

West Madison Little League - Fall 2021

ROOKIE LEAGUE BASEBALL LOCAL RULES

All national Little League rules for Rookie League baseball, as described in the current season rulebook, apply unless specifically changed in these local rules or by past WMLL custom. The WMLL Safety Plan contains further regulations which will be enforced as local rules. *Note: Rules of emphasis are indicated with blue text & new/modified rules in red text.*

Fall Ball is part of Little League's Training and Development Program. It is intended to provide additional opportunity for all players to hone skills and try new positions. Game scores are the least important part of Fall Ball. Coaches are encouraged to "ratchet it down a notch" to adhere to the purpose of Fall Ball. Coaches not adhering to this philosophy will be disciplined and not be asked back in the future.

TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

HOME TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES: The home team occupies the first base dugout & must:

- Provide two new regulation balls
- Arrange for a volunteer to help in the concession stand.

VISITING TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES: The visiting team occupies the third base dugout & must:

- Provide a volunteer to operate the scoreboard.
- Return scoreboard controller to concession stand after the last game of the day.

RESPONSIBILITIES SHARED BY BOTH TEAMS:

- Coordinate to provide a volunteer parent base umpire.
- Remove, fold and place the field tarps on the carrier and store behind the first base dugout for the first game of the day.
- Remove base plugs and install bases (stored in 3rd base dugout).
- Replace the tarps on the mound and home plate area after the last game of the day.
- Remove bases and install base plugs (stored in 3rd base dugout) after the last game of the day.
- **Equipment Bag:** Coaches must retrieve the shared equipment bag designated for their league from the equipment/mail room prior to the game and return the equipment bag after their game if it is the last game of the day. Coaches must disinfect all shared catcher's masks used during the game (per instructions) prior to putting the mask in the equipment bag.
- **Player Shortages/Replacement Players:** If a team expects to be short of players (fewer than nine players) for a game, the head coach should obtain replacement players from other Rookie League Teams to add to the roster for that game.
 - Replacement players must be players from another WMLL Rookie League team. Coaches should contact potential replacement players directly. *WMLL's goal is to allow as many players as practical this opportunity. Consequently, teams should try not to use the same player more than two times during the season.*
 - Replacement player(s) must bat last in the batting order.
 - If unanticipated roster player(s) show up bringing the total of regular roster players to ten or more, the replacement player(s) should not play, unless the game is a forfeit.
 - A team using a replacement player must notify the opposing team coach and the League Coordinator of his/her use.
 - Teams should use the same individual as a replacement no more than one or two times during the season.
- **Helmets:** Players shall have their own helmets (face masks are required). If a player does not have their own helmet, contact the League Coordinator to arrange use of a WMLL helmet for the season.
- **Attire:** Players must be in full uniform to be eligible to play in a game. Players may not wear jewelry regardless of the composition of that jewelry. Exception: jewelry that alerts medical personnel to a specific condition is permitted. Umpires will be instructed to strictly enforce this rule.
- **Dugout Management:** Only uniformed players, the head coach, one assistant coach and one scorekeeper (maximum of three adults) are permitted on the bench. Siblings, parents, friends, etc. are not permitted. The head coach must require all others to leave the dugout. Teams that do not adhere to this rule will receive one warning; subsequent violations will result in the team forfeiting the game. During a game, the only players allowed outside of the dugout are the defense team, the batter & base runners. Players must stay in the playing area or on the bench during the game unless the head coach permits them to leave.
- **Post-Game Cleanup:** After every game, both teams must clean up their respective dugout areas.

PREGAME WARMUPS

OFF-FIELD WARMUPS: Teams may warmup on the north side of the cages and in the grass area near the Major Field, but NOT in the grass area between the batting cages and the parking lot. Players are not permitted to enter NBC 15 property across from the driveway. Players should be careful when warming up so other individuals are not injured.

BATTING PRACTICE: Pregame batting practice and bat swinging can take place only in a batting cage or soft toss station as follows:

- **Batting Cages:** Teams can use a batting cage for twenty minutes beginning thirty minutes prior to the game. Each team can use only one of the cages.
- **Soft Toss Stations:** Teams may use a soft toss station for pregame batting practice during the allotted Batting Cage time. Only whiffle balls, tennis balls, or other soft surface balls are permitted for soft toss.

