

OZ PARK BASEBALL

ASSOCIATION

9U Age Division

2024 Baseball Rules of Play – as of 4/01/24

Please note that in addition to the below rules and regulations, all players, coaches and parents must abide by the OPBA Code of Conduct.

The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) baseball rules, as printed in the current National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Book, shall act as the basis of the Oz Park Baseball Association except for any revisions and additions as stated herein. To the extent any conflicts exist between the IHSA rules and these OPBA rules, the OPBA rules shall prevail.

I. OPBA LEAGUE AGE DIVISIONS

Whatever a player's age is on August 31st immediately following the summer of play determines the player's Age Division. For example, if a player turns 7 on August 31, 2024, then that player is in the 7-Year-Old Division for the 2024 Spring/Summer. If a player turns 7 on September 1, 2024, then that player is in the 6-Year-Old Division for the 2024 Spring/Summer. Current age groupings are:

4 year-olds
5 year-olds
6 year-olds
7 year-olds
8 year-olds
9 year-olds
10 year-olds
11-12 year-olds
13-14 year-olds

II. GENERAL LEAGUE RULES AND CONDUCT FOR ALL AGE DIVISIONS

1. All players, coaches, parents, and fans shall show good sportsmanship at all times – no chirping, bragging, trash-talking or taunting at any time.
2. ONLY umpires (or coaches, in the younger divisions) may decide if players are safe or out.
3. No parent or spectator will be permitted to stand at the backstop/fence directly behind the umpire from dugout to dugout. Umpires will be instructed to enforce this rule. A spectator that does not follow this rule after repeated umpire warnings may be asked to leave the field.

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4. At end of the game, both teams will line up on their respective foul line to tip their caps to each other or shake hands. Again, NO chirping, bragging or other poor sportsmanship is permitted.
5. At the end of the game, teams have 5 minutes to clean up and leave the dugout area before the next team enters the dugout area. Coaches are reminded that they are responsible for cleaning up any litter left by spectators in the viewing areas.
6. A coach shall not use cigarettes or cigars (electronic or otherwise), nor use or be under the influence of drugs (including marijuana) or alcohol at any game or practice. Any violations will result in immediate and permanent dismissal from coaching in the OPBA.
 - **Note:** All coaches, parents and spectators are reminded that drugs and alcohol are not permitted on Park District property pursuant to and enforced by Chicago Ordinance and subject to the City's enforcement policy.
7. A coach or player ejected for any reason will automatically be suspended for the next game. If the same coach or player is ejected from a second game, in the same division or in any other OPBA league division, within the same season, he or she will be suspended indefinitely and will be required to appear before and appeal to a disciplinary committee made up of OPBA board members and subjected to a vote before any reinstatement.
8. Only team members and their respective recognized coaches (including a designated scorekeeper) are allowed on the team bench or in a team's dugout area during a game. Spectators are not allowed on a team bench for any reason. All players are to remain on the bench except for the player at bat, the "on deck" player, and a pitcher and/or catcher warming up. Coaches not coaching a base, supervising a warming-up batter or pitcher, or coaching defense, must remain in the dugout/bench area while the game is being played. Coaches are not allowed in the well area or along the base line.
9. Coaches are expected to conduct themselves with the highest level of sportsmanship at all OPBA functions. Improper behavior includes, but is not limited to, verbal and/or physical interference of an opposing player or coach. For example, there is to be no negative commentary about the skills or ability of an opposing pitcher or batter directed to the player, the player's team or bench, or the coach's own team. Noncompliance in a game will result in an umpire-issued warning and possible ejection at the umpire's discretion. A second non-compliance WILL result in forfeit of the game and potential dismissal by the OPBA Board from coaching in the OPBA.
10. In case of an injury to a player, the injured player may be replaced by a player from the bench. In case of an injury to a batter who cannot continue the plate appearance, the at-bat shall be vacated, i.e., the count is wiped clean and the next batter in the

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order is up. An injured player may return to the game after a rest of at least the remaining half-inning in which the injury occurred. Should the player be excused from the game, and this causes the team to go below nine players, each player moves up one spot in the batting order and no automatic out will be recorded.

