



Florida District 1 Little League

Umpire 101

Introduction

Umpires,

I would like to thank you for your commitment to Little League. The purpose of this Umpire Manual is to outline guidelines, best practices, and responsibilities of an umpire. The information and suggestions that follow are intended to assist you.

Knowledge and confidence are two elements that comprise professionalism in umpiring. A basic knowledge, at a minimum, is required to umpire LLBB& LLSB: however, comprehension of the rules, correct positioning, and proper mechanics are the keys to success in umpiring.

All umpires must strive for perfection. The goal of every umpire must be to improve each and every time you are on the field. The district staff will try to help each of you in some of the details that we feel will help you become a better umpire. As umpires we are representatives of our League, so remember that professionalism must be maintained both on and off the field. Last but not least, remember to have fun during your games. After all we do have the best seats in the house.

Thank You

FL District 1 Staff



Philosophy of the Umpire (Handout 12 commandments)

One of the first things we must do as umpires is work together as a team. If you are blocked out on a play and need assistance, don't be hesitant to ask your partner. The main objective is to get the call right. Work hard to get in the proper position to make the call.

Remember to be professional. You should not go out on the field with a chip on your shoulder. We must be able to forgive and forget. Leave the things that happen on the field, on the field. Every game is a new game.

Always try to remain calm.

Never use language that you would not allow to be used toward you.

There is a difference between rules and judgment, never let anyone prolong an argument involving your judgment. You as an umpire can do this with dignity and by doing so will gain respect of all involved. You must be an impartial judge and maintain a calm attitude becoming the authority umpire.

When you go into a game, do so looking your best. Make sure your uniform is clean and your shoes cleaned/shined. Do not walk onto a field looking like you just pulled your uniform out of the hamper. Ensure your equipment is in top condition. Keep active and alert at all times.

Practice good "Game Management" and keep the game moving. One way to accomplish this is by not allowing the pitcher throw too many pitches while warming up and get the fielders to get the balls out of both the outfield and infield. Be courteous, impartial and firm. By doing this simple practice you will help keep the game moving quickly and smoothly.

(Team 3 hand out)

Dress Code

An umpire who looks like he/she knows what they are doing immediately commands respect. A good appearance shows teams that you are a professional.

Umpire Uniform

Hat - Black or Navy- Color coordinated w/shirt

Shirts - Navy, Polo Blue (Black Collar), Powder Blue (Light Blue Collar), Black, White, Cream, Red Etc.

Slacks - Heather Gray or Charcoal, No cuffs

Belt - Black

Socks - Black – No ankle or no-show socks

Shoes - Black- May have white contrasting color- Not saying they should be spit shined, but they should be clean. Shinning them once or twice would not hurt.

NOTE: Umpires should try to dress/match one another in uniform color

Umpire Equipment

***Mask** – Dangling throat guard is recommended, but optional

***Chest Protector** - Various types/styles find one you like

***Shin Guards** - Various types/styles

***Protective Cup** - Male umpire- Female Umpires it is recommended to use a Pelvic protective plate

***Ball Bags** - Black or Navy

***Indicator** - Various types

***Plate Brush** - Various styles

***Line-Up Holder** - Various styles

***Plate Shoes** - At the minimum steel toe shoes

Base Shoes - No metal cleats

Sunglasses - Not recommended for plate, must be non-reflective, and should never be worn on hat

Accessories - No watches, cell phones or jewelry (medical alert bracelet acceptable)

***Identifies equipment for the Plate Umpire that is required by Little League rule 9.01(a)**

Shirt color = undershirt color, hat color, ball bag color

Shirt Color	Undershirt Color	Hat Color	Ball Bag Color
Red	Navy	Navy	Navy
Navy	Red	Navy	Navy
White	Red	Navy	Navy
Powder Blue	Navy	Navy	Navy
Black	Black	Black	Black
MLB Black (gray)	Black	Black	Black
Cream	Black	Black	Black
Polo Blue	Black	Black	Black
MLB Polo Blue	Black	Black	Black
Hunter Green	Black	Black	Black
Pink	Black	Black	Black

Bottom Line- Take as much pride in your appearance as you do in getting the call right.

Umpire Conferences (hand out case card)

There are three different conferences that an umpire must have each game.

- Pre-game Conference (Umpire to Umpire)
- Plate Conference (Umpire and Manager)
- Post-game Conference (Umpire to Umpire)

PRE-GAME CONFERENCE

The umpire-to-umpire pre-game conference is very important and can prevent many mishaps during the course of the game. You will want to arrive at least 30 minutes before game time to give you and your partner time to cover the following:

Fair/foul coverage, fly ball and line drive coverage (Outfield/Infield), when the plate umpire will cover 3rd base, touch and tag up responsibilities, dropped 3rd strike, batted ball hits batter (in box/out of box), half swings (check swing), balks/illegal pitches, live balls into dead ball territory, umpire positioning and signals that will be used during the game. Don't assume that your partner knows what you are going to do. There could have been four or five games between when you last worked together.

