



2024 MTLL Umpire Training Manual

Introduction

Thanks for your interest in umpiring for MTLL. We hope you will find your umpire experience to be rewarding and fun. As an umpire for MTLL we will be relying on you to be responsible, professional, and expect you to always give your best effort. We want you to have some fun while you umpire and earn some extra cash, but you must always conduct yourself in a professional manner when participating in training or working as a MTLL umpire.

So please, take the time to read and understand this document and the online quiz. **A minimum score of 80% correct is also required to umpire.** In addition to the quiz, do some research and improve your knowledge of the game. The more preparation you do prior to stepping out on the field as the umpire, the better job you will do, and the more comfortable you will be.

Some references for completing the quiz and improving your baseball rules knowledge:

- This manual
- MTLL League Rules ([Low Minor](#), [High Minor](#), [Majors](#), [Juniors](#))
- Little League International: [Introduction](#) and [playing rules](#)
- [Umpires Positioning and Hustle](#) (video)

Equipment

Mask – Chest Protector – Knee Guards – Count Indicator – Brush

Mask - Make sure the mask is in good maintenance and is adjusted to fit you properly.

Chest Protector – Tuck the chest protector up under your chin with the facemask hanging out over the top of it to prevent your throat from being vulnerable to injury. Wrap your arms through the two back straps from the inside to the outside and bring them back to the inside of the protector. Keep your hands and body completely behind the chest protector until the ball comes to a complete stop in the catcher's glove.

Knee Guards – Place the knee guards on your chins with the buckles latching on the outside of the leg and strap them down snugly so they do not move when you run.

Count Indicator – Each umpire should carry a Count Indicator and keep track of each pitch and out, in the event that the home plate umpire gets temporarily lost in the game. Then the field umpire can help out.

Brush – The plate umpire should grab a brush from the umpire bin. Use it to clean home plate occasionally. Remember to put the brush back in the bin after your game!

General attire

- Each umpire will be given an official umpire's shirt. These umpire's shirts must be clean and worn at the time he or she is on the field in their official capacity as an umpire.

- You must wear fully enclosed toed athletic shoes while umpiring. Sandals or flip-flops or any shoes without enclosed toes are not allowed. Steel toed black rubber-soled shoes are preferred.
- Shorts may be worn during warm weather. Shorts must be properly hemmed. Cut-offs, jean shorts and swimsuits are not allowed. Light colored shorts are not recommended because they may get in the way of a fielder seeing the ball clearly after being hit. Long dark pants are preferred at all times.
- Umpire equipment can be found in the MTL lockboxes at each of the diamonds. Coaches will unlock the boxes prior to the game. Please advise the Umpire Director as soon as possible if you discover missing or damaged equipment.

Responsibility

Report time – Umpires are required to be at the field and in uniform by 20 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the game. Unless there is a dangerous situation such as a thunderstorm, you are required to report to the field despite the weather. If the game is to be cancelled, the cancellation will be listed on www.mt-ll.org or you will receive an email. If you do not receive notice of cancellation, and you report to the field, you will be paid. If you are sent an email of the game cancellation by 60 minutes prior to game time, or the cancellation is posted on www.mt-ll.org by 75 minutes prior to game time, you will not be paid.

Teamwork – The umpiring crew is a team. Before the game starts make sure to have a conference and understand who is responsible for the basic situations and calls. Preparation and anticipation of where to be to make a good call are paramount. Do not run in circles to make a call. Get into position. Never make a call while you are in motion. If the other umpire makes a call you disagree with, call time and discuss with the other umpire discreetly.

Home Plate Umpire

- Responsible for starting the game on time, weather permitting, and calling the game off in conjunction with the coaches or having a game delayed during inclement weather or if the field is not in “playable” condition.
- Reviews the ground rules and conducts introductions before every game with head coaches from both teams and the field umpire in attendance.
- Responsible for making ball and strike calls and making all force and tag calls at home plate and third base while keeping accurate track of the game on their “Count Indicator.”
- Responsible for making other calls such as a balk call, a foul ball call, infield fly ruling, interference, time outs, checking the scores between innings, stray balls entering from outside the field of play, and other conflict resolution.
- Must be in good position to make each call. This may call for running up the line to third base then back to home plate to make another call. It is very important for an umpire to be ready and willing to move himself quickly, so that he/she can get set in a good position to make the call.
- Be sure that the batter is ready to receive the pitch before the pitcher delivers the ball. If the umpire believes the batter was not ready, they will call “No Pitch” – and time is out until everyone is ready and they call “Play Ball” again. “Quick Pitching” must be explained to the pitcher so they eliminate this from their delivery system. Do not let a coach tell you that the batter was in the box and therefore the pitch was legal. You must allow a reasonable amount of time for the batter to be ready.
- Responsible for keeping everything moving along at a reasonable pace and letting everyone on the field know what the count is.

