

There are a ton of places to buy gear. I find my best deals usually on umpire websites and Ebay, but all of the dealers have good buys when stuff goes on sale. Epic Sports and Ump-Attire are two that I shop at often. [Umpire Empire](#) is the best place to read about anything to do with umpiring and they have an entire forum on equipment. While you can get started for much less, you can easily spend \$1000 on gear and uniforms if you get the best, for example my chest protector, mask and shin guards were \$500 alone. I would make sure that this hobby is for you before you drop that kind of money. You can ease into umpiring by buying quality serviceable gear, then upgrading. If you want to do the big money tournaments you are going to have to have the right gear and proper uniforms by this summer.

My 2 cents on gear -other opinions may vary:

Uniform shirts-pay attention when buying as some are sized for the bases (your normal size Large=Large) and some are sized for the plate (Large=Extra Large). I usually buy Smitty-they are sized for the plate (buy your normal size to wear over plate gear, 1 size smaller for bases). I normally wear an XL so I buy an XL for Plate and a L for bases. New umpires only need the plate size. I would suggest buying black first as most veteran umpires like black, then buy a lighter color like Cream or Light Blue (with black collar for baseball-Lt blue collar for softball). Wear the light colors when you are working in the sun. Keep them on hangers and wash them after every game. I always wear an undershirt that is moisture wicking like a Nike Dry Fit. Note the undershirt has to match your uniform shirt: navy for navy, black for black, cream, and Lt blue with the black collar.

Uniform pants-Honig's Polywool pants are the best and you can wear them at any level of baseball, but they are pricy. Smitty 100% polyester are great pants for the Recreational level and about 1/2 to 2/3 the price. Their Poly-Spandex pants are the current rage. Some guys like the Cliff Keene pants-they just started making polywool pants recently. My first pants were Smitty, my new ones are Honig's. Buy the charcoal color for baseball, heather gray for Softball. The temptation is to buy Combo pants that are billed as being fine for both the bases and the plate. The reality is that they look tight on the plate and baggy on the bases. My suggestion is to buy plate pants, then base pants when you move up to 2 man games. Have them professionally hemmed. Have your plate pants fitted with your plate shoes and shin guards on. Keep them on hangers (I get dressed at the field) and the press should last for around 6 games-then wash or dry clean them and iron them.

Manhood protection-This is up to you to find something comfortable, but don't skimp. If you catch one in the jimmies and it hurts, everybody is going to know and you are going to be "that guy" for the rest of the season. I like Shock Doctor cups and wear them in their compression shorts. I had a 12 year old girl break their Carbon Flex cup so now I wear the Titan cup which is made out of stainless steel. If someone breaks this one I am taking it as a sign to retire. Nutty Buddy is another highly touted cup. Here is a tip: get black compression shorts-if you blow out the seat of your pants it will be less obvious. Another tip: I tuck my undershirt and uniform shirt into my tights-this keeps them from getting untucked or baggy about my waist during the game. This works much better than the rubber belts you wear under your pants.

Hats-Buy quality hats-I like Richardson. Our association hats are Richardson and are available for \$15 (but free with paid membership). Using a fitted hat is a sign of a veteran umpire. Know your size. There are different sized bills for different positions: 4 stitch for plate, 6 stitch for combo plate/base, 8 stitch for bases. Navy hats for Navy shirts, Black hats for Black, Cream, and

Light Blue with Black collar shirts. Hats will get dirty and show salt rings. Rinse them with water or dry clean them to keep them looking professional. Replace them when they fade.

Ball Bags-You can pick up Smitty Ball bags for \$6-10 and they will work. I like the [Ultimate ball](#) bag from Ump-attire.com-worth the money for me. One ball bag is acceptable (wear it on the side of your dominate hand), but many veteran umpires wear 2. Don't forget a brush, indicator, flipping coin, timing device, and lineup card holder. I keep most balls in the right as well as my brush, extra pen, and a small notebook that I use for notes like when I throw somebody's butt out of a game. I put extra balls, lineup holder and a water bottle in the left. I put my flipping coin in the right front pant pocket, indicator and a single car key in the left front pant pocket, and timer in the left back pocket. Ball bag color should match the hat color. Wash your ball bags when they get dirty, replace them when they fade.

Shoes/Socks/Belt-Umpires use 2 types of shoes: Plate and Base. Either way they should be mostly black-some white is acceptable in baseball. Plate shoes have a hard toe and a metatarsal plate over the top of the shoe. New Balance is the leader in umpire footwear and what I would recommend. Wipe the dust off your shoes after wearing them-I use cleaning wipes from Costco, but some guys like a rag and squirt bottle. I wipe the shoe then put the wipe inside to keep them smelling fresh. Have a plan to polish them-I work a lot of games during the week and I polish them every Monday. Liquid Quickshine polish is easy and effective-it takes me less than 5 minutes to polish 2 pairs. Socks should be black-I like over the calf socks that wick away moisture like soccer socks as they give more support. Belts should also be black and around 1 1/2" in width-Boston Leather is the brand I buy. Belts will need to be polished a couple times a season. I am not a big fan of patent leather but I have heard it is easy to take care of.

Chest protector-One thing you don't want to buy is a catcher style soft padded protector. The best bang for the buck right now is the Champion P1XX [like this one](#). These "hard shell" type protectors will give great protection from pitching up to college level. They come in different sizes and are measured in the front. Measure from the hollow at the top of your chest to the bottom of your rib cage-the longer the more coverage. Let it dry out after wearing it. Washable padding is a plus. The Wilson Gold/Platinum CP are the mainstays of the higher levels. I wear an Unequal and love it.

Shin guards-Lots of options here, but [these](#) are great for lower level rec ball and you can't beat the price. I wear these for softball and lower level baseball and Force 3 shin guards for upper level baseball. Shin guards come in different sizes so make sure you get the right one. Measure from the top of your foot to the middle of your knee.

Masks-Again there are a lot of options here. I like a light weight mask-none of my masks weigh much more than a pound. Most umpires I know own more than one mask as they are your most visible accessory. [This Mask](#) comes in both black and silver frames. I have this mask in black and a silver aluminum Wilson Dynalite-both have Team Wendy pads. I recommend you upgrade the padding to [Team Wendy](#) when you move up to higher level ball-concussions suck more than getting hit in the balls. Your mask will stay looking sharp if you keep it in a breathable bag when not in use.

Short on cash for Gear?

We now have a program that allows you to buy gear from us and pay over time as you do games. Sign the attached agreement and return to me. 50% of your first 8 game fees will go to cover your plate gear and you get to keep the other 50%! The gear costs \$160 and includes Uniform

Shirt/Hat, chest protector, mask, shin guards, plate brush, indicator, ball bag and a nice bag to keep it all in.