

BECOMING A BETTER UMPIRE A GREAT PHILOSOPHY

1. **REGISTER AND JOIN** a local association that offers classroom and field clinics and training.
2. **RELATIONSHIPS:** Develop a sound, productive, responsible relationship with your association. Know the persons who make it happen every day. Understand what their roles are and respect them. Know what is expected, help them by being prompt and responsible.
3. **DRESS & APPEARANCE:** You should always be neat, clean and in uniform as prescribed by your association.
4. **PRE-GAME CONFERENCE:** Set your own tone during your pre-game. The pre-game is business like, but informal. It should include the "Big Five" 1. Ground Rules, 2. Batting Order, 3. Courtesy Runners, 4. Contact Book Rule, 5. Manager or representative who will address the Umpire. 6. Develop good people skills in dealing with the managers, players and your brother umpire.
5. **CONCENTRATION:** Officiating requires 110% concentration. Not only do you have to pay attention of the game but you have to be prepared for situations to develop which are not determinable (preventative umpiring). Some guidelines: 1. Don't take personal or work related problems on the field. 2. Limit talking to the players or fans by only communicating what is necessary in the interest of the game. Small talk with players is distracting and will eventually cause problems. 3. It will take years to build a good reputation, but only one bad outing to ruin the reputation.
6. **STAY ALERT:** - Mental Alertness is needed if you expect to become an above average umpire. Great umpires keep in mind the teams, personalities, situations, field conditions, etc. Remember that the Visitors play to win and the Home team plays to tie.
7. **GAME CONTROL / MANAGEMENT / JUDGEMENT:** Game control is really effective management. Effective management means that you gain respect of the managers and players with how you manage the game. If you know what to say, how to say it and are in position to make a call you will earn respect. Whereas you need to take charge, you do not want to be a dictator. Each manager's personality is different, no two games are the same. You must use good judgement in all cases.
8. **STUDENT:** Be a student of the game. Develop an understanding of coaches, players, pitching mechanics, field mechanics and hitting mechanics. Example: It is all right to ask the shortstop or second baseman who has the throw at second base in case of a double play. This information will help you determine what you should do if a double play is attempted. Know when the ball arrives and when the foot makes contact with the bag.
9. **SOFTBALL SENSE:** Keep the game moving with good game management. Take into consideration the level of play (competitiveness of the teams) and make adjustments accordingly: 1. Call a consistent as accurate as possible strike zone. 2. Sell your call. (a. be in position to make the call, b. make it loud, clear and firmly.) 3. Do not over hustle if the pace of the game is slow. 4. Make sure the play has ended before you make any call. 5. Only call time out after a play is finished. Only safety, injury, field conditions will warrant calling time out immediately.
10. **MECHANICS AND RULES:** Mechanics is the art of being in the right place at the right time and not being blind sided by a play. Learn you mechanics (single and double), this will make all of your games go smoother and without less problems. Being in the right place gains the respect of the managers and players. You must constantly strive to be in the right place at the right time regarding distance, position and angle. Softball Association and League Rule Guides are our Bibles. These are the guidelines by which we officiate games. League Rule Guides are provided by League Directors and usually are the exceptions by which they want us to officiate their games.

IN REVIEW:

1. Develop good work ethics, accept all levels of play and give each game your best performance. Call in availability as prescribed by your association and accept all assignments within your availability.
2. Take a competitive spirit to the ball games. Challenge yourself to do a great job, hustle into positions, stay alert and make good calls.
3. Be able to take criticism whether warranted or not. Be able to address difficult situations with respect and rapport with the managers and players.
4. Treat managers and players in a courteous manner. If they ask a reasonable question, answer it in a polite and respectful manner. Choose your words wisely so maintain rapport. Ask managers to control their players and fans at the pre game meeting and on an as needed basis throughout the game. If you are having problems with a player or fan go to that team's manager and give them first chance as remedying the situation.
5. Stay cool, remember your purpose is to establish a calm environment during the game. Acting nervous or displaying a large range of emotions before or during the game will get you off track.
6. **Remember that the more game experience you have, the more self discipline you will acquire, the more successes you will have and the more fun you will have on the field.**