

**Introduction:**

Umpiring is great fun and is as much a part of the game as playing itself. It is a rewarding feeling to walk off the field after a game, knowing that you have made a difference in the Little League experience of the players. While this may be the only training you receive, please read through the rule book and don't be afraid to try. Character, good judgment, ability to get along with kids and the desire to do the job well are the attributes of a good umpire. This is only part of what it takes to be a Little League umpire. First and foremost, the safety of the children and the integrity of the game must be number in your mind as an umpire and how you enforce and interpret the rules.

**Baseball Myths and Common Rules**

**1. “The hands are part of the bat!”**

No, the hands are not part of the bat. To prove this, ask the coach if the hands came with the bat when you bought it at the store. This most often comes up when a batter is struck on the hands with a pitch that isn't in the Strike Zone. If a batter is hit on one of the hands by a pitched ball, he/she has been hit by a pitch and is awarded 1st Base. In Little League, there are two exceptions to this rule”

1. If the batter's hands are in the Strike Zone when the ball hits them, it is a Strike and the ball is dead; and,
2. If the batter swings at a pitched ball, attempting to hit it, and is hit by the ball, it is a strike.

**2. “An Infield Fly”**

An Infield Fly is a fair fly ball (NOT a line drive or an attempted bunt) which can be caught by an infielder with ORDINARY EFFORT, when 1st & 2nd, or 1st, 2nd and 3rd bases are occupied, before two outs. The ball is live and runners may advance at the risk of being put out if the ball is caught, or retouch (tag up) and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. NOTE! This rule says “Caught *by an infielder*” NOT “Caught *within the infield.*”

**3. “A Foul Tip is Not a Foul Ball”**

A Foul Tip ...	A Foul Ball ...
A batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is caught.	A batted ball that lands anywhere in foul territory and is not caught (in the case of a fly foul ball).
A strike and if 3rd strike, batter's out.	A strike and if 3rd strike, at-bat continues.
Is a live ball. Play can continue, including runners.	Is a dead ball. Play stops and runners are returned to their bases.

**4. “Do they have to slide or not?”**

The runner does not by rule have to slide to avoid contact (a common myth). He has four options: 1) slide; 2) get around the fielder like move to the side or even jump over; 3) retreat; 4) “surrender”. The runner need only attempt to avoid contact. A young player, who executes a poor slide and ends up stumbling into the fielder, should not be called out for interference.

## 5. “Obstruction and Interference”

Key to remember: Defense Obstructs – Offense Interferes

<b>Obstruction (Defense)</b>	<b>Interference (Offense)</b>
When a fielder, without possession of the ball, impedes the progress of a runner.	When a runner interferes with a fielder attempting to make a play
<b>Typical examples:</b> 1. Fielder standing in front of a bag (or in the base path) awaiting a thrown ball 2. Fielder standing in the base path not paying attention 3. Fielder standing in the base path of a runner attempting to steal a base after a pitch 4. A run down (aka “pickle”) where a fielder is in the base path waiting on a thrown ball	<b>Typical examples:</b> 1. Runner collides with a fielder making a play on a batted ball Runner is hit by a batted ball 2. Runner obscures the fielder’s vision while attempting to field a batted ground ball
When it occurs, play stops (umpire calls time) depending on the type of obstruction (below)  Generally, the runner is awarded base(s)  Other runners typically advance to the base they were approaching at the time of the obstruction	When it occurs, play always stops (umpire calls time) at the time of the interference  The runner is called out  All other runners typically return to the last base touched prior to the interference

### More Examples:

<b>The Play</b>	<b>Your Call</b>
Runner from first base (R1) runs into the first baseman who attempted to make a play on a batted ball to his area of the field.	R1 out for interference.
R1 is forced to go around the first baseman on a batted ball to the shortstop and in so doing, is late (and out) at 2nd base.	R1 safe on the obstruction at first base.
R1 has to run around the first baseman on an attempted steal.	R1 safe on obstruction if the catcher threw him out at second.

## 4 Umpire Tips

### Favor angle over distance when making a call on a runner

Try to be about 10 feet from a play being made on a runner and at a 90 degree angle between the play on the runner and from where the ball is being thrown.

### Look for just one outcome when deciding your call

Look for just one outcome when there are two possibilities. Some examples:

- Did you see an out? If not, runner's safe.
- Did you see a strike? If not, must be a ball.
- Did you see a rule violation? If not, “you got nothin” - and there's no penalty to apply.

### Take your time making your call

Whether a safe or out call, ball or strike, fair or foul, catch or no-catch, calling time ... don't hurry your call.

### Make your call with confidence

The closer the play - strike or ball, out or safe, fair or foul –"sell your call". So be outwardly confident in your calls, especially when you're not actually so confident!

## **Professional Conduct as an Umpire:**

To successfully enforce the rules, you must look and act like an umpire – your appearance and demeanor are very important.

**1. GET A RULEBOOK!** Join the Little League Umpire Registry so you'll get free copies of the rule books (Baseball & Softball).