ON-FIELD WARMUPS:

- **Infield practice:** Time permitting, both teams will be allowed to take infield practice for six minutes prior to starting the game. Time permitting means that the infield practice cannot interfere with the game's official start time. All players present (not just the starting infielders) should participate in the infield practice.
- The Visiting Team will take infield first, the Home Team will take infield and then place fielders in their positions, only non-starting defensive players will return to the dugout. If players are used as catchers, they shall wear a facemask.
- **Pitcher Warm-Up:** Pitchers warming up prior to or during the game must do so in each field's designated area. Pitchers must throw from the area closest to the dugout with catchers located farthest away from the dugout. If players are used as catchers, they shall wear a facemask.

FORFEITS, GAME LIMITS & PACING

FORFEITS: Teams forfeit if they have fewer than seven (7) players to participate in a game. A team has fifteen minutes from the schedule starting time to obtain seven players before a forfeit is declared. When both teams have less than eight players, a double forfeit occurs. If a team forfeits a game, the game will not be replayed.

INNING & TIME LIMITS: All games are limited to six innings with no new inning beginning at or after an elapsed playing time of 1-hour & 20-minutes.

- The 'hard' time limit is 1-hour & 30-minutes after the game started or after 9 PM curfew Sunday thru Thursday. The game ends immediately after the current batter finishes their at bat. When this occurs, the outcome is determined by the score at the end of the last complete inning, unless the home team is at bat & has tied the game during their at-bat (after being behind at the end of the last complete inning). In this case the game ends in a tie.
- If the game is tied after the bottom half of the inning and the game clock is at or beyond the time limit, the game will be considered a tie.
- A game which ends due to the time limit will be considered a complete game regardless of the number of innings played.
- **Exception:** During weeks 1-3, the first weekday game on the Minor Field must end by 5:50 PM.

GAME START & END TIMES: The official start time of the initial game of the day will be the scheduled start time regardless of the time of the first pitch (unless the delay is weather-related, or the umpires are not present). Games after the initial game of the day must start ten minutes after the final out of the previous game or the scheduled start time, whichever is later.

- The umpires will enforce the scheduled starting time and the time limits for each league. Umpires shall announce the official start time of the game prior to the first pitch.
- The official game start time & end time (when the last out in the last inning is made) should be recorded on the scorecard.

RUN LIMIT: A maximum of five runs can be scored per half inning & there is no maximum to the number of hitters who may bat before the fifth run is scored. Any half inning which does not end by national rule will end as soon as the fifth run is scored.

INNING SWITCH: Players must hustle on and off the field between offense and defense so that the game proceeds quickly.

COURTESY RUNNER FOR CATCHER: To allow the catcher to be in gear and ready to play without delay, a courtesy runner may be used for the catcher at any time but is mandatory when there are two outs. This runner will be the individual who made the previous out in the inning.

COACHING

LINE UP CARDS. Line up cards are to be exchanged between the head coaches at the beginning of the game to indicate the starting players, all eligible substitutes, absent and injured players and players who are being disciplined by not participating.

ON-FIELD COACHES: For the first two weeks of games the defensive team may station one coach on the outfield grass for instructional purposes. The offensive team may have adults as base coaches. All other coaches must stay within three feet of the dugout entrance during play.

COACH-PITCHER CONFERENCES/DEFENSIVE TIME OUTS: A coach is permitted two visits per pitcher during a game and one per inning, with any defense timeout being considered as a visit. During a visit with the pitcher, coaches may confer with any player(s), including the catcher. On the third coach visit to a pitcher in a game or the second of an inning, the pitcher must be removed from the mound.

OFFENSIVE TIME OUTS: Each team is limited to one offensive time out per inning, which includes base coaches coming down the line to have a conference with a batter.

COACH BEHAVIOR: *See below for important rules related to INTERACTIONS WITH UMPIRES & MISCONDUCT.*

DEFENSE

DEFENSIVE PLAYING TIME. Each player shall play at least four innings defensively. At least one of the defensive innings must be playing an infield (including the pitcher and catcher) position and one an outfield position. The minimum defensive innings in this rule must be full half innings.

