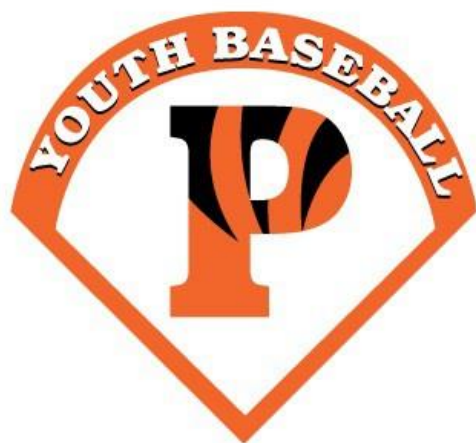


# Princeton Little League Baseball

## Spring 2026 President's Rules

for the Rookie Division



# The Rookie Division

Welcome to the Rookie Division!

The Rookie Division is an instructional division for Little League age 7-9 year olds. There are no standings or playoffs. The division is designed to transition the player from coach-pitch to player-pitch baseball. The Rookie Division has specific rules of play to assist in this transition. Pitching machines are used to give players greater opportunity to develop their hitting, fielding and strategic skills.

This is the age where most players fully begin to appreciate the joy and responsibility of being part of a team, of being part of something bigger than themselves. As a result, players are often motivated as much, or even more, by helping out their team as they are by individual accomplishments. Cultivating and witnessing this transformation is one of the many joys of coaching this age group.

As with all Princeton Little League divisions, coaches should stress player and team improvement, and having fun, over winning, though always strive to help players understand that all three are in fact closely related.

## Rookie Division Overview

- The responsibility for pregame equipment inspection rests with the team manager (not the umpire). Use of an illegal bat may result in the ejection of the offending player, manager, and base coach.
- No alterations or modifications to the bat are allowed (e.g., choke knobs, choke-up assists).
- **Base stealing is NOT** permitted in Rookies. This means no advancing on passed balls and wild pitches. No stealing of home. Base runners must maintain contact with their base until the pitch reaches the hitter.
- **Runners may advance only ONE base per overthrow.** Runners may not advance to home base on an overthrow of third base.
- **The Ten Batter Rule** is in effect. Ten batters is the maximum number of batters a team can send to the plate in any half inning.
- **The Ten Run Mercy Rule** is **NOT** in effect in Rookies. The game proceeds until six innings have been played (not ending in a tie), or time has run out.
- **Ten fielders** are permitted in the field in Rookies, six infielders (including a

pitcher/pitcher's helper and catcher), and four outfielders.

- **Bunting** is **NOT** allowed in Rookies.
- **NO Infield Fly Rule** in Rookies.
- **NO Dropped Third Strike Rule** in Rookies; three strikes you're out.
- **Batting helmets with face masks must be worn by all Rookies players when batting, and when playing the defensive position of pitcher's helper.**
- Rookie players may not serve as first or third base coaches, only adult coaches.
- No new inning can start after **1 hour and 30 minutes** from the time the game was originally scheduled (this includes any time used for drills and warm-ups).

## Safety

- **Head first sliding** is forbidden in all Princeton Little League games. The penalty: the base runner is automatically out.
- A runner may not hurdle, jump over, or leap over a fielder unless the fielder is lying prone on the ground. Penalty: The runner is out, but the ball remains alive unless the umpire calls interference. Note: Jumping over a kneeling fielder is also illegal.
- Coaches are strongly encouraged to teach their players how to **slide feet first** as soon as possible in the season, and preferably before the first game.
- **Metal spikes** are not permitted in any Princeton Little League game.
- **Protective cups** are recommended for all male players and must be worn by all male catchers.
- **Batting helmets with face masks** must be worn by all Rookie Division players while batting, while running the bases, and while playing the position of pitcher's helper.
- **Mouth guards** and **chest protectors** are encouraged to be worn by all players.
- **Cleats** (not metal) are also strongly encouraged to be worn by all players, not only because they improve performance, but also because the better footing they provide make cleats much safer than sneakers.

- Player-pitchers (not pitcher's helper) must be in contact with the pitching rubber at ball release.
- **Slash bunting** (where a batter fakes a bunt, and then pulls back and takes a full swing) is forbidden in all Princeton Little League games. The penalty: the batter is out, the ball is dead, no runners can advance.
- No player except the batter is ever permitted to have a bat in their hands; there is no on deck circle. All offensive players except the batter and the runners must remain behind the fence and in the dugout.
- Further safety rules and guidelines are discussed below.

# Pitching

## The Use of Pitching Machines in Rookies

Pitching machines help make Rookie games more fun for players, coaches and fans alike. Pitching machines give young hitters a chance to develop their swings against a more predictably delivered baseball and increase the chances of putting the ball into play. This gives fielders more opportunities to field, and runners more opportunities to run. Walks are eliminated for the pitching machine portion of a Rookie game; an impressive display of hitting often follows.

