

Rules of the Game

Many misunderstandings on the field are the result of "Everybody Knows That..." rules myths.

Listed below are a collection of common myths about Little League baseball rules. Each of these statements are false.

Dropped 3rd strike situation

The pitch hits the ground before home plate and the catcher catches the ball on the bounce. The batter swings and misses on the third strike.

Assuming that there was no one on first with less than two outs or there were two outs, the batter is allowed to attempt for first on any dropped third strike or any third strike that touches the ground. This includes even if the ball bounces and the catcher catches the ball on the bounce.

Rule 6.08

the batter is touched by a pitched ball which the batter is not attempting to hit unless (1) The ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter, or (2) The batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched by the ball

I need to clear something up. It doesn't matter if the player swung at the ball. It matters the location of the ball when it contacts the player.

If the ball is in the strike zone it is call a strike, first base is not awarded.

If the ball is not in the strike zone, it is hit-by-pitch and first base is awarded.

Myth: A batter-runner cannot overrun first base on a base-on-balls.

Reality: In Little League, this is permitted. Just as with a base hit, the batter-runner may over-run first base on a base on balls, provided he or she immediately returns to the base. (It doesn't matter which direction he or she turns - just that he or she returns immediately.)

Part of the confusion over this rule may stem from the fact that there are other sets of baseball and softball rules (e.g. "Federation" rules) in which this is prohibited. In Little League, however, it is perfectly legal.

Rule 6.08

The batter becomes a runner and is entitled to first base without liability to be put out (provided said runner advances to and touches first base) when

- fours "balls" have been called by the umpire; ball is live and base runners may advance

Myth: The runner must always slide when the play is close.

Reality: This is probably the single most misunderstood and misapplied rule in Little League. There are any number of variations of the "must slide" myth. "The runner must always slide at home." "The runner must slide if the defense is making a play on him." "The runner must slide once he's been put out during a double play attempt."

None of them are true.

There is **never** any situation in which a runner is **required** to slide. The relevant rule is:

7.08(a)(3) -- Any runner is out when ... the runner does not slide or attempt to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag;

First, notice that the runner has two options -- he or she may slide, or he or she may attempt to get around the fielder. The choice is up to the runner. Second, notice that the rule says that, if the runner does not elect to slide, that he or she must **attempt to get around** the fielder. It does not say that the runner **must not contact** the fielder. Consider a common play:

The catcher is standing just off the line as the runner approaches. The catcher fields the ball, and starts to step across the line to tag the runner. The runner swerves to his right, trying to avoid the catcher, but the catcher continues his motion toward the runner, and the two collide.

The fact that contact occurred does not mean that the runner is automatically out. In this situation, by swerving, the runner satisfied the rule -- he or she **attempted** to get around the fielder. Of course, if the runner goes more than three feet to either side attempting to avoid a tag, then he or she can be called out under Rule 7.08(a)(1), but that is another matter entirely.

Finally, read the last half of the rule again. For this paragraph to even apply, the fielder must **have the ball and be waiting to make the tag**. Thus, for example, if the runner arrives just as the ball is hitting the catcher's glove, this rule probably doesn't apply either. Only once the catcher is in position to make the tag does the runner acquire the obligation to slide **or** attempt to avoid. In fact, if contact occurs **before** the fielder has the ball, then the fielder is probably guilty of obstruction.

Little League has made this abundantly clear in Make The Right Call, a Little League publication with commentary on how the rules should be applied. In there, it says: There is no "must slide rule." The rule is, "slide or attempt to get around." The key

in this situation is "fielder has the ball and is waiting to make a tag." If the fielder (any fielder, not just the catcher) does not have the ball, and there is a collision, you CANNOT call the runner out. However, if the umpire determines that the runner deliberately attempted to injure the fielder, the umpire could eject the runner for unsportsmanlike conduct.

The first part bears emphasizing. Repeat after me:

There is no "must slide" rule.

There is no "must slide" rule.

There is no "must slide" rule.

Myth: A batted ball that hits the plate is a foul ball.

Reality: For the purposes of a fair/foul determination, home plate is no different from the ground. As it happens, all of home plate is in fair territory, so if a batted ball touches it, it has merely struck part of fair territory.

A ball that touches the ground before passing either first or third base is not yet a fair or foul ball. It is merely a ball **over** fair or foul territory. This may seem like just a bit of semantics, but the distinction is very real. The ball does not become fair or foul until it either "settles" (stops rolling) or touches something other than the ground - a player, a fence, etc. At **that** time, the ball is then rendered fair or foul based on its position at the time it settles or is touched. How the ball got there (the path it followed before being touched) has nothing to do with the fair/foul determination.

Myth: The ball is dead on a foul tip.

Reality: The ball is NOT dead on a foul tip. Rule 2.00 FOUL TIP explicitly says that a foul tip is a live ball.

Much of the confusion surrounding this probably comes from a misunderstanding of what a foul tip actually is:

A FOUL TIP is a batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught. It is not a foul tip unless caught and any foul tip that is caught is a strike, and the ball is in play. It is not a catch if it is a rebound, unless the ball has first touched the catcher's glove or hand. A foul tip can only be caught by the catcher.

Thus, it is *only* a foul tip if the catcher catches the ball. A ball that hits the bat and goes straight back to the backstop is a foul ball not a foul tip.

Myth: The base coach can't leave the coach's box during play or he/she will be guilty of interference.

Reality: Actually, in certain respects, it's the other way around - if the

coach **doesn't** leave the coaches' box under certain circumstances, **then** he or she may be guilty of interference.

The coaches box is intended to provide an approximate area in which the coach is to remain. Baseball tradition, however, holds that the coach may take up a position outside the box in order to coach his or her runner(s), providing that the position the coach takes does not hinder any of the defensive players. Generally, we require that the coach start any play within the bounds of the box. With a runner rounding third, however, it is common for the base coach to retreat somewhat down the line towards home so that he or she can keep the runner and the ball in sight. This does not constitute interference.

What **can** constitute interference, however is:

1. Physically assisting a runner in any way while the ball is alive. Pushing a runner off a base or back to a base, or helping a runner up off the ground, for example, would be considered coaches' interference.
2. Failing to get out of the way of a fielder who is making a play on a batted ball, regardless of where the fielder is at the time. For example, if the ball is popped up near first, and the first baseman collides with the coach while trying to catch it, this is interference. Note that, in this case, the interference does not have to be deliberate.
3. Simulating the actions of a runner or making any other movement designed to draw a throw by a fielder.

Myth: A fly ball that is deflected over the fence is a ground rule double.

Reality: If a fly ball is first touched by a player in fair territory and then goes over the fence, it is a home run.

