

# West Lafayette Little League Softball Rules Briefing

## Rules common to Major and Minor League play

- **Safety Rules**

- **Play must be suspended immediately at the first sighting of lightening or the sound of thunder.** Once suspended, play cannot resume until a period of 30 minutes with no lightning elapses.
- Only players, managers, coaches and league officials are allowed on the field or in the dugouts.
- No one (player, manager, coach or umpire) wearing a cast is allowed on the field during games. A player or coach wearing a cast may remain in the dugout.
- All batters, base runners and player-base coaches must wear a helmet with a face mask at all times from leaving the dugout until returning to it—even when running off the field after being retired or at the end of a half inning.
- At least one adult must be in the dugout at all times during games (maximum of 3 adults).
- All gates to the field should be kept closed at all times.
- No bats are allowed in the dugout or in the on deck cage. All bats must be kept in the receptacles outside the dugouts.
- Only coaches and the next due up batter are allowed in the on deck cage. All other players must be in the dugout.
- Catchers must wear appropriate protection during games..
- Catchers must wear a catcher's mask during pre-game infield practice.
- Head first slides are not allowed. The runner is ruled out. A runner may dive back to a base.
- Between inning team meetings should not be held in front of the dugouts.
- **LOCAL RULE** - The first time the batter throws the bat, the plate umpire issues a warning to the batter after the play is over. (This is noted by the Official Scorer.) If this **same** batter in the same game throws the bat a second time, the ball is dead, the batter is out, and any runners return to the last base that was legally touched at the time of the pitch.

- **General Rules**

- Home teams occupy the third base dugout; visitors occupy the first base dugout.
- All players are in the batting order at all times unless injured.
- Each player must play a minimum of 6 defensive outs. These outs do not have to be consecutive.
- A seven run/half inning rule is effect for all games. The half inning ends immediately upon the 7<sup>th</sup> run crossing the plate.
- If a game becomes mathematically un-winnable due to the seven-run rule, it is up to the manager of the trailing team to decide whether or not play continues.

## Minor League

### Game night:

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 4:30 - 4:50 | Visiting team has the batting cage (batting practice is NOT to take place on the field)  |
| 4:50 - 5:10 | Home team has the batting cage   |
| 5:10 - 5:20 | Visiting team takes infield/outfield   |
| 5:20 - 5:30 | Home team takes infield/outfield and remains on the field for the start of the game  |
| 5:30        | Game start. (Before school is out, no inning shall start after 7:00 p.m. After school is out, no inning shall start after 7:30 p.m. An inning starts the moment the third out is made in the bottom of the previous inning.) |

The home team is responsible for setting up and removing the pitching machine.

### Rules:

- **Teams must start the game with at least 8 players from their team.** If a team cannot start a game with 8 of its players the game will be forfeited. Substitute players may be obtained only from teams which played the previous minor league game. Substitute players must bat last in the batting order and can only play in the outfield.
- Each team will play 10 players—six infielders and four outfielders (LF, LC, RC, RF).
- The home team supplies the home plate umpire. The visiting team supplies the base umpire.
- No infield or outfield practice is allowed between innings.
- Outfielders must be positioned at least 10 feet from the edge of the infield.
- Infielders cannot position themselves on the grass portion of the infield prior to a pitch.
- Fielders may not change positions during a half-inning other than for substitutions.
- There are no walks. A pitch out of the strike zone on which no swing was attempted will be called a no pitch.
- Bunting is not allowed. A bunt will be called a no-pitch.
- Stealing is not allowed.
- There are no “lead offs.” Base runners must remain on a base until the ball crosses the plate. If a player leaves a base early, a dead ball is called and the base runner is declared out. The results of any subsequent play are nullified.
- There is no infield fly rule.
- If the ball is in the infield and controlled by an **infielder** and the attempt is made to return it to pitching circle, base go immediately to the closest unoccupied base. Where the runners were located when this occurs will be a judgment call for the umpire.

