# FOREST HILL RECREATION COUNCIL <br> BASEBALL RULES/GUIDELINES <br> <br> 7-8 Program 

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Revised: March 29, 2023

## Mission Statement

The PURPOSE of the Forest Hill 7-8 Baseball program is to expand on the fundamentals of basic baseball skills while having "FUN". This program serves as the transition between learning skills in stations (56 t-ball) and applying those skills in games (9-10). This is to be accomplished through practice sessions and the use of controlled, evolving "INSTRUCTIONAL GAMES", as identified in the established BASEBALL RULES/GUIDELINES for the 7-8 age group. In this age group, we will be using batting tees for instructional hitting and game situations, Coaches pitching to all participants, and, eventually, pitchers (players having the skill) will be instructed in pitching in live game situations.

Another important aspect of the baseball program, beyond just learning the game itself, is the spirit and application of sport and competition in the larger context of life. This applies to any sport offered in a recreation program. Becoming a better person, not just a better player, is the intention.

Our managers and coaches have volunteered their time to organize and lead the program, but the participation of all adults will ensure the success of this program. It is the expectation of every parent to assist these managers and coaches in whatever areas they deem necessary. Please be prepared to contribute to the program in different ways; playing catch with your child during warm-up; shagging balls during practices; keeping an eye on the bench during instructional games; organizing drink/snacks after sessions; etc.

With all this in mind, the paramount purpose of this program will always be the safety and well-being of our players.

## Forest Hill Recreational Rules

1. A copy of these rules/guidelines should be made available to the parent/guardian of each participant.
2. The Forest Hill Recreation Council's "BY LAWS", "CODE OF CONDUCT"
"BASEBALL/SOFTBALL OPERATIONS HANDBOOK" and these "BASEBALL RULES/GUIDELINES" MUST be followed.
3. UNSPORTMANSLIKE conduct WILL NOT be tolerated from any player, coach, manager, parent, fan or spectator. This includes conduct directly toward other players, coaches, managers, parents, fans, and spectators and especially towards umpires. Managers/coaches/parents/players/spectators ejected from a game must sit out the next game as well.
4. Any questions related to these rules/guidelines should be directed to the Age Group Director and/or the Baseball Director or his/her assistant.
5. All participants will receive a hat and t-shirt at the start of the season and a trophy at the end of the season.
****** MANAGERS AND/OR COACHES FOUND NOT FOLLOWING THE "BASEBALL RULES/GUIDELINES MAY BE SUSPENDED FROM THEIR MANAGER AND/OR COACHING DUTIES AT THE DISCRETION OF THE BASEBALL DIRECTOR, ASSISTANT BASEBALL DIRECTOR AND AGE GROUP DIRECTOR ******

NOTE: The use of ALL tobacco products is prohibited on Harford County Parks and Rec facilities. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited at all youth games and practices.

## Player Safety

As stated above, player safety is paramount to this program. The following rules are in place to protect the well-being of our players:

1. NO METAL SPIKES! NO JEWELRY! NO EXCEPTIONS!
2. MacGregor \#56, RIF \#1; NO HARD BALLS!
3. Parents should be instructed to encourage their child to wear a protective cup/supporter and a protective mouthpiece.
4. All batters/base runners MUST wear a batting helmet with facemask.
5. Catchers MUST wear the proper gear (cup/supporter, full catcher's helmet, face mask with throat guard, chest protector and leg guards).

## League Rules

1. All players moving up/down in age group should be reviewed by the two Age Group Directors and must be approved by the Baseball Director or his/her assistant. NO EXCEPTIONS!
2. The 7 and 8 year old Age Groups will consist of no more than 14 teams combined.
3. Each team will consist of no more than 13 players under normal circumstances.
4. Teams should be of equal talent if at all possible. Special requests (manager or coach, play with a friend, car pool, etc.) should be honored if at all possible as long as team balance is not compromised.
5. Teams should be picked and list of players along with manager/coaches names/phone numbers will be compiled by the Age Group Director and forwarded to the Baseball Director.

