

## 2026 Rookies Division Softball Rules – Coach-to-Player Pitch Transition

These rules will define the complete Rookies Division for the 2026 season, incorporating both Coach Pitch play and the mid-season transition to limited Player Pitch beginning approximately May 15. The goal is to maintain a consistent, developmental environment where players build confidence, learn fundamentals, and prepare for advancement to the Minors division while keeping play safe, instructional, and fun.

### Game Operations & Equipment

- **Game Balls:** 11-inch softballs are used for all games. Both teams supply one (1) new game ball at the plate meeting. The umpire or game coordinator will select the game ball; backups should be available.
- **Catcher Safety:** All catchers must wear full gear, including a helmet with mask, chest protector, leg guards, and a dangling throat guard for all warmups, innings, and bullpen activities.
- **No Forfeits:** Borrow players when needed/able to ensure every game is played.
- **Weeknight / Lighting Adjustments:** Games shall not be scheduled for non-lighted fields after sunset.

### Division and Game Format

- **Ages:** 6–8 (league age). If age 6, must have played one season of Tee Ball previously.
- **Field dimensions:** 60-foot bases; 35-foot pitching distance.
- **Games will be a maximum of 6 innings, and no new inning may begin once 1 hour and 15 minutes have elapsed from the first pitch.**
- **Continuous batting order is required for all games.**
- **Each half-inning ends after three (3) outs or a maximum of five (5) runs scored, whichever occurs first.**
- **A team must field a minimum of eight (8) players to begin play. A catcher is a mandatory position. Borrow players from the opposing team if necessary to avoid cancellation.**
- **No on-deck batters**
- **There must be one coach in the dugout at all times throughout the game.**

## Coach Pitch Rules (Start of Season – Through Approximately May 15)

### Pitching Rules

- Coaches will pitch from approximately 35 feet, managers should use best judgement of where to stand for each batting situation

### Batting Rules

- Each batter will receive a maximum of six (6) pitches. A foul ball on the fifth pitch allows another pitch. There are no walks in this division.
- If a batter does not put the ball in play within six (6) pitches, a tee may be brought in to assist in a hit, however continued pitching takes away from other players/the game. Coaches must pitch at a reasonable speed for consistent hittable balls.
- No bunting or intentional soft contact hitting is permitted.

### Base Running Rules

- Runners may not leave the base until the ball is hit.
- No stealing or leading off. Runners may not leave the base until the pitch crosses home plate.
- On balls hit to the outfield grass, runners may advance up to two bases maximum.
- On infield overthrows that reach the outfield, runners may advance one base at their own risk. On all other overthrows, runners may not advance.
- Once an infielder controls the ball, runners cannot advance.
- Sliding is permitted feet-first only. No head-first slides are allowed - runner will be called out.
- A runner overrunning first base cannot be tagged out returning to the bag, regardless of which direction they turn, however runners that turn toward second base should be coached accordingly.

### Fielding and Defense

- Two defensive coaches may be on the field for instruction. Offensive coaches will occupy first and third base boxes.

### Scoring and Conduct

- An inning ends after three (3) outs or five (5) runs, whichever comes first.
- Scoreboards and standings remain off; games continue as instructional.

## **Player Pitch Rules (Beginning Approximately May 15)**

This phase serves as a bridge from Coach Pitch to live Player Pitch. It should begin around the season midpoint (approximately May 15).

The same rostered teams, schedule, and field setup remain unchanged. The transition occurs during regular games.

### **Pitching Rules**

- A player from the defensive team will pitch to batters under coach supervision.
- Each inning may begin with a player pitcher and end with a coach pitcher to maintain pace of play.
- Player pitchers throw from 27-35ft. Coaches should provide instruction on safe mechanics, tempo, and sportsmanship.
- Pitchers should be able to throw ~50% hittable balls before being allowed to pitch. If possible, switch pitchers each inning.
- If a player pitcher issues four balls to a batter, a coach from the batting team completes that at-bat. Strikes for that count stay in play and the player pitcher leaves the mound for that batter only.
- If a pitcher hits three (3) batters in a game, regardless of the same or different innings, they must be removed from the mound for the remainder of the game.
- No breaking pitches are allowed. Fastballs and changeups only.

### **Batting Rules**

- No walks are awarded; base advancement to first must result from the ball being put in play.
- Strikeouts are permitted. Dropped third strike rule does not apply.
- Bunting is not allowed.
- Batting Tee is no longer used once player pitch starts

### **Base Running Rules**

- Runners may take only one base on an overthrow, not including throws back to the pitcher.
- Once an infielder controls the ball, runners cannot advance.
- Stealing of third base only is permitted

- No leading off. Runners may not leave the base until the pitch crosses home plate
- On a catcher's overthrow during a steal attempt, runners may not advance.
- Courtesy runners may be used for catchers with two outs (last batted out).

### **Fielding and Defense**

- Two defensive coaches may be on the field for instruction. Offensive coaches will occupy first and third base boxes.

### **Scoring and Conduct**

- An inning ends after three (3) outs or five (5) runs, whichever comes first.
- Scoreboards and standings remain off; games continue as instructional.
- Coaches should emphasize control, safety, and consistency. The purpose of this period is learning, not competition, and transition toward Minors play. Coaches should continue to rotate positions for balanced development.
- Emphasize instruction, effort, and sportsmanship alongside healthy competition. Disrespectful behavior toward umpires, opponents, or teammates will not be Tolerated.

These rules ensure a consistent, development-focused experience throughout the Rookies season, from Coach Pitch fundamentals to the introduction of live Player Pitching, without changing the division or competitive structure.

### **Rule Authority and Precedence**

These local rules serve as operational guidance for the Parsippany Troy East Little League and are intended to complement the Official Little League Rules and Regulations. All games are governed first and foremost by the Official Little League Rulebook. If any discrepancy or conflict exists between these local rules and the Official Rulebook, the Official Little League Rules shall take precedence.