**Pitching Machine:**

- A coach or parent from the batting team is responsible for feeding the pitching machine. **No coaching is allowed from this position.**
- The speed of the pitching machine should be set at **38** rpm.
- Adjustments to the aim of the pitching machine should be made **only** when absolutely necessary and then only at the beginning of an inning.
- The pitching machine is not in play. When a batted ball hits the machine, it immediately becomes a dead ball. The batter advances to first base only and any runners advance one base only if forced.
- The adult who is feeding the pitching machine is in play. If a batted or thrown ball hits this person, the ball is still in play.
- The fielder in the pitching position shall have both feet within the pitching circle and be even with, or behind the pitcher's rubber when the ball is released from the pitching machine.

## Major League

### Game Night

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 6:30 - 6:50 | Visiting team has the batting cage (batting practice is NOT to take place on the field)  |
| 6:50 - 7:10 | Home team has the batting cage   |
| 7:10 - 7:20 | Visiting team takes infield/outfield   |
| 7:20 - 7:30 | Home team takes infield/outfield and remains on the field for the start of the game  |
| 7:30        | Game starts. (Before school is out, no inning shall start after 9:15 p.m. After school is out, no inning shall start after 10:00 p.m. An inning starts the moment the third out is made in the bottom of the previous inning.) |

The home team is responsible for setting up the pitching machine.

### Pitching Machine:

The pitching machine will be used for the first three innings of play. The following special rules apply while the pitching machine is in use:

- A coach or parent from the batting team is responsible for feeding the pitching machine. **No coaching is allowed from this position.**
- The speed of the pitching machine should be set at **50 rpm** for the first two weeks of the season, then increased to **55 rpm** for the third and fourth weeks, and finally increased to **60 rpm** for the fifth and sixth weeks and the end-of-season tournament.
- Adjustments to the aim of the pitching machine should be made **only** when absolutely necessary and then only at the beginning of an inning.
- The pitching machine is not in play. When a batted or thrown ball hits the machine, it immediately becomes a dead ball. The batter advances to first base only and any runners advance one base only if forced.
- The adult who is feeding the pitching machine is in play. If a batted or thrown ball hits this person, the ball is still in play.
- The fielder in the pitching position shall have both feet within the pitching circle and be even with, or behind the pitcher's rubber when the ball is released from the pitching machine.
- There are **no** walks, but strikes will be called if the batter misses a pitch or does not swing at a pitch in the strike zone.
- Bunting is not allowed when the pitching machine is being used. A bunt will be called a no pitch.
- Infielders cannot position themselves on the grass portion of the infield prior to a pitch **when the pitching machine is being used**. This restriction does not apply during live arm pitching.
- The home team is responsible for putting away the pitching machine.

## Rules:

- **Teams must start the game with at least 7 players from their team** (If there are not 7, the game will be forfeited). **Teams must have at least 8 players to start the game although they are strongly encouraged by our local board to start with 9 players.** A fill-in minor league player cannot play any more innings than any rostered major league player. A substitute player must bat **last** in the batting order. A **substitute player must play in the outfield for the first three innings of a game.** From the fourth inning on the substitute player can play any position at the manager's discretion, but cannot pitch more than one inning.
- All players **must** wear either a visor or a baseball hat while in the field.
- There can be two adult coaches on the bases, provided there is still an adult in the dugout.
- Umpires will enforce one minute in between each half-inning for warm-ups.
- At least two pitchers on each team need to be used each week. If the starting pitcher pitches two or more innings in one game, then she cannot start the next game for her team (whether it is in the same week or the next week). This is a local rule.
- If a player pitches in more than one (1) inning, one calendar day of rest is mandatory. Delivery of a single pitch constitutes having pitched in an inning.
- Bunting is allowed during live arm pitching; slap bunting is not allowed
- **LOCAL RULE:** Once the batter squares to bunt, she may **not** swing away or she will be declared out.
- Adults must remain either in the dugout or behind the fence during live ball situations, except when coaching the bases.
- The infield fly rule is not in effect.
- Stealing is allowed both during live arm pitching and pitching machine use.
- The runner is out if she fails to keep contact with the base [**NEW**] until the ball has been released by the pitcher or it exits the pitching machine. The ball is dead and "No Pitch" is declared. **Note:** if the pitcher has possession of the ball within the pitcher's circle and is not making a play (a fake throw is considered a play), runners not in contact with their bases must immediately attempt to advance or return to their base. If they don't, the ball is dead. "No Pitch" is declared, and the runner is out.
- **NEW** A batter may advance to first base on a dropped third strike **IF** first base is unoccupied or if first base is occupied **AND** there are two outs. First base is considered occupied if a runner is on first base when the pitch is delivered even if that runner attempts to steal second on that pitch.

