

# **New Umpire Training Guide**

**Revised 11/27/16**

# Table of Contents

<b>New Umpire Training Guide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Revised 12/22/15</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Purpose of this document .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Equipment.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Necessary Equipment	3
Optional Equipment	5
Equipment to Avoid	5
<b>Professionalism .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Promptness	6
Appearance	7
Decisiveness	7
Hustle	7
Attitude	7
Conflict Resolution	8
Focus	8
Rules Knowledge	9
Judgement	9
<b>Mechanics.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Ball / Strike	11
Fair / Foul	12
Safe / Out	13
Basic Rules Application	14
Intereference / Obstruction	14

Interference 14

Obstruction 14

**Self Improvement.....18**

**Appendix .....19**

## Purpose of this document

This document has been created to be used by our Mentors / New Umpires as a guide for training new umpires. If you can, go through this document with your mentor. Some of the mechanics are “by the book” while others are best practices.

This document is intended to be a **beginning primer for umpires that are working games 1-10** of their careers as an Umpire. We have found that **any association is only as good as our most junior umpires**. The purpose of this program is for us to train and keep our new umpires.

Many officials come to us with little or no umpiring experience. New umpires are usually instructed to “Use the rule book” for this training. While the rule making organizations are the authorities in this area, we have found that their training is geared more toward the experienced umpire. There is just too much information for a novice to digest.

With this training program we have broken down our training into 3 phases.

- Phase 1 - Games 1-10
- Phase 2 - Games 11-50 (or the end of your first year)
- Phase 3 - Year 2 and beyond - ongoing training

There are a few assumptions that are being made here regarding your first 10 games. First, is that you will be the **only umpire working your games**. This will be true if you are working high school (rookies are usually scheduled for freshman games in which only one umpire is used) or rec. ball where the only time you will work with another umpire is during a tournament championship.

Phase 1 of your training focuses on some practical tips on selecting, buying and maintaining your **equipment**, your **professionalism, mechanics**, and how to **improve yourself as an umpire**.

## Equipment

The last two sections of this document involve investments that you will be asked to make in your own career as an umpire. As an umpire, you are an independent contractor. And, as in any business you must make personal investments in your business to make it grow. These investments are in the form of your time and your money. Lets talk about your first big investment, your equipment.

### Necessary Equipment

Rule books only require umpires to wear the proper uniform and a mask behind the plate. Many umpires will tell you that the list of necessary equipment behind the plate is much more complete. This list reflects the gear that we believe is required along with what to look for when shopping.

**Uniform Shirt** - **Nylon Mesh** is the coolest. Get it **size up to be able to fit chest protector inside**. If you make a career of it, you will have multiple in many colors; red, powder blue, dark blue, white, etc.

**Uniform Hat** - Look for the hats with the **2-inch bill** that will fit under the mask as well a provide enough shade in the field.

**Pants** - **Heather or Charcoal gray**. Ones bought off the shelf at discount stores are o.k. to begin with, however once you decide to make a career out of it, you will want to get specialty ones from a catalog. They will allow **plenty of room to accommodate shin guards**. **Combo pants** are much more versatile than either base or plate pants. You will need them at that point anyway because you will probably blow out the seat in the first ones. Get them one size bigger than you normally wear.

**Socks** - **Black socks required.** A pair of over the calf black socks will come up high enough to protect your legs from the chafing caused by the straps on your shin guards.

**Mask** - This can be a **traditional mask or a helmet style mask**, depending on the level of protection that you want.

When shopping for a mask, **the lighter the better.** You will spend a lot of time with that thing on your face and your neck can get tired using a heavy mask. Look for a mask that has **microfiber or leather pads** that come in contact with your face. Vinyl pads tend to irritate the skin. **Adjust your mask harness** so that the **middle strap is as short as it will go** and the **side straps are as long as they will go.** This will allow you to pull the mask off without taking your hat (or glasses) with it. It will also allow the mask to spin if you get hit in the face, absorbing some of the impact.

Helmets are not usually very light but the weight is distributed around your head so you shouldn't see too much of a difference. if you wear glasses, **find one that won't interfere with your glasses** when removing or putting on the helmet. Also look for **closed cell foam padding.** If you look inside the helmet and see a sponge-like material for padding, that is open cell foam padding and it will likely wear out quicker. If you find a helmet that has **replaceable pads**, you won't have to find a new helmet once the padding wears out. You will not be able to wear a hat under your helmet unless you spin the hat around. Most umpires don't wear a hat under their helmets. It will also keep your head cooler. **Helmets should be black** and avoid helmets with excessive decoration. **Be careful about storing your helmet in your trunk** for extended periods of time.