## Managers and Coaches

1. The Age Group Director will nominate all team managers for approval by the Baseball Director. Initial nomination is based on the "Coaches Application Forms" received. All managers MUST complete the "Coaches Application Form".
2. The Age Group Director and/or Baseball Director and/or Assistant Baseball Director must approve all coaches. All coaches MUST complete the "Coaches Application Form".
3. Travel managers/coaches can be nominated by the Age Group Director and MUST be approved by the Travel Coordinator or Baseball Director or his/her assistant. All managers and coaches MUST complete the "Coaches Application Form'.
4. All players should be notified of "travel" and "fall ball" tryouts.
5. At the first practice session, each coaching staff should:
a. Conduct an informal parent/players meeting. At this meeting, Forest Hill's philosophy should be explained as it relates to the 7-8 year old age group, as well as the manager/coaches' philosophy.
b. The season schedule (dates \& times), and any special dates of events (fund raisers, etc.), should be explained and a volunteer "Team Parent Coordinator" should be identified, and their role explained.
c. Any rules or guidelines established by the coaching staff should be reviewed and the official 7-8 AGE GROUP BASEBALL RULES/GUIDELINES should be distributed.
d. Any questions from parents should be addressed.
6. Responsibilities:
a. Managers are responsible for practice sessions being planned and having a purpose with fundamentals being taught utilizing stations.
b. Managers and coaches will station themselves on the field with the players and instruct as the game situation arises.
c. Managers and coaches should explain the game situation to the players not on the field and keep order on the bench.
d. Coaches should be warming up pitchers and catchers between innings, and when their team is batting.
e. Coaches who are pitching to players during Instructional games will keep at least 6 balls on the mound and keep pitching if the ball gets by the catcher. This will keep the game moving.
f. Managers and coaches should never disrupt another team while warming up. Games must start ontime.

## Teaching Guidelines

1. All players will be instructed in all positions.
2. The following basics of baseball will be taught:
a. A continuation of the skills taught in the 5-6 year old program
b. How \& why to warm-up before each practice session or "instructional game"
c. How \& why to cool-down after each practice session or "instructional game"
d. Layout of the baseball field
e. Name \& location of each position (player, coach \& umpire)
f. How to throw ( 2 seams vs. 4 seams)
g. How to catch (grounders, fly balls, line drives), emphasizing the proper glove orientation
h. How to pitch
i. Base running
j. Fielding by position
k. Hitting (strike zone, mechanics)
3. How to get out of the way of a pitched ball
m . Emphasis will be placed on every child learning and practicing the basics of Throwing, Catching, Hitting and Pitching.

## Practice Planning

Practices are the method by which players learn and fine-tune the fundamentals of the game. This is applicable to any game.

Just as with the Major Leagues, practices will be held prior to the start of Instructional (Spring Training) games. Practices will continue throughout the duration of the season, although the time allocated for practices will decrease as the season progresses.

The format of these practices should be consistent:

- A warmup period, where the coaches talk to the team, and the players warm up.
- Individual practice, using stations to improve the fundamentals of the players by working with the players on an individual basis. During this individual practice time, the coaches will be providing guidance to the players, but it is expected that parents will be assisting with these stations.
- Team practice, where the coaches work with the entire team on different aspects of the game (game situations, etc.)
- Wrap up/Cool down, where the coaches review the practice, and provide information regarding the next upcoming event.


