

# Umpire Clinic



## NY District # 8 Little League

*Clinic Workshop Training Manual*

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## "Do's" and "Don'ts" for all Umpires

1. You must have ambition but also patience, as over-anxiety has ruined many young umpires.
2. Realize the importance of an umpire. You are a representative of the league in which you are working, and must at all times uphold the dignity which your position demands.
3. Develop your sense of fair play both on and off the field.
4. Learn how to handle situations with the least amount of friction and always keep an even temperament.
5. Be courteous at all times and under all conditions, yet be firm.
6. Keep personalities out of your work and be able to forget. Every game is a new game in all respects. Let by-gones be by-gones.
7. Never be sarcastic or want the last word. If a coach or a player is walking away, let him go. Never follow or charge a coach or player, and above all, do not point your finger or yell at him.
8. Do not be cocky or have an antagonistic attitude towards coaches, players, or fans. Be patient and keep your poise no matter how angry they appear to be. If you lose your temper ..... then the trouble will really begin.
9. No matter what your opinion is of another umpire, never make any adverse comment regarding him to anybody, either on or off the field. This is probably the worst breach of ethics among umpires.
10. Go over any situation, with your partner, that is doubtful in your mind. A smooth team of umpires has a decided effect upon coaches and players. Good teamwork is noticed and appreciated.
11. Be energetic on the field. When changing your position, run, don't walk.
12. Remember to get respect ..... you have to show respect.
13. Don't be too quick with the thumb ..... It is the easy way out.
14. Decisions must be made in a split second. You don't have time to think a play over, always be ready.
15. On plays that are close, be emphatic. Make your call in a decisive manner that leaves no doubt as to the correctness of your judgment.
16. Never "socialize" with the participants or the fans, before, during or after the game.
17. Don't worry if you have a tough game, you will have bad days ..... all umpires do. One bad day does not mean you are a bad umpire.

## Ten Commandments of Umpiring:

1. Thou shalt show respect for the game.
2. Thou shalt always approach umpiring as a professional.
3. Thou shalt understand that nobody (except your significant other and family) came to watch you umpire. The more invisible you are .... the better.
4. Thou shalt always conduct yourself as if your mother was watching.
5. Thou shalt know that your position commands respect, but as an individual you must earn it.
6. Thou shalt understand that perception is reality.
7. Thou shalt always anticipate that the pitch will be a strike. To paraphrase Will Rogers, I never saw a strike I didn't like.
8. Thou shalt know the more strikes you call, the better game you will have (within certain limitations, of course).
9. Thou shalt never assume the outcome of a play, however thou shalt anticipate possible outcomes.
10. Thou shalt know that umpiring is fun, and some games are more fun than others.

## Game Play Tips

- When calling balls and strikes, permit the catcher plenty of room, but get as close as possible without interfering.
- Wait until the ball is in the catcher's mitt before calling the pitch. Never anticipate where the pitch will be.
- Call the pitches what they are. Some catchers will attempt to assist or influence the umpire by calling out a ball or a strike, politely remind him that you are the umpire and you will call the pitches.
- Wait until a batted ball settles before calling it fair or foul, unless it touches a person or object. Batted balls can strike in foul territory and still become fair balls.
- When a play is completed, then make the call. Prompt action saves many arguments.
- Time should not be called before a play is completed. Catchers often ask for time following a base-on-balls, do not grant it until the batter-runner has reached first base.
- Do not call "Time" or "Foul" prematurely. A play that might occur could unintentionally be killed off if time was called too soon.
- Calling time too often will slow up the ball game. Many solutions are being sought to speed the game up, so do not be guilty of calling time unless the situation warrants it.
- Watch the ball and do not move away from a play too soon. The adage "keep your eye on the ball at all times" can save embarrassing moments, particularly if the ball is dropped.
- If the ball is "live", never handle it. This will seldom occur, but always be alert and allow the players to field or throw it.

- When a judgment decision is made, no explanation is necessary. Explain a decision only when an interpretation of a rule is in doubt.
- On an appeal play, make no decision unless an appeal is properly made. Get set for the next play. This is important, appeals are intended to keep the defense on alert, do not assist by making a decision before the appeal is made.
- You may get hit if you stand in fair territory when calling plays at home plate. Almost all plays around home plate can be called from a position in foul territory. Make every effort to avoid any interference.
- Get into proper position quickly when a ball has been batted or thrown. Be alert and move fast. Hustle makes a big impression and helps you.
- Do not make decisions on the run, stop and then call the play. Your vision can be jumpy if you are on the move.
- Be sure that bases are secure and positioned as they should be. Unless bases are in exact position, difficult situations can develop.
- When getting into position, be sure you are not obstructing the view of a fielder. Always check the position of a fielder who may be in back of you.
- Get as close to every play as possible without getting in the way. Always try to be looking into a play and avoid being blocked out of vision.
- Hustle out on fly balls to the outfield which seemingly may be trapped or become difficult catches. This is important. A trapped ball off the ground or fence is not an out.
- Try to anticipate what can occur before the next play takes place, but do not assume that it will happen.

- When there is no doubt about a call then make it routinely. When a play is close, make the call emphatic and forceful to imply that there is no doubt in your call. Coaches, players and fans admire the umpire who indicates certainty and authority.
- Make your calls at first base in fair territory except when the pitcher is covering that base or when a batted ball is fielded by the first baseman, pitcher or catcher near the first baseline. The best position to call such a play is in foul territory, about ten feet toward home from first base.
- Be sure to line up with runners on base when a fielder is about to catch a fly ball, to make sure the runner does not leave the base too soon. With runners on first or second. Leave third base to the plate umpire.
- Never be without a rule book. Only use it when necessary, it is better to refer to the rule book to settle a dispute than to have the situation protested and find that you were wrong.
- Hustle - Hustle - Hustle ..... This is the attribute of a good umpire.



## **DISTRICT #8 LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL RULES CLARIFICATION**

Listed here are several of the most commonly misunderstood rule situations in Little League Baseball. They apply to all divisions of play, unless otherwise noted, but are not applicable to Softball. Suggestions and additions to this list would be greatly appreciated,

### **1.00 - Objectives of the Game**

**Gloves and Mitts:** The catcher must wear a catcher's mitt. The first Baseman may wear a first Baseman's mitt or a fielder's glove. No other fielder may wear a first baseman's mitt or a catcher's mitt. (1.12, 1.1, 1.14)

**Catcher's Mask:** Any player warming up a pitcher, either on the field or on the sidelines, must wear a catcher's mask. (1.17)

### **2.00 - Definition of Terms**

**Fair vs. Foul:** A ground ball is immediately judged fair or foul as soon as any one of the following occurs: 1) It is touched by a person or a foreign object; 2) It settles (stops rolling); 3) It bounds past, bounds over or strikes first or third base. It is always the position of the ball that is important where it is touched, not the position of the person or object touching it. (FAIR BALL, FOUL BALL)

**Batted Ball Strikes Home Plate:** This is not an automatic foul or dead ball. It is treated like any other batted ball. Home plate and all other bases are entirely within fair territory. (FAIR BALL, FOUL BALL)

**Force Play:** This is a play on a runner who is forced to advance to the next base by virtue of the fact that the batter has become a base runner. A fielder may retire him by tagging the base to which he must advance before he reaches it, or the fielder may tag the runner before he reaches that base. As long as the runner has not reached the base to which he is forced to advance before he is tagged he is still considered forced out even though he, rather than the base, is tagged. Conversely, all outs made by tagging a base, rather than a runner, are not necessarily force outs. **Example:** Runner on second base with no outs and the shortstop catches the batter's line drive. The shortstop throws to the second baseman who tags second base before the runner can return there. The runner is out when the base is tagged, but this is not a force play. It is an appeal play. (FORCE PLAY)

**Foul Tip:** This is one of the most misused terms in baseball, particularly by sports announcers. A pitch is never a foul tip unless it is caught by the catcher; otherwise it is just an ordinary foul ball. The distinction is important because a foul tip is a live ball and runners may attempt to steal on it without tagging up. If the batter has two previous strikes a foul tip is a legal third strike. (FOUL TIP)

**Batter Steps On Plate:** A batter is not necessarily called out if he steps on home plate while his bat contacts a ball. The lines that outline a batters box come within 4"(60' diamond) or 6"(90' diamond) of home plate. A foot that touches any part of these lines is considered in the batters box even if most of it lies outside of the box or touches home plate. (1.04 Illegally Batted Ball)

**Infield Fly:** An infield fly can only be declared when there are less than two outs and first and second base, or first, second and third bases are occupied. An infield fly is never declared with a runner on first base only, or on a bunt, or on a foul ball. Any fielder can qualify as an "infielder" under this rule and no lines of demarcation are used to denote the infield. All that is necessary is that if in the opinion of any umpire a short fly ball could be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, instead of allowing the ball to drop in order to get a double or triple play. An infield fly is always a live ball and the runners may advance at their own risk, even though they are not longer forced to do so. It must be noted that what constitutes "ordinary effort" in regards to catching a fly ball is dependent upon the age and skill of the players. (INFIELDFLY)

**Strike Zone:** The umpire determines a batter's strike zone according to his stance as he swings at a pitch. Batters in unnatural stances or who duck as the pitch comes in will have all doubtful pitches called a strike.