### ***NEVER CARRY A RULE BOOK WITH YOU ONTO THE FIELD.***

**2. NO UMPIRE SHALL EVER OVERTURN ANOTHER UMPIRE'S JUDGEMENT CALL!**

If, after asking another umpire for help on a call, you decide you need to change a call you made, give the signal (out or safe) and THEN give the signal indicating the reason for the change. This way, when the coach who doesn't like your changed call comes out to talk to you, you can simply verbalize the same thing you just indicated, for example, "He pulled his foot off the bag coach", rather than just appearing to change your call because the rest of the crew "talked you into it."

**3. Discussing a Call with a Manager or Coach.**

During the game, remember that your goal is to ***GET THE CALL RIGHT***. Be receptive to a Manager or Coach who ***respectfully*** asks for time to discuss a call with an umpire. Be willing to discuss potential rule violations and/or illegal players; a pulled foot or swipe tag; but **do not** converse about judgment calls.

ALWAYS...

Be a good listener

Be respectful

Talk in a low tone of voice

Use **HALF** the intensity of the Manager or Coach.

### **Handling Manager and Coach Ejections**

Deciding when to eject a coach from a game can be difficult. You can't be too quick to pull the trigger or too willing to take a lot of abuse.

Eject a Manager or Coach when it involves any of the following:

- Physical (contact in anger or threatening).
- Personal (i.e. "you're a bad umpire").
- Profanity
- Prolonged and/or Persistent (won't stop when told to) or (continues to bring up call from earlier).

Provide a warning to the coach to get things under control. You might say: "Coach, I'm not going to listen to this all day", "Coach, I can't allow you to interrupt the game any longer. Let's play." Or "Coach, you can umpire or coach but you can't do both."

# Home Plate Umpiring Mechanics

## What should my strike zone be?

The strike zone is the space over the plate which is between the armpit and the top of the knees of a batter. You should also consider several factors in determining your strike zone for each game and be consistent.

**Adjust your strike zone for each game and apply it consistently**



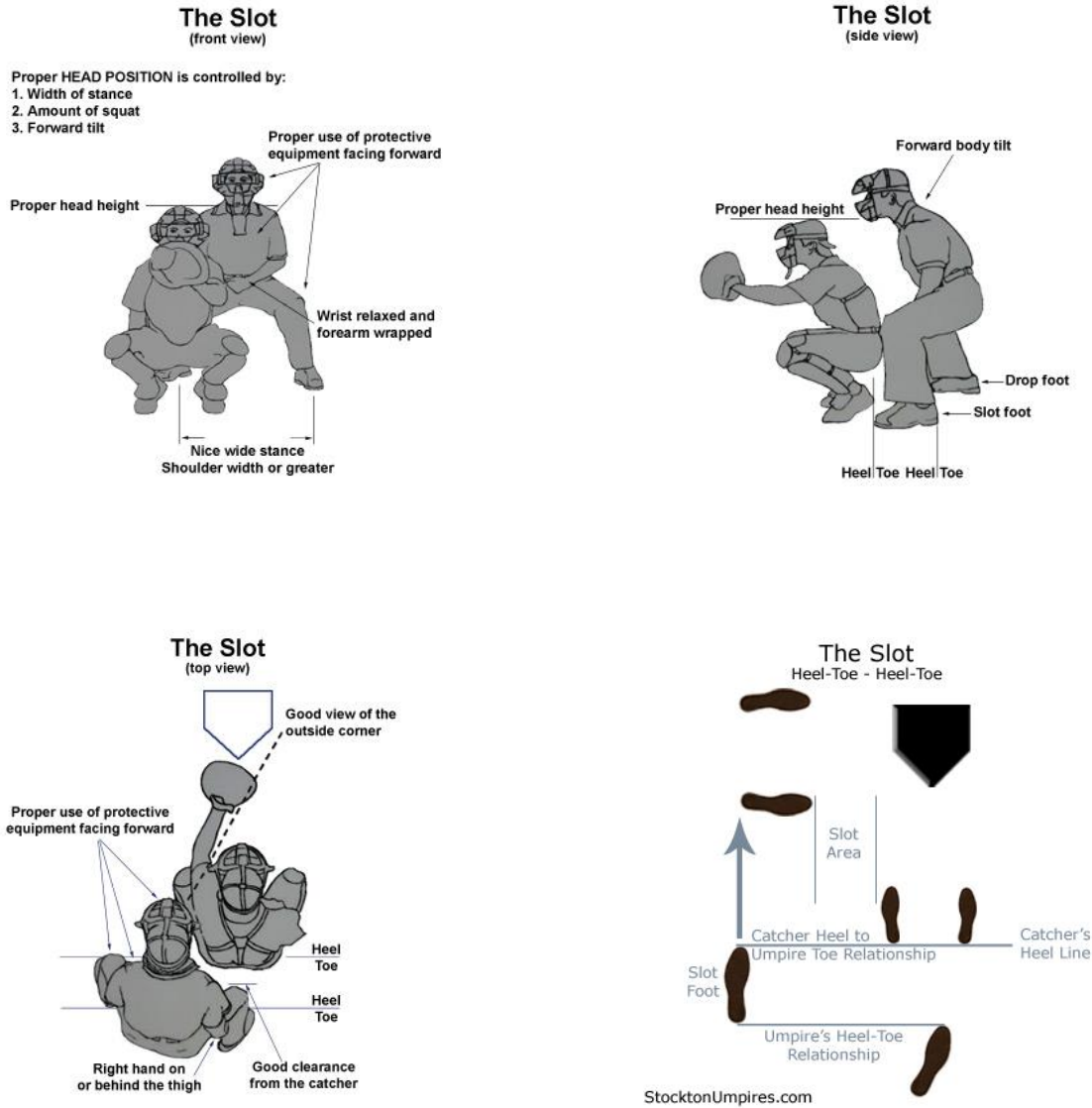
- Little League Rule Book states: "The strike zone is that space over home plate which is between the batter's armpits and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural stance. The umpire shall determine the strike zone according to the batter's usual stance when that batter swings at a pitch."

