
LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL RULE CHANGES FOR 2015 SEASON

Last Updated Feb 1, 2015

The following is a summary of the changes between the 2015 Little League Baseball rules and their 2014 counterparts. Items have been loosely categorized as to whether the change represents a clarification of existing practice that was simply added to the rulebook, or whether it represents an actual change to the rules or regulations.

Throughout this document, text that is underlined represents the modified or newly added text.

REGULATION I

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball

The minimum age for advancing to Minor League play has been adjusted for players who participated in Tee Ball.

Previously, the regulation said:

NOTE 3: Participants league age 6 are permitted to advance to Minor League Coach Pitch or Machine Pitch after participation in Tee Ball for one year.

The regulation now reads

NOTE 3: Participants league age 5 and 6 are permitted to advance to Minor League Coach Pitch or Machine Pitch after participation in Tee Ball for one year.

In addition, a corresponding change was made to Regulation III(c):

Tee Ball: Local league must establish the age structure for the Tee Ball Division. Players league age 4 are eligible ONLY for Tee Ball, unless otherwise approved by the Charter Committee. **EXCEPTION:** Participants league age 5 and 6 are permitted to advance to Minor League Coach Pitch or machine pitch after participation in Tee Ball for one year. A player listed on a Tee Ball roster shall not be permitted to play with a Minor League team.

The underlined portions were added.

REGULATION I

ADDITION

Baseball

The regulation contains the following new text:

Local leagues shall be required to determine the applicability of, and comply with, all State, local and municipal laws, administrative rules and regulations and municipal ordinances regarding background checks including, but not limited to, sex offender registry checks, criminal history records or reports, fingerprinting, certifications or other requirements associated with volunteers, coaches, participants and/or employees. Failure to comply with this regulation may result in the suspension or revocation of tournament privileges and/or the local league's charter by action of the Charter or Tournament committees in Williamsport.

As of November 17, 2014, very few state statutes mandate background checks for non-school associated activities involving youth sports and athletics. Certain municipal ordinances and administrative regulations require background checks.

As of November 17, 2014, those states with additional background check requirements either enacted or pending are: Alabama, California, Florida, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania.

For your reference, information regarding State requirements is available at LittleLeague.org.

REGULATION I

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball

The regulations governing Big League and the participation of league Presidents and Player Agents has changed. Previously, the regulation read:

Local Little League president and player agent may not manage, coach or umpire.

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The regulation now reads:

The local Little League president may manage, coach or umpire provided he/she does not serve on the Protest Committee. The president of record or anyone who assumes the position or duties of president, on or after January 1 of the current year, is not eligible to serve as tournament team manager or coach. The player agent shall not manage, coach or umpire in his/her respective division

This also brings the regulation into synchronization with the corresponding softball wording.

REGULATION I

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball

A minor addition has been made in the regulations regarding background checks:

Upon confirmation of a conviction for, guilty plea or no contest plea to, a crime against or involving a minor or minors, the local league shall not permit the individual to participate in any manner.

The phrases “or no contest plea” and “or minors” was added.

REGULATION IV

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball

The eligibility birthdates are being changed somewhat for the various divisions. The regulations now read:

Little League (Major) Division: Any candidate with amateur status who will attain the age of 9 years on or after May 1, 2014, and who will not attain the age of 13 before May 1 of the year in question...

Minor League Division: Any candidate with amateur status who will attain the age of 7 years on or after January 1, 2015, and who will not attain the age of 13 before May 1 of the year in question...

Tee Ball Division: Any candidate with amateur status who will attain the age of 4 years on or after January 1, (2015), and who will not attain the age of 8 on or before December 31, (2015), of the year in question...

For Minor League and Tee Ball, the dates used to be May 1 instead of January 1.

Regulation IV(e) has been similarly amended:

- (e) For players born prior to January 1, 2006, “League Age” is that age attained prior to May 1 in any given season. Thus, a participant whose 12th birthday is on April 30 or earlier has a League Age of 12; a participant whose 12th birthday is on May 1 or later has a League Age of 11.

For players born on or after January 1, 2006, “League Age” is that age attained on or after January 1 in any given season. Thus a participant whose 8th birthday is on January 1 or later has a League Age of 8; a participant whose 8th birthday is on December 31 or earlier (of the prior year), has a League Age of 9.

