

THIRD GRADE RULES*

*These rules are not meant to be exhaustive. Any situation not covered herein will be ruled by the umpire(s) in accordance with Little League Baseball's Official Rulebook.

Revised date: March 31, 2025

1. **Competitive Principles:** This program is devoted primarily to developing skills, but the transition to competition can now impact how the coaches manage the game. Coaches can engineer fielding rotations, subject to the rules below, to have the most skilled players at key positions. As kids pitch in 3rd grade, coaches are encouraged to permit less-skilled players the opportunity to pitch to enable development (see Section 4). Coaches shall not make winning a game their sole goal, as it is more important to develop the players and have them enjoy their experience.
2. **Fielding:**
 - a. **Number of Fielders:** There may be nine fielders except when a child is catching, in which case there may be ten.
 - b. **Location of Fielders:** There may not be a pitcher's helper when a kid is pitching, and there shall be one pitcher's helper when a coach is pitching. There may not be more than one catcher, 1st baseman, 2nd baseman, shortstop and 3rd baseman in the infield (**i.e., no player stationed ON 2nd base, no outfielder starts a play within 15 feet of any base path**). There may be up to four outfielders at relatively equal depth (i.e., left field, left center, right center, and right field).

If a player that is stationed on 2nd base makes any force out play (assist or putout) or if an outfielder that starts a play within 15 feet of any base path makes a force out play (assist or putout) at the closest two bases, the affected runners shall be safe. An outfielder that starts a play more than 15 feet away from a base path may make an *assisting* play at any base (i.e., the outfielder can throw the ball to an infielder who makes the putout at a base).
 - c. **Rotating Fielders:** The players are to be rotated amongst positions every game and throughout the season and encouraged to play *every* position they are capable of playing. For example, it is permissible to only put players at shortstop and 3rd base who can make the throw across the diamond and to place only proficient catchers of a thrown ball at 1st base or catcher. Each player **MUST** play the infield an equal number of times over the course of the season, and ideally each game if feasible given the number of players on the team. For this purpose, pitcher, pitcher's helper and catcher constitute infield positions.
 - d. **Rotating Players Not in Field:** Every player plays equal full innings in the field. In each game, no player shall sit out a second inning until all players have sat out one full inning. This rule applies on a season long basis, so that each player has sat out an equal number of innings as of the end of the season.
 - e. **Plays at the Plate:** All plays at the plate are to be called and handled as force out regardless of if the runner is actually forced. **There is no circle of dirt.** If a team does not have enough players to field a catcher (less than 8 kids) an adult may field the position. A reasonable throw must be made to an adult catcher who must then satisfy all of the usual requirements of a force out. In either case, once a runner has run halfway home they are committed to going home. A player who returns to third base will be called out.
 - f. **Catching:** Kids are strongly encouraged to catch the entire game. If a child is catching it is acceptable to have a parent back them up to speed up the pace of play. The parent can have no other role on the

field during this time. **If 8 kids are in attendance, 1 must play catcher, even though that will result in just 2 outfielders. (You may borrow an outfielder from the other team.)**

- g. No Infield Fly: The infield fly rule shall never apply.
- h. Substitutions: There will be unlimited substitutions, except for the pitcher.
- i. Pitcher's Helpers positioning: Pitcher's helpers shall be positioned no closer to the batter than the front of the pitching mound, or if a field has no pitching mound, then no closer than the pitcher.
- j. Stoppage of Play: As there is no stealing, play stops when the pitcher has the ball. However, if a player(s) are in motion and the play is live, play does not automatically stop when the pitcher has the ball, unless the umpire has signaled the play is dead. The ball should be returned to the pitcher's helper and not directly to the coach, when a coach is pitching.

3. **Batting:**

- a. All Players in Batting Order: All players are in the batting order. Every player bats regardless of whether the player played in the field that inning.
- b. Consistent Batting Order During Game: The batting order must remain consistent throughout each game.
- c. Batting Order During the Season: Coaches are strongly encouraged to rotate players in the batting order throughout the season in an attempt to balance the total number of at bats across all players (i.e., coaches should *not* have the same player lead off or hit fourth or the same group of players bunched at the top or bottom of the batting order).
- d. No Bunting: No bunting is allowed.
- e. No Bat Throwing: A thrown bat as ruled by the umpire results in one warning per team from the umpire. All subsequently thrown bats as ruled by the umpire by a player on a warned team results in that batter being called out regardless of whether the ball is hit, and the ball is dead. For safety reasons, any player who throws a bat a third time as ruled by the umpiring any game shall be removed from the batting order for the remainder of the game.
- f. Dropped Third Strikes: A batter cannot run to first base on a dropped third strike.
- g. Strikes during coach pitch: During coach pitch strikes will be called both when a batter swings and misses/hits the ball foul and when the pitch crosses through the batter's strike zone. No balls will be called during coach pitch. No base for a hit batter.