**Dropped Ball After Tagging a Runner or Base:** If a fielder tags a base with the ball held firmly in his hand or glove and in doing so retires the runner, that runner does not nullify his out if an instant later he collides with the fielder causing him to drop the ball. The reason is that the play is made on the base and not on the runner, the fielder demonstrated that he firmly held the ball while tagging the base. However, if the fielder drops the ball after contact with the runner he is attempting to tag, then the out is not allowed because the play was made on the runner and the fielder did not demonstrate that he held the ball firmly while tagging the runner. (TAG)

**Pitcher Warmup:** Only a player may warmup a pitcher, not a manager or coach.

## 4.0 - Starting and Ending the Game

**Run Scoring on a Third Out:** A runner who crosses the plate on a play in which the third out is made, will score a legal run if he touches the plate before the out is made and all of the following conditions are met: 1) the batter reaches first base safely; 2) the third out is not a force out; 3) a preceding runner is not called out on an appeal play. If any of these conditions are not met, the run does not count. (4.09)

**Regulation Game:** A game becomes regulation as soon as the losing team has completed 4 times at bat. (4.10c)

## Putting the Ball in Play - Live Ball

**Dead Ball Becomes Live:** Whenever a ball is dead for any reason, it can only become live again after the pitcher steps on the rubber with the ball in his possession. The umpire then calls "Play" either verbally or by signaling. **Example:** Batter hits a foul back to the backstop and the catcher retrieves the ball. The catcher's throw back to the pitcher goes into center field. No runners would be allowed to advance because the ball is still dead even though it is in fair territory. (5.11)

**Return to Base After Foul Ball:** Whenever a foul ball is not caught, the umpire must not put the ball back in play until all runners have had the opportunity to go back to their bases. (5.09e)

## 6.00 - The Batter & 7.00 - The Runner

**Bunt Foul on a Third Strike:** This results in a strike out and the ball is dead, except if the ball is popped up foul and caught on the fly by a fielder. In that case the fielder gets credit for a put out and the ball remains in play. (6.05c)

**Base Awards on a Overthrow:** When a thrown ball goes out of play as a result of the first play of an infielder, and runners have not already advanced 1 base, all runners are awarded 2 bases from the base that was last touched when the pitch was made that started the play. In all instances of overthrows by a fielder, other than the first play of an infielder, the award is 2 bases from the base that was last touched before the wild throw was made. A wild throw is made when the fielder throws it, not when it leaves the playing field. **Example 1:** Bases full, ground ball hit to the shortstop, who throws to the first baseman but the ball goes out of play. As this is the first play by an infielder, runners on second and third score, runner on first goes to third and the batter/runner goes to second. **Example 2:** Bases

empty, the batter singles to center field and the centerfielder throws to the second baseman who notices that the batter/runner has rounded first base in a wide arc. The second baseman throws to the first baseman as the batter/runner slides back to first base and the ball sails out of play. The batter/runner is entitled to third base. (7.05g)

**Overthrow by the Pitcher:** Overthrows by the pitcher are treated like overthrows by any fielder except when he is on the rubber. Pitches and throws made by the pitcher while he is in contact with the rubber, which go out of play, entitle the runner to advance one base only. (7.05h)

**Obstruction:** A fielder commits obstruction when he impedes the progress of a runner while not in position of the ball, or not in the act of fielding the ball. As soon as a throw is in route to a fielder, that fielder may stand wherever necessary to receive the ball and does not by this act alone commit obstruction. Any time a runner is obstructed while a play is being made on him, the umpire must award the obstructed runner at least one base beyond the base last touched before the obstruction occurred. After any obstruction, the umpire may invoke any other penalties, including nullifying outs, that he feels will nullify the act of obstruction. If no play is being made on the obstructed runner, obstruction is not called until all action stops. (7.06)

**Base Path:** This is an area 3 feet either side of a midline between any two bases. It does not conform to the "base path" which is cut out of the grass between home plate and first and third bases on many ball fields, because often these paths are cut less than 6 feet wide. Thus, a runner caught in a rundown between third base and home plate may still be technically in the base path even if he steps on the grass. A runner may run out of the base path at any time except to avoid being tagged or to abandon his effort to run the bases. (7.08k)

**Runner Avoiding a Tag:** At no time may a runner run directly into a fielder waiting to tag him. If he fails to slide or attempt to get around the fielder he is out, even if the tag is not made or the fielder drops the ball. (7.08 a-3)

**Offensive Interference:** The team at bat may not do anything to interfere with a fielder attempting to make a play, including shouting at him in an effort to confuse him. A runner must vacate any area, including the base path, if a fielder must come into that area to field a batted ball. The runner may not block the fielder's vision nor screen him from the ball in any way. In most cases of interference in baseball intent to interfere is not a factor. All that matters in these cases is does interference take place. The exceptional cases of interference where intent is a factor may be found under rules 7.09 b, c ,g ,h and l.

**Runner Hit by Fair Ball:** Any runner who is called out under the provisions of rule 7.08(f) is out even if he had contact with a base at the time, unless the "Infield Fly Rule" was in effect. (Infield Fly, 5.09f, 6.08d, 7.04b, 7.08f)

**Three Foot Lane:** If, while outside the three foot lane, the batter-runner hinders the fielder taking a throw at first base even by screening him from the ball, he is guilty of interference. (6.05j)

**Overrunning First Base After a Walk:** A batter-runner who receives a base-on-balls may overrun first base in the same way as any other batter-runner, so long as he returns immediately to the base. (7.08c exception)

**Appeal Plays:** There are three appeal plays in which an umpire makes no ruling unless asked to do so by the defensive team: 1) batting out of order; 2) failure of a runner to tag up properly after a catch; 3) failure of a runner to touch a base (with special provisions for first base and home plate).

- 1) **1) Batting out of Order** - If the appeal comes while the improper is still at bat, the proper batter takes his place and assumes the count of balls and strikes that the improper batter had accumulated. If the appeal comes after the improper batter has completed his time at bat, and before any following play, attempted play or pitch, then the player that was supposed to bat is called out and all actions of the improper batter are nullified. Actions such as a stolen base which are not actions of the improper batter, but which occurred while he was at bat, are not nullified. If the appeal is made after any following play, attempted play or pitch, then all actions of the improper batter ARE MADE LEGAL AND NO PENALTY IS ASSESSED. The next proper batter then becomes the player who follows the improper batter in the batting order.
- 2) **2) Appeal Plays Regarding Bases** - The base or runner in question must be tagged with a live ball. If more than one runner was involved at the particular base, the fielder must designate which runner and which rule was in violation. Otherwise, the intent of the appeal is obvious. An appeal must come immediately before any play, attempted play or pitch or it cannot be allowed. An appeal can be made only when the ball is live, an appeal cannot be made in a dead ball situation. (7.10)

**Pitch Strikes the Ground or Home Plate:** This is not a dead ball, but is treated like any other pitch. If the batter is hit by this pitch he may be awarded first base. (Inflight 6.08b)

**Batter Hit by a Pitch:** The Batter is awarded first base if these three conditions are met: 1) The pitch is not in the strike zone; 2) The batter did not attempt to hit the pitch; 3) the batter made an honest attempt to avoid being hit by the pitch. Regardless of whether or not the batter is awarded first base, the ball is always dead as soon as it touched the batter and thus, no runner may attempt to steal a base after such a pitch. (5.09a, 6.08b)

**Pitch Hits Hands:** A pitched ball which strikes a batters hands is treated like any other pitch even if the hands have contact with the bat when struck by the ball. (5.09a, 6.08b)

**Defensive Interference:** If the catcher or any other fielder interferes with the batter, and the batter and all runners do not advance at least one base by the resulting play, then the batter's manager may elect to have the batter awarded first base or he may accept the resulting play and refuse the award. (6.08c)