## Some pertinent and often misunderstood rules

Below is a thumbnail sketch of some of the more important and/or often misunderstood rules. This list is no substitute for thoroughly reading and understanding the Little League's Official Regulations and Playing Rules.

- **Pitcher Visits:** A manager may visit a pitcher twice in one inning or three times in a game. On the occasion of the third visit in a single inning or the fourth visit in the game, the pitcher must be replaced. **Any defensive time out initiated by a manager or coach counts as a visit to the pitcher.** A manager may confer with any other defensive players during a visit to the pitcher..
- **Offensive time outs:** The manager of the team on offense is allowed one time out per inning.
- **The Strike Zone** is the space over home plate which is between the batter's armpits and the top of the knees when the batter assumes a natural stance. **The ball only needs to touch a portion of the zone to be considered a strike.**
- **Fair or Foul?**
  - Before reaching first or third base whether a ball is fair or foul is determined by where it is when it stops or is touched—where a player who touches it is standing has no affect. Home plate, first and third base and the baselines are all in fair territory.
  - Beyond first and third base fair or foul status for a fly ball is determined by where it first hits the ground or is touched. The status of a ground ball is determined by its position when it passes first or third base.
- **Foul Tip:** a batted ball that goes sharp and direct from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught. It is not a foul tip unless caught; it is a foul ball instead. Any foul tip is a strike **even if it is the third strike**, the ball is in play and **base runners can advance**. It is a not a catch if it is a rebound, unless the ball has first touched the catcher's glove or hand. A foul tip can only be caught by the catcher.
- **Hit by pitch:** If the batter is hit by a pitch, the ball is dead and first base is awarded. This rule applies even if the ball bounces into the batter. The hands are **not** part of the bat. If the batter swings at the pitch or is in the strike zone when hit, the ball is dead and the batter is charged with a strike—first base is not awarded.
- **Running out of the base line:** Any runner is out when running more than three feet away from her baseline **to avoid being tagged**. The base line is established by drawing a straight line from the runner to the base and is not, necessarily, the straight line between two bases.
- **Overrunning first base:** A runner cannot be tagged out after overrunning or over sliding first base if she returns immediately to the base. It does not matter if the runner is in fair or foul territory as long as no attempt has been made to advance to second base.
- **Obstruction:** Obstruction occurs when a fielder, not in possession of the ball, impedes the progress of any base runner whether or not intentional. This often a delayed call. Bases may be awarded if in the opinion of the umpires the obstruction prevented a runner from obtaining a base she had a reasonable chance of reaching.
- **Interference:** Offensive interference is an act by the team at bat which interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play. The ball is dead, the runner or batter is out, and any runners return to the last base that was legally touched at the time of the interference. **Catcher interference** occurs when the catcher's mitt touches the batter's bat when attempting to swing. The ball is dead and the batter is awarded first base. Other runners advance if forced. If the batter hits the ball and advances past first base, the interference is ignored.
- **Bunting:** Any forward movement of the bat during a **bunt attempt** is considered a swing. **NEW** In addition, it is a strike when the batter holds the bat in the strike zone when the pitch is delivered to the plate even if the batter does not "offer at the pitch. This is true even if the pitch is out of the strike zone.

Bunting foul with two strikes is an out. **Local Rule:** Once the batter squares to bunt, she may **not** swing away or she will be declared out.

- **Sliding:** A base runner must slide **OR** avoid contact with a fielder. The base runner who does not slide and significantly contacts a fielder will be declared out. It is perfectly legal for the runner not to slide as long as contact is avoided.
- **Appeals:**
  - Can be made for a missed base or failure to tag up after a fly out.
  - Must be clearly intended as an appeal by a verbal request by a player
  - Must be made during a live ball situation.
  - Only one appeal shall be attempted on the same runner at the same base

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