



SPRING 2018
Rookies Division (7/8): Baseball Rules

The official playing rules, with the exceptions and variations contained below shall be “Official Rules of Major League Baseball” completely revised, as released through the office of the Commissioner of Baseball.

EQUIPMENT

- A. Leather covered baseballs manufactured to appropriate specifications by several companies are the baseballs to be used for league play and tournament play. Two new baseballs will be provided by the home team for each game.
- B. Rubber soled tennis shoes or rubber cleated shoes are permitted. Metal cleats are not permitted.
- C. The batter, player in the on-deck batting area and base runners shall be required to wear protective headgear which gives protection to the top of the head, temples, ears and base of the skull. These items shall be NOCSAE approved.
- D. Catchers are required to wear a cup and proper protective equipment including a mask with throat guard, chest protector, shin guards and protective headgear which gives protection to the top of the head when catching behind the plate.
- E. It is recommended that coaches make every effort to encourage the wearing of athletic supporters or a protective cup by all male players.
- F. All players must be dressed in full uniforms (hat, pants, numbered shirt and socks). Shirts must be tucked into pants with hats facing forward. This rule is intended to promote teamwork, encourage players to look like a team and play like a team.

THE FIELD

- A. The field dimensions should be setup so that the distance between bases is 60' and the pitcher's rubber is 46' from the back of home plate.

BATTING

- A. All players will remain in the batting lineup throughout the game (roster bat). If a player comes late to the game, that player will be inserted at the bottom of the line-up without a penalty.

- B. Dropped 3rd strike rule not in effect...batter is out regardless if catcher catches the 3rd strike or not.
- C. Pitching Machine height and speed to be set by both coaches at the start of the game (**setting 8 on the tension spring**). Machine should be set up at 46' from the back of the plate to the front of the machine. Machine should be set so the pitch is between the waist and the knees of an average size player. Speed may be adjusted to 9 by mid season.
- D. If a machine is not available or not functioning properly, the coach will pitch to his/her teams' hitters. There is no designated distance that the pitching coach must stand/kneel from the batter. Usually the pitching coach should stand near, or just in front of, the mound/pitching rubber area. The pitcher should pitch overhand, preferably from a kneeling position to ensure ball is released at the player's eye level and encouraging a slightly downward swing. Put as much pace on the ball as the player can handle...reinforcing quick bat speed. Don't throw "lolly-pop" pitches with a softball-type arc to the hitters.
- E. The pitching coach should not attempt to field a hit or thrown ball, unless of course he is doing so to protect the safety of a player.
- F. If a batted ball hits the pitching coach / machine, the ball is considered dead and the play ends. All runners will advance one base....and the batter is awarded first base.
- G. If a thrown ball hits the pitching coach / machine the ball is dead and the play ends. Base runners that are more than half way to the next base shall be awarded the next base. Runners less than half way must return to the previous base.
- H. If possible, the umpire will feed the machine. This should keep consistency of the pitches throughout the game and allow umpires to declare a "no pitch" when necessary. If the umpire is unavailable or not being utilized, then the hitting team coach will feed the machine.
- I. If the umpire is running the pitching machine, he will utilize the help of the outfield and base coaches to determine fair and foul balls down the line.
- J. During the regular season if umpires are not used the pitching coach will serve as the umpire, making all "safe" or "out" calls at bases. If he is not sure of the play, he should ask the closest opposing coach positioned in the outfield to make the call. If the outfield coach has no opinion, then the call should go in favor of the offensive team.
- K. **Batter is out after 3 missed swings or after a maximum of 5 pitches.** Batter will not foul out on the last pitch. Use good judgment here...if the pitch is really WAY out of the strike zone...don't count it. As in conventional baseball, a player cannot strikeout on a foul ball...unless it is caught in the air by an opposing player. Foul balls caught by the catcher are "out" only on the third strike or anytime the ball travels over the batters head.