### Key factors in determining your strike zone for each game

Factor	Description
Batter's natural and usual stance	Some batters crouch when they swing. Others stand more upright.
Age of the players	The younger they are, the bigger (height and width) your strike zone should be. A generous strike zone for younger players (< 11 years old) will have them swinging often, keep the defense alert and speed up the game for everyone.
Time of season	At any age, your strike zone should be bigger at the beginning of the season and become smaller as pitchers become more proficient.

# Home Plate Umpiring Essentials

Position yourself in the Slot position to get the best view of the ball to call balls and strikes



Besides calling the game, what are my other responsibilities?

## Plate Conference

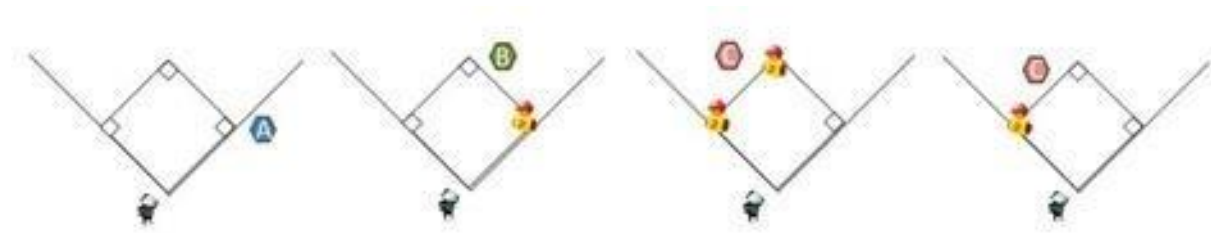
### DO...

1. Introduce yourself and your partner to each Manager
2. "Are all of your players properly equipped according to Little League Rules?" Remind the Manager's that the players are not allowed to wear jewelry, except for Medical Alert Items.
3. "Are there any local ground rules for this field?"
4. Let the Manager's know that all changes must be made through the Plate Umpire.
5. Let the Manager's know if they have a question, they should ASK for time, and once it's granted, approach the Umpire who made the call.
6. Let the Manager's if they huddle with their team before sending them out on the field, they will be cutting into their pitchers warm-up time. There is a 1 minute warm-up period. Batters cannot leave the batter's box. There is a 1 offensive time out per ½ inning.

# Base Umpire Mechanics

## For a two person umpire crew - one Plate Umpire (PU) and one Base Umpire (BU1)

- If no runners on base – BU1 will start in Slot A.
- If one or more runners on any of the bases - BU1 will start in the Slot just ahead of the lead runner, except when a runner is on 3rd base (3B). In that case, BU1 will start in Slot C.
  - Example: if runner on 2nd base (2B), BU1 starts in Slot C (just ahead of the runner). If a runner on 3B, BU1 also starts in Slot C.



## Base umpire tips:

Watch For	Potential Rule Violations	Do This
Runners leaving early	Did any runners leave their base early (prior to the ball reaching the batter)?	Send the runners back without calling them out. If the ball is hit, it is live. Don't kill the play.
Runner base touches	Did the runner(s) touch the base(s)?	If not, don't say anything and let play proceed. Untouched bases are rule violations that the defense must appeal.
Tag-ups	Did the runner(s) tag-up on a fly ball catch?	If not, don't say anything. This is also an appeal call like untouched bases.
Fielders standing in the base paths	<p>Did a fielder (without the ball) obstruct a runner's advance to a base?</p> <p>Did a runner interfere with a fielder's ability to field a batted ball?</p>	<p>If so, you might have an obstruction or interference violation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For example, a fielder without the ball standing in the way of a runner's attempt to touch a base is obstruction on the fielder. A runner that runs into a fielder attempting to field a ground ball is interference on the runner.</li> <li>- After play stops, if you think one of these rule violations occurred, call "Time" and talk with your umpire crew to decide on the ruling.</li> </ul>