- Keep the plate clean so all parties can see it. Please sweep the dirt towards the pitcher, first or second base, not in the direction of the catcher. If it is windy please ask the catcher and batter to be aware so they don't get any dirt or dust in their eye.
- Responsible for all foul ball calls when the field umpire is in the field at positions B or C.
- Keep the field clear from obstacles such as stray or extra bats, gloves and donuts.
- Have the on-deck batter retrieve any foul balls behind the plate.
- Have the on-deck batter stand behind the batter in a safe location not too far up the line.

Field Umpire

- Stay focused during long periods of inactivity.
- Responsible for starting the game on time, weather permitting, and calling the game off or having a game delayed during inclement weather or if the field is not in "playable" condition.
- Responsible for making all force and tag calls at first and second base.
- Keep accurate track of the game on their "Count Indicator," including batter's count in the event the home plate umpire becomes confused.
- Responsible for making other calls such as a balk call, a foul ball call, infield fly ruling, interference, time outs, checking the scores between innings, stray balls entering from outside the field of play, and other conflict resolution.
- Below are some of the issues, in order of importance, just prior to delivery that they will need to be aware of:
 - Watching for the illegal pitch, quick pitch or balk if callable.
 - Handling pickoff plays to the bases when possible
 - Assisting on the check swing appeal
 - Handling the "runner leaving early" rules
 - Watching for pickoff plays from the catcher
 - Watching for attempted steals, particularly double steals when possible
 - Identifying if the infield-fly rule is in effect
 - Identifying if it's a "dead ball" situation
 - Calling both ends of a double play

Positioning

Being in the right place to make the call is 75% of the battle. Having the correct angle on the play will make you a wiser umpire. It is better to have a good angle on the call from 20 feet away than it is to be right next to the play and have an obstructed view.

Home Plate Umpire

- Should have an athletic stance behind the catcher with their feet spread wide and their knees bent so they are able to move quickly.
- Should bend so their eye level is at about the chest level of the batter or slightly lower. Their head should be directly over the inside portion of the plate but not inside the inner corner of home plate.
- Do not touch or lean on the catcher but be close enough to whisper to them. This will allow you to move out of the way if there is a foul ball or a passed ball. It will also allow you to run up the line to get into position to make a good call.
- If there is a call at third base, the home plate umpire should go out into the infield toward the shortstop so they have a better angle to make the call.
- You will also be responsible for calling the tag-up of the runner. So get into position to see the catch and the runner tagging in one view. Line them up together.

- Never get in the way of a play. Watch the ball and the fielders. They will tell you where the ball is most of the time.
- If there is a tipped ball, get out of the way of the retreating catcher and get into position to make the call.

Field Umpire

- Starts the game, and all circumstances where there are no base runners, by standing about 15-20 feet up the right field line behind the first baseman, just barely in foul territory (position A).
- They can be in an upright relaxed stance but able to move quickly when the ball is hit and get into a good position to make a call. If the ball is hit on the ground, they need to enter the field of play, staying out of the way of the eventual throw and getting into a good position so they can make the call at first base.
- If the ball is hit in the air, the field umpire should run onto the field of play and get into a good position to make sure the ball is cleanly caught or dropped so no controversy comes up. Remember never to get in the way of the play.
- Responsible for calling the tag-up of the runner. So, get into position to see the catch and the runner tagging in one view. Line them up together.
- Watch the ball and the fielders. They will tell you where the ball is most of the time.
- For 90-foot bases:
 - If there is a runner on first the field umpire should be behind the pitcher and on the first base side of the infield (position B). Make an imaginary line from the plate through the edge of the mound and the umpire should stand halfway between the pitcher and second base in this line.
 - Here they can place their hands on their knees to set a solid base to react from.
 - They should face the catcher and be aware of the situation so they know how to respond. Make sure the center fielder has a good view of the catcher. If you think you are obstructing the center fielder or any fielders view of the catcher, you will need to move a bit. Stay low and do not get in the way of the play.
 - If there are runners on first and second, then stand on the third base side of the infield halfway between the pitcher and second base in a direct line from the plate through the edge of the mound (position C). Stay low, with hands on your knees and in an athletic, ready position.
 - Be aware of the situation and be able to move into a good position to make the call.
- For 60-foot bases:
 - Due to the small field, the Field Umpire starts the game, and all circumstances where there are no base runners, by standing about 10-15 feet up the right field line behind the first baseman, just barely in foul territory (position A).
 - If there is a runner on first, they stand just barely on the outfield grass just to the right field side of second base (position B).
 - If there are runners on first and second with 0 or 1 out, stand on the third base side of second base on the edge of the outfield grass (position C).
 - If there are 2 outs, the Field Umpire should stand on the edge of the outfield to the right field side of second base (position B).

