

Umpiring

Start of Game

Coaches should come up and say hi (or feel free to go say hi to them) before the game. Good opportunity to see if there are any different circumstances for the game (short players – lending of players – etc) – Coaches in the younger ages are happy to adapt slightly different rules than normal (if only 8 players, they might field one short but have the 1st batter of the innings bat again to make it 9 if they don't all get out) – 7's and 8's are a lot more flexible, as long as both coaches and the Plate Umpire are on board.

Coaches will normally get their players lined up on first base and third base, and they will run in towards the pitchers plate and then towards Home Plate and line up just before the scheduled start time.

This is when you can do a little talk about having fun, being safe and whatever else you want.

Teams will then get ready to field or bat.

Game Details

Games are 1 hour or 9 Innings (whichever comes first) – but you will normally see 3 or 4 completed innings in the 7's to 10's. One Inning is when a team bats then fields. If a team bats 3 times and fields 3 times, that is 3 completed innings. If the game finishes (after the 1 hour siren) and an innings hasn't been completed, then the score goes back to the end of the last completed innings.

When the siren sounds to finish the games, call "TIME AND GAME".

Uniforms

Shirts should be tucked in. (There have been cases of injuries to players injuring arms that have been caught up in opposing players untucked shirts when trying to tag).

Caps to be worn facing to the front – sun protection and also if the player fielder falls backwards, can injure their neck.

No exposed jewellery (necklaces, watches, earrings) – Medi Alert OK but should be taped to remove loose gaps.

On Field Gear

All batters/runners are to wear a helmet.

Catcher is to wear a helmet.

Pitcher is to wear pitchers helmet (with front guard) and the pitchers chest plate.

All fielders are to have gloves.

Fielders

9 on the field (Left Field, Center Field, Right Field, First Base, Second Base, Short Stop, Third Base, Pitcher and Catcher).

Distance out for Outfielders can depend on age of the players, but should be out a little more to stop them from looking like additional infielders.

Spacing between infielders should be about the same (evenly spaced) – if the third base fielder is more towards second base than third base, then short stop should move more around, second base fielder should move around a bit and first base fielder should be in an appropriate spot.

This means there are no small or big gaps between the infielders.

Same for the outfielders (generally in younger ages, one between first base and second base, one behind second base and one between second base and third base.

7's and 8's can have a coach in the outfield with the players to provide some guidance, keep motivation up and get the players focused on the ball (you may see coaches picking up and moving fielders around between hits, that is ok – may see coaches tell fielders to stand up (if sitting) or stop chewing their gloves, or playing with dirt etc).

Once Batter Up is called, the coach can't directly assist the fielders in stopping the ball but can direct fielders to where the ball is, and what to do with it when they get the ball (throw to second – run to third etc).

Plate Umpire

Tee to be set on top of home plate.

When all players are set in field – call “next batter please” – batter will then come to the plate and set up to hit.

Younger Ages (7's – 8's – some 9's) can have the coach help get them set – feet placed properly and the like. The coach then needs to move back outside the field of play.

Once batter is set (normally with the bat behind the ball), call “Batter Up”

Batter then should do their backswing

When happy that batter and fielders are all set, call “Play Ball” – batter will then swing their bat and hopefully hit the ball.

Two things can then happen – the batter hits the ball or the batter misses.

Missing the Ball

Missing the ball has different actions depending on age groups.

7's and 8's – they have 5 'strikes' to have a swing and hit the ball. If they haven't hit the ball after 5 'strikes', the coach can come up and help them with their swing to hit the ball.

9's and upwards – swinging and missing is deemed a strike – call “TIME – STRIKE 1 (or 2, or 3, depending on how many strikes they are on). After 3 strikes (either swinging and missing, or hitting foul balls), call “TIME – STRIKE 3 – BATTER OUT”

Hitting the Ball

When the batter hits the ball, the umpire will need to quickly do two things:

1 - Keep their eyes on what is happening

2 - Grab the Tee (and bat if in the line between 3rd and home) and hold the tee until Time is called. Tee should be folded and the base and stem held together to prevent the tee from opening up when being held.

The batter (and any forced runners) will then run directly to the next base they need to touch.

There are 3 general ways that a runner/batter can be given out after hitting the ball

A – The ball is hit and is caught by a fielder before the ball has a chance to hit the ground

B – The runner is tagged (the fielder has possession of the ball and touches the runner with the ball on the runner) before the runner gets to the next base (for second and third base – they can be tagged if they have stepped off the base once they have touched it).