7.05(a) Each runner including the batter-runner may, without liability to be put out, advance ... to home base scoring a run, if a fair ball goes out of the playing field in flight and the runner touches all bases legally;

When the batted ball was touched by the player in fair territory, the ball automatically became fair. The ball remains in flight until it touches the ground - touching a player does not alter this. Thus, this rule applies.

If a fly ball is first touched by a player in **foul** territory and then goes over the fence, it is a foul ball.

Myth: A base runner cannot be guilty of interference on a ground ball if he or she doesn't touch the fielder.

Reality: Interference does not require contact. The definition of interference reads:

2.00 INTERFERENCE(a) Offensive interference is an act by a member of the team at bat which interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play.

Two examples of things that should probably be ruled as interference, even though there is no contact:

- *The ball is grounded towards the second baseman. R1 stops in front of the fielder until the ball is almost there, then ducks out of the way.*
- Here, the runner took up a position that could prevent the fielder from seeing the batted ball as it approached him. Although simply crossing the fielder's line of sight is not generally cause for an interference call, stopping like this is designed to hinder the fielder, and should be penalized.
- *The ball is grounded towards the second baseman. R1 runs behind him, but just as R1 passed behind him, R1 shouts, "Look out!" The fielder is visibly startled, and misses the ball.* Here again, the actions of the fielder are clearly designed to confuse or hinder the fielder, even though there is no actual contact.

The two examples above illustrate cases in which the runner clearly interfered with the fielder deliberately. Intent is not always required in order for interference to be called, particularly when the fielder is attempting to field a batted ball. Neither, however, is actual contact.

Myth: A batter who bats out of order is out.

Reality: In fact, it is the other way around. If anyone is declared out, it is the batter who was **supposed** to have batted, not the one who was out of order.

In order to gain an out in a batting-out-of-turn situation, the defense must appeal the infraction **after** the incorrect (improper) batter has completed his or her time at bat, but **before** the next pitch, play or attempted play. In this case, the **correct** batter is declared out, and then the batter following him or her is up. If the offense or defense appeals the situation while the incorrect batter is still at the plate, nobody is out - the correct batter is simply put in the box, assuming whatever count the incorrect batter had run up.

If the defense waits too long and pitches to the batter after the incorrect one, the incorrect batter is "legalized." Now, the correct batter is the one immediately after that batter in the order. Of course, that may or may not be who is at the plate right now.

Rule 6.07 covers batting out of turn.

Myth: The pitcher gets eight warm-up pitches between innings.

Reality: Under normal circumstances a pitcher gets a **maximum** of eight pitches between innings. The pitcher is only allowed a maximum of one minute in order to complete these pitches, however. Thus, if the pitcher is slow he or she may not be able to complete the eight pitches before the one minute elapses.

The one minute clock starts at the end of the previous half-inning, that is, when the third out is made. Thus, the time for the pitcher and catcher to take their positions comes out of the one minute that the pitcher is allotted.

Little League umpires rarely time teams with a stopwatch. If the pitcher and catcher (or another player wearing the required helmet/mask/throat guard) take the field promptly and don't dawdle between pitches, then umpires usually allow them the full eight pitches, even if it takes somewhat longer than a minute. If the catcher is slow getting his gear on and the defense doesn't send another player out in his place, or if the defense has a two-minute rah-rah huddle before taking the field, an umpire can limit the number of pitches allowed, or even eliminate them completely once the one minute period is exceeded.

Conversely, if weather or other game conditions warrant it, an umpire can grant a pitcher extra warm-up pitches. In particular, if a pitcher is injured and his replacement has not had time to warm up, the umpire may allow the replacement as many pitches as the umpire sees fit.

Myth: If a pitch hits a player's hands it's considered a foul ball, since hands are considered part of the bat.

Reality: The hands are **not** part of the bat. They are part of the arm.

Let's repeat that again. All together now...

The hands are not part of the bat.

The hands are not part of the bat.

The hands are not part of the bat.

Don't believe it? Try this. Hold a bat in your hand at arm's length. Now open your hand. Did the bat hit the ground? Good, gravity works. Where is your hand? I'll bet it's not on the ground. So your hand is not part of the bat.

When a player is hit on the hand by a pitch, the umpire must evaluate the situation just as he would if the pitch had hit him elsewhere:

- If the pitch was in the strike zone the ball is dead, runners return to the last legally touched base, and the batter gets a strike. If that was the third strike, the batter is out.

- If the batter was in the process of swinging, just as in the previous case, the ball is dead, runners return to the last legally touched base, and the batter gets a strike. If that was the third strike, the batter is out.
- If the pitch was not in the strike zone and the batter was not swinging at it, but the batter makes no attempt to get out of the way, the ball is dead, runners return, a ball is charged to the batter and he/she must continue to bat. (Unless that was ball four.)
- If none of the above conditions apply, the ball is dead, the batter is awarded first base, and runners advance only if forced.

Remember - when a batter is hit **anywhere** by a pitch, the ball is immediately dead, whether or not a base award is made.

Myth: When the catcher blocks the plate without the ball, it should be called interference.

Reality: Interference is generally an act by an **offensive** player who hinders a **defensive** player. When a defensive player hinders an offensive player, the correct call is **obstruction**, not interference.

In addition, however, for obstruction to be called, the base runner must, in fact, be hindered. For example, if the catcher is set up across the line while the runner is still rounding third base, there is no obstruction, because the catcher has not yet impeded the progress of the runner. Only when the runner collides with the catcher, or is forced to alter his or her path to avoid or get around the catcher, does obstruction occur.

Finally, once the catcher acquires the ball, he or she may legally block the path of the base runner. Obstruction only applies to a defensive player who is not in possession of the ball.

Myth: In order to be called out on a caught foul ball, the batted ball must go higher than the batter's head.

Reality: To start off with, there is no such thing as a "caught foul ball." In order for a ball to be foul, it has to strike the ground, the fence or some other object. If that happens, the ball can't be legally caught. Thus, what we're really talking about here is a "ball caught over foul territory."

We all know, of course, that the batter is out if a fielder catches a popup or line drive while the ball is over foul territory. The popup is routine, and that diving catch by the first or third baseman is a play we admire. So what we're **really**, really talking about here is the situation in which it is the catcher who gathers in the ball,

not one of the infielders.

Is the catcher somehow special from a rule point of view? Yes. There are two very specific situations in which a batted ball caught in the air by the catcher does not result in an out:

1. The ball goes sharply and directly from the bat to the catcher's hand or glove and then is caught legally. In this case, the batter has hit a foul tip. A foul tip is a live ball, and a strike. If the batter had two strikes before hitting the foul tip, then he or she is out, since this makes three strikes. Otherwise, however, it is just a strike. This is covered in the definition of a Foul Tip in section 2.00.
2. The ball goes sharply and directly from the bat and first touches some part of the catcher or his equipment other than the glove or the hand (like his mask or chest protector) and is then caught. This is a "rebound," and is considered a foul ball. (2.00 FOUL TIP mentions that a rebound is not a foul tip. The fact that it is considered a foul ball is a bit of baseball tradition that you won't, actually find written in the rulebook, however.)

