

# Rule of Little League Baseball & Softball



# Fair Ball

A batted ball that:

- stops on fair ground between home and first or third base;
- is on or over fair territory when bounding to the outfield past first or third base;
- touches first, second or third base;
- first falls on fair territory on or beyond first base or third base;
- while on or over fair territory touches a player or umpire; or
- while over fair territory, passes out of the playing field in flight (home run).

# Foul Ball

A foul ball is a batted ball that:

- settles on foul territory between home and first or third base;
- bounds past first or third base on or over foul territory;
- first falls on foul territory beyond first base or third base;
- while on or over foul territory, touches a player, umpire; or any object foreign to the natural ground.

Always judge the position of the ball, not the fielder.

# Fair or Foul Territory?

Is home plate in fair or foul territory?

Are first and third base in fair or foul territory?

Are the foul lines and foul poles in fair or foul territory?

# Fair or Foul Ball?

What call if a batted ball touches home plate?

What call if a line drive hits the pitching rubber and caroms into foul territory between home and third?

# Fair Ball!



# Equipment & Uniforms



# USA Baseball Bat Standard

In the Major Division and below, all non-wood and laminated baseball bats must comply with the USA Baseball Bat Standard.

Bats must bear the USA Baseball logo signifying that the bat meets the USA Youth Baseball Bat Performance Standard.

All BPF - 1.15 bats prohibited.

Not required for solid one-piece wood barrel bats



# BBCOR Allowed in 50-70

In the Intermediate (50-70) and Junior Divisions, bats must meet either:

- USA Baseball Bat standard or
- Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution (BBCOR) standard

# Prohibited Items

Players must not wear jewelry such as rings, watches, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, or any hard cosmetic decorative items. The material making up the decorative item is irrelevant.

Exception: Players may wear medical alert jewelry.

Players must not play with a cast. They must remain in the dugout.

In the Major Division and below, players may not wear metal spikes.

# Glasses and Sunglasses

Glasses are allowed.

Sunglasses are allowed.

No prescription required.

Players can wear sunglasses on top of their hat.

# Pitchers

Any part of pitcher's exposed undershirt must be a solid color.

The sleeves of an exposed undershirt cannot be white or gray.

Neoprene sleeves must be covered.

Sweat bands or other items worn on the hands, wrists or arms that are distracting to the batter are not allowed.

Glove may not be white, light gray or distracting in any manner.

A batting glove under the pitcher's glove is allowed if it is not white, gray or optic yellow.

# Catchers

All catchers in all divisions must wear:

- Catcher's mitt and shin guards
- Traditional helmet and mask or a hockey style helmet
- “Dangling” throat protector
- Short-model or long-model chest protector.

Male catchers must wear a protective cup.

Catchers must wear a catcher's helmet with dangling throat guard during games, pitcher warm-up, and any form of infield or infield/outfield practice.

# Batters, Runners & Base Coaches

In all cases, whether in a game or a practice, the following players must wear a batting helmet that covers both ears:

- Batters: any player holding a bat at any time
- Base Runners: any player depicted as a base runner at any time
- Base Coaches: any player depicted as a base coach at any time
- Adult Base Coaches and defensive players: helmet is optional

# Catching the Ball



On August 17, 2013, Brook Heinen of Urbandale Little League in Iowa makes a diving catch at the Little League World Series.

# What is a catch?

A “catch” is the act of a fielder in getting secure possession in the hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it before it touches the ground.

A fielder may not use a cap, protector, pocket or any other part of the uniform in getting possession.

In establishing the validity of the catch, the fielder shall hold the ball long enough to prove complete control of the ball and that release of the ball is voluntary and intentional.



# The Elements of a Catch

The critical elements are:

- secure possession
- complete control
- voluntary release

There is no specific time limit.

This is a judgment call.

# That's a catch!

If the fielder has made the catch and drops the ball while making the throw following the catch. The player must hold the ball long enough to demonstrate complete control and that the release is voluntary and intentional.

If the ball is finally held by any fielder, even if juggled, or held by another fielder before it touches the ground.

**Note:** When tagging up, runners can leave their bases the instant the first fielder touches the ball.

# No catch!

If simultaneously or immediately following contact with the ball, the fielder collides with a player, or with a wall, or if that fielder falls down, and as a result of such collision or falling, drops the ball.

