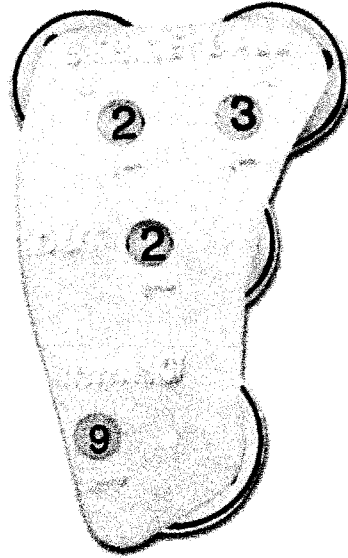


# Umpire Basics



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# Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this booklet is to provide useful information about the art and skill of umpiring. It is mostly about umpire mechanics on a 60' diamond. It provides some information on mechanics for larger diamonds, rules, umpire gear, handling conflicts and other topics such as umpire philosophy. Little League™ baseball rules are covered in the *Little League Baseball Official Regulations, Playing Rules, and Policies* book.

Umpire mechanics define how umpires move on the field. Proper mechanics is a skill that all umpires should try to learn from trained instructors as early as possible and throughout their career. To learn it requires training, practice, thoughtfulness, discipline and time. The information provided in this booklet is only a reference that supplements the mechanics taught at umpire training clinics by properly trained instructors.

# Acknowledgment

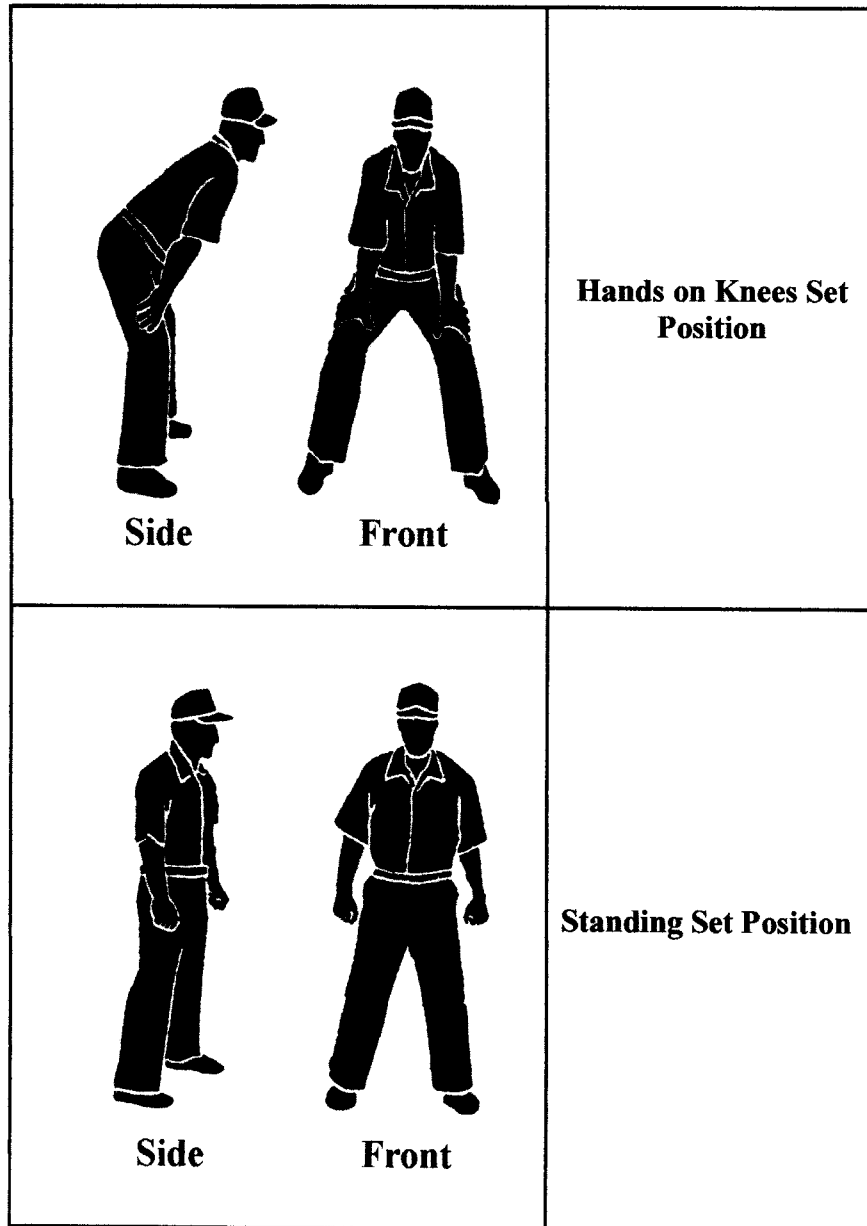
Thank you to CA District 57 for providing the basic outline and most of the material for this document.

Updated 2018 – Updates and additions made by Mike Smith, Auburn Little League UIC and reviewed by Richard Miller, CA District 11 Umpire

# Field Positions

	<p><b>Position of Base Umpire When...</b></p> <p><b>60 foot diamond</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Bases empty</li> <li>B. Runner on 1<sup>st</sup> base</li> <li>C. Runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base</li> <li>C. Runner on 3<sup>rd</sup> base</li> <li>C. Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup></li> <li>C. Runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup></li> <li>C. Runners on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup></li> <li>C. Runners on all bases</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Position of Umpire when ball is hit to the outfield</b></p> <p><b>60 foot diamond</b></p> <p>Base umpire moves into the infield and watches the runners tag bases and pivots to stay ahead of the runner, not behind.</p> <p>Plate umpire moves into the infield, in the direction of the ball, only if the base umpire goes out.</p>

