

Baseball Rule Myths

Rules and Regulations of Little League Baseball

Myth # 1

The hands are considered part of the bat.

The hands are part of a person's body. If a pitch hits the batter's hands the ball is dead, period. If the pitch is swung at and it hits the hands (or any part of the body), a strike is called (NOT a foul) and the ball is dead for striking the batter's person. If the batter was avoiding the pitch, the batter is awarded first base, as long as the batter was not struck while the ball was in the strike zone.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: PERSON, TOUCH, STRIKE (e)

Myth # 2

If a batter does not swing and is struck by a pitch, the batter automatically is awarded first base.

If the batter is struck by a pitch that is in the strike zone, the pitch is a strike and the batter is not awarded first base (hit-by-pitch).

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: STRIKE: (f)

Myth # 3

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

The batter-runner may turn in any direction after overrunning first base as long as he/she returns to the base immediately. If an attempt is made to go to second base, the runner can be tagged out. This is a judgment made by the umpire.

LL Playing Rules: 7.08(c) (j)

Myth # 4

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

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.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: Fair Territory

Myth # 5

The batter cannot be called out for interference if he/she is in the batter's box.

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 the batter has had time to react to the play he/she could be called for interference if he/she 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/she 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/she has a chance to avoid interference after he/she has had time to react to the situation and does not, he/she is guilty. If he/she just swung at a pitch, or had to duck a pitch and is off-balance, he/she 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.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: INTERFERENCE (a), 6.06(c)

Myth # 6

The ball is dead on a foul tip.

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 legally caught, this is a foul tip by definition. A foul tip is a strike and the ball is live. Base-runners may steal on a foul-tip. 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. If the event of a foul tip, the umpire should not verbalize the word "foul" in any manner. Since the ball is still live and runners may advance at their own risk, verbalizing the word "foul" or "foul tip" would have a tendency to stop all action since a foul ball is a dead ball. The proper way to indicate a foul tip is to simply signal the foul tip and then signal strike.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: FOUL TIP, STRIKE (g)

Myth # 7

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

The batter can switch boxes at any time, provided he/she does not do it after the pitcher is ready to pitch. The purpose of this rule (not switching after the pitcher is in position ready to pitch) is so that the batter does not confuse the defense. Defenses often set up differently depending on whether a batter is right or left-handed.

LL Playing Rules: 6.06(b)

Myth # 8

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

Who is called out and what is done depends on when the appeal is made. There are three different timeframes when the appeal occurs.

- The first is when an appeal is made while the improper batter is still at the plate. In this case, the proper batter simply replaces the improper batter and resumes whatever ball/strike count the improper batter had attained.

- The second timeframe is an appeal after the improper batter has completed his/her turn at bat, but before the very first pitch to the next batter (or very next play or attempted play). In this case, the proper batter (the one who should have batted) is declared out and the next batter is the batter who follows the proper batter. The improper batter's at-bat is nullified and any advances made on the final pitch are nullified. In this case, the next batter may be the same exact batter who just batted improperly. Example: The first two batters of the 2nd inning are supposed to be, in order, Alvin and Bobby. Bobby bats first (improperly) and singles. The defensive team realizes that Alvin was supposed to be the first batter and appeals before the first pitch to the next batter. The umpire will declare Alvin out, because he failed to bat in turn (he was the proper batter). Bobby's single will be nullified because of a ball batted by an improper batter and Bobby will come to the plate again, because he is the next proper batter.

- The third timeframe is when the out-of-turn batter is appealed after his/her at bat is completed and a pitch is made to the next batter before the appeal (or a play is attempted or made before the appeal). In this case, no one is declared out. Once the next pitch is made to a batter after an improper batter, the batter who batted out of turn becomes what the rules call a "legalized improper batter." The next batter to a legalized improper batter will be the next person up in the order after the legalized improper batter. No action will be taken, in this instance, other than to assure the official scorebook is properly marked and up to date.

LL Playing Rules: 6.07

Myth # 9

The batter may not overrun first base when he/she gets a base-on-balls.

OVERRUN FIRST BASE RULE MYTH

The Playing Rules 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.

LL Playing Rules: 7.06 (c) Exception

The Right Call - Casebook of Little League Baseball (2004) Page 30 Comment

Myth #10

The batter is out if he/she starts for the dugout before going to first after a dropped third strike (Junior, Senior & Big League Only).

The batter may attempt first base anytime prior to entering the dugout or a dead ball area. First base must be unoccupied before 2 outs, or if there are two outs, first base can be occupied.