If a fielder touches a fly ball, which then hits a member of the offensive team or an umpire, and then is caught by another defensive player.

# Catch or No Catch?

The batter hits a fly ball to the center fielder who gets the ball in her glove, takes four steps and falls to the ground. During the fall the ball comes out of the fielder's glove.

This is not a catch. The fielder must demonstrate complete control and show voluntary release of the ball.

# Balls and Strikes



# The Strike Zone

The space over home plate between:

- the batter's armpits and
- the top of the batter's knees
- when the batter assumes a natural stance

The strike zone is determined by the batter's usual stance when the batter swings at a pitch.

# Natural or Usual Stance



On August 19, 1951, Eddie Gaedel of the St. Louis Browns became the shortest player in the history of Major League Baseball. Gaedel stood 3 feet 7 inches tall and weighed 65 pounds. Wearing the number  $\frac{1}{8}$ ", he made a single plate appearance and walked on four consecutive pitches before being replaced by a pinch-runner at first base.

# Balls

What call if a ball bounces on the ground and then passes through the strike zone?

What if the batter swings and hits a pitch after it bounces?



# The Nine Strikes

1. Swinging Strike
2. Called Strike
3. Foul tip
4. Foul ball
5. Bunted foul
6. Ball touches batter as the batter swings at the pitch
7. Ball touches batter in flight in the strike zone
8. Batter refuses to take a position in the batter's box
9. Batter fails to remain in the batter's box with at least one foot throughout the at bat (multiple exceptions)

Question: What's the difference between strikes 1-3, 4-9?

# Check Swing

A motion by the batter where the swing is started but stopped before striking the ball.

- There is no specific rule regarding check swings.
- Whether a batter strikes at a ball is a judgment call.
- Guides that an umpire may use in judging a swing may include breaking the wrists or the barrel of the bat crossing the plate.

# Foul Tip

A batted ball that:

- goes sharp and direct
- from the bat to the catcher's hand or glove and
- is legally caught

A foul tip is a strike and the ball is live.

# Foul Tip Questions

What call when the ball arcs between the bat and the catcher's hand or glove?

Is a foul tip a foul ball?

May a runner steal on a foul tip?

What call if a foul tip is not caught?

# Coaches May Not Warm Up Pitchers

Managers and coaches must not warm up a pitcher:

- at home plate
- in the bullpen or
- elsewhere at any time

They may stand by to observe a pitcher.

# Players Warming Up Pitchers

- Catchers must wear a catcher's helmet with dangling throat guard during games, pitcher warm-up, and any form of infield or infield/outfield practice.
- Cup and other catcher's equipment not required.
- May squat.

# Courtesy Runners

Only for pitcher and catcher

Only with 2 outs

CBO - player who made the last out

Only regular season

# Base Coaches

Two base coaches required

Eligible player in uniform and/or team manager or coaches

One adult manager or coach must remain in the dugout.

Coaches must not leave dugouts until pitcher has completed warm-up pitches.



# Fewer than 9 Players

A regulation game may be started or continued with 8 players.

If one or both teams have fewer than 8 players, the teams can play a practice game or scrimmage. The scrimmage will not count as a regulation game.

A game cannot be played without one adult manager or acting manager.

# The Batter



# On Deck Batter

In the Major Division and below:

- The on-deck position is not permitted.
- Fenced-in areas may not be used for an on-deck batter.
- Only the first batter of each half-inning is allowed outside the dugout between half-innings.
- The next batter should be ready with a helmet on, but may not pick up a bat until it is his/her turn to bat.

# On Deck Batters: 50-70

In the Intermediate Division (50-70) Division:

- The on-deck position is permitted.
- The on-deck batter shall be positioned in the on-deck circle closest to their dugout.
- The traditional batting donut is not permitted.

# Batter's Box

The area within which the batter must stand during a time at bat.

Lines defining the box are within the batter's box

# One Foot in the Box

Batter must remain in the box with one foot throughout the at bat.

# One Foot in the Box - Penalty

First Offense by Batter: Warning

Second Offense by Same Batter: Called strike

Major Division and below:

- No pitch has to be thrown.
- Ball is dead.
- No runners may advance.