# Set Positions



# Slot Position

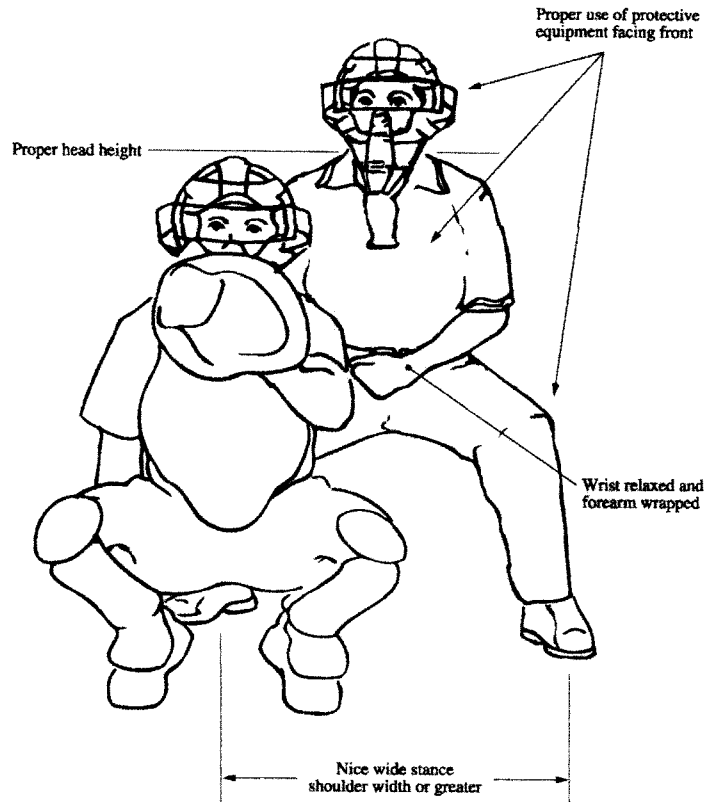
The purpose of the slot position is to give the plate umpire the best possible view of the strike zone while maintaining the correct head position.

The proper slot stance is having your head just to the side of the catcher's shoulder with the chin no lower than the top of the catcher's head. The back of the catcher's heels controls the relationship between the toe of the forward foot (slot foot) and the location of the catcher. The toe of the trail foot should not be further back than the heel of the forward foot. (see diagram on page 8)

## THE SLOT (FRONT VIEW)

Proper head position is controlled by

1. Width of stance
2. Amount of squat
3. Forward body tilt



## **THE SLOT POSITION DISCRPTION**

The Plate Umpire's Slot Position is comprised of three elements; **WIDTH OF STANCE, SQUAT AND LEAN.**

### **WIDTH OF STANCE (Heel-Toe-Heel-Toe)**

For a right-handed batter the left foot is the slot foot and the reverse is true for a left-handed batter.

The width of the stance should be wider than shoulder width apart, the wider the stance the less you will have to squat.

The amount of the squat should not be more than the thigh's parallel to the ground. Any more squat than this will hinder mobility.

### **SQUAT**

When first setting up for the slot position the umpire should remember that the slot foot goes into position first and the trail foot sets up second. This is often referred to the "A" position of the slot.

When going into the squat posture (position "B") the umpire should move in one crisp movement bending at the knees keeping the back straight. Constant eye contact with the pitcher during this "A" to "B" movement is imperative

The correct location of the head is to not have the chin of the umpire below the top of the catcher's head.

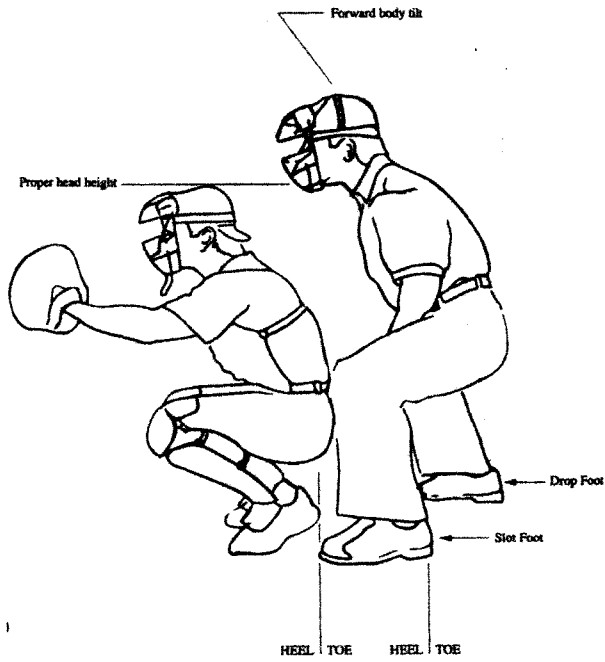
With proper head height and correct location of the slot the umpire will have the best view of the strike zone with the outside corner of the plate, and should maintain a strong, stable working position.

The arm closest to the batter should be wrapped in front of the body, relaxed, with the elbow tucked into the side. The free arm should grasp the upper thigh or back of the leg.

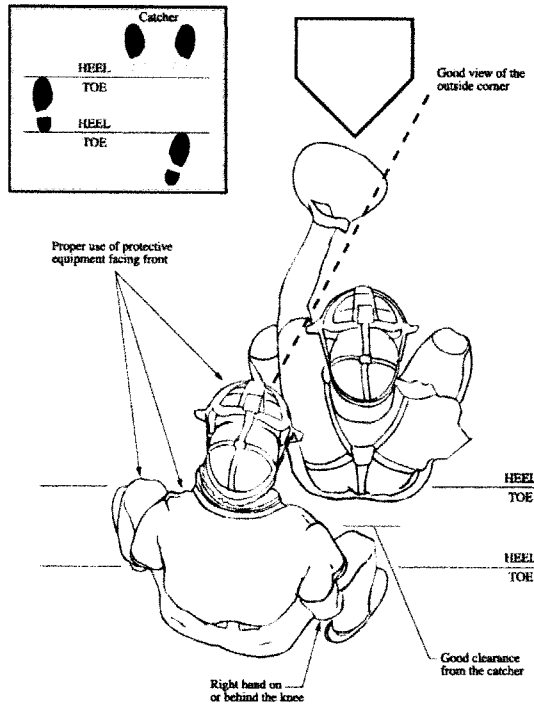
### **LEAN**

The forward body LEAN should be very slight to correct head height and to reduce fatigue and instability. Too much LEAN and you will put strain on your shoulders and neck. You must maintain stability of the upper body..

