

Hello, my name is Rich Riedel and I have been umpiring baseball and softball for the past 10 years, doing around 2,000 games. I currently run an umpire organization of about 45 guys, covering Lake, McHenry, and the Kane county area.

CGYBS has asked me to compile a list of umpire equipment needed to safely protect an individual as an umpire. As I write this, I will try to look at all the possible variables in what equipment to choose, where to purchase it from, and how to possibly save some money. I will write this to you as the parents, believing you are looking to purchase this for your son or daughter who is wanting to get into umping. If you are an adult wanting to get into umping, you should understand my intent.

Purchasing protective equipment is much like purchasing a vehicle. What brand should I get, what model is best, what store do I purchase it from. Protective equipment is very much the same kind of question. Do I purchase Wilson, Addias, or Rawlings? Do I get it from Amazon, Gerry Davis, or baseball savings? Do I get catchers gear and use that, or do I need umpire gear? I will do my best to answer all those questions. But if you still have a question, please feel free to reach out to me and ask.

Let's first address the question of "can an umpire use their old catcher's gear instead of buying new umpire gear?" In most circumstances, the answer is yes. The main reason I may say no is because most youth catcher's gear does not provide shoulder protection on the throwing arm side. That leaves a shoulder area unprotected and serious injury can occur. It takes a lot of practice to learn how to position yourself behind the catcher to minimize the possibility of being hit, but the reality is that you still need a good catcher in front of you and that does not always happen. If an umpire is well protected, they will not get hurt and will most likely want to continue to umpire. So with that, if the chest protector does not provide protection on both shoulders, then you may just need to buy an umpire chest protector and use the catcher's shin guards and helmet.

As you look at the equipment, you will see it is somewhat pricey. But, Don't try to save a few bucks at the expense of saving a few dollars. This equipment will last a long time so with that, let's get into it.

Where do I purchase the equipment from? Amazon is usually a good place to start. They have most brands and competitive pricing. And, shipping may be cheaper or free. There are also a couple of umpire stores online. One is Gerry Davis at <https://gerrydavis.com/>. You can buy everything there. Another is Honigs at <https://honigs.com>. They do not have as much of a selection, but there are options there. Or, google baseball umpire equipment and you will find many other options. Most have starter kits you can buy and those will work fine. Until you know your child is going to do this long term, or stop growing, this is a good option.

Now, let's start talking about the equipment in general, starting at the top. The headgear is the most important piece of safety equipment to buy. Spend as much money here as you can. It could make the difference between a concussion or not. Until your child is an experienced

umpire, do not let them wear a face mask style mask. They need full head protection, top to side and front to back. It takes years of practice to stand there and not turn your head on certain pitches. You do not want to see them get hurt that way. So you may ask, why do you use this and why do so many umpires wear that style. It is because they are lighter, cooler, and easier to work with. But I also have a lot of training and experience behind the plate. I wore a hockey style mask for many years before I switched over. In fact, I will still wear that in the older level games because of the added protection they offer when the pitchers are throwing so much harder. In addition to the helmet, purchase a throat protector and attach it to the helmet. A good friend of mine had a ball come up under his mask and he had to go to the emergency room. For \$12, it's a great investment.

Here is a good style of helmet-

<https://gerrydavis.com/products/under-armour-victory-series-umpire-helmet>

Stay away from this-

<https://gerrydavis.com/products/champro-steel-umpire-mask>

Throat guard-

<https://gerrydavis.com/products/wilson-6-umpire-throat-guard?shpxid=ab57bcb9-447b-402c-9943-fd54cbd9de99>

I like to wear a baseball umpire hat because it helps with the sweat and it fits under the helmet.

<https://baseball.epicsports.com/prod/20506/richardson-525-surge-umpire-adjustable-ball-caps.html>

To finish with the head protection, I would recommend that your child wear a pair of safety glasses. A pair of sunglasses helps with the sun, but also protects the eyes from dirt by a bounced pitch, or dirt from the glove of the catcher when the catcher catches the ball. For evening games, a clear pair of glasses is equally important.

