



2021 Rule Changes

Summary of Key Changes to Little League's Playing Rules for 2021

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MANDATORY PLAY – 15+ Eligible Players At Game

BASEBALL and SOFTBALL

Regulation III(a) – Reduces the minimum number of players on a regular season roster for the Major, Intermediate (50-70) Baseball, Junior, and Senior Divisions.

Regulation III(a) – Allows a league to roster up to 20 players on an Intermediate (50-70) Baseball, Junior, or Senior Division team if only fielding one regular season team.

Regulation III(a) – Allows leagues to vary roster size in a particular division by one (1) player.

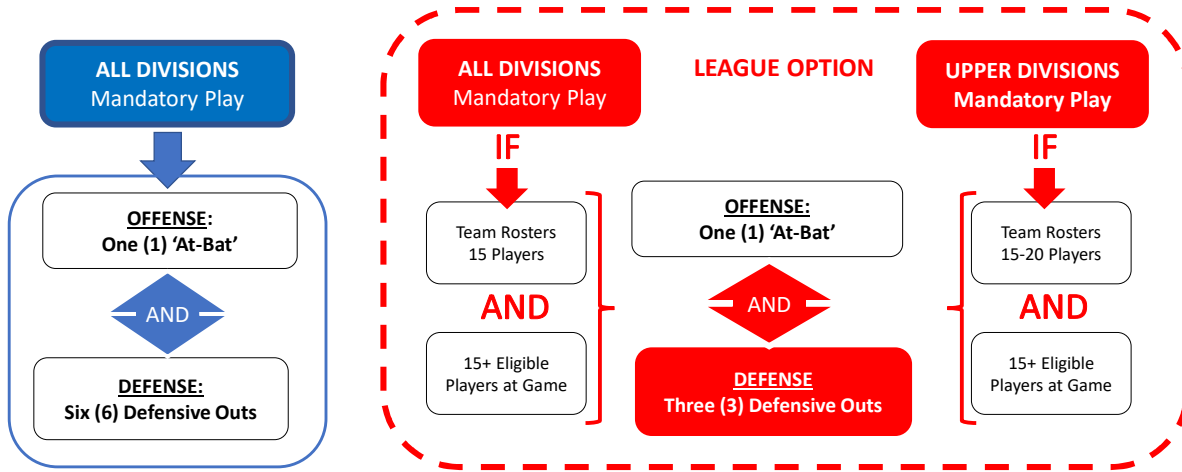
(a) The league shall, at least 10 days prior to the first regular game, establish the number of players on each team. No team may have more than 15 players nor less than 10. **NOTE:** Rules 1.01, 3.03 NOTE 3, 4.16 and 4.17 apply regardless of roster size. **EXCEPTION: Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior:** A league may roster up to 20 players if fielding only one regular season team.

BASEBALL and SOFTBALL - Regulation IV(i) NOTE 4 – Permits a local league to update Mandatory Play for all divisions if 15-20 players are rostered and available to participate in a game.

NOTE 4: If a league uses 15 to 20 player rosters and 15 or more eligible players are at a game, the league may reduce the Mandatory Play Rule to three (3) defensive outs and one (1) at bat per game.

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Option to Reduce Mandatory Play with 15+ Players



Bottom Line: Option to reduce mandatory play if a team (i) rosters 15+ AND (ii) 15+ arrive to a game

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MANDATORY PLAY – Clarifies What ‘Bat at least once’ Means



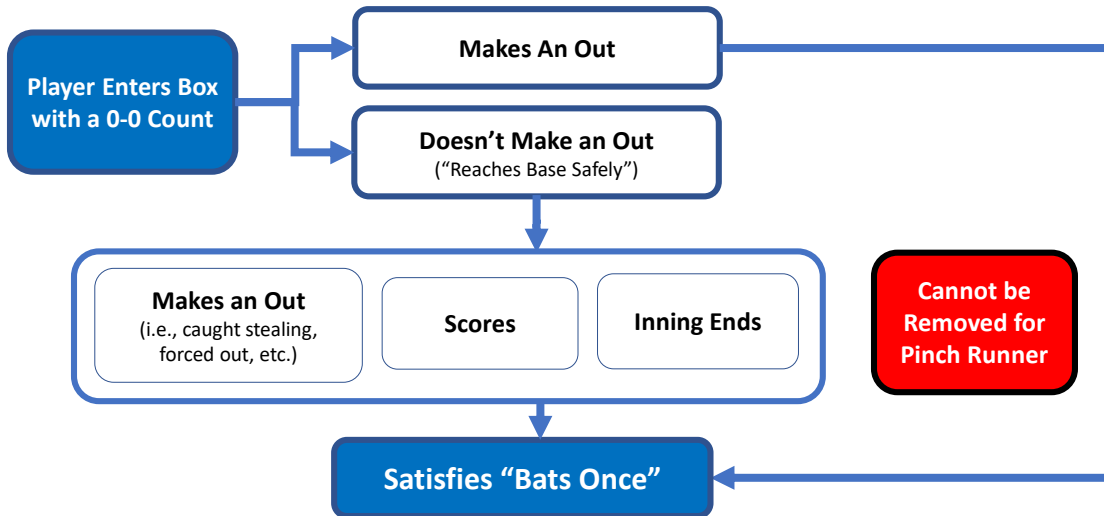
Baseball and Softball - Regulation IV(i), Rule 2.00, and Tournament Rule 9 – Revises mandatory play to require a player to run the bases after one at-bat, if they reach base, until they are retired, score, or the inning or game ends. During the International Tournament, a player removed prior to meeting the running portion of their Mandatory Play requirement will be treated as an improper substitute.