**Two Runners Simultaneously On a Base:** This does not result in an automatic out unless a runner has passed another runner. If there are two or more runners on the same base, only the preceding runner is entitled to the base. The following runner or runners is/are out when tagged, even if still in contact with the base>

**Runner Passes Another Runner:** The runner who has advanced the least far toward scoring a run (following runner) is called out whenever two runners pass each other, even if the bases are being run in reverse order for some legal reason. A following runner's position on the base paths can never pass that of a preceding runner and it is the responsibility of the following runner to make sure that this does not happen. (7.08h)

**Appeal Play May be a Force Play:** Whenever a runner fails to tag a base to which he is forced to advance, and the defense makes a proper appeal, the out which results is considered a force out even though an appeal was required to bring it about. If there were two outs at the time then any runs scored on the play would not be allowed as this would be an inning ending force out. Had the offending runner been called out for missing a base that he was not forced to advance to then any resulting runs would be allowed. (FORCE PLAY, 4.09, 7.10)

**Runners Leading:** A base runner cannot leave the base until the pitched ball crosses the plate. (Minor-Major 7.13)

## **8.00 - The Pitcher**

**Days of Rest:** To see days of rest required on pitch-count refer to section:  
(VI - PITCHERS b)

**Illegal Pitch:** There are three types of illegal pitches: 1) A pitch made in which the foot is not in legal contact with the rubber from start of delivery until the ball is released; 2) A pitch made with a foreign substance applied to the ball; 3) A quick return pitch, designed to catch the batter off guard. An illegal pitch, with or without, the bases unoccupied is a BALL to the batter unless the batter reaches first base safely on any play immediately following the pitch. (ILLEGAL PITCH 8.01d, 8.05e)

**Pitcher Touching Mouth:** The pitcher may bring his pitching hand in contact with his mouth or lips anytime except while he is within the confines of the pitcher's mound. If he touches his mouth or lips with his pitching hand while on the mound the umpire immediately calls a BALL on the batter. The purpose of including this rule in Little League is not to prevent spitballs, instead this rule is included so that pitchers will be prevented from developing habits which might be penalized more severely at higher levels of play. (8.02a-1)

**Balks:** This are no balks in Minor/Major league play.

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## 9.00 - The Umpire

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**Appeal on Checked Swing:** When the plate umpire calls a BALL after a checked swing, the defense does not have the right to appeal directly to a field umpire as they do at many others levels of play. They may ask the plate umpire to confer with an associate umpire, however, but he does not have to comply with the request. (9.02c)

**Umpires' Decisions:** Judgment decisions by an umpire cannot be appealed nor objected to by anyone. No umpire may overrule another umpire, but an umpire may consult with another umpire and change his own decision. Except for the powers to suspend and forfeit a game, which are reserved for the umpire-in-chief, all umpires have equal authority. (3.10b, 9.02a, 9.02c, 9.04a-6, 9.04b-3)

**Umpire's Interference:** An umpire commits interference in only two ways: 1) If he is hit by a fair ball on fair territory before it passes an infielder or touches the pitcher; 2) If the plate umpire impedes the catcher's throw to prevent a stolen base. In all other instances whereby an umpire inhibits play, the play continues as if nothing of the sort has happened. (INTERFERENCE - Umpire's, 5.09f, 6.08d, 7.04b)

**Ground Rules:** Since the umpire is required to enforce all of the Official Playing Rules, no ground rules which contradict the Official Playing Rules may be permitted. Ground rules which add to or supplement the Official Playing Rules are permitted. The responsibility for establishing ground rules lies with the local league. All teams must follow the same ground rules, thus no pre-game agreements between managers which modify or supplement the local rules are permitted. (3.13, 9.01b, 9.04a-8)



## OTHER MISUNDERSTOOD RULES CLARIFICATIONS

### The Appeal:

APPEAL is an act of a fielder in claiming violation of the rules by the offensive team. **Appeals must be made while the ball is in play. (Alive).** When the ball is dead, it becomes in play when the pitcher has the ball and is on the rubber and the umpire says "play."

**When the ball is alive** an appeal may be made by the defense in any of the following ways:

1. by touching the runner whom they believe committed a base running infraction;
2. or by touching the base they believe was missed while the runner was advancing;
3. or by touching the **original** base that a runner left before a fly ball was caught.

In all cases, the defense must make a verbal appeal to the umpire or complete an act that is unmistakably an appeal. Accidentally touching a base that was missed is not an appeal. A throw to a base to catch a runner who had not retouched is unmistakably an appeal.

Appeals must be made before the next pitch or play. If the defense makes an appeal after "time" has been called, the umpire should say "put the ball in play and appeal again." Since no runner may advance or be put out while the ball is dead, this is not a play and the defense has not lost their right to appeal after the ball is put in play.

The appeal itself is not a play. A fake throw to hold a runner is not a play. It is a play when a balk is committed during an appeal. Plays that occur during "continuous action" after an infraction do not cancel the defense's right to appeal.

The defense loses their right to appeal when any of the following actions occur:

1. When the throw made in an appeal attempt goes into dead ball territory. When this occurs no more appeals may be made at any base. This is an "err" on an appeal and is interpreted to be the same as a play.
2. A balk is committed before or as part of an appeal attempt.
3. A pitch is made to the batter.
4. A play is made that is **not** part of continuous action.

Continuous action example:

Runner on first misses second as he advances to third on a hit. The defense makes a play on him at third and he is safe. The play was part of continuous action after the hit, therefore, the defense may appeal the infraction at second.

An appeal should be clearly intended as an appeal, either by a verbal request by the player

or an act that unmistakably indicates to the umpire that it is an appeal.

Rule 7.10 covers appeals/

### Award of Bases:

Much confusion exists regarding the proper award of bases after a ball enters dead ball territory.

The most common myth is the statement "he gets 1 plus 1." This is **not correct**. Rule 7.05 covers award of bases and an umpire must know all the details of this rule. Rule 7.05(g) is the focus of this document.

The basic thing to remember is:

When the pitcher throws the ball into dead ball territory while he is in contact with the rubber, the runners are awarded one base. If he is not in contact with the rubber he is a fielder. **When any fielder throws the ball into dead ball territory, the runners are awarded two bases.**

The complicated part of this rule is deciding from what position the two bases are awarded. There are several exceptions that can affect the award. I will try to simplify making the decision.

If the throw was the **first play by an infielder**, the award is two bases from where the runners were at the **time the pitch was thrown** in 99% of the plays. There is an exception that will be described later. Time of pitch is when the pitcher began his motion to the plate. "Where the runners were" means from the last legally held base. The direction they were running or how far between bases they were has nothing to do with the award. They get 2 bases closer to home plate from wherever they were positioned.

If the throw was the second play by an infielder, or any play by an outfielder, the award is two bases from the time the throw left the fielder's hand. The moment when the ball enters dead ball territory has no effect on the determination of the placement of the runners. The placement is from where the runners were at the **time of the pitch** or the **time the throw left the thrower's hand** depending on whether the play was the first play by an infielder or some other play.

A key thought to remember is:

**"first play by an infielder = time of pitch. Second play or outfielder = time of release."** The award is always two bases. The only decision is; from where?

### EXCEPTIONS:

If **ALL** runners **including** the batter runner have advanced one base **before** the first play by

an infielder, the award is from time of release. The key word is **ALL**. Example: Runner on second. A high pop-up is hit to the shortstop. The runner holds. The shortstop drops the ball, then throws to first attempting to get the batter who has already rounded the base before the release of the throw, and the ball enters dead ball territory. This was the first play by an infielder which means the award is from time of pitch. The exception states that **ALL** runners must advance a base before the time of release award is used. Because the runner at second held his base, the award is from time of pitch.

A **play** for purposes of this rule is a legitimate attempt to retire a runner. A throw to a base, an attempted tag or attempting to touch a base for a force out are plays. A fake throw or fielding a batted ball are not.

PLAY:

Runner on first. Ground ball to SS. The throw to second is too late and R1 is safe. The second baseman throws to first and the ball goes into dead ball area. R1 is awarded home and the batter is awarded second. This was the second play so time of release applies. R1 was at second when the throw was made. The batter was not at first at the time of the release.

An infielder is always an infielder for purposes of this rule even if he has gone into the outfield. Anytime the infielder's throw is the second throw after the batted ball has been fielded, the time of throw will apply in determining the award.

The catcher is an infielder for purposes of this rule. If he throws a batted ball out of play as the first play, the award is from time of pitch. If he throws away a ball on a second play or one in which the batter has not become a runner, the award is from time of throw.

