
LITTLE LEAGUE RULE CHANGES FOR 2014 SEASON

The following is a summary of the changes between the 2014 Little League Baseball and Softball rules and their 2013 counterparts. Items have been loosely categorized as to whether the change represents a clarification from the previous year, or whether it represents an actual rule change or new rule.

REGULATION II

REGULATION CHANGE

Baseball and Softball

Residency requirements have been changed to allow players to play for a league whose boundaries include the school that they attend.

REGULATION IV

CONSISTENCY

Baseball and Softball

The phrase “with amateur status” has been added to the eligibility requirements for all levels of play. Previously, this phrase was only explicitly included for the Big League division.

A matching change has been made in the “Player Eligibility” section of the Tournament Rules.

REGULATION VI(B)

CLARIFICATION

Baseball only

The regulation now reads:

(b) A pitcher once removed from the mound cannot return as a pitcher.

Intermediate (50-70) Division, Junior, Senior and Big League Divisions only: A pitcher remaining *on defense* in the game, but moving to a different position, can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once per game.

The phrase “on defense” was added to the second paragraph of the regulation to clarify what was meant by the regulation. Previously, the regulation simply read “remaining in the game.”

REGULATION VI(B)

CLARIFICATION

Baseball only

The regulation permitted a pitcher who had reached his or her pitching limits to continue to pitch until the batter reached base, was put out, or the third out was made to complete the half-inning. The rule has been amended to include the situation in which the game ends without the third out in the half-inning necessarily being made.

This same change was made in the corresponding Tournament Rules (Rule 4e).

REGULATION VI NOTE 3

INADVERTENT OMISSION

Baseball

Previously, the pitching regulations included the following:

EXCEPTION: In the event that the first inning is not completed, all records including pitching records, batting records, etc. shall be disregarded.

This exception has been removed from Regulation VI in the 2014 rulebook.

The March edition of the Little League Fair Ball Newsletter indicates that this removal was “inadvertent.” As such, this exception should still be considered as being in force for 2014.

REGULATION XIV(E)

RULE CHANGE

Baseball and Softball

Possession of firearms on the playing field, benches or dugouts is now expressly prohibited. The rule also now explicitly mentions “cigarettes” in addition to “tobacco.”

1.10 – BATS

RULE CHANGE

Baseball only

For the Intermediate and Junior Leagues, the following phrase has been added:

If a 2¼ barrel bat has no composite materials, it may be used provided it is labeled with a BPF (bat performance factor) of 1.15 or less. (NOTE: Solid wooded barrel bats do not require a BPF label.)

Previously, the requirements for 2¼ bats had not been specified in these divisions.

1.10 – BATS

CLARIFICATION

Baseball and Softball

Note 4 in baseball and Note 3 in softball has been amended to read:

Bats that have cracks or sharp edges, or that cannot pass through the approved Little League bat ring for the appropriate division must be removed from play.

Previously there was no explicit prohibition on bats that were cracked or had sharp edges – only the “bat ring requirement” was explicitly in the book.

1.16 – HELMETS

CLARIFICATION

Baseball and Softball

The rule now includes:

Use of a helmet by an adult base coach *or any defensive player* is optional.

The phrase “or any defensive player” was added, indicating that Little League does not prohibit a defensive player from wearing a protective helmet.

2.00 ILLEGAL PITCH

CLARIFICATION

Baseball only

The definition of “illegal pitch” was amended to explicitly indicate that violations of rule 8.05 are considered illegal pitches in Majors and Minors.

2.00 PIVOT FOOT

CLARIFICATION

Softball only

The definition of “pivot foot” was amended slightly, to read:

The pitcher’s **PIVOT FOOT** is that foot which is in contact with the pitcher’s plate *prior to pushing off*, as opposed to the non-pivot foot with which the pitcher steps toward home plate.

The italicized phrase was added, since it is legal for a pitcher to drag his/her foot off the pitching plate as part of the delivery.

4.07 – EJECTIONS

CLARIFICATION

Baseball and Softball

The rule was amended to indicate that a manager, coach or player suspended as a result of an ejection may not participate in pregame or postgame activities in addition to the game itself.

The same change was made in the corresponding Tournament Rules (9c and 17).

4.19(A) - PROTESTS

CONSISTENCY

Baseball and Softball

An exception was added to 4.19(a). The rule now reads:

- (a) Protest shall be considered only when based on the violation or interpretation of a playing rule, use of an ineligible pitcher or the use of an ineligible player. No protest shall be considered on a decision involving an

umpire's judgment. Equipment which does not meet specifications must be removed from the game.

