



GHBL Umpire Clinic



Introduction

- This clinic covers many of the rules and situations commonly encountered in Cal Ripken games
 - Does not cover every rule in the Official Babe Ruth League playing rules
 - Everyone is encouraged to read through the rule book to become better acquainted with all playing rules
 - **Playing Rules - Table of Contents:**
 - 2.00 – Definitions
 - 3.00 – Game Preliminaries
 - 4.00 – Starting and Ending the Game
 - 5.00 – Putting the ball in play - Live Ball
 - 6.00 – The Batter
 - 7.00 – The Runner
 - 8.00 – The Pitcher
 - 9.00 – The Umpire

Expectations of GHBL Umpires

- Maintain positive attitude and professionalism at all times
 - Project the example of the attitude we expect from everyone else
- Keep tempers in check
 - Umpires expected to have “thick skin”
 - Don’t have “quick triggers” for ejections
(more on ejections later)
- Be out there for the league and players
 - Not solely to demonstrate that we’re “in control”
....**But** ... know how and be able to maintain or regain control

Expectations of GHBL Umpires

- Understand and implement the rules **as best we can**
 - Always strive to get better and learn more about the game
 - Understand that everyone makes mistakes – don't dwell on them but learn from them for next time
 - Dwelling on a mistake will cause you to “daydream” and lose focus for the next few plays and possibly miss calls

Ejections

(Part 1 of 2)

- You can only eject persons from the playing field, not from the bleachers
 - Players, managers, coaches, photographers, scorekeepers, etc.
 - Cannot eject spectators outside the playing field (see guidance later for how to deal with unruly spectators)
- **Players** – Reasonable causes for ejection
 - Threats or cursing either verbally or via body language
 - Repeated complaints about calls (again, try to have thick skin)
 - Reserve ejections to those who really deserve it But don't permit anyone to continually demonstrate disrespect to either the umpire crew or anyone else involved in the game
 - Gross unsportsmanlike behavior
 - Flagrant malicious behavior
 - Example: "Plowing" the catcher while attempting to score

Ejections

(Part 2 of 2)

- **Managers/coaches** – Reasonable causes for ejection
 - Same as for players
 - Encouraging or “egging-on” spectators to complain about umpires calls
 - Arguing a call and not giving up on it

Umpires and Spectators

- **Tournament Play - General etiquette**

- Umpires should be careful about seeming too friendly with fans so as not to create *perception* of bias
- Between innings, base umpires usually retreat down baselines
 - Don't drift over to fence and chat with spectators or players/coaches

- **Regular Season Play within GHBL**

- Regular season play within GHBL can be more relaxed (after all, we usually know everyone at the game)
 - Maintain balance between teams when talking to spectators
- Umpires are encouraged to be approachable before and during games and to represent the league in a friendly manner
- Be cautious about impression of favoritism toward any team (maintain balance)
 - Plate umpires might try standing on the side of the field of the team coming to bat.

Handling Difficult Fans or Coaches (part 1)

- **Umpires are expected to have “thick skin”**
 - Expect complaints and criticism – it’s natural for fans to think you made a bad call when it didn’t go their way
 - Learn to brush it off (almost as though you didn’t hear it – tune out the “fan chatter”)
 - For the “common complaints and comments” ... don’t react to fan criticism
 - Reacting acknowledges that you heard the comment and will encourage repeat behavior
 - Many times a complaining fan will stop complaining if it doesn’t get them anywhere (they make a spectacle of themselves)
 - **NEVER react by engaging spectators in arguments or debates about behavior or a call**

Pausing before making the call *(Part 1 of 2)*

- Umpires sometimes feel pressure to make quick calls (nerves, knowing everyone is watching you, the fast pace of a play)
- In a fast action play, a new umpire will sometimes make a split second decision and make a quick call
- Quick calls are many times wrong
- **Examples**
 - Close play at first. What did you really see? Did runner's foot hit the bag first, or was the ball caught first? Are you absolutely sure of your call? Are you sure first baseman didn't pull his foot?
 - Runner stealing 2nd with a close tag. After your quick "out" call, you notice the ball on the ground between the runner and the fielder.