### Obstruction:

Obstruction is called when the defense hinders the runners ability to run the bases. There are two different applications of the rule. One causes an immediate dead ball and the other is delayed dead. If a play is being made on a runner who is obstructed, the ball is immediately dead. If no play is being made the ball is delayed dead. A **play** for purposes of this rule is when the ball is in-flight heading toward the base the runner is heading, an attempted tag, or when the runner is caught in a run-down. The rule book definition is:

*"OBSTRUCTION is the act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball and not in the act of fielding the ball, impedes the progress of any runner.*

*If a fielder is about to receive a thrown ball and if the ball is in flight directly toward and near enough to the fielder so he must occupy his position to receive the ball he may be considered "in the act of fielding a ball." It is entirely up to the judgment of the umpire as to whether a fielder is in the act of fielding a ball. After a fielder has made an attempt to field a ball and missed, he can no longer be in the "act of fielding" the ball. For example: an*

*infielder dives at a ground ball and the ball passes him and he continues to lie on the ground and delays the progress of the runner, he very likely has obstructed the runner."*

A fake tag is considered obstruction.

The fielder may stand in the base path without the ball, **IF**, the throw is almost to him and he needs to be there to catch the ball. "Almost to him" is a judgment by the umpire. Some say that when a throw is over the infield grass and heading toward the fielder; the fielder is "in the act of fielding" and may stand where he needs to, to catch the ball. However, he may not actually block the base until he has possession of the ball. Until he has possession of the ball he must give the runner some way to get to the base. Obstruction can NEVER be called on a fielder for blocking a base; when he has possession of the ball.

As with interference, obstruction is also a tough judgment call. Contact between the runner and fielder is not necessary to meet the definition. If a runner must slow down or alter his path to avoid a fielder who is not in possession of the ball and not in the act of fielding, he has been obstructed.

If no play is being made on the runner at the time he is obstructed, the play continues. The tough part comes when the play stops. The umpire will award the runner the base to which the umpire believes he would have reached had he not been obstructed. For example: the batter hits a ball in the gap for what looks like an easy double. No play is being made on him. As he rounds first the fielder is in his path and they collide. The batter stops at first. The umpire will award the runner second base if he believes the runner would have made it there had he not been obstructed.

It does not matter where the obstruction occurs. If a runner is obstructed at first base and the umpire believes he could have made it to third base, he will be awarded third. The umpire must be the judge. If, in the umpire's judgment, a runner is slowed down by one step at first and then is thrown out by five steps at third, the out should stand.

An immediate dead ball obstruction is called when obstruction occurs while a play is being made on the runner. For example: a runner on first is attempting to reach third on a hit. He is obstructed by a fielder between second and third as the throw from the outfield is heading toward third. This is a play on the runner. The umpire should call "time" when the obstruction occurs and award the runner third base. Another example is a run-down play. It does not matter which way the runner is heading. If he is obstructed while being played upon in a run-down, he is awarded at least one base beyond the last base he held.

If a runner is obstructed attempting to get back to first on a pick-off play, the ball is dead and he is awarded second.

If a runner is awarded bases due to obstruction; runners ahead of him are forced to the next base. However, trailing runners are not always given another base when obstruction awards a lead runner another base.

Rule 7.06 covers obstruction. 7.06(a) is when a play is being made and 7.06(b) is when there is no play being made.

### Interference:

I believe interference is the toughest call an umpire has to make. It is a call based solely on the umpire's judgment. To make a good judgment as to whether or not interference occurred, the umpire must understand the definition as stated in the rules so it can be recognized when it occurs. After interference is called, the proper rule must be applied.

The definition as stated in Rule 2.00 is:

*"(a) Offensive interference is an act by the team at bat which interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play. If the umpire declares the batter, batter-runner, or a runner out for interference, all other runners shall return to the last base that was in the judgment of the umpire, legally touched at the time of the interference, unless otherwise provided by these rules.*

*In the event the batter-runner has not reached first base, all runners shall return to the base last occupied at the time of the pitch.*

*(b) Defensive interference is an act by a fielder which hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch."*

It should be noted that (b) above is the only defensive interference. Hindering the runner by the defense is OBSTRUCTION.

How do we interpret this rule? The key, is to focus on the phrase "**interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses.**" Those words cover a lot of actions. The umpire, after witnessing an act by the offense must ask himself the following question: "Did the offense interfere with, obstruct, impede, hinder or confuse the fielder attempting to make the play?" If the answer is yes, interference should be called. The call must be made as soon as possible. When interference is called the ball is immediately dead and no runners may advance beyond the base they held at the time of the interference. The umpire must be aware of where all runners are at the time of the call. When the interference occurs the umpire immediately calls it. You do not wait to see the outcome of the play.

Some interference calls are easy.

Example: If a runner is hit by a batted ball he is out and no judgment of intent is required unless he is hit by a deflected ball, or the ball has passed on infielder, in which case the umpire must decide if he intended to be hit to interfere, obstruct, impede, hinder or confuse the defense or if another fielder had a play on the ball. Rule 5.09(f) and 7.08(f).

Example: A runner **must** avoid a fielder attempting to field a **BATTED BALL**. If he does not he is guilty. This is a fairly easy call. Rule 7.09(L) and 7.08(b).

The fielder's protection begins the moment the ball is hit. That protection continues as he completes his initial play. His protection ends if he misplay the batted ball and has to move to recover it. Contact with the fielder is not necessary for interference to be called.

When a ball is hit, you have to judge which fielder has the best chance to field the ball. That fielder is then "protected" meaning; must not be interfered with, from the time the ball leaves the bat, up through the gloving of the ball and the act of throwing. The fielder is protected even if he

started to field the ball from outside the basepath and then moved into it to field the ball.

The runner must avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball.

Rule 7.09(L). He must avoid the fielder and not interfere with him during the entire time that the fielder is in protected status and in all areas including the basepath.

Interference is the act of hindering or obstructing a fielder attempting to make a play. A "Play" is the act of throwing, or attempting a tag of a runner or a base, or an attempt to catch a throw.

Difficult calls are the ones involving thrown balls. Interference with a **thrown ball** must be judged as an **intentional act**. Rule 7.08(b), 7.09(L). If a runner is hit by a thrown ball while running the bases, he is not out unless the umpire judges that the runner **intentionally** interfered, obstructed, hindered or confused the defense attempting to make a play.

Some examples of interference are:

- Yelling at a fielder as he attempts a catch or play (Note that the rule states "the team at bat..") This includes coaches and players on the bench.
- Waving his arms to distract the fielder
- Making contact with the fielder as he attempts a throw
- Making contact or otherwise interfering with the fielder as he attempts to catch a batted ball
- Making INTENTIONAL contact with a fielder as he attempts to catch a thrown ball. The runner has a right to the base path except when a fielder is attempting to field a BATTED ball
- Making INTENTIONAL contact with a thrown ball
- Stopping directly in front of a fielder attempting to field a ground ball

### Collisions vs. Interference:

The runner has a right to an unobstructed path while running the bases. The fielder has a right to make a play without interference. The runner has the right to the base path **except** when a fielder is attempting to field a BATTED BALL or has possession of the ball.

Sometimes when the runner and fielder collide, no penalty should be applied. The umpire

must judge whether someone's rights were violated. This applies mainly to plays where the throw and the runner are arriving at the same time. **There is no such thing as a must slide rule.** When a runner collides with a fielder attempting to field a **batted ball**, he should be called out in almost all cases. If the runner collides with a fielder attempting to catch a **throw**, the umpire must first decide if the collision was intentional, then decide if the act interfered with, impeded, hindered or confused the fielder. If the runner is legally in the base path and simply running the bases when a collision occurs, he is not out. If he deviates from his path and/or intentionally interferes, or makes malicious contact, he is out. In sliding to a base he must be able to reach out and touch the base with his hand. If he slides into a fielder while more than an arms length from the base it is interference if the fielder is attempting a play. If a runner goes into a base standing up AND this act hindered the fielder in an attempt to make a play, it is interference. This hinderance would have to be by contacting the fielder while in the act of throwing or attempting to throw. If the fielder makes no attempt to throw simply because the runner is in the base line standing up; this is NOT interference. If he does not slide, he must not touch the fielder while he is attempting a play. If the runner has already been put out before he interferes, then the ball is dead and the runner being played upon is also out.

The "must slide" rule is a myth. Only when the fielder **has possession of the ball**, is the runner required to make a choice of actions. The runner has two choices, slide **OR** attempt to get around the fielder. He is not required to slide only.