- L. There will be no walks. Pitching coach should, however, urge batter to swing if not doing so and notify the batter on the 5th pitch.
- M. The batting order shall remain the same for the entire game and include every player. The offensive team will bat each player in order until the defensive team makes 3 outs or the offensive team scores 5 runs. If a player comes late to the game, that player will be inserted at the bottom of the line-up without a penalty. For clarity, there is no "automatic out" in the Rookies division for a spot in a lineup for a late player.
- N. Bunting is not allowed. A bunt counts as a swing and miss strike.
- O. For the safety of our catchers and umpires, if a batter throws or slings his bat after making contact with the ball, one warning will be given to the hitting team. If any player on that team throws or slings his bat after the warning, he will be called out.
- P. Cal Ripken Division Bat Specifications **(NEW FOR 2018)**
- All Bats must have the USA Baseball Marking with a 2 5/8" Barrel Maximum. 2 1/4" bats are also allowed if they also have the USA Baseball Marking. **NO BBCOR BATS.**
 - If the illegal bat is discovered prior to a batter completing his "at bat" the bat is simply removed from play and the "at bat" continues.
 - A player who uses an illegal bat or non-conforming barrel dimension and hits a fair ball will be ruled out. No advancement on the bases will be allowed, and any outs during the play shall stand. This is an appeal play. The "at bat" will be considered legal once a pitch is thrown to the next batter.
 - Any bat discovered prior to the game that does not conform to the above rule shall be directed to be removed immediately and not be allowed for use during the game.

BASE RUNNING

- A. No stealing or lead-offs are permitted.
- B. Runners will not be allowed to advance a base on a pitched ball missed by the catcher.
- C. Sliding is allowed with an emphasis on safety...no head-first slides into any base. Runners are allowed to dive back to a base that they have already reached safely. If a runner attempts a head-first slide into a base he has not yet reached safely, he will be called out.
- D. Running over the catcher at home plate is not allowed, and will result in the player being called out and ejected from the game.
- E. All players must slide when arriving at home if there is a play at the plate. One warning per team, per game. Runner is called out on second team offense. Again, only if there is a reasonable play at the plate.
- F. Runners are awarded one base on any ball that goes under the fence, under the

backstop, in a dugout, etc.

- G. Pinch runners, as well as courtesy runners for the catcher, are not permitted unless they are due to injury. We feel strongly that when a young ballplayer earns his or her way on base, he or she deserves, and needs to learn, to run the bases.

H. **Hits to the Infield; One Infield Overthrow Rule (Runners Advance One Extra Base on an Overthrow At Runners Risk; Only One Overthrow Per Play).**

The intent of this rule is to encourage conventional baseball base running on balls hit to the infield; while encouraging and rewarding conventional baseball defensive plays and rewarding outstanding 7-8 year old defensive plays (e.g. it is desirable for defensive players to make throws needed to try to make plays). Runners of course will seek to advance one base on a ground ball to the infield and may advance two bases if an overthrow occurs. All runners are “at risk” according to conventional baseball rules. In support of this intention, there shall be in effect an “One Infield Overthrow Rule” as follows:

- **Overthrow on Initial Throw. On a ball fielded by an infielder in the infield, runners can advance one base (and only one base) on an overthrow of the initial/first throw to a base by the infielder.**
 - Runners will not be permitted to advance any further than two bases from their initial position under any circumstance on a ground ball to the infield, even if another overthrow occurs, regardless of what base it is and regardless of what defensive position makes the subsequent throw. Runners will not be permitted to advance any further than one base from their initial position under any circumstance on a ball caught in the infield and then overthrown (trying to make a double play), even if another overthrow occurs, regardless of what base it is and regardless of what defensive position makes the subsequent throw.
 - The runners advancing do so at his/her risk and the defense may get a runner out at any time until the runner is safely on a base and time is called. In other words, the play is not dead as soon as the runner reaches the furthest base to which the runner can advance. As in conventional baseball, the play is dead when the runner is safely on a base and does not seek to advance further. For example, if the shortstop attempts to make a play at 2nd base and inadvertently throws the ball deep into right field, the runner approaching 2nd can advance to 3rd at his own risk. The team in the field will be able to try and throw the runner out at third. If another overthrow happens due to an errant throw to third the runner will remain on third base and will not be allowed to score. For further clarity, if the runner safely reaches third base but then either overruns the base or try to score the defensive can continue to attempt to get the runner out. If the defense is successful then the runner is out. If the defense is not successful in obtaining an out (i.e. the runner stops on third base or makes it home without being tagged) then the runner is safe but regardless must return to third base. See below for additional examples

