

Ready for the field.

A practical guide for your first assignments. Read it here, or keep a printed copy in your gear bag.

Read the play, name the division, then apply the rule. This guide supports your training; the official rulebook controls, and your adult mentor helps you apply it.

1. Know your assignment

You are an umpire, and you are still learning. Aim for a clear view, a calm voice, and a safe game. You never have to handle a difficult situation alone.

- Confirm the date, field, start time, baseball division, and whether the game is regular season or a tournament.
- Ask who your partner is, what position you will work, and who the adult umpire mentor is.
- Get the league's arrival-time expectation and a contact for changes or cancellations. Before each pitch, use the packet's routine: count, outs, runners, next responsibility.
- Your age (11–14) does not identify the players' division. Minors, Majors, Intermediate (50/70), and Junior Baseball need their own rule preparation.

2. Pack and protect yourself

Ask your league what it supplies and what it expects you to bring. Try equipment on with an adult before game day.

- Plate assignment: properly fitted mask and head protection, chest protector, leg guards, and the personal protective equipment your league requires.
- Bring an indicator, a small notebook, pencil, and plate brush if your assignment calls for them.
- Wear your league's umpire uniform and footwear suited to the field. Bring water and sun protection.
- If protective equipment is missing, damaged, or does not fit, tell your mentor before taking the assignment.

Personal gear preparation is separate from a team-equipment inspection. The 2026 manual directs umpires not to perform pregame equipment inspections; managers are responsible, and other league or tournament personnel may inspect. Still respond to improper, damaged, or illegal equipment noticed during a game, with your adult mentor's help. Different equipment problems have different remedies. Do not treat every gear problem as an automatic illegal-bat penalty.

Sources: 2026 Umpire Manual: §13F, pp. 31–32; Rule 3.01.

3. Meet your partner and the managers

The manual suggests arriving about 30 minutes before game time and holding the plate meeting five minutes before the scheduled start. Follow your league's assignment instructions. Find your adult mentor and walk through your responsibilities with your partner.

- Agree on who covers each base, fly balls, fair/foul boundaries, and appeals. Ask your mentor to demonstrate your league's two-umpire system.
- Walk the field for gates, holes, fences, and other hazards. Ask how the local ground rules handle unusual boundaries.
- At the pregame meeting, confirm the division, game context, and written local options with the responsible adults.
- Know how to contact help for an injury, weather concern, equipment issue, or adult behavior problem.
- If you do not understand a ground rule or option, ask before the first pitch. Do not invent an agreement to replace an official rule.

Sources: 2026 Umpire Manual: Section 2, pp. 11–12; §18, p. 33; Rule 3.13.

4. Build a view of the whole play

Behind the plate

With your mentor, practice the slot behind the catcher: nose aligned with the inside corner, head no lower than the catcher's helmet, shoulders square to the pitcher. The 2026 manual emphasizes a slot foot forward in a heel/toe or heel/instep relationship rather than parallel feet. Get set before delivery and track the ball into the glove. Let an adult check your stance and protective gear.

Practice: foot, ball, runner

Adapted from the training packet: with an instructor, a soft practice ball, and slow runners, try three plays at first. First, the runner beats the secure catch. Next, the fielder holds the base and catches before arrival. Finally, the ball arrives first but the fielder is off the base and makes no tag. Explain the evidence before signaling; sound alone does not prove possession. Repeat in a different order.

Base umpire: two umpires on a 60-foot diamond

Runners	Starting position
No runners: A	In foul territory behind the first baseman, square to home. Never closer than 10–12 feet from first, and leave the fielder room.
First only: B	Outside the diamond on the first-to-second side, about 25 feet from first; no deeper than 30 feet or the midpoint. See the second baseman's shoe tops.
Any runner at second or third: C	Outside the diamond behind the shortstop, off the shortstop's left shoulder. Stay out of the batter's view; never closer than 15–20 feet from second.

Starting spots are not places to stay frozen. Read the ball, fielders, runners, and partner; move for an angle without interfering. For a force, see the base touch and ball control. For a tag, find a view between fielder and runner. Be balanced when you judge.

Intermediate (50/70) and Junior: do not carry these 60-foot starting positions onto a larger diamond. The 2026 manual adopts CCA mechanics for 50/70 and 90-foot play; rehearse that division's system with your mentor.