Yes, lightweight masks or helmets with leather pads will be more expensive, but you will likely not have to upgrade your equipment later. Also, **find a bag specifically for the mask.** You're not going to want your face to come in contact with the dirt and grime from your other pads. Even though most masks nowadays come with a metal throat guard attached, consider adding a **plastic throat guard** on the bottom for more protection.

**Chest Protector** - Most chest protectors provide adequate protection. The key here is to find one with **good ventilation.** You will be spending more hot days behind the plate than cool days and you don't want your t-shirts to start smelling like your socks. Also look for a protector that has **dual, hard plastic shoulder caps.** Protectors designed for catchers do not have these.

**Shin Guards** - Make sure you get a **pair that fit you**, are **light weight** and have **good ventilation.** **Toe and metatarsal flaps are not required if you have proper plate shoes.**

**Shoes** - **Hard-toed shoes with metatarsal guards** are the norm here. They should be **mostly if not all black**, made of leather, and **shined** when you step on the field. **High tops help keep the dirt and dust out** of your shoes. Umpires get by with less, but a foot injury will prevent you from working. Be careful about storing in the trunk for extended periods.

**Cup** - Newer flexible sided cups help to prevent chafing. You can use a **supporter or compression shorts with a cup pocket** to hold it in place.

**Ball bag(s)** - Dark blue, black or grey in color depending on the association. Get a bigger one for softball.

**Indicator** - Find one that fits in your left hand. If you have small hands, stay away from the ones that count innings. You are going to need to pull the mask off with your left hand as well.

**Brush** - Easy enough to find. The ones with the included bat ring are nice. Make sure to get the 2 1/4" ring for softball. 2 5/8" for baseball.

**Pencil** - For recording line up changes.

**Timing Device** - To keep track of game time, necessary for rec. ball. You may want to keep this in your back pocket. Anything in your front pocket has the potential to be hit by a pitch, become broken and/or cause injury

## **Optional Equipment**

These are things that you might like to have on hand.

**Undergarments** - **Moisture wicking material** like Under Armor is wonderful stuff. It keeps you cooler in the summer and warmer in the spring. **White, black or navy blue t-shirts. Compression shorts or pants with a cup pocket** are also nice. Some are even padded.

**Fence Bag** - Something you can clip onto the fence to hold all of the things that you want near but don't want in your pockets.

**Notepad** - A binder clipped set of 3 x 5 cards works well

**Sunscreen**

**Lip Balm with an SPF**

**Band-Aids**

**Pain relievers**

**Water bottle** - For drinking

**Spray Bottle** - with water for cleaning equipment and glasses.

**Towels / Washcloths**

**Corn Starch Based Powder** - Great for absorbing moisture and preventing chafing.

## **Equipment to Avoid**

**Jewelry** - It's hard to enforce a "no jewelry" rule when you are wearing it behind the plate. Some umpires even remove wedding rings.

**Cell Phones** - If you need to use it as a timing device, keep it in your pocket or ball bag. Remember that anything in your pocket has the potential to be hit by a pitch.

## Professionalism

Professionalism is the first area for an official to master. It is also the first opportunity for you to make a mistake. Your professionalism can make the difference between having a smooth game and having a rough one. We define professionalism in the following terms:

- Promptness
- Appearance
- Decisiveness
- Hustle
- Attitude
- Focus
- Rules Knowledge
- Judgement

All of these elements are the things that you will be evaluated on as an umpire in the GLOA.

### Promptness

It's good practice to contact HS athletic departments the day before to reassure them that an umpire will be there. This gives them the ability to contact you with changes and gets your name out there for later opportunities. Always show up to your games **at least 30 minutes before game time. Never be late.** You should always know where you're going. If you can, print out a map and plan for traffic. Keep your assigners / athletic directors numbers handy in case you run into a problem.

**Keep track of your assignments in a calendar. Once you are scheduled, keep that commitment.** A paper planner that has a calendar and phone directory in it is a perfect tool for this. The calendar can also be used to track your mileage.

Being on time means that you will have plenty of time to conduct a **proper pre game routine**. In softball, this requires an equipment check. Make sure that you check each team's equipment to ensure that they have the proper **NOCSAE approved stamps on helmets and masks**, include the catcher's helmet as well. **Bats should have the proper stamp**, (see Figure 1).