- I. **Hits to the Outfield; “Ball in the Infield Rule”**. The intent of this rule is to encourage conventional baseball base running on balls hit to the outfield; while encouraging and rewarding conventional baseball defensive plays and rewarding outstanding 7-8 year old defensive plays (e.g. it is desirable for defensive players to make throws needed to try to make plays). Runners will typically attempt to advance two bases on a single to the outfield and three on an extra base hit to the outfielder (and the defense will typically attempt to limit the runner(s) advances). All runners are “at risk” according to conventional baseball rules. In support of this intention, there shall be in effect an “Ball in the Infield Rule” as follows:

- **Infielder has Control, within 5 feet of baseline or closer to home plate. Once an infielder has control of the ball inside the base paths, at a base, or within 5 feet of the base paths or closer to home plate, runners will not be allowed to advance to the next base unless the runner is already halfway to that base.**
 - For example, if a runner has just rounded 3rd when the 2nd baseman gets the ball in from the outfielder at 2nd base (or within five feet of the base paths) , the runner should be held at 3rd regardless of whether or not he can make it safely home. If the runner continues home, he/she will return to 3rd base (unless the runner was already halfway home when the ball was brought under control).
- **Ball in the Infield, No Infielder Control. Once the ball is inside the base paths, at a base, or within 5 feet of the base paths or closer to home plate but not under control of an infielder, runners will only be able to move up a maximum of 1 base, even if not yet halfway.**
- The intent of this rule is to encourage “typical” conventional baseball plays with runners having the opportunity to run bases in a manner similar to what would be expected at higher skill levels and fielders having the opportunity to make defensive plays while preventing the game from turning into a “track meet” and thus encouraging errant throws around the field. The umpire is the judge as to whether the runner was beyond the halfway mark when the ball came under control in the infield. Coaches are encouraged to assist in this call to the benefit of the opposing team but not to argue with volunteer umpires over this judgment call. Same as the “one infield overthrow rule” above, runners advance at their own risk and the defense may get a runner out at any time until the runner is safely on a base and time is called.
- See rule below for limitations on when an outfielder can make plays in the infield.

- J. Additional examples of application of these base running rules. For added clarity, here are some examples of the correct and intended application of the above base running rules:

- No one on base. Ground ball to infielder. Overthrow to 1b. Batter may advance to second at his/her own risk. First baseman or right fielder is encouraged to try to make the play at second. If there is another overthrow the batter/runner cannot advance (meaning the runner either remains at second and time is called or will be sent back to second if runner chooses to run safely advances to third or home).

If the runner does try to advance he/she does so at his/her risk with no benefit – i.e. the play continues and the defensive continues to have the opportunity to get the runner out but if the runner safely reaches third or home the runner must return to second base. The runner can be tagged out if he/she overruns second base or tries to go to third. Play does not stop until baserunners hold on a base or score at home.

- Runner at first. Ground ball to infielder. Overthrow to 1b. Same as previous and runner on first can advance only as far as third base.
- Runner at first. Ground ball to infielder. “Underthrow” to 1b and 1b has ball off the base but in the infield. Runners safe at first and second. Runner on second base leave second base and tried for third. First baseman tries to throw runner out and overthrows third base. Runners go back to first and second. (Once 1b had control in within 5 feet of baseline runners cannot advance but if they try they are at risk with no risk to defense to try to make the play).
- Runner on 1b. Single to CF. Centerfield steps on second base for the force out. Runner is safe at second base. (Throw needs to be made). Same play, CF throws the ball to SS covering second base in time for force out. Runner is out.
- Runner on 2b. Fly ball to CF, caught. CF may continue in a tag second base for a double play. (Although a throw may be typical in larger fields continuing in without a throw may be the best baseball play at this age and field dimension. Most importantly, such an unusually good play by an outfielder should be rewarded).