Sources: 2026 Umpire Manual: pp. 3, 7–8, 56, 65, 74; plate fundamentals p. 121.

5. See it, decide it, say it

Ready → See → Decide → Call → Reset. This practice rhythm comes from the youth training packet. Watch the complete action, decide what happened, then make a clear call. A loud, rushed call cannot make up for a missed view.

- Use a clear voice and one consistent signal. Practice with your mentor: safe—both arms extended to the sides; out and called strike—a clear right-arm signal. Say “Ball” without a safe signal. Let your instructor demonstrate the full set before live pitching.
- For a fair ball, point toward fair territory; do not shout “fair.” For a foul ball, use the foul signal and voice. For “time,” both hands go overhead.
- Make the signal where your partner can see it. Avoid a second gesture that seems to contradict the call.
- On a two-strike checked swing or a hit-by-pitch with a half-swing, the 2026 plate mechanics call for checking immediately. Rehearse the open-palm “Did they go?” request with your partner.
- Observe priorities in order: fair/foul, catch/no-catch, then touches, retouches, tags, and other responsibilities.

“What did I see? What rule applies? What is my call?”

Sources: 2026 Umpire Manual: pp. 7–8, 41, 53–54, 121; 2024 background rule text: Rule 2.00 FAIR BALL, p. 33.

6. Fair/foul, catches, forces, and tags

Fair or foul?

Judge the ball, not the fielder's feet. A ball settling on a foul line between home and first or third is fair: the lines are in fair territory. For a grounder before first or third, watch where it settles or is touched. For a ball beyond those bases, its flight, first landing, and contacts matter. Do not call too early. Rules 2.00 FAIR BALL, FOUL BALL, and FAIR TERRITORY.

Catch or no catch?

A catch needs secure control and a voluntary, intentional release. A drop while intentionally transferring a controlled ball does not undo a catch. A drop caused by an immediate fall or collision before completing control is not a catch. A caught foul fly is an out and remains live; an ordinary uncaught foul is dead. Rules 2.00 CATCH, 6.05(a), 5.09(e).

Force or tag?

A force exists when the batter becoming a runner makes another runner lose the right to the occupied base. Touch the forced base with secure possession before the runner gets there to make the out. If a following runner is retired first, the force can disappear: the remaining runner then needs a tag. Rules 2.00 FORCE PLAY, 7.08(e).

A live-ball tag requires touching the runner with the ball, or the hand/glove holding it securely, while the runner is off a protected base. Watch control through the tag. A base touch by itself does not retire an unforced runner. Rule 7.08(c).

First base and tagging up

A batter-runner who overruns first and returns immediately without an attempt toward second is protected from a tag. An actual attempt toward second ends that protection; simply turning left or right is not the test. Rules 7.08(c), 7.08(j).

On a fly ultimately caught, a runner may leave after the fielder's first touch, even during a bobble. A runner who leaves too soon must retouch or may be retired on a proper appeal. Rules 2.00 CATCH, 7.08(d), 7.10(a).

Sources: 2026 Umpire Manual: §11C, p. 30; §16, p. 33; §1, p. 21; 2024 background rule text: definitions pp. 32–34; Rules 6.05(a), 7.08(c)–(e), (j), pp. 59, 72–73.

Official education: catch criteria; first-touch retouch explanation.

7. Live/dead balls and common awards

A pause between pitches is not automatically time. The ball stays live until a rule or the umpire makes it dead. Do not call time during an active play just because the action looks unusual. Restart correctly with “Play” when the pitcher, catcher, runners, and other required conditions are ready. Rules 5.02, 5.11.

Event	Common result
Legal foul tip	A strike that stays live. It must go directly to the catcher’s hand or glove and be caught; a mere tipped pitch is not automatically a foul tip. Rule 2.00.
Uncaught foul	Dead; runners return. Adds a strike when fewer than two strikes, unless a different rule applies, such as a two-strike foul bunt.
Pitch goes out of play	Dead; one base from time of pitch. If the batter becomes a runner on ball four or an eligible uncaught strike three, the batter’s award is first.
Fair batted ball bounces over the fence	Dead; two bases from time of pitch. Awards do not excuse missed bases.
First play by an infielder: throw out of play	Usually two bases from time of pitch. If every runner, including the batter-runner, already advanced one base before the throw, use time of throw.
Outfielder’s throw, or later infield play: throw out of play	Two bases from runners’ positions when the ball leaves the throwing hand.
Pitch hits a swinging batter	Dead-ball strike; runners return. If strike three, batter out—no uncaught-third-strike advance.

