
LITTLE LEAGUE CHANGES FOR 2017 SEASON – SOFTBALL ONLY

Last Updated Mar 13, 2017

The following is a summary of the changes between the 2017 Little League Softball regulations and rules and their 2016 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.

DIVISIONS

CHANGE

The Big League division of Little League Baseball, which served players of ages 17 and 18, has been eliminated. Thus, all the Big League-specific rules and regulations have been removed.

REGULATION I(A)(3) NOTE 2 & REGULATION IV

REGULATION CHANGE

For the Majors division and above, it is now permissible for a player to participate in two different divisions. Previously, NOTE 2 said:

NOTE 2: Players shall not participate in more than one division.

It now reads

NOTE 2: Major/Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League: A local league may allow players to participate in two divisions. Tee Ball/Minor Division: Players shall not participate in more than one division.

This change affects the wording of a number of other regulations as well.

REGULATION I(B)

REGULATION CHANGE

Previously, the league president was not eligible to be selected as a manager or coach of a league's All-Star Tournament team. The regulation now reads:

The president of record or anyone who assumes the position or duties of president, on or after January 1 of the current year, may be eligible for selection by the local league Board of Directors as tournament team manager or coach with approval from their respective District Administrator.

REGULATION I(C)(6) AND 1.11(A)(2)

CLARIFICATION

Regulation I(c)(6) and Rule 1.11(a)(2) have had text added clarifying that it is not permissible for the Little League shoulder patch to be silk-screened or dye-sublimated onto uniforms:

REGULATION I(C)(9)

CLARIFICATION

Regulation I(c)(9) has had the following text added clarifying what is an acceptable background check:

A local league within the United States must conduct a nationwide background check utilizing First Advantage or another provider that is comparable to First Advantage in accessing background check records for sex offender registry data and other criminal records. Each year, Little League International provides each local league located within the United States one hundred twenty-five (125) free criminal background checks administered through First Advantage. First Advantage can be accessed at LittleLeague.org/Background. Further information on how to utilize First Advantage, as well as how to conduct background checks, can be found at LittleLeague.org/childprotectionprogram. Local leagues located outside the United States must conduct a comprehensive criminal background check, including checks in the relevant country, as well as that country's provinces/states and municipalities unless otherwise prohibited by the laws of the country of which the local league is located.

REGULATION I(G)

CLARIFICATION

Regulation I(g), covering a local league's limitations with regard to non-Little League events, has been reworded to clarify additional restrictions, including the fact that teams may not use Little League uniforms, nor equipment supplied by the local league, in non-Little League events.

REGULATION II(A)

CLARIFICATION

Regulation II(a) has had the following text added regarding league boundaries:

The league boundaries as detailed on the boundary map must be a physical structure (such as a road), or a geographic feature (such as a river). The boundary line will be considered to be in the center of such structures or features, unless noted otherwise. The boundaries must not encroach on the territory of any other chartered Little League's boundaries.

REGULATION VI(C), 3.03(C), TOURNAMENT RULES 4 & 10

REGULATION CHANGE

The rule relating to pitchers returning to the mound has changed. It now reads:

Junior/Senior League: A pitcher may be withdrawn from the game offensively or defensively, and return as pitcher once per inning, provided the return does not violate the substitution, visits per pitcher, or mandatory play rule(s).

The requirement that the pitcher had to remain in the game has been removed.

REGULATION IX(F)

CLARIFICATION

Tournament teams may now participate in Special Games beginning on June 1st. Previously, it was "June 15th or two weeks prior to the start of tournament within their respective division, whichever is earlier."

REGULATION XIII(F)

CLARIFICATION

Additional clarifications on the restrictions surrounding the use of trademarks owned by Little League International were added.

REGULATION XIV(E)

CLARIFICATION

"Controlled substances" has been added to the list of items banned on the field.

