



# **Youth Umpire Training Manual**

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## I. The Basics

The umpire is the authority figure. If you look the part and act the part, you'll get treated the way you should be: with respect. This starts the minute you show up at the field. The basics of umpiring are very simple:

- Look professional
- Act professional

Look professional:  An umpire shirt will be provided and must be worn. An umpire who takes pride in his appearance also takes pride in his game. Respect is all about perception.

Act professional:

- Know the rules.
- Show up on time.
- Take charge: your authority is assumed act that way. You are the umpire. You are in charge.
- Be pleasant. Be polite. But, be firm and confident out there.
- Take your time on calls: Pause-read-react. There is nothing to be gained by rushing, except trouble.
- Your calls: Make 'em loud and make 'em proud – everyone has a right to know what your call is.
- Don't hesitate. The best way to avoid confrontations is to be in the correct position to make the right call, and to "sell" close plays with confident verbal and hand signals. Don't show off though, you are not the show.
- Don't argue. Listen to reason, but be firm. If you are sure you made the right call, say so, and move on with the game. If you are not sure, listen, use your best judgment, make the call, and move on.
- Don't be afraid to confer with your partner if you are not sure on something.
- If a manager asks you to check with your partner, do it, but remember it's still **your** call.
- Even professionals make mistakes: treat each call as a new one. Don't try to "even things up" if you blow a call.
- Be a team out there: support your partner. Don't change his calls; you aren't supposed to. If you think your partner missed something, when the play is over, call time and go to your partner first away from the players and coaches. Talk it over. Get it right. Then, whoever made the initial call, announce clearly what the call is now.
- Smile and be nice – it goes a long way towards making things run smoothly.
- Always watch the BALL, and you will likely not miss an important play.
- Don't let inane comments bother you. Parents, and coaches will usually say things like "that looked close" and the like, but they are not meant to undermine your authority. Save your 'authority' for prevention of direct, mean spirited, or repeatedly disruptive personal attacks.
- Never hover around a particular dugout, or mingle too closely with players and spectators, as this will cause problems. You don't want it to look like you favor one team or the other.
- NEVER get into a shouting match with a spectator. Go to the offender's team manager, and politely ask him to control his parent(s).
- Always make calls with clear, firm decisiveness, and confidence.

### Before the game

- Get to the game on time. Show up early (at least 15 minutes).
- Confer with your partner.
- Make sure the managers have the field prepared on time.
- Have a plate conference. Introduce yourself to the managers, and learn their names. It is easier to have a discussion later if you refer to each other by name.
- Go over the ground rules at the plate conference: things like where dead ball territory is, keep gates closed, if there are holes in the fence what will happen if the ball goes in there, etc.

- Make sure the players are properly equipped and ready to play. Cups, shoes, masks, other gear, and two game balls to the umpire
- Start on time.

#### **During the game**

- Help keep the game moving. Hustle the players into position and back to the dugout, including warming up pitchers.
- Stay near the plate during warm-ups, but out of the way near the backstop.
- Keep warm-up pitches to no more than 8 for a new pitcher, 5 for a returning one.
- Let the catcher get in position first, and then you set up.
- Keep equipment off the field. This means bats, balls, buckets, catcher's gear, etc. If you see it on the field during play, wait until the play finishes. Call time and have the equipment removed.
- Keep the players in the dugouts when they aren't on the field. The dugouts are for players, managers, and coaches only.
- There is NO on-deck hitter in little league baseball at any time. The first batter of the inning can come out to take practice swings at the start of the inning under your supervision, but that's it. Keep the batter away from the plate while the pitcher is warming up.

#### **After the game**

- As soon as the game is over, give the baseballs back to the manager who gave them to you.
- Put the equipment back clean in the umpire bin.
- Report any broken equipment to the UIC immediately.
- If there has been controversy during the game, you'll need to report it. It will eventually have to be in writing, but report it by phone first.

