

ROOKIE LEAGUE BASEBALL LOCAL RULES

All age-appropriate national Little League rules, as described in the current season rulebook, apply unless specifically changed in these local rules, WMLL Universal Local Rules, the WMLL Code of Conduct, or by past WMLL custom.

GAME LIMITS + FORFEITS

INNING & TIME LIMITS: All regular season games are limited to six innings with a hard stop of 1-hour & 30-minutes. The official final score is the score at the end of the last completed full inning or the score at the start of the bottom of the half inning if the home team was already ahead before the hard stop is reached.

- Tie games will not continue if six innings have been played or the time limit has been reached.
- A game which ends due to the time limit will be considered a complete game regardless of the number of innings played.

GAME START & END TIMES: The official start time of the initial game of the day will be the scheduled start time regardless of the time of the first pitch (unless the delay is weather-related, or the umpires are not present). Games after the initial game of the day must start ten minutes after the final out of the previous game or the scheduled start time, whichever is later.

- The umpires will enforce the scheduled starting time and the time limits for each league.
- The umpires must record the official game start time & end time (time of the final out) on the umpire card.

RUN LIMIT: A maximum of five (5) runs can be scored per half inning (with no maximum to the number of hitters who may bat before the fifth run is scored). Any half inning which does not end by national rule will end as soon as the fifth run is scored.

FORFEITS: Teams forfeit if they have fewer than seven players to participate in a game. A team has fifteen minutes from the scheduled starting time to obtain eight players before a forfeit is declared. When both teams have less than seven players, a double forfeit occurs. When a forfeit takes place, teams are strongly encouraged to scrimmage one another, sharing players as needed. This scrimmage is not an official game & will not count toward league standings.

- Exception: If a team has less than the required number of players due to a scheduled school event during the regular school year, the game can be rescheduled if the league coordinator is notified 2 weeks prior to the scheduled game.

EQUIPMENT & GEAR REQUIREMENTS

Each team's coaching staff must make sure that their players are properly equipped.

HELMETS: Players must have their own helmets. Helmets must include face masks in Rookie & Minor Lg BB & all SB leagues. If a player cannot provide their own helmet, they should contact their League Coordinator to arrange a WMLL helmet loan for the season. All offensive players outside the dugout must wear batting helmets including batters, base runners and player base coaches.

CLEATS: If players wear cleats (recommended), they must be rubber (steel cleats are only allowed in the Jr & Sr Leagues.)

BATS: Only bats meeting national Little League rules (Rule 1.10) may be used at WMLL. For Rookie, Minor & Major Lg baseball, bats must comply with USABat standards.

DEFENSE

DEFENSIVE PLAYERS: Teams can play with up to ten players on defense of which a maximum of six can play in the infield (including the pitcher and catcher – both of which are mandatory). All outfield players must position themselves on the outfield grass at least 20 feet behind the back arc of the infield. Free defensive substitution of all players is allowed.

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DEFENSIVE PLAYING TIME. Each player shall play at least four innings defensively. The minimum defensive innings in this rule must be full half innings.

- Each player must play at least four full defensive half innings within the first five innings of the game, and each player must play a minimum of 1 inning in the infield and 1 inning in the outfield. For teams with 13 or more players, this must be done in the first six.
- No player may be kept off the field defensively for two innings, before all players have been kept off for at least one inning.

Playing Time Rule Exceptions. The only exceptions to the playing time rule will be:

- If a player misses practices and/or games without a valid reason, the coach may decide to reduce the number of innings played in the field for the next game by a maximum of one inning. Absences due to family vacations should not affect playing time.
- If a player arrives late for a game, the head coach can decide to reduce the number of innings at his/her discretion.
- If a player is being disciplined, a head coach must inform the opposing head coach prior to the game or immediately after an incident which requires removal, for the participation rule to be satisfied. The player who is being disciplined should be advised of why he/she is not participating. If the discipline results in the player being “docked” more than one inning below the league minimum, the coach must inform the League Coordinator in writing of the discipline and the cause. This method of disciplining should be used with reasonable discretion.
- If a game is shortened because of the time limit, inclement weather or run limit, all players will not be required to satisfy the playing rule.
- If an eligible player does not fulfill the participation rule, that player must be a starter in the team’s next game and play the whole game. Any head coach who violates this rule will be subject to dismissal by the league’s Baseball Operation Committee.

INFIELD FLY RULE: There is no infield fly rule.

DEFENSIVE OBSTRUCTION: A defensive player without the ball who impedes a runner, whether intentional or unintentional, or who fakes a tag will be penalized for defensive obstruction. The umpire will award the runner the base or bases they are attempting to reach.

PITCHING

MACHINE PITCH: All pitching is done by pitching machine. Coaches will operate the pitching machine when their own team is batting.