Third most important tip for the new base umpire

Pausing before making the call *(Part 2 of 2)*

- Stay calm at all times before, during and after a play
 - Feeling out of control will sometimes cause a knee-jerk fast call
- Watch the play through to completion ... And think about what you just saw
- Force yourself to delay (maybe by counting to 3) before verbalizing your call
- Think to yourself ... “I’m **sure** he was safe/out” ... then say it for real, and appear confident as you make the call.
- On tag plays, **find where the ball is after the play is over** and *confirm the out* only after verifying that the fielder had the ball in the tag-hand and had never lost control of it during the play
(if the fielder is picking it up off the ground, runner was likely safe)
 - **If you think the tag was good but you aren’t sure where the ball is, ask the fielder to show you the ball, then make the call as needed.**

Coach Appeals vs. Judgment Calls

- Coaches can only argue or appeal a call when they deem a rule was violated or not applied correctly
- Coaches cannot appeal or argue judgment calls
 - Six Common Judgment Calls
 - Ball or Strike (I.e, strike zone)
 - Fair or Foul
 - Safe or Out
 - Other Judgment calls
 - Whether obstruction or Interference has occurred
 - Whether a hit ball is an Infield Fly
 - Check swing calls

Very common for a coach to argue a safe or out call. This is not proper and is not allowed, but they do it anyway.

Handling appeals and arguments

- Coach disagrees with call
 - Must requests time from the dugout
 - Umpire may grant time ... but should do so **only after the play has stopped**
 - Common knee-jerk reaction is to grant time right away. Don't. Hold up your hand to acknowledge the request but wait until play is over.
 - Coach must approach the umpire who made the call
 - Coach can ask for a clarification of the call.
- Tips for Umpire
 - Realize this situation is common, so get used to it.
 - Be confident in yourself, but not arrogant or argumentative
 - Be respectful You might have been wrong, so don't set yourself up to "eat crow". This will earn their respect for that game and those that follow.
 - Start you're response: "Coach, He was out".
 - Remember: Appeals are not debates.

Coach Appeals & Umpire Conferences

- When can (or should) one umpire help another with a call?
 - 9.02c No umpire can over-rule or seek to reverse the decision of another umpire unless asked to do so by the other umpire.
 - Coach asks BU to seek “help” from Plate Umpire
 - If question deals with a judgment call, coach shouldn’t be appealing, although sometimes a coach will do so anyway under the “polite” explanation that he thinks “*your view may have been obstructed.*” If your view was not obstructed, simply say “Coach, I had a clear view and I ruled him out”.
 - BU **does not** have to seek opinion of PU if BU is confident in the call or ruling (but if you have any doubt, go ahead and consult).
 - **During “conference”**: Coach returns to dugout. Ruling umpire can ask for “help” ***but this is not to be interpreted as BU asking PU to make the call, nor should PU “take over” in an attempt to “correct the situation”.*** BU simply asks PU “what did you see”, or “did you see him drop the ball” (whatever the situation requires). Once BU is satisfied, turn and make your final call.
 - **After conference**: *Original umpire who made the call* reinforces original call or changes call (can provide brief explanation ... such as “*Ball was on the ground – Runner is Safe at First*”)

Live Ball – Dead Ball

- Ball is live when plate umpire puts ball into play
 - Plate umpire calls “Play” when pitcher is on mound ready to pitch
 - Sometimes PU forgets to put ball into play – ball is still live upon the pitch
- Ball becomes dead when
 - Any umpire calls time
 - Hit ball leaves the field in either fair or foul territory
 - Foul ball
 - Home run
 - Ground rule double
 - Thrown ball leaves the field
- No one can be put out when ball is dead
 - Reason why appeal plays need to be done when ball is live.

Infield Fly

- Official Definition:
 - Fair fly ball (except line drives and bunts) that can be caught by an infielder with “ordinary” effort, when 1st and 2nd (or 1st, 2nd, and 3rd) are occupied and less than 2 out
(just think: The situation where you have 2 “sitting ducks” on what should be an easy pop-up when defense may want a double-play)
 - **Notes & Clarifications**
 - Any fielder (including pitcher, catcher or outfielders) can catch an infield fly
 - Umpires calls it when the ball is at its *maximum* height (its “apex”)
- Purpose
 - Infield fly is meant to avoid defense taking unfair advantage of offense by obtaining a “cheap” double-play on an intentionally dropped ball
- [How to call](#)

Obstruction

(How to recognize when it occurs)

- Official definition

- Any act of a fielder who, while **NOT** in possession of the ball, impedes the progress of any runner. Examples: Fake tags, blocking a base, base path or home plate when not in possession of the ball.