## The Slot (Side View)



## THE SLOT (TOP VIEW)





Once in the squat position, minor head adjustments may be made by adjusting with the catcher by moving left, right or back and above. Once in position, lock yourself in and get ready for the pitch.

With proper feet placement and correct head height the proper use of the equipment is insured. The upper body will be facing both the pitcher and the strike zone.

Proper use of the eyes will develop a good tracking of the ball. Every pitch should be followed completely from the pitchers hand through the strike zone and into the catcher's glove before making a call.

When working the slot, the plate umpire will have the best stance for "Opening the Gate" on passed balls. The consistency of the umpire will improve by repeating this movement and holding a steady head position.

## Things to remember about The Slot Position

1. Proper Head Position is controlled by:
  - The width of the stance
  - The amount of the squat
  - Forward body lean
2. Proper foot location: From the catcher – Heel – Toe – Heel – Toe
3. Track the ball to the glove with your eyes: Don't move your head.
4. When calling a Ball: Stay down in the squatted position.
5. When calling a Strike: Rise out of the squat position, raise your right hand in front of you, then bring it back to your ear while grabbing air, clench your fist while bringing your arm forward like your are pounding your fist on the wall and at the same time calling "STRIKE!"
6. After each pitch: Step back and relax.

# Umpire Check List

1. Proper Uniform:
  - Clean, Shined Black Shoes
  - Black Socks
  - Heather or Charcoal Gray Pants
  - Black Belt
  - Undershirt
  - Umpire Jersey with Little League patch on left shoulder
  - Umpire Cap
  - *Plate Umpire:*
    - Protective gear (shoes, leg guards inside pants, chest protector, mask with throat guard, cup)
    - Ball bag
  - *Base Umpire:*
    - Red Flag, 60-foot diamond only
2. Be at the field at least 30 minutes before game time.
3. Pre-game umpire to umpire conference:
  - Introductions
  - Local ground rules
  - Fair/Foul coverage
  - Catch/No catch responsibility
  - Tag-ups/Touches
  - Fly balls to outfield
  - Fly balls to infield
  - Base umpire goes to outfield
  - Coveraga at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bases
  - Live ball (put back in play after all dead ball situations)
  - Fences and trouble spots
  - Umpire positioning
  - Runners lane violation
  - Overthrows and awarding bases
  - Infield fly
  - Timing plays
  - Umpire hand signals
  - Inspect equipment in dugouts (safety check)
  - Pick-offs, steals (Juniors/Seniors/Big League)
  - Dropped 3<sup>rd</sup> strike (Majors/Juniors/Seniors/Big League)

**4. Pre-Game Conference with managers at home plate:**

- Introduce everyone
- Collect, review and confirm line-ups
- Review playing field ground rules
- Insure that all players are properly equipped
- Start game on time

**To Players:**

- Good sportsmanship and hustle on and off the field
- Helmets must be worn at all times for all offensive players on the field
- No jewelry (except for Medical Alert)
- Have fun!

**To Manager/Coaches:**

- Are all players properly equipped
- Proper way to ask a clarification about rule calls and get help
- Do not leave the dugout until a proper time-out is granted
- Stay in dugout between innings (except the next batter up or in Junior and above the on-deck batter)

**5. Post-Game**

- Talk with your partners and critique after every game
- Be positive (do not criticize)
- Be open minded to your partners input
- Review important plays
- Assist with ejection report

# Communication during a game

It is very important that umpires communicate clearly with everyone, including each other, throughout the game. They do this with calls and hand gestures called signals.

## Calls

These communicate what is happening during a game and are intended for everyone to see. Some calls are voice only, some are signal only with no voice, and some are both voice and signal combined.

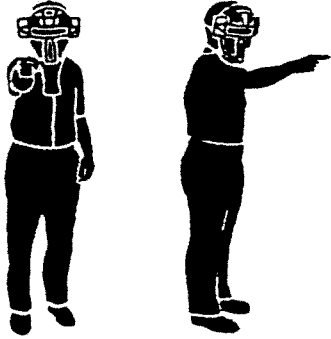
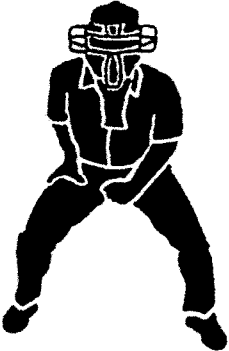
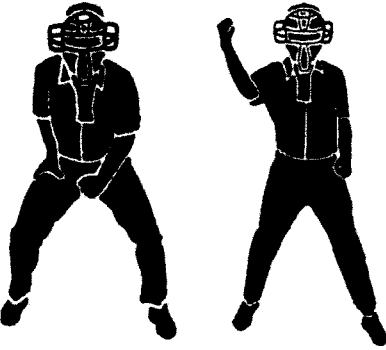
- Play
- Balls
- Strike
- Time
- Safe
- Safe, off the bag
- Out
- Out on the tag
- Fair
- Foul
- Foul tip
- No catch
- Catch
- Infield fly
- Interference
- Obstruction
- Obstruction with time
- Runner leaves base early
- Home run