## Instructional games

1. Instructional games will be played, starting on Opening Day. These games will contain a mixture of coach-pitch and player-pitch.
2. For Instructional Games, the managers should have the line-up and player position by inning identified before the start of the game. This will allow the game to keep moving.
3. No more than half of the team will bat per inning, over the entire course of the season.
4. Managers and coaches must teach the positions, not swarm-ball! Everyone has some place to be and something to do when the ball is put into play.
5. The Instructional Games will be played with at most ten (10) defensive players on the field at one time. If ten (10) players are present, then four (4) outfielders will be deployed. If more than ten (10) players are present for an Instructional game, equal time in the field is encouraged. In this event, all players
should sit at least one inning per game throughout the season. Those players not in the field must be working with a coach near the bench or sitting on the bench paying attention to the game.
6. The outfielders will be positioned on the grass edge of outfield. Outfielders should be reminded they are to back up the infielders, not make plays on the infield.
7. If enough players are available, a Catcher will be employed for all games. A coach must be with the Catcher at all times. Players who will be catching should be coached and warmed up on the side lines before every inning. All players should be given the opportunity to catch - BUT NOT FORCED!
8. In order to keep the players from getting bored while out in the field, it is highly recommended that players switch positions between batters. If ten (10) players are on the field, then the outfield and inside will switch places (i.e. $3^{\text {rd }}$ baseman will switch with LF, SS will switch with LC, $2^{\text {nd }}$ baseman with RC, and $1^{\text {st }}$ baseman with RF). If nine (9) players are present, then $3^{\text {rd }}$ baseman and LF will switch; SS, 2B, and CF will rotate, and $1^{\text {st }}$ baseman and RF will switch. The players at the pitcher and catcher positions will remain in their respective positions for the duration of the inning. Between innings, players will switch ( $3^{\text {rd }}$ and SS will switch; $1^{\text {st }}$ and $2^{\text {nd }}$ will switch). In this way, a player will play all positions on their side of the field during a game.
9. Players shall rotate between sides/positions (left side of field, right side of field, pitcher, catcher) during the course of the season, so that every player gets to experience every position. If a player struggles with catching a baseball, then the manager should use caution when that player is scheduled to play first base and Pitcher. As stated above, every player is encouraged to try the catching position, but if a player does not want to play Catcher, then that player will not be forced to.
10. The field will be $60^{\prime}$ bases and $40^{\prime}$ distance from home plate to the pitching rubber.
11. Score will not be kept. Game WIN/LOSS records will not be kept.
12. The lineup will change from game to game, in order to allow every player to bat in different positions within the lineup.
13. No bunting for offensive purposes. Bunting should be done by the offense if the defensive team agrees and must be done for instructional purposes only. The defense should be informed that the batter is bunting so the coaches can prepare them to defend against the bunt.
14. If a player is called out on the bases because the defense made a play on him and he is called out, then he is REALLY out and must leave the field and sit on the bench.
15. For infield hits, batters and all runners should be held to one base. If the batted ball goes into the outfield, the batter and runners can try to advance two bases, but if thrown out, then they are out. This teaches the importance of getting the ball back into the infield. Runners cannot advance once the ball is controlled in the infield. The only exception to this is in regards to the final batter of each half inning. For that batter, and all runners on base, they may continue to run around the bases until they reach home plate or an out has been recorded. Once an out has been recorded on the play, then the play stops, and all runners must immediately return to their bench.

## Coach Pitch rules

1. It is highly recommended that the coach kneel, to promote greater accuracy and to provide a realistic pitch trajectory for the batter.
2. Prior to each pitch, make sure that the batter is focused on the pitch. Present the ball prior to the pitch, so that the player can keep his eyes on the ball.
3. Absolutely no more than 6 coach-pitches per batter. We do not want kids swinging a bat $8-10$ times because they "almost got it." If a batter does not hit the ball within six (6) pitches, the batting tee must be used. NO exceptions!
4. A player will be stationed next to the coach. That player will be responsible for fielding any balls that are hit back to the pitcher's location.

## Player Pitch rules

1. 3 strikes (either swinging or called) and the batter is out. This needs to be enforced so that the players start to become prepared for 9-10. Have a liberal strike zone when calling strikes.
2. 4 balls is a walk. Instead of walking, the batter then has the option to hit off the tee.
3. A batter who is hit by the pitch has the option of hitting off the tee, or may be placed on $1^{\text {st }}$ base. Sometimes a player is too upset after getting hit by the pitch to bat off the tee.
4. Pitchers can pitch to a maximum of 3 batters. Relief pitchers should be warmed up in the out of play area in preparation for the game. 2 warm-up pitches allowed from the mound.
5. If a team doesn't have enough pitchers that are able to pitch all the innings that kids can pitch, then revert to coach-pitch. DO NOT use the same pitchers over and over again.
6. Only those players able to get the ball across home plate from the $40^{\prime}$ rubber are permitted to pitch in the Instructional Game. In other words, if a player cannot throw 40 feet, he cannot pitch until he can demonstrate that he can get the ball over the plate.
7. A pitching rotation is encouraged for all players who can throw 40 feet in the air.
8. Pitchers who cannot throw some strikes should be relieved to avoid a walk-fest.
9. Fast balls only - NO CURVE BALLS.

