball is hit in the air to the outfield move inside the baseline towards the pitcher's mound.</p> <p>Listen to your partner's call of "out" or "no catch." If the ball is caught, support your partner by observing R3's tag-up. If no catch is made, observe BR's touch at first base.</p> <p>You have responsibility for a play at third base if R3 moves towards the plate and returns. Adopt a set position before the play occurs.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and take a position along the base line. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, move towards first- or third base dugout so that you have a clear view of the play. Stay near home. Take a set position, and watch the play unfold.</p> <p>If the ball is caught easily, signal and say "Out." A difficult catch should be accompanied with a loud "Out" call. If no catch is made, call "No catch! No Catch!" while signaling "Safe."</p> <p>After the catch, watch a potential tag-up at third base.</p> <p>Return quickly to cover a possible play at home. Adopt a set position before the play occurs.</p>



Runners on first and second, bunt

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position C. If R1 or R2 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>When the ball is bunted read whether the play will occur at first, second, or third base. You have responsibility for the first play. Take two or three steps towards the base where the play is being made.</p> <p>Adjust your position for an unobstructed view, and take a set position before the play is made. Be sure the fielder controls the ball before calling the runner out. If you are unsure about a tag or pulled foot ask your partner for assistance before making the call.</p> <p>You have responsibility for a following play at first, second, or third base.</p>	<p>If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and take a position along the base line. Raise both hands above your head and call "Foul;" point fair only.</p> <p>If no fair or foul call is needed, read where the first play is being made. If the first play is at first base rule immediately if there is a running lane violation or other interference by BR.</p> <p>You have responsibility for any play that occurs at home plate.</p>



Runners on first and second, infield fly

Base Umpire	Umpire-in-Charge
<p>Stand in Position C. If R1 or R2 leaves the base before the pitch has reached the batter, drop a flag.</p> <p>When the ball is hit in the air, read which fielder will make the play. There must be less than two out, with runners on first and second or the bases loaded, and an infielder must be able to catch the ball with ordinary effort. If you are certain it is an infield fly, point straight up with your right hand and call “Infield fly, the batter is out!” This removes all force plays. If your partner is the first to call the infield fly, point straight up and echo “Infield fly!” If the ball is near the foul line, you will echo “Infield fly, if fair!”</p> <p>Unless the ball is not caught and settles in foul territory, the ball remains alive. If the ball is caught, runners must tag before advancing. You have responsibility for following plays on the bases.</p>	<p>Read the pop up and determine which fielder will make the play. If a fair or foul call is needed, clear the catcher and straddle the foul line in front of or behind home plate. If no fair or foul call is needed, move to a position in front of home plate.</p> <p>Either umpire may make the initial call of infield fly. Point straight up with your right hand and call “Infield fly, the batter is out!” This removes all force plays. If your partner is the first to call the infield fly, point straight up and echo “Infield fly!” If the ball is near the foul line, call “Infield fly, if fair!”</p> <p>Unless the ball is not caught and settles in foul territory, the ball remains alive. If the ball is caught, runners must tag before advancing. You have responsibility for watching R2’s touch at third base and for any play at home plate.</p>

VII: Web Sites

There are a number of useful sites on the internet that you will find useful. Some of the best sites are:

Rules Interpretation: <http://www.eteamz.com/baseball/boards/obrrules>

Eteamz has a comprehensive rules library, interpretations, and an online discussion group. The path above takes you to the discussion group; other sections such as the rules library or myths section are easy to find. If you can't find it here, you probably haven't looked hard enough or used the keyword search function inside the rules library. There's also a baseball rules quiz.

Umpire Mechanics: <http://www.amateurumpire.com>

Brent McLaren is a Canadian ump who posts articles on various aspects of umpiring.

Amateur Baseball Umpires' Association: <http://www.umpire.org/>

Posts some good basic information on working the plate, among other articles.

Little League Official Site: <http://www.littleleague.org>

Baseball Links: <http://www.baseball-links.com>

If you're looking for baseball stuff on the web this is the place to start. See the "Rules/Umpiring" and "Youth Baseball" lists.

IFPAA: <http://www.ifpaa.org>

This guidebook can be found on-line by clicking on "Handbook" and then choosing "Umpire Guidebook"