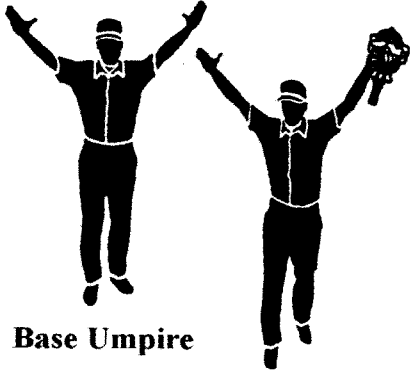
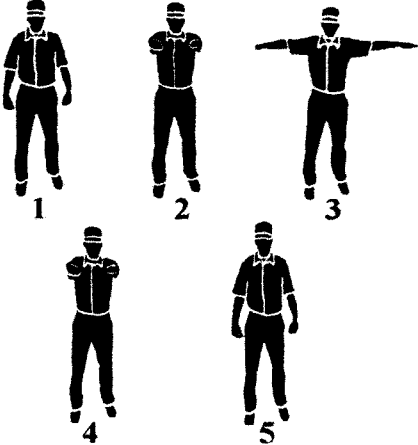
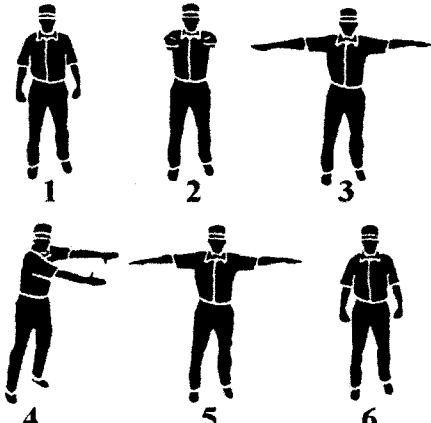
## Hand Signals

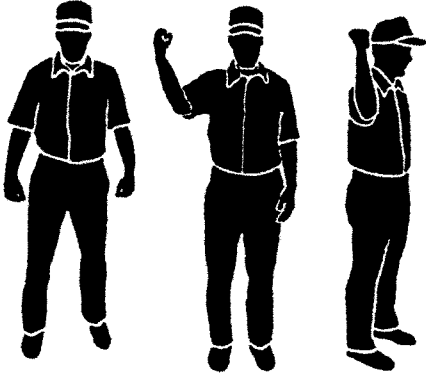
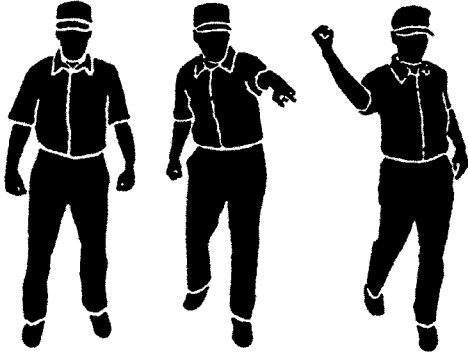
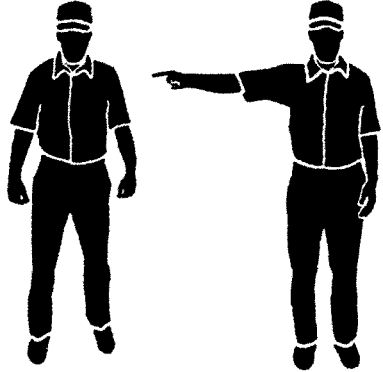
Umpires communicate with each other by talking and via non-verbal hand signals. This should be done often to avoid confusion and missed calls. Always echo a signal back to your partner to acknowledge you have received their signal and to confirm you agree. Contact between umpires between innings, should be minimized.

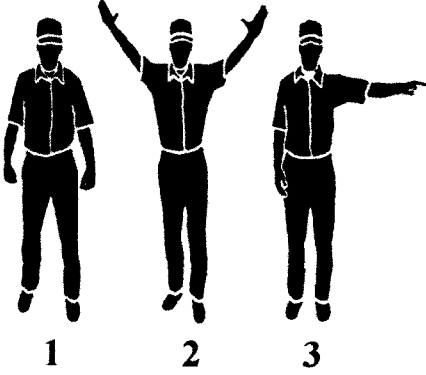
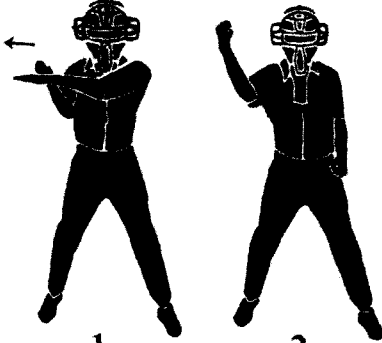
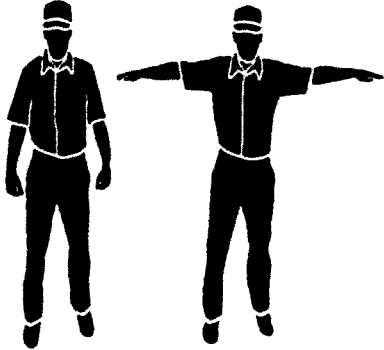
- Infield fly situation
- Number of outs
- Timing play situation
- What is the count?
- The count is
- Plate umpire will cover 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Plate umpire will stay at Home
- Check swing
- Umpire clap