- (i) **Mandatory Play:** Every rostered player present at the start of a game will participate in each game for a minimum of six (6) defensive outs and bat at least one (1) time. For the purposes of this rule, “six (6) 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 a defensive position while six outs are made; “bat at least one (1) time” is defined as: A player enters the batter’s box with no count and completes that time at bat by being retired, ~~retired as a batter-runner or runner, scores, or the inning or game ends.~~ ~~or by reaching base safely.~~ **PENALTY:** The player(s) involved shall start the next scheduled game, play any previous requirement not completed for Section (i), and the requirement for this game before being removed.



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Redefines "Bat at least one time"



Bottom Line: If the player makes it to base safely, they must run the bases.

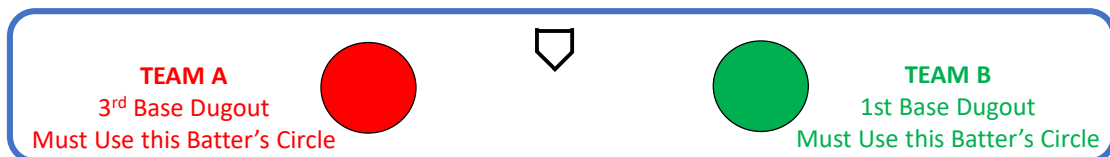
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BATTER'S CIRCLE – Upper Division Only

Baseball and Softball - Regulation XIV(b) A.R. – Requires the on-deck batter to be positioned in the on-deck circle closest to their dugout in the Intermediate, Junior, and Senior divisions.

(b) Uniformed players, news photographers, managers, coaches, and umpires only shall be permitted within the confines of the playing field just prior to and during games. Batboys and/or batgirls are not permitted at any level of play. Except for the batter, base-runners, and base coaches at first and third bases, all players shall be on their benches in their dugouts or in the bullpen when the team is at bat. When the team is on defense, all reserve players shall be on their benches or in the bullpen. **EXCEPTION:** The on-deck position is permitted in Intermediate (50-70) Division, Junior, and Senior League.

A.R. – Intermediate (50-70) Division, Junior, and Senior League: The on-deck batter shall be positioned in the on-deck circle closest to their dugout.

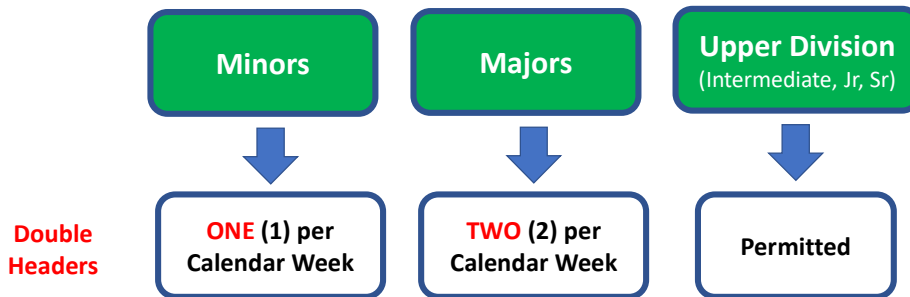


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DOUBLE HEADERS – Baseball Majors & Minors

Baseball Only - Regulation VII(d) and Rule 4.12(d) – Permits a local league to schedule and play one (1) doubleheader for Minors and up to two (2) doubleheaders for Majors in a calendar week.

- (d) **Minor (Player Pitch):** A team may play one (1) doubleheader in a calendar week. **Little League (Major) Division:** A team may play two (2) doubleheaders in a calendar week. No team shall play three games in a day.