50-70 Division and above:

- No pitch has to be thrown.
- Ball is live.

# One Foot in the Box - Exceptions

- On a swing, slap, or check swing
- When forced out of the box by a pitch
- When the batter attempts a “drag bunt”
- When the catcher does not catch the pitched ball
- When a play has been attempted
- When time has been called
- The catcher leaves the catcher’s box
- On a three ball count that the batter thinks is a ball
- When the pitcher leaves the eight foot circle (softball) or the dirt area of the pitching mound (baseball)

**The exceptions swallow the rule.**



# Practical Effect

- In practical terms, the rule only applies if:
  - Batter doesn't swing
  - Catcher catches the pitch
  - No play has been attempted and
  - Pitcher and catcher remain in their positions
- Enforce the intent/spirit of the rule
  - Intent is to speed up the pace of play by preventing batters from walking away from the plate.
  - Use common sense
  - Do not be overly strict if a player's foot is inches outside the box unless the player is delaying the game.

# Uncaught (Dropped) Third Strike



Mickey Owens

On October 5, 1941, during game 4 of the World Series, the Brooklyn Dodgers were leading the New York Yankees 4-3 with two outs in the top of the 9th inning and a 3-2 count on Tommy Henrich. Henrich swung at and missed strike 3. The catcher, Mickey Owen, did not catch the pitch and Henrich made it safely to first base. The Yankees scored 4 runs and won 7-4. They beat the Dodgers again the next day for the World Series title.

# Uncaught (Dropped) Third Strike

A batter is out if the catcher legally catches the third strike.

A batter is out if the catcher does not catch the third strike if:

- a runner is on first base and
- there is one out or no outs

A batter is not out and may attempt to advance to first base if the catcher does not catch the third strike if:

- first base is unoccupied with one out or not outs or
- there are two outs

# Infield Fly Rule

An infield fly is a:

- fair fly ball (not a bunt)
- can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort
- with runners on first and second or bases loaded
- with nobody or one out

# Infield Fly Rule

The batter is out.

The ball is live.

Runners may advance at their own risk.

# Infield Fly Rule Questions

What call if an umpire calls infield fly and then the ball rolls foul?

What call if a runner is hit by an infield fly ball?

Must a runner tag-up on an infield fly?

May an outfielder catch the ball on an infield fly?

What call if an umpire forgets to call an infield fly?

# Infield Fly Rule



# The Running Lane





# Running Lane Violations

A batter-runner is out when:

- in running the last half of the distance from home to first
- while the ball is being fielded to first base
- the batter-runner runs outside or inside the three-foot line
- interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base

The lines marking the lane are part of the lane.

The runner must have both feet within or on the lines.

# Running Lane Violations



# Hitting Outside the Batter's Box



AP / 1946

During the 1946 All Star Game, Rip Sewell threw an Eephus (“blooper”) pitch to Ted Williams. Before the game Sewell had warned Williams that he would throw it. Williams fouled off the first blooper but hit the second blooper for a home run. It was the only homerun ever hit off of Sewell’s blooper pitch. Notice Williams’ right foot?

# Hitting Outside the Batter's Box

A batter is out when:

- hitting a fair or foul ball
- with one or both feet on the ground
- entirely outside the batter's box

# Intentional Walk

Before or during the at-bat, the defense may elect to intentionally walk a batter by announcing it to the plate umpire.

The defensive manager must request and receive time.

The ball is dead and no other runners may advance unless forced.

The number of balls needed to “walk” added to the pitch count.

Note: If a pitch is thrown, the defense must pitch to the batter until put out, becomes a runner or the third out of the inning is made.

# Hit by Pitch



# Hit by Pitch

A pitched ball touches the batter or batter's clothing unless:

- The batter is attempting to hit the ball;
- The ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter;  
or
- The batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched by the ball.

Question: What call if the ball hits the batter's hands?

Question: What call if the ball bounces before hitting the batter?

# Balls out of Play



How many bases is a runner awarded on an overthrow?



# Batted Balls Out of Play

## Home Run

A fair batted fly ball that goes out of the playing field in flight entitles the batter and all runners to advance to home base.

