

WMLL Fall Ball Rules of Play (8.20.20)

Updates from summer ball highlighted in **yellow**

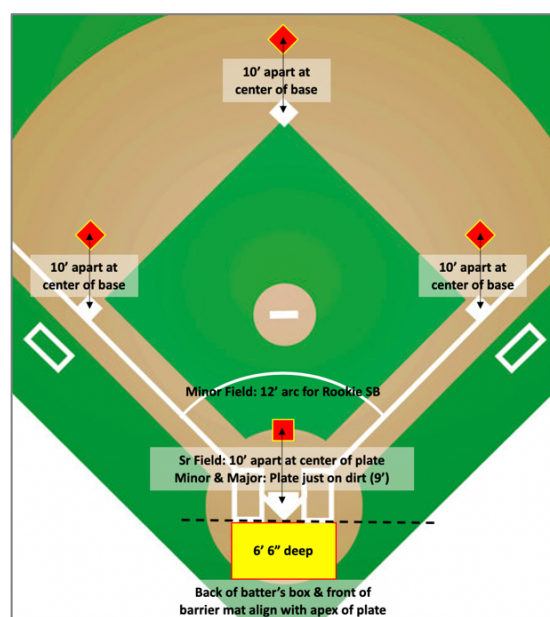
These modified rules of play are mandatory at WMLL scrimmages (& practices as applicable). These rules supplement & in any areas of conflict override both WMLL local rules & national Little League rules. All non-conflicting WMLL local rules & national Little League rules remain in effect. Note: Coaches must also understand & abide by all "WMLL Requirements for Spectators & Volunteers" (see separate document).

TEAM & PLAYERS

- **Teams & Squads:** No WMLL team may have more than 25 players. Teams may elect to break their players into two squads in a fixed manner for all scrimmages or via temporary assignments for individual scrimmages.
- **Approved Players:** All scrimmages & practices are limited to players assigned to the team involved.
- **No Replacement Players:** Replacement players from other teams may NOT be used under any circumstances.
- **No Forfeits:** There will be no forfeited scrimmages. Coaches should consider distributing players across squads if there is a significant imbalance in attendance.

FIELD LAYOUT

- **Bases:** Fields will be modified by the addition of a second set of bases/home plate placed 10-feet straight out from the standard base locations.
 - **Standard Bases:** The standard bases are for use by the offensive squad at all times and for establishing foul lines. Pitchers pitch to the batter at the standard home plate.
 - **Additional Bases:** The defensive squad will use the added set of bases for defensive force outs at all times.
- **Batter/Catcher Barrier:** The batter's box will be shortened so that the back edge lines up with the back of the standard home plate. A flat barrier mat will be placed between the back of the batter's box and the front of the "catcher's box". The batter must stay in front of and the catcher behind this area at all times.
- **Expanded Dugout:** The expanded dugout consists of one dugout and a delineated adjacent area outside the fence with marked player drop spots at least six feet apart. Only players, coaches and approved volunteers are allowed in the squad-only zone.
 - **"Player Drop" Spots:** Players will be assigned a designated & marked "player drop" spot that they must stay at when their squad is on offense unless the head coach permits them to leave. Each player must keep all individual equipment, including water bottle, helmet, bat & mitt, at his/her assigned spot.
 - **Dugouts:** Dugouts should only be used for team equipment storage & by coaches, on-deck / in-the-hole batters, by catcher's putting on & removing catcher's gear (of that is preferred to the catcher's "player drop" spot)



TIME LIMITS & WARMUPS

All scrimmages are limited to 6-innings with two types of time limits that are based on the scheduled start time. Time-limited scrimmages can end in a tie.