REGULATION IX

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball

The underlined exception was added to Regulation IX(a), which governs “special games:”

- (a) Special Games are defined as games that:
1. are non-regular season games, and,
 2. are not Little League International Tournament games, and,
 3. involve only teams from chartered Little League programs, and,
 4. have been approved in writing by the regional office.

Exception: Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior League: Up to six (6) games played under Special Games against Little League teams may count towards players’ Regular Season schedule. Senior/Big League: Up to twelve (12) games played under Special Games against Little League teams may count towards players’ Regular Season schedule.

The tournament rules have also been updated to reflect the fact that special games can count toward eligibility.

REGULATION XIII

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball

The underlined text was added to Regulation XIII(f), which governs sponsors:

- (f) A local Little League may permit a Regular Season Team and/or Tournament Team to include the name of a team sponsor on the uniform, and the local league may receive a fee for such sponsorships, provided the sponsorship does not conflict with any Little League Rule, Regulation and/or Policy. Such sponsor shall have no authority with regard to the composition or operation of the league, the team, or its manager and/or coaches. No district, league or team may authorize use of any of the Little League trademarks without express written permission of Little League International. In other words, no district, league or team may permit a local sponsor to use the Marks of Little League International. Please refer to the Little League Operating Manual for detailed guidelines.

REGULATION XIV

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball

Regulation XIV(e) was amended as shown:

- (e) The possession of firearms and/or use of tobacco, cigarettes (including e-cigarettes and vapors) and alcoholic beverages in any form is prohibited on the playing field, benches or dugouts. Alcohol is prohibited at the game site.

Previously, the regulation was silent on the issue of these devices.

RULE 1.11

RULE CHANGE

Baseball

Rule 1.11(a)(3) has been amended to read:

- (3) Any part of the pitcher's undershirt or T-shirt exposed to view shall be of a solid color. The pitcher's undershirt sleeves, if exposed, shall not be white or gray. Neoprene sleeves, if worn by a pitcher, must be covered by an undershirt. NOTE: A pitcher shall not wear any items on his/her hands, wrists or arms which may be distracting to the batter, e.g. sweat bands.

Previously, the rule read

- (3) Any part of the pitcher's undershirt or T-shirt exposed to view shall be of a solid color. A pitcher shall not wear any items on his/ her hands, wrists or arms which may be distracting to the batter.

NOTE: White long sleeve shirts are not permitted.

Thus, the rule has reverted somewhat to previous practice, as it is no longer "long sleeve" shirts that are affected, but any exposed undershirt sleeves. In addition, the rule governing neoprene sleeves is new.

RULE 1.16

RULE CHANGE

Baseball

The following phrase has been added to Rule 1.16, which governs batting helmets:

Helmets must have a non-glare surface and cannot be mirror-like in nature.

RULE 1.17

RULE CHANGE

Baseball

Rule 1.17, which governs catcher's equipment, was amended to allow either long-model or short-model chest protectors for males in all levels of baseball. This rule change became effective during the 2014 season, although after the rulebook was printed. Thus, the rulebook has simply been amended accordingly.

RULE 3.17

CLARIFICATIONS

Baseball

A portion of Rule 3.17 was amended by inserting the underlined words:

The use of electronic communication equipment during the game is restricted. No team shall use electronic communication equipment, including walkie-talkies, cellular telephones, etc., for any communication with on-field personnel including those in the dugout, bullpen or field.

It is presumed that this change was made in order to permit the use of electronic equipment such as a PDA or tablet for scoring purposes, as long as it is not used for communications.

This also brings the rule into synchronization with the corresponding softball wording.

TOURNAMENT ELIGIBILITY

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball

The Big League eligibility section was re-written as follows:

Big League - Any player League Age 15, 16, 17 or 18, with amateur status, who has participated as an eligible player in 40 percent (40%) of the regular season games (Special Games may be counted toward this requirement - See Regulation IX) by the start of Tournament Play in their respective District, with the exception of the high school or college baseball season, on a:

1. Big League Baseball Team, or;
2. Senior League Baseball Team.

NOTE: For the purposes of qualifying for a Big League International Tournament Team under this rule, participation is considered as having completed one or more of the following:

1. The player bats one (1) time - which is defined as entering the batter's box with no count and completing that time at bat by being retired or by reaching base safely; or
2. The player enters the game in one of nine (9) defensive positions and occupies such position for one (1) defensive out or one (1) at-bat; or
3. The player is entered as a special pinch runner and scores, is retired or three (3) outs end the inning.