Making the Call - Make your calls loud and clear!

Read, Pause, React – One of the biggest mistakes umpires make is that they are too anxious to make the call. They simply want to react. They want to make a quick call to show everyone they know what they are doing. They will anticipate that the runner will be out because the ball beat the sliding runner to the base.

This will get you into a lot of trouble. What if the fielder does not apply the tag? What if the fielder drops the ball? Many things can occur. Read - let the play happen, Pause – for the outcome, React - make the decision.

A very common practice amongst veteran umpires is to ask the fielder to show them the ball before they will make the call so they know the fielder was in control of the ball when the tag was made. Be cautious if you ask to see the ball that there are no other runners on the base paths as this would inhibit the ability for the defense to make a play.

Home Plate Umpire

- The strike zone extends from the bottom of the knees to the armpits. If the batter is stooping unnaturally low then you may need to call a head high pitch a strike. If they complain, tell them why you made your call.
- Don't let a batter duck out of a strike call. If a batter insists on standing erect then the strike zone will be rather large for that batter.
- Before making a call on any pitch, stay behind the safety of your equipment. Do not make the call until the catcher has safely caught the ball or the ball has caromed behind you or out of your area. I
- If the pitch is a strike, raise your right arm so everyone on the field, including the outfielders, can see it and will know what the call was. You should also shout "strike" while you raise your right arm.
- If there is a left-handed batter you can display your right arm to your left to signal a strike. The only reasons that you would raise your right arm are for a strike, an out at third base or home plate, and if signaling a fair ball.
- You do not need to say anything if the pitch was a ball, however softly stating "Ball 1", "Ball 2", etc. can be helpful. If you feel the need to tell anyone why the pitch was a ball, converse only with the catcher while you are behind the plate. Do not use your hands to indicate the ball is high, low, inside, or outside as this could be confused with a strike call signal.
- Do not engage in conversation with a coach or spectator while you are behind the plate. If they are continuing to express opinions regarding your calls, then call "time-out" and meet with both coaches away from others.
- If there is a play at home plate, you may need to take off your mask. You can hold it in your left hand until you are ready to put it back on. Do not throw it to the side. It may get entangled in someone's feet.
- If the person coming home is out you will raise your right arm and yell "you're out." Before you make the call you should have the catcher show you the ball, if there is no one else on base, to prove they had control of it during the tag. If the person is safe at home, you spread your arms to the side and yell "safe."
- Before every pitch, determine where the outside edge of the strike zone is by where the catcher sets up. A good catcher will move on almost every pitch.
- Don't let a catcher pull the ball back into the strike zone after they catch a pitch that is obviously out of the strike zone in order to influence your decision. A good catcher will "frame" the ball when they catch it. They will hold it momentarily over the outside corner of the plate to help you make your call.
- Remember the plate is 17 inches wide and the strike zone is about 22 inches wide. If the ball just barely nicks the outside edge of the plate, it is a strike.
- If a batter asks for time out, it must happen before the pitcher's hands have separated to pitch. You will hold up your hand to tell the pitcher not to pitch. If the pitcher continues through the motion you can let the play happen and call no pitch once the catcher catches the ball.