## Ground Rule Double (Rule Book Double)

A fair batted ball that touches the ground and then goes out of play entitles the batter and all runners to two bases from the time of pitch.

# Batted Balls Out of Play

What call if a fly ball bounces off a fielder's head or glove and then passes over the outfield fence?

What call if a fielder catches a fly ball and then falls over the outfield fence?

What call if a fielder deflects a fair fly ball with a glove or cap?

# Thrown Balls Out of Play

Bases are not awarded on overthrows; the ball must go out of play.

When a thrown ball goes out of play, the ball is dead and all runners are awarded two bases.

The important question is two bases from where.

# Awarding Bases on Thrown Balls out of Play

First Play by an Infielder: two bases from base(s) at time of pitch

Second Play by an Infielder: two bases from base(s) at time of throw

Any play by an Outfielder: two bases from base(s) at time of throw

# Pitched Balls Out of Play

If a ball:

- pitched to the batter or
- thrown by the pitcher from the pitcher's plate to a base to catch a runner

and the ball:

- goes out of play or
- lodges in the umpire's mask or paraphernalia

the ball is dead and all runners are entitled to one base.

# Obstruction



On October 26, 2013, the St. Louis Cardinals won Game 3 of the World Series on an obstruction call at third base. Third base umpire Jim Joyce of Oregon made the call.

# Obstruction

The act of a fielder who:

- while not in possession of the ball
- impedes the progress of any runner

Fake tags are obstruction.

It is obstruction when a defensive player:

- blocks off a base, base line or home plate from a runner
- while not in possession of the ball

# Type A Obstruction

Occurs when a play is being made on the obstructed runner.

Immediate dead ball.

Award bases as appropriate - Award the base the runner would have reached, in the umpire's judgment, had the obstruction not occurred.

If runner is obstructed while returning to a base, always award at least the next base.



# Type B Obstruction

Occurs when no play is being made on the obstructed runner.

Delayed dead ball - The umpire points to offending fielder and calls “that’s obstruction,” but allows play to continue.

After play concludes, call time and award bases if appropriate.

If award of bases not appropriate, ignore the obstruction.

# Examples of Obstruction

A first baseman standing on first base or in the baseline while watching the ball, causing the runner to bump into or run around the fielder has committed obstruction.

Fielders standing in front of a base without the ball have likely committed obstruction.

An infielder who dives for a ground ball and remains on the ground after the ball passes him and delays the progress of a runner, has likely obstructed the runner.

# Obstruction Examples



# Obstruction Examples



# The Baseline

A runner's baseline is a straight line from the runner to the base to which he or she is attempting to reach.

A runner's baseline is established when the a fielder attempts to make a play on the runner.

# Running Out of the Baseline

A runner is out when:

- running more than three feet away from his/her baseline
- to avoid being tagged
- unless to avoid interference with a fielder fielding a batted ball.

Guideline: a Step and a Reach

# Running Out of the Baseline

A runner is out when after touching first base, the runner leaves the baseline, obviously abandoning all effort to touch the next base.

# The Must Slide Rule





# There is No Must Slide Rule

The runner is out when:

- the runner does not slide or
- attempt to get around a fielder
- who has the ball and
- is waiting to make a tag

A runner has two other options:

- give up
- retreat

# Sliding Head First

Any runner is out when the runner slides head first while advancing.

A runner may dive head first when returning to a base.

Falling head first is not necessarily sliding. Use your judgment.

# Circle Violations in Softball

If pitcher:

- has possession of the ball
- inside the 8 foot pitcher's circle and
- is not making a play (fake throw is a play)

Runners off the base must either:

- immediately advance to next base or
- return to previous base.

# Penalty

If runners don't immediately advance or return to the base, the umpire should call time and call the runner "out."

If the runner takes more than one or two seconds, or if she is trying to egg on the pitcher to make her throw the ball, the runner should be called "out."

If the pitcher attempts a play on a runner, this rule does not apply.

# Runner Touched by Batted Ball

Any runner is out when touched by a fair ball in fair territory before the ball has touched or passed an infielder.

The ball is dead, no runners may score, no runners may advance unless forced.

The runner is not out if touching a base when touched by an Infield Fly.

If a runner is touched by an Infield Fly when not touching a base, both the runner and batter are out.