The chest protector is the next most important piece of safety equipment. Again, spend as much money as you can afford here. For the lower level games, most entry level protectors will work fine. Just make sure both shoulders are protected.

Here is a good style of chest protector-

<https://gerrydavis.com/products/champro-pro-plus-umpire-chest-protector>

For higher levels and faster pitching, this is what I wear. I love the hard plastic shell and added protection.

<https://www.ump-attire.com/Products/A3215/Wilson-MLB-West-Vest-Platinum-Umpire-Chest-Protector>

Shin guards protect the legs from pitches the catcher misses, or foul balls. As the pitchers throw harder, look for guards that offer more protection around the ankles and tops of the feet.

Here is a good entry level of shin guards.

<https://gerrydavis.com/products/champro-pro-plus-umpire-leg-guards>

For higher levels, I would suggest something like this-

<https://gerrydavis.com/products/wilson-mlb-gold-umpire-leg-guards>

Plate shoes are unfortunately something that will have to get replaced more so than not. Especially with the growing feet of the kids. It is important to wear umpire plate shoes. They have steel toes and a protective cover on the top of the foot. There are so many small bones in the feet that they will break easily. Do Not wear tennis shoes as an umpire behind the plate. You are only asking for trouble. There are a lot of options out there but the 3N2 shoes seem to be a pretty good shoe for most people, and they will not break the bank. These shoes can be bought about anywhere, so just shop for the best price.

<https://baseball.epicsports.com/prod/30997/3n2-reaction-pro-plate-lo-umpire-officiating-shoes.html>

The last piece of protective recruitment is for the boys only. There is not any good feeling about getting hit below the belt with a ball. I did not listen to the veteran guys and bought a pretty cheap protective cup. Then after my first "hit", the first thing I did when I got home was order this protective cup. I mean it can still hurt some if you get hit there, but at least you will not feel like your life is going to end. Worth every penny.

<https://nuttybuddy.com>

Now for the uniforms. At a minimum, each umpire should have a navy blue uniform top for baseball. Softball they should have powder blue. That is the standard color. There is nothing wrong with adding colors later, but Navy or Powder Blue is always the default color if you are going to work with a partner. There is no need to add a number, but if you want the added expense, they cost about \$8 per number. Order the size shirt your child wears. They are cut large to wear over the chest protector.

For the pants, again order the same size pants your child wears. They are cut large at the bottom for the shin guards, and they have an adjustment in the waist. Pants come in two styles, plate or combo pants and base pants. They need either a plate or combo pants. If they get base pants, they will not allow the shin guards to fit. Order the color charcoal gray, NOT heather gray. Very few umpires wear heather gray.

Next, you will need to order ball bags. Order the same color as the pants. I like to wear two ball bags, one for the baseballs and the other for my sweat rag or sunglasses and snacks. I try to keep the Baseball bag for the balls and dirt only.

<https://gerrydavis.com/products/smitty-11-5-umpire-ball-bag-with-pockets>

Lastly, they need to have a plate brush and indicator. I would suggest buying a couple of each because they are easily lost.

<https://baseball.epicsports.com/prod/14685/index.html?trk=900297242&msclkid=2ea74c2b567818eb8e9b2f0910e90698>

<https://baseball.epicsports.com/prod/112220/index.html?trk=902021851&msclkid=613b5ebf26a51e0cfc7f3d9d60179f81>

To summarize, this is a rather expensive list of equipment, but most of it will last a long time. As your child gets more experienced, they can start working for umpire organizations where they can make \$65 to \$100 per game. It is a great summer job and a great way to help pay for college. Many of my high school kids work 50 to 100 games a season, and some of my umpires work 200 to 225 games a year. If you do the math, your gear is paid off rather quickly and the rest is profit.

I hope this helps. Please let me know if you have any questions. I had a mentor when I started umpiring, and I will be a mentor to those who need it too.

Regards,

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