Previously, the eligibility requirements were

has been as rostered member for 60% of the regular season games

Thus, participation in the game, rather than being on the roster, is now the basis for eligibility, and the percent has been reduced.

In addition, the "Selection of Fields" section was modified as follows with respect to artificial mounds:

A Little League approved artificial mound is permitted at the District level. A request to use an artificial mound for the Section tournament level and above may be submitted to the Tournament Committee in Williamsport (through the District Administrator/Tournament Director and Regional Office). An artificial mound must not be used at the Section level and above unless approved the current year.

APPROVED RULINGS

CLARIFICATIONS

Baseball

This year, Little League had added numerous "Approved Rulings" (marked "A.R.") in the rulebook. These additions do not represent changes in the respective rules – they merely represent clarifications in how the rules are to be interpreted or enforced.

The following approved ruling was added to Regulation IV(i) governing mandatory play:

A.R.—If a player/batter is called out by an umpire for using an illegal bat or for Rule 6.07 violation, this will qualify as an at bat for the purpose of this rule.

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The following approved ruling was added to Regulation VI(a) governing catchers subsequently pitching:

A.R.—The catcher receiving one pitch to a batter in the fourth inning constitutes having caught four (4) innings. Warm-up pitches do not count, only when the ball is live will the pitches count toward innings caught.

Although the Approved Ruling does not say so, this is clearly intended to cover a catcher who started the game, and thus has already caught the first through third innings.

In addition, the following approved rulings were also added to Regulation VI:

A.R.—If a Junior or Senior League pitcher pitches in more than one game in a day, and has not pitched 31 or more pitches in the first game, the total number of pitches that pitcher may pitch in both games combined is the daily maximum of 95.

The regulation already prohibits a Junior or Senior player from pitching the second game if he/she threw 31 or more pitches in the first game, so this clarifies that the pitches from the first game count toward the pitch count in the second.

A.R.—Minor League and Little League (Majors): When warming up, if a pitcher is discovered to be ineligible, he/she must be removed and the previous pitcher of record may not return.

In Majors and below, a pitcher may not return once removed from the mound. This clarifies that this applies even if the subsequent pitcher is found to be ineligible.

The underlined approved rulings have been added to the Notes under Rule 1.08:

NOTE 1: The on-deck position is not permitted in Little League (Major) Division and below.

A.R.—Fenced-in areas MAY NOT be used for an on-deck batter.

NOTE 2: Only the first batter of each half-inning will be permitted outside the dugout between half-innings in Little League (Major) Division and below.

A.R.—The next batter should be ready with a helmet on, but may not pick up a bat until it is his/her turn at bat.

The following approved ruling has been added to the Notes under Rule 1.10, which governs legal bats:

A.R.—If the certification mark/s on a bat are not legible, that bat cannot be used and shall be removed from the game.

Rule 1.11(h), governing cleats, has had the following approved ruling added:

A.R.—Little League (Majors) and below: Removable spikes or cleats are permitted if, when removed, no metal remains exposed.

The following approved ruling was added to Rule 1.16, governing batting helmets:

A.R.—If a player, during play, removes his/her helmet or causes his/her helmet to come off, he/she shall NOT be called out, but shall be warned not to intentionally remove his/ her helmet and, if it continues, the player may be removed for unsportsmanlike conduct, as this can cause an unsafe condition.

The following approved ruling was added to Rule 1.17 governing catcher's equipment:

A.R.—Wearing of a catcher's helmet with mask and dangling throat guard (even if the mask has a wire extension) is required during games, pitcher warm-up, and any form of infield or infield/outfield practice. The "Hockey Style" helmet is authorized for use at all levels of play. The "dangling" throat guard still must be attached properly.

The following approved ruling was added to 2.00 BENCH or DUGOUT:

A.R.—Bench or dugout is not for additional coaches or scorekeepers.

The following approved ruling was added to 2.00 BUNT:

A.R.—If no attempt is made to make contact with a ball outside the strike zone while in the bunting stance, it shall be called a ball. The batter must offer at the pitch for it to be a strike.