If the throw is almost to the fielder and a collision occurs; it is not interference or obstruction. It is a collision and neither player is penalized. However, intentional, malicious contact is never allowed. If the runner does it, call him out and eject him. If the fielder does it, award the base to the runner and eject the fielder.

Rule 7.09 is the main rule that covers interference. Rule 2.00 Interference and 2.00 Obstruction. Rule 7.06 (a)(b).

### Batter Interference:

Many people believe the batter's box is a safety zone for the batter. It is not. The batter **MAY** be called out for interference although he is within the box. The key words, impede, hinder, confuse or obstruct apply to this situation.

An umpire must use good judgment. The batter cannot be expected to immediately disappear. If he has a chance to avoid interference after he has had time to react to the situation and does not, he is guilty. If he just swung at a pitch, or had to duck a pitch and is off-balance, he can't reasonably be expected to then avoid a play at the plate. The batter should always be called out when he makes contact and is outside the box.

### Leaving Base Too Early When a Hit Occurs:

The rule book takes a full page attempting to explain what to do in all possible situations

when any runner leaves early before a hit. I will try to simplify it. It's not easy though. There is one loophole in the rule that allows the offense to go unpenalized. If a runner or runners are forced to advance and have left early and the batter gets a "clean" hit. No penalty is imposed. A "clean" hit means it was a single, double or triple in the umpire's judgment. If it was a hit and an error or an advance on the throw, the batter will be sent back to the base that was the scored value of the "clean hit" and all runners must go back to the bases they originally held or the one nearest the batter after the batter has been placed at the value of the "clean" hit. Any time a base becomes available after a hit, runners will be sent back.

Here are some basic keys that help simplify the rule:

1. If one runner is guilty they are all guilty.
2. You move the batter-runner back to where you judge the value of the clean hit. Any advance made by him, beyond his "clean" hit, is nullified.
3. Place all runners back on their original bases whenever possible. Put them as close as possible to the batter-runner after placing the batter-runner at the base judged to be the clean hit.
4. If any bases become empty due to any runner or the batter-runner being put out, return the runners to those bases.

EXAMPLE: Bases loaded, no outs. Batter hits a "clean" double, and tries for third thinking the throw is going home. The throw is cut-off and they get him out at third. Before the hit a runner left early. Guess what? The batter is out and ALL runners return. Because his out left bases empty, you put all runners back to their original bases. The offense just loves that call! In that same play, if the out on the batter had been the third out, no runs would count due to the fact that they could have been put back if it had not been the third out. The really love that call!!!

When a runner leaves early he remains guilty even if he returns before or after a hit.

EXAMPLE: A runner on 2nd leaves early, then a fly ball is hit to right field. The runner retouches after the catch and heads for 3rd. The throw gets past F5 and the runner scores. RULING: You put the runner back on second. They love that call too!

There is NEVER an out called for violating rule 7.13. That's just the way it is written. Your play where the guy beats the force at second is one of a few instances where they get away with leaving early. There is no penalty. However, it is not advisable for a coach to do this because it can hurt him other ways.

For instance:

R1 leaves early and a single is hit to right. The right fielder misses the ball thru his legs. R1 continues on to score and the batter goes to third. Well, since R1 left early and the "clean" hit was a single, you put the batter back on first and R1 on second.



They just lost a run because they violated the rule in hopes of beating a possible force at second. Is it worth trying to beat the force at the risk of losing a run?

### Leaving Base Too Early When a Pitch Occurs:

When a pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate AND in possession of the ball AND the catcher is in the catcher's box READY TO RECEIVE delivery of the ball, base runners shall not leave their bases until the ball has been delivered and has REACHED THE BATTER.

Confusion on this rule arises in regard to what exactly do they mean by "REACHED THE BATTER" and "READY TO RECEIVE" and just when does a runner have to return and what is the proper penalty when a runner leaves early and then the pitch is hit.

Ready to receive means the catcher must have his equipment on (including his helmet) and be in the catcher's box facing the pitcher. He does NOT have to be squatting. The batter does not have to be in the batter's box. Because the batter may not be in the box, the catcher is not required to squat.

Reached the batter means literally that. If the batter is standing in the front of the box the pitch reaches him at a different time than when he is standing in the back of the box. It is NOT when the pitch crosses the plate, which is the most common misinterpretation.

Frequently in Little League, a batter who is a fast runner will run all the way to second after receiving a base-on-balls. This occurs mostly when a runner is on third. Managers think they can stop this by having the catcher immediately return the ball to the pitcher and have the pitcher step on the rubber before the runner arrives at first. SORRY! The official ruling from headquarters is: you may not stop a runner who is ALREADY ADVANCING and continuing to advance prior to the pitcher and catcher being in position. If a runner stops or is already stopped when the pitcher steps on the rubber, that runner must return. He is liable to be put out while off base, but if he advances after being stopped while the pitcher was on the rubber, he shall be sent back. The umpire must use good judgment. The defense should not be granted time out while a runner is advancing. All play must be stopped before the umpire grants time out.

### The Balk (90' Diamond only):

This document will not attempt to cover everything regarding balks. It will cover the most frequently asked questions.

First, a bit about the basics of the balk rule. The purpose of the rule is to limit what the pitcher is allowed to do in an attempt to pick off a runner. Basically, it is pretty simple: He cannot fake one thing and then do another. He cannot fake a pitch and then throw to a base, or fake a throw to a base and then pitch. If he starts either action, he must finish

that action without hesitation or alteration. The rule specifies many specific actions, but it is a judgment of the umpire as to whether one action was started and not completed or not.

- The pitcher does **not** have to step off the rubber to throw to a base. (You don't want to throw to a base after stepping off. If the throw goes out of play it is a 2 base award. If the throw goes out of play when throw is from the rubber it is a 1 base award.)
- The pitcher may throw from the rubber to a base from the windup position. (It must be done before **any** movement that is part of the normal motion that is part of his windup.)
- The pitcher may fake a throw to second or third base from the rubber, but not to first base. This may be done from the windup or the set position. (You do **not** have to step off the rubber to fake to 2nd or 3rd. Only if you fake to 1st.)
- A jump turn is legal and considered being in contact with the rubber.
- The pitcher may place his hands in a different set location before each pitch. He must come to a set before pitching to the batter, but not before throwing to a base. He may not set twice before the pitch.
- A stretch move prior to the set is optional.
- He must disengage the rubber with his pivot foot first.
- He must step in the direction of the throw and prior to the release of the throw.

Once he is on the rubber he may do one of three things:

1. Throw to a base
2. Deliver a pitch
3. Disengage the rubber (pivot foot first)

In (1) and (2) above, the move must be completed without interruption or alteration, except for a fake to 2nd or 3rd.

The ball is not immediately dead if a pitch or throw is completed after the umpire yells "That's a balk."

Example play:

A runner is on second, 2-2 count. The pitcher stretches, but doesn't come to a set before delivering the pitch. The umpire yells "Balk!", but the pitch is thrown and the batter hits a grounder to shortstop. F5 looks the runner back and throws to first too late to get BR. What's the call? Where do you place the runners?

Answer: R2 is awarded third and the batter returns to the plate with the count 2-2.

In Pro rules, and Little League®, the ball is not immediately dead when a balk is called. If the pitch is thrown or a pick-off attempt is made the ball is still live. (Sometimes called delayed dead ball.) The ball becomes dead when all play has ended after the balk call or when the pitch or pick-off throw is caught.

Rule 8.05 - PENALTY: The ball is dead, and each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out, unless the batter reaches first on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter, or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk.

APPROVED RULING: In cases where a pitcher balks and throws wild, either to a base or to home plate, a runner or runners may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk.

It took me a long time to understand the wording in this rule. What it means in simpler terms is: When the play ends, the ball is dead. When a balk is committed and a pitch is thrown, if all offensive players advance at least one base on the play; ignore the balk. If ANY runner is put out BEFORE he advances one base or does not advance during the play; put everyone back where they were before the play began and then award all runners one base. If a runner is put out after all runners have advanced one base, the out stands and the balk is ignored.

The ball becomes dead when the catcher catches the pitch. If it is a passed ball or wild pitch, the ball remains alive until all play ends. When the balk is made in a pick-off attempt, the ball is dead when the fielder catches the throw. If the throw is wild, play continues.

Example: Runner on first. The pitcher balks during his throw to first and the ball gets away from the first baseman. The runner attempts to get to third and is thrown out. The out stands. He made the one base he would have been awarded and went beyond it at his own risk. If he had been thrown out at second the out would not count and he would be awarded second because of the balk

Rule 8.05 covers balks.