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TIME LIMITS

Baseball and Softball - Regulation VII(h), X(c), 4.10 and 4.11 – Allows a local league to establish time limits for games, regardless of number innings played, that will still qualify towards Regular Season games played and a player's Tournament eligibility.

Regulation VII (c): [NOTE: summarized below in Rule 4.10(2)]

Regulation X (c): [NOTE: summarized below in Rule 4.10(2)]

4.10:

(c) If a game is called, it is a regulation game:

- (1) If four innings [**Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League: five innings**] have been completed;
- (2) **Local League Option:** If the game has been played for 1 hour and 45 minutes. Any inning which has been started prior to the time limit expiring will be completed. No new inning will begin once the time limit has expired.
A.R. – District Administrators overseeing interleague play activities and local Little League programs may establish a minimum 2-hour time limit for games in **Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League.**
- (3) If the home team has scored more runs in three and one-half innings [**Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League: four and one-half innings**] than the visiting team has scored in four completed half-innings;
- (4) if the home team scores one or more runs in its half of the fourth inning [**Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League: fifth inning**] to tie the score.



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TIME LIMITS

1. Any inning started prior to time limit shall be completed.
2. No new inning shall begin after time limit expires.

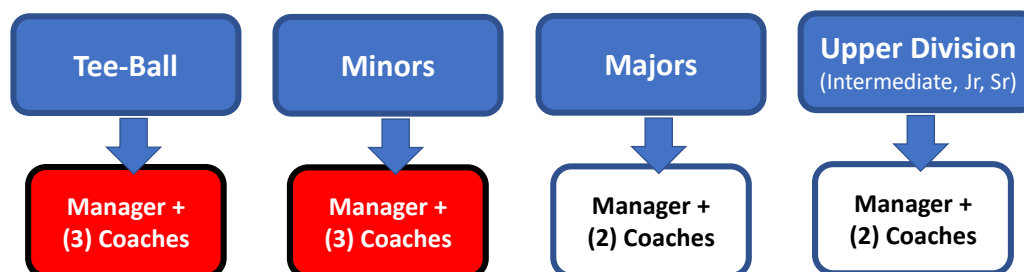


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COACHES ALLOWED – Tee Ball and Minors Only

Baseball and Softball - 1.01 and 3.17 - Permits Tee Ball and Instructional Minor Divisions to utilize up to three coaches.

Tee Ball/Minor League Instructional Division is a game between two teams, under the direction of a manager and not more than ~~three~~ **two** coaches, played on a regulation Little League field in accordance with these rules, under the jurisdiction of one or more umpires.




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INTENTIONAL WALK – Baseball


Baseball Only - 6.08(a) – Allows a defensive team to “intentionally walk” a batter at any time during the at-bat in the Minor and Major Divisions of Baseball.

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) (1) four “balls” have been called by the umpire; ball is live and base runners may advance;
or,

(2) **Minor/Major Division:** ~~Prior to a pitch being thrown,~~ The defense elects to “Intentionally Walk” the batter by announcing such decision to the plate umpire. ~~The request may be made prior to or during the at-bat.~~ 

NOTE 1: Such notification must be made by the defensive manager. The manager must request and be granted “time” by the umpire and then inform the umpire of the defense’s intent to walk the batter.

NOTE 2: The ball is dead and no other runners may advance unless forced by the batter’s award. ~~Four (4)~~ The appropriate number of “balls” needed based on the count on the batter at the time of the manager’s request to complete the Intentional Walk ~~pitches~~ will be added to the pitch count. 


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INTENTIONAL WALK – Softball

Softball Only - 6.08(a) – Permits a defensive team to “intentionally walk” a batter in all divisions of softball.

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) (1) four “balls” have been called by the umpire; the ball is live and in play. Base runners may advance;

(2) The defense elects to “Intentionally Walk” the batter by announcing such decision to the plate umpire. The request may be made prior to or during the at-bat. 

NOTE 1: Such notification must be made by the defensive manager. The manager must request and be granted “time” by the umpire and then inform the umpire of the defense’s intent to walk the batter.

NOTE 2: The ball is dead and no other runners may advance unless forced by the batter’s award.