For both sports, you should inspect the field looking for holes in the fencing and any other irregularities, i.e. short field requiring w/ no fence requiring ground rule doubles.

Next you should conduct a **pre-game conference** at home plate with representatives from both teams. Your pre-game should include

- Introduce yourself to everyone
- Collect and review lineups
- Playing field ground rules - should come from home coach.
- Players
  - Proper sportsmanship will be followed at all times.
  - Players with jewelry cannot participate
  - Hustle in, hustle out.
- Coaches



Figure 1 - NOCSAE, BBCOR, USSSA and ASA Stamps

“Are all of your players properly equipped according to the rules?”

“I will handle all of the situations inside the fences, you will handle situations outside the fences.”

Having a good, professional pre-game conference should help you set the tone for the game.

## Appearance

As an umpire, you have a uniform. That uniform is what sets you apart from the other participants on the field. The image you portray is the first impression you will make on the coaches / players that you are umpiring. A **clean, proper fitting, regulation uniform** is the easiest way to set forth a professional image. A dirty hat or dirty shoes do not convey experience, they convey a lack of effort on the part of the official to portray themselves as a professional. **Shine your shoes.** Many officials carry shoe polish or a spray bottle with water in it to keep their shoes clean. If your hat gets dirty during the course of the game, shower with it after the game and dry it on a coffee can to keep its shape. Leave the plastic lid on the can to avoid rust stains.

## Decisiveness

Decisiveness is important on the field. This is where the rubber meets the road. If you are not comfortable making decisions, then find another career. **Your decisions are what you are being paid for, right or wrong. If you're going to be wrong, be really wrong.** It isn't the first time and it won't be the last.

# Official NFHS Softball Signals

voice and the proper hand signal, Many

**A. DO NOT PITCH**



Signal toward pitcher

**B. PLAY BALL**



Verbally calls "Play ball"

**C. TIME OUT/FOULBALL/DEAD BALL**



Verbally calls "Time," "Foul ball" or "Dead ball"

**D. DELAYED DEAD BALL**



Extend left arm out, fist with palm down (or out)

**E. STRIKE/OUT**



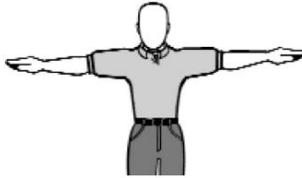
Fist to hammer at 90 degrees or greater

**F. INFIELD FLY**



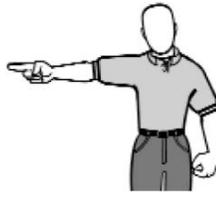
Verbally call "Infield fly"

**G. SAFE**



Verbally call "Safe"

**H. FAIR BALL**



Point to fair territory with hand closest to infield. No verbal call.

**I. FOUL TIP**



Fingers touch together, chest high, followed by strike call.

**J. COUNT**



Left hand indicates balls, followed by strikes on the right hand. Verbally give count.

**K. HOME RUN**



Right fist in the air, rotate counterclockwise

**L. DOUBLE**



First two fingers in the air

new umpires give the impression that they are indecisive because they do not make their calls loud enough or use proper hand signals. One or the other can be enough but you should try to do both.

**When making your calls make them loud.** If you are not usually a loud person, this can be a challenge. If you cannot muster the volume then make your voice deeper, the sound will travel farther.

**Hand signals should be made correctly and emphatically**, as shown in *Figure 2*. If you have to, practice them in the mirror or run through them with your mentor. When delivering your hand signals for safe and out, remember to **stop and pop**. Bring your body to a stop, feet shoulder width apart, and give a good, strong hand signal.

**Every time a coach asks you what the call is, there are two problems.** The first is that you are **not doing your job** and conveying your decisions. Some plays depend on calls from umpires. Secondly, **every conversation that you have to have with a coach is an opportunity for a situation to arise.** Whenever a coach has to ask you what you called, that means you need to improve.

## Hustle

Making the effort to get into the proper position to make a call is essential. Many times umpires make a call that a coach doesn't agree with but the argument is avoided because the coach sees the umpire is doing everything they could to get into the proper position to make the call. **Don't get caught in concrete shoes** and make all of your calls from behind the plate. This is especially important for the umpire who is working the game alone. However, it is important to note, **the angle that you get is more important than the distance** you cover. This will be covered later in the mechanics portion of this training.

## Attitude

This area of professionalism is as individual as you are. Each umpire brings with them experiences that make up their attitude on the field. It is important that you are decisive. It is also important to remember that you are an ambassador of the game and the association when you are on the field. Leave your problems at home.