That's it, however. If there's any "loop" in the ball as it leaves the bat, it isn't "sharp," so neither of these provisions apply. If it doesn't come straight back to the catcher, but the catcher manages to dive to one side and glove it, it wasn't "direct," so again, neither of these provisions apply. As a result, we fall back to the more general case of "caught before it touches the ground," and the batter is out.

Myth: On an overthrow out of play, the runners get 1 plus 1; the base he/she is going to plus one base.

Reality: This one's pretty simple. Look at the language in the book:

7.05(g) Each runner including the batter-runner may, without liability to be put out, advance ... two bases when, with no spectators on the playing field, a thrown ball goes into the stands, or into a bench (whether or not the ball rebounds into the field), or over or under or through a field fence, or on a slanting part of the screen above the backstop, or remains in the meshes of the wire screen protecting spectators.

Notice that the rule says "advance." When an overthrow goes out of play, runners are awarded two bases past the last base legally touched.

"Isn't that the same thing?" you ask. Well, if the runners were advancing at the time of the overthrow, yes, it's basically the same. If they're retreating, however it isn't. Say that a runner rounded first, the defense throws behind him, the runner dives back to first, and the throw goes out of play. The "1+1" school would argue that the runner gets second base - the base he/she was going to (first) plus one. The correct

award, however, is third base - two bases past the last base legally touched (first). The only other question that then comes up is "two bases from **where**? The rule goes on to cover that, too:

When such a wild throw is the first play by an infielder, the umpire, in awarding such bases, shall be governed by the position of the runners at the time the ball was pitched; in all other cases the umpire shall be governed by the position of the runners at the time the wild throw was made;

APPROVED RULING: If all runners, including the batter-runner have advanced at least one base when an infielder makes a wild throw on the first play after the pitch, the award shall be governed by the position of the runners when the wild throw was made.

Notice that the award has nothing to do with the time the ball went out of play - the award is either made from the last base legally touched at the time of the pitch, or the last base legally touched at the time the throw is released.

Myth: If a fielder holds a fly ball for two seconds it's a legal catch, even if he/she drops it thereafter.

Reality: Let's look at the definition of a catch in section 2.00:

A CATCH is the act of a fielder in getting secure possession in the hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it before it touches the ground providing such fielder does not use cap, protector, pocket or any other part of the uniform in getting possession ... In establishing the validity of the catch, the fielder shall hold the ball long enough to prove complete control of the ball and that release of the ball is voluntary and intentional.

You will see that no specific time limit is stipulated. The critical elements here are "secure possession" and "complete control" which are entirely and 100% a judgment call on the part of the umpire.

On one hand, fielder may be considered to have secure possession even though he holds onto the ball for far less than two seconds - consider the outfielder who catches a fly ball and immediately whips the ball back into the infield. The ball was probably in the fielder's glove or hand for much less than two seconds. On the other hand, a fielder could snow-cone a ball on a dead run, stagger for several more steps, fall and have the ball squirt free and not have it considered a catch, even though more than two seconds elapsed between the time the ball went into the glove and when it came out.

"Voluntary release" is one of the key measures that an umpire will use to judge whether or not the player is considered to have control of the ball. In the first case mentioned above, the outfielder deliberately removed the ball from his glove and

threw it back to the infield. In the second case, however, the fielder did not intend for the ball to drop out of his glove. Thus, the "voluntary release" in the first case demonstrated "secure possession" and "control," while the "involuntary release" in the second case demonstrated a lack of control

Of course, despite the phrase "and that release of the ball is voluntary and intentional," voluntary release is not the only criteria an umpire will use. Suppose Johnny's in right field, and catches a fly ball for the final out in the Little League World Series. He runs back to the infield and jumps into the arms of another player. As he does so, the ball slips from his glove and lands on the ground. Does the fact that he did not intend to drop the ball mean that this wasn't a catch? Of course not. In carrying the ball back to the infield, he clearly demonstrated control, voluntary release or not. Thus, while voluntary release is **one of** the criteria an umpire will use to judge a legal catch, it's not the only one.

Myth: A runner who runs more the three feet away from a direct line between bases is out of the baseline and should be called out.

Reality: Rachel hits a screamer into the gap. It's clearly going to be extra bases, maybe even a triple. Does Rachel run directly down the first base line, make a perfect right-angle turn at first and then run towards second? Of course not. Part way down toward first, she veers out into foul territory and "rounds" first. Both between home and first, and between first and second, she is almost certainly more than three feet away from a direct line between the bases.

The key to understanding "out of the baseline" is twofold:

1. Under normal circumstances, the runner makes his or her own baseline.
2. The rule about staying within three feet of the baseline only applies when a fielder is trying to make a tag.

Until a play is being made on a runner, he or she can take any path to, or between, bases that he or she wants. If the batter wants to go from first to second via center field, that's just fine. Maybe not wise, but definitely legal. When this changes, however, is when a fielder gets the ball in a position to potentially make a tag on the runner. **Then**, and only then, does the "direct line to the base" come into play. Even so, the "line" is a direct line between where the runner currently is and the base, not the direct line between the bases.

Not only does a runner have the right to run outside a direct line between the bases, at times the runner is obligated to. If a fielder is attempting to catch a batted ball, and is standing in the baseline, the runner is required to avoid him or her. Here, too, the runner is **not** out for veering off his path - he or she is doing exactly

the correct thing.

Myth: In order to satisfy the mandatory playing rule, players must play six consecutive defensive outs.

Reality: Regulation IV only requires players to play six defensive outs, not six consecutive defensive outs. For substitutes, these outs will have to be consecutive, since once a substitute leaves the game, he or she may not re-enter. A starter, however, may play any portion of his or her six defensive outs, be removed for a substitute, re-enter later, and then complete the remaining requirement. Thus, this statement is true for a substitute, but not for a starter.

Further, if a league has adopted the "continuous batting order" rule, even substitutes' outs do not have to be consecutive. With CBO, the defense is essentially allowed "free substitution" meaning players can be entered or removed as desired. All that is required is that, sometime during the game, each player gets his/her six defensive outs.

Keep in mind that this requirement is for regular season - the tournament rules are different.

Myth: If a batter is batting out of turn, the scorekeeper should let the umpire know.