- **Note:** In case of injury to a player, a coach should seek to apply immediate first aid and/or seek emergency medical care, as necessary. If a parent or guardian of the injured player is not present, he or she should be notified as soon as possible. Park District personnel should also be notified as soon as possible, as necessary. The Park District also requires an injury report form to be completed.
11. Players 8 and up are required to attend the game in complete uniform. This includes league-issued hat, jersey, pants, and closed-toed shoes (sneakers or non-metal cleats). Players must keep shirts tucked in their pants and keep hats facing forward. Players not in proper uniform will be suspended for that game.
 12. It is expected that teams will run on and off the field to speed play and through position rotations.
 13. Each team should practice at least once, but no more than twice, per week.

III. TEAM STRUCTURE AND PLAYER PARTICIPATION

1. A team must play with at least 8 players for a game to be counted as a legal game. Playing with less than 8 will result in a forfeit. No automatic out will be recorded.
2. 9 players will play in the field at one time: Pitcher, Catcher, 1st Base, 2nd Base, 3rd Base, Short Stop, Left Fielder, Center Fielder and Right Fielder.
3. Somewhat permanent positions are OK as skill warrants, but the coaches need to provide some rotation between games to give each player on the team an opportunity to play every position. For example, a coach should not play the same player in right field every game, while putting his own child on second base every game.
4. A late-arriving player is eligible to play in a game only if that player is available to play by the first pitch at the top of the fourth inning and must be placed in the last spot in the batting order.
5. **Call Up Rules:** If a team is unable to field the minimum number of players (8), that team may “call up” a player(s). Coaches should consult the division rosters for player contact information and/or coordinate with their division commissioner. Call ups will be limited as follows:
 - Any house player in the same house age division who is not an All-Star in any All-Star age division -- e.g. If a 10U All-Star is playing 12U house, then that player is not eligible for a “call up” to another 12U house team.

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- Any player from the house league age division immediately below, including All-Stars (e.g. A 10U house player who is also a 10U All-Star is eligible for a call up to any 12U house team.).
 - Once called up, the call up player(s) must play at least as many innings in the game as the rest of the roster players even if the game day lineup later exceeds 9 players from a team's original roster (meaning a player unexpectedly showed up).
 - The call up player(s) must be the last batter in the batting order.
 - For the regular season, the call up player(s) must play outfield in every other inning and cannot play 1st base, pitcher or catcher; ***provided, that for Fall Ball regular season***, call up players can play any position other than pitcher but are required to play a minimum of two innings in the outfield. ***For the Playoffs, call up players must play in the outfield only.***
 - No more than 2 call up players are permitted per team per game.
 - A team cannot call up players to purposefully exceed 9 players; however, if an unexpected rostered player arrives, then all call-ups who are present at the field are permitted to play even if the roster exceeds 9 players; and
 - Call-ups must follow all rules for the division in which the game is being played.
 - Please note that the call-up rules, including the ability to call-up All-Stars during the playoffs, will be reviewed by the Rules Committee during the season and information will be provided in advance of the playoffs starting if the Rules Committee makes any changes to the rules for the playoffs.
6. **Playing Time Requirements**: No player should be on the bench for more than one consecutive inning. Every player must sit one inning before someone sits two innings in any one game (when possible). A player's playing time is always contingent upon them following the OPBA Code of Conduct and a coach can take absence from games and practices into account.
 7. Any base runner scheduled to play Catcher the following inning must be substituted with a courtesy runner whenever there is 1 out or more in order to speed play along and minimize any delay associated with inning changeover. The courtesy runner must be the player that made last out (whether by strikeout, by putting a ball in play, or otherwise).
 8. Prior to the defensive team taking the field in any inning, a coach may substitute any player for any other player as long as it does not violate pitching regulations.
 9. Umpires will be supplied for each game and are the only ones authorized to make all calls in the game – not the coaches. If an umpire is not available for a game for any reason, the coaches should call the phone numbers for umpires provided by OPBA, including on its website. If an umpire is still not available, or is unavailable