- **Machine Not Functioning Properly:** If the pitching machine does not function properly, coach pitching by an adult coach from the offensive team will be used. The pitching machine should be removed from the field for safety reasons.
- **Machine Hit by Batted or Thrown Ball:** The pitching machine & cord are in play &, as such, any ball that hits the pitching machine is considered a fair ball (even if it ends up in foul territory).
- **Ball Lodged in/under Machine:** If a batted ball becomes lodged in/under the machine as to be unplayable, the umpire has the discretion to call a replay. If a thrown ball becomes lodged in/under the machine as to be unplayable, the ball will be declared dead & the base runners will be awarded the base to which they were heading when the ball was declared dead.
- **“No Pitch” due to Malfunction:** The umpire may call a “no pitch” when the machine obviously malfunctions. An obvious malfunction is defined as a ball which hits the ground before reaching the dirt area around the batter’s box. If a player swings at such a pitch before “no pitch” is called, it will be considered a legal pitch.

PLAYING PITCHER ON DEFENSE: When the pitch is delivered the player in the pitcher’s position must have at least one foot on the dirt area of the pitcher’s mound, forward of the point where the ball leaves the machine.

BATTING

ON DECK WARMUPS: For safety reasons, on deck warmup swings are strictly prohibited and on deck hitters are not allowed on the field.

SET BATTING ORDER: The batting order of every team will be predetermined for every game except the post-season WMLL tournament games. When the WMLL tournament begins, the set batting order rule is suspended, and coaches may determine the batting order for every game.

- **Setting the Order:** Before Opening Day, each head coach will determine a set batting order for their team that will rotate by one player for all games up during the first two weeks of the season. The order must be sent to the league coordinator no later than three days before Opening Day and will be shared with the other head coaches.
- **Order Rotation:** After every game, the player batting last is automatically moved to the leadoff spot for the next game and every other player shifts back one spot. If a player misses a game for any reason, they will simply be left out of the order and will resume in the next game in their predetermined spot.
- **Option for Batting Order Adjustment:** At the start of the third week of the season (Monday), coaches have the opportunity, but are not required, to change their team’s batting order for the remainder of the regular season.
- **Rainouts:** The batting order for rainouts will be determined by when the game is played, except in the event of a game suspended during the first two weeks of the season and resumed after start of the third week of the season, in which case the order of the original game will be in effect.

STRIKE ZONE: To encourage more aggressive hitting and speed the game along, the strike zone used is larger than the standard. The width shall be the width of the plate plus the width of a baseball on both the inside and outside corners (for a total width of 23-inches) and the height shall be from the batter’s armpits to the bottom of their knees.

BUNTING: Bunting is not allowed.

WALKS & HIT BATTERS: To create more opportunities for hitting & fielding, there are no walks & hit batters are not awarded first base. If a batter is hit, the ball is dead immediately on hitting the batter. Catcher's interference will, however, result in the batter being awarded first base

BAT THROWING: A player will receive one warning each game for inadvertently throwing the bat. For any subsequent instance of throwing the bat in that same game, a player that has been warned will be called out. The warning and out can be on the same at bat. If a hitter is called out for throwing the bat the ball will be dead and any runners must return the base, which he/she occupied prior to the pitch. *Note: this rule applies to accidental bat throwing, not to bat throwing in anger or protest.*

BASERUNNING

DOUBLE FIRST BASE: A double first base is used on the Minor Field. The runner must touch the orange portion of the base while the fielder must touch the white portion on the initial play at first base. If there is no play the runner may touch the white base.

STEALING: Base stealing is not allowed.

SLIDING: Players are encouraged to slide on ANY close play (even if the defensive player is not yet in possession of the ball). Headfirst sliding when advancing is prohibited with the penalty of the offender being called out.

DROPPED 3RD STRIKE: Batters are out after being thrown three strikes & may not attempt to advance to first base on a dropped third strike.

PLAY STOPPAGE: At the conclusion of a play, base runners may advance no further than the base to which they are headed at the point the ball has reached the infield, regardless of whether the ball has been secured by a defensive player or not.

OFFENSIVE INTERFERENCE: On a close play at second base, third base or home plate, the runner is required to either slide or avoid contact with a defensive player in possession of the ball while located within the batter's box area or within the vicinity of another base. If contact is made and the runner did not slide, the umpire shall call the runner out for offensive interference.

▪ *Additional Guidance:* *For a non-sliding runner to be automatically out, all three of the following must be true:*

- 1) There was contact between the non-sliding runner and the defensive player.*
- 2) At the time of contact the defensive player had possession of the ball.*
- 3) At the time of contact the defensive player was within the batter's box area or within the vicinity of another base.*

MALICIOUS CONTACT: When a runner initiates malicious contact with any fielder, with or without the ball, in or out of the baseline, the umpire shall eject the runner for the game. The runner has the primary responsibility to avoid a collision with the defensive player.