### Batting Out of Order:

#### **1. When is the appeal made?**

- a. If the appeal is made too soon: The proper batter takes his place in the box and assumes the count, if any.
- b. If the appeal is made too late: No penalty: Play continues without reference to the infraction.
- c. If the appeal is made just right (after the batter finishes his turn at bat but before a pitch to either team, play, attempted play, intentional walk): Impose the penalty.

#### **2. Who appeals?**

- a. While an improper batter is at the plate, the defense.

- b. After the improper batter has completed his at bat, only the defense may appeal the infraction.
- c. Only an appeal by the defense can ever result in the proper batter being called out.

### **3. Who is out?**

- a. The PROPER batter is always out. The improper batter is never out.

### **4. Who stays put and who advances?**

- a. All advances by runners made as a result of the actions of the improper batter (base on balls, hit batsman, base hit, fly ball tag up, ground out, sacrifice bunt, error) are void. After a successful defensive appeal; runners must return to the bases occupied at the time the improper batter stepped into the batter's box and the ball was made alive.
- b. Runners who advance on their own (balk, wild pitch, passed ball, stolen base) while the improper batter is at-bat, keep their new bases.
- c. Example: R1 steals second and advances to third on an improper batter's ground out to the second baseman. After a successful appeal, R1 returns to second. He must give up his advance on B1's batted ball, but he keeps his stolen base.

### **5. Who bats next?**

- a. The new proper batter is the batter whose name follows the name of the batter called out. (The prior proper batter)

### **6. What are the special considerations?**

- a. When the penalty is invoked, the improper batter is always removed from base or has his out canceled.
- b. Any outs made while the improper batter is hitting or as a result of actions by him stand.

*Play 1:* R1 is thrown out stealing while improper batter Able is hitting. After Able walks, the defense appeals. Ruling: The proper batter is out. Able is removed from base. R1

remains out.

**Play 2:** R1. Improper batter Able hits into a 6-4 force out. The defense appeals properly. Ruling: R1 is out (on the play), and the proper batter is out. Able is removed from base. An out for batting out of order always supersedes an out made by the improper batter.

**Play 3:** R1. Improper batter Able hits into a 6-4-3 double play. The defense appeals properly. Ruling: R1 is out (on the play), and the proper batter is out on appeal. If a proper batter is on base, there is no penalty: He is skipped; the proper batter is now the player in the line-up who follows the batter skipped.

### Check Swing Rule:

"He broke his wrists", "The bat went past the front of the plate."

Many people believe those two statements are written in the rules or are written as official interpretations of a strike.

**THEY ARE NOT.**

A strike by definition is "a pitch that is struck at by the batter and is missed." It is purely a judgment made by the umpire as to whether the batter "struck at" the pitch. Breaking the wrists or the bat moving beyond the front of the plate or the batter's body, are factors that the umpire may use to make the judgment. Factors is all they are; not definitions.

It is not automatically a strike when a batter holds the bat over the plate preparing to bunt and does not pull it back when the pitch goes by. The same judgment applies. Did the batter "strike at" the pitch?

It is not automatically a strike when a batter is ducking an inside pitch and he spins around and the bat crosses the plate. The umpire must judge if he was avoiding the pitch or striking at it.

### Sliding Rule:

**THERE IS NO "MUST SLIDE" RULE!!!**

Rule 7.08 - Any runner is out when -

(a) (3) the runner does not slide OR attempt to get around a fielder who HAS THE BALL and is waiting to make the tag.

The key phrases here are: "**or attempt to get around**" and "**has the ball waiting to make the tag.**"

The runner may slide or attempt to get around the fielder. He **does not have to slide**. Plus, unless the fielder **has the ball**, the runner doesn't have to do either.

The purpose of the rule is to prohibit the runner from **deliberately** crashing into a defender who has the ball, for the sole purpose of knocking the ball loose, because the runner knows he is going to be out otherwise.

The fielder should not be in the base path without possession of the ball. If he is it is obstruction. Anytime a runner deliberately and maliciously crashes into a fielder he should be ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct. However, if a close play occurs and the runner does not slide and makes incidental contact with the defender before he has the ball, no call should be made. If the defender has the ball, the umpire should judge as to whether the runner made an attempt to get around the fielder. If he did, he should not be called out simply because he did not slide or made contact.

In attempting to get around a fielder who has the ball waiting to make the tag, the runner must not run more than 3 feet to either side of a line that goes between bases. If he does, he is out for violation of rule 7.08 (a) (1)

If the defender does not have possession of the ball, and a collision occurs as he steps into the path of the runner as he attempts to catch a thrown ball, there is no penalty, unless the umpire judges the collision to be deliberate and malicious.

### Protests:

Judgment calls may not be protested. This means out/safe, fair/foul, ball/strike, obstruction/interference, hit batter, balk, etc. The game can only be protested when a rule has not been applied correctly.

Example: R1 and R3. R1 interferes with F4 attempting to field a grounder. The umpire calls R1 out for interference, but allows R3 to score.

This is incorrect. If, in the umpire's **JUDGMENT** interference occurred, the **RULE** states that the ball is dead and no runs may score or runners advance.

The **judgment** of whether it was interference or not, is **NOT** protestable. The fact that the umpire allowed the run to score **IS** protestable.

The batter attempts to bunt with less than two strikes and pops the ball up near the first base line. The back spin on the ball causes it to quickly roll into foul territory where it hits the batter runner who is attempting to get to first. The umpire calls the runner out. Was this correct or should it just be a foul ball and dead with the batter getting another chance?

Answer: He should not be called out unless the umpire judges that the runner intentionally did something to affect the course of the ball to gain an advantage for himself. Rule 7.09(c)

If that is his judgment, the play is NOT protestable. If he believes the rule states that the runner is out when touched by his own foul ball; he is incorrect and the play is protestable.

A protest must be made to the umpire-in-chief before the next pitch or play. In LL®, protests of the use of ineligible players may be made anytime prior to the last out of the game. When an ineligible player is discovered he is removed from the game and the opposing manager MAY protest or not at his discretion

### Force Play:

Rule 4.09 - A run scores when a runner touches home plate before the third out is made, EXCEPT that no run can score when the third out is the result of a force play, or when the batter is put out before touching first base.

The batter being put out before he touches first is NOT a force out. It is just an out, but, if it is the third out, no runs can score.

Many people believe that a FORCE OUT is any play where you can put out a runner simply by touching a base. **This is NOT correct.** Many people think that when you tag the runner instead of stepping on the base that the runner was forced to; that this is not a force-play. **This is also NOT correct**

A FORCE PLAY is in effect anytime a runner is forced to leave his base because the batter became a runner. It doesn't matter how the runner is put out; a tag, an appeal or stepping on the base; in all three cases the out is a FORCE PLAY.

Whenever the batter is put out in any manner, all forces are removed.

There are three types of plays where touching the base is all that is required.

1. When a runner must advance because the batter became a runner. (This is always a FORCE play)
2. When an appeal is made that a runner missed a base while advancing or retreating. (This could be a FORCE PLAY if the base being appealed is one to which the runner was forced to advance. Otherwise it is not.)
3. When an appeal is made that a runner did not retouch (tag-up) after a fly ball was caught. (This is NEVER A FORCE PLAY)

Rule 2.00 which contains definitions is an important part of the rule book. Many people do not understand what a force play is.

A FORCE PLAY is a play in which a runner legally loses his right to occupy a base by reason of the batter becoming a runner. This means anytime a batter is put out before reaching first base ALL forces are off. If a following runner who was forced to advance is put out, the force on the preceding runner is removed.

Confusion regarding this play is removed by remembering that frequently the "force" situation is removed during the play. Example: Man on first, one out, ball hit sharply to first baseman who touches the bag and the batter-runner is out. The force is removed at that moment and the runner advancing to second must be tagged. If there had been a runner on third or second, and either of these runners scored before the tag-out at second, the run counts. Had the first baseman thrown to second and the ball then been returned to first, the play at second was a force out, making two outs, and the return throw to first ahead of the runner would have made three outs. In that case, no run would score because the batter made the third out before reaching first.

Example: **NOT a force out.** One out. Runner on first and third. Batter flies out. Two out. **(All forces are now removed)** The runner on third tags up and scores. Runner on first tries to retouch before the throw from the fielder reaches the first baseman, but does not get back in time and is out. Three outs. If, in the umpire's judgment, the runner from third touched home before the ball was held at first base, the run counts.