- Concepts to understand when determining if obstruction has occurred

- Fielders have a right to be where needed to field a batted ball. Therefore, even if they do not yet have possession of the ball, but are moving to or in a position to field a batted ball, they have first right of position. The runner needs to move around or avoid the fielder in this case (otherwise they risk being called for interference).
- The above concept does not apply to fielders who are fielding a thrown ball. A fielder cannot be in a position or moving to a position that impedes a runner or blocks a base, home plate, or the base path, even while a thrown ball is in-flight and the fielder is preparing to make the catch (i.e., the catch is eminent).

The determination of whether obstruction has occurred is a judgment call and is not subject to appeal or argument by managers/coaches.

Obstruction

(What to do when it occurs: two types of obstruction)

- What happens when obstruction occurs (and what penalty is enforced) depends on which of the two types of obstruction has occurred.
- Type A – Immediate Dead Ball ([example](#)) --Occurs when a play is being made on the obstructed runner or when obstruction occurs on batter who hasn't yet reached 1st
 - Penalty enforcement -- Immediately call "Time! That's obstruction!" Then award runner one base. Note: even if runner was going back into a base, the award is the next base.
- Type B – Delayed Dead Ball ([example](#)) -- Occurs when no play is being made on obstructed runner
 - Penalty enforcement -- Call "That's obstruction" (but do not call time). Let the play continue. When play is over, award the runner whichever base the umpire deems the runner would have reached had obstruction not occurred. (Note: the umpire may not award any additional bases beyond where the runner ended up.)
 - After the play: "Time! We had obstruction on the runner! Runner ended up at second, and runner stays at second!"

Interference

(What it is and how to recognize it)

Official Definitions

- **Offensive Interference**: Any act by the batter or runners that obstructs, hinders, impedes or confuses a fielder attempting to make a play. Examples:
 - **Most common** • Runner running into or impeding fielder in act of fielding a batted or thrown ball; batter impeding catcher from throwing out a runner who's stealing, runner from 1st sliding into fielder attempting to turn a double-play, runner who is hit by fair ball before it passes by a fielder.
- **Defensive interference**: Any act by a fielder that hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch.
- **Umpire's interference**: When (1) the plate umpire interferes with the catcher's throw attempting to prevent a stolen base or (2) when a batted ball hits a base umpire in fair territory before passing a fielder
- **Spectator interference**: When a spectator reaches out of the stands or comes onto the field and touches a live ball.

Interference *(What to do: Enforcing the penalty)*

- Offensive Interference

- Immediately call “Time! That’s interference!” (**immediate dead ball**)
- Member of offense who committed interference is out. Other runners awarded last base legally held or next base if forced (batter-runner awarded first if not yet at 1st).

- Example situations

- **Example 1:** Runner on 1st and 2nd. Batter hits and ball strikes runner leaving 2nd. Umpire calls “Time!, That’s interference!”
 - Runner hit by ball is out, batter awarded 1st base and runner from 1st is forced to 2nd.
- **Example 2:** Runner on 1st and 2nd. Batter hits and ball strikes runner leaving 1st. Umpire calls “Time!, That’s interference!”
 - Runner hit by ball is out, batter awarded 1st base and runner from 2nd returns to 2nd.
- **Example 3:** Batter bunts the ball and in leaving for 1st, kicks the ball with his foot when ball was in fair territory.
 - Batter is out; all other runners return to their bases.
 - If ball was in foul territory, batter is out only if kick was intentional

Offensive Interference

⇒ *When a runner is moving toward second base on a double play ball, there is no requirement for the runner to slide. The fielder must expect the runner to be there. As long as the runner is moving toward the base, there would generally be no interference.*

⇒ *If sliding into second base, the runner must be able to reach the base with hand or feet. If the sliding runner is not able to reach the base with his/her hand or feet, and in the umpires judgment the slide caused the second baseman not to complete the double play, call interference and get the out at 1st base also.*

⇒ *If the batter or a runner continues to advance after he/she has been put out, he/she shall not by that act alone be considered as confusing, hindering or impeding the fielders.*

⇒ *If contact between the runner and fielder occurs after the ball is released, there would be no interference.*

Take the Fair – Foul Quiz !!