Playing Time Rule Exceptions. *The only exceptions to the playing time rule will be:*

- *If a player misses practices and/or games without a valid reason, the coach may decide to reduce the number of innings played in the field for the next game by a maximum of one inning. Absences due to family vacations should not affect playing time.*
- *If a player arrives late for a game, the head coach can decide to reduce the number of innings at his/her discretion.*
- *If a player is being disciplined, a head coach must inform the opposing head coach prior to the game or immediately after an incident which requires removal, for the participation rule to be satisfied. The player who is being disciplined should be advised of why he/she is not participating. If the discipline results in the player being “docked” more than one inning below the league minimum, the coach must inform the League Coordinator in writing of the discipline and the cause. This method of disciplining should be used with reasonable discretion.*
- *If a game is shortened because of the time limit, inclement weather or run limit, all players will not be required to satisfy the playing rule.*
- *If an eligible player does not fulfill the participation rule, that player must be a starter in the team’s next game and play the whole game. Any head coach who violates this rule will be subject to dismissal by the league’s Baseball Operation Committee.*

DEFENSIVE POSITIONS. Each team shall field ten players when on defense. Four of those players must be outfielders and take positions on the outfield grass.

DEFENSIVE OBSTRUCTION: A defensive player without the ball who impedes a runner, whether intentional or unintentional, or who fakes a tag will be penalized for defensive obstruction. The umpire will award the runner the base or bases they are attempting to reach.

INFIELD FLY RULE: There is no infield fly rule.

PITCHERS POSITION. When the pitch is delivered the player in the pitcher’s position must have at least one foot on the dirt area of the pitcher’ mound, forward of the point where the ball leaves the machine.

PITCHING MACHINE. The pitching machine and cord are in play. However, if a batted ball becomes lodged under the machine so as to be unplayable, the umpire shall have the discretion to call a replay. If a thrown ball becomes lodged in or under the machine as to be unplayable, the ball shall be declared dead and the base runners will be awarded the base to which they were heading when the ball was declared dead. The umpire may call a “no pitch” when the machine obviously malfunctions. An obvious malfunction is defined as a ball which hits the ground before reaching the dirt area around the batter’s box. If a player swings at such a pitch before “no pitch” is called, it will be considered a legal pitch. An adult coach of the offensive team is required to operate the pitching machine. If the pitching machine does not function properly the game should adopt coach-pitch. A coach should pitch to his own team and be positioned in front of the pitching machine, and the pitching machine should be turned off for safety reasons.

BATTING

GAME DAY BATTING ORDER: Every player in attendance must be in the batting order. Coaches should rotate the order so the same players aren’t always batting in the top or the bottom of the lineup.

- **Changes in Player Availability:** If a player is unable to continue play, there will be no penalty to the offensive team when that individual is scheduled to bat. If able, the player can reenter the batting order without penalty. If a player arrives after their spot in the batting order has been passed the first time, they will enter lineup in the last position.

BATS: Only bats meeting national Little League rules may be used at WMLL. Bats will be stamped with the USA Baseball Logo. See Rule 1.10 in the Little League rule book and LittleLeague.org.

HELMETS: All offensive players outside the dugout must wear batting helmets with face masks including batters, base runners and player coaches.

ON DECK WARMUPS: For safety reasons, on deck hitters are prohibited.

STRIKE ZONE: To encourage more aggressive hitting and speed the game along, the strike zone used is larger than the standard. The width shall be the width of the plate plus the width of a baseball on both the inside and outside corners (for a total width of 23-inches) and the height shall be from the batter's armpits to the bottom of their knees.

BASE ON BALLS AND HIT BATSMAN: There will be no walks, intentional or unintentional, or hit batsmen allowed in this league. (Note: Catcher's Interference results in the batter being awarded 1st base.)

BUNTING: Bunting is allowed. WMLL believes the act of squaring to draw infielders in and then swinging away is dangerous to charging infielders. While this is not a rule & umpires will not enforce a sanction, coaches should not permit their batters to engage in this action. Anyone concerned that a coach or team is not adhering to this philosophy should contact the appropriate league coordinator.

