

Spring Rookie Division (7/8): Baseball Rules

Batting

- Conventional baseball rules apply except for the following:
- Infield fly rule not in effect
- Dropped 3rd strike rule not in effect...batter is out regardless if catcher catches the 3rd strike or not.
- Big barrel bats are not allowed. Maximum barrel size is 2 ¼”.
- Pitching Machine height and speed to be set by both coaches at the start of the game (setting 8 on the tension spring). Machine should be set up at 46’ from the back of the plate to the front of the machine. Machine should not be adjusted for individual players.
- The machine can be adjusted at the beginning of an inning at the mutual agreement of both teams.
- Machine should be set so the pitch is between the waist and the knees of an average size player.
- If a machine is not available or not functioning properly, the coach will pitch to his/her teams’ hitters. There is no designated distance that the pitching coach must stand/kneel from the batter. Usually the pitching coach should stand near, or just in front of, the mound/pitching rubber area. The pitcher should pitch overhand, preferably from a kneeling position to ensure ball is released at the player's eye level and encouraging a slightly downward swing. Put as much pace on the ball as the player can handle...reinforcing quick bat speed. Let’s don’t throw “lolly-pop” pitches with a softball-type arc to the hitters. This only serves to develop an upper cut that some coach down the road is going to have to try and break.
- The pitching coach should not attempt to field a hit or thrown ball, unless of course he is doing so to protect the safety of a player. If a batted ball hits the pitching coach / machine, the ball is considered dead. All runners will advance one base....and the batter is awarded first base.
- The hitting team coach will feed the machine.
- The pitching coach also serves as the umpire, making all “safe” or “out” calls at bases. If he is not sure of the play, he should ask the closest opposing coach positioned in the outfield to make the call. If the outfield coach has no opinion, then the call should go in favor of the offensive team.
- Each batter will get five pitches. The three strike rule will be in effect on the 4th game of the season. During the first three games of the season, each batter will get 5 pitches regardless of how many strikes the batter accumulates. Batter will not foul out on the last pitch...unless he is bunting. Use good judgment here...if the pitch is really WAY out of the strike zone...don’t count it.
- Batter is out after 3rd strike. If a coach has a player or two that is really struggling to make contact, then he should alert the opposing coach of this prior to the game. Upon mutual agreement between the two coaches, the pitching coach may deliver these designated players another pitch or two. Again, this should really be the exception. The intent of this exception is to give those kids who are clearly struggling to make contact a little better chance of putting the ball in play and even getting on base. Let’s be careful though and not abuse this privilege...(i.e. throwing additional pitches to other kids who have proven they can hit the ball.)
- There will be no walks. Pitching coach should, however, urge batter to swing if not doing so.
- All players from each team will have a turn at bat each inning (unless three outs are recorded starting the 4th game of the season), regardless if they played in the field that inning. All players will remain in the batting lineup throughout the game. If a player comes late to the game, that player will be inserted at the bottom of the line-up without a penalty.

- When the third out is made or a team hits through the line-up, the side is retired and the fielding team will come off the field and take their turn at bat. If one team has gone through the line-up in the first two innings while the other team has had 3 outs recorded in both innings, the losing team will hit through their line-up starting in the 3rd inning regardless of how many outs are recorded. If by the 4th inning, the losing team is catching up or winning, both teams should go back to playing 3 outs to retire the side. This is our attempt to prevent a blow-out. This rule can apply later in the game as well (for example: if the winning team has gone through the line-up in innings 1 and 3 while the losing team has been retired with 3 outs in any 2 or more of the 3 innings, the losing team will hit through their line-up starting in the next inning. Said another way, no one team can go through their complete line-up more than two innings of the other team.
- If the opposing teams have a different number of players present, the team with the fewest players will bat additional players to make up the difference. The additional players batted each inning must be rotated throughout the game so the same kids don't get an extra "at bat" each inning. (For example: If one team has 14 players and the other team has only 12, the team with 12 would bat their players 1 through 12 in the first inning plus allowing the 1st and 2nd batters to bat again. In the 2nd inning, the team with 12 could either start where they left off in the batting order and bat players 3 through 12, and then 1 through 4...or bat 1 through 12 again, followed by 3 and 4.)
- Coaches are encouraged to alter their batting order each inning to prevent the "last batter" from being the same player each inning.
- "Last Batter": The last batter will be treated no differently than any other batter. Once an infielder has control of the ball in the infield or at a base, coaches will hold their runners and not permit them to advance unless the runner is already halfway to a base when the ball is brought under control by the infielder. And yes, that includes holding a runner at 3rd on the last batter in lieu of scoring a run at the end of an inning! Some leagues allow the last batter to continue running until he or she is tagged out. We feel this encourages poor decision-making in the field (i.e. leftfielder running the ball to home plate) as well as reckless abandon base running. It also penalizes a last batter who hits a nice double to the outfield with a runner on second, but is then forced to run to third to get tagged out to end the inning.
- As in conventional baseball, a player cannot strikeout on a foul ball...unless it is caught in the air by an opposing player.
- Foul balls caught by the catcher are "out" only on the third strike or anytime the ball travels over the batters head.
- Bunting is allowed.

