

How to Take Care of Your Gear!

Remember, for an umpire to earn respect, one crucial aspect is appearance. A neat clean appearance is very important and can get you a lot farther than looking unkempt.

Suggested cleaning/maintenance kit

- Clothing brush
- Old toothbrush
- Wipes (disposable kind)
- Clear shoe polish
- Black shoe polish
- Cleaning cloth/wiping cloth

Cap

A cap will, due to the work environment, pick up shale dust and look old and tired before its time. A way around this and to prolong the life of the hat is to after a game, when you get home, rinse it under cold water. This will help get the sweat out and the dust off and keep it bright looking.

If the cap has a logo (like a Baseball Ontario logo) then you can scrub it gently with a small brush and a gentle soap. Do not scrub hard and make sure to scrub in the same direction as the embroidery stitches run. This will get the dirt out from between the threads.

Let the cap air dry. Hang it in the shower or other place where it can drip. It will be dry by morning.

Shirts

Your shirt will also pick up dust and dirt from various sources. When you are behind the plate and the ball gets by the catcher and hits your shirt it will leave a mark, usually containing shale dust. Players sliding into bases and creating a dust cloud will also generate additional dirt/dust on your shirt.

The majority of the umpire shirts in use today are already drip dry material which does not require ironing. A regular washing and hanging to dry will keep your shirt looking in good condition.

You should regularly inspect your shirts for items such as loose threads, pulls, loose buttons and other items which detract from the appearance of the shirt. These items should be fixed as soon as you find them.

Belts

You should inspect your belt on a regular basis to make sure that the edges are not starting to look tired and old. A leather belt can be given a cleaning using a leather cleaning product which helps keep it looking new and fresh. If the buckle is starting to look worn and tired consider replacing the belt.

Pants

A well fitting pair of pants hemmed to the correct length goes a long way to assisting in your appearance. A pair of pants used for umpiring, by their very nature, tend to be cut bigger depending upon whether you are doing plate or base work. Your plate pants have to allow room for shin guards under the legs. They are also cut bigger in the seat to allow you to take the correct stance without an embarrassing opening taking place.

It is important that a regular cleaning and pressing take place on your pants to maintain their appearance. Your pants tend to get more dirt on them from your hands, dust from the diamond due to players sliding in and the normal dust generated by necessary movements to fulfill your task.

After each game, using a clothing brush, you should give your pants a brushing to remove loose dust and to prevent it from getting on other items in your clothing bag.

The regular washing and ironing of your pants should include looking for loose threads and other wear which will detract from their appearance. Make sure when ironing you also remember to iron the belt loops and entire waistband area. Pay special attention to the crease line on each leg of your pants. Pants may say wash and wear but the extra time spent ironing the pants will make a difference.

Also after each washing check to see that the zipper is still in good working order. There is nothing more embarrassing than to find your zipper no longer works and it is noticed when you are on the field.

Shoes

After each game you should make sure to clean your shoes. Inspect the laces and the entire shoe for damage and repair as necessary. Give your shoes a good brushing to remove the dust and dirt accumulated during the game followed by a wipe down and polishing. Players and fans alike do notice when your shoes are not clean. They will not stay that way long but when you walk on the diamond for the first time a clean appearance is noticed by all.

Shin guards

Your shin guards will also accumulate dust from the diamond. After each game wipe them down and give them a good brushing to clear the shale dust. You can also consider, if you have access to an air compressor, using low pressure to blow the dust out which accumulates between the padding and the protector. Compressed air can also be used to clean up the dust which accumulates in other areas of your shin guards.

Even though no one may see them if you wish to keep them shinier looking, after a thorough cleaning, you can use some Pledge, for example, to buff up and shine the plastic parts.

Regularly inspect the straps on your shin guards to ensure they are in good condition.

Ball Bags

With the frequent action of your hand going in and out of your ball bag a lot of dust and other dirt will accumulate. Most bags are made well enough to have no problem getting a good washing in a washing machine. After washing if you see wrinkles, a quick touch up with an iron will go a long way to make them look better.

After a game is a good idea to also give your ball bags a brushing off and turn them inside out to get all the shale bits which may have gotten in during the game.

Umpire Bag

An often neglected piece of equipment. Keeping it clean outside and sharp looking also goes a long way to presenting a good image. A bag which looks dirty can form an impression about your skills if noticed by fans and players as you walk to the change room.