PLATE CONFERENCE – REFER TO RULE 4.01

Meet with the Managers of each team five minutes before game start time at home plate.

NOTE: no players should be on the field, swinging bats or throwing the ball during the plate conference. KEEP THEM IN THE DUGOUT.

- Introduce yourselves - address each other by first names
- Take line-up cards- check home team line-up card first then the visitors. This is the time to fix any issues with the lineup. For protests, the umpire lineup cards will become official game records.
- Ask each coach if his/her team is appropriately equipped according to rules/regulations
- Go over ground rules (If your field has them). Ask questions if you need clarification.
- Keep it short and to the point- should be a two- or three-minute conference
- Don't be a joker! Be professional

POST-GAME CONFERENCE

It is important for you and your partner to have a post-game critique. Always be honest with your partner and make sure he/she knows you want the truth from them. Learn from each other, this is a great opportunity for you to receive objective feedback. Conduct your post-game conference in the dressing or parking lot but after you are out of earshot of those involved in the game, including fans. If working with a new umpire; don't overload them with information on their mistakes; give them one or two things to work on before their next game. Always end with something positive! If you are a new umpire, ask questions if you are unsure of something you saw during the game. Everyone should be striving to get better each game so even the most seasoned umpire can learn something new. Do not be afraid to give feedback, it will be appreciated.

5 TOOL UMPIRE (hand out case card)

Every umpire should strive to become a 5-tool umpire. Are you a 5 Tool Umpire?

1. Physical Appearance
2. Knowledge of rules
3. Plate/Base work
4. Judgment
5. Handling Situations

Physical Appearance- Properly Dressed- Neat/Clean/Polished- a positive appearance provides a solid foundation

Knowledge of the Rules- Complete & thorough knowledge of the rules and application- For all levels of baseball and softball - it's harder than it seems

Plate/Base Work- Footwork (extremely important), getting where you need to be - Positioning, proper angle/distance- Mechanics, communicate w/firm crisp signals

Judgment- Must be impeccable - start at 100% and get better- Good Timing promotes Good Judgment- Remember you are human

Handling situations- Be aware of potential problems- Diffuse Situations - Keep players/coaches in the game- ALWAYS keep an even keel

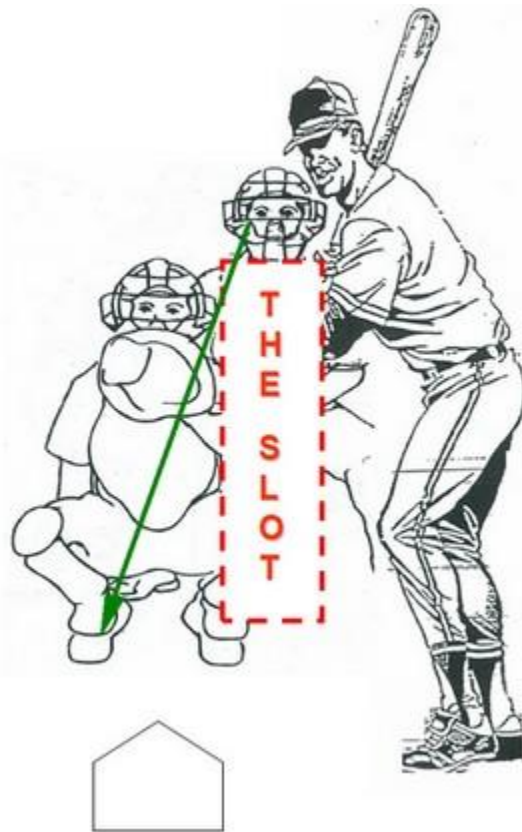
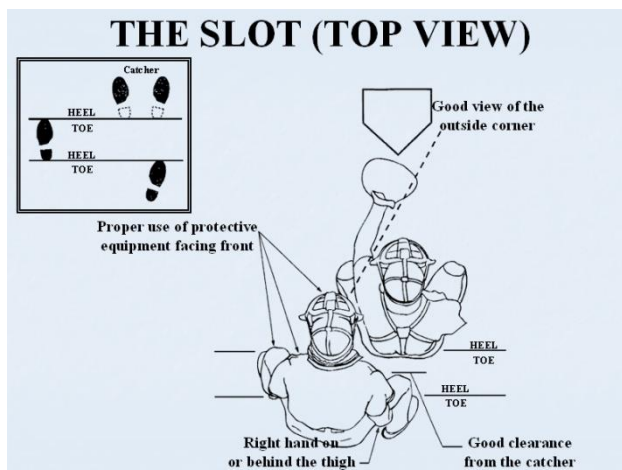
There are a lot of 4 tool umpires- Put it all together- Strive to BECOME A 5 TOOL UMPIRE!

