

HEY BLUE...

Babe Ruth League, Inc.



Diamond Digs

Excellence in Umpiring

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From the beginning to the ending of any baseball or softball game, the umpire makes a necessary contribution. Either the contribution will be positive or negative – it's up to the umpire. Whether you're a rookie or a seasoned vet, it is always good to review the basics.

BASICS OF UMPIRING:

Appearance

Hey Blue! Don't you find it interesting that the favorite nickname for an umpire is tied directly to the color of the uniform?

Your uniform speaks volumes about you. If your shoes are shined, your shirt is crisp, you have your belt, and you are well groomed, you will immediately be accepted as a professional. The managers, coaches, players and fans will respect you from the time you step on to the field. If your shoes are scuffed and worn, your shirt is faded and wrinkled, you didn't bother with a belt or a shave, you could be the most knowledgeable umpire in the sport of softball, but no one will believe it. Every close call will be questioned. It will be assumed that your mechanics, like your uniform, are sloppy.

Make sure the way you dress when you step onto that field says that you are a professional umpire and that your game that day will be professional too.

Umpiring 101:

- **Be visible but not seen.** Umpires are an important part of the game, but not bigger than the game. No one comes to the game to see the umpires. Never embarrass or humiliate a player. With the players there is no game. The best compliment an umpire can receive is that no one even knew you were there. You don't need to be told when you've done a good job. You will know it.
- **Know the rules.** There is no excuse for not knowing the rules. An easy way to learn rules is to simply read the rulebook on a regular basis. Know the rules and the intent of each rule. A blend of common sense and rule knowledge makes for a good umpire. Warning – don't take the book on the field with you. If you refer to it on the field, people will know you don't know the rules.
- **Don't take the field unless you are mentally and physically ready.** Only accept the games you can do. From an umpiring standpoint, all games are crucial games. Be on time and in the proper uniform. Every game you umpire is important.
- **Hustle.** You may miss a rule or a call, but there is no excuse for not hustling. Be as close as you can without getting in the way. Never walk from one position to another. Hustle and the players will follow your example.

- *Make the game fun and have fun.* Good umpires smile and sometimes joke with the players. Don't be confrontational. A good umpire solves the problem without adding to it.
- *Support your partner.* The odds are never in the umpire's favor. There will always be more players, coaches, fans, etc. Be a unified force. Umpires working together must have a mutual respect for each other. Support your colleague throughout the game. You are no better than your partner, no matter how good you think you are. It is always important to walk off the field together.
- *Keep the game moving.* A good umpire will keep the players hustling and not let the game drag on. You are responsible to keep things moving. Enforce the rules, they are there for a reason.

Two Umpire System:

In working the two-umpire system, it is important each umpire know his/her responsibilities.

Home Plate Umpire

- Takes full charge of, and is responsible for, the proper conduct of the game.
- Calls and counts balls and strikes.
- Calls and declares fair balls and fouls except those commonly called by field umpires.
- Makes all decisions on the batter.
- Makes all decisions except those commonly reserved for the field umpires.
- Decides when a game shall be forfeited.
- If a time limit has been set, announces the fact and the time set before the game starts.
- Informs the official scorer of the official batting order, and any changes in lineups and batting order, on request.
- Announces any special ground rules.

Base Umpires

- Makes all decisions on the bases except those specifically reserved to the umpire-in-chief.
- Takes concurrent jurisdiction with the umpire-in-chief in calling "Time", illegal pitches, or defacement or discoloration of the ball by any player.
- Watches for early release from the base, tag-ups and touched bases.
- Aids the umpire-in-chief in every manner in enforcing the rules, except for the power to forfeit the game.
- Has equal authority with the umpire-in-chief in administering and enforcing the rules and maintaining discipline.

The above outlined duties will assist umpires in developing a consistent method of working the two-umpire system. Remember, there is a lot of territory to cover on the diamond.

Attitude:

This is probably the most important aspect of umpiring. If you take the field with an arrogant attitude, you may well leave with a humbled attitude. There WILL be obscene fans, the obstinate coaches and the obnoxious players. Be positive and not negative.

An umpire needs to ask himself or herself why he or she is on the field. Is it for the extra money? If it for a sense of control over a situation? These may be valid reasons at times, but they are not ultimate reasons. The umpire helps the ballplayers - especially the young ballplayers - have a sense of the game. Conflicts will come. An umpire that fights back will set the wrong example.

Commonsense and hustle will be your best friends on the field. All things that happen on the field will not always be covered in a rulebook or manual. Be a thinking umpire. Know your responsibilities and priorities. Respect the very difficult job that you do.

Remember, Babe Ruth League's focus is for every player to be able to participate and have fun. We should always emphasize concern for the players and their safety, a sense of fair play, as well as teach and live by the Babe Ruth Sportsmanship Code during all levels of competition.