Foul Balls

- A hit ball becomes foul when
 - It settles to a stop in foul territory between home and 1st or 3rd
 - First touches ground in foul territory past 1st or 3rd
 - Touches an object in foul territory before being caught
 - Bounding ball passes 1st or 3rd in foul territory (i.e., does not cross over ANY PART of 1st or 3rd base)
- Note
 - The foul lines are in fair territory. Any ball that touches ANY PART of the foul line is FAIR
 - **Never call or yell “Fair Ball!” – Just POINT fair**

Whether a ball is Fair or Foul is a JUDGMENT CALL and is not subject to appeal or argument

Who makes the call

- Plate Umpire Typical Calls
 - Catch/no-catch on all fly balls and line drives whether infield or outfield
 - All Fair – foul (unless discussed otherwise in plate meeting)
 - Calls at home plate
 - Sometimes calls at 3rd base for 1st to 3rd situations (explain)
 - Usually will take the Infield Fly call
(but actually either umpire can call)
- Base Umpire Typical Calls
 - Safe – out on all bases (except for 1st to 3rd situations)
 - Obstruction or Interference

Pitched Ball Goes into Dead Ball Territory

- Ball is dead immediately whenever ball goes into dead ball territory
 - Umpires immediately call time
- Base awards (where do the runners go?)
 - One base from the time of the pitch (regardless of whether the runners were going or not)

Thrown Ball goes into Dead Ball Territory

- Ball is dead immediately whenever ball goes into dead ball territory
 - Umpires immediately call time
- Base awards (i.e., where do the runners go?)
- First play by infielder
 - Two (2) bases from the time of the pitch
- Outfielder *or* second play by infielder
 - Two bases from the time of the throw

Foul Tip

- A foul tip is not the same as a foul ball
- A foul tip can be considered exactly the same as a swinging strike
 - Ball remains live (so don't call foul ball)!!
 - Runners can steal
 - Can count as strike 3 (batter out)
- Definition
 - Batted ball that goes directly to the catcher's mitt



Base Umpiring

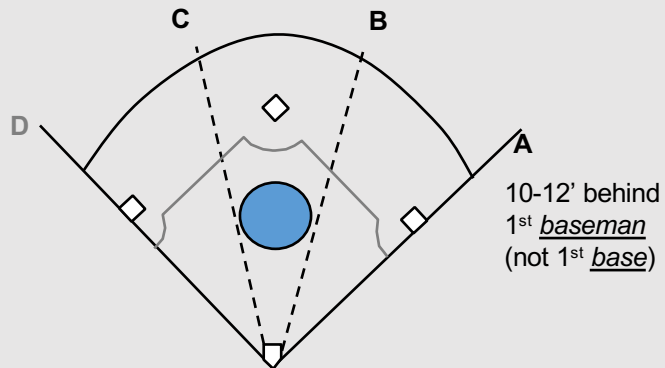


Things the base umpire needs to know

- Before the ball is hit
 - Where to be at the start of the play
- Responsibilities as pitch is delivered
 - Base umpire has certain responsibilities on the pitch
- After the ball is hit
 - Where to go and how to move into position as play develops
- Other basics
 - How to observe a play and get the call right
 - **PAUSING BEFORE MAKING YOUR CALL**
 - Knowing what calls are the BU's and what calls are the PU's
 - Basic rules (we'll cover the basics)
 - Basic responsibilities of plate versus base