Base Running

- No stealing or lead-offs are permitted.
- Runners can advance one base on an overthrow at a base, but will not be permitted to advance a base on a pitched ball missed by the catcher.
- Sliding is allowed with an emphasis on safety...no head-first slides into any base. Runners are allowed to dive back to a base that they have already reached safely. . If a runner attempts a head-first slide into a base he has not yet reached safely, he will be called out.
- Running over the catcher at home plate is not allowed...and will result in the player being called-out and ejected from the game.
- All players must slide when arriving at home if there is a play at the plate. One warning per team, per game. Runner is called out on second team offense. Again, only if there is a reasonable play at the plate.
- Once an infielder has control of the ball either at a base, or inside the base paths, runners will not be allowed to advance to the next base unless the runner is already halfway to that base. For example, if a runner has just rounded 3rd when the 2nd baseman gets the ball in from the outfielder at 2nd base, the runner should be held at 3rd...regardless of whether or not he can make it safely home. If the runner continues home, he/she will be asked to return to

3rd base...unless the runner was already halfway home when the ball was brought under control. The intent of this rule is to prevent the game from turning into a “track meet” and thus encouraging errant throws around the field. The pitching coach is the judge as to whether the

runner was beyond the halfway mark when the ball came under control in the infield.

- Runners will only be allowed to advance one base on an overthrow, regardless of what base it is. For example, if the shortstop attempts to make a play at 2nd base and inadvertently throws the ball deep into rightfield, the runner approaching 2nd can advance to 3rd...but will not be allowed to score.
- Runners are awarded one base on any ball that goes under the fence, under the backstop, in a dugout, etc.
- Pinch runners, as well as courtesy runners for the catcher, are not permitted unless they are due to injury. We feel strongly that when a young ballplayer earns his or her way on base, he or she deserves, and needs to learn, to run the bases.

Fielding

- Each team should play 10 players in the field. The six players in the infield should be positioned in conventional infield positions. The pitcher should stand slightly behind, and to the side, of the opposing pitching coach. (i.e. Pitchers will not be allowed to play greater than halfway between the pitchers mound and 2nd base.) The remaining four fielders should be spread out in the outfield. The intent of having 10 players in the field is to allow more playing time...not to “create new positions”. Outfielders must play “outfield” and not be positioned as “short-fielders”. (i.e. You may not position an outfielder right behind 2nd to cover the bag.)
- A player may not stay on the bench more than 1 consecutive inning when they are playing the field. Every player on the team does not have to sit out an inning.
- Free substitution is allowed in the field throughout the game
- The cut-off man should be encouraged to make a play at a base if they have a chance of getting an out. They may also “run the ball” into the infield to stop play vs. throwing it to the pitcher. Do not allow outfielders to “run” the ball into the infield to stop play. Coach them to throw the ball in to the cut-off man.
- The fielding team will position a coach behind the catcher to assist with missed pitches. The coach should help retrieve pitched balls that the catcher misses to speed up the game. If possible, the coach should give the ball to the catcher and let him throw it back to the pitcher. The coach backing up the catcher should not interfere with missed throws at the plate coming in from the field where the ball is in play and runners are advancing.
- Certainly at the Coach/Machine Pitch level, coaches are encouraged to allow kids to play a variety of positions throughout the season. Of course, it’s up to the coaches whether they elect to rotate kids in the field during a game or from one game to the next. Regardless, while keeping the kids’ safety in mind, move your players around some in the field as it’s way too early in these kids’ lives to peg them as a pure infielder or outfielder.
- All catchers are required to wear conventional catcher’s gear. Catcher’s masks must have some type of throat guard. Catchers must wear cups. Good idea to encourage all players to do so.

General Rules

- Every game should begin with both teams lining up on their respective foul lines with the Home team coach offering a brief prayer. Teams should then pass by one another and shake hands...exchanging “have a good game” types of comments to their opponents to set the tone of the game for the players, coaches, parents and fans.
- The Home team is responsible for having the field ready to play at game time and for providing game balls. In the event of a rained-out game, the home team will coordinate with the visiting team and the Scheduling/Facilities team lead to schedule a make-up game.