## **II. Umpire Signaling**

### **PAUSE - READ – REACT**

Remember in each of these calls timing is everything. Selling the call is a matter of the game situation and each umpire will respond differently. There is nothing wrong with putting a little extra on the gesture and voice, in fact it is an important part of the game. In time each umpire develops his or her own personal sense of rhythm and timing, style and flair.

### **Play**

Along with strike and ball, this is the one call the plate umpire will make most often during a game. Pointing at the pitcher (or the plate) with the right hand and calling "play." The call is essential for the batter and catcher. The gesture is essential for the pitcher, defense and offense. In every case in the rule book (Section 5.00) it is clear that the play signal is a verbal signal: "...the umpire shall call "Play"."

### **Strike**

Always signaled with the right hand, each umpire develops a personalized system for signaling the strike.

### **Ball**

Never signaled. The general preference is that the verbal signal "ball" loud enough that both dugouts can hear it. Calling "Ball One," "Ball Two," etc. allows you to maintain the rhythm of your calls.

### **TIME!**

Raising both hands into the air and calling in a loud voice "TIME!" All umpires on the field will immediately signal the time call. Sometimes the call must be made several times in order to shut things down. Once time is called every effort must be made by all umpires to stop the action-taking place. Umpires learn that there are many moments when time is out, and it has not been called. This is normal in the course of a game as the umpires change their field positions, players repair equipment, or hundreds of other reasons. It may be the simple lifting of the hands communication between crewmembers, or the plate umpire holding the stop hand up. Not all "t"ime is big-"T"ime.

### **The Count**

Balls are signaled using the left hand. Strikes are signaled using the right hand. Both hands extend to shoulder level at the same moment. A full count is always signaled as "three balls, two strikes" and never signaled using clenched fists. The count is relayed back to the pitcher after every pitch and a verbal report is made usually after the second or third pitch and from that point on. The count is always read aloud as "two balls, two strikes" and not "two and two" or "twenty-two" or other similar variation.

### **Safe**

Both left and right arms are raised together, to shoulder level, in front of the umpire and then a sweeping motion is performed out, parallel to the ground, palms down. The verbal call of "safe" may be made. To complete the call you normally return to the set position. To sell a safe call you might consider doing it two or three times in rapid succession. It is not always necessary to even make the sign or call. If the play is obvious do nothing.

### **Out!**

The clenched right fist and a short hammered motion seem to be favored by most umpires. Again, personal style is acceptable as long as it does not distract you from seeing any further plays taking place. Check that the fielder is really in possession of the ball. The signal can be made with only a gesture or can be sold with a loud call of "He's Out!" or "She's Out!" Signal every out.

### **On the tag!**

Point at the runner with the left hand; signal the out with the right hand. Complete the sign by saying

"On the tag, he's out!" if you want to sell it a touch. (Remember you are the umpire, not the color commentator.)

**Missed the tag!**

A "selling it" call that occurs when a runner slides under the tag or the tag is high. You can save some grief by indicating a loud "Safe, he missed the tag!" and following it with a tapping motion where the tag was. Everyone will know you saw the tag and most will assume the runner had the bag before it.

**Fair Ball**

The right hand points into the field in fair territory. There is no call "Fair" ever made.

**Foul Ball**

The same signal as "Time" but the call becomes "Foul." Umpires often add a point into foul territory with one hand after giving the time signal. Once verbalized, this call sticks. The base umpire needs to pay specific attention to a ball hitting the batter in the batter's box. If the batter has not moved the base umpire will immediately call "Foul." If the batter is in motion the base umpire must delay to see if the plate umpire is going to make a call. Only if the plate umpire is silent, and the base umpire is certain the batter contacted the ball outside of the batter's box would the base umpire signal "Time, that's interference, the batter is out!" otherwise the call is "Foul!"

**No Pitch**

The same signal as "Time" but the call becomes "No Pitch." If you are the plate umpire, step away from the plate. It can be helpful to repeat "No Pitch".