- **"No New Inning" Time Limit:** No new inning may begin after this time limit is reached.
 - **Rookie Lgs = 1 hr, 30 min**
 - **Minor & Major Lgs = 1 hr, 40 min**
 - **Junior & Senior Lgs = 1 hr, 50 min**

An inning starts when the last out of the prior inning is made. If an inning starts prior to the "no new inning" time limit expiring, that inning may be completed unless the scrimmage ends because the home team takes the lead or the "hard" time limit is reached.
- **"Hard" Time Limit:** When this time limit is reached, the scrimmage ends immediately after the current batter finishes their at bat.
 - **Rookie Lgs = 1 hr, 40 min**
 - **Minor & Major Lgs = 1 hr, 50 min**
 - **Junior & Senior Lgs = 2 hr**

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 scrimmage during their at-bat (after being behind at the end of the last complete inning). In this case the scrimmage ends in a tie.

- **No Batting Practice, Off-Field Warmups or Infield Practice:** Pre-scrimmage batting practice, off-field warmups, & infield practice are not allowed. Players are allowed to warm-up in the outfield before their scrimmage as time permits.

BATTING

- **Batters:** The batter must remain in front of the batter/catcher barrier at all times & must back out of the box after each pitch to create a clear lane for the catcher's return throw to the pitcher.
- **On-Deck / In-the-Hole Batters:** The on-deck batter (in-the-hole batter in the Jr & Sr Lgs), should move to the end of the dugout so that they can advance to the plate (on deck circle in the Jr & Sr Lgs) without delay
- **No Dropped Third Strike:** Batters are out after being thrown three strikes & may not attempt to advance to first base on a dropped third strike.
- **No Bunting:** Bunting is not allowed.
- **Bat Storage / Retrieval:** In Rookie, Minor & Major Lg BB & all SB, bat racks have been moved near the backstop. Players will get their bat on the way to the plate. If they are not able to return their own bat to the rack, the plate monitor (or a coach) will do so. In Junior & Senior Lg BB, bats will be handled as usual.

BASERUNNING

- **Offensive Bases:** The offensive squad will use the standard set of bases at all times.
- **Advancing Base:** Once a runner advances halfway to a base, he/she is committed & must continue to that base (& may not return to the previous base).
- **Leaving Base:**
 - **In Rookie, Minor & Major Lg BB & all SB:** Runners may not leave the base until the ball crosses the plate. Players detected leaving early will be called out.
 - **In Junior & Senior Lg BB:** Runners can take a four-step lead of no more than eight feet.
- **Arriving at a Base:** Sliding is permitted, but not required as there are no tag plays. Headfirst sliding when advancing is prohibited with the penalty of the offender being called out.
- **Stealing - Baseball:** Stealing is not allowed.
- **Stealing - Softball:**
 - **Stealing:** Except in the Rookie League, runners may attempt to steal second or third base when a pitch is made. When doing so, the runner must continue on to the base they are trying to steal (& may not return to the previous base) once he/she advances halfway.
 - **Putting Out a Stealing Runner:** If a defensive player (usually the pitcher) with the ball touches the pitching rubber before the leading committed stealing runner reaches the base they are trying to steal, the runner will be ruled out. If there are two runners stealing, the lead runner is the only runner that may be put out.

DEFENSE

- **Defensive Bases:** The defensive squad will use the added set of bases for defensive force outs but will use the standard home plate when pitching to the batter. Fouls lines are established by the standard bases.
- **Putting Out Runners:**
 - **Standard Force Outs:** Force plays in front of & behind runners can be made per standard rule.
 - **Force in Lieu of Tag Out:** In place of a tag play, if a defensive player with the ball touches the corresponding defensive base before a committed advancing runner reaches the offensive base, the runner will be ruled out.
 - *Once a runner advances halfway to a base, he/she is committed & must continue on to that base (& may not return to the previous base).*
- **Catchers**
 - **Rookie Lg:** Catchers will not be used. The plate monitor/retriever will retrieve balls & return them to the pitcher - either individually as they are pitched or after a quantity is collected in a bucket.
 - **Minor, Major, Junior & Senior Lgs:** When receiving pitches & throwing balls back to the pitcher, the catcher must stay behind the batter/catcher barrier at all times. The catcher may only cross over the barrier to be prepared to make a play during a live ball when the batter is clear of the batter's box.
 - *In order to keep the scrimmage moving, coaches may have the plate monitor handle balls that get passed the catcher (unless stealing is allowed).*

