

Tips for Working the Bases

- The biggest key to umpiring is learning to pause, read, react.. These are probably the most essential elements of successful umpiring. Good timing is also essential. Observe the ball, pause to read the situation, see the developing action and react in the appropriate manner. The few extra moments can be the difference between proper reaction and running off in the wrong direction. You'll be a better umpire, have fewer problems and will avoid some of those embarrassing situations, such as making an out call and then seeing the ball rolling away on the ground.
- Before a pitch is made the base umpire has two responsibilities: make sure that the pitcher's foot is in contact with the pitching rubber, and watch any runners to see if they leave the base early.
- Always keep your eye on the ball—nothing can happen until the ball gets there.
- After the ball is hit the base umpire needs to move into different positions depending on the play. When moving into position, remember "Inside/Outside." If the ball is in the infield, the base umpire will generally be outside the baseline. If the ball is hit to the outfield, you should move to the infield side of the baseline.
- Strive to get in front of all plays and obtain the best possible angle.
- Make sure all plays are finished before making your call—avoid a common fault of young umpires of making calls too soon. Never anticipate your calls.
- Make sure fielder has ball under control. Get as close to tag play as you can without interfering. You must get an angle where you can see between the base runner's foot or hand and bag.
- On all plays, get down low and support your close calls with a strong voice.
- Indicate your out calls with a brisk move of the right arm outward.
- Indicate your safe calls with both arms, stretched outward and apart—palms of hand downward.
- On wide open plays just indicate safe or out with a mild gesture.
- Never call a play on the run—it is better to be further away from the play and call it in a stationary position. Remember, in a two-man system, it is not always possible to be on top of every play.
- The base umpire calls all trapped balls in the outfield and should make every effort to get as close to the outfielder as possible and obtain the proper angle to see the entire play. Don't run directly at the ball as the angle is very important to see trap or catch.
- Always be alert to avoid being hit by batted or thrown balls. Being in an upright position and moving a step forward or backward on each pitch will enable you to keep from being hit.
- Do not turn your head too quickly on the first part of a possible double play or any other play. Follow the ball.
- Make sure the bases are secure and in proper position.
- Be ready to assist the plate umpire with half swings and batted balls hit off a batter's foot.
- Remember being out of position is inexcusable and never forget that hustle, common sense and mental readiness is always important in good umpire. Think of what could happen on the next play. Always be alert.