Reality: No. In fact, the rulebook explicitly states the opposite:

6.07 NOTE: The umpire and scorekeeper shall not direct the attention of any person to the presence in the batter's box of an improper batter. This rule is designed to require constant vigilance by the players and managers of both teams. While the scorekeeper **should** call the umpire's attention to an unannounced substitution, he or she should remain silent in a batting out of order situation. The two can be distinguished by the fact that an unannounced substitution occurs when a player **not** currently in the lineup comes to bat, while a batting out of order situation occurs when a player already in the lineup comes to bat, but not when he or she is supposed to.

Myth: When it's getting dark, the league president or safety officer can order the game halted.

Reality: No. Only the umpires have this authority:

4.01(d) As soon as the home team's batting order is handed to the umpire-in-chief, the umpires are in charge of the playing field and from that moment have sole authority to determine when a game shall be called, halted or resumed on account of weather or the conditions of the playing field.

and

4.14 The umpire-in-chief shall order the playing field lights turned on whenever in such umpire's opinion that darkness makes further play in daylight hazardous. Of course, if the president, safety officer, manager, coach, etc. feel that conditions are such that further play is unsafe, they are strongly encouraged to bring this to the umpire's attention. The final decision, however, rests with the umpire.

Myth: On a double play ball, it's mandatory for the runner going into second to slide or get out of the way.

Reality: 7.09(f) It is interference by a batter or runner when... any batter or runner who has just been put out hinders or impedes any following play being made on a runner. Such runner shall be declared out for the interference of a teammate

Play: John is on first. The batter hits the ball to the shortstop, who flips it to second, retiring John. The throw from second to first strikes John as he (a) continues to advance toward second, (b) stops dead in his tracks, (c) throws up his hands as he approaches the second baseman, or (d) veers out of the baseline towards the side of the base from which the second baseman is throwing.

In (a) and (b), no interference has occurred. A runner has the "right of way" with respect to a throw, and, as long as he or she does not **deliberately** interfere, a throw that strikes a runner is alive and in play.

It might appear from a literal reading 7.09(f) that John should be called out. By baseball custom and interpretation, however, a runner who has been put out, and continues to advance, is not judged to be interfering merely because he or she continues to advance, nor is it interference if he or she stops in his or her tracks. The runner must commit some other action that indicates a deliberate intent to interfere before the "spirit" of the rules has been violated. The logic behind this interpretation is that the runner may not, in fact, yet know whether he or she is out, nor can he or she "dematerialize" in order to avoid a subsequent throw. Indeed, the professional rulebook contains a specific casebook statement to this effect: Comment: If the batter or a runner continues to advance after he has been put out, he shall not by that act alone be considered as confusing, hindering or impeding the fielders. Although Little League has never incorporated the Casebook comments from the Major League rulebook into its own rulebook, the vast majority of these interpretations do apply to Little League baseball and softball.

In (c), the runner committed a deliberate act to try to distract or interfere with the second baseman. Thus, in this case, interference should be called. The ball is immediately dead, and the batter-runner should be called out for his teammate's

interference.

In (d), the umpire must judge whether John left the baseline in order to deliberately stay between the second baseman and first (interference) or whether he was trying to get out of the way of the play (not interference). This is a judgment call.

Myth: The runner is out if tagged when he/she turns to the left after crossing first base.

Reality: The direction in which the batter-runner turns in overrunning first base is completely irrelevant.

7.08(c) EXCEPTION: A batter-runner cannot be tagged out after overrunning or over sliding first base if said batter-runner returns immediately to the base.

Thus, the critical thing is not the direction in which the batter-runner turns, but what he or she does as, or immediately after, the turn. If the batter-runner makes any movement towards second, he or she has forfeited his or her protection. If he or she comes directly back towards the base, however, he or she is protected until the base is touched, or until some other move towards another base is made.

Myth: It can't be an Infield Fly if the infielder is standing on the outfield grass.

Reality: The position of the infielders is irrelevant. The only requirement regarding player position is that the ball must be catchable with "ordinary effort." If the infielders are playing deep, a ball that is some feet onto the outfield grass may be catchable with ordinary effort, while a ball that falls on the infield grass may be impossible to catch. On the other hand, if the infield is playing very shallow, a ball that falls on or behind the baseline might be beyond ordinary effort. This is entirely a matter of umpire judgment.

Note that the rule does not require an infielder to actually catch the ball, merely that an infielder **could have** caught it. Thus, if an outfielder is playing very shallow, the outfielder might actually field the ball. If an infielder could have caught it with ordinary effort, the ball remains an Infield Fly.

Myth: In order for a runner to be called out for interference, it must be intentional.

Reality: There are a number of situations in which intent is not a factor in calling interference on a runner. These include:

1. The runner hinders a fielder attempting to field a batted ball.
[7.09(a), 7.09(l)]

2. The bat hits the ball a second time in fair territory.
[7.09(b)]
3. The batter-runner interferes with a fielder receiving a throw at first by running out of the three-foot "running lane."
[7.09(k)]
4. A fair ball touches the runner in fair territory before the ball touches or has passed a fielder.
[7.09(m)]

In general, with certain exceptions, the runner has the right of way on a thrown ball, and thus should not be called out for interference if the throw strikes him or her unless the act was intentional. A runner struck by a **batted ball**, however can easily be called out for interference, even if unintentional, because the **fielder** has the right of way to a batted ball.

Myth: The home plate umpire can over-rule another umpire if he/she has more experience or a better look at the play.

Reality: The rulebook explicitly states:

9.02(c) ... No umpire shall criticize, seek to reverse or interfere with another umpire's decision unless asked to do so by the umpire making it.

If the base umpire makes a call, the home plate umpire has no authority to overrule it. Similarly, if the plate umpire makes a call, the base umpire has no authority to overrule it. Rule 9.02(c) also includes the following

If a decision is appealed, the umpire making the decision may ask another umpire for information before making a final decision.

Thus, an umpire may only become involved in a call if his or her partner chooses to ask. Managers have no right to go to another umpire and ask him or her to change a call or attempt to influence the call. The only thing a manager can do is to go to the umpire who made the call and request that he or she check with his or her partner.

The use of the word "appeal" in 9.02(c) deals specifically with the issue of whether or not a call is in conflict with the rules, not whether a judgment call was correct or incorrect.

9.02(b) If there is reasonable doubt that any umpire's decision may be in conflict with the rules, the manager may appeal the decision and ask that a correct ruling be made. Such appeal shall be made only to the umpire who made the protested decision.

Even if the manager does believe that the call was incorrect under the rules, you

can see that it is still necessary to go the umpire who made the call, and let him or her decide whether to ask his/her partner for more information.

Myth: When the batter backs out of the box when a pitch is delivered, it's an automatic strike.

Reality: The baseball rulebook says:

6.02(b) The batter shall not leave that position in the batter's box after the pitcher comes to Set Position, or starts a windup.