4. **Pitching:**

- a. Rotating Pitchers: Coaches shall pitch each player that wants to and is ABLE to pitch at least one inning (or fraction thereof if removed for wildness, pitch count or injury) before allowing any player to pitch on a second occasion. Once every player who wants to and is able to pitch has had a chance to pitch, the coaches can use pitchers as they see fit within the pitch count limits, but they shall encourage all players to try to pitch. Pitchers can only be removed mid-inning due to wildness, reaching a pitch count limit, injury, or at the request of the pitcher.
- b. Coach Pitch Innings: Coaches shall pitch to their own team in innings one, three, and five throughout the season. **Pitching shall be overhand (standing or from a knee) and from no more than two feet in front of the pitching rubber.** Umpires will be instructed to monitor the distance.
- c. Kid Pitch Innings: Players shall pitch in innings two, four, and six throughout the season, subject to being replaced by a coach after being removed for wildness or reaching a pitch count. If a pitcher is removed during an inning, the pitcher must be replaced by a coach to complete the inning in order to speed up the pace of play. There can be no more than one player pitching per inning. Be mindful of rest days, pitch count and the Saturday/Monday pattern. A kid that pitches on Saturday is unlikely to be eligible to pitch on Monday,
- d. When Coaches Pitch in Kid Pitch Innings: Coaches shall pitch when the kid pitcher is removed during the middle of an inning. Coaches pitch when their own team is at bat.

e. Pitch Count Limits and Rest Days:

- (i) Protecting youth pitchers' arms is extremely important, and the following pitch limit and rest days are designed to minimize or prevent serious arm injuries to youth players. The following rules for daily limits and required calendar days rest **MUST** be followed:

Daily Limit (Pitches)
50

Rest Days (Pitches)	Rest Days (Pitches)	Rest Days (Pitches)	Rest Days (Pitches)
0 Days	1 Day	2 Days	3 Days
0-20	21-35	36-50	51+

- (ii) If a pitcher reaches the daily limit (50) while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until the batter reaches base safely or is put out. All pitches must be included in pitch counts for rest day purposes. For example, if a pitcher is at 50 pitches and completes an at bat and ends with 54 pitches, the pitcher's pitch count is 54 pitches for rest purposes. The pitcher would need three days of rest rather than two had the pitcher stopped at 50 pitches. Rules allow a pitching change to be made during an at bat.
- (iii) Calendar days of rest **DO NOT** include the day of a game. For example, if a player pitches 36 pitches on a Saturday and needs two calendar days of rest, the rest days are Sunday and Monday. Therefore, that player is NOT eligible to pitch in a Monday 3rd grade league game.
- (iv) If your players also play travel baseball, please coordinate with their parents on pitch count and rest days. This is very important.
- f. Pitch Count Reporting: Coaches are required to submit pitch counts after each game via web link which will be distributed to coaches by the grade coordinator(s).
- g. Pitcher to Catcher Change: A pitcher who delivers 41 or more pitches in a game cannot play the position of catcher for the remainder of that day.
- h. Catcher to Pitcher Change: Any player who has played catcher in four or more innings (i.e., appears in an inning) is not eligible to pitch on that calendar day. A player who played catcher for three innings or less (i.e., three full innings or less) and moves to pitcher and delivers 21 pitches or more in the same day may not return to the catcher position on that calendar day.
- i. Mound Visits: A coach is allowed to visit the mound up to three times per inning per pitcher, and the pitcher must be moved on the third visit. A coach may visit the mound up to four times per game per pitcher, and the pitcher must be removed on the fourth visit. Coaches are strongly encouraged to use their best judgment in an effort to keep the pace of play and under no circumstances should mound visits be used in an effort to delay the game to improve a team's chances of winning.
- j. Removal for Wildness: Pitchers will be removed if, in one inning, they hit two batters, give up five walks, or give up four walks and hit one batter. In addition, any pitcher who walks four in a row or walks three and hits a batter all in a row will be removed. There are no exceptions to this rule.
- k. Balks: No balks will be called.
- l. Strikeouts and Walks: Regular baseball rules apply with respect to strikeouts and walks when a kid is pitching.
- m. No Intentional Walks: Intentional walks are not permitted.
- n. Pitchers Cannot Return after Removal: Once a player has been removed as pitcher, that player cannot pitch again that game.
- o. Strike Zone: The umpire has been told to call a generous strike zone.