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The following approved ruling was added to 2.00 FORCE PLAY:

A.R.—Runners forced to advance as a result of the batter-runner being awarded first base.

The wording is slightly odd – it is presumed that this is intended to clarify that such runners are considered to be “forced.”

The following approved ruling was added to 2.00 ILLEGAL PITCH:

A.R.—This would apply to rule 8.05(e) and 8.05(g). In all other instances of Rule 8.05 with no runners on base, no penalty is enforced. In such cases, the umpire shall call “Time” and the pitcher and batter will resume the count without reference to the pitch.

The following approved ruling was added to 2.00 INFIELD FLY:

A.R.—The infield dirt and the outfield grass do not form a boundary line for infield fly purposes.

The following approved ruling was added to part (a) of 2.00 INTERFERENCE, which describes “Offensive interference:”

A.R.—Interference does not have to be intentional for it to be called.

The following approved ruling was added to part (c) of 2.00 INTERFERENCE, which describes “Umpire’s interference:”

A.R.—Only the plate umpire may interfere with the catcher and only on a cleanly caught ball or a pitched ball that doesn’t cause the catcher to move from his/her position. If the catcher errs on the ball, the umpire will be considered part of the field, and no interference results.

The following approved ruling was added to Rule 3.13, which governs “ground rules:”

A.R.—Local ground rules should pertain to particular situations or field conditions that are not specifically covered in the rulebook, but at no time should they supersede or change the rulebook.

The underlined approved ruling was added to Rule 4.05(c), which governs base coaches:

Base coaches shall...

(c) remain within the base coaches boxes at all times, except as provided in Rule 7.11;

A.R.—Once an inning starts, coaches shall not alternate between the first and third base coaches boxes.

The following approved ruling was added to Rule 4.19, which governs protests:

A.R.—A substitute pitcher who is ineligible DOES NOT have to pitch to a batter. It is not a violation until the ineligible pitcher has delivered a “Pitch” as defined in Rule 2.00.

The underlined approved ruling was added to Rule 5.09(g):

5.09 - The ball becomes dead and runners advance one base, or return to their bases, without liability to be put out, when -

(g) A pitched ball lodges in the catcher’s or umpire’s mask or paraphernalia; runners advance;

A.R.—If a pitched ball lodges in the umpire’s or catcher’s mask or paraphernalia, and remains out of play, on the third strike (Majors/Intermediate (50/70) Division/Junior/Senior/Big League) or fourth ball, then the batter is entitled to first base and all runners advance one base. If the count on the batter is less than three balls, runners advance one base.

The underlined approved rulings were added to Rule 6.05

6.05 - A batter is out when -

(a) a fair or foul fly ball (other than a foul tip) is legally caught by a fielder;

A.R.—A fielder may reach into, but not step into, a dugout to make a catch, and if he/she holds the ball, the catch shall be allowed. A fielder, in order to make a catch on a foul ball nearing a dugout or other out-of-play area (such as the stands), must have one or both feet on or over the playing surface (including the dugout) and neither foot on the ground inside the dugout or in any other out-of-play

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area. Ball is in play, unless the fielder, after making a legal catch, falls into a dugout or other out-of-play area, in which case the ball is dead.

- (g) after hitting or bunting a fair ball, the bat hits the ball a second time in fair territory. The ball is dead and no runners may advance. If the batter-runner drops the bat and the ball rolls against the bat in fair territory and, in the umpire's judgment there was no intention to interfere with the course of the ball, the ball is alive and in play;

A.R.—If a bat is thrown into fair or foul territory and interferes with a defensive player attempting to make a play, interference shall be called, whether intentional or not.

- (j) in running the last half of the distance from home base to first base, while the ball is being fielded to first base, the batter-runner runs outside (to the right of) the three-foot line, or inside (to the left of) the foul line, and in the umpire's judgment in so doing interferes with the fielder taking the throw at first base; except that the batter-runner may run outside (to the right of) the three-foot line or inside (to the left of) the foul line to avoid a fielder attempting to field a batted ball;

A.R.—The lines marking the three-foot lane are a part of that lane and a batter-runner is required to have both feet within the three-foot lane or on the lines marking the lane.

In addition, the underlined text was inserted into 6.05(l):

- (l) a preceding runner shall, in the umpire's judgment, intentionally interfere with a fielder who is attempting to catch a thrown ball or to throw a ball in an attempt to complete a play.