**It is your job to control the game.** It is another reason you get paid. Your actions on the field are the way that you control the game. If you are hostile then the attitude of the game will be hostile. If you maintain control of your emotions then you will control the game. **Problems occur when other participants try to wrestle that control away from you.**

## Conflict Resolution

As an umpire, you should be the only non-competitor on the field. Conflicts are exacerbated by trying to compete with coaches players as to who is right or wrong.

If you need to eject someone to keep the game in control, then that is what has to be done. Many times emotions run high and it is important not to develop **"rabbit ears."** Try to ignore most of the things being said by fans and coaches unless those things are preventing you from maintaining control.

Many times you will hear other umpires talk about how they have ejected participants. **Ejections are and should be a rare occurrence.** While the stories are fun to listen to, there are many instances when an umpire should have handled the situation differently and an ejection could have been avoided. Coaches and spectators are usually reasonable people, just like you.

## Focus

At it's most basic level, a game is a form of entertainment for the people attending, whether they be a fan, player or coach. Unless you are umpiring college ball or higher, you are probably the highest paid person on the field . In fact you may be the only person being paid. It is a very rare occasion that someone is attending a game

to watch an umpire. You may have a guest at the game or you may have an evaluator watching your performance. In either case it is important to remember that **the focus of the game should be on the players**. Do not call attention to yourself by being flamboyant, overly funny or giving too much attention to one team vs. the other.

Humor is a coping mechanism that many of us use in the course of our lives. Working with youngsters will provide you with many humorous situations during the course of your umpiring career. **Be judicious in your use of humor**. Being too humorous can give the impression that your focus is not on the game.

You will get to know coaches, players or other umpires. You will see a lot of familiar faces year in and year out. We want you to have fun and make friends, but don't let a situation arise where your friendship can be misconstrued as influencing your decisions. If you have an acquaintance on one side of the field, **be mindful of the time spent talking to them and split time between both dugouts**. This should help to prevent any unfortunate situations.

## Rules Knowledge

As a beginning umpire, it is unreasonable to expect you to know all of the rules. This training highlights some of the basics. Playing "**Stump the Ump**" can be confusing and intimidating. However, rules knowledge is important. It is one of the things that you will be evaluated on as an umpire. **The more you know about the rules, the easier your job will be**. If you have a question during a game **use your best judgement and then look it up after the game, not during**. That is how many of us have learned our way around the rule book.

Rules knowledge centers around a couple of major concepts. The first concept is how to read a rule book. Rule books are written with technical language. Much of this language is usually covered in definitions at the beginning of the book. Definitions serve to provide the limits to the situation. This will be the jargon from where all of the other rules spring.

From here you can go to the index of the rule book. The keywords that you learn from the definitions will help you look up what you want to find in the index. This will send you to the pages of the rule book that apply. It is our job to enforce the rules in the book. Be careful reading too much into the rules. Umpires sometimes find trouble when they start enforcing rules that do not exist. Also, don't believe things you are told, verify by reading them. Its how you learn. The game is full of things that people think are rules, which are not. i.e. "Tie goes to the runner."

Next go to the case book, this helps with knowing when to apply the rules. However, there is no replacement for experience when it comes to successful application of the rules.

## Judgement

As an umpire you will make hundreds if not thousands of decisions during the course of the game and hopefully make most of them correctly. Nobody is perfect. Let's take a look at all the things that could happen on one pitch. A bunt with a runner on first.

1. Is the pitch delivered on time?
2. Did the pitcher do anything illegal?
3. Is the pitch a ball or a strike?
4. Did the batter make an attempt?
5. If the batter makes contact, were their feet in the batter's box?
6. Did the ball hit the batter? If so where was the batter standing when contact was made?
7. Does the ball make contact with the bat a second time? Were the batters feet in the box? If the bat is on the ground, is the bat moving? Is the contact made in fair or foul territory?
8. If the ball is hit, is it fair or foul?

9. If fair, did anyone interfere with the play being made by the fielder?
10. Is there another fielder on the field that obstructed the runner?
11. Did the runner make it to first before the throw?
12. Did the first baseman keep their foot on the bag?
13. Does the first baseman maintain control of ball?
14. Does the runner make an attempt for second?
15. Did I lock my keys in the car?