PENALTY: If the pitcher pitches, the umpire shall call "Ball" or "Strike" as the case may be.

The softball rulebook wording is slightly different:

6.02(b) The batter shall not leave that position in the batter's box after the pitcher starts the windup.

PENALTY: If the pitcher pitches, the umpire shall call "Ball" or "Strike" as the case may be.

Thus, the umpire should simply observe the flight of the pitch, and call "Ball" or "Strike" depending on whether or not the pitch passes through the strike zone.

The Little League Casebook also has this to say:

Comment: Keep in mind, however, that with no batter present, the pitcher should be given the benefit of the doubt in this case. After all, the batter backed out without permission. It is, however, not an automatic strike. The batter leaves the batter's box at the risk of having a pitch delivered and a strike called unless he/she requests the umpire to call "Time." The batter is not at liberty to step in and out of the batter's box at will.

Veteran umpires generally give the pitcher "the benefit of the doubt" by calling any pitch that is reasonably close to the strike zone a strike. A pitch that bounces, or is **obviously** out of the strike zone, however must be called a ball, even if the batter stepped out as it was being delivered.

25. The batter is out when he/she hits the ball when he/she is touching home plate.

Reality: There is no rule that explicitly deals with the foot touching home plate.

The relevant rule says:

6.06(a) A batter is out for illegal action when ... hitting the ball with one or both feet on the ground entirely outside the batter's box.

Thus, in order for this rule to be invoked, the batter's foot must be **completely** outside the batter's box. If any part of his or her foot was on a line of the batter's box, this rule does not apply.

Umpires should remember that the batter's box is only four inches from home plate in Majors and below, and only six inches in Juniors and above. This distance is far shorter than the length of most players' feet. Thus, it is quite possible for a batter to have part of his or her foot in contact with the plate and still have the heel touching the line.

Confusion over this rule is likely due to the fact that there are other baseball and softball rule sets (e.g. "Federation") in which the batter's foot touching home plate is explicitly covered. It isn't in Little League, however.

26. A base coach cannot touch a runner. If he/she does, the runner is out.

Reality: The relevant rule reads:

7.09(i) It is interference when ... in the judgment of the umpire, the base coach at third base, or first base, by touching or holding the runner, physically assists that runner in returning to or leaving third base or first base.

The key to properly applying this rule is that the base coach must **physically assist** the runner for interference to be called. Thus, interference should not be called if, for example, the base coach "high fives" the batter following a home run, since this does not constitute physical assistance.

On the other hand, interference may be called if a base coach pushes a runner towards a base, stops a runner who has overrun a base, helps a player to his feet while the ball is live, physically stops a runner who has missed a base, etc.

27. A runner cannot be called out if hit by a batted ball while standing on a base.

Reality: If the batted ball has not touched a fielder, and if there is an infielder who could make a play on the batted ball behind the runner, a runner can, indeed, be called out when hit by a batted ball, even if he or she is in contact with the base.

The only time that being in contact with the base absolutely protects a runner is during an infield fly situation. [7.08(f) EXCEPTION]

28. In order to make a proper appeal play, the pitcher must first take the ball back to the mound.

Reality: As long as the ball remains live, there is no need for the ball to return to the mound before an appeal is made. Remember, one of the most common appeal plays is throwing behind a runner who has not retouched his or her base following a caught fly ball. The defense obviously does not throw the ball to the mound first in this case. Neither is it necessary for the ball to go back to the mound prior to appealing a missed base.

The most likely origin of this myth is the fact that the defense frequently requests "Time" prior to appealing a missed base. Usually, this is done so that the manager

or coach can instruct his or her players on how to make the appeal. Once "Time" has been granted, the pitcher must have the ball on the mound before the plate umpire will put the ball in play again. It is the act of making the ball live, however, not the appeal, that requires the ball on the mound.

29. A batter cannot change from the left-handed to the right-handed batter's box after two strikes.

Reality: The only prohibition on changing batter's boxes reads:

6.06(b) A batter is out for illegal action when ... stepping from one batter's box to the other while the pitcher is in position ready to pitch

Other than that, the batter may take position in either batter's box at any time. In theory, the batter could switch between batter's boxes after each pitch.

30. A pitch that bounces as it comes in cannot be hit.

Reality: If a pitch bounces, the only thing that changes is that it can no longer become a called strike. With this single exception, the pitch is alive and in play.

- If the batter swings at the pitch and misses, it is a strike.
- If the batter hits the ball in fair territory, the batted ball is alive and in play.
- If the batter hits the ball foul, it is simply a foul.
- If the bounced pitch hits the batter, all the standard hit-by-pitch rules apply.

31. The batter is not out for interference with the catcher if he/she stays in the batter's box.

Reality: Whether or not the batter may be called out for interference depends on the nature of the play. A few examples:

1. If the catcher is making a throw to attempt to put a runner out, the batter is "protected" while in the batter's box, provided that he or she makes no deliberate attempt to interfere. Thus, for example, if a catcher's snap throw attempting to pick off a runner on first strikes a left-handed batter in the batter's box, interference is only called if the batter deliberately interfered with the throw. The batter cannot be expected to "dematerialize."
2. If a runner is attempting to score, the batter is required to vacate the area, if necessary, to avoid interfering with the defense. If the batter remains in the box, and his or her presence interferes with the play, interference should be called, even if the batter did not commit any deliberate action. An exception to this would be a squeeze play - the batter is allowed to stay in the box because he has the right to try to hit the pitch. In this case, however, the batter must still avoid doing anything to deliberately interfere with the defense's play on the runner once the pitch is past him or her.

3. If the batter's follow through strikes the catcher and interferes with his or her attempt to throw out a runner who is stealing, interference can be called, even if the batter did not leave the box. The batter is responsible for his or her follow through.

A general "rule of thumb" is that the box protects a batter who is struck by a thrown ball, except when a play at home is under way. The batter must not, however, interfere with a play at the plate, physically contact the catcher outside the batter's box, or deliberately interfere with any play.

If the batter **leaves** the batter's box, he or she is completely responsible for any interference that might happen.

With R2 on second, the pitch is wild, going all the way to the backstop and then rebounding up the third base line. The catcher retrieves the ball and throws toward third, attempting to retire R2. When the pitch passed the catcher, the batter backed out of the box toward the third base fence. The catcher's throw strikes the batter.

In this situation, 6.06(c) applies:

6.06(c) A batter is out for illegal action when ... interfering with the catcher's fielding or throwing by stepping out of the batter's box or making any other movement that hinders the catcher's play at home base.

EXCEPTION: Batter is not out if any runner attempting to advance is put out, or if runner trying to score is called out for batter's interference.

Thus, the batter can be called out for interference, and R2 returned to second.

