

# MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL LOCAL RULES

*All national Little League rules for Minor League baseball, 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 & 45 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 was 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 with the final score being what it was at the end of the last completed inning.
- For league playoff games, the hard stop will convert to no new inning after 1 hour & 45 minutes requiring teams to finish the current inning unless the home team is already leading during the home half (bottom) of the inning. That will be the final score.

**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 eight 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 eight 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 strictly 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 League 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). 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.

**DEFENSIVE PLAYING TIME:** Each player shall play at least four innings defensively with a minimum of one inning in the infield and one inning in the outfield. The minimum defensive innings in this rule must be full half innings.

**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

**APPLICATION OF PITCHING RULES:** Pitching rules, including pitch counts and rest days, apply to ALL WMLL sponsored games, including playoff, in-house tournament, interleague, and/or special games which may not count toward league standings (*i.e., pitch counts do not reset for a play-off or in-house tournament*).

- If a pitcher reaches the maximum number of pitches or a days of rest threshold during an individual’s at-bat, the pitcher may continue until that individual’s at-bat is completed and only be required to observe the days of rest for the threshold reached during that at-bat. This exception also applies to the Pitcher to Catcher and Catcher to Pitcher rules.

**PITCH COUNT LIMITS:** Pitchers may pitch no more than 75 pitches or two innings in a game, whichever comes first. For the purposes of this rule, throwing one pitch in an inning constitutes an entire inning. After having been removed as a pitcher a player may not return to the mound in the same game.

- **Pitcher to Catcher Rule:** A pitcher who delivers 41 or more pitches in a game cannot play the position of catcher for the remainder of the day. A pitcher who throws 40 or fewer pitches in a game may catch in the same game.
- **Catcher to Pitcher Rule:** A player who plays the position of catcher in 4 or more innings may not pitch in any games that same calendar day. A player who plays the position of catcher for 3 innings or less and then moves to pitcher and throws 21 or more pitches may not return to the catcher position on that calendar day.

**DAYS OF REST:** The following days of rest are mandatory for pitchers Little League ages 14 and younger:

- If a player pitches 66 or more pitches in a day, 4 calendar days.
- If a player pitches 51-65 pitches in a day, 3 calendar days.
- If a player pitches 36-50 pitches in a day, 2 calendar days.
- If a player pitches 21-35 pitches in a day, 1 calendar day.
- If a player pitches 1-20 pitches in a day, 0 calendar days.
- Pitchers may not pitch three consecutive days.

**NINE-YEAR-OLD PITCHING REQUIREMENT:** In each game one or more Little League age nine players must pitch a minimum of six defensive outs or thirty pitches. This requirement must be started no later than each team’s start of their time in the field in the third (3rd) inning AND must be continued until the requirement is completed (30 pitches or 6 outs). If the game ends due to the time limit in less than four (4) complete innings, the rule will not be fully enforced. Any violation of this rule will be referred to the Baseball Operations Committee to determine an appropriate penalty, which may include forfeiture of the game.

**PITCH COUNT RECORD:** Each head coach must maintain an accurate record of the pitch count and innings pitched for each player who pitches in a game and adhere to all pitching requirements. A counter will be provided to each team by WMLL. Prior to each game, head coaches must provide one another with a list of each player on their team who pitched in the past week along with the dates and number of pitches thrown in each outing.

**INELIGIBLE PITCHER:** Any violation of the pitching rules will result in the ineligible pitcher being removed from the pitching position and an automatic protest to be ruled on by the Baseball Operations Committee. The game will continue with a new eligible pitcher, and both scorebooks should note the ineligible pitcher's name and the inning in which the violation was said to have occurred. Coaches will be subject to disciplinary action for using ineligible pitchers.

**BALKS:** No balks will be called.

**NO WALKED IN RUNS / SOFT TOSS:** In all games played there will be no walked in runs. When the bases are loaded and the pitcher throws ball four, the batter will not take first base and force in a run. Instead, the batter will continue the at-bat with soft-toss from a coach from the batting team until a batted ball is put in play (i.e., soft toss cannot result in either a strike out or a walk).

**INTENTIONAL WALKS:** Intentional walks are not allowed. Any coach who directs a pitcher to deliberately walk any batter will be subject to severe disciplinary action by the Baseball Operations Committee.

## BATTING

**SET BATTING ORDER:** The batting order of every team will be predetermined for every game except post season WMLL playoff games. When the WMLL playoffs begin, 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 through the fourth week 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 Adjustment:** Coaches have the opportunity, but are not required to, change their team's batting order for the remainder of the regular season after the fourth week of the season.
- **Rainouts:** The batting order for rainouts will be determined by when the game is played, except in the event of a game suspended before the fourth week deadline and resumed after the fourth week deadline, in which case the order of the original game will be in effect.

**ON DECK WARMUPS:** For safety reasons, on deck warmup swings are prohibited and no on deck batters are allowed on the field.

**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 allowed.

- *Additional Guidance: WMLL believes the act of squaring to draw infielders in and then swinging away is dangerous to charging infielders. While not a rule, coaches should not permit their batters to engage in this action. Anyone concerned that a coach or team is not adhering to this philosophy should contact their League Coordinator.*

**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. 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:** In all games played through the first four weeks of the season, no base stealing is permitted. In regular season and tournament games played after the fourth week of the season, stealing is allowed subject to the following rules:

- **One Base Limit:** Runners may advance only one base regardless of overthrows or actions taken by the defense. This rule is intended to encourage catchers to attempt to throw out runners.
- **No Stealing Home:** If a runner is on third base when the pitcher delivers a pitch, the runner may not score on a wild pitch, a passed ball, a throw by the catcher to any base immediately after the pitch, or the throwback to the pitcher. In all other situations, the runner may advance as allowed by Little League rules.

**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.

**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 is secured by any defensive player on the infield.

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

**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.