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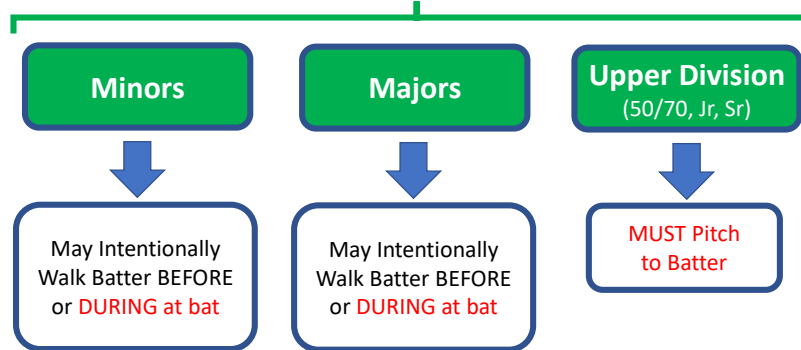
INTENTIONAL WALK

1. Defensive Manager Must Ask For Time and Inform Umpire
2. The Ball is Dead
3. BASEBALL: # of pitches needed to reach four balls added to pitch count.

SOFTBALL



BASEBALL



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8 PLAYER OPTION – Starting & Continuing Play

Baseball and Softball

1.01, 4.04, 4.16, 4.17, and 6.05 – Permits a local league to start and play games with eight (8) players on each team. If implemented, the local league will determine if teams will be charged an out for the ninth (9th) position or skip over the ninth (9th) position without penalty.

1.01 - [NOTE: change as shown in Rule 4.16 below]

4.04 - The batting order shall be followed throughout the game unless[edited]...
NOTE 3: Local League Option: When a league permits teams to start and play games with eight (8) players, the Board of Directors will determine if an out is called for the ninth (9th) position in the batting line-up each turn at bat or if the team may skip over the ninth (9th) position without penalty.



4.16 - This shall not be grounds for automatic forfeiture, but shall be referred to the Board of Directors for a decision. **NOTE:** A game may not be started with less than nine (9) players on each team, nor without at least one adult manager or substitute manager. **Local League Option:** A game may not be started with less than eight (8) players on each team.



4.17 - If during a game either team is unable to place nine (9) players on the field due to injury or ejection, the opposing manager shall select a player to re-enter the line-up.[edited] ...
NOTE: A game may not be continued with less than nine (9) players on each team. **Local League Option:** A game may not be continued with less than eight (8) players on each team.




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COURTESY RUNNER

Baseball and Softball


2.00, 3.04, and 7.14 – For the Regular Season, allows a local league to implement a courtesy runner for the pitcher and/or catcher of record when there are two (2) outs during the Regular Season.

3.04 - A player whose name is on the team's batting order may not become a substitute runner for another member of the team. A local league may permit a "courtesy runner" ~~not permitted for~~ the catcher and/or pitcher of record when there are two (2) outs. **Exception:** If the continuous batting order is used, the "courtesy runner" may be in the team's batting order and must be the player in the batting order who made the last out. See 7.14(b). 

7.14 –

(a) **Special Pinch Runner:**

[edited but still applies]

(b) **Courtesy Runner:** A local league may permit a "courtesy runner" for the catcher and/or pitcher of record when there are two (2) outs. A player whose name is on the team's batting order may not become a substitute runner for another member of the team. Neither the pitcher nor the catcher is subject to removal from the lineup. The same courtesy runner may not run for both the pitcher and the catcher at any time during the game. A courtesy runner must be reported to the plate umpire. **Exception:** If the continuous batting order is used, the "courtesy runner" may be in the team's batting order and must be the player in the batting order who made the last out. 

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COURTESY RUNNER

COURTESY RUNNER is a player not currently in the batting order who may become a base runner for the pitcher and/or catcher provided there are two (2) outs in the half inning....

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DISENGAGE RUBBER – Softball

Softball Only – Rule 8.01(g) A.R. 2 – Permits the pitcher to remove him/herself from the pitcher’s plate with either foot first prior to the hands being brought together.

A.R. 2 - For the pitcher to remove himself/herself from the pitching position 1) before the hands have been brought together as noted in 8.01(f), the pitcher may legally step back from the pitcher’s plate with either foot;



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ILLEGAL PITCH PENALTY – Softball Juniors & Seniors

Softball Only - Rule 8.01 and 8.05 Penalty – Revises the penalty for an illegal pitch within the Junior and Senior Softball Divisions to be a ball on the batter and no effect on any base runners.

PENALTY: The penalty imposed for violation of all subsections of rule 8.01, with the exception of subsection (i), is an illegal pitch. Violation of (i) is ruled as a No Pitch. **Minor/Major Divisions:** The pitch shall be called a ball. If a play follows the illegal pitch, 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. **Junior/Senior League:** ~~The pitch shall be called a ball and all base runners advance one base without liability to be put out. If a play follows the illegal pitch, 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.~~

No Longer a Base Award



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