

## Umpire Quick-Tips

- Most umpires appreciate a catcher who works hard for them by blocking or at least attempting to block every pitch. **You can return the favor by not asking him to chase down foul balls or passed balls with no runners on base.** Make the on-deck hitter or ball-boys do that work. It will help your pace of the game, and improve your relationship with your catcher.
- With no runners on base, the base umpire at 1<sup>st</sup> in the “A” position (U1) should go out on a trouble ball in right field, leaving his partner to handle the batter-runner. **In going to the outfield, U1 should not run directly toward the potential catch, but instead run perpendicular to it in order to open up the angle.** It is easier to see a short hop into the glove with a side view than it is looking at the catch head-on.
- When playing through light rain, or when playing on a wet field, you will often need to replace a wet baseball with a dry one repeatedly during the game. **Have a coach or ball boy keep a towel or something to dry off wet baseballs so that you can keep the game moving.** Also, if you are sending a wet baseball to the dugout, make sure you throw it so that it doesn’t land on the ground or roll. That just gets it even more wet.
- Veteran MLB Umpire Gerry Davis refers to the technique of calling pitches as “catching the ball with your eyes.” **It starts from seeing the ball released and following the flight of the ball all the way to the catcher’s mitt.** Umpires decide what the pitch is the last time they see the ball. If it leaves your eyes out in front of the plate, you’re going to determine the pitch too early. Slow down, make sure you don’t decide what the pitch is until you’ve seen the catcher actually catch the ball. If you have tunnel vision, you’re keeping your eyes in front and making that decision too early.
- Vary your pre-game discussion with your partner. Rather than going off the same script in each of your discussions, **make sure to include things you know about the competing teams or events that you or your partner have encountered recently.** That can be an effective way of going over necessary mechanics without the pre-game sounding repetitive.
- By the time you have advanced in your career to be mentoring other umpires, you have probably been the one to lead a pre-game meeting hundreds of times. **Let the least experienced umpire lead the pre-game discussion.** That umpire will learn more by going over the information himself as opposed to just listening to it. The senior umpire can correct any mistakes or fill in the gaps to ensure that all points are covered.
- On a pop fly, an umpire should never follow the ball. **The umpire should watch the fielder, because he will lead the umpire to the baseball.** Following the ball can result in the umpire inadvertently interfering with the fielder or with the umpire losing the ball in the sun or lights.

- **Call strikes.** As simple as that sounds, that's the best way to survive as a plate umpire, especially as the level of the games increases. Umpires should be looking to call as many strikes as possible on borderline pitches. Don't over-expand the strike zone and start calling nose-to-toes and batter's box to batter's box, but get as many strikes as possible. The game will have a better pace and you'll get fewer objections from the teams.
- With weather being such a huge factor, baseball games get cancelled or moved more often than any other sport. **Umpires should use all available technology, such as cell phones and the Internet, in order to stay on top of the weather situations.** Being in contact with the game administration and your partner is important, so make sure you have their cell numbers and they have yours. Office numbers aren't effective since umpires are driving to the field and coaches are already outside. Being prepared with knowledge of expected weather also helps. If a big storm is coming, encourage the teams to hustle and be ready to get the teams off the field at the first sign of lightning/thunder. If there is radar at the field, like Jamestown has, it will help to know if it's a passing shower or if the rain is going to go on all night.
- Catcher's interference is just one call in which an umpire must use more than just what he sees to get the call right. **A plate umpire must rely on the sound of the bat ticking the glove, since seeing that while tracking the pitch is a difficult task.** When catcher's interference occurs, there will be two sounds...the bat hitting the mitt and then the bat hitting the ball. The plate umpire can also read the reactions of both the hitter and the catcher in getting that play correct.
- No matter if you're working with someone new or with a trusted veteran, **treat every game like it's your first time working with that person.** Hold a thorough pre-game discussion and be ready to handle anything that might occur during the game. Don't go into a game assuming that everything will be all right because of who your partner is.
- When a half-inning ends in the middle of a batter's plate appearance, such as a runner caught stealing, **write the batter's number on your line-up card.** That way you will know who is supposed to be the leadoff batter in the next half-inning, and can be prepared for a possible batting-out-of-order appeal.
- **Selling the Call:** Umpires can get through an entire game without a close call on the bases. A routine out here, a clean base-hit there, and no tag plays to be found. Those are the kind of games that umpire themselves, where there's little chance of an argument developing, even if the score is close in the late innings. However rare those games are, they are a welcome change from where every play is a "bang-banger". When close plays occur, sometimes the standard mechanics aren't enough. When you have to sell a call, be it an out or safe, it is important to remember several things: **1) Just because the play was close, you should not rush your call.** Just as if it were a routine play, make certain you see the whole play before making the call. **2) Don't go so crazy in your mechanic** that you take your eyes off the ball or off the play. More can happen that you are expected to see. **3) Keep in mind there may be other plays,** so staying with the close play too long could take you out of position for the next one.