### III. The Base Umpire

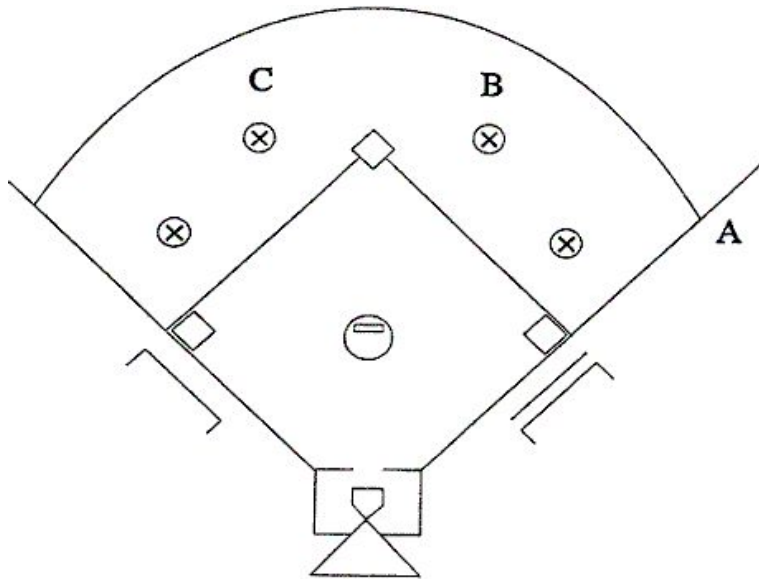
#### Helpful hints when working the bases

- Always know where the ball is on the field.
- Never make a call on the move, get set and wait until the play is over before you make the call.
- Get as close to the play as possible without interfering.
- Hustle to be in the best position to make the call.

#### Positioning:

##### Where to stand before the pitch in a 2-man system

Diagram 1 shows where you should be before the pitch. There are three basic positions: A, B, and C. The X's are the infielders. The chart below shows where to be in each situation:



A----Bases empty

B----Runner on first base

C----Runner on second base

C----Runner on third base

C----Runners on first and second base

C----Runners on second and third base

C----Runners on first and third base

C----Bases loaded

Only time at A is with no one on base

Only time at B is with ONLY a runner on first

Quite often a play will call itself if you are in the proper position. It is impossible to make a call without guessing if you have the wrong angle on a play. Study and practice until you know what position to be in and how to get there. It is impossible to be in the perfect position for all plays, as the play does not always develop as it is supposed to.

Three important factors to remember in positioning are ANGLE, DISTANCE AND TIMING. ANGLE IS MORE IMPORTANT THE DISTANCE!

## IV. Behind the Plate

### Positioning:

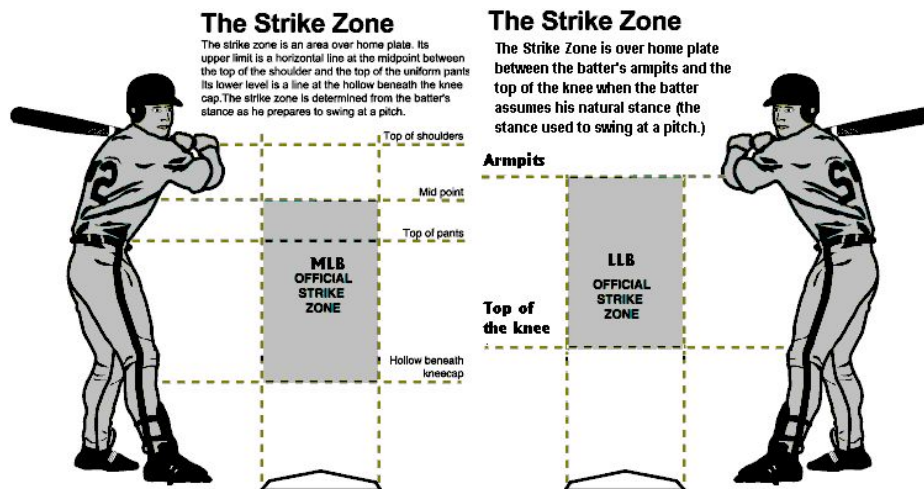
Assume a position behind the catcher looking between the catcher and the batter; you must be able to clearly see the pitcher, the entire plate and the batter's knees. To see all of those elements, it is important to move into "the slot" that area between the catcher and the batter. The farther you are into the slot, the better you will see the strike zone. Two additional factors have tremendous impact on your view of the strike zone: head height and stability. Your head should be positioned so the bottom of your chin is even with the top of the catcher's helmet. If you work with your head lower, your view of the knee high pitch at or near the outside corner of the plate will be restricted. The head is straight ahead looking at the pitcher. Your ear closest to the catcher should be just to the outside of the catcher's shoulder. These are good starting positions. From the moment the pitcher releases a pitch until the ball arrives in the catcher's glove, your head should remain absolutely still. If your head moves at all, your view of the strike zone will be blurred and your judgment will be inconsistent.

