



Tri-West Little League Baseball 2026 Gameplay Guidelines Rookie Division

Reminder for 2026:

- ⚾ Coaches will pitch to batters – no pitching machine;
- ⚾ Pitching Distance: 30 feet from home plate – lower portion of pitching circle;
- ⚾ 7 pitches per at bat (batter must swing at the 7th pitch and all subsequent pitches if the final pitch is a foul ball) – see batting rules outlined below.

General

- ⚾ Tri-West Little League adheres to Little League International's Official Regulations, Playing Rules, and Operating Policies: <https://www.littleleague.org/playing-rules/>
- ⚾ Primary Focus: Applying fundamentals, displaying sportsmanship, enjoying the game;
- ⚾ Regular Season: 5 inning games/no time limit/5-run rule for first 4 innings – then unlimited runs for 5th inning;
- ⚾ Playoffs = 6 innings – 5-run rule for the first 5 innings – then unlimited runs for the 6th inning;
- ⚾ Mercy Rule: 15 runs after 3 innings or 10 runs after 4 innings - including playoffs.

Fielding

- ⚾ Teams shall field one pitcher's helper, one catcher, and four infielders. 4 players shall be positioned in the outfield;
- ⚾ The pitcher's helper must have one foot inside the pitching circle until the ball is put in play;
- ⚾ If a ball is fielded in the infield, fielders shall attempt to record an out. If the ball has been secured and the fielder is no longer attempting an out, "time" will be called by the umpire;

- Ⓢ If ball is fielded in the outfield, fielders shall return the ball to the infield by a throw. Once an infielder has secured the ball and is no longer attempting an out, “time” will be called by the umpire;
 - ❖ Discretionary umpire keys to consider: control of the baseball by infielder
 - ❖ Time should be called when the play reaches its “natural conclusion”
- Ⓢ Catcher shall be positioned a safe distance behind home plate/the batter;
- Ⓢ Two coaches shall be positioned in the outfield to instruct fielders during gameplay;
- Ⓢ Defensive Lineups: in the spirit of player development, please make an effort to place kids in different defensive positions during the course of a game (and throughout the season) with consideration given to player skill and overall player safety;
- Ⓢ Coaching tip – stress to the players to work to get out the lead runner.

Batting

- Ⓢ Teams will bat until 3 outs are recorded or 5 runs are scored;
- Ⓢ Each batter shall receive 7 pitched baseballs, per at-bat, from the pitching coach;
- Ⓢ The batter **MUST** swing at the 7th pitched baseball. In the event of a foul ball, the batter will be awarded an 8th pitch, but the batter must swing at the 8th pitch. This sequence continues until the batter either strikes out or puts the ball in play, but the batter must swing at the 7th pitch and every subsequent pitch (even if it’s technically a ball thrown by the pitching coach);
- Ⓢ 3 strikes will result in a strikeout;
- Ⓢ NO WALKS;
- Ⓢ Batting order shall be varied each game to allow for exposure throughout the lineup.

Baserunning

- Ⓢ Batter/baserunner, while running to 1st base, is not allowed to advance to 2nd base on an errant throw (this rule **ONLY** applies if the bases are empty);
- Ⓢ Baserunners shall return to the dugout if they are called out according to Little League rules;
- Ⓢ Generally, baserunners shall attempt to advance one base per fair ball. At the discretion of base coaches, if a ball that is hit into the outfield has not yet been possessed by the fielder throwing the ball back into the infield, baserunners may attempt to advance an extra base;

- ⚾ Baserunners are allowed to attempt to advance one (1) base following an errant throw (aside from the exception above for a batter/baserunner going to 1st base with empty bases). Multiple overthrows on the same play do not result in additional bases;
- ⚾ Baserunners shall advance/return to the nearest base at the moment “time” is granted by the umpire;
- ⚾ Stealing bases is not permitted.

Equipment

- ⚾ All batters and baserunners shall wear a helmet at all times while on the playing field;
- ⚾ Pitcher’s helper shall wear a helmet, heart guard, and facemask;
- ⚾ Catcher shall wear helmet, face mask, throat protector, chest protector, cup, and shin guards;
- ⚾ Only USABat baseball bats are permitted. For more information on the USABat standard and a complete list of bats approved through the USABat Standard visit: <https://usabat.com>

Rookie Division Goals to Aim For

- ⚾ Getting players to understand baserunning, looking and understanding the direction of the base coaches (1st/3rd base);
- ⚾ Stressing and getting players to understand defensive alignment: who covers which base, hitting cut-offs/cut-off positioning, and the roles and responsibilities of each position;
- ⚾ Situations: getting players to understand outs, where plays are required, who covers what base in various situations, tag/no tag, and stressing player communication to each other while playing the field;
- ⚾ Making a successful double play or attempting double plays (making the extra throw).