# Calls

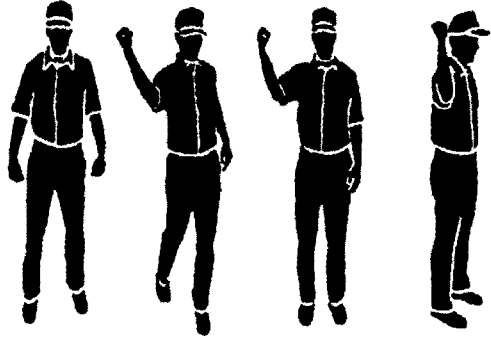
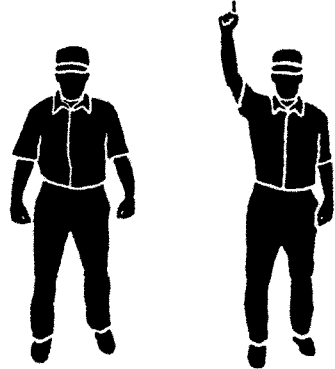
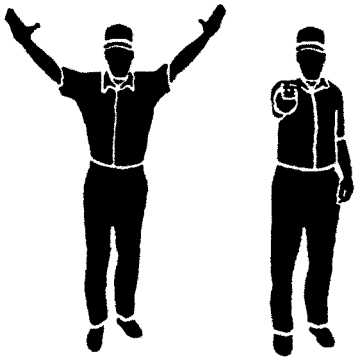
	<p><b>“Play”</b></p> <p>Called by the plate umpire only.</p> <p>Starts the game or resumes the game when time is out.</p>
	<p><b>“Ball”</b></p> <p>Called while down with no arm signal.</p> <p>Called with the number. “Ball 1,...2, ...3, ...4”</p> <p>Not as loud as strikes.</p> <p>There should be no vertical or lateral body movement to indicate location.</p>
	<p><b>“Strike”</b></p> <p>Called after rising up from the squat position.</p> <p>Strikes are called loud enough to be heard in the stands.</p>

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Base Umpire</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Plate Umpire</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Time”</b></p> <p>Called by plate or base umpire.</p> <p>Called loud and clear.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">1                      2                      3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4                      5</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Safe”</b></p> <p>Safe calls originate from the hands-on-knees set, or standing set position and may end with a return to a hands-on-knees set position after the safe call.</p> <p>After making this call remain set with eyes on ball in case there is an immediate play following the safe call.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">1                      2                      3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4                      5                      6</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Safe...off the bag”</b></p> <p>Called on a play that pulls the fielder off the base.</p> <p>Accompanied by a sweeping motion to indicate the call.</p> <p>After making this call remain set with eyes on ball in case there is an immediate play following the safe call.</p>

 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Front</b>                      <b>Side</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“He’s Out!” or “She’s Out”</b></p> <p>Out calls originate from the hands-on-knees set, or standing set position. Make the call in a standing position.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1</b>                      <b>2</b>                      <b>3</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“On the tag, He’s out!”</b></p> <p>On close plays when the first baseman tags the batter runner, point to the spot of the tag and aggressively signal this call.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fair Ball</b></p> <p>No voice is used to indicate a fair ball. Indicated by pointing onto the field of play. Emphatically “pump” the signal on close calls. The call is made from the standing set position.</p>

 <p style="text-align: center;">1                  2                  3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Foul”</b></p> <p>Raising both arms above the head and make the call. The closer it is the more emphatic the voice and motion. When a hit ball is caught on the fly by a fielder outside of fair territory do <u>NOT</u> say anything and complete the foul signal and catch signal.</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">1                  2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Foul Tip</b></p> <p>This is a non-verbal call used with a “strike” hand motion.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“No Catch”</b></p> <p>Called loud and clear by the umpire that has the responsibility to make the call.</p>



 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Front</b> <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><b>Side</b></span></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“That’s a catch”</b></p> <p>Called by plate or base umpire.</p> <p>Call loud and clear.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Infield Fly” or “Infield Fly, if Fair”</b></p> <p>Called by plate or base umpire.</p> <p>Call when the ball reaches peak height. Echo you partner if they call it.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Time; That’s Interference”</b></p> <p>Called by plate or base umpire.</p> <p>Called immediately when it happens. Follow up verbally with any base award(s)</p>



**“That’s Obstruction”**

**7.06 B**

Called by plate or base umpire when a play is not being made on a runner.

Call loud and clear. Point at offender and let play continue. Any base awards are done after play concludes and time is called.




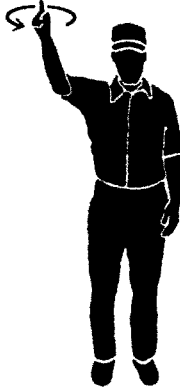
**“Time! That’s obstruction”**

**7.06A**

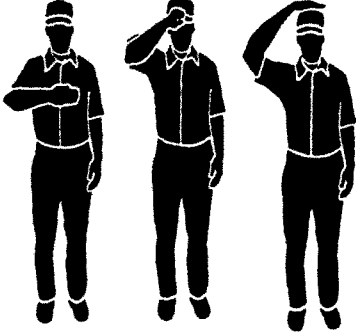


Called by plate or base umpire when a play is being made on a runner.




Call loud and clear. Stop all play immediately.




Base awards are done immediately.

 A silhouette of a base umpire wearing a cap and uniform, dropping a red flag from his right pocket.	<p><b>Runner Leaves Base Early</b></p> <p>Called by base umpire only.</p> <p>Drop red flag from pocket. This is a non-verbal (no voice) call. Let play continue, when all play has stopped enforce the violation if any .</p>
 A silhouette of a base umpire wearing a cap and uniform, pointing his right index finger upwards with a curved arrow indicating the direction.	<p><b>Home Run</b></p> <p>Indicates that the hit ball went over the fence</p>

# Signals

	<p><b>Infield Fly Situation</b></p> <p>Indicates 3 different ways to signal your partner that all the Infield Fly conditions exist.</p>
	<p><b>Number of Outs</b></p> <p>Done with every new batter and only necessary if runners are on base.</p>
	<p><b>Timing Play Situation</b></p> <p>Indicates to your partner that you both must be aware the timing between when a runner reaches home plate and when the third out is made.</p>

	<p><b>What is the Count?</b></p> <p>Discretely asks your partner to tell you what they have for the current count of balls and strikes.</p>
	<p><b>The Count is</b></p> <p>Discretely tells your partner what you have as the current count of balls and strikes.</p>
	<p><b>Plate umpire will cover 3<sup>rd</sup></b></p> <p>Indicates to the base umpire that the plate umpire will handle any calls at third base.</p>

	<p><b>Plate umpire will stay at Home Plate</b></p> <p>Indicates that the plate umpire intends to only cover home plate.</p>
	<p><b>Check Swing</b></p> <p>Plate umpire steps out from behind catcher, points to base umpire with <u>left</u> hand, and asks, "Did he go?"</p>
	<p><b>Clap</b></p> <p>Tells your partner that you think they did a good job or made a good call.</p>

# Key Communication Terminology

## Batting:

**“Ball. No he didn’t go”**

Plate Umpire: Check swing – not a strike – give count

**“Yes, he went”**

Plate Umpire: Check swing – strike, with hand signal – give count

**“Did he go?”**

Plate Umpire: Left hand pointing to partner, never right hand

**“Yes he did” or “No he didn’t”**

Base Umpire: Do hand signal for out or safe at the same time.