RULE 1.11(A)(2)

CLARIFICATION

As with Regulation II(6), this rule has had text added clarifying that it is not permissible for the Little League shoulder patch to be silk-screened or dye-sublimated onto uniforms. In addition, some of the previous wording regarding the exact positioning of the patch has been removed. Previously, the rule read:

1.11(a) (2) The Little League Official Shoulder Patch must be affixed to the upper left sleeve of the uniform blouse. Patches are worn 3" below the left shoulder seam on raglan sleeve; 1" below the seam on set-in sleeve; over the left breast on sleeveless style.

It now reads

1.11(a) (2) The Little League Official Shoulder Patch must be affixed to the upper left sleeve or left chest of the uniform shirt. Patches shall be placed centered on the left shoulder sleeve; or, centered on the left chest for sleeveless style. The patch may not be screen-printed or sublimated.

RULE 6.02(C)

NEW RULE

Tournament Rule 3a has been added requiring batters to keep one foot in the batter's box during an at bat. Little League permits leagues to adopt this rule during the regular season.

Little League Regulation and Rule Changes For 2017 Season – Softball Only

6.02(i) Local League Option: After entering the batter's box, the batter must remain in the box with at least one foot throughout the at bat.

Exceptions:

1. On a swing, slap, or check swing.
2. When forced out of the box by a pitch.
3. When the batter attempts a "drag bunt."
4. When the catcher does not catch the pitched ball.
5. When a play has been attempted.
6. When time has been called.
7. When the pitcher leaves the dirt area of the pitching mound or takes a position more than five feet from the pitcher's plate after receiving the ball or the catcher leaves the catcher's box.
8. On a three ball count pitch that is a strike that the batter thinks is a ball.

PENALTY: If the batter leaves the batter's box or delays play and none of the exceptions apply, the umpire shall warn the batter. After one warning on a batter, the umpire shall call a strike. Any number of strikes can be called on each batter. Minor/Major Division: No pitch has to be thrown, the ball is dead, and no runners may advance. Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior: No pitch has to be thrown and ball is live.

NOTE: The batter may return their position in the batter's box and assume the new count at any time during the at-bat, unless such enforced penalty is the third strike.

RULE 7.14

NEW RULE/LEAGUE OPTIONS

The Special Pinch Runner rule has changed for Tournament play. (See below.) Leagues are allowed to use the Tournament rule during the regular season if they so elect.

RULE 8.06(B)

CLARIFICATION

For divisions in which a pitcher may leave the mound and then return to pitch, a clarification has been added that the number of visits by the manager or coach to the pitcher does not "reset."

NOTE: A pitcher moving to a different position and returning as the pitcher of record shall retain the number of visits from their previous appearance as pitcher. To calculate the number of visits for a pitcher, all visits, regardless of the pitcher being removed and returned to the pitcher's position, shall be applied.

This has always been the practice, however it was never formally included in the rulebook before now.

RULE 9.01(D)

NEW RULE/LEAGUE OPTIONS

The following note has been added to 9.01(d):

NOTE: The local league has the option to adopt this rule application. The stealing and relaying of signs to alert the batter of pitch selection and/or location is unsportsmanlike behavior. If, in the judgment of the umpire, this behavior is occurring, both the player and the manager may be ejected from the game.

RULE 9.01(E)

NEW RULE

A new rule 9.01(e) has been inserted, and subsequent paragraphs in 9.01 renumbered:

- (e) A manager, coach, or player shall not leave their position in the field or bench area during a fight or physical confrontation; a manager or coach who attempts to prevent a fight or restore order, in the umpire's judgment, is not in violation of this rule.

PENALTY: The umpire shall eject the offender(s) from the game immediately. Failure to comply with the ejection may result in the umpire suspending the game and referring it to the Board of Directors for further action.