Plate Umpire (hand out case card, clear the catcher, balls/strikes, plate mechanics)

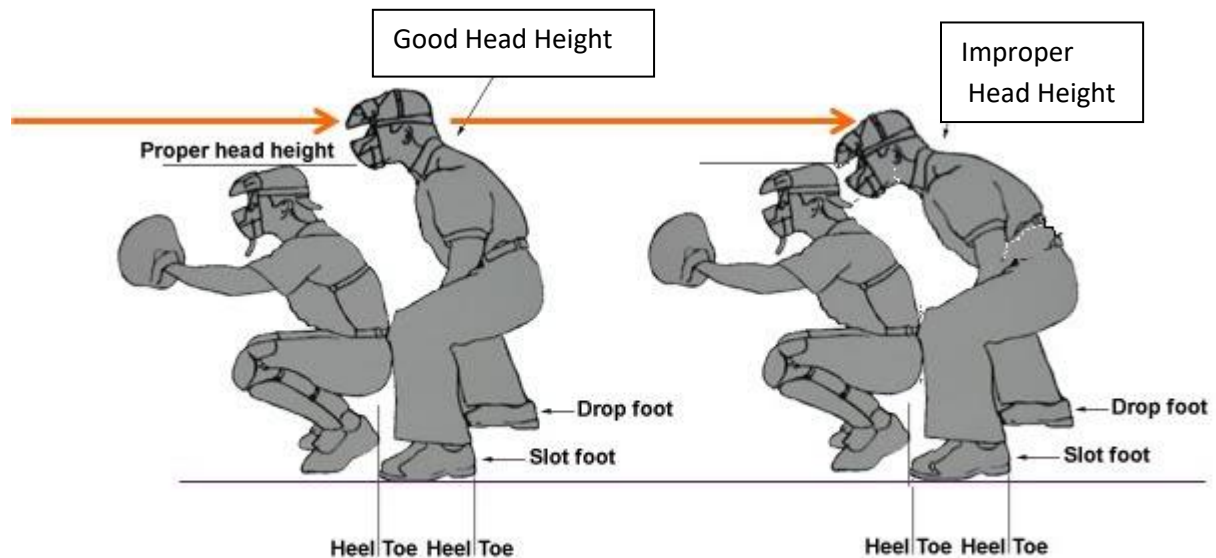
We know that all phases of umpiring are important. To be a complete umpire, you must prove that you have good judgment of calling balls and strikes, a clear understanding of the strike zone, proper positioning, and effective mechanical techniques. The plate umpire should look at the pitches from every new pitcher. Count warm-up pitches, the rules are specific and only allow one minute or eight pitches. Record all changes and report them to the official score keeper. Be sure to record offensive and defensive changes, warnings, delays, ejections.

Working the Plate/ 5 Keys to success

Slot - The area between the catcher & the batter. Need to step in with the slot foot first. Make sure you are up in the slot and not too far back you will not be able to see the outer half of the plate. (Top view below shows foot placement utilizing the “box” stance.)



Head Height- Making sure you are consistent with your head going to the same place each time you set up. The chin should be no lower than the top of the catcher's head.



Lock- To ensure a consistent head height, an umpire must have a locking mechanism. There are three primary umpire stances: the Davis, the box and the scissors. While each stance has its pros and cons, the one we demonstrate the most is the Gerry Davis method. The Davis has you locking both of your arms at the top of your knees each time you get set.

Eye Movement – This is very important. You must track the ball all the way to the glove by moving only the eyes and your head should remain still. The tendency is to have tunnel vision – not tracking the ball all the way to the catcher’s mitt. This will leave the ball out in front of the plate and will lead to quick timing and an inconsistent strike zone. Remember to use only your eyes; ensure that you are not drifting with the pitch or dropping your head to follow the pitch.

Timing- Must have good timing. Good timing involves seeing the ball all the way to the glove, deciding that it was a ball or strike, and then calling the pitch. Balls are called down and strikes are called up.

NOTE: Plate umpire needs to step back and relax after every pitch. Practice getting into the slot before each pitch is delivered.