LL Playing Rules: 6.09(b) NOTE

Myth #11

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

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

A bunt is a batted ball not swung at, but INTENTIONALLY met with the bat and tapped slowly.

The key words are "intentionally met with the bat"

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

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: Bunt,

The Right Call – Casebook of Little League Baseball (2004) Page 7 Bunt Comment 2

Myth #12

The batter is out if his foot touches the plate.

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

LL Playing Rules: 6.06(a)

Myth #13

The batter-runner is always out if he/she runs outside the running lane to first base after a bunted ball.

The runner must be out of the lane AND cause interference. He/she is not out simply for being outside the lane. The running lane (to first base) is defined as the area between the foul line and the three feet to the right of it, usually designated by chalk lines, for the last half of the between home plate and first base. Runners are required to run in this lane, if a ball is being fielded to first base.

Keep in mind that he/she could be called for interference even while in the lane. If a fielder is fielding a ball inside of the running lane, the runner must avoid contact with the fielder, even if they need to run outside of the lane.

If he/she is out of the lane the last half to the base and is hit with a quality throw,

he/she should be out. Please understand that the fielder must make the throw and it must be a quality throw. If the fielder gives up because he/she sees the runner in the way and doesn't make the throw, then you do not have interference. Also, simply throwing the ball into the runners back or over the fielder's head will not be interference because it wasn't a quality throw to the first base.

LL Playing Rules: Definition of Terms: 2.00 Interference, 6.05(j), 7.09(k)

Myth #14

A runner is out if he/she high-fives the coach while rounding third base (or first base), after a homerun is hit over the fence.

The rule states that if a coach physically assists a runner in returning to or advancing from first or third base by touching or holding him/her, it is interference.

Examples: If the runner falls over and the coach helps them up while the ball is in play, it is interference.

If the coach touches the runner at the point of a catch by an outfielder, to indicate when to tag up, it is interference.

If a coach physically grabs and stops a player from proceeding to the next base, it is interference.

The coach is not assisting a player if they exchange high fives on a home run.

LL Playing Rules: 7.09(i)

The Right Call – Casebook of Little League Baseball (2004): Page 31 Play 7-14

Myth #15

Tie goes to the runner.

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.

Myth #16

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

When a fielder throws the ball into a dead ball area, the award is two bases. The award is from where the runners were at the time of the pitch if it is the first play by an infielder or pitcher acting as a fielder. On all other plays into dead ball area, the award is from where each runner was physically positioned (last base attained) at the time the ball left the throwers hand. If the ball was a pitch or an attempted pick-off (anything thrown from the position of the pitcher's plate), and the ball goes into dead ball area, the award is one base. Exception: If all runners, including the batter-runner have advanced at least one base when the infielder makes a wild throw on the first play, the award shall be governed by the position of the runners at the time of the wild throw. Please understand that awards are based from the base last attained by the runner, not the fact that they were within a few feet of the next base. It doesn't matter how close to the next base the runner was, you always award based upon last base attained at the time of the pitch or the time of the throw.

LL Playing Rules: 7.05(g) (h)

Myth #17

Runners may never run the bases in reverse order.

In order to correct a base running mistake (such as missing a base), the runner MUST retrace his steps and retouch the bases in reverse order (If the ball is dead and the runner has touched the next base beyond the missed base, the runner may not return to touch the missed base. This might occur on a homerun or a ground-rule double). In a tag up situation, if the runner must return to a base, the runner must retrace his/her steps and retouch the bases in reverse order. The only time a runner is out for running in reverse is when he/she is making a travesty of the game or tries to confuse the defense. You might ask if a runner can reverse his/her direction to

touch a missed base after the ball is dead. The answer is yes, as long as they haven't touched the base beyond the one missed. Of course, in order to be declared out for missing a base, you must have a proper appeal by the defensive team, otherwise the play stands.

LL Playing Rules: 7.08(i), 7.10(b)

Myth #18

The runner must always slide when the play is close.

There is no "must slide" rule. When the fielder has the ball in his/her possession and is waiting to tag the runner, the runner has two choices; slide OR attempt to get around the fielder. He/she may NOT deliberately or maliciously contact the fielder, but he/she 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. No league can implement a "must slide rule."

LL Playing Rules: 7.08(a)(3)

Myth #19

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

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/she 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/she is hit on the foul ground foot, he/she is not out. It is a foul ball. Does this mean that a runner must vacate a base when the ball is about to hit them? No – if the runner can show that they are trying to get out of the way of the fielder and still maintain touch with the bag – and they do not interfere with the fielding of the ball, the runner can maintain touch with the bag. Again, you must have interference in order to call interference.