## Ball hit down right field line: (80 or 90 foot diamond)

**“I’m going out”**

Base Umpire: Go out on Trouble Ball, Fair/Foul, close Catch/No Catch

**“I’ve got the plate” or “I’m at home”**

Base Umpire: Gone out and comes back to cover home

## Infield Fly:

**“Infield fly, the batter is out”**

Either Umpire: Echo your partner. Make sure runners hear you.

**“Infield fly, if fair”**

Either Umpire but in most circumstances the plate umpire: Echo your partner. Make sure runners hear you.

## Rundowns:

**“I’ve got it all”**

Plate Umpire: Rundown with multiple runners between home and 3<sup>rd</sup>

**“I’ve got this half”**

Plate Umpire: Rundown with runner on third or first only.

## **Runner 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**“I’ve got 3<sup>rd</sup> if he comes”**

Plate Umpire: Watch R1 if he turns 2<sup>nd</sup> – stay in foul territory

**“I’ve got 3<sup>rd</sup>”**

Plate Umpire: As play develops at 3<sup>rd</sup> – be ready at 3<sup>rd</sup>

**“I’ve got the ball”**

Plate Umpire: Going down 3<sup>rd</sup> base line on a fly ball

**“I’m on the line”**

Plate Umpire: going down 1<sup>st</sup> base line on fly ball and will not be at 3<sup>rd</sup> should the runner advance to 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **Runners 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fly ball to outfield: (80/90 foot diamond)**

**“I’ve got 3<sup>rd</sup> if he tags”**

Plate Umpire: your call only if fly ball is caught

**“Going home”**

Plate Umpire: As soon as ball not caught.

## **Timing Plays:**

**“Run scores. Run scores. Score that run!” or “ Score two runs”**

Plate Umpire: Point at home plate to let scorekeeper know

**“No run. No run”**

Plate Umpire: Wave off – above the head and shoulders, not a safe signal - let scorekeeper know

## **Close plays on fly balls:**

**“No catch. No catch”**

Proper Umpire: On a close play give safe signal

**“That’s a catch”**

Proper Umpire: On a close play – really sell it – give out signal



## Miscellaneous:

### **“That’s a balk” (not in Minor or Major Divisions)**

Base Umpire: Stand – Point at pitcher – Back to hands on knees set. When all action has stopped stand, call time, say “That’s a Balk” and make the proper awards.

Plate Umpire: Hold position - Do not stand up. When all action has stopped stand, call time, say “That’s a Balk” and make the proper awards.

### **“On the tag, He’s out!”**

Base Umpire: Only on swipe tag, and never on a tag between bases

### **“Safe, off the bag, SAFE!”**

Base umpire: Make the call – with a motion of the direction the fielder was off the bag.

### **“Safe, no tag, SAFE!”**

Base Umpire: Make the call – with a vigorous safe mechanic motion – sell it

### **“Foul”**

Plate Umpire: Hands forward shoulder height, palms forward.

### **“Time”**

Plate/Base Umpire: Hands forward shoulder height, palms forward.

### **“Play”**

Plate Umpire: Right hand point at pitcher with verbal “Play”

## Obstruction/Interference:

**“That’s obstruction”**

**“Time, that’s obstruction”**

**“Time, that’s interference”**

## Special Terminology:

**“Backswing hit the catcher”**

**“Illegal Pitch”**

**“That’s a ball! You went to your mouth!” or “Pitcher went to his mouth!”**

# Handling Conflicts FAQ

**What separates the top umpires from the other umpires?**

- Their ability to handle people well

**What is the one thing that separate umpires from everyone else on and around the field?**

- They don't care who wins

**What are the 5 reasons a Manager will come out to discuss a call?**

- Thinks you missed a play
- Misinterprets a rule
- To protect or support a player
- Wants the umpire to bail his team out of a mistake
- Wants to impress the crowd

**What is the first thing you should do when an upset manager comes out to talk with you?**

- Make sure that the manager is facing the crowd so that they at his facial expressions and reactions instead of yours

**What are some additional things an Umpire can do when a Manager does come out?**

- Calm them down. Say something like "Let's both be calm and discuss the issue you may have"
- Listen without interpretation and keep eye contact.
- Don't ask confrontational questions like "What did you say?"
- Ask them to inform you of the rule that they are arguing about

**Should you ever admit you missed a call?**

- General rule, NO
- Some possible answers you could provide are:
  - "From where I was standing, that is what I saw."
  - "In my judgment that is the right call."

**Note:** If a manager gets real angry you might say something like "OK, you had your say, now please go back to the dugout so we can continue the game" and then walk away. Remember that managers that disagree with a rule call can file a

protest and continue play without delay. No arguing or protesting of judgment calls is allowed per the rules.

**What should you do about sniper fire from the dugout?**

- First time, look at dugout, mask on, maintain position
- Next time, remove mask, look at dugout, maintain position
- Next time, remove mask, a couple of steps, "I've heard enough". Do not threaten.
- If it is from a player don't eject anyone unless you know for sure that they are the guilty one. Ask the Manager to deal with his players. Sit them down on the bench and warn to be quiet

**When should you go for help?**

- If everyone starts going nuts after a call.
  - Example: Play at the Plate. Dropped ball. Plate umpire did not see drop. Manager comes out. If you (base umpire) saw what happened, stop the Manager. Get together with partner and tell what you saw. Not changing his call, just providing information he may not have. If the call is changed DO NOT let the other Manager get involved because you did not allow the first Manager to come out. You can say, "what are you doing out here?"
  - Example: If Manager does come out and you go for help. Say, "I'm going to ask my partner if he saw it differently. If he did I will change the call, but if he didn't then we are done and you going back to the dugout."
- Go for help if you are totally screened out of the play.
- Don't let your partner die with an obvious wrong call such as dropped ball on a tag or pulled foot at 1<sup>st</sup> base.