# Overrunning First Base

A runner is out for failing to return at once to first base after overrunning or oversliding the base.

Questions:

What call if after overrunning first base, the runner turns left to return to first base, but is tagged before reaching the base?

Must a runner turn to the right after overrunning first base?

May a runner overrun first base on a walk?

# Leading Off & Leaving the Base Early



# Baseball

In the Major Division and below, 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 the ball

Base runners may not leave their base until:

- the ball has been delivered and
- has reached the batter.



# Softball

When the pitcher is in the 8 circle and in possession of the ball, base runners must not leave their bases until:

Minor Division - the ball has been batted or reaches the batter

Major Division - the ball leaves the pitcher's hand

# Penalty for Leaving Early

Ball is dead.

Runner is out.

If two or three runners leave early, the first runner to leave early is out.

In reality, the lead runner is usually called out.

# Offensive Interference



On October 18, 2004, Yankee Alex Rodriguez was called out for interference when he swatted at Red Sox pitcher Bronson Arroyo's glove and knocked the ball loose during the 8th inning of Game 6 of the AL Championship series.

# Offensive Interference

Offensive Interference is:

- any act by an offensive player (batter or runner)
- that obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses
- any fielder attempting to make a play.

Interference does not have to be intentional.

# Runner's Interference

- Runner is hit by a batted ball before the ball passes infielders.
- Runner fails to avoid/collides with a fielder making a play on a batted ball.
- Runner intentionally impedes a fielder's attempt to throw the ball.
- Runner intentionally interferes with a thrown ball.
- Runner intentionally slaps away a tag.

# Runner's Interference

The runner is out and all other runners must return to the last base that was, in the umpire's judgment, legally touched at the time of the interference.

If a runner intentionally impedes a fielder's attempt to throw the ball on a double play attempt, the umpire may call both runners out.

# Batter's Interference



On Jun 17, 2015, Melky Cabrera swung through a 3-2 pitch with nobody out and a runner on first, who stole second on the pitch. The home plate umpire ruled that the runner was out because Cabrera crossed over home plate on the swing and interfered with the catcher's ability to throw the ball.

# Batter's Interference

- Batter intentionally impedes a fielder's attempt to throw the ball, usually the catcher.
- Batter intentionally or through willful neglect interferes with a play at the plate.



# Penalties for Offensive Interference

On interference by a batter or runner:

- the runner is out
- all other runners must return to the last base that was, in the umpire's judgment, legally touched at the time of the interference.

If the batter interferes with a play at home plate with two out, the batter is out and no score counts.

# You Make the Call

The catcher without the ball is standing in fair territory in front of home plate waiting for a throw from center field as the runner rounds third base.

The centerfielder throws the ball off line to the catcher's left. In attempting to catch the ball, the catcher moves five feet up the third baseline directly into the runner's path and catches the ball.

The runner runs over the catcher knocking him to the ground. The catcher drops the ball.

The third baseman picks up the ball and tags the runner before reaching home plate.

# The Umpire



# Throwing the Bat - Intentional

There is no rule that covers thrown bats.

Umpires do not have authority to call a batter “out” for throwing a bat.

If intentional, an umpire may eject a player for unsportsmanlike conduct.

This is harsh penalty because ejection disqualifies player from the next game.

# Throwing the Bat - Unintentional

According to RIM, when a player throws a bat or engages in other potentially unsafe actions, the umpire should:

- Warn the player and members of the player's team.
- Recommend to the player's manager to substitute for the offender until the player is properly trained.
- Ultimately the team manager is responsible for teaching the players the proper way to discard a bat.

# Disqualification

Each umpire has the authority

- to disqualify any player, coach, manager, or substitute:
  - for objecting to the decisions or
  - for unsportsmanlike conduct or language and
- to eject such disqualified person from the playing field.

# Judgment

Any umpire's decision that involves judgment is final.

Examples include but are not limited to, whether:

- A batted ball is fair or foul,
- A pitch is a strike or a ball, or
- A runner is safe or out

No player, manager, coach or substitute shall object to any judgment decisions.

**RIM Comment:** Umpires must not allow arguing on balls and strikes. Umpires should warn teams that if they start for the plate to protest the calls they could face an ejection.

# Questions?