This may scare you. You can see how dizzying this string of decisions can be. And it's your job to make a decision on all of these points. If you are alone, some of these things will be impossible for you to see, let alone make a call on. **Call only what you can see.**

Some of these decisions involve some pretty obscure rules that you may not be ready to make as a new umpire. To keep us all from going crazy, we have tried to whittle these things down to most frequent, and most important decisions that you will make, and in the following order:

- 1. Ball / Strike**
- 2. Fair / Foul**
- 3. Safe / Out**

**The key to good judgment is proper mechanics and good positioning.** Let's talk about mechanics and how they will help you to be a better umpire.

## Mechanics

You will hear a lot of talk about mechanics in your career as an umpire. **Mechanics are the procedures that umpires use on the field to perform their job.** They involve **hand signals, positioning and the order in which things happen on the field.** This part of your training is going to go over the basics of the **one umpire system.**

## Ball / Strike

The first key decision that an umpire makes is the calling of balls and strikes. Calling balls and strikes is easier if you position yourself properly behind the plate.

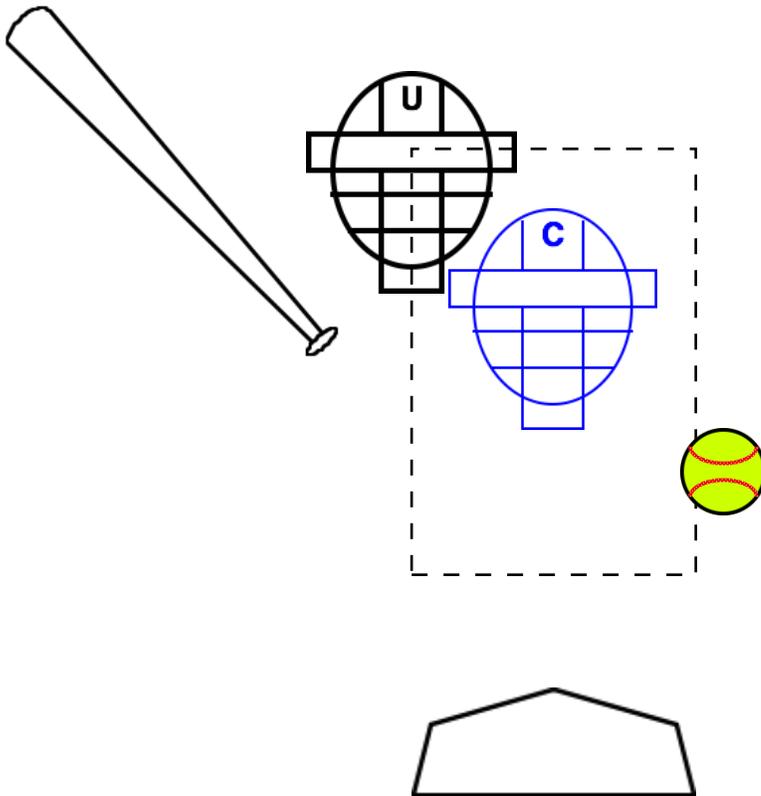
The strike zone is the area **over home plate** from the **batter's armpits to the top of the knees**. **If any part of the ball that goes through the zone is a strike.** The pitch thrown here, (Figure 3) would be a strike.

Call out "Strike" and give the strike signal with the right hand (See Figure 2-E). Call "Ball" if it is ball. Don't get into the habit of saying why it was a ball. This constitutes unnecessary conversation, something we have already addressed.

Take enough time to make your call. Most umpires have made a "Sball" call at some point in their career.

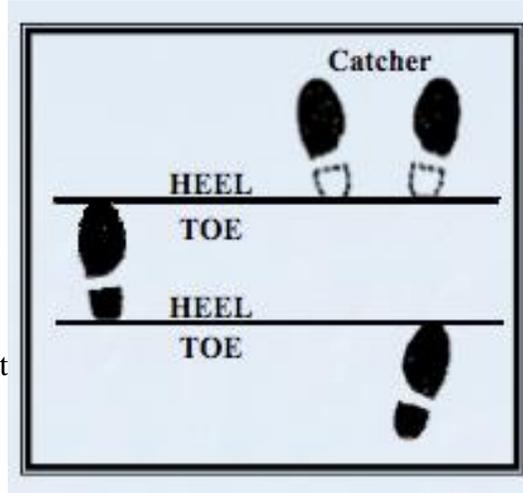
**Position your eyes at the top of the strike zone**

Figure 3 - Proper set up for left handed batter



and your **nose on the inside of the strike zone**. Many times umpires want to hide behind the catcher using the player as a shield. This also shields the umpire from making calls on things like foul balls off of the batter or dropped third strikes. **Trust your gear**. You have paid too much for it not to use it. Try not to ever set up on the

outside corner of the zone. when you do this. It's one not an extreme sport. If the inside. If you still can't get an angle, you may have to turn your body more toward the plate. Talk to the catcher if this continues to be a problem and work something out. As a last resort, set up outside, but be prepared to get hit by the ball.