FIELDING

- A. Each team should play 10 players in the field. The six players in the infield should be positioned in conventional infield positions. The pitcher should stand slightly behind, and to the side, of the opposing pitching coach. (i.e. Pitchers will not be allowed to play greater than halfway between the pitchers mound and 2nd base.) The remaining four fielders should be spread out in the outfield. The intent of having 10 players in the field is to allow more playing time...not to “create new positions”. Outfielders must play “outfield” and not be positioned as “short-fielders”. (i.e. you may not position an outfielder right behind 2nd to cover the bag.)
- B. Outfielders will not be permitted to run in to make tag plays, cover or take throws at any base unless (i) there is a rundown or overthrow type scramble play or (ii) the outfielder catches a fly ball and has an opportunity to run in and tag a base for a double play on an advancing runner. As noted below, the outfielders should throw the ball into an infielder on a hit consistent with conventional baseball. The penalty for an outfielder running in and making a tag on a base hit, being the initial coverer of a base or not throwing a hit ball back into the infield is that all runners are safe and get to move up one base (as if the throw were made and the ball was in the infield but not controlled by an infielder). Only exceptions are the two “highly skilled” plays noted in subsection (i) and (ii) above.
- C. Infield players are not permitted to interfere with base runners by lining up defensively in the base path(s). Additionally, defensive players shall not stand on bases while the ball is in play. Base runner interference will be determined by the umpire and a base will be awarded to the runner.

- D. A player may not stay on the bench more than 1 consecutive inning when they are playing the field. Every player on the team does not have to sit out an inning.
- E. Free substitution is allowed in the field throughout the game
- F. The cut-off man should be encouraged to make a play at a base if they have a chance of getting an out. They may also “run the ball” into the infield to stop play vs. throwing it to the pitcher. Do not allow outfielders to “run” the ball into the infield to stop play. Coach them to throw the ball in to the cut-off man. See above for penalty if this occurs. This rule does not prohibit an outfielder from running a ball in after an overthrow into the outfield or after making a catch in the outfield in which case the outfielder will be treated like an infielder for purposes of determining when runners can advance or not.
- G. The fielding team will position a coach behind the catcher to assist with missed pitches. The coach should help retrieve pitched balls that the catcher misses to speed up the game. If possible, the coach should give the ball to the catcher and let him throw it back to the pitcher. The coach backing up the catcher should not interfere with missed throws at the plate coming in from the field where the ball is in play and runners are advancing.
- H. At the Rookie age level, coaches are encouraged to allow kids to play a variety of positions throughout the season as its way too early in these kids’ lives to peg them as a pure infielder or outfielder. At the same time, use good judgment and keep the players safety in mind by not playing him/her at a position where they are likely to get injured. Every team shall meet the following defensive playing requirements:
- a) By the conclusion of the 4th inning, ALL players shall have either played at least one inning in the outfield or sat on the bench.
 - b) All players must play a minimum of **one** inning at an infield position (including catcher) during a game.
 - c) A player can only play a maximum of **three** innings at one infield position during a game.
 - d) A player cannot sit on the bench for a second inning until every player has sat at least once.
 - e) This rule is intended to be self-policed and coaches are expected to be ethical and follow these rules. Umpires are not expected to get involved in policing this. If another coach notices an opposing coach failing to comply with this rule then it should be politely brought to the offending coaches attention (and coaches should comply promptly/rectify any oversights during the game). Failure to follow these play rules will result in a warning from league coordinators. A failure to correct after a warning or a second violation reported to league commissioner will result in a forfeit of the game.
- I. All catchers are required to wear conventional catcher’s gear. Catcher’s masks must have some type of throat guard. Catchers must wear cups. Good idea to encourage all players to do so.

GENERAL RULES / GUIDELINES

- A. Every game should begin with both teams lining up on their respective foul lines with the Home team coach offering an opening prayer. Teams should then pass by one another and shake hands...exchanging "have a good game" types of comments to their opponents to set the tone of the game for the players, coaches, parents and fans. If a team chooses to not participate in a prayer, then they may remain in their dugout.
- B. In the event of a rained-out game, the home team will coordinate with the visiting team, the ALC to schedule a make-up game as soon as possible.
- C. If weather is a factor, use common sense in determining whether to play the game or not. Make every effort to play all games unless the safety of the children is in jeopardy. If a game is called in progress by the head umpire due to the weather before the end of the 4th inning (3 ½ if the home team is ahead), then the game will be rescheduled by the home team coach. When the game is rescheduled, the game will resume at the precise point where it left off; with the score, count, pitch counts, substitutions, etc resuming where you left them at the point of the rain delay. If a player was not in attendance at the original game, he cannot play in the make-up game. If a game is called in progress by the head umpire due to the weather after the end of the 4th inning (3 ½ if the home team is ahead), the game will be called and not replayed. The score at the end of the last complete inning will prevail as the final score and outcome of the game. If the game was tied, it goes down in the records book as a tie.
- D. A team must have at least 8 players to start an "official" game. However, an "out" will be recorded each inning when the missing 9th batter is due up. If a team starts a game with 8 players, and a player gets hurt...they may finish the game with less than 8 players; but will record outs for the missing players below 9.
- E. A team failing to field at least 8 uniformed players within 15 minutes of the scheduled starting time of a game shall forfeit. If a team has less than 8 players, a scrimmage game should be played. Substitute players may be allowed and game will be "official" if coaches agree in advance of the game to get to 8 players. Substitute players are not allowed in the post season.
- F. If a player is injured or falls ill during the game and is not able to bat when his turn comes you may skip to the next batter without penalty. He retains his position in the batting order and may bat again later in the game if he recovers. Any coach found manipulating this to gain an advantage when one of his weaker batters is due up, will be suspended 2 games.
- G. Regulation games shall be six (6) innings in duration. An official game is four (4) innings (3.5 innings if the home team is ahead).
- H. **A maximum of 5 runs can be scored per inning, including the 6th inning.** Once a team is mathematically out, the game is official. However, it is up to the Head Coach of the losing team whether to continue play or not. Completion of the game is encouraged, and umpires should remain and officiate up to the 1 hour 30 minute no new inning time limit.
- I. Mercy rule is 10 runs after 4 innings.

- J. A half inning will be declared over when the fielding team records three (3) outs or the hitting team scores six (5) runs.
- K. All games should be try and be completed within 1 hour 45 minutes, if at all possible. **No new innings shall be started after 1 hour and 30 minutes of play.** Innings started prior to the 1:30 time limit will be played in their entirety if necessary and conditions permit. If the inning is called for any reason, the score will revert back to that of the last full inning completed.
- The timer should be paused during a weather delay.
 - Playoff Games are still subject to the “No New Inning after 1:30 rule,” except in the case of a tie.
 - The Championship Game will have no time limit and play a full seven innings.
- L. If the game remains tied after the completion of 6 innings and you are still within the 1 hr. 30 minute “no new inning” rule, the following procedures will be implemented during extra innings:

Each team will begin the extra inning (and any subsequent necessary extra innings) with a player on second, no outs. The player on second will be the last out from the previous inning and the batting order will continue from the point of the next consecutive batter in the order. The batting order is not restarted and continues from the previous inning. This in not sudden death each team has an opportunity to score in its half inning. Due to game times and play during school nights, any game not decided within the max 2-hour game time limit rule is declared a tie.

- M. To help speed up play, there will be **a maximum of 90 seconds between innings**. (This makes up 9 minutes of every game). Both coaches should make a concerted effort to move the game along quickly. Get the players on and off the field quickly by letting them know in advance where they will be playing next inning. The clock is an unnatural, but necessary, part of youth baseball. Coaches must resist the temptation to intentionally slow down a game to limit the number of innings played in order to secure a win. Please have an adult ready to calibrate the pitching machine and someone to help dress your catcher if he is on base when an inning ends.
- N. In addition to the pitching coach, the Batting team can only have 1st and 3rd base coaches on the field. In addition to the coach backing up the catcher, the Fielding team can have 2 coaches positioned in the outfield if they so desire. These coaches should only serve to direct players. They should never touch the ball unless they are doing so to protect a kid from getting hurt.
- O. All coaches should make an extra effort to ensure the safety of the kids during practices and games. Accidents will happen, but let’s make sure it’s not due to anything we as coaches could have prevented. For example...
- Please make sure all batters and runners keep their helmets on until they get back inside their dugout.
 - On-deck hitters should always be well behind the hitter regardless of which dugout their team is in. (i.e. On-deck hitters should be on the 1st base side when a left-handed hitter is at bat and on the 3rd base side when a right-handed hitter is at bat.)