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for part of the game, the coaches may agree to a suitable replacement at umpire, provided that all necessary and reasonable safety precautions are taken (e.g., if a temporary umpire without padding is used, that umpire should call the game, including balls and strikes, from behind the pitcher, with appropriate head protection).

10. Once each half-inning begins, coaches for the fielding team must remain in the bench area; no defensive coaches are permitted in the field of play, and offensive coaches must either be in the bench area or in the first or third base coaching boxes with the exception of the pitching mound in the event of a coach-pitcher situation. A coach may enter the field of play to change a pitcher, but only after first calling for and receiving a time-out from the umpire.

IV. FIELD AND GAME STRUCTURE

1. All innings will be player pitch with a **BIG** – *i.e., 9U appropriate* -- strike zone encouraged.
2. **Live Play/Dead Play:** The ball/play is considered dead when a player in the infield controls the ball ***inside of the base paths and calls time out.*** It is the umpire's discretion as to whether time out will be granted. Coaches should instruct players to call time out upon gaining possession of a hit ball in the infield. **Umpires are to grant time outs consistent with the flow of the game. Any player halfway or more to a base, gets that base. Any player less than halfway goes back to the original base.**
3. The ball is also considered dead when it hits an umpire whether by batted ball or thrown ball. Each player gets the base to which they were headed.
4. Each game is scheduled for six (6) innings; however, no new inning can start after 90 minutes from the game's scheduled start time with a hard stop at 105 minutes.
 - **Note:** Any game still being played at the hard stop time will end immediately and the score will revert back to the end of the previous inning, unless the home team has taken the lead or tied the game after having been behind at the end of the previous inning, in which event the game would end at the hard stop with the home team winning or in a tie, as applicable. Time limits including hard stop apply to all games including the last game of the day.
5. A game is official after three and one-half (3 1/2) innings, if the home team is ahead, or four (4) complete innings if the visitors are ahead. A game that is tied at the end of the last inning and prior to the expiration of the time limits will be continued until the earlier of when a winner is determined or the time limits have expired, unless darkness or inclement weather intercedes. If an official game is tied and cannot be continued because of time limits, weather or darkness, the game will remain a tie.

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6. **Forfeited Game:** If a team cannot field the minimum number of players (8) from their original roster including call ups, within fifteen minutes following the scheduled starting time for the game, the team without enough players shall forfeit the game. If a forfeit is called because not enough players showed up for the game, then the two teams may choose to scrimmage and are encouraged to cooperate by “loaning” players from one team to another in order to facilitate the scrimmage.
7. If, during the course of a game, a player leaves mid-game, all batters shall move up a spot in the batting order and there is no automatic out; however, in the event that the mid-game departure of a player results in a team’s roster dropping below eight players, then that team will have to forfeit the game.
8. Any player arriving after the beginning of the game, but before the first pitch of the 4th inning, is added to the end of the batting order.
9. **Run Cap:** Each half-inning ends upon reaching 3 outs or the maximum of 6 runs scored per half-inning. For example, if a team has scored 5 runs in a half-inning, and there are runners on 2nd and 3rd and the batter knocks in 2 runs, the inning technically ends when the 6th run crosses the plate. The 7th run will not count.
10. Run limitations from prior innings do not carry over to a new inning.
11. **Last Inning:** The 6-run-per-inning limit shall be lifted for the last inning (as determined by the umpire) of each game; provided, that the visiting team’s half of the last inning ends should they lead by a maximum of 16 runs. In such a scenario, the 17th run will not count.
 - a. The last inning is either the sixth inning or the last inning as determined by the umpire in his/her discretion because the time limits are likely to expire or because of darkness or inclement weather. Note that that the game is over at the completion of the sixth inning or the last inning as determined by the umpire, even if there is time remaining before the hard stop time is reached.
 - b. We encourage the coaches to discuss with the umpire before the start of the fourth and fifth innings whether that inning will be the last inning because the time limits are likely to expire or because of darkness or inclement weather. *Coaches cannot determine what constitutes the final inning without the express agreement of the umpire.*

V. EQUIPMENT

1. Teams are required to use OPBA-league-sanctioned equipment.
2. Coaches should clearly label all team equipment and team bag with team name and age division. Head Coaches are responsible for any replacement fees incurred by

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the OPBA for lost equipment and equipment that is not returned to the OPBA at the end of the season.

3. All batters are required to use helmets. Facemasks are not required, but are recommended. All league issued helmets include a facemask and a coach may not remove the facemask for any reason.
4. No metal spikes allowed.
5. Hard baseball shall be used – Rawlings RLLB1.
6. All male players must wear an athletic cup support.
7. Players may use only the following bats, with a maximum diameter of 2 5/8”:
 - a. Solid wood bats; or
 - b. Bats marked with the USA Baseball certification stamp, with no drop limitation.
8. USSSA (1.15 BPF) bats are not permitted in any age division. Any batter who uses one of these bats, even if for 1 pitch, will automatically be out (without warning). *Coaches are encouraged to enforce this rule because it is in place for the safety of our players.*
9. If a batter is found to have taken a single pitch with an illegal bat, this will result in an automatic out, as long as the call is made prior to the next batter taking a single pitch. Any use of an illegal bat must be reported to the division commissioner.
10. The Catcher is to leave all gear on until he/she is on deck to hit. A coach or parent volunteer should be present to help remove and replace catching gear to speed innings and minimize delays.

VI. PITCHING

1. As a developmental baseball league, coaches are encouraged to work with as many players as possible on pitching. A season goal should be for every player that has an interest in pitching to get an opportunity to do so in a game on multiple occasions.
2. **Pitching Limits:** Pitchers may throw a maximum of 2 innings per game, and no more than 5 innings total in a week. Any player who pitches 2 innings in a game may not pitch the following day. An inning as it pertains to pitching limits shall be considered any inning in which a pitcher throws at least 1 pitch. A week is defined as a 7 day period beginning with the day the individual pitcher threw his/her first pitch.
3. A player who has been removed as a pitcher in a game shall not pitch again during that game, even if the player has not reached the game pitch limit.

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4. **Catching Limits:** A player may play catcher for a maximum of 3 innings or play a combination of pitcher and catcher for 3 innings.
5. *** **Important** - Coaches will report the innings pitched by each player on a team to the division commissioner after each game. At the beginning of each game, coaches shall identify to the opposing coach the players that cannot pitch in any game due to inning limits from prior games.
6. Any team in violation of the pitch limits will be subject to the following penalties: **First offense**=Forfeiture of game in which violation occurred; **Second offense**=Forfeiture of game and 2 game suspension for Head Coach; **Third offense**=Forfeiture of game and removal of Head Coach for season, with Head Coach's return the following season subject to review and approval by the OPBA Board.
7. **HBP Limits:** If a pitcher hits two batters in one inning or three batters overall in the same game, he or she is to be removed from the pitcher's position in that game.
8. At all levels, a new pitcher is permitted 5 warm-up pitches from the mound. A current pitcher is permitted to throw 3 warm-up pitches while he/she waits for the catcher to get into position. Once the catcher arrives, the pitcher may throw 1 more warm-up pitch.
9. **Mound Visits:** A coach may only visit a pitcher on the mound once during the inning. A second visit to the mound will require the removal of the current pitcher. Pitching changes/mound visits **SHOULD NOT** be used as a stall tactic. Umpires are instructed to warn coaches and report to the league ANY stalling tactics.
10. **No Balks:** No balks shall be called. The pitcher shall start his/her pitching motion with at least one foot in contact with the pitching rubber and one foot must remain in contact with the pitching rubber at all times until the ball is released.
11. **No Breaking Pitches:** Pitchers are *not* allowed to throw breaking pitches, including but not limited to curveballs, knuckleballs, knuckle curves, sliders, screwballs and cut-fastballs. Change-ups are not considered breaking pitches.