You are putting yourself in harm's way thing to trust your gear, but umpiring is catcher sets up inside set up further

Figure 4 - Foot positioning for *Heel - Toe Stance* for a right handed batter

Most umpires use the **Heel-Toe Stance** (Figure 4) behind the catcher. This is when the inside foot is forward and the outside foot is even or slightly behind the heel of the inside foot. The umpire then squats into position. Don't get yourself into position too early as you have a lot of deep knee bends to do over the course of the game. **Conserve your energy.**

As hard as we try, it is inevitable that every umpire calls their own strike zone. Some umps will tell you that if the catcher sets up out of the zone and the pitcher hits the glove it is a strike. There is some danger there so make sure that the strike zone you are calling is fair to the batter and the pitcher. Consistency of the strike zone is the one thing the coaches are looking for.

Many novice umpires have troubles calling low balls as strikes. One reason they do this the way that they are standing behind the plate. Remember to squat into position and to keep your back perpendicular to the ground as you go down. **Bending at the waist places a lot of stress on your lower back.** Back problems are a big reason that umpires retire before their time. You will also be surprised how it brings the low end of the strike zone into focus.

**When umpiring less advanced levels of play** (10U travel, in-house league play, and possibly freshman), remember that you should probably **stretch your strike zone.** One way to think about this is if you think the batter could have hit the ball, call it a strike. When stretching the zone, remember that the fans and coaches can easily see a ball that is high or low, and they will let you know if they see it, so leave the high and low ones alone and **only stretch your zone from side to side.** Believe it or not, coaches will thank you for it as it speeds up the game, gets their batters swinging, conserves their pitchers and cuts down on walks, which causes the game to drag on. No matter what you are doing, call the same zone for both teams. Don't set yourself up to be the equalizer.

One last note about balls and strikes. **Announce the count often.** Try to do it **every other pitch.** Accompany the count with the proper hand signal. (See Figure 2-J) To avoid confusion, remember, **the right hand is the strike hand.** You call strikes with the right hand and when showing the count you should use the right hand to indicate the number of strikes. **Balls are indicated using the left hand.** Your **indicator should be in your left hand** as well. During plays, your left hand will get pretty full holding your indicator and your mask. It will take some practice getting used to. Holding your mask in the left hand will prevent you from striking someone with the mask when making the overhand out call

**Save the commentary.** If you think the ball was low say only "Ball" adding commentary only gives the bench something to disagree with. Many umpires when questioned "Where was that pitch?" reply, "Out of the strike zone."

## Fair / Foul

The second key decision that an umpire makes is after the ball is hit. Is the ball fair or foul?

A foul ball is a batted ball which:

- A. Settles on foul territory between home and first base, or between home and 3rd base.
- B. Bounds past first or third base on or over foul territory.
- C. First falls on foul territory beyond first or third base.
- D. While on or over foul territory touches the person of an umpire, a player or any object foreign to the natural ground.

**There are four ways to stop play on the field: No Pitch, Dead Ball, Time Out, and Foul Ball.** A foul ball is a dead ball and stops play immediately. If a ball is caught in foul territory on the fly, it is an out and play continues. This point is made because almost all new umpires have a tendency to call “Foul” too early. **Don’t anticipate** where the ball will stop by making your call too early. Wait for the ball to stop or be touched in foul territory before calling it foul. **Once “Foul Ball” is called, it can’t be taken back.** Play is dead.

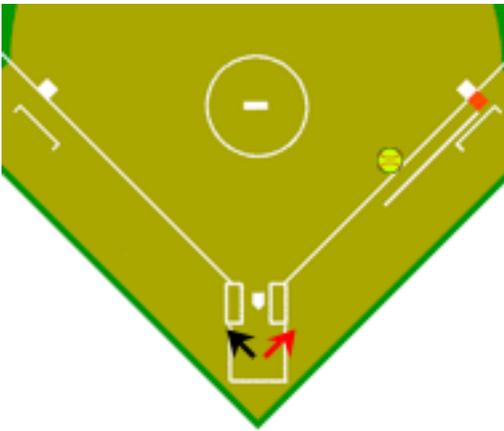
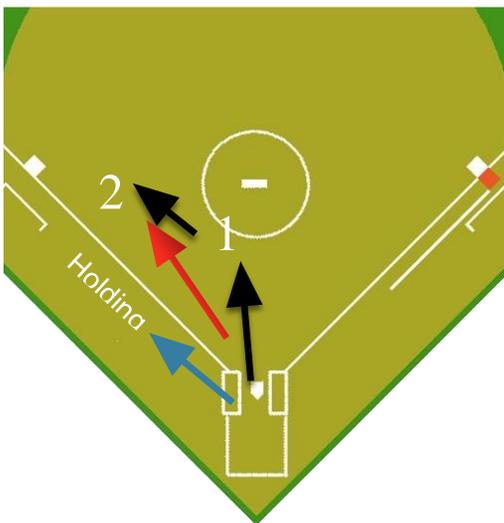


Figure 5 - Black arrow shows position for Fair/Foul call on the first base line. Red arrow shows position for Fair/Foul call on the third base line.



**Positioning for the fair / foul call** is pretty easy. It requires you to take one or two steps. (Figure 5) shows that **if the ball is going down the 1st baseline, the umpire needs to take 1 or 2 steps to the left to put themselves in position to make the call.** For a ball running down the 3rd baseline, take two steps to the right.

**Remove your mask with your left hand** to get a good view. You use the left hand to avoid throwing your mask should you have to call somebody out. **If fair, just point to the pitcher’s mound, no call is made. If foul, call “Foul Ball” and give the dead ball signal.** (See Figure 2-C) **The line is considered fair territory.**

For years, baseball announcers have used the term foul tip to denote any ball that barely hits the bat. The rule book calls a **foul tip** as a **batted ball, which goes directly and speedily from the bat to the catcher’s mitt or hand and is legally caught by the catcher. Only if the ball is caught is it a foul tip, otherwise it is a foul ball. On a foul tip, play continues.** It is just as if the ball never hit the bat. Give the foul tip signal. (See Figure 2-I) If the runner is stealing, the catcher must throw her out. If it is strike three, the batter is out.

## Safe / Out

The last of the key decisions that you will make is the decision of whether a play results in a safe or out call. **The key to making a good call, is positioning.** The mechanics for getting you in position are

complicated due to the variety of calls that you will be expected to make.

*Figure 6 - Black arrows show mechanic for multi-base hit with nobody on. Red arrow shows mechanic for runner on first. Blue arrow shows mechanic for all other situations*

This diagram (*Black Arrows in Figure 6*) shows the mechanics of a multi-base hit with no runners on. This illustration is also useful because it shows the four main areas that you will be working in a single umpire system: behind the plate, position 1, position 2, and the holding area.

For a **play at first with no one on**, the proper position to make the call from would be **position 1**. (*Black arrow in Figure 6*) With a **runner on first, and no one else on base**, go directly to **position 2** (*Red arrow in Figure 6*) to call the play. **Any other situation you should be calling from the holding area.** (*Blue arrow in Figure 6*)

**If for some reason, you forget where to go, get to the holding area.** You should be able to get a good angle anywhere on the field from there. Remember that the angle that you get is more important than the distance you cover. Try and hustle, but here is no shame in calling a play at first or second from the holding area if it is the only place you can get to.

When it comes time to make the call the most important fact to remember is to **follow the ball**. There are only a few things that can happen on the field without the ball, but in your first ten games you need to keep your eye on the ball.

As is the case with all of the calls you make, **don't jump your calls. Safe calls should be made immediately.** This is especially important on the trapped line drive. **Before you call a runner out** however, make sure that you have **ball in hand** and, if needed, **foot on bag**. Double calls are confusing and will almost always require further clarification (i.e. unnecessary conversation with a coach).

## Basic Rules Application

One of the more confusing rules for a new umpire, and new coaches, is the **infield fly rule**. An infield fly is any time there are **runners on first and second and less than two outs** and a **fly ball is hit on the infield that can be caught with ordinary effort**. Contrary to the belief of some coaches, **this rule is written to prevent trickery on the part of the defense**, not to give the defense an easy out.

Another rule that creates confusion is the **dropped third strike**. **If first base is unoccupied at the time of the pitch, strike three is called, and the ball hits the ground, the runner may advance to first base unless tagged or forced out. The runner may advance on a dropped third strike anytime there are two outs; It doesn't matter if first base is occupied or not.**

## Interference / Obstruction

Interference and Obstruction are the hardest calls for a new umpire to make. They require real knowledge of the game. They are based purely on your judgement. It takes umpires two to three seasons before they really understood the rule to the point where it is called correctly. We include them here because of their importance to game control and keeping you out of the coaches sights and keeping a lid on the game.