BAT THROWING: A player will receive one warning each game for inadvertently throwing the bat. For any subsequent instance of throwing the bat in that same game, a player that has been warned will be called out. The warning and out can be on the same at bat. If a hitter is called out for throwing the bat the ball will be dead and any runners must return the base, which he/she occupied prior to the pitch. *Note: this rule applies to accidental bat throwing, not to bat throwing in anger or protest.*

BASERUNNING

DOUBLE FIRST BASE: A double first base is used on the Minor Field. The runner must touch the orange portion of the base while the fielder must touch the white portion on the initial play at first base. If there is no play the runner may touch the white base.

LEAVING BASE: Runners may leave the base when the ball crosses the plate. Players detected leaving early will be called out.

STEALING: Base stealing is not allowed.

SLIDING: Headfirst sliding when advancing is prohibited with the penalty of the offender being called out.

BASERUNNING & EXTRA BASES: Runners may attempt to advance one additional base (including home) on an overthrow to any defensive player (including a baseman, the cutoff, or the pitcher) following a batted ball. If a second overthrow results from an attempt to throw out an advancing runner, the runners may not advance again.

- *Note: There are no or rules or guidelines that limit the number of bases that runners (including the batter) can take on hits to the infield or outfield, on fielding errors, or on hits to unmanned outfield positions.*

PLAY STOPPAGE: At the conclusion of a play base runners may advance no further than the base to which they are headed at the point the ball is secured in the hand of **any defensive player who is in the infield.**

OFFENSIVE INTERERENCE: On a close play at second base, third base or home plate, the runner is required to either slide or avoid contact with a defensive player in possession of the ball while located within the batter's box area or within the vicinity of another base. If contact is made and the runner did not slide, the umpire shall call the runner out for offensive interference.

For a nonsliding runner to be automatically out, all three of the following must be true:

- 1) *There was contact between the non-sliding runner and the defensive player.*
- 2) *At the time of contact the defensive player had possession of the ball.*
- 3) *At the time of contact the defensive player was within the batter's box area or within the vicinity of another base.*

MALICIOUS CONTACT: When a runner initiates malicious contact with any fielder, with or without the ball, in or out of the baseline, the umpire shall eject the runner for the game. The runner has the primary responsibility to avoid a collision with the defensive player.

BEHAVIOR

COACH, PLAYER, PARENT & SPECTATOR BEHAVIOR

Sportsmanship: Coaches, players, parents and spectators should adhere to a high level of sportsmanship. The league will not tolerate negative interactions between or among coaches, spectators & players; harassment of umpires; verbal or physical altercations involving coaches, players, or spectators; hazing or organized chanting or “cheering” directed at opposing teams or players. Instances of unsportsmanlike behavior reported to the Board of Directors will be investigated by the President and may result in discipline, including suspensions.

Treatment of Umpires: Coaches, players, parents and spectators must accept and respect umpire decisions. They should refrain from questioning “judgment” calls and must parents avoid actions which tend to undermine umpire authority. Umpires will not tolerate any abusive language, equipment throwing or other violent or unsportsmanlike behavior by coaches, players or fans.

- **Warning:** Any person guilty of participating in these actions will be warned once by the umpires.
- **Ejection:** A second violation will result in ejection from the game and removal from the WMLL field areas. In severe instances, the offending party will be immediately ejected. *Note: The umpire will report such ejections to the umpire coordinator who will notify the VP-Baseball / Softball.*
- **Suspension:** Unsportsmanlike behavior which results in a game ejection carries with it another one game suspension. For a second game ejection there will be an automatic three game suspension and for a third game suspension, the individual will receive a season ending suspension.

COACH BEHAVIOR

Coaches and coaching staff should provide the players and fans with an exemplary model of sportsmanship & are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times. Coaches are to follow all WMLL rules – in general & specific to their individual league.