32. All appeals must be made verbally.

Reality: When an appeal is being made, a clear indication of the infraction being appealed is necessary. This indication does not have to be verbal, however. If a runner fails to retouch his or her base following a caught fly ball and the defense throws behind the runner, this is an appeal play. No verbal appeal is necessary in this situation, since the nature of the infraction (failure to retouch) is clear.

An appeal of a missed base, on the other hand, typically **does** require some kind of verbal indication on the part of the defense in order to clearly communicate to the umpire what is being appealed. This is particularly true when multiple runners have passed the base in question, since the defense must indicate not only which base was missed, but which runner missed it.

33. Tagging the runner running from first on a ground ball is a tag play, not a force out.

Reality: Whether an out is a force out or not does not depend on how the runner is put out, merely where the out occurs. Any out on a runner forced to advance is a force out provided (a) the runner has not yet touched the base to which he or she is

forced and (b) no following runner has been put out. Thus, any of the following are force outs:

- A forced runner is tagged before reaching the next base.
- The bag to which the runner is forced is touched before the runner reaches it.
- A runner is called out on appeal for missing a base to which he or she is forced.
- A runner is called out for a head-first slide before reaching a base to which he or she is forced. (Majors and below only)

Once a runner touches the base to which he or she is forced, any subsequent out made on that runner is no longer a force play. Similarly, if any following runner is put out, the force is removed.

34. Judgment calls can be appealed if the manager feels that the umpire missed the call.

Reality: The word "appeal" is frequently misused. Judgment calls by umpires are not subject to question or objection by a manager or coach.

9.02(a) Any umpire's decision which involves judgment, such as, but not limited to, whether a batted ball is fair or foul, whether a pitch is a strike or a ball, or whether a runner is safe or out, is final. No player, manager, coach or substitute shall object to any such judgment decisions.

The only "appeal" of this nature that a manager may make under the rules is if the manager feels that the umpire has misapplied a playing rule. In this case, rules 9.02(b) and 9.02(c) apply:

9.02(b) If there is reasonable doubt that any umpire's decision may be in conflict with the rules, the manager may appeal the decision and ask that a correct ruling be made. Such appeal shall be made only to the umpire who made the protested decision.

9.02(c) If a decision is appealed, the umpire making the decision may ask another umpire for information before making a final decision. No umpire shall criticize, seek to reverse or interfere with another umpire's decision unless asked to do so by the umpire making it.

Thus, for example, when a manager thinks the base umpire "blew" a safe/out call at first base and goes to the plate umpire saying, "Can I appeal that?" he has no basis under the rules for the request. The safe/out call is a judgment call, and thus not questionable. Even supposing it were, the question should have been directed to the base umpire, not the plate umpire. The plate umpire should, therefore, simply answer "No" to this question.

That being said, if the manager approaches the base umpire and requests that he ask his partner to see if he had a better angle, this is not an "appeal," simply a request. The base umpire is under no obligation to go to his partner, but may do so if he feels that his partner may have information that bears on the call.

35. When a relief pitcher replaces an injured pitcher, he/she gets as many warm-up pitches as he/she wants.

Reality:

Pitchers are normally limited to a maximum of eight warm-up pitches, not to exceed one minute. However,

8.03 ...If a sudden emergency causes a pitcher to be summoned into the game without any opportunity to warm up, the umpire-in-chief shall allow the pitcher as many pitches as the umpire deems necessary.

Note that it is the umpire, not the pitcher, who determines how many warm-up pitches the pitcher may take in this situation.

36. Contact must occur for interference or obstruction to be called.

Reality:

The definition of offensive interference in 2.00 INTERFERENCE reads:

Offensive interference is an act by a member of the team at bat which interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play.

Note that the word "contact" does not appear in the definition, while the word "confuse," while does not require contact, does. In fact, there are at least two actions that do not necessarily involve contact that are specifically cited as interference in the rulebook:

7.09 It is interference by a batter or runner when...

(e) any member or members of the offensive team stand or gather around any base to which a runner is advancing, to confuse, hinder or add to the difficulty of the fielders. Such runner shall be declared out for the interference of teammate or teammates

(j) with a runner on third base, the base coach leaves the box and acts in any manner to draw a throw by a fielder

A runner could also easily interfere with a fielder by standing in front of him to block his view of a batted ball, or by shouting at the fielder as he passes behind him. Each of these actions also can be considered interference.

The definition of obstruction reads

OBSTRUCTION is the act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball,

impedes the progress of any runner. A fake tag is considered obstruction. (NOTE: Obstruction shall be called on a defensive player who blocks off a base, base line or home plate from a base runner while not in possession of the ball.)

A runner can easily be impeded without requiring contact - the simple act of "taking a detour" around an obstructing player will certainly cause a runner to take longer to get to his destination. Thus, even if contact does not occur, this can constitute obstruction.

37. If a fielder runs into an umpire while chasing a fly ball, this is interference and the batter should be called out.

Reality:

There are two, and only two, situations in which umpire's interference is called:

2.00 INTERFERENCE

Umpire's interference occurs (1) when an umpire hinders, impedes or prevents a catcher's throw attempting to prevent a stolen base, or (2) when a fair ball touches an umpire on fair territory before passing a fielder

In any other situation, an umpire is considered part of the field. While getting oneself into a situation where a fielder runs into you may represent poor umpiring mechanics, it does not constitute interference, and the ball remains alive and in play.

38. The batter-runner is always out if he runs outside the running lane after a bunted ball.

Reality:

The relevant rule is:

6.05(j) A batter is out when... in running the last half of the distance from home base to first base, while the ball is being fielded to first base, the batter-runner runs outside (to the right of) the three-foot line, or inside (to the left of) the foul line, and in the umpire's judgment in so doing interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base; except that the batter-runner may run outside (to the right of) the three-foot line or inside (to the left of) the foul line to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball

Thus,

1. The batter is not required to be in the three-foot running lane until he/she is half-way down the line toward first base. Prior to that, the batter may legally be in either fair or foul territory.
2. In order to be called out under this rule, the batter must be in a position to interfere with the throw to first base. For example, in Juniors and above, if the catcher fails to catch the third strike, and ends up throwing to first from

the foul side of the line, a runner who is running in fair territory is very unlikely to interfere with the fielder taking the throw at first. Thus, in that case, this rule does not apply. In addition, notice that it is the fielder **taking** the throw with whom the batter-runner must interfere. If, because of the batter-runner's position, the catcher does not throw, this rule does not apply.

3. The batter-runner, in fact **must** leave the three-foot lane in some cases in order to avoid interfering with a fielder retrieving a batted ball.

39. Any Little League player who slides headfirst at any time is out.

Reality:

The headfirst slide rule applies only in Majors and below. Juniors and above are free to slide headfirst if they so choose.