Identify the event, the starting moment, and each runner’s position. “Always two bases” is not a rule. Ask your mentor for unusual deflections, detached equipment, or a ball lodged in gear rather than guessing.

Sources: 2026 Umpire Manual: §2, pp. 23–24; §15, p. 32; §30–31, pp. 45–46; 2024 background rule text: Rules 2.00 STRIKE, 5.09(a)/(e), 6.05(e), 7.05(f)/(g)/(h) and notes, pp. 56–57, 60, 68–69.

8. Runner responsibilities and division differences

Touch bases in order, retouch after leaving too soon on a caught fly, and avoid hindering a fielder entitled to field a batted ball. Being awarded a base does not erase the responsibility to touch the intervening bases. Rules 7.08, 7.09(j), 7.10.

Baseball division	Know the difference
Minors	No uncaught-third-strike advance. When the pitcher has the ball on the plate and the catcher is ready, runners wait until the pitch reaches the batter. Confirm any permitted local options, including leaving-early enforcement and instructional stealing limits.
Majors	Same leaving-early timing. Normally an uncaught third strike can make the batter a runner with first empty or with two outs. A league may adopt the Minors strike-three rule for the regular season; do not assume it has.
Intermediate (50/70) and Junior	Leads are allowed; an off-base runner can be legally picked off. Balk rules apply with runners, unlike Minors/Majors. A pitcher starting a pitching motion and stopping can balk; a one-base award and any continuing-play exception must be enforced correctly.
Tournament context	Confirm the tournament division and its current rules. A regular-season local option is not automatically a tournament option.

Leaving early: a simple no-hit example

In Majors, if the batter does not hit the pitch and the early runner is tagged out, the out stands. If the runner is safe, return the runner to the original base after the action. Do not turn this into an automatic out or erase the pitch. Hits and multiple runners require the full Rule 7.13 enforcement.

Interference, obstruction, and appeals

Interference: the offense illegally hinders the protected defensive play. **Obstruction:** a fielder without the ball and not fielding a batted ball impedes a runner. Interference penalties and obstruction awards differ. A play on the obstructed runner calls for immediate-dead enforcement; obstruction away from a play is delayed. Rules 7.09, 7.06(a)/(b).

A missed-base or retouch appeal uses a live ball and must be made before the next pitch, play, or attempted play, with additional end-of-inning limits. Do not call an appeal out before the defense makes a proper appeal. Rule 7.10.

For a third out, check whether it is a force, the batter-runner before first, or another scoring exception. A nonforce tag can be a time play; the order in which home is touched and the third out occurs matters. Rule 4.09(a).

Sources: 2026 Umpire Manual: §1, p. 21; §3, pp. 24–25; §21, pp. 33–38; §22, pp. 39–40; §25, pp. 41–42; §32–33, pp. 46–47; 2024 background rule text: Rules 4.09(a), 6.05(b), 6.09(b), 7.06, 7.09, 7.10, 7.13, 8.05, pp. 49–50, 60, 67, 70, 74–77, 84–86.

9. Common myths—and the 2026 updates

- **“Tie goes to the runner.”** Judge the sequence: secure possession, base touch or tag, and the runner’s touch. Do not invent a tie shortcut.
- **“The runner must always slide.”** There is no blanket must-slide rule. The runner must slide or attempt to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to tag; your mentor can explain the other permitted responses. Rules 7.08(a)(3), 7.06.
- **“The ball is dead whenever action pauses.”** Not without a rule or time call. Rule 5.02.
- **“Turning left after first makes you out.”** Look for an attempt toward second, not the direction of the turn. Rule 7.08(j).
- **“A base award means no touches are needed.”** Touch awarded and intervening bases. Rules 7.05, 7.10(b).
- **“Pine tar and thumb protectors are banned.”** The official 2026 changes permit pine tar/similar adhesive and thumb protectors. Choke-knobs and choke-up assists remain prohibited. Rule 1.10 Note 2 and A.R. 2. Older FAQ equipment passages conflict with this update and are excluded.
- **“Umpires inspect all team equipment before the game.”** The 2026 manual says pregame inspections are the manager’s responsibility and may be done by other personnel, not the umpires. This does not mean ignoring a gear problem during play. Rule 3.01.