Interactions with Umpires:

- **To question an umpire’s ruling**, coaches may not run out of the dugout or yell objections. Instead, one coach from the team must request a time out and then meet with the umpire who made the call & one coach from the opposing team in foul territory to calmly discuss the matter. The second umpire is encouraged to join in discussions as needed.
 - o *If the umpires ruling was a judgment call based on the correct understanding & application of the rules, the coach may request an appeal. In any case, the umpire’s final call must be respected & the coach should not argue or complain to the umpire or publicly.*
 - o *If the umpires ruling was based on an incorrect understanding or application of the rules, the umpire(s) & coaches should work together to determine the correct response. If a ruling change is in order, the change must be announced by the umpire that made the original call.*
- **To check on an injured player**, a coach may move onto the playing field after requesting a time out from the umpire to assist the injured player.
- **Coaches who feel an individual umpire is lacking in skills or knowledge** should not offer instruction or advice but should report their concern to the League Coordinator or Umpire Coordinator.

Misconduct: Any coach that is reported to the League for issues of misconduct may be investigated by the Board and may result in discipline, including being suspended from games, practices, and other volunteer positions. *Examples of misconduct are as follows, but not limited to openly disputing or arguing any decision by an umpire; using obscene or vulgar language; visually displaying any sign of dissatisfaction with an umpire’s decision including staying on the field or standing in the dugout with the intent of inciting the officials, players or spectators; & berating players, umpires, coaches, families, and/or spectators in a manner unbecoming WMLL.*

- **Warning:** First warning may be a discussion between the coach(es) and the League Coordinator and/or Board President. In severe instances, the offending party may be immediately suspended. *A written summary of the discussion will be provided to all parties and kept on file.*
- **Suspension:** A second infraction that occurs in the current year may be an automatic suspension from coaching. The period of suspension will be no less than two (2) weeks and may be up to the remaining season based on the severity. *A written summary of the discussion will be provided to all parties and kept on file.*

ADDITIONAL CONSEQUENCES: Any member of the WMLL Organization or Community is subject to further consequence should they be found to flagrantly disregard the Organization’s rules and expectations. Examples of possible consequences are as follows, but not limited to inability to serve as a WMLL volunteer and/or inability to participate on WMLL committees.

WEATHER, LIGHT & OTHER SAFETY CONDITIONS

All determinations of field, light, weather & other conditions that could affect player, spectator, umpire, coach or concession worker safety should be made together by the head coaches & umpires at each playing field unless a Board member is present and has instructed the head coaches & umpires otherwise. These determinations should always be made erring on the side of safety.

DELAYING GAMES DUE TO RAIN, LIGHTNING OR DARKNESS/LIGHTING FAILURE: If a field is not playable at game time but might be playable in a short period of time, the game will be delayed no more than fifteen minutes. The conditions will be checked after fifteen minutes and, if the field is still unplayable, the game will be canceled and rescheduled by the coordinator. If a delay occurs after a game has begun, the first fifteen minutes of the total delay time do not count as part of the game time limit.

LIGHTNING: When lightning is visible, the game will be suspended for thirty minutes and all coaches, players, spectators and umpires must take immediate shelter in the dugouts, near the concession stand or in private vehicles to ensure their safety.

CALLING GAMES DUE TO RAIN, LIGHTNING OR DARKNESS/LIGHTING FAILURE: When a game has been delayed for forty-five minutes, the game will be called.

- A game called before the completion of one inning will be rescheduled as a new game.
- A game called after 4 innings have been completed (3 ½ innings if home team is leading) is an official completed contest.
- A game called after the completion of one inning and before it is an official completed contest will be considered a suspended game. A suspended game shall be resumed at the exact point of suspension.
 - o *Prior to leaving the field of play, the coaches will verify the line ups, score and exact point at which play has been stopped (i.e. outs, balls and strikes batter, runners score, etc.) Any dispute should be referred to the league coordinator and/or Baseball Operations Committee for resolution.*
 - o *The line ups and batting order of the teams shall be the same as the moment of suspension. If player(s) present originally are absent when the suspended game is resumed their spots in the batting order will be skipped over with no penalty. Players absent originally, but present with the game is resumed, will be added to the end of the batting order.*
 - o *The league coordinator shall attempt to reschedule the suspended game at the time when the two teams will be playing each other again. The suspended game will be played prior to the regulation game or another suspended game. All pitching regulations will be determined by the week during which the suspended game is being resumed.*

IMMEDIATE CANCELLATIONS: These rules will not restrict the head coaches, umpires, and/or any Board member present at the field from immediately canceling play in order to ensure the safety of players, spectators, umpires, coaches and concession workers.