TOURNAMENT PROCEDURES

UPDATES

A number of updates have been made to the tournament procedures:

- Tournament teams are required to complete and carry a Tournament Verification Form for every player.
- Local Leagues may now select and announce their Tournament teams as early as June 1st. Teams may start practice as soon as June 1st.
- The tournament divisions in Majors and below now allow additional, younger players to participate:
 - The “9 and 10” division is now “8, 9 and 10.”
 - The “10 and 11” division is now “9, 10 and 11”
 - The Majors division now allows players 10, 11 and 12.
- In order to be eligible for Tournament play, players must have participated in 60% of regular season games by the start of Tournament play. (The last phrase is new.)
- District administrators must finalize tournament schedules by June 1st, and must get permission to alter tournament schedules once play begins.
- The procedures for breaking ties in pool play, and the way that runs-allowed ratios are calculated, have been modified.

TOURNAMENT RULE 3A

NEW RULE

A new rule has been added for tournament play requiring batters to keep one foot in the batter’s box:

- a. After entering the batter’s box, the batter must remain in the box with at least one foot throughout the at bat.

EXCEPTIONS:

- i. On a swing, slap, or check swing.
- ii. When forced out of the box by a pitch.
- iii. When the batter attempts a “drag bunt.”
- iv. When the catcher does not catch the pitched ball.
- v. When a play has been attempted.
- vi. When time has been called.
- vii. When the pitcher leaves the dirt area of the pitching mound or takes a position more than five feet from the pitcher’s plate after receiving the ball or the catcher leaves the catcher’s box.
- viii. On a three ball count pitch that is a strike that the batter thinks is a ball.

PENALTY: If the batter leaves the batter’s box or delays play and none of the exceptions apply, the umpire shall warn the batter. After one warning on a batter, the umpire shall call a strike. Any number of strikes can be called on each batter. Minor/Major Division: No pitch has to be thrown, the ball is dead, and no runners may advance. Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior: No pitch has to be thrown and ball is live.

NOTE: The batter may return their position in the batter’s box and assume the new count at any time during the at-bat, unless such enforced penalty is the third strike.

TOURNAMENT RULE 3E

RULE CHANGE

The Special Pinch Runner rule for tournament play has changed:

- d. Twice a game but not more than one time per inning, a team may utilize a player who is not in the batting order as a special pinch-runner for any offensive player. A player may only be removed for a special pinch-runner one time during a game. The player for whom the pinch-runner runs is not subject to removal from the lineup. If the pinch-runner remains in the game as a substitute defensive or offensive player, the player may not be used again as a pinch-runner while in the batting order. However, if removed for another substitute that player or any player not in the line-up, is again eligible to be used as a pinch-runner.

Previously, a team could use a special pinch runner in every inning of the game, if they so chose. Now they are limited to a maximum of two times during the game.

TOURNAMENT RULE 3F

NEW RULE

A new rule has been inserted regarding umpires' authority to disqualify game participants:

- e. Each umpire has authority to disqualify any player, coach, manager, or substitute for objecting to decisions or for unsportsmanlike conduct or language and to eject such disqualified person from the playing field. If an umpire disqualifies a player while a play is in progress, the disqualification shall not take effect until no further action is possible in that play. The stealing and relaying of signs to alert the batter of pitch selection and/or location is unsportsmanlike behavior. If, in the judgment of the umpire, this behavior is occurring, both the player and the manager may be ejected from the game.

Note that, in particular, "stealing signs" during tournament play has been explicitly made "unsportsmanlike conduct."

TOURNAMENT RULE 10 NOTE 2

CLARIFICATION

The underlined text has been added clarifying when a substitute batter may be used for a starting pitcher.

NOTE 2: A player who has met the mandatory play requirements, and is a pitcher at the time she/he is removed, may be removed for a substitute batter and re-enter the game as a pitcher once, provided the pitcher was not physically replaced on the mound. If a team has thirteen (13) or more players in uniform at the start of a game and is the visiting team, they may substitute a batter for the starting pitcher listed in the line-up prior to the pitcher facing a batter without violating Rule 3.03(c) provided that the pitcher of record pitches to the first batter in the bottom of the first inning in accordance with Rule 3.05. All other rules governing the pitcher are still in effect.