Assume your crouch when the pitcher is about to release the ball. You'll view the pitch from between the batter and catcher. Don't go down too early, for you will put unnecessary strain on your muscles. Relaxation between pitches is very important. Many umpires wear themselves out for the late innings by staying in a set position for long a period of time. The upper body should remain in an almost upright position.

### The Youth baseball Strike Zone (2.00)

“The STRIKE ZONE is that space over home plate which is between the batter’s armpits and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural stance. The umpire shall determine the strike zone according to the batter’s usual stance when that batter swings at a pitch.”

### MLB vs. Little League



**If it looks like a strike call it a strike. Think Strikes.**

**Strikes mean outs. Outs mean innings. Innings mean games.**

## V. Rules

These are just a few of the most common rules that you need to be aware of as an umpire.

### **Must slide rule (7.08a3)**

**There is no must-slide rule.** The runner has three options when the fielder HAS THE BALL AND IS WAITING TO MAKE THE TAG: slide, attempt to get around the fielder, or go back to the previous base. If the runner does neither and goes in standing up, he's out. But if he attempts to get around and successfully avoids the tag without going out of the baseline, he's safe.

- Remember, the fielder must have the ball and be waiting to make the tag. If the ball is on its way to the base, or the ball and runner get there simultaneously, and there's contact because the runner didn't slide or attempt to get around, this is just a collision.

### **Interference – (Rule 2.00 and 7.09)**

The umpire must judge that someone on the offense "interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses" a defensive player who is trying to make a play on the ball. Some interference calls are easy, such as a runner being struck by a batted ball, or a runner colliding with a fielder trying to field a batted ball. The troublesome ones are when the umpire must judge the intent of the runner, such as:

- A runner makes contact with a thrown ball. The umpire must be convinced that the runner intentionally interfered with the throw (raised arms, timed it so ball hits him, etc.) ☐
- A runner makes contact with or gets in the way of a fielder trying to field a thrown ball. INTENT is required here. If a runner just runs into a fielder while that fielder is waiting for a throw, it's not interference unless the umpire judges the runner intentionally ran into him. ☐
- A runner doesn't contact a fielder fielding a batted ball, but causes him to miss it by some other action. Contact is not needed for interference. So if a runner: yells at a fielder as he runs behind him; waves his arms at the fielder; runs at the fielder and stops at the last second, stops in front of the fielder and jumps over the ball, etc., AND the umpire judges that this act caused the fielder to miss the batted ball, it's interference. ☐
- A base coach or someone from the bench gets in the way or yells "DROP IT". The rule says any member of the team at bat, not just the batter or runner, can cause interference. ☐

### **Batter's interference (Rule 6.06)**

There are things a batter does (or fails to do) that are interference, and other things he does (or fails to do) that do not. Confused? First off, the batter's box is NOT a safety zone for the batter. If he's in the box, he's usually OK in these situations:

- The ball gets by the catcher and the catcher knocks over the batter trying to get to the ball (no penalty, live ball) ☐
- The catcher throws the ball back to the pitcher or to a base to retire a base stealer, and the ball hits the batter or his bat (no penalty, live ball UNLESS the batter PURPOSELY moves into the catcher or the path of the ball) ☐
- The batter swings so hard that he hits the catcher's glove on the follow-through, knocking the ball away from the catcher (dead ball, runners return) ☐
- However, if the batter had time to get out of the box but stays in and gets in the way, then he's guilty of interference. This usually happens in lower levels when the ball gets by the catcher, a runner tries to score, and the batter stays in the box and affects the play at the plate. If the batter gets in the way of a play while OUT OF THE BOX, he will almost certainly be guilty of interference, even if it's unintentional. ☐

### **Obstruction (Rule 2.00 and 7.06)**

Obstruction is one of the most common calls in the minor divisions, Pay attention!

Like interference, this is a tough call when there is no contact. If a runner has to slow down or stop because of a fielder's action OTHER THAN fielding a batted ball, you have obstruction.

Examples of obstruction that isn't so obvious:



- A fielder boots the initial play, and then gets in the runner's way as he goes after the ball. No interference here on the runner because the fielder booted the ball. The fielder is only “protected” on the initial play, not a subsequent play after his error.
- A batter-runner has to slow down on his way to first because the first baseman is standing on the base. This happens a lot in the lower divisions.
- A fielder stands in the baseline or puts his leg down and blocks the base or plate well before he has the ball. A fielder cannot block the base while he is waiting for the throw to come in.
- Remember that there are two types of obstruction: Type A, where the defense is making a play on the obstructed runner (immediate dead ball), and Type B where the runner is obstructed while play is going on elsewhere (play goes on).

### **Out of the baseline (Rule 7.08a1)**

The confusion with this rule is the definition of “baseline”.

The runner establishes the baseline. It is not necessarily the direct line between the two bases.

- For example, if the runner takes a wide turn at first into the grass behind the second baseman's normal position, and the throw comes back to first, the baseline goes from the runner to first base. If the first baseman tries to tag him, he cannot deviate more than three feet to either side of this line. The other source of confusion with this rule is the fact that the runner is not out for being out of the baseline unless he's avoiding a tag. If he's running around a fielder who is trying to field a batted ball, there is no violation.

### **Leaving the base early (7.13)**

This rule is unique to youth baseball and may cause an umpire a lot of headaches. The bottom line: if any base runner leaves a base before the pitch reaches the batter, all runners are guilty, and depending on the subsequent action, runners must return to any unoccupied bases. The Rule Book has a number of examples that are pretty straightforward. Some are less understood:

- If the batter is subsequently thrown out on a play, ALL RUNNERS return. For example, a batter hits a double with the bases loaded, but gets gunned down trying to stretch it into a triple. Since his out left all the bases open, no runs score and all runners must return. If his out was the third out of the inning, no runs score and the inning is over! Expect the offensive manager to be very peeved by this.
- The runners can only advance to the bases they would have achieved based on the umpire's judgment of the base value of the hit, regardless of any subsequent errors. For example, a batter hits a sharp grounder to the center fielder with the bases loaded, and the ball goes under the center fielder's legs all the way to the fence. After the play is over, the umpire may judge the value of the hit was a single. If so, he would put the batter on first, and put the other runners on second and third (only one run scores).
- If with the bases loaded the ball doesn't leave the infield, no runs score. This is explained in Example 15 in the Rule Book. What is not explained is if the ball is hit in the infield and then goes through because of an error on the fielder. Here the umpire should rule that the value of the hit is only one base, so everyone only gets one base and one run scores. □
- If a runner leaves early, he cannot correct his mistake by returning to touch the base. For example, a runner on second leaves early then sees the ball is flied to right. He tags up and tries for third, and ends up scoring on a wild throw. He must return to second because he left early, regardless of the fact he subsequently tagged it. There is no “fixing” a 7.13 violation.

## **VI. EHYLLL Local Operating Rules**

### **B.11. MAJORS DIVISIONS**

B.11.1. Rule 4.04, note 1 of the Official Regulations and Playing Rules shall be adopted.

B.11.2. In the AAA, AA and A Divisions, an offensive inning is over after three (3) outs or five (5) runs in that inning, whichever comes first. The inning ends when the fifth run touches the plate even when more runs could score on the play. The exception is for an over-the-fence homerun, in which case all runs will score. In the sixth or any extra innings there is no run limitation and an inning will end only after three (3) defensive outs.

#### **Unlimited Run Inning**

In AA and AAA (and playoffs only for Single A) the final inning of the game is the unlimited run inning. The final inning must be declared by the umpire prior to the start of a new inning if it's prior to the 6'th inning (4'th or 5'th inning). If the final inning results in a tie then any subsequent inning is unlimited runs as well until a winner is determined. Managers are responsible for understanding the game time limits and conferring with the plate umpire prior to the start of a new inning if it appears the game time limit will cause the game to be shortened. The final inning cannot be declared after a new inning begins and the game result will not be protestable if the game concludes without an unlimited run inning. This will apply to playoffs as well.

B.11.3. In the AAA, AA and A Divisions, no player may be out of the defensive lineup for two consecutive innings.

B.11.4. In a tie, make-up or suspended game for AAA, AA, and A, a player who is at the original game and not at the make-up game shall have his/her spot in the lineup skipped and will not be considered an out. A player not at the original game but at the make-up game is allowed to play; however, he/she must be inserted at the bottom of the original line up order. In the event that each player does not achieve the requirements in this/her by-law, Section IV, Rule (i) in the Official Rules shall apply.

## **B.12. "A" DIVISION**

**This is an instructional division to allow players to continue learning the skills necessary to play multiple positions including pitching if the player desires.**

B.12.1. There are no standings. All teams will make the playoffs in a random draw format. Scorekeeping may be kept for internal team purposes only.

B.12.2. Players will pitch the entire season.

B.12.3. There are no walks. In the case of ball four (4) thrown by the player pitcher, a coach from the batting team will pitch using the existing ball/strike count until the batter either hits a fair ball or strikes out. The umpire will call balls/strikes when both the player and the coach are pitching. There will be a maximum of four (4) pitches made to each batter by the coach pitcher. If a pitch from the coach pitcher hits a batter, it will be considered a ball only, except if it is a fourth pitch, then it will be considered no pitch. The batter is out if he/she does not hit the fourth pitch. A batter cannot be out on a foul ball.

B.12.4. Coach pitchers must pitch overhand in a standing position and from the pitching rubber. The player pitcher must stand no closer to the plate than the pitching rubber and no farther than 3' to the side or behind the coach pitcher.

B.12.5. There are no bunts allowed.

B.12.6. Base runners cannot advance unless the ball is hit. There are no wild pitches or passed balls. No advancing of any base on any overthrows anywhere. No exceptions.

B.12.7. Nine (9) players are allowed on the field while on defense. Three of those players must be outfielders and the outfielders must play no closer than twenty (20) feet behind the base paths.

B.12.8. The infield fly rule does not apply.

B.12.9. Each player must play at least one inning per game at an infield position within the first four innings of the game. The catcher position is not considered an infield position for the purpose of this rule. Any manager in violation is subject to Disciplinary Activity. (B.12.1) Managers should notify the umpire to prevent a player from a missed infield opportunity.

B.12.10. Only two (2) adult manager/coaches may coach the bases. Four (4) coaches are allowed in the dugout to provide for dugout supervision while two coaches are at the bases and another coach is pitching. On defense, during the regular season only, teams may elect to have a rostered coach in the outfield providing game instruction provided that coach not interfere with any play and is positioned at least 20 feet from the base paths. Only the outfield coach may be out of the dugout while on defense.

B.12.11. No protests are permitted in the Single A division.

B.12.12. Games will consist of six (6) innings with a time limit of one hour and forty-five minutes. No new innings can start after an hour and 45 minutes of play.

B.12.13. A pitcher may not start pitching to a new batter after he has thrown 50 pitches in a single day. A pitcher can not pitch more than six outs in a game.