- p. Pitch that Bounces: The following points clarify when a pitch bounces before reaching home plate during kid pitch innings:

- (i) Except as provided in 4.p.(ii) and 4.p.(iii) below, if a pitch bounces off the ground and then through the strike zone, it is called a ball.
- (ii) If a pitch bounces off the ground, the batter may swing and hit the ball, or if missed by the batter, it is called a strike (even if the ball subsequently hits the batter which results in a dead ball called strike).
- (iii) If a pitch bounces off the ground and hits the batter (who has not swung the bat and either made an attempt to avoid or cannot avoid the pitched ball), a hit by pitch is ruled, and the batter is awarded first base.

5. **Baserunning**:

a. Some Sliding, No Contact:

- (i) Feet first sliding should be taught and encouraged to players.
- (ii) No head first slides to any base including home, other than diving back into the base originally occupied. **If a runner slides head first, the runner is out.**
- (iii) No sliding into first base. A runner doing so will be called out.
- (iv) **Coaches must emphasize that it is the runner's responsibility to avoid contact.** All runners must avoid contact with fielders at all times when a play at a base. If a play is being made, the runner may go in standing but must avoid contact. If there is contact as ruled by the umpire, the runner is out, and if in the opinion of the umpire, it was intentional, the player will be ejected. (THIS IS A NON-CONTACT RULE AND SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED AS A "MUST" SLIDE RULE.) Runners should slide feet first unless the runner is diving back into the base originally occupied.
- (v) Runners should slide or get down in order to avoid contact with the fielder. A runner will not be called out for not sliding, if such player gets down to avoid contact.

b. No stealing or Leading: No stealing or leading.

c. Advancing on Errors: Runners can advance on errors. If the ball is out of play the runners advance one base.

d. Tagging Up Permitted: Tagging up is allowed. If a runner leaves the base early, the runner shall be returned to that base.

e. Pinch Runners: No runner substitution except (i) for injuries and (ii) the coach shall insert a runner for the catcher if there are two outs to speed up the game. Any pinch runner must be the last batter that made out prior to the substitution.

6. **Equipment**:

a. Baseballs: Only baseballs approved by Scarsdale Little League may be used in 3rd grade games. Approved baseballs are included in each team's equipment bag, and coaches should contact the grade coordinator(s) to acquire additional game baseballs.

b. Helmets: Players must use helmets at the plate AND on the bases. No helmet--no batting or running the bases.

c. Uniform: All players must wear their entire Scarsdale Little League uniform (team cap, team shirt, and baseball pants) at all times during the game. Players are encouraged to tuck in their team shirts.

d. No Metal Cleats: No metal cleats are permitted.

e. Bats: Only wood, metal or composite material baseball bats containing a "USA Baseball" marking on them may be used during league play. The USA Baseball stamp signifies that a bat meets the USA Baseball Bat standard (USABat) as adopted by Little League.

f. Double First Base: A double base included in equipment bags shall be used at first base.

g. Cups: Male players catching MUST wear a cup, but all male players are encouraged to wear cups even when not playing catcher.

7. **Scoring:**

- a. **Game Length:** Games are a maximum of six innings. If coaches agree, games will be played through bottom half of the last inning (time permitting) even if the home team is winning after the top half of that inning. In that case, the runs scored in the bottom half of the last inning will not count in the official score of the game.
- b. **Weather Delays:** Once thunder is heard or lightning is seen, all players must immediately leave the field and move under cover (i.e., sit in cars). They are not to sit in dugouts. Players shall not be permitted to return to the field until 20 minutes have elapsed since the last thunderclap was heard or lightning bolt seen.
- c. **Runs Counted:** Score will be kept.
- d. **Inning Mercy Rule:** Half-inning ends with three outs or five runs, whichever comes first.
- e. **Ending Games Early:** On weekends, no inning will start after **an hour and 45 minutes** after the start time for the game. On weeknights and late afternoon weekend games, the umpire shall terminate games prior to the end of the 6th inning if poor light risks the safety of the players. Play shall not start for an inning not reasonably likely to be completed. For all games, if the visiting team takes the lead in the top of an inning, and the game is called before the full inning has been completed, the visiting team's runs will NOT count in the score.
- f. **Four At-Bats for Official Game:** The losing team must bat four times for the game to be official.