**What should you do about Zoo Situations?**

- Umpire should not make a call putting a runner into jeopardy. Example: runner at first, catch/no catch, no one makes a call, now two runners at 1<sup>st</sup>, runners hung up!
  - Call time, get umpires together and reconstruct the play around what could have been expected to happen if umpires would have made the catch/no catch call immediately. Then get both coaches together and tell them what the ruling is (right or wrong – no discussion that's what we have). Try to give them each a "piece of the pie"
- Eject a player for language and Manager asks what he said.

“I will tell you, but if you repeat it or you act in a manner that you agree with him you are going with him. Now do you still want me to tell you what he said?”

**What should you do about a pitcher showing emotion?**

- Call time, brush the plate and quietly send a message through the catcher
- Get the Manager and pitcher together between innings
- Last resort – Warning next incident ejection

**What should you do about a batter drawing lines or other displeasure?**

- Don't embarrass yourself – warn him so both benches can hear.
- Resolve right away

**What should you do about a catcher holding pitches and other displeasure?**

- Stop it immediately. Tell him to get the ball back to the pitcher.
- Don't let him turn around on you
- If Manger asks, “where was that pitch catcher?” – Inform catcher you are going to tell him what to say
- Let the catcher talk to the Manager, he has more credibility

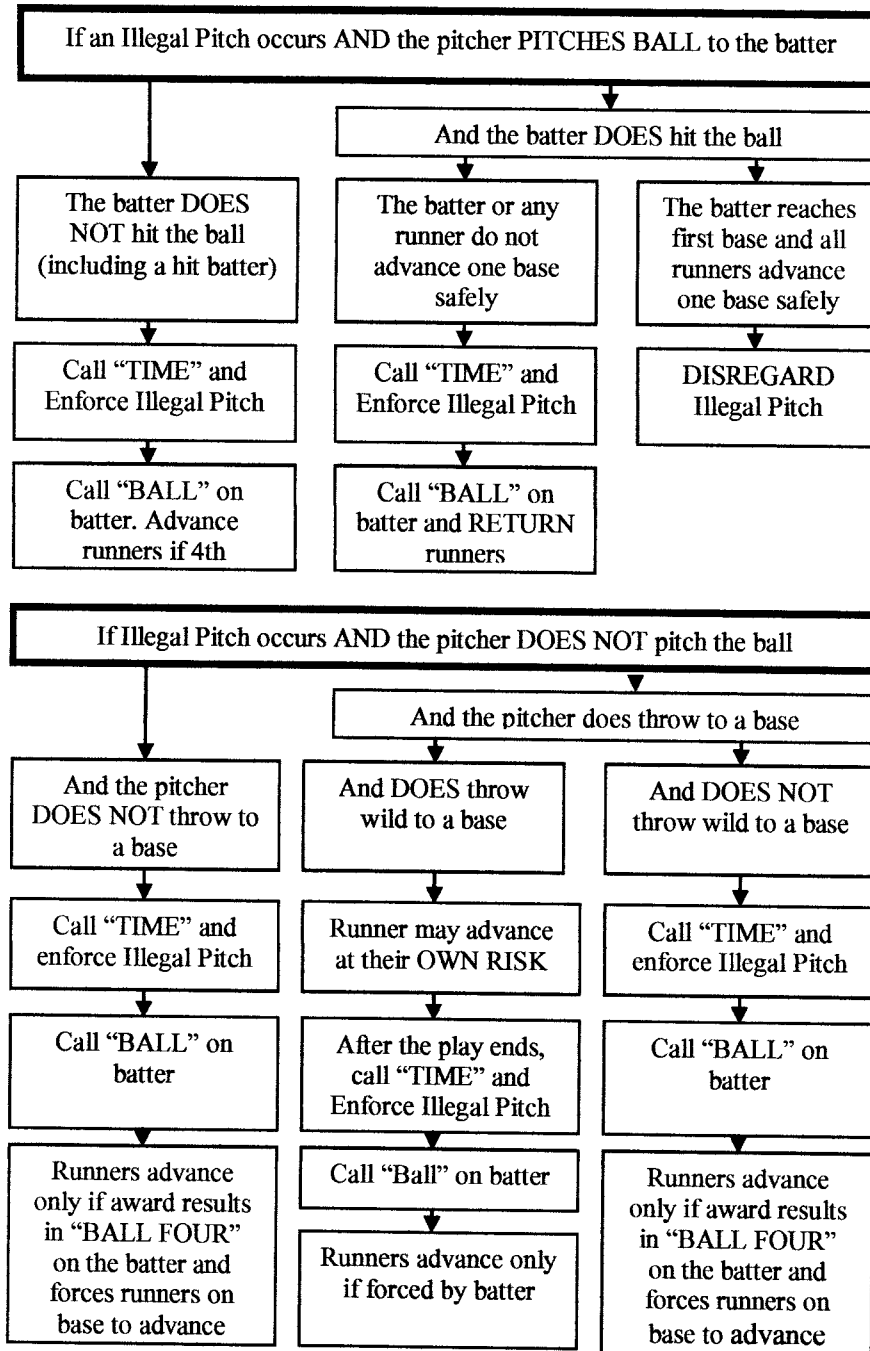
**When you get together with the other umpire, between innings, after a close play you are signally everyone:**

- You don't know what happened or you're not sure.
- You're not sure you made the right call.