\*\*\*\*\***Very Important**\*\*\*\*\*

While pitching machines have shown to significantly improve the game in several positive ways, **there is an added degree of dangers that comes with the machines.** The machines deliver a baseball at a constant speed and location which makes it far easier for young batters to dig in, time it up, and give it a healthy whack. **As a result, balls will be hit harder, and fielders must be ready and at attention whenever a pitch is being delivered.**

Coaches should also be aware that balls coming off the bat will test their reaction times as well. Coaches should always wear a glove while operating the machines.

## Rules Related to Pitching Machine Use

- Machines are to be feed by a coach from the hitting team. Players are never allowed to touch or operate the machines.

- **Important:** use only AD Starr PM-3 balls in the machines. See “League-wide Pitching Machine Guidelines” below for more on pitching machine balls.
- Hitters are limited to seven hittable pitches, or until they make an out. If the 7<sup>th</sup> pitch is either swung on and missed, or not offered at, the player is out.
- Any pitch can be called off as unhittable and would not then count toward the seven pitches.
- The pitching machine cannot walk a batter.
- Foul balls not resulting in an out (i.e., not caught by a defensive player) struck on the final pitch do not result in an out. A batter hit by a pitch delivered from the pitching machine is awarded first base (very rare).
- A batted ball that strikes the pitching machine or pitching machine equipment immediately becomes a dead ball. The batter gets first base and each runner advances one base.
- Players are never allowed within a 6 feet diameter circle of the pitching machine.
- Balls coming to rest within this 6-foot circle, whether batted or thrown, are dead.
- The pitcher’s helper is a defensive position player who fields for the pitching machine. Coaches operating the pitching machine should, of course, avoid touching a batted ball (except for purposes of self-preservation). **The pitcher’s helper must wear a helmet with a face mask at all times.**
- Before a pitch is delivered, the pitcher’s helper must be positioned **behind** the pitching rubber with one foot on the dirt of the pitching mound and one foot on the grass of the infield. The pitcher’s helper can be positioned on either the first, or third base side of the mound in this fashion.
- A thrown ball that hits the pitching machine or pitching machine equipment is dead. The hitter gets (at least) first base, and each base runner gets one additional base from their last legally touched base which they had attained at the time the ball struck the pitching machine.
- Intentionally throwing a ball at the pitching machine and/or pitching machine equipment to stop a base runner is forbidden. After the first such incident all base runners, including the batter/runner, will be awarded two bases from their last legally touched base, and the fielder issued a warning. Once warned, if that fielder again intentionally throws at the pitching machine and related equipment, that player shall be removed from the remainder of the game.

## Tips for Using the Pitching Machine

- Unlike a real pitcher, the pitching machine has no windup, and gives no warning to batters before firing off a ball. Therefore, when using the machine to deliver a pitch to a batter, 1/ **always** look to make sure the batter is ready for the pitch. And, 2/ **always** hold the ball up high before placing it into the machine as a signal to the batter that it is on its way.
- If the pitching machine throws more than a few unhittable pitches in a row, it should be adjusted. Minor tweaks to the legs or screws to modify the angle of delivery, and/or to the speed dial are usual all that's needed.
- **Important: after adjusting the pitching machine, always have the batter step out of the box and use the pitching machine to deliver a "practice pitch" in order to make sure the ball is headed over the plate and not in the direction of the batter!**
- Make sure there is enough gas in the generator tank before starting a game or practice.
- Make sure the power switch on the pitching machine itself is off before attempting to start the generator.
- Always engage the choke before attempting to start the generator.
- Once the generator starts, disengage the choke before turning on the pitching machine.
- For Rookies the recommended speed is 28-32mph as indicated by the digital red readout on the machine.
- The recommended placement of the machines is immediately in front of the pitching rubber.
- Don't forget to set the pitching machine up on its three leg extensions before using. And return the leg extensions to their vertical holding slots on the machine after each use.

## League-wide Pitching Machine Guidelines

Princeton Little League maintains four pitching machines and generators for league use.

The machines are chiefly intended for use during Rookies Division games.

In addition, all divisions can use the machines for practices. The order of priority is: 1/ Rookie Division games, 2/ Rookie Division practices, 3/ Minor and Intermediate Division practices.

**Important:** please use only special AD Starr pitching machine balls in the machines. These balls are model number PM-3 as marked on the ball. They can be found in a green mesh bag attached to the pitching machine. These balls are made of especially durable materials so that they can withstand the rigors of going through the pitching machine. Because of this they are expensive, so please make sure to gather them all up after each game or practice and return them to the green mesh bag. Please don't mix in other balls that are not marked "PM." And please don't put non-PM balls through the machine; it will tear them up.

The pitching machines and generators will be kept inside one of the Grover Park equipment sheds, and at a shed at Farmview. The sheds are secured with a key/combo lock and the pitching machines and generators must be returned to the shed, and the shed locked, immediately after use.