SAFETY STOPS

A number of safety stops / player freezes have been created to help maintain physical distancing on the playing field. Umpires, offensive players and defensive players all have the responsibility and authority to trigger a safety stop. Whenever a safety stop occurs, umpires will determine how to call the play – safe, out, do over, etc. If there is any uncertainty about the correct call, a do over should be implemented.

- **Dead Ball:** Umpires must call a play dead / player freeze whenever they anticipate that the developing play could result in two or more players breaking physical distancing requirements or potentially creating any other unsafe condition.
- **Defensive Player Freeze (Expanded Interference):** A runner must stay six feet away from a defensive player in the act of fielding a batted ball.
 - *If a defensive player in the act of fielding a batted ball must stop or yield right of way to the runner, the defensive player should raise their hand as a signal to the umpires. If the umpire believes (expanded) interference occurred, the runner will be called out.*
- **Offensive Player Freeze (Expanded Obstruction):** A defensive player not in the act of fielding a batted ball must stay six feet away from all baserunners – both along the base path and around all offensive bases.
 - *If a runner must stop or yield right of way to the defensive player, the runner should raise their hand as a signal to the umpires. If the umpire believes (expanded) obstruction occurred, all runners will be awarded the bases that the umpire judges they would have reached had there been no obstruction.*

HYGIENE

- **Face Coverings/Masks:** Players may wear a face covering/mask at the discretion of their parent(s) or guardian(s). When wearing a face covering/mask, individuals must still keep six feet between themselves and others. The face covering/mask is NOT a substitute for social distancing.
- **Food & Snacks:** Food and snacks (including sunflower seeds and gum) & spitting are not permitted in the squad-only zone or the playing field.
- **Hand Sanitizing:** Coaches & players must sanitize their hands as follows at a minimum. When using sanitizer, individuals should cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry
 - **Scrimmages:** Once every inning of play
 - **Practices:** During regular hand-sanitizing breaks made mandatory by coaches
 - **Shared Bats:** Before & after using a shared bat.
- **Celebrations:** Handshakes, high fives, fist bumps, elbow bumps, chest bumps, and all other celebrations by pairs or groups are not allowed.
- **Post-Scrimmage “Handshake”:** After scrimmages, squads will not shake hands. Instead they will line up outside their dugout spaced six feet apart and tip their caps or wave to the opposing squad as a sign of good sportsmanship.
- **Post Scrimmage Cleanup:** After every scrimmage, every player must clean up their assigned “player drop” spot & the coaches must clean up the dugout & make sure that the entire squad-only zone is left clean.

EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

- **Mandatory Personal Gear:** Each player is required to have their own **water bottle** & their own batting helmet. **Batting helmets** must have a facemask in Rookie BB & SB, Minor BB & SB and Major SB.
Note: Members of the same household may share equipment. If needed, WMLL will arrange to provide a loaner helmet to players for the summer season.
- **Optional Personal Gear:** While optional, if a player elects to use batting gloves, body protective gear, a softball face mask or a storage bag, they are required to have their own. *Members of the same household may share equipment.*
- **Bats:** Bats may be shared, but any player using a shared bat must sanitize their hands before & after using it.
- **Catcher’s Gear:** Players may use WMLL-provided or their own catcher’s gear. In either case, catcher’s gear may not be shared between players within any practice or scrimmage.
Note: Before catcher’s gear worn by one player in a practice may be used by another player in another practice or scrimmage, the gear must either be cleaned and disinfected or set aside for at least 72 hours. If needed, WMLL will arrange to provide squad’s with additional sets of catcher’s gear for the summer season