Exception: *Illegal bat [see Rule 6.06 (d)].*

The exception for an illegal bat was added, since there is now a penalty associated with that, as opposed to the bat simply being removed.

5.09(C) – ILLEGAL PITCH

CLARIFICATION

Softball only

The rule has been amended to read:

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

(c) an illegal pitch is committed (see Penalty 8.05). *The ball is dead at the end of playing action, if the ball is pitched;*

The italicized phrase was added, making this paragraph consistent with the fact that an illegal pitch which is delivered to the batter may still be batted by the offense.

6.05(B) – THIRD STRIKE NOT CAUGHT

CLARIFICATION

Baseball and Softball

The approved ruling has been amended to read:

APPROVED RULING: When a batter becomes a runner on a third strike that is not caught, and starts for the bench or his/her position, that batter may advance to first base at any time before entering the *dugout or any other dead ball area*. To put the batter out, the defense must tag the batter or first base before the batter touches first base.

Previously, the term “bench” was used in place of the italicized text.

6.06(C) – ILLEGAL ACTION BY THE BATTER

CLARIFICATION

Baseball and Softball

The rule was reworded as follows:

6.06 - A batter is out for illegal action when -

(c) interfering with the catcher's fielding or throwing by:

- 1) stepping out of the batter's box, or;
- 2) making any other movement that hinders the catcher's *actions at home plate or the catcher's attempt to play on a runner, or;*
- 3) *failing to make a reasonable effort to vacate a congested area when there is a throw to home plate and there is time for the batter to move away.*

Previously, the rule simply read:

(c) interfering with the catcher's fielding or throwing by stepping out of the batter's box or making any other movement that hinders the catcher's play at home base.

The new wording helps clarify the batter's responsibilities, particularly in the case where a play is being made on a runner coming home.

7.01

RULE CHANGE

Softball only

The rule has been amended as follows:

7.01 - A runner acquires the right to an unoccupied base when that runner touches it before being retired. The runner is then entitled to it until put out or forced to vacate it for another runner legally entitled to that base. If a runner legally acquires title to a base, and the pitcher *has control of the ball within the eight (8) foot radius circle and is not making a play*, the runner may not return to a previously occupied base.

Previously, the italicized phrase read “assumes his/her pitching position.” Under a strict reading of the previous version of the rule, the “8 foot circle rule” applied to a runner advancing, but not necessarily retreating. This change brings this paragraph into consistency with 7.08(a) in this respect.

8.05(E) – QUICK RETURN PITCH

CLARIFICATION

Baseball only

The rule was reworded to explicitly state that a quick return pitch is an illegal pitch in Majors and below even if there are no runners on base. This brings this paragraph into line with the wording of the definitions of an Illegal Pitch and a Quick Return in Section 2.00.

8.05 – PENALTY FOR ILLEGAL PITCH / BALK

CLARIFICATION

Baseball only

The penalty for an illegal pitch was reworded as follows (italic text was inserted):

PENALTY FOR AN ILLEGAL PITCH: Little League (Majors)/Minor League: *The ball is dead and no runners will advance. The pitch shall be called a ball even if the pitch is not actually thrown. **EXCEPTION:** If the pitch is delivered and a play follows the illegal pitch, the play shall be allowed to continue as a delayed dead ball. Upon completion of the play, the manager of the offense may advise the plate umpire of a decision to decline the illegal pitch penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play. However, if the batter hits the ball and reaches first base safely, and if all base-runners advance at least one base on the action resulting from the batted ball, the play proceeds without reference to the illegal pitch.*

*When an illegal pitch is called, regardless of whether the pitch is completed or not by the pitcher, a pitch will always be charged to the pitcher's pitch count. (Rule 2.00 Definitions: Pitch) **NOTE:** Under no circumstances shall a balk be called in Little League (Majors) or Minor League.*

This emphasizes that:

- A “ball” is called even if no pitch is thrown.
- The ball is dead and no runners may advance, unless the pitch is delivered and a play follows.
- A pitch is always added to the pitcher’s pitch count

In addition, for balks in Intermediate and above, the following was added:

When a balk is called, if the pitch is delivered, a pitch shall be charged against the pitch count regardless of whether the batter put the pitch into play. However, on a balk that is called on a pickoff attempt or in an instance that the pitcher does not deliver the pitch, no pitch shall be charged to the pitch count.

Depending on the situation, a balk can result in a “no pitch” declaration (i.e. neither a ball nor a strike on the batter). This emphasizes that the pitch still counts toward the pitcher’s pitch count.