This merely clarifies that the interference must be with a fielder who is involved with the ball, as opposed to one who might just be standing around, and brings the rule into synchronization with the corresponding softball text.

The underlined approved rulings were added to Rule 6.06

6.06 - A batter is out for illegal action when -

- (a) hitting the ball with one or both feet on the ground entirely outside the batter's box.

A.R.—If a batter hits a ball fair or foul while out of the batter's box, he/she shall be called out.

- (d) The batter enters the batter's box with one or both feet entirely on the ground with an illegal bat (see bat specifications rule 1.10) or is discovered having used an illegal bat prior to the next player entering the batter's box.

NOTE: If the infraction is discovered before the next player enters the batter's box following the turn at bat of the player who used an illegal bat:

- (1) The manager of the defense may advise the plate umpire of a decision to decline the penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play.
- (2) For the first violation, the offensive team will lose one eligible adult base coach for the duration of the game.

A.R.—Any of the three adults in the dugout may be used as the one adult base coach at any time during the duration of the game.

- (3) For the second violation, the manager of the team will be ejected from the game. Any subsequent violation will result in the newly designated manager being ejected.

A.R.—When an illegal bat is discovered, it MUST be removed from the game at that point.

The underlined text and approved rulings were added to Rule 6.08:

6.08 - The batter becomes a runner and is entitled to first base without liability to be put out (provided said runner advances to and touches first base) when -

- (a) four "balls" have been called by the umpire; ball is live and base runners may advance;
- (c) the catcher or any fielder interferes with the batter. If a play follows the interference, the manager of the offense may advise the plate umpire of a decision to decline the interference penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play. However, if the batter reaches

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first base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base, the play proceeds without reference to the interference;

A.R. 1—Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior/Big League: If a runner is trying to score by a steal or squeeze from third base, note the additional penalty set forth in Rule 7.07.

A.R. 2—If the catcher interferes with the batter before the pitcher delivers the ball, it shall not be considered interference on the batter under Rule 6.08(c). In such cases, the umpire shall call “Time” and the pitcher and batter resume the count.

(d) a fair ball touches an umpire or a runner on fair territory before touching a fielder.

A.R.—Ball is dead. Runner(s) who are forced advance and any runners not forced will return to their bases at the time of the pitch.

The underlined approved rulings were added to Rule 7.08:

7.08 - Any runner is out when -

(a)(3) the runner does not slide or attempt to get around a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make the tag; or

A.R.—There is no “must slide rule.”

(c) that runner is tagged, when the ball is alive, while off a base;

EXCEPTION: A batter-runner cannot be tagged out after overrunning or over sliding first base if said batter-runner returns immediately to the base.

A.R. 1—This includes a batter-runner who overruns first after being awarded a base on balls.

The underlined approved ruling was added to Rule 7.09:

7.09 - It is interference by a batter or runner when -

(h) in the judgment of the umpire, the base coach at third base, or first base, by touching or holding the runner, physically assists that runner in returning to or leaving third base or first base;

A.R.—When a play is being made on the assisted runner, the runner is out and all runners return to the bases occupied at the time of the interference (dead ball). If no play is being made on the assisted runner, the runner is out and play continues (delayed dead ball).

The underlined Note was added to Rule 8.05:

8.05 – With a runner or runners on base, it is an illegal pitch – Major/Minor League (a balk in Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior/Big League) when -

(g) the pitcher makes any motion naturally associated with the pitch while not touching the pitcher’s plate;

NOTE: Rule 8.05(g) is an illegal pitch (Rule 2.00). Little League (Major)/ Minor League: The penalty for Rule 8.05(g), regardless of whether there are runners present or not, is a ball. This is an instance in which an illegal pitch, by Little League (Major)/Minor League definition, can occur without runners on base. Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior/Big League: With runners on base, Rule 8.05(g) is penalized with a balk; with no runners on base, Rule 8.05(g) is penalized with a ball. (See exceptions in “PENALTY.”)

The underlined Note was added to Rule 9.03(d), which deals with the role of the Game Coordinator when no adult umpire is available for a game:

A.R.—The Game Coordinator should not interrupt or stop a game until all play and action ends. At that time, the Game Coordinator can alert the plate umpire to stop the game, and at that time enforce any part of 9.03(d).