VII. BATTING AND BASE RUNNING

1. In all divisions, each team will use a continuous batting order with each player in attendance batting.
2. Any batter determined to have batted out of order will result in an out.
3. Bat safety is paramount. Coaches are required to teach all kids to carry bats by the barrel to avoid the temptation for random swings. Batters need to be aware of their surrounding area when "on deck." Other players also need to be taught to be careful around the "on-deck" player.

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4. **Bat Throwing:** If a player in any age group throws his or her bat, then the umpire will issue a “Team Warning.” If a batter throws his or her bat after a Team Warning has already been issued to his or her team (whether it’s the same batter or a different batter that threw his or her bat the first time), the batter will be automatically called out with all other base runners returning to their previously occupied base.
5. **Baserunner Interference:** A runner cannot interfere with a defensive player’s ability to make a play.
6. **Avoid Contact Rule:** If there is an active play at any base (**particularly home plate**), the runner must avoid contact and slide if necessary or he/she will be called out. It is the umpire’s sole discretion as to whether or not an active play is in progress and whether or not the runner attempted to avoid contact. ***This is not a mandatory slide rule, as explained below.***
 - The intention of the OPBA rule regarding avoiding contact pertains to the safety of all the league's players. In most cases, sliding is the easiest and most effective means for avoiding contact and players should be instructed to slide whenever possible. The Rules Committee recognizes that mandatory sliding can be restrictive in some circumstances and in other instances, sliding may not be the safest means for avoiding contact (i.e., a player can simply stop running or pull off to the side). The rules highlight a play at home plate, because that is where the majority of hard contact occurs. That said, a base runner is required to avoid contact whenever there is an active play. For clarity, the rules regarding avoiding contact pertain to all points on the field, including home plate, all bases and within the base paths. Unintentional contact will occur (such as during rundowns); however, the umpires have the right to govern those plays, call interference and/or eject a player if the contact is excessive.
 - What is not acceptable in the context of youth baseball is intentionally altering one's course in order to prevent the defense from making a play, such as lowering one's shoulder to dislodge the ball. Avoiding making an out, taking an extra base or scoring an extra run is not worth the risk of potentially serious injuries. We ask coaches to keep the safety of OPBA players first and foremost in their minds and to respect the umpires' decisions in using their discretion when player contact occurs.
7. **No Leadoffs or Base Stealing:** Base stealing and leadoffs are **NOT** allowed in 9U.
8. **Overthrows:**

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- a. On an overthrown ball that remains in the field of play, a runner may attempt to advance a maximum of *two bases*; however, the runner does so at his or her own risk and may be thrown out by the fielding team.
 - b. On an overthrown ball by any defensive player that leaves the field of play, the ball shall be ruled dead, and all runners advance *one base* (including home, as applicable).
9. **No Infield Fly Rule**: Not in effect.
 10. **No Dropped Third Strike**: Not in effect.
 11. **Bunting**: Allowed at any time, except squeeze plays are not permitted. Additionally, faking a bunt and swinging (i.e., bunt/slash) is not allowed and will result in the batter being called out with all runners being returned to their original base.

VIII. PLAYOFFS

1. Playoff seedings will be determined by a randomization process that will be conducted after the conclusion of the regular season.
2. Prior to the playoffs, rules specific to the playoffs will be distributed to the coaches by the Rules Committee.