In addition, the relevant rule - 7.08(a)(4) - only applies when a runner slides headfirst while **advancing**. It does not apply while the runner is retreating. Thus, for example, a runner between first and second is prohibited from sliding headfirst into second, but may dive headfirst back towards first.

40. If the batter breaks his wrists when swinging, it's a strike.

Reality:

Actually, if the batter breaks his wrists when swinging, it should result in a trip to the Emergency Room. (Sorry, couldn't resist!)

Whether or not a batter actually attempted to hit a pitch is completely and utterly a matter of judgment on the part of the umpire. There is no single "hard-and-fast" rule that can be applied. A player can easily attempt to hit the ball without breaking his/her wrists. Think about a bunt, or the "slap bunt" that is sometimes used in softball - players rarely break their wrists while doing this. Conversely, it is possible (although unlikely) that a player who swings very, very early, could break his wrists and then pull the bat back enough to convince an umpire that it was not a legitimate attempt to hit the ball.

Granted, in the vast majority of cases, if the batter breaks his wrists the umpire will call a strike. The point to be taken away is that this is neither a requirement, nor the sole determining factor.

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

Reality:

As with the "breaking the wrists" myth, the position of the bat during a bunt attempt has nothing to do with whether the pitch is a strike or not. It is solely a

question whether, in the umpire's judgment, the batter made an attempt to hit the ball.

When a player squares to bunt, he is simply adopting a different batting stance. This stance may or may not involve the bat being in the zone. If the batter makes no attempt to move the bat towards the ball, he or she has not attempted to hit it. Thus, in this situation, if the pitch is outside the strike zone, it must be called a ball. Granted, it is better practice for a batter who does not want to bunt a pitch to move his bat away from the ball and out of the strike zone, since this is much more likely to convince the umpire that he/she was not "offering" at the pitch. A batter who does not do this, however, and who made no motion toward the ball, has not met the criteria for a called strike.

42. Tie goes to the runner.

Reality:

Bill Klem, a Hall of Fame umpire, who worked the National League from 1905 through 1941, and then served as Chief of National League Umpires until his death in 1951, has been quoted as saying, "There's no such thing as a tie - it's either this, or it's that!"

If you want a literal reading of the rulebook, however, you will find that it is split on the issue. Regarding a batter,

6.05(i) A batter is out when... after hitting a fair ball, the batter-runner or first base is tagged before said batter-runner touches first base

Thus, to gain the out on the batter-runner, the base has to be tagged before the runner touches it. This would imply that, under this rule, a tie **would** go to the runner, since the defense failed to touch the base "before" the runner did.

Regarding a runner, however

7.08(e) A runner is out when... failing to reach the next base before a fielder tags said runner or the base after that runner has been forced to advance by reason of the batter becoming a runner.

Here, it is the **runner** who has the obligation to get to the base "before" the tag of the base is made. In this case, if a tie truly happened, the runner would be out, because he/she did not reach the base before the tag.

Thus, if you want a literal interpretation of the "black and white" in the rulebook, a tie goes to the runner at first, but to the defense at any other base. Like Bill Klem, however, umpires generally do not recognize the existence of a tie - the runner either beat the throw, or he did not, and that's that.

43. Runners may not run the bases in reverse order.

Reality:

In fact, there are situations in which a runner is **obligated** to run the bases in

reverse order.

7.02 In advancing, a runner shall touch first, second, third and home base in order. If forced to return, the runner shall retouch all bases in reverse order, unless the ball is dead under any provision of Rule 5.09. In such cases, the runner may go directly to the original base.

Thus, for example, consider a runner who takes off from first at the crack of the bat. After rounding second, however, he realizes that an outfielder has caught the batter's fly ball. The runner must return and retouch first, or he is liable to be put out on appeal by the defense. In this situation, as he retreats, he is **required** to touch second base on his way back. If he fails to do this, the defense can appeal the missed base, and get an out that way.

The only prohibition on running the bases in reverse is:

7.08(i) Any runner is out when ... after acquiring legal possession of a base, the runner runs the bases in reverse order for the purpose of confusing the defense or making a travesty of the game. The umpire shall immediately call "Time" and declare the runner out

Here, you can see that the umpire must be convinced that the runner is doing this deliberately and without justification in order to call the runner out.

44. A runner may not steal on a foul tip.

Reality:

Rule **2.00 FOUL TIP** explicitly says that a foul tip is a live ball, which means that it is perfectly legal to steal following one.

Much of the confusion surrounding this probably comes from a misunderstanding of what a foul tip actually is:

A FOUL TIP is a batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught. It is not a foul tip unless caught and any foul tip that is caught is a strike, and the ball is in play. It is not a catch if it is a rebound, unless the ball has first touched the catcher's glove or hand. A foul tip can only be caught by the catcher.

Thus, it is *only* a foul tip if the catcher catches the ball. A ball that hits the bat and goes straight back to the backstop is a **foul ball** not a **foul tip**.

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

Reality:

There is no single rule that explicitly deals with this in its entirety, however the required information is available spread across several rules.

2.00 A FORCE PLAY is a play in which a runner legally loses the right to occupy a base by reason of the batter becoming a runner.

Thus, when the batter hits the ball, a runner who began on first is forced to

advance, and loses his/her right to first base.

7.08(e) ...However, if a following runner is put out on a force play, the force is removed and the runner must be tagged to be put out...

By "following runner," the rule means another runner who is behind the runner in question. The batter-runner is behind all other runners, thus if he/she is put out, such as on a caught fly ball, the force is automatically removed on all other runners. As a result, if a runner is put out for failing to retouch a base, it cannot be a force out, since the defense must have caught the batter's fly ball (putting him/her out) for the situation to arise.

The rule that covers retouches is:

7.08(d) A runner is out when ... failing to retouch the base after a fair or foul fly ball is legally caught before that runner or the base is tagged by a fielder. The runner shall not be called out for failure to retouch the base after the first following pitch, or any play or attempted play. This is an appeal play.

As you can see, this is explicitly an appeal play. In addition, an Approved Ruling under 4.09 re-emphasizes that this is not a force play:

4.09(a) APPROVED RULING: One out, Jones on third, Smith on first and Brown flies out to right field for the second out. Jones tags up and scores after the catch. Smith attempted to return to first but the right fielder's throw beat Smith to the base for the third out. But Jones scored before the throw to catch Smith reached first base. Hence, Jones' run counts. It was not a force play.

Thus, in summary, although an appeal of a missed base can be a force play, an appeal for failure to retouch can never be a force play.

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

Reality:

This is directly related to the preceding myth regarding retouch appeals. Unlike a retouch appeal, an appeal for a missed base can easily be a force play, if the missed base being appealed is one to which the runner has been forced, or if the batter misses first base.