The above two paragraphs are from the rule book. In the example above, you must understand that the batter was out on the catch. That removed any force play by definition of force play. The attempt by R1 to return to first after the catch is NOT a force play. It is an appeal play and for scoring purposes a TIME play. People frequently make the mistake of saying he is forced to tag up, thereby thinking it is a force play. The proper statement is; he must retouch. But, any play on the attempt to retouch is NOT a force play, because the batter has been put out.



## Top 40 Baseball Rule Myths

All of the following statements are FALSE. Read the explanations and rule references to find out why.

- ▶1. The hands are considered part of the bat.

### **HANDS RULE MYTH**

*The hands are part of a person's body. If a pitch hits the batter's hands the ball is dead; if he swung at the pitch, a strike is called (NOT a foul). If he was avoiding the pitch, he is awarded first base.*

*Rules: 2.00 PERSON, TOUCH, STRIKE (e) and 6.05(f)*

- ▶2. The batter-runner must turn to his right after over-running first base.

### **RIGHT TURN RULE MYTH**

*The batter-runner may turn left or right, provided that if he turns left he does not make an attempt to advance. An attempt is a judgment made by the umpire. The requirement is that the runner must immediately return to first after overrunning or oversliding it.*

*Rule: 7.08(c and j)*

- ▶3. If the batter breaks his wrists when swinging, it's a strike.

### **BREAKING WRISTS RULE MYTH**

*A strike is a judgment by the umpire as to whether the batter attempted to strike the ball. Breaking the wrists, or the barrel of the bat crossing the plate are simply guides to making the judgment of an attempt, these are not rules.*

*Rule: 2.00 STRIKE*

- ▶4. If a batted ball hits the plate first it's a foul ball.

### **HIT PLATE RULE MYTH**

*The plate is in fair territory. There is nothing special about it. If a batted ball hits it, it is treated like any other batted ball.*

- ▶5. The batter cannot be called out for interference if he is in the batter's box.

### **BATTER BOX INTERFERENCE RULE MYTH**

*The batter's box is not a safety zone. A batter could be called out for interference if the umpire judges that interference could or should have been avoided.*

*The batter is protected while in the box for a short period of time. After he has had time to react to the play he could be called for interference if he does not move out of the box and interferes with a play.*

*Many people believe the batter's box is a safety zone for the batter. It is not. The batter MAY be called out for interference although he is within the box. The key words, impede, hinder, confuse or obstruct apply to this situation.*

*An umpire must use good judgment. The batter cannot be expected to disappear. If he has a chance to avoid interference after he has had time to react to the situation and does not, he is guilty. If he just swung at a pitch, or had to duck a pitch and is off-balance, he can't reasonably be expected to then immediately avoid a play at the plate. However, after some time passes, if a play develops at*

*the plate, the batter must get out of the box and avoid interference. The batter should always be called out when he makes contact and is outside the box.*

*Rules: 2.00 INTERFERENCE, 6.06(c)*

- ▶6. The ball is dead on a foul-tip.

**FOUL-TIP RULE MYTH**

*There is nothing foul about a foul-tip. If the ball nicks the bat and goes sharp and direct to the catcher's hand or glove and is caught, this is a foul-tip by definition. A foul-tip is a strike and the ball is alive. It is the same as a swing-and-miss. If the ball is not caught, it is a foul ball. If the nicked pitch first hits the catcher somewhere other than the hand or glove, it is not a foul-tip, it is a foul ball.*

*Rules: 2.00 FOUL-TIP, STRIKE*

- ▶7. The batter may not switch batter's boxes after two strikes.

**SWITCH BOX RULE MYTH**

*The batter can switch boxes at any time, provided he does not do it after the pitcher is ready to pitch.*

*Rule: 6.06(b)*

- ▶8. The batter who batted out of order is the person declared out.

**OUT OF ORDER RULE MYTH**

*The PROPER batter is the one called out. Any hit or advance made by the batter or runners due to the hit, walk, error or other reason is nullified. The next batter is the one who follows the proper batter who was called out.*

*Rule: 6.07(b, 1)*

- ▶9. The batter may not overrun first base when he gets a base-on-balls.

**OVERRUN FIRST BASE RULE MYTH**

*Rule 7.08(c and j) simply state that a batter-runner must immediately return after overrunning first base. It doesn't state any exceptions as to how the player became a runner. It could be a hit, walk, error or dropped third strike.*

*In Little League the runner may overrun. In FED rules he may not and in Professional baseball, he may not. In other programs that use the OBR he may if that is how the program rules it.*

*To overrun means that the runners momentum carried him straight beyond the base after touching it. It does not mean to turn and attempt to advance. Nor does it mean that he stepped over it or stopped on it and then got off of it.*

- ▶10. The batter is out if he starts for the dugout before going to first after a dropped third strike.

**DROPPED THIRD STRIKE RULE MYTH**

*The batter may attempt first base anytime prior to entering the dugout or a dead ball area.*

*The batter becomes a runner when the third strike is not caught. Therefore, if there are 2 outs and there is a runner at first, first and second, or bases loaded, the batter creates a force by becoming a runner. These runners are all forced to advance and an out may be obtained by making a play on any one of them. If the bases are loaded the catcher may step on home or throw to third,*

*second or first.*

*Rule: 6.05(c), 6.09(b) Casebook interpretation*

▶11. If the batter does not pull the bat out of the strike zone while in the bunting position, it's an automatic strike.

***BUNTING STRIKE RULE MYTH***

*A strike is an attempt to hit the ball. Simply holding the bat over the plate is not an attempt. This is umpire judgment.*

*Rule 2.00 STRIKE*

*Rule 2.00 BUNT is a batted ball not swung at, but INTENTIONALLY met with the bat.*

*The key words are "intentionally met"*

*If no attempt is made to make contact with a ball outside the strike zone, it should be called a ball. An effort must be made to intentionally meet the ball with the bat.*

▶12. The batter is out if a bunted ball hits the ground and bounces back up and hits the bat while the batter is holding the bat.

***SECOND BAT HIT RULE MYTH***

*The rule says the BAT cannot hit the ball a second time. When the BALL hits the bat, it is not an out. Also, when the batter is still in the box when this happens, it's treated as simply a foul ball. If the batter is out of the box and the bat is over fair territory when the second hit occurs, the batter would be out.*

*Rules: 6.05(h) and 7.09(b)*

▶13. The batter is out if his foot touches the plate.

***FOOT TOUCHES PLATE RULE MYTH***

*To be out, the batter's foot must be ENTIRELY outside the box when he contacts the pitch and the ball goes fair or foul. He is not out if he does not contact the pitch. There is no statement about touching the plate. The toe could be on the plate and the heel could be touching the line of the box, which means the foot is not entirely outside the box.*

*Rule: 6.06(a)*

▶14. The batter-runner is always out if he runs outside the running lane after a bunted ball.

***RUNNING LANE RULE MYTH***

*The runner must be out of the lane AND cause interference. He is not out simply for being outside the lane. He could be called for interference even while in the lane. This is a judgment call.*

*The runner may step out of the lane a step or two before the base if he moves from within the lane to out of it. If he is out of the lane the whole distance to the base and is hit with a throw, he should be out.*

*Rules: 2.00 INTERFERENCE, 6.05(k), 7.09(k)*

▶15. A runner is out if he slaps hands or high-fives other players, after a homerun is hit over the fence.

***HIGH FIVE RULE MYTH***

*The ball is dead on a homerun over the fence. You can't be put out while the ball is dead except*

when you pass another runner.  
Rules: 5.02, 7.05(a)

▶16. Tie goes to the runner.

**THE TIE RULE MYTH**

*There is no such thing in the world of umpiring. The runner is either out or safe. The umpire must judge out or safe. It is impossible to judge a tie.*

▶17. The runner gets the base he's going to, plus one on a ball thrown out-of-play.

**OUT-OF-PLAY BALL RULE MYTH**

*When a fielder other than the pitcher throws the ball into dead ball area, the award is 2 bases. The award is from where the runners were at the time of the pitch if it is the first play by an infielder before all runners have advanced or from where each runner was physically positioned at the time the ball left the throwers hand on all other plays.*

Rule: 7.05(g)

▶18. Anytime a coach touches a runner, the runner is out.

**COACH TOUCH RULE MYTH**

*Rule 7.09(I) says the runner is out if the coach PHYSICALLY ASSISTS the runner. Hand slaps, back pats or simple touches are not physical assists.*

▶19. Runners may never run the bases in reverse order.

**REVERSE BASERUNNING RULE MYTH**

*In order to correct a base running mistake, the runner MUST retrace his steps and retouch the bases in reverse order. The only time a runner is out for running in reverse, is when he is making a travesty of the game or tries to confuse the defense.*

Rules: 7.08(I), 7.10(b)

▶20. The runner must always slide when the play is close.