If a shed is to remain open for whatever reason during the player-pitch portion of a Rookie game, always make sure the shed is locked up before leaving the fields.

The machines are **not** to be transported away from the fields at Grover or Farmview.

## Coach-Pitcher Rules in the Rookies Division

If for whatever reason the pitching machines are unavailable, then during those innings that the pitching machine would have otherwise been in use, a coach takes over.

The rules for this situation are nearly the same as with the pitching machine. For example, coach-pitchers throw each batter 7 hittable pitches. There are no walks. Any pitch can be called off as unhittable and therefore doesn't count toward the 7 pitch limit. Players get another pitch if they foul off what would otherwise be the last pitch of an at bat, etc. When a coach pitches, the current player-pitcher goes to the bench for the duration of the coach pitching.

Just as during pitching machine use, the coach should always turn tail when a batted ball comes their way and let the fielders take over. The only difference between coach pitch and pitching machine usage is that if a coach-pitcher is struck by a batted ball, play continues. In this situation, the ball is live, and the coach-pitcher, runs, walks (or limps, as the case may be) away from the live ball and lets the players take charge. In other words, just as with the umpire, the coach-pitcher is considered part of the field.

## Player-Pitching in the Rookie Division

Pitching is perhaps the most challenging aspect of the Rookie years for pitchers, hitters, and coaches. But for many young players, pitching is also one of the most exciting opportunities baseball has to offer. Therefore, please give as many players as possible on your team a chance to pitch during the season, especially in the second half of the season as the games get longer, and pitching machines are used less and less each game.

For at least some Rookie pitchers one of the first challenges will be: can they throw the ball all the way from the pitching rubber to the plate? One good tip here is to have the pitcher push off strongly from the pitching rubber with their back leg as they throw. This often provides Rookie pitchers the extra power they need to get the ball to the plate. There are many other pitching tips available from a variety of sources including the Princeton Little League Rookie coaching manual.

**However, very important: for safety reasons, under no circumstances is a player-pitcher ever allowed to deliver a pitch from any position other than with their pivot foot (the back foot) in contact with the pitching rubber during wind up.**

**Pitchers who can't manage the 46 foot throw to the plate, either at all, or with sufficient and repeatable accuracy, cannot remedy this situation by moving closer to home plate.**

- There are no balks in the Rookie or Minor Divisions of Little League.
- Since runners can't leave the base until the ball reaches the hitter, pitchers are free to pitch from the stretch, or the full wind up, whichever is more comfortable.
- A player once removed as pitcher cannot return to the position of pitcher in that calendar day.
- Pitchers (or any players) are not permitted to wear jewelry of any kind except jewelry that alerts medical personal to specific conditions.
- Pitchers are only permitted to wear long-sleeved shirts under their uniforms which are of a solid color, **not white**.
- Pitchers are not permitted to wear wrist bands or sweat bands on their wrists or arms. Sleeves are permitted, provided they are a solid color and not white.

## Pitch Count Regulations

from Little League Headquarters:

- (a) Any player on a regular season team may pitch. **Exception:** Any player, who has played the position of catcher in four (4) or more innings in a game is not eligible to pitch on that calendar day.
- (b) A pitcher once removed from the mound cannot return as a pitcher.
- (c) The manager must remove the pitcher when said pitcher reaches the limit for his/her age group as noted below, but the pitcher may remain in the game at another position:
- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ◆ League Ages 11 -13: | 50 pitches per day |
| ◆ League Ages 9-10:   | 50 pitches per day |
| ◆ League Ages 7-8:    | 50 pitches per day |

**Exception:** If a pitcher reaches the per day limit imposed in Regulation VI (c) for his/her league age while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until any one of the following conditions occurs:

1. That batter reaches base;
2. That batter is put out;
3. The third out is made to complete the half-inning.

**Note 1:** A pitcher who delivers 41 or more pitches in a game cannot play the position of catcher for the remainder of that day.

Pitchers league age 14 and under must adhere to the following rest requirements:

- ◆ If a player pitches 66 or more pitches in a day, four (4) calendar days of rest must be observed.
- ◆ If a player pitches 51 - 65 pitches in a day, three (3) calendar days of rest must be observed.
- ◆ If a player pitches 36 - 50 pitches in a day, two (2) calendar days of rest must be observed.
- ◆ If a player pitches 21 - 35 pitches in a day, one (1) calendar days of rest must be observed.
- ◆ If a player pitches 1-20 pitches in a day, no (0) calendar day of rest is required.
- ◆ No player may pitch in games for three consecutive calendar days, regardless of rest requirement.

**Exception:** If a pitcher reaches a day(s) of rest threshold while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until any of the following conditions occurs:

1. That batter reaches base;
2. That batter is retired;
3. The third out is made to complete the half inning.

The pitcher will only be required to observe the calendar days(s) of rest for the threshold he/she reached during that at-bat, provided that pitcher is removed before delivering a pitch to another batter.