Base Umpire (hand out card and sheet fair/foul, base positioning, catch- no-catch)

The base umpire should Pause, Read and React on every play. Things base umpire needs to remember:

- Keep eyes on the ball
- Hustle and get into position
- Be stopped and get set on all plays
- Have good timing on calls
- Always stay away from pitcher's mound (think of it as quicksand)

Know your responsibilities (in order of priority):

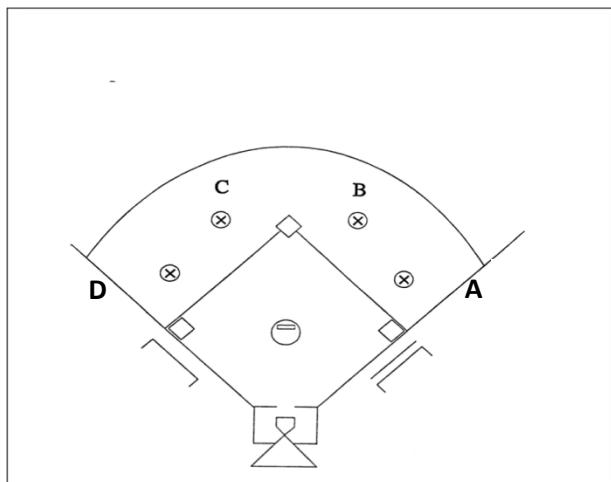
- 1) Fair/Foul
- 2) Catch/No-Catch
- 3) Anything that happens next

Your priorities will change depending upon your position at the time of the pitch (A, B or C), number of outs and even the count. Anything that happens next is exactly what it sounds like and we will discuss what that means below.

Field Umpire Start Positions

As a Base Umpire, there are four potential positions where you'll position yourself to start each play.

- A:** 10 – 12 feet behind 1st base in foul territory
- B:** 2 – 3 steps behind and 2 – 3 steps to the left of the 2nd baseman (in normal position)
- C:** 2 – 3 steps behind and 2 – 3 steps to the left of the shortstop (in normal position)
- D:** 10 – 12 feet behind 3rd base in foul territory (*used only in 3 or 4 man mechanics*)



Umpiring the Bases

General Information: The same concepts apply (just like the plate); **PAUSE, READ and REACT!!**
on every play.

Before rendering a judgement on any play, it is necessary for you to stop and get set. Do this ***before*** the play happens. Never call a play when you are running to get into position, stop and get set, this way your eyes will not be moving, and you will take a better picture of the play.

In getting set, bend at the knees and hips. Try to keep your upper body straight from the waist up. If you will put your hands on your knees it will help maintain balance as well as lock you into position. You should begin all your calls/signals from this set position; rise and make the call. Practice good mechanics: your verbal and signal should be in sync and do not return to the set position after you make the call.

As the game begins:

The base umpire should hustle from the home plate area down the first base line to his between innings position. The between innings position is behind the 10-15 feet behind the second baseman in the outfield grass. Be sure to stay out of the way of any outfielders warming up –know where the ball is! All umpires should avoid visiting with anyone between innings unless there is a problem between umpires which needs attention.

In getting into position at first base with no runners on base, the umpire should be about ten to fifteen feet behind first base in foul territory unless the first baseman is playing “back”. In this instance your position would be 2-3 steps behind the first baseman remaining in foul territory. Never allow the fielder to stand behind you. When positioning yourself before the pitch, place your hands on your knees, thumbs on the inside, locked into the set position; or let your arms hang loose at your sides. Do not fold your arms on your chest as this makes you look like you are loafing or bored.

When the ball is hit to the infield:

The umpire should hustle into a position where the angle to first base and the fielder making the throw is a right angle (90°). Don't be lazy; hustle out there, maintain your original distance away from the base so you will have a good view of the fielder reaching for a high throw and be sure to get set to call the play.

When the ball is hit to the outfield (The Pivot):

With no runners on, a ball hit **through** the infield or a fly ball to the outfield, which doesn't require that the base umpire go out, you should take a pivot across the baseline into the infield to get into better position to follow the action. As the ball is batted, run toward a spot on the 2nd base side of the 1st base cutout – this is where you should begin to execute your pivot. Time your movement so that you will execute the pivot just as the runner rounds first base. The movement should be timed so that the left foot is planted just before reaching the pre-determined spot on the grass portion of the cutout. The right foot is then planted so you can pivot around and watch the action at first base as you execute the turn to the left. You should now be in a good position to either take the runner into second base or for any plays back into first base. Be sure to pick up the ball – you do not want to be incapacitated by an errant throw.

Helpful Hints when Working the Bases

- 1) Always know where the ball is.
- 2) Never make a call on the move, get set and wait until the play is over before you make the call.
- 3) **Tag plays** - Do not try to outrun the runner to the base, work for a 90° angle to see the whole play.
- 4) **Run-downs** - The best coverage in a run-down is by both umpires, on each end of the play, if possible. When the situation allows for both umpires to work a run-down, use verbal communication to direct each umpire's coverage. Hustle to be in the best position to make all your calls.
- 5) **Hustle to be in the best position for all your calls**