**MUST SLIDE RULE MYTH**

*There is no "must slide" rule. When the fielder has the ball in his possession, the runner has two choices: slide OR attempt to get around the fielder. He may NOT deliberately or maliciously contact the fielder, but he is NOT required to slide.*

*If the fielder does not have possession but, is in the act of fielding, and contact is made, it is a no-call unless the contact was intentional and malicious.*

Rule: 7.08(a, 3) this rule does not apply to professionals.

▶21. The runner is always safe when hit by a batted ball while touching a base.

**HIT BY BALL ON BASE RULE MYTH**

*The bases are in fair territory. A runner is out when hit by a fair batted ball while touching a base, except when hit by an infield-fly or after the ball has passed a fielder and no other fielder had a play on the ball.*

*If the runner is touching first or third, he is not out unless the ball touches him over fair territory. If one foot is on the base and the other is in foul ground and he is hit on the foul ground foot, he is not out. It is a foul ball. (If the ball has not passed beyond first or third.)*

Rules: 5.09(f), 7.08(f)

- ▶22. A runner may not steal on a foul-tip.

**NO STEAL ON FOUL-TIP RULE MYTH**

*There is nothing foul about a foul-tip. If the ball nicks the bat and goes to the catcher's glove and is caught, this is a foul-tip by definition. A foul-tip is a strike and the ball is alive. It is the same as a swing-and-miss. If the ball is not caught, it is a foul ball.*

*Rules: 2.00 FOUL-TIP, STRIKE*

- ▶23. It is a force out when a runner is called out for not tagging up on a fly ball.

**FLY BALL FORCE OUT RULE MYTH**

*A force play is when a runner is forced to advance because the batter became a runner. When the batter is out on a caught fly, all forces are removed. An out on an a failure to tag-up, is NOT a force out. Any runs that cross the plate before this out will count.*

*Rules: 2.00 FORCE PLAY, 4.09*

- ▶24. An appeal on a runner who missed a base cannot be a force out.

**MISSED BASE APPEAL RULE MYTH**

*A runner must touch all the bases. If the runner misses a base to which he was forced because the batter became a runner and is put out before touching that base, the out is still a force play. If this is the third out, no runs may score. The base can be touched or the runner can be touched, either way it's a force out.*

*Rules: 2.00 FORCE PLAY, TAG, 7.08(e), 7.10(b)*

- ▶25. A runner is out if he runs out of the baseline to avoid a fielder who is fielding a batted ball.

**OUT OF THE BASELINE RULE MYTH**

*The runner MUST avoid a fielder attempting to field a BATTED ball. A runner is out for running out of the baseline, only when attempting to avoid a tag.*

*Rules: 7.08(a), 7.09(L)*

- ▶26. Runners may not advance when an infield fly is called.

**NO ADVANCE ON INFIELD FLY RULE MYTH**

*An Infield-fly is no different than any other fly ball in regard to the runners. The only difference is that they are never forced to advance because the batter is out whether the ball is caught or not.*

*Rules: 2.00 INFIELD-FLY, 6.05(e), 7.10(a)*

- ▶27. No run can score when a runner is called out for the third out for not tagging up.

**NO RUN ON THIRD OUT RULE MYTH**

*Yes it can. This is not a force play. A force play is when a runner is forced to advance because the batter became a runner. When the batter is out on a caught fly, all forces are removed. An out on an a failure to tag-up, is NOT a force out. Any runs that cross the plate before this out will count.*

*Rules: 2.00 FORCE PLAY, 4.09, 7.10(a)*

- ▶28. A pitch that bounces to the plate cannot be hit.

**NO HIT ON BOUNCED PITCH RULE MYTH**

*A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. It doesn't matter how it gets to the batter.*

*The batter may hit any pitch that is thrown. A pitch that bounces before reaching the plate may never be a called strike or a legally caught third strike.*

*Rule: 2.00 PITCH. (If the ball does not cross the foul line, it is not a pitch.)*

▶29. The batter does not get first base if hit by a pitch after it bounces.

**NO FIRST BASE ON BOUNCED PITCH RULE MYTH**

*A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. It doesn't matter how it gets to the batter. If the batter is hit by a pitch while attempting to avoid it, he is awarded first base.*

*Rules: 2.00 PITCH, 6.08(b).*

▶30. If a fielder holds a fly ball for 2 seconds it's a catch.

**2 SECOND CATCH RULE MYTH**

*A catch is legal when the umpire judges that the fielder has COMPLETE control of the ball. The release of the ball must be voluntary and intentional.*

*Rule: 2.00 CATCH*

▶31. You must tag the base with your foot on a force out or appeal.

**FOOT TAG RULE MYTH**

*You can tag a base with ANY part of the body.*

*Rules: 2.00 FORCE PLAY, PERSON, TAG, 7.08(e)*

▶32. The ball is always immediately dead on a balk.

**DEAD BALL ON BALK RULE MYTH**

*In Federation rules it is, not in any others. If a throw or pitch is made after the balk call, the ball is delayed dead. At the end of the play the balk may be enforced or not depending on what happened. On a throw; if ALL runners advance on the play, the balk is ignored. If not, the balk award is enforced from the time of pitch. On a pitch; if ALL runners INCLUDING the batter, advance on the play, the balk is ignored. Otherwise, it is no-pitch and the balk award is made from the time of the pitch.*

*Rule: 8.05 PENALTY*

▶33. If a player's feet are in fair territory when the ball is touched, it is a fair ball.

**FAIR FEET, FAIR BALL RULE MYTH**

*The position of the player's feet or any other part of the body is irrelevant. A ball is judged fair or foul based on the relationship between the ball and the ground at the time the ball is touched by the fielder.*

*Rule: 2.00 FAIR, FOUL*

▶34. The ball must always be returned to the pitcher before an appeal can be made.

**APPEAL RULE MYTH**

*An appeal may be made anytime the ball is alive. The only time the ball must go to the pitcher, is when time is out. The ball cannot be made live until the pitcher has the ball while on the rubber and the umpire says "Play." If time is not out, the appeal can be made immediately.*

*Rule: 2.00 APPEAL, 5.11, 7.10*

▶35. With no runners on base, it is a ball if the pitcher starts his windup and then stops.

**FALSE WINDUP RULE MYTH**

*A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. If the ball is not delivered, it is not a pitch. Therefore it cannot be a ball. If this happens with runners on base it is a balk. The rule for LL is different. It is an illegal pitch and a ball with or without runners on base.*

*Rule: 2.00 PITCH.*

- ▶36. The pitcher must come to a set position before a pick-off throw.

**MUST SET TO PICK RULE MYTH**

*The pitcher is required to come to a complete stop in the Set position before delivering the pitch, not before making a throw.*

*Rule: 8.05(m)*

- ▶37. The pitcher must step off the rubber before a pick-off throw.

**MUST STEP OFF RUBBER TO PICK RULE MYTH**

*If the pitcher steps off the rubber he is no longer the pitcher, he is a fielder. He can throw to a base from the rubber, provided he does not break any of the rules under rule 8.05*

- ▶38. If a fielder catches a fly ball and then falls over the fence it is a homerun.

**FIELDER OVER THE FENCE HOMERUN RULE MYTH**

*As long as the fielder is not touching the ground in dead ball territory when he catches the ball, it is a legal catch if he holds onto the ball and meets the definition of a catch. If the catch is not the third out and the fielder falls down in dead ball territory after catching the ball, all runners are awarded one base. If the fielder remains on his feet in dead ball territory after the catch, the ball is alive and he may make a play. (Except FED in which case the ball is dead and 1 base is awarded.)*

*Rules: 2.00 CATCH, 5.10(f), 6.05(a), 7.04(c)*

- ▶39. The ball is dead anytime an umpire is hit by the ball.

**DEAD BALL WHEN UMPIRE IS HIT RULE MYTH**

*If an umpire is hit by a batted ball before it passes a fielder, the ball is dead. On any other batted or thrown ball, the ball is alive when the umpire is hit with the ball. Umpire interference also occurs when the plate umpire interferes with the catcher's attempt to prevent a stolen base.*

*Rules: 2.00 INTERFERENCE, 5.09(b), 5.09(f)*

- ▶40. The home plate umpire can overrule the other umps at anytime.

**HOME PLATE UMPIRE RULE MYTH**

*The umpire who made a call or ruling may ask for help if he wishes. No umpire may overrule another umpire's call.*

*Rules: 9.02(b, c)*