- No food or drinks are allowed in the dugout...other than the team cooler.
- All players are to be properly dressed to play in their appropriate game uniforms. This means shirts tucked-in, hats on straight, pants pulled-up below the knee to expose the socks, black cleats, etc. This rule is intended to promote teamwork, encourage players to look like a team AND play like a team...and discourage players from developing into prima-donnas.
- If weather is a factor, use common sense in determining whether to play the game or not. Make every effort to play all games unless the safety of the children is in jeopardy.
- Base paths are 60 feet.
- A team must have at least 8 players to play an “official” game. In the event a team has less than eight players, a scrimmage game should be played...but the game is officially a forfeit. In the event of an injury, a game may be completed with less than eight players
- If a team would like to take infield practice before the game, they should do so prior to the scheduled start time of the game, coordinating this with the opposing coach...and being respectful of one another’s warm-up time. Live batting practice is not allowed on the game field before the game. Either find a batting cage, another vacant field...or use your whiffle balls to warm-up your players’ bats on one side of the outfield before the game.
- Games should end after six innings or 2 hours of play...whichever comes first. To ensure both teams get an equal number of “at-bats”, do not start a new inning after 1 hr. 45 minutes of play.
- In addition to the pitching coach, the Batting team can only have 1st and 3rd base coaches on the field. In addition to the coach backing up the catcher, the Fielding team can have 2 coaches positioned in the outfield if they so desire. These coaches should only serve to direct players. They should never touch the ball unless they are doing so to protect a kid from getting hurt.
- Teams may only have a total of three coaches on the field, or in the dugout.
- All coaches should make an extra effort to ensure the safety of the kids during practices and games. Accidents will happen, but let’s make sure it’s not due to anything we as coaches could have prevented. For example...
- Please make sure all batters and runners keep their helmets on until they get back inside their dugout.
- On-deck hitters should always be well behind the hitter regardless of which dugout their team is in. (i.e. On-deck hitters should be on the 1st base side when a left-handed hitter is at bat and on the 3rd base side when a right-handed hitter is at bat.
- All other players, including the batter “in-the-hole”, should remain inside the dugout.
- When a “strong” hitter steps up to the plate, the pitching coach should alert the opposing team that a big hitter is up. The fielding coach might want to encourage his players to take a step or two back.
- Don’t play a kid at first base who’s afraid of catching a thrown ball.
- Scorekeeping is allowed but should be discreet. Who “won” and who “lost” should not be the primary focus of the game. The focus instead should be on demonstrating good fundamental baseball skills, extra effort and continuous improvement. Remember, the coach sets the tone for the degree of focus on “winning & losing”. Kids are smarter and more attentive than we sometimes realize. Kids notice when a coach inquires about the score or urges his team to “catch up”. If the coach puts too much emphasis on the score...then so will the kids. We should all be able to make this fun and instructional, while at the same time allowing for healthy competition. If you would like to keep score, please ask a parent to do so outside of the dugout. You may confer with your scorekeeper between innings, but again...be discreet. The final outcome is there if you want it...*just don’t make a big deal of it!*
- After the game, players should line up on their respective foul lines in single file to congratulate their opponents. Of course, all comments should be encouraging in nature (ie. “good game”), with no remarks about who won or lost.
- Any conduct of a player or parent that is causing a problem should be corrected by his/her coach only.

- Kids should be encouraged to cheer “for” their teammates, as well as their opponents. Chatter directed “against” the opponents is not permitted. This goes for parents as well.
 - If a player is ejected from a game, he will not be allowed to play in the next game. If a coach is ejected from a game, he must leave the park immediately and will not be allowed to attend the next two games. If a coach is ejected twice in one season, he will be removed as coach of that team for the remainder of the season.
 - Trophy Guidelines (End of season): At the T-Ball and Rookie levels, if parents would like to pool their resources and purchase some type of modest participation memento (i.e. Baseball on a trophy pedestal for players and coaches to sign one another’s, plaque with team picture, etc), that’s fine. At the 9 and up levels, however, we would encourage trophies to be limited to “achievements” like winning a championship or making All-Stars...so these mementos actually hold some special meaning over time.
 - **NO TOBACCO** or **ALCOHOL** products of any kind are allowed on the playing field, or in the dugout, at games or practices. Coaches and parents...use good judgment here. Impressionable kids, who look up to you, are watching. Of course, these rules cannot possibly cover everything that can happen out on the field. If ever in doubt on a rule, simply put the kids’ best interest at heart, and let good judgment prevail.
- First, and foremost, all coaches should remember that the game is for the kids...not the adults. Our primary goal at this level is to build strong character, have fun and ensure that the players have such a good experience that they come back again next year for another fun-filled season of baseball. It is also incumbent on us as coaches that we concentrate on teaching these kids good, sound fundamental baseball skills that will help them reach their full God-given potential as a ballplayer. Please remember...as the coach, you set the tone for your players and their parents. Please take time along the way to teach your players, both in words and in actions, not only about the game of baseball...but also important “faith-based” life lessons (i.e. sportsmanship, teamwork, perseverance, sacrifice, hard work, etc.) that will serve them well in all facets of their life. Team devotionals are both a privilege and an integral component of Stewards of the Game baseball.....so please seize the precious opportunities you have as a coach to share your heart for Christ with your players. So...work hard, play fair...and HAVE FUN!! And remember, the kids are watching!

Thanks again for all your time and effort in coaching baseball!

Revised: 2-29-10

Special Post-Season Tournament Rules

- Early-Round Games: No new inning is started after 1 hour 45 minutes.
- Championship Game: No time limit....full six inning game.
- No run rule per inning. 10-run rule is replaced with a 15-run mercy rule after 2 hours of play.
- Highest seed from regular season play will be home team in post-season tournament games.
- Each team to supply one game ball at each tournament game.