This second exception is designed to make the game go more smoothly and remove the awkward necessity of a manager having to pull out a pitcher in the middle of an at-bat because he/she has reached their day(s) of rest threshold. The result will be less instances of pitchers having to enter a game with a count other than 0-0, and less instances of batters having to face a pitching change in the middle of their at-bat.

For the purpose of reporting pitch counts, coaches should still report the total number of pitches thrown by any one pitcher in any one game. But they should also report in parenthesis after that total pitch count number the threshold number to be used to determine days of rest if that number is less than the total pitch count because of the above exception.

**For example:** If Pitcher A threw 16 pitches, then began pitching to a new batter and threw 6 more pitches to that batter before being removed from the game, then Pitcher A's pitch count would be reported as 22(20). But if Pitcher A was taken out before pitching to that last batter then Pitcher A's reported pitch count would simply be reported as 16. In either case Pitcher A would require zero days of rest.

## Little League Strike Zone

The Little League strike zone is bigger in relationship to the hitter than the Major League professional (MLB) strike zone in order to help out young pitchers, and to encourage young hitters to swing away and not just be up there for a walk.

The Little League strike zone is defined as that space over home plate which is between the batter's arm pits and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural stance.

In addition, umpires tend to call pitched balls strikes which cross a few inches further inside the plate, and more than a few inches outside the plate. Again, this is to give pitchers an extra break and to keep the game moving. Hitters, pitchers and coaches should be aware of this Little League reality and make the necessary adjustments.

## Other Types of Strikes

In addition to 1/called strikes, 2/swings and misses, and 3/foul balls, strikes can also arise from the following scenarios:

A strike is a ball that touches the batter's person as the batter attempts to swing at it. If this happens, a strike is called and the ball is dead.

A strike is a ball that touches the batter while the ball is in flight in the strike zone. In other words, if when a batter is hit by a pitch, the part of his/her body or uniform that was hit by the pitch was in the strike zone, then the batter is not awarded first base, but instead given a strike.

Any foul tip that is caught by the catcher can be called a strike, including the third strike. A foul tip is defined as a batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught.

## **The Three Consecutive Walks Rule and Five Free Passes Rule**

A large number of walks and batters hit by pitches (HBP) slow the game, increase pitch counts, and detract from the development of fielding opportunities and running skills. So, in order to improve the quality of the game, Rookie coaches must relieve a pitcher and step in to pitch in either of the following two scenarios:

### **Three Consecutive Walks Rule:**

Whenever three consecutive batters are issued a walk (BB for base on balls), then a coach from the team at bat must pitch to the next batter. After such a coach-pitch at bat, the player-pitcher resumes pitching. Hit batters do not count toward the Three Consecutive Walks Rule.

Example 1: Single, BB, BB, Single, BB, Single, BB...

This does not trigger the coach to pitch to the next batter. The player pitcher remains pitching

Example 2: Single, BB, single, HBP, BB, BB, BB...

Coach pitches to next batter.

### **Five Free Passes Rule:**

Whenever in one half inning five batters have been awarded first base as a result of a free pass (whether by walk or hit by pitch, and whether or not consecutively issued), then a coach from the team at bat must pitch the remainder of that half inning.

Example 1: Single, BB, BB, Out, Single, BB, Single, BB...

Does not equal coach pitch, player remains pitching (neither trigger has been met)

Example 2: Single, BB, BB, Single, BB, Single, BB, Out, Single, HBP...

A coach pitches for the remainder of that half inning (the five free pass trigger has been met)

## Balks and Illegal Pitches

There are no balks in the Rookie or Minor Divisions. Instead what might be considered a balk in the Intermediate Division is called an illegal pitch. The penalty for an illegal pitch is the pitch is called a ball and the runners do not advance.

If a play follows an illegal pitch the manager of the offense may advise the plate umpire of a decision to decline the illegal pitch penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play. However, if the batter hits the ball and reaches first base safely, and if all base runners advance at least one base on the action resulting from the batted ball, the play proceeds without reference to the illegal pitch. **Note:** a batter hit by pitch shall be awarded first base without reference to the illegal pitch.

## In the Field

Ten defensive players are allowed in the field, 6 infielders, including pitcher and catcher, and 4 outfielders. **At no time are more than 6 players permitted in the infield.**

## Kill the Play Rule

A ball struck by the batter, then returned by the defense and controlled in the vicinity of the mound by, 1/ a player-pitcher, 2/ a pitcher's helper, or 3/ a coach, acting either as the pitcher, or operating the pitching machine, stops all runners. At such point runners must either return to their last legally touched base, or if they are more than half way to the next base, proceed to that base.