C – If the runner is forced, the fielder with control of the ball can touch the base the forced runner is heading to (normally just put their foot on the base).

Forced Runners

A Runner is forced to run if there is a runner behind them who is also forced to run.

Any Batter and anyone on First Base are always forced to run (the runner on first always is, as if they don't run, the batter will go to first too, and you can't have 2 runners on the same base).

A runner on second base with NO runner on first base is not forced to run when the batter hits the ball (as the batter can go to first base, and there was no one on first base to force the runner on second to have to run).

When runners are forced to run, the key rule is that the ball MUST beat the runner to the base, and that the fielder MUST have control of the ball.

If both the player in control of the ball touches the base at the same time as the forced runner touches the base (dead heat), the fielder did not beat the runner to the base – therefore the runner is not out – the ball MUST BEAT the runner to the base.

The Plate Umpire will watch for outs on third base and Home Plate, and the Base Umpire will watch for outs on first base and second base.

Time is Called:

“TIME” is called whenever the umpire deems play as having stopped for a variety of reasons.

The calls of Time should be in a loud, firm voice so that players and coaches know that Time has been called, and generally with both arms in the air pointing upwards.

A - If a fielder in an infield position (near enough to the first base, second base, Short Stop, third base, pitcher or catcher positions) is in control of the ball and not making a play **AND** all runners are in close proximity to a base (generally around 3 running paces) – call “TIME” – pretty much no one is trying to run and no one is trying to throw and the ball is in an infield position.

If runners are not within around 3 running paces, the ball is not brought into an infield position (can either be thrown to an infielder, or run in from the outfield to an infield position), or the fielders are making a play (throwing the ball, making a tag), then TIME is not to be called.

A fielder in the outfield holding the ball and not throwing it is not reason to call time. Coaches would get the player to throw to an infielder, or they can simply run to where an infielder would stand. Then as long as the runners are close enough to a base, then TIME can be called.

Fielders will generally put their hand holding the ball into the air straight up to indicate they are not making a play, but as long as they are not trying to throw it and are just holding it, that is fine.

B – If the ball is hit directly into Foul Territory (outside the diamond lines – landing on the line is deemed a fair ball) without having first landing inside the diamond lines– Call “TIME – FOUL BALL” and return all runners to the bases they were at before the foul ball (catches made in Foul Territory are OUT though).

C – If the ball is thrown into the Dead Ball area by a fielder when trying to get the ball in (basically the line where the parents line up to watch the games), call “TIME – DEAD BALL”

D – When 9 batters have batted, the scorers will tell you that nine have batted. You then call “TIME – SIDE AWAY” – the teams will then switch from batting to fielding and vice versa.

E – Any time the umpire wants to hold the game up (Injury / conflict / coaches wanting to discuss something) – Call “TIME” and then the situation can be tended to.

Thrown Bats

Bats thrown in a dangerous manner after hitting the ball (dangerous is deemed as ‘thrown hard’ in any direction, regardless as to whether in the proximity of people or not) – batter shall be given out.

This rule is in place to prevent the behaviour from continuing in the future.

Generally – 7’s and 8’s have more leniency with this as they are learning – have a chat with the coach the first time you see something you would deem as dangerous and advise then to remind the batters to drop the bat, not throw it.

Holding bat

Batter shall be given out if they have not dropped/disposed of the bat before the half way mark between home and first base (rarely happens as coaches are pretty good at telling batters to drop the bat and run).

7's and 8's again have a bit more leniency – if you see a player hold the bat too long, mention to the coach about it and get them to remind their batters to drop the bat before the half way mark

Strikes

In 7's and 8's, 5 strikes are called on batters but are not given out after these 5 strikes (to help encourage to hit the ball and not worry) – after these 5 attempts, coaches can go up and help them with their swings to get the batter to hit the ball and be on their way.

In 9's and up, 3 strikes are called on the batters and they are out after 3 strikes.

Strike definitions:

1 – The batter hits a foul ball (ball lands in foul ball territory without having landed in fair ball territory)

2 – If a full swing fails to dislodge a ball from the tee (can be a swing and miss, or rarely, the ball might pop up a little and sit back on the tee.

Basically, if after a proper swing, the ball is still on the tee – it is a strike.

3 – if, in the umpires opinion, the full swing hits more of the tee than the ball (the ball is dislodged from the tee) – Call “TIME – TOO MUCH TEE – STRIKE ##”

You will be able to hear more of a bat hitting steel/plastic sound, as opposed to the bat hitting ball sound.