- Do not let your guard down so you become vulnerable to injury. Once everyone is comfortable and the game can proceed you will call “play ball” and the game can start up again.
- Do not call a time out in the middle of a play or if a player has a lead off a base. Play must come to a complete stop before you can call a time out.
- To call time out raise both hands high and yell “time is out.” Do not call time out when a player asks you unless you are sure that the action has come to a halt.
- If the count is 0-2, the next pitch is not automatically a ball. If it is a strike, call it a strike. If the count is 3-0 the next pitch is not an automatic strike. Call it a ball, if it is a ball. Each pitch is unique unto itself.
- Try your best to be consistent. We would rather have you call a large strike zone than a tight zone. This is recreational baseball, not the big leagues.
- Keep track of the game with your count indicator. If you forget or get lost in the situation, ask the field umpire for the count.
- Fair vs. Foul balls – If a ball is hit foul, hold both hands high and outward as you yell “foul ball.” Again, do not call a foul ball until it happens. Do not make a premature call.
- If a bunt, or other hit in the infield, starts to roll foul and no one touches it, the ball may roll back into fair territory. The call is made where the ball is touched not how and where the player is standing.
- If the ball is hit hard down the outfield line and lands in fair territory you can run up the line a bit, stop and point towards fair territory yelling “fair ball.” Making the fair/foul call is one of the most important and basic aspects of being an umpire. Make sure you understand the rules.
- Balk calls – Stop the play. There is a “no pitch” situation. Allow the base runners to advance and a “ball” is added to the count on the batter.
- Infield Fly – Shout out “infield fly, if fair, batter is out” then wait to see if anything else happens. Runners may advance at their own risk after tagging up.
- If you turn your back on play, to clean the plate for instance, it is assumed that time is out and you must restart the play when you turn back towards the field.
- If a stray obstacle enters the field of play, call “my time out”, remove the obstacle, and resume play by saying, “play ball”.

Think Strikes - Often times, especially in younger leagues, batters can be hesitant to swing. Many things could cause this, but all of us want batters to develop into aggressive hitters. You can help them develop into aggressive hitters by having an aggressive strike zone. This will keep the batters hitting, and the players fielding, thus resulting in a more exciting and timely game.

Yes, there will be times when a pitcher is erratic and you have nothing to work with. But if the pitches are there and you can get the players swinging by calling strikes, you lessen the amount of decisions you have to make at the plate and everyone learns more and enjoys the game.

ASSUME A PITCH IS A STRIKE UNTIL PROVEN A BALL!!

Field Umpire

- How do you call a force play? When there is a force play at first you get into position, then look at the base and listen for the sound of the ball hitting the first baseman’s glove. Listen for the ball hitting the glove and see if the runner’s foot hits the base before or after the catch. There are no ties.
- The same thing takes place at all the other bases but the player will frequently slide into the base or slide to the right of home plate scrubbing their hand across the plate. Be aware of these situations. Let the play happen, pause then make the call. You will say “out at first”, or “out at 2.”

- Another situation that will occur is when there is an errant throw to first and the first baseman must leave the bag and tag the runner before reaching first base. You must lift your head and make the call. I point this out only for you to be aware of this.
- Get into position to make the call on a force play. The field umpire should make all calls on first and second and possibly a pickle play between second and third.
- Tag plays – Get into position – Read the play, Pause, and Make the call. Make sure the person making the tag has control of the ball. You may ask them to show you the ball after the tag is made. Once they show you the ball you can yell and signal for the out.
 - Caution: You should not ask to see the ball if there are other runners on base. If a person is tagged on the waist or higher you need to know if their feet reached the base first as the feet are about 3-4 feet ahead of their waist.
- Fair vs. Foul balls – If a ball is hit foul you can wave off the hit and yell “foul ball.” Again, do not call a foul ball until it happens. Do not make a premature call.
- If a bunt starts to roll foul and no one touches the ball, it may roll back into fair territory. The call is made where the ball is touched not how and where the player is standing.
- If the ball is hit hard down the outfield line and lands in fair territory, you can run up the line a bit, stop and point towards fair territory. The field umpire will make the calls down the first base line only.
- If you turn your back on play, to fix a base for instance, it is assumed that time is out and you must restart the play when you turn back towards the field.
- Balk calls – Stop the play. There is a “no pitch” situation. Allow the base runners to advance and there is an additional ball added to the batter’s count.
- Infield Fly – Shout out “infield fly, batter is out” then wait to see if anything else happens.
- Illegal tag-up after a fly ball is caught. Play is stopped, an out is given to the team that committed the infraction. Safe runners go back to their original base. Time is out, and then play continues.
- If a stray obstacle enters the field of play, call “my time out,” remove the obstacle and resume play by saying “play ball.”