LL Playing Rules: 5.09(f), 7.08(f)

Myth #20

A runner may not steal on a foul tip.

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

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: FOUL TIP, STRIKE (g)

Myth #21

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

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 a failure to tag-up, is NOT a force out. Any runs, that cross the plate before this out, will count.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: FORCE PLAY, 4.09 (a) Approved Ruling

Myth #22

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

A runner must touch all the bases. If the runner misses a base to which he/she 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.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: FORCE PLAY, TAG, 7.08(e), 7.10(b)

Myth #23

A runner is out if he/she runs out of the baseline to avoid a fielder who is fielding a batted ball.

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. The baseline is established on a runner when a play is being made on that runner. It is not simply a straight line between each base.

LL Playing Rules: 7.08(a)(1), 7.09(L)

Myth #24

Runners may not advance when an infield fly is called.

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. Runners can advance at their own risk.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: INFIELD FLY, 6.05(d), 7.10(a)

Myth #25

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

Yes it can. A tag up 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 a failure to tag-up, is NOT a force out. Any runs, that cross the plate before this out, will count.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: FORCE PLAY, 4.09 Approved Ruling, 7.10(a)

Myth #26

A pitch that bounces to the plate cannot be hit.

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 legally. A pitch that bounces before reaching the plate may never be a "called" strike or a legally caught third strike. If a batter swings and misses at a ball that bounced before reaching the plate, it shall be a strike (swinging strike).

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: PITCH, STRIKE (a)

The Right Call – Casebook of Little League Baseball (2004): Page 9 Comment on Definition of In Flight

Myth # 27

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

A pitch is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher. It doesn't matter how it gets to the batter, if it is a legally pitched ball. If the batter is hit by a pitch (even if it bounces before it reaches him/her), while attempting to avoid it, he/she is awarded first base (of course, as long as they haven't swung at it).

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: PITCH, 6.08(b)

The Right Call – Casebook of Little League Baseball (2004): Page 9 Comment on Definition of In Flight

Myth # 28

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

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.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: 2.00 CATCH

The Right Call – Casebook of Little League Baseball (2004): Page 7, Play 2-1 Ruling, Play 2-2 Ruling

Myth # 29

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

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

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: FORCE PLAY, PERSON, TAG, 7.08(e)

Myth # 30

The ball is always immediately dead on a balk (applies to Junior, Senior and Big League)

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 (ball four), 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.

LL Playing Rules: 8.05 Junior/Senior/Big League Penalty

Myth # 31

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

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.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: FAIR BALL, FOUL BALL Note (1)

Myth # 32

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

An appeal may be made anytime the ball is live. 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." The only reason the ball is going back to the pitcher is so that the umpire can put the ball back in play – which has nothing to do with the appeal process. If time is not out, the appeal can be made immediately.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 Definition of Terms: APPEAL, 5.11, 7.10

Myth # 33

The pitcher must come to a set position before a pick-off throw. (Juniors, Seniors, Big League)

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

LL Playing Rules: 8.05(m)

2004 LL RIM: Instructor's Comments: In Juniors, Seniors and Big League, the pitcher may step and throw anytime during the stretch.

Myth # 34

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

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

LL Playing Rules: 8.01(c) (e)

Myth # 35

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

As long as the fielder is not touching the ground in dead ball territory when he/she catches the ball, it is a legal catch if he/she 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 live and he/she may make a play.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 CATCH, 5.10(f) & Note, 6.05(a), 7.04(b)

Myth # 36

The ball is dead anytime the ball hits an umpire.

If a batted ball hits an umpire before it passes an infielder, the ball is dead (award first base to the batter and one base each to any runners). On any other batted or thrown ball, the ball is live 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.

LL Playing Rules: 2.00 INTERFERENCE (c), 5.09(b), 5.09(f)

Myth # 37

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

The umpire who made a call or ruling may ask for help if he/she wishes. No umpire may overrule another umpire's call. Specifically, no umpire shall criticize, seek to reverse or interfere with another umpire's decision unless asked to do so by the umpire making it. The only time one umpire can overrule another umpire is when two umpires have made different decisions on one play. In that case, the umpire in chief (plate umpire) shall make the final decision.

LL Playing Rules: 9.02(b) (c)

Myth # 38

A batter-runner may not slide into first base.

There are no restrictions on any runner, including the batter-runner, from sliding into any base, feet first, including first base. At the Major division and below, no runners may slide head first. At the Junior, Senior & Big League levels, head first sliding, at any base, is permitted.