

Little League Baseball® - Understanding The Basic Rules

Most of the rules that govern play in Little League Baseball® are the same as those used at other levels of play. But, there are a few rules that you will find only in Little League Baseball. What follows is a short explanation of some of the more prominent rules that are specific to Little League Baseball. For more information, including details on the new rule changes for 2018, visit LittleLeague.org/Rules.

Pitch Count

Pitchers removed from the mound may not return as pitchers. The manager must remove the pitcher when said pitcher reaches the limit for his/her age group (see below), but the pitcher may remain in the game at another position.

League Age: 10 (75 pitches per day); **11-12** (85 pitches per day)

Exception: If a pitcher reaches the limit imposed above for his/her league age while facing a batter, the pitcher may continue to pitch until any one of the following conditions occurs: 1. That batter reaches base; 2. That batter is put out; 3. The third out is made to complete the half-inning. **Note:** A pitcher who delivers 41 or more pitches in a game cannot play the position of catcher for the remainder of that day. A player who catches in four or more innings in a game is not eligible to pitch on that calendar day.

Pitchers league age 10-12 must adhere to the following rest requirements:

- **66 or more pitches in a day:** *four (4) calendar days of rest*
- **51-65 pitches in a day:** *three (3) calendar days of rest*
- **36-50 pitches in a day:** *two (2) calendar days of rest*
- **21-35 pitches in a day:** *one (1) calendar day of rest*
- **1-20 pitches in a day:** *zero (0) calendar days of rest*

NOTE: Pitchers may complete a batter at each threshold above, including the maximum pitch count.

NOTE: Under no circumstances shall a player pitch in three (3) consecutive days.

Stealing

When a pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate and in possession of the ball and the catcher is in the catcher's box ready for delivery of the ball, base runners shall not leave their bases until the ball has been delivered and has reached the batter.

Mandatory Play

If a tournament team has thirteen (13) or more eligible players in uniform at a game, then every player on a team roster shall participate in each game for a minimum of one (1) at bat. If a tournament team has twelve (12) or fewer eligible players in uniform at a game, then every player on a team roster shall participate in each game for a minimum of six (6) consecutive defensive outs and bat at least one (1) time.

For the purpose of this rule, "six consecutive defensive outs" is defined as: a player enters the field in one of the nine defensive positions when his/her team is on defense and occupies such position while six consecutive outs are made; "bat at least one time" is defined as: a player enters the batter's box with no count and completes that time at bat by being put out or reaching base safely.

Prior to the start of play in the top of the fourth inning, the umpire-in-chief or other individual designated by the game Tournament Director in consultation with the official scorekeeper, shall advise both team managers of their obligation to insert all players who have not completed their mandatory play requirement into the line-up as outlined in the official rule. A manager's failure/refusal to insert players into the line-up as outlined in the official rule shall result in immediate ejection of the manager and removal for the remainder of the International Tournament.

Substitutions/Re-entry

Any player who has been removed for a substitute may re-enter the game in the SAME position in the batting order.

A substitute entering the game for the first time may not be removed prior to completion of his/her mandatory play requirement.

Special Pinch-Runner

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.

Foot in the Batter's Box

Since 2017, Little League requires batters to keep one foot in the batter's box throughout their at-bat, barring eight exceptions provided in the rule book. 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. Individual warnings do not carry over from previous at-bats.

Intentional Walks

Starting in 2017, defensive teams are now able to elect to intentionally walk a batter by announcing the decision to the plate umpire. After appropriate notification is made by the defensive manager, the ball is ruled dead and no other runners may advance unless forced by the batter's award of first base. Once the award is granted, four pitches will be added to the defensive pitcher's official pitch count.

Run Rule

If at the end of three (3) innings (two and one-half innings if the home team is ahead), one team has a lead of fifteen (15) runs or more, the manager of the team with the least runs shall concede the victory to the opponent. If at the end of a regulation game one team has a lead of ten (10) runs or more, the manager of the team with the least runs shall concede the victory to the opponent. The home team, if behind, must bat in its half of the inning. This should **not** be called the "mercy rule" or "slaughter rule." It is the "Run Rule."

For more information and clarification on rule changes for 2018, including a full breakdown of each of the rules, visit LittleLeague.org/Rules.