Although primarily designed to illustrate another concept, the Little League Casebook has an example play that covers this explicitly:

Play 7-17: Runners on first and third, two outs. The batter singles to left field. The runner on third scores and runner on first is thrown out trying to reach third, missing second on his way, for the third out. The defensive team is leaving the field when the defensive coach yells at the right fielder, the last player in fair territory, to pick up the ball, step on second, and make a verbal appeal that the runner missed second base.

Ruling: The runner is out on a force at second. The fourth out takes precedence

over the third out, and the run scored is nullified.

47. Runners may not advance when an infield fly is called.

Reality:

The rulebook explicitly states otherwise:

2.00 INFIELD FLY ... The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of that ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched or caught, the same as on any fly ball...

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

Reality:

When a pitch bounces, the **only** thing that changes is that it can no longer be a called strike. The pitch is still alive and in play. The batter may swing at it, and if it hits the batter, all the standard rules about whether or not the batter is awarded first apply.

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

Reality:

If you stop and think about it, players don't touch the bag with their foot. Unless they're playing barefoot, they touch the base with their **shoe**. The relevant definition reads:

A TAG is the action of a fielder in touching a base with the body while holding the ball securely and firmly in the hand or glove;

A related rule reads:

The PERSON of a player or an umpire is any part of the body, clothing or equipment.

If the fielder is holding the ball securely and firmly in the hand or glove, they may touch the base with any part of their person - that is, with the body, clothing or equipment. Thus, for example, a player could have the ball in his or her bare hand, and touch the base with his or her glove, and the tag would be legal. After all, a glove and a shoe are both pieces of his/her equipment.

The rule for tagging a runner, of course, is different. The second half of the "tag" definition goes on to read:

...or touching a runner with the ball or with the hand or glove holding the ball, while holding the ball securely and firmly in the hand or glove.

Thus, when we're dealing with a runner, a tag is much more restrictive than when we're dealing with a base.

50. The ball is always immediately dead on a balk.

Reality:

Under certain rule sets, NFHS ("Fed") for example, this is true. Under Little League

rules, however, it is not. Rule 8.05 includes this section:

PENALTY: The ball is dead, and each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out unless the batter reaches first on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk.

Clearly, if the batter can hit the ball and runners can advance after a balk, the ball cannot be automatically dead when the balk occurs.

When a balk occurs during a pick-off move, the batter clearly cannot advance. As a result, the ball becomes dead at that time, and the penalty is enforced. If a balk occurs during a pitch, however, the play is allowed to continue. If the batter-runner and all other runners advance at least one base safely, the balk is ignored. As soon as it becomes apparent that this will not happen, however, **then** the ball becomes dead and the penalty is enforced.

Thus, a balk is what umpires refer to as a "delayed dead ball," in the sense that the ball may not become dead for some time after the infraction, if at all.

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

Reality: The position of a player's feet have nothing to do with whether a ball is fair or foul. The "condition" of the ball is based solely on where the ball is with respect to the foul line. The rule book emphasizes this by including the following phrases:

Under 2.00 FAIR BALL:

A fair fly shall be adjudged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time such fielder touches the ball.

Under 2.00 FOUL BALL:

A foul fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on foul or fair territory at the time that fielder touches the ball.

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

Reality: If a fielder catches a fly ball before it leaves the playing field and retains possession of the ball, the catch stands, and the batter is out. All runners currently on base are then awarded one base from the time of the pitch because the fielder fell out of the field of play.

7.04(b) Each runner, other than the batter, may, without liability to be put out, advance one base when ... a fielder, after catching a fly ball, falls into a stand, or falls across ropes into a crowd when spectators are on the field or falls into any other dead-ball areas;

The ball is dead anytime the ball hits an umpire.

Reality: There are two, and only two, situations in which umpire's interference is called:

2.00 INTERFERENCE

Umpire's interference occurs (1) when an umpire hinders, impedes or prevents a catcher's throw attempting to prevent a stolen base, or (2) when a fair ball touches an umpire on fair territory before passing a fielder

In any other situation, an umpire is considered part of the field, and any ball that touches him/her is alive and in play.

54. Runners must stay on their bases until the pitcher releases the ball.

Reality:

In Majors and below (both baseball and softball), runners must stay on their bases until the ball **reaches the batter**.

In Junior softball and above, runners must stay on their bases until the pitcher release the ball.

In Junior baseball and above, of course, runners may leave their bases at any time.

55. The batter is out if he starts for the dugout before going to first after a dropped third strike.

Reality:

When the catcher does not catch a third strike, the batter is not obligated to go directly to the base. He or she may take any path desired to the base, including walking right over to the dugout door. Once the batter leaves live ball area, however, he or she is automatically out, so if the batter actually steps into the dugout, he or she may not return and run to first. Other than that, however, there are no restrictions on how the batter goes to first. This is explicitly covered under Rule 7.08(a):

APPROVED RULING (Junior/Senior/Big League): When a batter becomes a runner on a third strike not caught and starts for the bench or his/her position, that batter may advance to first base at any time before entering the bench. To put the batter out, the defense must tag the batter or first base before the batter touches first base.

Myth: The pitcher must come to a set position and stop before a pick-off throw.

Reality: The pitcher must stop prior to pitching, but he is not required to stop prior to a pick-off move.

8.01(c) At any time during the pitcher's preliminary movements and until the natural pitching motion commits that pitcher to the pitch, said pitcher may throw

to any base provided the pitcher steps directly toward such base before making the throw.

The "coming set" movements are considered preliminary, and do not yet commit the pitcher to pitch, thus he may make a pick-off throw prior to stopping his motion.

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

Reality: In some rule sets, including NFHS ("Fed"), the pitcher is prohibited from making a pick-off move from the windup position. In Little League, however, the pitcher is free to make a pick-off move from the rubber from either the windup or set position.

8.01(a) Windup position ... From this position the pitcher may:

- (1) deliver the ball to the batter, or
- (2) step and throw to a base in an attempt to pick off a runner, or
- (3) disengage the pitcher's plate. In disengaging the pitcher's plate, the pitcher must step off with the pivot foot and not the free foot first.

8.02(b) Set Position ... From such Set Position the pitcher may deliver the ball to the batter, throw to a base or step backward off the pitcher's plate with the pivot foot.

In addition, consider the following:

7.05(h) Each runner including the batter-runner may, without liability to be put out, advance ...one base, if a ball, pitched to the batter, or thrown by the pitcher from the position on the pitcher's plate to a base to catch a runner goes into a stand or a bench, or over or through a field fence or backstop. The ball is dead;

This rule clearly references the case where a pickoff is made from the rubber (pitcher's plate).