Communication

- Make all of your calls loud and clear.
- Between each half inning the home plate umpire should check with both teams to make sure the scores match up.
- Make sure everyone on the field knows what the call was. A quick explanation to let players and others know the “why” of a call can also be helpful. Be careful not to appear defensive.
 - For example: “Safe at second, the runner slid under the tag”. If you are talking to one coach about a situation the other coach has the right to understand your decision.
- If the tag was high show it by raising your hands to demonstrate this to the spectators and players. If the ball was juggled shift your hands up and down to illustrate the situation. Help the coaches out so they understand and there won’t be a dispute.
- Don’t call the obvious with any overindulgent zeal. Just make a simple call and walk away. Everyone there knows what the call is. However, when a play is close, it is appropriate and important to make the call with authority and animation.
- Use reason and logic when speaking to a coach(s) about a call. Do not change a call made by the other umpire unless the other umpire asks you if you had a better view of the play. Then, and only then, be honest. Have a quiet conference with the other umpire. If you clearly saw the play differently and had a better angle discuss it with the other umpire before making the change. This should not happen but maybe once a year. Do not embarrass the other umpire.

Umpire signaling is an extremely important aspect of proper communication. The baseball diamond can be a noisy place, and all players, coaches, and fans may not be able to hear your calls. In addition to loud and clear calls, you must also make the appropriate signal to avoid any confusion.

Conflict Resolution

The only reason for umpires is for conflict resolution, otherwise the players could call their own game.

General Rule Conflicts – When there is a rule conflict both umpires should approach each other in a neutral area, typically on the infield between the mound and the plate, to discuss the conflict. Discuss the situation between each of the umpires first, without players hearing your discussion.

Then have both coaches approach the area so the coaches will walk away understanding your decision. During the discussion with the coaches, listen to the coaches' suggestions. Do so earnestly. They may be right. You may not understand a specific rule and you may need to overturn your call.

However, if you are certain about the ruling stick to your guns, if there is any additional conflict, make the best rational call you can, and then call your umpiring coordinator after the game and they will follow-up on the situation. Do this with a quiet confidence and a genuine care for the game. Everyone will know quickly if you really care about this call.

Parental Conflicts – If a parent becomes belligerent or unmanageable you must ask to speak to both of the coaches about the situation. Do not approach an adult by yourself. The coaches will most likely be familiar with your need for their assistance. Ask the coaches to first speak to the parent in a manner so they do not embarrass the person or ridicule them.

If necessary, you do have the authority to ask the person to leave and not return to within 500 feet of the playing field. It is highly unlikely that this will take place but these are the general guidelines that the MTL Board wants you to take under these conditions. Most importantly do not approach the person without a coach/adult accompanying you.

Coach Conflicts – If a coach becomes belligerent or unmanageable you must speak to the other coach about the situation. Ask the coach to speak with the other coach. If necessary you have the authority to have the coach leave and not return to within 500 feet of the playing field or you will have to call the game.

If another coach is available, play may continue. If the game must be stopped because of lack of a coach or the expelled coach not leaving then the league director will determine the outcome of the game.

Player Conflicts – If a player becomes unmanageable speak to their coach first about the situation. Ask the coach to help you out and try to bring the player under control. If necessary you can eject a player for bad sportsmanship. This too is very unlikely to happen during the season. You may want to give the player a warning and make sure the coach is aware of your warning to the player before ejecting anyone from the game.

- **The throwing of a bat in anger is unacceptable and the player should be ejected from the game.** While highly discouraged, bats are sometimes tossed during the course of a game instead of being carried. While this type of action warrants a warning, it is not cause for ejection.

Guidelines for dealing with problem player, parent, coach:

- Have an adult with you when discussing the issue with the person.
- Leave the area if the person is yelling profusely or if he is, or you believe he may, act out physically.
- Remain calm and professional at all times.
- Be respectful even if they are not.
- Listen to what they have to say.
- Examples responses to use:
 - “I have heard what you are saying, but from where I was when I made the call and with my knowledge of the game, the call stands.”
 - “It was a tough call, but it is my determination that the call stands.”

The 10 Rules of Umpires are:

1. Keep your eye on the ball and get into position.
2. Keep all personalities out of your work. Forget and forgive.
3. Avoid sarcasm. Don't insist on the last work.
4. Never charge a player and, above all, no pointing your finger and yelling.
5. Hear only the things you should hear – be dead to others.
6. Keep your temper. A decision made in anger is never sound.
7. Watch your language.
8. Take pride in your work at all times. Remember, respect for an umpire is created off the field as well as on.
9. Review your work. You will find, if you are honest, that 90% of the trouble is traceable to loafing.
10. No matter what your opinion of another umpire, never make an adverse comment regarding them. Doing so is wrong and ungentlemanly.

In summary

If you show up on time, dress in uniform, be respectful and professional, be a student of the game, and always hustle, you will be a great umpire. Remember your position in the game. You are not a coach, you are a humble servant. People do not come to see the umpire. They came to see their children and friends.

We hope you find your job as an umpire both fun and rewarding