

Runners and Baselines

How many times have you heard someone yell “He’s out of the baseline”? How many times have you yelled it? But do you know what it REALLY means? We suspect you might not because if you do, you might not have yelled it.

The Little League rule is the same as the professional rule, and it reads:

7.08 -- Any runner is out when -

(a) (1) running more than three feet away from his baseline to avoid being tagged, unless such action is to avoid interference with a fielder fielding a batted ball. A runner’s baseline is established when the tag attempt occurs and is a straight line from the runner to the base which he is attempting to reach;

Yep – he’s out, but **only** if he runs out of **his** baseline, not **the** baseline. And **his** baseline is a straight line from where he was when the tag attempt started to the base he is attempting to reach.

And it only applies if it is to avoid a tag attempt, not at any other time.

And a tag attempt cannot be made unless the fielder has the ball and is attempting a tag.

Unless the condition is met (a tag attempt), the runner can run anywhere he pleases. If you think about it, runners taking wide turn around bases would be out if the perceived baseline rule was always true. But it isn’t, so they aren’t

Only when a tag attempt is started does the rule kick in. At that point, you draw a straight line from the runner’s position, wherever it is, to the base he is attempting to reach. That line is the one he cannot deviate more than three feet from.

And if the fielder throws to another fielder, as in a rundown? Then that tag attempt has ended and the new one starts after the second fielder has the ball and starts another tag attempt. And at that point the runner’s baseline is re-drawn. It can change several times in a rundown.