



22 Things New Officials Need to Know

Training reference prepared for Central Florida Umpires, Inc.
A practical guide for new baseball and softball officials.

Purpose

This guide gives new officials a practical, honest look at what to expect when they begin umpiring. The lessons below are not meant to discourage new officials. They are meant to help them prepare, handle difficult moments professionally, and build the habits that lead to respect and advancement.

How to use this guide

Read it before your first season, then revisit it after you have worked a few games. Many of these lessons make more sense after you have experienced them on the field.

Starting with the right expectations

1

You are going to get yelled at.

Baseball and softball are emotional games, and officials are often the easiest target when a coach, player or fan is frustrated. Do not take every comment personally. Stay calm, listen when appropriate, enforce sportsmanship standards when needed, and remember that your job is to manage the game, not win every argument.

2

You are going to spend more than you think on equipment and uniforms.

Officiating has start-up costs: shirts, pants, hats, plate gear, base shoes, plate shoes, jackets, bags and accessories add up quickly. Buy what you need to be safe and properly dressed, then build your inventory over time. Treat your purchases as an investment in credibility and long-term development.

3

Good shoes matter. Do not skimp on them.

Your feet, knees and back absorb the workload of every game. A cheap pair of shoes can become expensive if it leads to pain, poor movement or missed opportunities. Choose quality base and plate shoes that fit properly, support your body and allow you to move with confidence.

4

You will learn to ignore obnoxious fans.

Fans often see the game through a team-colored lens. Many do not know the rule, the angle or the mechanic that applies. Hear what you need to hear for game management, but do not let the crowd control your emotions, pace or judgment.

Credibility, communication and field presence

5

Improve your appearance and respect for you grows.

First impressions matter before the first pitch. A clean uniform, polished shoes, proper fit and professional body language tell everyone that you take the assignment seriously. Appearance alone will not make you a good official, but poor appearance can damage your credibility before you make a call.

6

Confidence in your voice and posture preserves credibility.

How you communicate often matters as much as what you say. Strong signals, clear verbal calls, stillness when appropriate and a composed tone help people believe you are in control. Confidence is not arrogance; it is calm, prepared, professional certainty.

7

You are going to miss calls. Learn from them.

Every official misses calls, including the best officials you know. The goal is not perfection; the goal is improvement. Own the miss when appropriate, review what caused it, learn the correct rule or mechanic, and move on to the next pitch with focus.

8

You will not always get the big game, and that is OK.

Assignments are affected by experience, availability, geography, evaluations, relationships, crew needs and timing. Do not measure your value only by the schedule. Work the game you have, make it look important, and build the trust that leads to better opportunities.

9

Mastering rulebook definitions is critical.

Many rules make sense only when you understand the definitions behind them. Terms such as catch, tag, force play, interference, obstruction, fair, foul and appeal carry specific meaning. Learning the definitions helps you apply rules accurately instead of guessing from baseball language or television habits.

10

People respect officials who carry themselves properly.

When you walk onto the field with professionalism, people notice. Be approachable but not casual, firm but not confrontational, and prepared without acting superior. Your demeanor should communicate that you are there to serve the game and handle your responsibilities.

Feedback, game management and professional trust

11

You will be evaluated, and evaluations are part of development.

Some feedback will be excellent, some will be incomplete, and some may feel unfair. Take what is useful, ask questions, and look for patterns across multiple evaluations. The best officials are coachable without letting every opinion shake their confidence.

12

Game administrators vary.

Some administrators will escort you, provide water, handle problems and make you feel valued. Others may barely acknowledge you. Be professional either way. Know who is in charge, communicate when necessary, and do your job even when the host site does not make it easy.

13

Put bad things in the past.

A bad inning, missed call, argument or awkward moment can follow you if you let it. Look through the windshield, not the rearview mirror. Learn what needs to be learned, then return your attention to the next pitch, the next play and the next responsibility.

14

Assigners do play favorites; earn that trust.

Being a favorite is usually less about politics and more about trust. Assigners value officials who are available, answer messages, arrive on time, accept appropriate assignments, communicate problems early, work well with partners and do not create avoidable headaches.

Preparation, health and equipment habits

15

Hydration and nutrition matter.

You cannot perform well if you are running on energy drinks, skipped meals and no water. Hot weather, long days and multiple games expose poor preparation quickly. Build habits that keep your mind sharp and your body ready from the first pitch through the final out.

16

Fitness is critical.

You need to be as physically capable in extra innings as you were for the first pitch. Fitness affects judgment, timing, movement, recovery and confidence. You do not have to be an elite athlete, but you do need to be able to move, hustle, recover and stay locked in.

17

Not every veteran is willing to help you.

Some experienced officials are excellent mentors; others may be quiet, impatient or set in their ways. Learn from the good ones, ask respectful questions, and do not let one unhelpful partner discourage you. You are responsible for your own development.

18

Pack for changing weather.

You may leave home in one kind of weather and work the game in another. Keep uniforms and undergarments for heat, cold, rain and wind, and pack more than you think you need when conditions are uncertain. Being comfortable and prepared helps you focus on officiating.

Rules knowledge, advancement and patience

19

You will learn the rules, not just think you know them.

Many new officials arrive with playing, coaching or fan experience and assume they know the rules. Officiating reveals the difference between familiarity and rule knowledge. Study regularly, ask rule-based questions and learn how rules, case plays and mechanics work together.

20

Advancement may come slower than expected.

Moving up too soon can damage confidence and reputation. Be patient with the process and build a foundation that lasts. It is better to be ready and promoted a year late than to be exposed a year too early.

21

Take care of your officiating gear.

Your gear is part of your safety, appearance and credibility. Clean it, dry it, store it properly and inspect it regularly. Replacing neglected equipment is expensive, and poorly maintained gear can make you look unprepared before the game begins.

22

You will not work varsity right away, and you should not.

Sub-varsity and lower-level games are where new officials learn timing, rules, positioning, communication and game management. Treat those assignments with respect. They are not beneath you; they are where you build the skills needed for higher-level games.

Final reminder

The early part of officiating can be challenging, but every strong official was once new. Be prepared, be coachable, be dependable, and keep learning. The reputation you build one game at a time will become your most important assignment credential.