- All other players, including the batter “in-the-hole”, should remain inside the dugout.
- When a “strong” hitter steps up to the plate, the pitching coach should alert the opposing team that a big hitter is up. The fielding coach might want to encourage his players to take a step or two back.

GENERAL CONDUCT

- A. Scorekeeping should be discreet. Who “won” and who “lost” should not be the primary focus of the game. The focus instead should be on demonstrating good fundamental baseball skills, extra effort and continuous improvement. Remember, the coach sets the tone for the degree of focus on “winning & losing”. Kids are smarter and more attentive than we sometimes realize. Kids notice when a coach inquires about the score or urges his team to “catch up”. If the coach puts too much emphasis on the score, then so will the kids. We should all be able to make this fun and instructional, while at the same time allowing for healthy competition. If you would like to keep score, please ask a parent to do so outside of the dugout. You may confer with your scorekeeper between innings, but again be discreet. The final outcome is there if you want it, *just don’t make a big deal of it!*
- B. After the game, players should line up on their respective foul lines in single file to congratulate their opponents. Of course, all comments should be encouraging in nature (ie. “good game”), with no remarks about who won or lost.
- C. Any conduct of a player or parent causing a problem should be corrected by his/her coach only.
- D. Kids should be encouraged to cheer “for” their teammates, as well as their opponents. Negative chatter directed “against” the opponents is not permitted. This goes for parents as well.
- E. If a player is ejected from a game by the umpire, he will not be allowed to play in the next game. If a player loses his temper and throws his bat, helmet, glove, etc, then his coach should immediately put him on the bench for the rest of the game...don’t wait for the umpire to make that call.
- F. If a coach is ejected from a game, he must leave the park immediately and will receive an automatic one (1) game suspension. In addition, the matter will be referred to the league coordinator, commissioner of baseball and the director of baseball for review and possible further sanctions. If a coach is ejected twice in one season, he will be removed as coach of that team for the remainder of the season.
- G. NO TOBACCO or ALCOHOL products of any kind are allowed on the playing field, or in the dugout, at games or practices. Coaches and parents...use good judgment here. Impressionable kids, who look up to you, are watching.
- H. **Please limit Mobile Device Usage while in the dugout! Pay attention to the kids and not your phone! If you have to take an emergency call, please leave the dugout and make sure an assistant coach is monitoring things until you return.**

Of course, these rules cannot possibly cover everything that can happen out on the field. If ever in doubt on a rule, simply put the kids' best interest at heart, and let good judgment prevail.

First, and foremost, all coaches should remember that the game is for the kids...not the adults. Our primary goal at this level is to build strong character, have fun and ensure that the players have such a good experience that they come back again next year for another fun-filled season of baseball. It is also incumbent on us as coaches that we concentrate on teaching these kids good, sound fundamental baseball skills that will help them reach their full God-given potential as a ballplayer.

Please remember...as the coach, you set the tone for your players and their parents. Please take time along the way to teach your players, both in words and in actions, not only about the game of baseball...but also important life lessons (i.e. sportsmanship, teamwork, perseverance, sacrifice, hard work, etc.) that will serve them well in all facets of their life. This is an integral component of youth baseball...so please seize the precious opportunities you have as a coach to make a positive impact in the lives of your players

So... work hard, play fair...and HAVE FUN!! And remember, the kids are watching

Thanks again for all your time and effort in coaching baseball!

SPECIAL POST-SEASON TOURNAMENT RULES

- **Early-Round Games: No new inning is started after 1 hour 30 minutes.**
- **Championship Game: No time limit...full six inning game.**
- **No run rule per inning in Championship Game. Mercy rules are still in effect.**
- **Regular season rules still apply in tournament play, except a game cannot end in a tie.**
- **Home & Away Teams for each game will be determined by coin toss.**
- **Tournament seeding will be a blind draw.**

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