4 – if, in the umpires opinion, the batter does not take a full, forceful swing (more a half effort swing or a bunt) – Call “TIME – NOT FULL SWING – STRIKE ##)

5 – The batter has a foot COMPLETELY out of the batters box OR steps on home plate (which the tee is on) while in the process of hitting the ball.

Leaving Bases Early

Runners can only leave the bases once the ball has been hit. If a runner is found to leave early – call “TIME – DEAD BALL” and return runners to bases. Let the runner know (maybe the coach if a younger player so the coach can let them know).

A second offence in that innings by the same offender, that runner shall be given out.

Running to First

Batter running to first can run through first base after touching it (doesn't have to stop on it), as long as they show no intent on then running to second base (normally by running straight or turning towards the spectators after running through). Any indication they are intending on heading to second, they can be given out if tagged by the fielder.

Tagging (Player or Base)

While the ball is live (TIME not called), any runner may be out if tagged by the fielder while not touching a base (the ball must be in the hand or glove that is making the tag and must have control of the ball)

Exception is if runner has run through first base and has no intent on going to second base.

If a runner is forced to run (due to runners behind them who must also run), then the fielder in control of the ball can touch the base (normally with their foot) before the runner touches the base to get them out.

*** If there is a runner on first, and the batter hits the ball and that runner is tagged (by the player or base), the runner going to 2nd is no longer forced (they can go back to 1st if they want) so they **MUST** be tagged by the fielder to be given out, not by the fielder touching the base. ***

If a batter hits a ball and is caught, any runners who were on bases **MUST** return and touch the base they were on before running to the next base (if they want to – as once the batter is out, there is no longer a force making you run, but they should still return to the base they were on) – if a fielder then tags the runner or the base they were supposed to return to – they are OUT.

Base Coaches for the batting side should let runners know they need to stay on the base until the catch is made, or tell them to return to the base they were on – this is up to the batting side to handle how they deal with this, and if the runners don't listen or get caught up, that is unfortunate, but they would be out if they or the base they were on are tagged – very rare in 7's, 8's and 9's as catches are a rare occurrence.

Suicide Running

Defined as any attempts by Coaches or Runners to force errors in the field by excessive running or barging. Any advantage gained by the runners shall be nullified and the runner(s) returned to the base(s) occupied before the offence. Players and coaches should be warned about this behaviour. If injury could have occurred, runner can be given out, or if the Coach was the instigator, the coach can be ejected from the game. Coach or Player must be given at least one warning before they can be ejected though.

*** Example is the ball and runner arrive at the base at around the same time but the runner continues / is told to keep running to the next base (as a thrown ball should normally beat a runner to the next base, the runner is hoping the throw is bad / overthrow / force the fielder into an error).

A Runner shouldn't run if there is a general expectation that the runner would be out if the fielders throw and catch with no errors.

Avoiding a Tag

A runner is OUT if they deviate from the running line they are taking to try to avoid being tagged. The runners basically have to go in the direction they are running (can slide under or jump over – although jumping over less likely – to avoid a tag). If not forced, they can try to go back to the base they came from.

Interference

If the runner interferes with a fielder when they are trying to field a batted ball, the runner is OUT.

If a runner intentionally interferes with a fielder in the act of fielding a thrown ball, the runner is OUT.

If the ball hits a runner (and the runner didn't deliberately attempt to be hit by the ball), that is not deemed as intentional and is just game on.

Obstruction

Fielders without the ball shouldn't block the ability for a runner to reach the base (standing on the line, or just in front of the base the runner is heading to). Penalty depends on the situation / where would the runner have gotten to had they not slowed down/deviated around blocking fielder.

Base Umpire

The base umpire has a better view of any tagging of runners at first and second bases, and also for any catches in the outfield.

The Base Umpire can approach the Plate Umpire to discuss any possible decision before it is made (and Vice Versa), but the Umpires need to see the action to make a decision (if the Plate Umpire didn't see a tag, they can't call out).

Any call made by the Base Umpire cannot be overturned by the Plate Umpire (and Vice Versa), but consultation can be had if one umpire believes that a rule may have been interpreted by the calling umpire incorrectly. After consultation, the umpire who made the initial call can then either stick with the decision, or change it.

The Plate Umpire has final say on third base and Home Plate, and the Base Umpire has the final say on First and Second Bases.

Head Coaches can only approach the Plate Umpire to make an enquiry, in a polite and respectful manner. Plate Umpires can then speak to Base Umpires to handle the enquiry.