

HOME PLATE MEETING

The plate umpire needs to understand that the home plate meeting is one of the most important jobs the umpire will perform the entire game. The basic philosophy of the home plate meeting is to keep it friendly and keep it short. A well-run home plate meeting instills confidence in the coaches that the umpire knows what he is doing. Many times a coach's opinion of the umpire is directly related to how the umpire conducts the home plate meeting. Here are some of the things the plate umpire can do to insure a well-run plate meeting. Obviously, these items pertain to umpire crews. One person game umpires should make the appropriate adjustments.

- 1) Let the home coach know you are ready for the home plate meeting approximately five minutes prior to game time. If the coach is ready, proceed to home plate. If he is not ready (which will happen now and again) tell the coach you will wait outside the field near the dugout and to get you when the meeting is ready to begin. The primary reason to do this is to avoid waiting at home plate for an extended time until the coach is ready. Do not wait on the field near the backstop, etc. We all know, that by rule, the home plate meeting is scheduled to begin five minutes prior to game time. However, in reality, there are many reasons why this won't happen as scheduled. Be flexible.
- 2) When it is time for the meeting, walk in a business-like manner directly to home plate. The plate umpire stands just behind the point of the plate facing the field. The partner(s) stand facing the plate umpire a couple of feet from the front of the plate. There is no need to yell from home plate for the coaches. If a coach needs to be summoned, have the base umpire go over to the dugout and get him.
- 3) When the coaches approach the plate, introduce yourself and let your partners introduce themselves. Make a point of remembering the first name of each coach. It is not that difficult and it is an acceptable and professional manner in dealing with coaches.
- 4) Sometimes coaches will begin to separate the lineup cards as they approach the plate. Ask them not to do that. Be nice, but do not let them do that. First, take all lineup cards from the home coach, then, before doing anything else, take all lineup cards from the visiting coach. You are now in possession of both lineups. Inspect the lineup cards of the home coach first. Be sure you do three things. First, take your time and be sure all positions are listed. You will be surprised that, occasionally, there will be an omission or duplicate positions. Do the same with the numbers. Be sure numbers are listed for the substitutes. Next, check the names. Be sure there is an initial in front of duplicate last names. When you are finished, keep the top white copy, give the next copy to the visiting coach and the rest, if any, back to the home coach. Repeat the process with the visiting coach. If available, you may if you wish, keep the first colored copy from the visiting coach. If you do this, you will know the white lineup is the home team and the colored lineup is the visiting team. If both copies are white, note in the upper left corner 3B or 1B for the appropriate team. That way, where there is a lineup change, you will be looking at the correct lineup. TAKE YOUR TIME CHECKING THE LINEUP CARDS. It's much better to fix a problem at the plate meeting than later in the game. While you are checking the lineup cards, the coaches may be talking with each other or your partner may be talking with one or both coaches. This is acceptable.
- 5) Ask the home coach to go over the ground rules. This will usually start from behind the backstop. It is a nice gesture to ask the visiting coach he is clear on the ground rules. It is a good idea to note any unusual ground rules on the back of your lineup card. This should complete the home plate meeting. You might remind them to make sure you get any lineup changes. Wish both coaches good luck. Avoid any further discussion with the coaches. The exception would be league-mandated instructions. Expect that they know what they are doing. Do they always? Of course not, but assume they do know what they are doing and deal with issues as they occur.
- 6) It is customary for the base umpire(s) to take their positions as the home team takes the field. It is also customary for base umpires to give the plate umpire a light tap on the chest before breaking for their positions. The base umpire(s) should jog to the infield cutout past the bases. On a dirt infield, jog a few feet past first base. On a four man crew, the second base umpire should jog with the first base umpire. Do not move to second base through the middle of the infield.
- 7) In the event the National Anthem is played, umpires should face the flag with their hats over their hearts. Umpires should stand at attention a couple of beats after the end of the Anthem. In the event of a color guard, umpires should hold their position until the color guard leaves the field.