

# 4 HABITS SOFTBALL UMPIRES MUST HAVE

By **Referee** - January 15, 2021



*Photo Credit: Bob Messina*

If you took a poll of coaches and players and asked them to name the skills and habits that are important for an umpire to possess, what do you suppose would be on the list? More importantly, where would “rules knowledge” fall on the list?

**Rules knowledge** is undoubtedly important, but how often will it enter into their thinking? Probably only if a controversial ruling came up during the game you worked

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While there is no substitute for strong rules knowledge and **solid mechanics**, the best umpires also possess qualities that are independent of those skills. They have a demeanor or confidence that sets them apart from most umpires. How can you rise above the rest and, with minimal effort, make yourself look better to everyone who views your performance?

## START TO IMPROVE ON THE LITTLE THINGS WITH YOUR NEXT ASSIGNMENT

As in other areas of life, there are “little things” that you can do right now — starting with your next assignment — that will enhance your performance, improve your image, increase your comfort and confidence levels and simply make you a better umpire. The following skills and habits won’t be ingrained overnight but improving a little bit at a time with each of them doesn’t require any significant study or exceptional effort.



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## 1. Keep moving.

Hustle really doesn't take all that much extra effort. It's simply a matter of being dedicated to being in position and looking interested and athletic during your games. If you know where to be, it is usually easy to get there. Just remember the basic hustle rules: Get as close to the ideal position as possible while ensuring that you are not running when the play actually happens, you don't interfere with the play and you don't leave a potential secondary play uncovered.

## 2. Look professional.

No one should underestimate the value of appearance. Buy the standard clothes and equipment for your level of play and wear them properly. Iron your shirts and pants and shine your shoes. Be dressed and ready before you appear on the field. Looks are seldom deceiving; make your first impression one that you can try to live up to and not one that you have to overcome.

## 3. Arrive early.

As with appearance, arrival time is a first-impression issue. It should surprise no one that the umpire who comes running up to the field a few minutes before game time creates a

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you arrive 15 minutes earlier than that, you will always be on time. You will need to properly conduct a managers or coaches conference in addition to your own pregame conference with your partner or crew.

#### 4. Meet the teams.

Don't underestimate the potential value of the meeting with coaches and captains, which gives you an opportunity to get the game started on the right note.



Know what you're going to say before you talk to the coaches. That diminishes the possibility of stumbling over your words, creating a negative opinion of your ability or

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