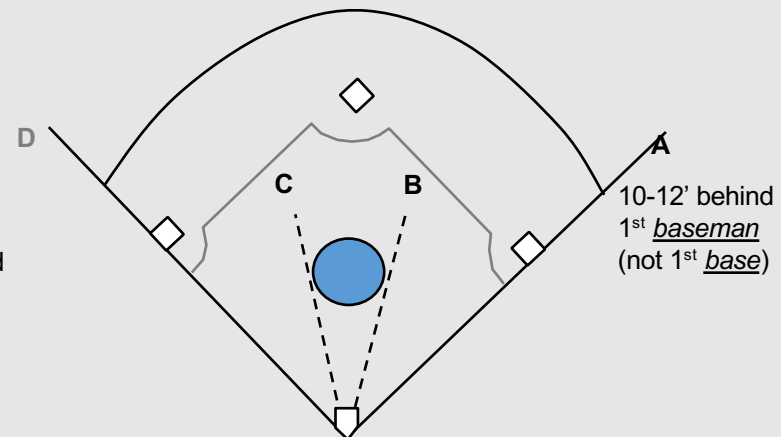
Base Umpire Positions

Minors and Majors



60' Diamond
70' Diamond
Majors

Babe Ruth League



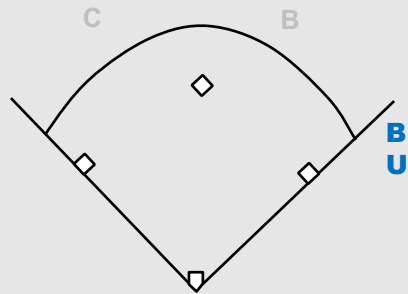
90' Diamond

Note: The "D" position is only used when there are 2 or more base umpires (i.e., 3 and 4 umpire crews). It won't likely be used in regular season games since most games will use 2-umpire crews.

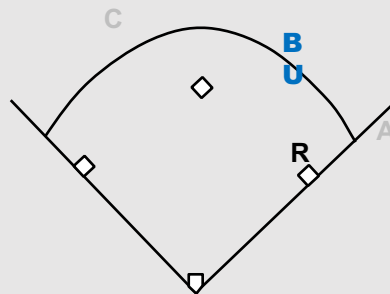
Position at Start of Play

(aka Rotation)

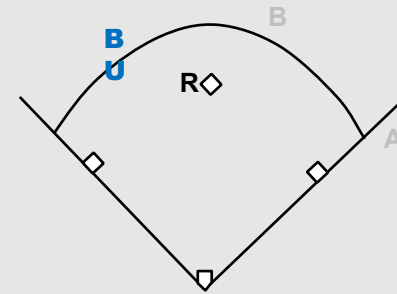
60'/70' Diamond



Bases empty



Runner on 1st



Any other combination
(2nd only, 2nd and 3rd,
1st and 3rd, 3rd only,
bases loaded)



First most important tip for the new base umpire

Responsibilities on the pitch

On every pitch, what are the immediate priorities for a base umpire?

1. Watching for the illegal pitch (and/or balk in Majors and above)
2. Handling pickoff plays to the bases (Majors and above)
3. Assisting on the check swing appeal
4. Handling the "runner leaving early" rules (Minors and Majors)
5. Watching for pickoff plays from the catcher
6. Watching for attempted steals, particularly double steals when possible

Where to go when ball is hit

Single most important tip to learn

- Ball is in – You're out, Ball is out – You're in
 - If a hit ball stays in the infield and is fielded by an infielder, BU stays outside and makes call from shallow outfield or in the dirt
 - If a hit ball gets through to the outfield (either on a fly ball or ground ball), BU busts inside, turns to watch runner tag first and follows runner and ball to the play. BU should be set ahead of arriving runner.
 - Only way to keep up with the runners and be in position for the play
 - Helps you stay out of the way of the ball coming in
 - *Aside from being the proper mechanic, it makes your life as the BU much easier!*

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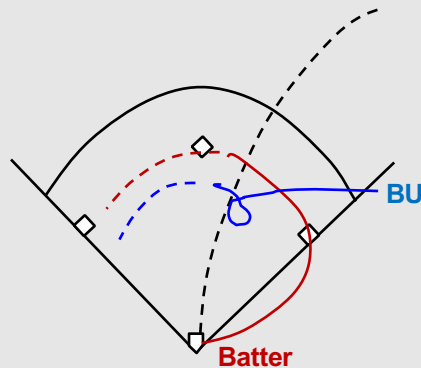
If you learn ONE thing at this clinic, learn this tip !!!

Second most important tip for the new base umpire

Where to go when ball is hit

Out – You're in In-You're out

- Example Play: Outfield hit with no one on
 - BU breaks into infield, turns left to watch runner touch 1st, then moves with and ahead of runner to be ready for a play at 2nd or 3rd
 - No way to stay out and beat runner to bases as well as watch runner touch 1st and 2nd
 - The runner would be behind you and the ball would be coming in from your back
 - You might even be in the way of the ball coming in



Thank you!

- Thank you for helping the league have a good season !!!
- Encourage others to help out as well
- Might have another clinic during the season if needed