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Little League Rules Myths

Many misunderstandings on the field are the result of "Everybody Knows That..." rules myths. Listed below are a collection of common mis-beliefs about Little League baseball rules. Each of these statements are false. Clicking on each link will explain the correct ruling.

1. [The ball is dead on a foul tip.](#)
2. [A batted ball that hits the plate is a foul ball.](#)
3. [The base coach can't leave the coach's box during play or he/she will be guilty of interference.](#)
4. [A batter-runner cannot overrun first base on a base-on-balls.](#)
5. [A fly ball that is deflected over the fence is a ground rule double.](#)
6. [A base runner cannot be guilty of interference on a ground ball if he or she doesn't touch the fielder.](#)
7. [A batter who bats out of order is out.](#)
8. [The pitcher gets eight warm-up pitches between innings.](#)
9. [If a pitch hits a player's hands it's considered a foul ball, since hands are considered part of the bat.](#)
10. [When the catcher blocks the plate without the ball, it should be called interference.](#)
11. [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.

12. [In order to be called out on a caught foul ball, the batted ball must go higher than the batter's head.](#)
13. [On an overthrow out of play, the runners get 1 plus 1; the base he/she is going to plus one base.](#)
14. [If a fielder holds a fly ball for two seconds it's a legal catch, even if he/she drops it thereafter.](#)
15. [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.](#)
16. [In order to satisfy the mandatory playing rule, players must play six consecutive defensive outs.](#)
17. [If a batter is batting out of turn, the scorekeeper should let the umpire know.](#)

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