We will examine **highly simplified** versions of these rules here. Please understand that this only scratches the very surface of the rules and that more reading and research is required before you will be able to get this right.

### Interference

Let's look at interference first. Interference is when someone gets in the way of the defense. This could be a coach, fan or most likely, an opposing player. The most important things to remember here are that:

- The defense gets a chance to field a batted ball.
- They get a "drop and a step."

- Contact is **not required** in order for interference to occur.

You will be umpiring children. Do not require them to run each other over to get an interference call, you will only be asking for trouble. If you call interference, someone is most likely going to be called out.

### **Obstruction**

Obstruction, on the other hand is when the defense gets in the way of the offense. Here are the key things to remember.

- The offensive player must avoid contact with the defender. Sliding is one way of avoiding contact. If the slide is legal they are avoiding contact, even if they touch the defender.
- The Defense cannot block the base path without the ball. They must have the ball, not waiting for it to come in. Catch, block, tag
- It is a delayed dead ball call until the obstructed player is put out, then dead ball is called and bases awarded accordingly.
- Call it when you see it, if no one is put out mention it to the coach of the defense so that he can inform his players. If you call it later, the coach should understand why.
- Sometimes both players and the ball all come at the same time and it can be appropriate to make no call. A good example of this is a throw that **carries** the defender into the base path with an ensuing collision.

## Self Improvement

Like any career, you will only get out of umpiring that which you put into it. The investment we are talking about here is time. We have provided you with this initial training document to give you a jump start on the process. As an association, we will continue to provide you with the best training we can. Good umpires will always look for more. It is up to you to take the next step.

The number one thing you can do is to **actively participate in an association.**

- Attend association meetings. .
- Become a mentor to new umpires.
- Volunteer to conduct a training on a topic of interest.
- Post a discussion topic online

You will find that by doing just one of the things from the list above, you will make yourself a better umpire. There are many independent assigners out there that take a lot more than 10% of your fees and don't offer anything to you in return, other than an assignment. We are an association because we choose to associate ourselves with each other. By helping to improve just one umpire we are improving our association as a whole.

# Appendix

These index cards can serve as a reference that you can use on the field to remind you of some of the things that you have or will learn during the course of your training.

The cards can be laminated for protection. Print the cards on card stock and laminate them back to back. The scorecard should be laminated with a matte finish so it can be written on.

<b>Visitor:</b>	<b>Home:</b>		<b>Date:</b>								
<b>Coach:</b>	<b>Coach:</b>		<b>Start Time:</b>								
<b>Score</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Visitor</b>											
<b>Home</b>											
<b>CHARGED DEFENSIVE CONFERENCES</b>											
<b>Home</b>											
<b>Visitor</b>											
<b>Notes:</b>											

## Pre Game Routine

- Inspect equipment
- Inspect Playing Field
- Introduce yourself to everyone
- Collect and review lineups
- Playing field ground rules

### Players

- Proper sportsmanship will be followed at all times. No throwing helmets or bats
- Players with jewelry cannot participate
- Hustle in, hustle out

### Coaches

- “Are all of your players properly equipped?”
- Enter the field of play only after time has been granted.
- “An Umpire’s judgment should not be questioned”
- “I will handle all of the situations inside the fences, you will handle situations outside the fences.”

## Umpire to Umpire Pre-Game

- Introduce yourself
- Fair/Foul -Who’s got what?
- Tag-ups / Touches
- Fly balls to outfield
- Coverage of third base
- Live ball (restart after dead ball)
- Dropped third strike
- Batted ball hits batter while in box
- Check Swings
- Umpire positioning
- Signals
- Need Count / Mirror Count?
- Infield Fly
- Outs
- Timing Play

## Lightning Rules

- Clear field and dugouts immediately.
- Play does not resume for 30 minutes from last flash.

## DP/FLEX

- The role of DP/Flex is never terminated.
- A team may go from 10 to nine players and back to 10 any number of times during the game
- DP can never be on defense only
- FLEX can never be on offense only
- DP and FLEX can never be on offense at same time.
- DP and FLEX can play defense at same time.

Helpful Tips Tricks:

W-9

Questions you need to ask

How do i get paid

How much do i get paid