## Moving Players Around

Rookie coaches are strongly encouraged to move players around and let them experience

multiple positions, both during any one game, and during the season as a whole. This is particularly important for this age group. Skill-sets which might one day point a player to a specific position are only just beginning to develop. Playing multiple positions leads to a greater understanding and appreciation of the game on the part of the players. And perhaps most important of all, moving players around helps build enthusiasm for the game in each and every player, and a sense of team spirit for all players, coaches and parents.

During the game coaches are free to move players from position to position, and to and from the bench. A player removed from the game and placed on the bench one inning can re-enter the game the next inning, or indeed the next pitch without penalty.

The only exceptions to unlimited substitutions involve the pitcher and the catcher.

A pitcher once removed from pitching cannot return to pitching for the remainder of that calendar day.

No player can play the position of pitcher's helper more than one inning per game, though that same player can be a kid pitcher in the same game.

Once a pitcher pitches 41 pitches, they cannot play the position of catcher for the remainder of that calendar day.

Once a catcher plays four innings as catcher in any one game, they are not eligible to pitch for the remainder of that day.

## Moving Players Around Rule / Bench Time Rule

All players must be given the chance to play the infield (which includes the positions of pitcher and catcher) for at least two innings every two games. There are only two exceptions to this rule: 1/ a player who expressly doesn't want to play the infield, and, 2/ a player who because of inexperience or difficulty focusing is deemed a safety risk.

**Closely related: All players, no matter their level of experience, must spend at least one inning every other game on the bench (if applicable).** This is good not only for the less experienced players who get to feel what it's like to have their more experienced teammates cheer them on from the bench, but a little bench time is also good for the more experienced players to remind them that baseball is indeed a team sport.

**Note:** If a team has 10 or fewer players present for a game, then that game does not count toward the bench time rule.

**Also:** If a player misses a game, then they can be considered to have spent time on the bench for that missed game.

## **Coaches**

Rookie Division coaches, if desired, can position themselves out in the field while their team is playing defense to help instruct their fielders from a closer vantage point. The best place for this is just behind the infield on the edge of the outfield grass. Also, at times a Rookie Division coach will want to position themselves directly behind their pitcher to offer similar assistance.

## **A Catch**

A catch is called when a player controls a batted ball in the glove before it strikes the ground. If a player having gained control of the ball loses control upon transfer to the throwing hand, the ball is still ruled a catch.

## **Obstruction**

Obstruction occurs when a fielder who is not in possession of the ball, or in the act of fielding the ball, impedes the progress of a runner. Fielders without the ball, or not in the act of fielding the ball, must get out of the way of runners or risk being called for obstruction.

Note: Little League further defines obstruction as taking place when a defensive player impedes the progress of a runner even while waiting for a throw by a teammate.

## **Penalties for Obstruction**

The umpire will allow obstructed runners to advance freely to the base they would have otherwise been able to reach if no obstruction had occurred. If by advancing to the next base, the obstructed runner forces another runner to vacate a base, the umpire will allow that runner to advance as well. The umpire will always allow an obstructed runner to advance at least one base beyond the last base he had occupied before the obstruction, and sometimes more than one base.

## **No Infield Fly Rule**

All balls hit into the air are equal in the Rookie Division.

## **At Bat**

The Rookie Division, as with all Princeton Little League divisions, uses a continuous batting order. This means that all players present at the game will remain in the batting order for the entire game independent of their playing history that day on the field or time spent on the bench.

## Safety

**No player is allowed on deck. There is no on deck circle. Only one player may have a bat in their hands at any one time and that is the player at bat. The umpire may call out any player who has a bat in their hands and is not at bat.**

All players will stay behind the fence and on the bench when not at bat, running the bases or in the field.

All players while at bat or running the bases must wear a helmet with a face mask.

## Late Arrivals / Leaving Early

According to Little League rules, when a division employ a continuous batting order, players can arrive late, leave early, and even leave during the middle of a game and return if necessary without penalty to the player or the team. Naturally, most players will want, and are strongly encouraged, to arrive early for all games and stay the entire time. But this particular rule is available for players and their families in the case of an unresolvable conflict.

As a practical example, a player arriving just a little late might still be able to bat in the position that the coach had originally slotted for them provided that position in the batting order has not already been passed.

If the player's position in the batting order has been passed, then the late arriving player will be inserted last in the batting order. Naturally a coach also has the option of relegating any late arriving player directly to the bottom of the batting order, regardless of whether their original turn has been passed or not.

Again: there is no penalty for a player leaving early for whatever reason. That player's spot in the batting order is simply skipped.

The only exception is if a player's leaving early for reasons not related to illness or injury causes their team to drop below 8 players. In that case the team with less than 8 players forfeits the game 6 - 0.

## Coaches

The team at bat will position one coach at first base, and one coach at third base. A third coach or designated volunteer will stay behind in the dugout or monitor the team along the outfield fence to enforce proper conduct and adherence to the safety rules.