## Season Schedule

The objective of the season schedule is to provide both practice instruction to the players, as well as allow players to engage in instructional games. Practices are vital to emphasizing the fundamentals required to play the game. As the season progresses, the time allocated to practicing will decrease, while the time allotted for instructional games will increase. In addition, the number of innings that players pitch will increase during the season, so that by the end of the season, the instructional games provide a good representation of games that are played in the $9-10$ program.

All times prior to Opening Day will be for practices only. Only one team will be assigned to a field during these practices. Practices will be run as described above.

On Opening Day, an Instructional game will be played, in which Coach pitch will be utilized for the entire game. The length of the Instructional game on Opening Day is driven by the field schedule. No full inning should start within 20 minutes of the scheduled start of the following event on the respective field.

From Opening Day onward, there will be a mixture of practice time and instructional game time, as described in the following chart. The chart provides the guidance for each of those sessions. In general, the first session of each week during the early part of the week will be practice/instructional games, while the second session of each week (latter part of week or weekend) will be instructional games. If a session is cancelled as a result of weather or holiday, then that session will be skipped over.

During the practice time, the home team will have the infield $1^{\text {st }}$ while the visiting team uses the outfield. Halfway through the practice time, the teams will switch. During these designated practice times, no scrimmages should be conducted. This time is to focus on the fundamentals by instructing the players in the various aspects of the game.

| Week* | Session of wk | Practice Time (min) | \# Game <br> Innings | $\begin{gathered} \text { \# Coach } \\ \text { IP } \end{gathered}$ | $\begin{gathered} \text { \# Player } \\ \text { IP } \\ \hline \end{gathered}$ | Notes |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | 1 | 60 | 2 | 2 | 0 | Enough innings to allow every player to bat once. |
| 1 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | Every player bats 3x. |
| 2 | 1 | 50 | 3 | 3 | 0 | Half of team bats twice. |
| 2 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | Every player bats 3 x . |
| 3 | 1 | 40 | 3 | 3 | 0 | Other half of team bats twice. |
| 3 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | Every player bats 3 x . |
| 4 | 1 | 30 | 4 | 4 | 0 | Every player bats twice. |
| 4 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | Every player bats 3 x . |
| 5 | 1 | 20 | 4 | 4 | 0 | Strikeouts, walks, outs called. Half of team bats per inning. |
| 5 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | Strikeouts, walks, outs called. Half of team bats per inning. |
| 6 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 0 | Only 1 team uses infield for practice; managers to decide. |
| 6 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | Strikeouts, walks, outs called. Half of team bats per inning. |
| 7 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 1 | Strikeouts, walks, outs called. Half of team bats per inning. |
| 7 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 1 | Strikeouts, walks, outs called. Half of team bats per inning. |
| 8 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 2 | Normal outs rules; max half of team bats per inning. |
| 8 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 2 | Normal outs rules; max half of team bats per inning. |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assumptions: |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| This schedule starts after opening day. Prior to opening day, all practices. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 90 min total per session; if daylight allows extra time, discretion of BOTH managers to play additional inning(s). |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 min infield warm up for each team prior to start of game. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Half of the team bats per inning, regardless of the number of outs recorded, up through week 7. |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Games always start with Coach pitch; Player pitch occurs at end of game. |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## End-of-Year

1. An All-Star Game will be played at the end of the season. Each in-house team will select at least two to participate in the All-Star Game. The Age Group Director will determine teams and their managers and coaches. In-house rules apply! Game length will be six (6) innings. Pitchers are allowed to pitch a maximum of one inning (one pitch counts as an inning).
2. All players should be evaluated at the end of the season and for hitting, throwing, fielding, catching, and pitching. The "evaluation forms" must be completed and given to the Age Group Director, who in turn will relay the forms to the Baseball Director.
3. All equipment is to be collected and accounted for at the end of the season by the coaching staff and turned in to the Equipment Manager on the designated Uniform/Equipment Turn-In Day.
4. An Age Group picnic will be held at the end of the season for the participants and their family members. Family members will be asked for donations (minimum $\$ 1.00$ per family member) to offset the cost.
5. A baseball wrap-up meeting may be held in August to review the season and discuss any changes for the next season.