Sources: 2026 Umpire Manual: §13F, pp. 31–32; §25, pp. 41–42; §35, p. 48; 2024 background rule text: Rules 5.02, 7.08(j), 7.10(b), pp. 56, 73, 75.

Controlling 2026 equipment updates: Rule 1.10 Note 2 and A.R. 2.

10. Handle questions calmly

You can be respectful and firm at the same time. Use your league's procedure for a manager to ask a question.

“I saw the ball arrive before the runner touched the base. That is the play I ruled on.”

“I want to get the rule right. I’ll check with my partner and our adult mentor.”

- Listen to the actual question and explain what you saw in one or two sentences.
- Separate a question about the rule from a disagreement about your judgment.
- Do not argue with spectators or make promises about penalties you have not checked.
- If an adult is insulting, threatening, or making you feel unsafe, involve the designated adult immediately. You should not manage that situation alone.

11. Use your support crew

Involve your adult mentor or league official when a rule or enforcement is unclear, a lineup or appeal issue arises, safety is at risk, or a manager's behavior needs adult support.

A blocked view is a reason to consult

When the play ends, the calling umpire can initiate a crew consultation to gather missing information. Meet away from players and managers, include the crew, and explain a reversal if one is necessary. This is different from automatically changing a call because someone disagreed. Rules 9.02 and 9.04(c); 2026 manual pp. 13–14.

Bring facts, not a guess: “We had one out, runners on first and third, and here is the order of events.” Your mentor can help find the rule and the correct procedure.

After the game, ask for one thing you did well and one thing to practice. Keep a short note about a play you want to study. Do not write down children's personal information.

Practice and readiness

The packet suggests two 75-minute clinics followed by a mentored game: first practice calls, plate stance, and base plays; then work as a crew, rehearse rules and calm conversations, and get individual feedback. These are training recommendations, not Little League mandates.

Ask your mentor to mark each skill “ready” or “practice again”: count and outs, clear signals, seeing the whole play, force versus tag, fitted protection, asking for help, and knowing the adult support plan. A quiz score alone does not approve an assignment. The packet recommends starting on the bases beside an experienced plate umpire, with a separate plate-readiness and gear check.

12. Game-day pocket checklist

- ✓ Assignment, division, game context, and arrival time confirmed.
- ✓ Gear fits; protective equipment and water packed.
- ✓ Partner, adult mentor, and safety contact identified.
- ✓ Field boundaries, ground rules, and written local options reviewed.
- ✓ Coverage and communication agreed with the crew.
- ✓ Watch the whole play; make a calm, clear call.
- ✓ Ask for help when a rule or situation needs adult support.
- ✓ Afterward: one success, one practice goal.

13. Sources and review scope

Reviewed October 9, 2026. The web guide and downloadable PDF use the same content. The 48 scenarios have been cross-checked against the accessible sources below; the full 2026 app rulebook has not been accessed or verified.

The official 2026 Little League Baseball rulebook controls. Use the current manual for interpretations and mechanics. The manual retires the former RIM as the current instruction source; older rule text is used here only as compatible background, with current official material taking priority.

- Official rulebook / app landing page—verified working replacement for the requested URL, which returned 404.
- Official 2026 changes—reviewed, including equipment and double-first-base updates.
- 2026 Umpire Manual—edition and relevant interpretation/mechanics sections reviewed; attached and downloaded copies match.
- 2024 Rules Instruction Manual—compatible background rule text only; not a current substitute for the rulebook.
- Little League University and Help Center—specific relevant articles/FAQ passages cross-checked; conflicting older equipment passages excluded.

Each quiz explanation retains exact applicable rule numbers and source-section references. If sources disagree, use the official current rulebook and consult your adult mentor. The supplied 11-page Youth_Umpire_Training_Packet.pdf was audited as a draft training aid. Its preparation routine, slow field drills, calm scripts, adult support, and mentor-readiness approach are incorporated. Brief rule reminders were expanded with precise divisions, local options, and source citations; its eight short exercises were not used to pad the harder quiz levels.