## Bat Throwing

After the first warning, any player who throws a bat, whether after a swing, or while running to first base following a hit, walk, etc., can be penalized. Penalties are up to the umpire. But they can range from an extra strike, to an automatic out, to expulsion from the game.

## No Dropped Third Strike Rule

Three strikes you're out.

## Ten Batter Rule

The ten batter rule is in effect in the Rookie and Minor Divisions of Princeton Little League. This means that a team will send up ten batters per half inning, or surrender three outs, whichever comes first. The tenth batter is called the "last batter."

### Last Batter Rule

**If the pitching machine, or coach, pitches to the last batter**, then the last batter must either hit the ball into fair territory, foul out, or strike out. The exceptions are if the last batter is:

hit by the pitch, or  
is the victim of catcher's interference.

In those two cases, for scoring purposes, all runners shall advance two bases and the inning will be over. In other words, any runner on second

or third will score.

**If a player pitches to the last batter** then the inning can end as above, with a ball hit into fair territory, a foul out, or a strike out.

Or if the last batter is: walked,  
hit by the pitch,

or become the victim of catcher's interference,

then the inning will also end and all base runners will advance two bases for scoring purposes.

## The Runners Shall Proceed Rule

When the 10<sup>th</sup> batter hits a fair ball, the base runners shall proceed home until a 3<sup>rd</sup> out is recorded, or until the ball is controlled at home plate by a defensive player, regardless of the number of outs previously recorded in that half inning. No tag out at home is necessary, nor can any additional runs score, on a ball put in play by the last batter after the ball is controlled at home plate by a defensive player. Also, if the lead runner stops their progress home regardless of the number of outs, or location of the ball in the field, then the inning is over.

The practical implication of this rule is that when a 10<sup>th</sup> batter comes to the plate, coaches from the offensive team should alert their runners, and the batter as well, that in the event of a ball hit into fair territory they should continue circling the bases toward home, and not stop until either a 3<sup>rd</sup> out is recorded, or until the ball is controlled at home plate by a defensive player.

The defensive coaches should also alert their players that if the 10<sup>th</sup> batter hits the ball into fair territory they should either make a quick out of that batter, or another runner, or get the ball immediately to the catcher, or any another defensive player positioned at home plate.

# Base Running

There is no stealing permitted in the Rookie Division. Stealing at this level is too much of a distraction for all players, but especially to fielders who are just beginning to hone their skills and awareness of such baseball situations as force outs and double plays.

- Once the player-pitcher, pitcher's helper, or coach acting as pitcher, has control of the ball in the vicinity of the pitching mound, runners must go to the nearest base and stop. (See Kill the Play Rule under Fielding)
- Runners must maintain contact with their base until the next pitch reaches the hitter.
- If a pitched ball is not struck by the batter, runners must return immediately to their base. Runners cannot advance on passed balls or wild pitches. Nor can they advance on errant throws back to the pitcher, or general inattentiveness on the part of the pitcher, or any other player holding the ball.

- If a ball is struck into fair territory by the batter, runners are free to advance at their own risk according to the rules of Little League baseball. However, runners are only allowed to advance one base on each overthrow. And runners are not allowed to advance home on an overthrow of third base.
- If the ball is struck into the air in foul territory, runners have the option to tag up and proceed to the next base at their own risk once the catch is made. But if the catch is not made and the ball hits the ground and is subsequently declared foul, then all runners must return immediately to their base, as, of course, they must with any batted ball declared foul.

**Note:** All players should always keep in mind that a ball is not foul **until the umpire says it is!** And that a ball struck into foul territory may well land in foul territory and spend some time there, but then bounce, roll, leak, tiptoe, etc., into fair territory before passing first or third base and thus be considered fair!

## Consequences of a Runner Leaving Early

Little League rule 7.13 governs this situation. The many permutations of this rule are challenging to keep track of even for seasoned umpires and coaches. Luckily, they rarely have an impact on a Rookie Division game. Here is a brief overview of what can happen when any base runner leaves before the ball reaches the batter. For the purposes of this rule, if one runner is guilty of leaving early, they all are.

**After a foul ball not caught** – runner or runners are returned to their last occupied base without penalty.

**After a clean hit** – the runner or runners and the batter/runner are permitted to continue. If a play is made that results in an out, then that out or outs will stand. If no put outs result, then the batter is awarded the base value of that hit as determined by the home plate umpire and placed on that base. The runner or runners must either return to their original base, or to the unoccupied base nearest to the one that was left.

**Example:** runner on second leaves early, batter hits a clean double: runner goes to third only, batter is awarded second.

**If after leaving early, a runner or runners are forced to the next base, or home, by a clean hit** – runners might still be permitted to advance, and/or score without penalty. Or depending on the situation, they might be penalized by not being allowed to go as far as they otherwise might have.

**Example:** runners on second and third, batter hits a clean double: runner on third scores, runner on second is moved to third, batter is awarded second.

**If not forced, runner(s) leaving early do not advance or score.**

**Example:** runner on third, batter hits a clean double: runner is returned to third. Batter is awarded second.

**All runners will be allowed to score when the batter hits a clean triple or home run, regardless of whether any runner left early.**

## Interference

Offensive interference is an act by a member of the team at bat which interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play.

**Interference as a result of a runner or batter getting in the way of a fielder attempting to field, catch, or throw a ball**

- Runners, or the batter, need not have physical contact with a fielder to be called for interference. Nor do they need to show intent. Yelling, waving arms, running too close to a fielder are also grounds for interference.
- Runners need to go around a fielder who is in the act of fielding a ball even if that fielder is in the base path. In such a case the runner cannot be called out for exiting the base path to avoid the fielder.
- The fielder's protection begins the moment the ball is hit. That protection continues as the fielder completes their initial play. The fielder's protection ends if they misplay the batted ball and have to move to recover it.
- The penalty for interference: if interference is called on a runner, that runner is out, and the ball is dead.
- If a batter is called for interference, the batter is out and the runner or runners are returned to their original base. **Exception:** if with less than two outs a batter is called for interference while a runner attempts to score, then the runner is out and the batter continues to bat unless struck out on the play. With two outs the batter is out and the run does not score.
- Also, if a batter is called for interference but the defensive team nevertheless records an out on the play, then that out stands and the batter remains batting unless also struck out on the play.
- No runners are allowed to advance as a result of an interference call on any

other runner or batter.

### **Interference as a result of an offensive player being struck by a batted or thrown ball**

- If a runner is hit by a batted ball while standing in fair territory before it has passed or is touched by a fielder then the ball is dead, the runner is declared out, and the batter awarded first base.
- If the batter/runner comes into contact with their own batted ball before that ball has passed or touched a fielder, then the batter/runner is out unless still within the batter's box in which case the ball is declared foul.
- If the runner is hit by a thrown ball then the runner must have shown intent to interfere with the thrown ball in order to be called for interference. Otherwise the play continues.
- There is no such thing as defensive interference except in the case of catcher's interference. "Defensive interference" is called obstruction.

## **Slide or Avoid Rule**

as reprinted for the Little League Rule book

*7.08(a)(3) -- Any runner is out when ... the runner does not slide or attempt to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag;*

In practice, the spirit of this rule – to provide an extra measure of safety for both runners and fielders – can be undermined because, as written, the rule seems to imply that with a bang bang play, the benefit of the doubt goes to the runner. Furthermore, the rule implies that all a runner has to do is make some attempt at evading, for example, attempting in any way to get around the catcher, and they can't be called out for failure to slide even if contact is made.

However, Princeton Little League recommends that coaches advise their runners to **always slide** if at all in doubt that the ball might be in the possession of the fielder by the time the runner get to the base. Coaches should stress sliding in these situations not only for safety reason, but also because failure to slide is a terrible way for a runner to be called out, especially if it happens at home plate.

## **No Head First Sliding**

Head first sliding is forbidden in all Princeton Little League games. Any runner sliding head

first into a base will be called out.

**Exception:** runners returning to a base. So, if a runner overruns a base that runner is permitted to dive back to their base.

## No Hurdling

A runner may not hurdle, jump over, or leap over a fielder unless the fielder is lying prone on the ground. Penalty: The runner is out, but the ball remains alive unless the umpire calls interference. Note: Jumping over a kneeling fielder is also illegal.

## Courtesy Runners

Courtesy runners are not allowed in any Princeton Little League game. The one exception is when a runner becomes injured. In that case the courtesy runner must be the player from the batting team who made the last recorded out. If the injury occurs in the first inning, the courtesy runner must be the offensive player furthest away in the batting order from coming to the plate who is not on base.

# Disagreeing with the Ump

It is perfectly acceptable to request a time out and approach the adult umpire to discuss an interpretation of the rules as they relate to the proceeding play. This is part of the game and it's in everybody's best interest to get interpretations of the rules correct.

Naturally it is critically important that all discussions with the head umpire proceed in a calm, cool, and collected manner, and if a hot temper temporarily gets the better of any coach, that a cooling down happens as soon as possible. Coaches should never forget that their highest responsibility is to set a good example of conduct for the players.

What is **not acceptable** is for a coach to approach the head umpire to complain about a judgment call. This means among other things, balls and strikes and out/safe calls on the bases. Let the umps do their job!

If history is any guide, bad calls will happen with unfortunate frequency during the season, sometimes even multiple times in the same game. (Far more common will be calls that are perceived to be bad, 99.9% of the time by the team most hurt by the "bad" call.)

For all these reasons, and more, coaches should be quick to counsel their players that bad calls are part of the game and that they have a way of evening out over time. And players should never blame the umpires for an undesirable outcome.

# Junior Umpires

Princeton Little League employs a number of younger umpires to work the bases and for Rookie games to call balls and strikes as well. They can be as young as eleven, and for many this is their very first job.

**IMPORTANT RULE:** No coach or player can have any interaction with a junior umpire at any time during a game. Junior umpires are not to be engaged with in any way, and they are most especially never to be argued with. If a Rookie Division coach has a disagreement with the way a junior umpire makes a call, the coach should make a silent note of their disagreement and bring it up to a PLL board member or the PLL president so that the problem might be addressed before the next game. Under no circumstances are you to ever express your disagreement directly to a Junior Umpire.

**Note:** as a practical matter, Rookie Division coaches and the Junior Umpire calling balls and strikes will occasionally have to communicate during games to make adjustments to the pitching machine. But this interaction should never extend beyond this necessity.

## Time Limits on Games

### For weekend games:

No new inning can start after 1 hour and 30 minutes from the time the game was originally scheduled (this includes any time used for drills and warm-ups).

### For weekday games:

**Prior to Memorial Day**, no new inning can start after 1 hour and 30 minutes from the time the game was originally scheduled (this includes any time used for drills and warm-ups).

**After Memorial Day**, no new inning can start after 1 hour and 45 minutes from the time the game was originally scheduled (this includes any time used for drills and warm-ups).

In all cases the final inning will be played in full, unless the visiting team is trailing after the top half of the final inning is completed at which time the game is over, or unless the umpire stops the game due to darkness or weather-related issues, in which case the final score will

revert back to the last completed inning.

**Note:** the bottom half of an inning may start after the time limit has expired as long as the top half of the inning started before the time limit expired.

**Note:** the official start of a game is the time the game actually started, not the scheduled start time. For example: for a 1 hour and 45 minute game: 6:07pm to 7:52pm. The managers and head umpire should agree on the start time immediately before the game begins.

## Rainouts

Rained-out games are made up as scheduled by the President of Princeton Little League baseball. All efforts will be made to reschedule Rookies games on Tuesday nights within 7 days of the rained out game. Unless otherwise determined by the President, all teams within a division will make up games on the same date.

### Rained-out Games & Rescheduling

If a field is unplayable, or if a game is rained-out while in-progress, the league will reschedule the games ASAP, in this priority order: Intermediates > Minors > Rookies

## Appendix A

# Multi-Division Comparison Table

	Rookies	Minors	Intermediates
Stealing	No	Yes	Yes
Leading off	No	No	Yes
Head first sliding	No	No	No
Hurdling	No	No	No
Slash Bunting	No	No	No
Bunting	No	Yes	Yes
Dropped Third Strike	No	No	Yes
10 Run Mercy Rule	No	Yes	Yes
10 Batter Rule	Yes	Yes	No
Last Batter Rule	Yes	Yes	No
Infield Fly Rule	No	Yes	Yes
Balks	No	No	Yes
Number of Innings	6	6	7
Playoffs	No	Yes	Yes

## Appendix B

### Wet Field Guidelines

Here are some general guidelines about wet field conditions.

Monday through Friday, the Recreation Department makes the call on whether games are played. Sometimes there is rain after 4:00PM and the coaches and umpires together make the call based upon field conditions at 6:00PM.

On Saturdays, the coaches and umpires make the call at the scheduled game time, e.g., 9:00AM. Sometimes on Saturdays, the 9:00AM games have to be canceled, but later games can be played, because if it has stopped raining, field conditions will generally improve as the day goes on.

On weekends, **ALL** of the coaches with scheduled games are responsible for making every effort to make the field playable for **ALL** games on that day. For example: in the case of rain on Friday, even the coaches who are scheduled to have a game on Grover 2 starting at 2:00 on Saturday afternoon should join the other coaches scheduled on that field **on Saturday morning**, along with any other volunteers, to prepare the fields for games.

We generally do not play when there is standing water in the infield base paths. If the infield is damp or slightly muddy, coaches are encouraged to rake the surface and may apply a **limited amount** of infield mix on the slightly muddy area. Infield mix is **NOT** to be used in the case of standing water.

**If there is standing water**, there will quite likely not be a game on that field for several hours, as the raking will not cure it in a timely fashion, and the use of infield mix is not appropriate. If more than a few bags of mix must be used, this will damage the field and still not render a playable surface.

When raking water on the infield, **DO NOT PUSH THE WATER ON TO THE GRASS AT ANY TIME**. Pushing the water on to the grass causes damage to the field. It should never be done. If there is a large puddle, the only thing that can be done is to rake the water onto another section of the infield dirt or mix (**NOT THE GRASS**).

If there are soft muddy conditions, coaches or a volunteer parent recruited by the coach, should rake the section of the infield between innings. Also, between games on Saturdays, coaches and volunteer parents should rake and drag the infield, batter's box and pitcher's mound areas.

If there is no standing water in the infield, we will normally play the game.