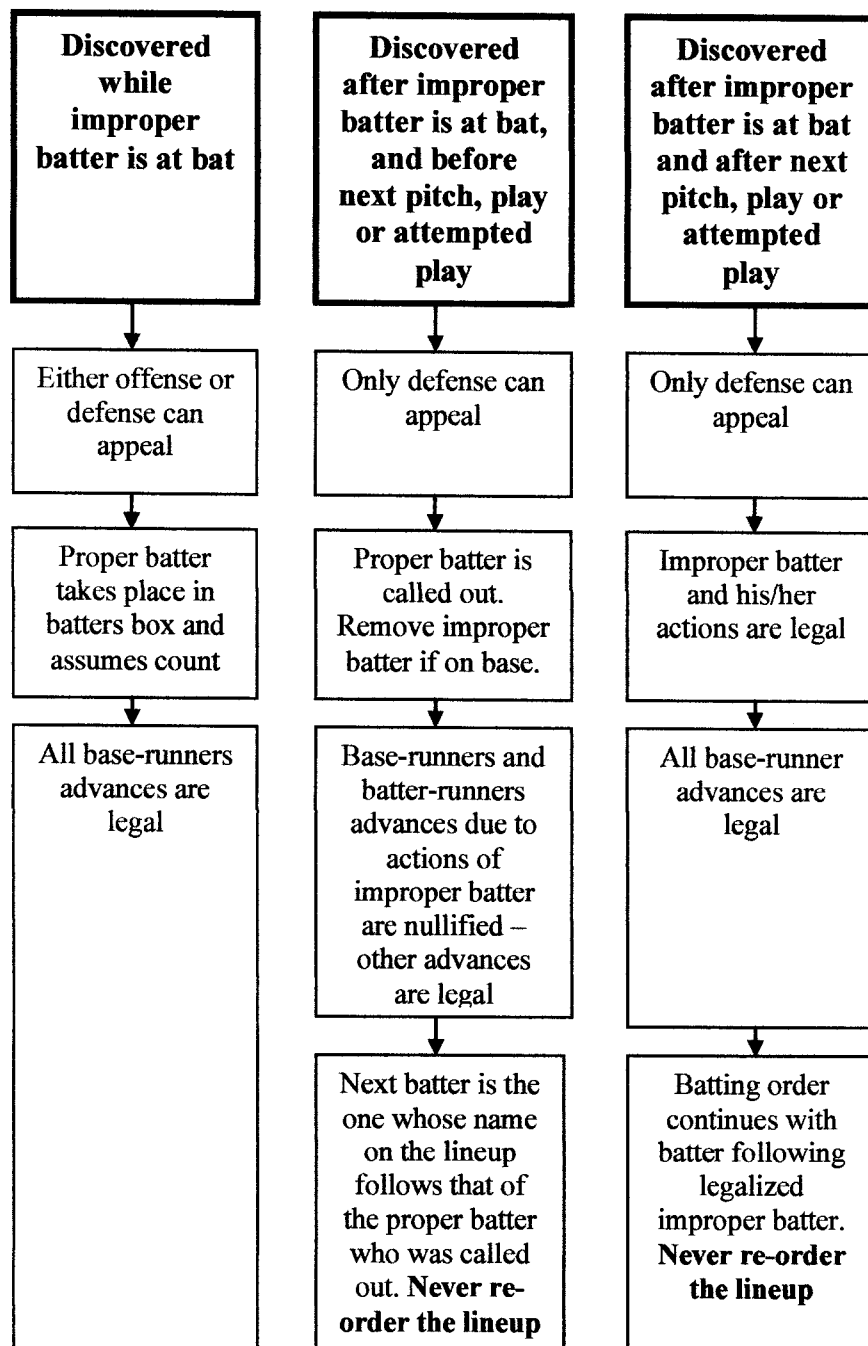
**Guidelines to avoid trouble**

- **Dress and act professionally.** It will make you look right, even if you are not.
- Do a **pre-game meeting** at the plate with the team managers.
- You **must** keep calm even when others are not. If you lose your cool you lose everything!
- Let Managers and coaches have their say – **be approachable.**
- When you are done, **walk away.**
- If you warn someone, **follow through** or you lose credibility. The other dugout and fans are watching you
- Do **not** be a tough guy, wise guy, or smart aleck.

# Illegal Pitch



## Batting Out of Order



# 10 Commandments of Umpiring

1. Keep your eyes on the ball.
2. Keep all personalities out of your work. Forget and forgive.
3. Avoid sarcasm. Don't insist on the last word.
4. Never charge a player, and above all, no pointing your finger and yelling.
5. Hear only the things you should hear – be deaf to others.
6. Keep your temper. A decision made in anger is never sound.
7. Watch your language.
8. Take pride in your work at all times. Respect for an umpire is created both off and on the field.
9. Review your work. You will find that 90% of the trouble is traceable to not hustling or staying focused.
10. No matter what your opinion of another umpire, never make an adverse comment regarding them. To do so is unprofessional.

# Principles of Umpiring

1. **Pause, Read, and React**  
Read the position of the fielders to help determine the play and always pause before you react and make a call.
2. **Pivot**  
Enables you to get into position and change direction on the field
3. **Watch the Ball, Glance at the Runners**  
Must know when to take your eyes off the ball; head on a swivel.
4. **Chest to Ball**  
Always face the ball at all times.
5. **Angle / Distance**  
Angle first! Get as much distance as play will allow.
6. **Be Set**  
You must be set to see the play. You must see the play to make the call.
7. **Timing**  
Proper use of the eyes – wait until you see it all happen.
8. **Adjust**  
Constantly
9. **Open the Gate**  
Know when to do it. Let the fielder take you to the play.
10. **Echo your Partner**  
Knowing responsibilities for balks, overthrows, time out, and the many other communications between umpires means less confusion on the field.



Please contact Mike Smith at [UICJR@auburnlittleleague.org](mailto:UICJR@auburnlittleleague.org) if you have any questions, additions, or corrections