8. **Coaches' Roles:**

- a. **Location on Defense:** On defense, all coaches must be on the bench or otherwise in the dugout area, except one coach may stand beyond first or third (outfield) on the side opposite the defensive team's dugout. This coach must be in foul territory.
- b. **Location on Offense:** On offense, there may only be one coach in each of the first and third base coach's boxes, potentially one behind the catcher and, when a coach is pitching, one pitching. All other coaches must be on the bench or otherwise in the dugout area.
- c. **Backing up Catcher:** Space permitting, coaches may backup catchers for passed balls, EXCEPT on live plays.
- d. **No Plays in the Field:** Coaches are not permitted to make plays in the field.
- e. **Umpiring:** Coaches from the team in the field shall act as umpires if there is no umpire present at the game.
- f. **Reporting Pitch Counts:** Coaches are responsible for ensuring that pitch counts are made and for reporting them to the grade coordinator(s) within two days after each game. A coach or parent must be designated by each team before each game to keep the pitch count. See 4.e. above.
- g. **No Private Coaches:** No private coaches may be hired to assist in team training unless provided by Scarsdale Little League as a part of player development across the league.
- h. **Practices:** Coaches are encouraged to hold a minimum of one practice per week (weather permitting), and players should attend.

9. **Setup and Organization:**

- a. **Distance of Bases:** Bases are 60 feet from each other. Each coach is to have a means for measuring this distance. The back tip of home plate is used for measuring distances to the bases, and the edges of first base and third base *farthest* from home plate are used (i.e., 60 feet from the back tip of home plate to the back of the base not the front). The midpoint of second base is lined up with the back edges of first and third base where these meet the baselines (i.e., 60 feet from the baseline corners of the back of first and third base to the midpoint of second base). For more details, see the field diagram in Section 11 below.
- b. **Location of Pitching Rubber:** Pitching rubber is 42 feet from the part of plate farthest from the mound.
- c. **Dugouts, Setting Up Field, Warm-Ups:** The home team occupies the first base dugout unless signage at a field indicates otherwise (e.g., CX3) and is responsible for setting up the field (bases and pitching

rubber) and for supplying game balls. Home and away teams split time on the field for warm-ups during the 15 minutes before game time.

- d. Location of Non-Players/Coaches: As coaches will be pitching at times, they should encourage other parents of players to help coach the bases, get kids ready for at bats, keep kids on the bench behind fences, etc.
- e. Location of Batting Team: The batting team is to be kept behind fences and in the dugout area while waiting to bat. All players that are sitting out shall be behind fences and in the dugout area.
- f. No On-Deck Hitter. Do Not Use Bats When Not Hitting: There is no "on deck" hitter. Swinging bats other than in the batter's box is not permitted during the game.
- g. Clean-Up: Both teams are responsible for dugout and field cleanliness at end of game. Coaches are required to monitor trash and equipment left behind. All trash must be placed in receptacles at end of each game.
- h. Minimum Number of Players: There will be no forfeits for any games. The coaches will determine how they will borrow/lend defensive players should there be fewer than nine at the start of the game. The umpires should be informed of this but will not call a game forfeit for lack of available players. Coaches should not refuse to share players when reasonably able to do so.

10. **Sportsmanship:**

- a. No Arguing: No arguments are to be had by players, coaches, parents or other spectators.
- b. Resolving Rule Questions: Before each game, a representative of each team shall meet (together with any umpire(s)) to discuss the ground rules for the field and go over the rules of play. If there is a question about the application of a rule, the coaches and umpire ONLY are to meet outside of earshot of parents, spectators and players and communicate civilly with one another to resolve the question. If the coaches are unable to resolve the question very promptly, play shall continue and a grade coordinator(s) shall be notified by both coaches promptly after the game so that the question can be clarified prospectively.
- c. No Unsportsmanlike Behavior: Poor behavior, name calling or other unsportsmanlike behavior will not be tolerated from any player or adult. Players are not to comment on others' plays. No one, including spectators, should attempt to influence an umpire's calls—for example, by shouting "out" or "safe" at the time an umpire must make a call on a play. Players are accountable to all coaches, not just their own. The coaches shall promote good sportsmanship at all times. It is the coaches' responsibility to monitor the parents', spectators' and players' behavior. Coach, parental, spectator or player misbehavior will result in punitive action at the discretion of the Scarsdale Little League. There will be zero tolerance for poor sportsmanship.
- d. Treat Umpires Respectfully: Coaches are NEVER to question (except in a civil manner in a private conference with only the other coach present and outside of earshot of parents, spectators and players) or argue any call by an umpire or otherwise verbally or physically abuse an umpire. A violation of this rule will result in one warning from the umpire, and then ejection. In addition, violators of this rule are subject to immediate suspension, termination and/or other punitive action by Scarsdale Little League.
- e. Ejections: Any ejection by an umpire will result in an automatic one game suspension.
- f. Shake Hands After Games: Teams line up at the end of every game to shake hands. Players and coaches are also encouraged to shake hands with the umpire(s).
- g. Reporting Violations of Rules: All violations of these rules and other inappropriate conduct shall immediately be reported to the grade coordinator(s) and to Scarsdale Little League.

Field Dimension Diagram:

