

Tournament Playing Rules

Tournament Playing Rules

The Little League, Junior League, and Senior League Softball Playing Rules shall govern tournament play except as noted below:

- 1. SOFTBALLS:** Softballs meeting Little League specifications for a 12-inch softball shall be used in **9- to 11-Year-Old Division, Little League, Junior League, and Senior League** play. The 11-inch softball shall be used in the **8- to 10-Year Old Division**.

NOTE: Specific softball models for tournament play can be found at LittleLeague.org/TournamentBalls.

- 2. FIELDS:** All fields are considered neutral. The home team shall be determined by the toss of a coin, the winner having the choice. The official pitching distance shall be

(1) **8- to 10-Year-Old Division:** 35 feet;

(2) **9- to 11-Year-Old Division and Little League (Majors):** 40 feet; and

(3) **Junior/Senior League:** 43 feet.

- 3. PLAYING RULES:** A copy of the Little League Regulations and Playing Rules and the Tournament Rules and Guidelines or access to the Little League Rulebook App must be available at each tournament site and at the time the game is to be played. This is the responsibility of the Tournament Director. Written ground rules established by the Tournament Director or assistant must be reviewed with both managers and the Umpire-in-Chief at least ten (10) minutes before the start of the game. It is suggested the same be available to news media if requested.

- 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 "slap" or "slap 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 eight foot circle or the catcher leaves the catcher's

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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. No pitch has to be thrown, the ball is dead, and no runners may advance.

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.

- b. In all Tournament levels and divisions, the penalty for use of an illegal bat [see [Rule 6.06\(d\)](#)], if discovered before the next player enters the batter's box following the turn at bat of the player who used an illegal bat, is:
 - i. The batter is out. The ball is dead and runners must return if they advanced on the play (**NOTE:** The manager of the defense may advise the plate umpire of a decision to decline this portion of the penalty and accept the play. Such election shall be made immediately at the end of the play), and;
 - ii. The manager of the team will be ejected from the game, the batter who violated the rule will be ejected from the game, and the offensive team will lose one eligible adult base coach for the duration of the game.
- c. **9- to 11-Year-Old Division:** The batter may advance on an uncaught third strike ([6.05/6.09](#)). This rule will not apply for the **8- to 10-Year-Old Division**.
- d. **9- to 11-Year-Old Division:** Base runner(s) must maintain contact with the base in which they are entitled until the ball has been released by the pitcher on delivery [[\(7.08\(a\)\(5\)\)](#)]. **8- to 10-Year-Old Division:** Base runner(s) must maintain contact with the base in which they are entitled until the ball has been batted or reaches the batter [[\(7.08\(a\)\(5\)\)](#)].
- e. **8- to 10-Year-Old, 9- to 11-Year-Old, Little League, and Junior League:**
COURTESY RUNNER: A tournament team may permit a "courtesy runner" for the catcher and/or pitcher of record when there are two (2) outs. Utilizing continuous batting order, 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.

Senior Division: 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

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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. **NOTE:** Both the DP/Flex are considered to be in the batting order and therefore not eligible to be used as a Special Pinch Runner.

A.R. - The courtesy runner must always be the player in the batting order who made the last out. If a team chooses to use a courtesy runner and the player who made the last out is the pitcher or catcher of record, that pitcher or catcher of record must be used as the courtesy runner. A team may not skip the pitcher or catcher of record if that pitcher or catcher of record made the last out and is therefore due to be the courtesy runner.

A.R. - If the pitcher and catcher of record are on base with two outs, the offense may use a courtesy runner for both the pitcher and catcher of record at the same time. The offense shall place the courtesy runners in order on the bases. **EXAMPLE:** With two outs and the pitcher at second base and the catcher at third base, the offense wishes to use courtesy runners for both the pitcher and catcher of record. The offense will use the player who made the second out of the inning as the courtesy runner for the pitcher of record at second base and the player who made the first out of the inning as the courtesy runner for the catcher of record at third base.

- f. 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, the team manager and those responsible including any player(s) and/or coach(es) shall be warned after the first offense. Those responsible including any player(s), coach(es), and/or manager shall be ejected from the game for a team's subsequent offense.
- g. Managers or coaches are not permitted to warm up a pitcher at home plate or in the bullpen or elsewhere at any time. They may stand by to observe a pitcher

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during warm-up in the bullpen.

- h. Umpires are not required to inspect equipment prior to the start of the game. The managers of both teams will confirm with the umpire(s) at the plate conference that all equipment is proper and legal according to Little League Rules. **PENALTY:** If illegal equipment is used during the game, the manager of the team will be removed for the remainder of the International Tournament, the player who used the illegal equipment will be ejected from the game.

4. PITCHING RULES – LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL, 8- TO 10-YEAR-OLD SOFTBALL, AND 9- TO 11-YEAR-OLD DIVISION

These rules replace the regular season pitching regulations. *Violation of these pitching rules is subject to protest and action by the Tournament Committee in Williamsport if protested or brought to the Tournament Committee's attention.*

- a. Any player on a tournament team may pitch. (**NOTE:** There is no limit to the number of eligible pitchers a tournament team may use in a game.)
- b. A Tournament pitcher may not pitch in regular season or Special Games while the team the player is a member of is still participating in the Tournament.
- c. Delivery of a single pitch constitutes having pitched an inning.
- d. A pitcher removed from the circle or withdrawn from the game defensively can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once in the same inning as he/she was removed.
- e. One (1) calendar day of rest must be observed following regular season or Special Games play, and between levels of Tournament Play if a player pitches seven (7) or more innings in a calendar day.
- f. A player may not pitch in more than twelve (12) innings in a day.
- g. If a player pitches in less than seven (7) innings in a calendar day, no rest is required.
- h. If a player pitches in seven (7) or more innings in a calendar day, one day's rest is required. This also applies between regular season games following Tournament elimination or Special Games following the Tournament.

EXAMPLE 1: A player may pitch on Saturday in regular season play then, after one (1) calendar day's rest, pitch again in the next level of tournament play on Monday.

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EXAMPLE 2: A player may pitch on Saturday in the final district game then, after one (1) calendar day's rest, pitch again in the next level of tournament play on Monday.

EXCEPTIONS:

- (1) A player may pitch on consecutive calendar days if less than seven (7) innings were pitched in the previous calendar day.
 - (2) In a game suspended by darkness, weather or other causes and resumed the following calendar day, the pitchers of record at the time the game was halted may continue to pitch to the extent of the remaining eligibility that pitcher would have had during the previous day. However, in no event shall any pitcher pitch more than twelve (12) innings in any game.
- i. Failure to remove a pitcher who has reached his/her maximum number of innings pitched or use of an ineligible pitcher is basis for protest. Violations protested or brought to the Tournament Committee's attention, shall result (by action of the Tournament Committee) in the suspension of the team's manager for the next two scheduled tournament games, even if those games are played at the next tournament level. Additional penalties (up to and including forfeiture of a game and/or disqualification of the team, managers, or coaches from further tournament participation) may be imposed if, in the opinion of the Tournament Committee:
1. a manager or coach takes any action that results in making a travesty of the game or;
 2. a team fails to meet the requirements of this rule more than once during the International Tournament, which begins with District play and ends at the World Series level (State level for 8- to 10- and 9- to 11-), or;
 3. a manager willfully and knowingly disregards the requirements of this rule. A manager or coach suspended for any reason is not permitted to be at the game site and must not take any part in the game, nor have any communications whatsoever with any persons at the game site.

This includes pregame and postgame activities. Violation may result, by action of the Tournament Committee, in further suspension; forfeiture of a game; and/or disqualification of the team, managers, or coaches from further tournament participation.

JUNIOR/SENIOR LEAGUE

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- a. Any player on a tournament team may pitch. (**NOTE:** There is no limit to the number of eligible pitchers a tournament team may use in a game.)
 - b. A Tournament pitcher may not pitch in regular season or Special Games while the team is still participating in the Tournament.
 - c. A pitcher removed from the circle or withdrawn from the game defensively can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once in the same inning as he/she was removed. A pitcher may be withdrawn from the game, **Senior:** 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). **Penalty:** See [Rule 10\(f\)](#).
 - d. No pitching restrictions apply.
5. **FORFEITS:** No game may be forfeited or a team disqualified without the authorization of the Tournament Committee. Violations which may result in forfeiture or disqualification must be reported immediately to the Regional Director before further play takes place which would involve a team or teams affected by such action.
 6. **BENCH/DUGOUT:** No one except the players, manager, and coach(es) shall occupy the bench or dugout during a game. Base coaches may be players or adults. Two (2) adult base coaches are permitted at all levels subject to [playing rule 4.05\(b\)](#).
 7. **VISITS:** A manager or coach may not leave a dugout for any reason during a game without receiving permission from an umpire. The manager or coach may be removed from the field for the remainder of the game for violation of this rule. When permission is granted the manager or coach will be permitted to go to the pitcher's circle to confer with the pitcher or any defensive player(s). A manager or coach who is granted a time out to talk to any defensive player will be charged with a visit to the pitcher.

9- to 11-Year-Old Division, Little League, Junior League, and Senior League: A manager or coach may come out once in one inning to visit with the pitcher, but the second time out, the player must be removed as a pitcher. The manager or coach may come out twice in a game to visit with the pitcher, but the third time out, the player must be removed as a pitcher. The rule applies to each pitcher who enters a game.

8- to 10-Year-Old Division: A manager or coach may come out twice in one inning to visit with the pitcher, but the third time out, the player must be removed as a pitcher. The manager or coach may come out three times in a game to visit with the pitcher,

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but the fourth time out, the player must be removed as a pitcher. The rule applies to each pitcher who enters a game.

NOTE: Only one offensive time-out will be permitted each inning.

8. **INJURY/ILLNESS:** If a player is injured or becomes ill during a game, the decision of a doctor (if present) or medical personnel will be final as to whether or not the player may continue in the game.
9. **MANDATORY PLAY – CONTINUOUS BATTING ORDER: 8- to 10-Year-Old, 9- to 11-Year-Old, Little League, and Junior League:** All Tournament Teams must adopt a policy of a continuous batting order that will include all players on the team affidavit present at the start of the game, to appear in the batting order. Each player is required to bat in his/her respective spot in the batting order.
 - a. A player may be entered and/or re-entered defensively in the game at any time. Tournament Rule 4 provisions apply: **8-to10-Year Old Division, 9-to11-Year Old Division, Little League [Tournament Rule 4 (d)]:** A pitcher removed from the circle or withdrawn from the game defensively can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once in the same inning as he/she was removed. **Junior League, Senior League [Tournament Rule 4 (c)]:** A pitcher removed from the circle or withdrawn from the game defensively can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once in the same inning as he/she was removed. **Senior:** 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). Penalty: See Rule 10 (f).
 - b. If a player is injured, becomes ill, or must leave the game site after the start of the game, the team will skip over him/her when his/her time at bat comes up without penalty. If the injured, ill, or absent player returns, he/she is merely inserted into their original spot in the batting order and the game continues. Also, if a player arrives later to a game site, if the manager chooses to enter him/her in the lineup (see Rule 4.01 NOTE 2), he/she would be added to the end of the current lineup.
 - c. An improper batter will be considered as batting out of turn (see Rule 6.07).
 - d. If a player is unable to complete a plate appearance due to injury, illness or ejection, the next batter in the lineup shall take his/her place at the plate and assume the count of the original batter.
 - e. If a batter becomes a runner by reaching base safely and is unable to run the

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bases due to injury, illness, or ejection, he/she shall be replaced by the player who recorded the last out or with a Courtesy Runner if applicable (see Tournament Rule 3 (d) Courtesy Runner).

- f. There is no exception to this rule. This rule does not apply to Senior Divisions of play.

NOTE: The rule replaces **Regulation IV (i)** and **Rule 3.03**.

- g. Managers are solely responsible for ensuring that all players fulfill the requirements of playing participation.
- h. The Tournament Committee reserves the right to impose penalties (including, but not limited to removal of the manager, forfeiture of a game, and/or disqualification of the team or coaches from further tournament participation) may be imposed if, in the opinion of the Tournament Committee:
 - 1. if a manager or coach takes any action that results in making a travesty of the game, causing players to intentionally perform poorly for the purpose of extending or shortening a game, or;
 - 2. a team fails to meet the requirements of this rule more than once during the International Tournament, which begins with District play and ends at the World Series level (State level for 8-to-10- and 9-to-11-Year-Old Divisions), or;
 - 3. a manager willfully and knowingly disregards this rule.

For more information and frequently asked questions on Tournament Mandatory Play visit: LittleLeague.org/MandatoryPlay.

10. SUBSTITUTIONS/RE-ENTRY: This tournament rule replaces regular season [Rule 3.03](#) (re-entry) for all levels of tournament play.

- a. If illness, injury, or the ejection of a player prevents a team from fielding nine (9) players, a player previously used in the lineup may be inserted, but only if there are no other eligible substitutes available. The opposing team manager shall select the player to re-enter the lineup. A player ejected from the game is not eligible for re-entry.
- b. **Senior League Only:** Any player who has been removed for a substitute may re-enter the game in the **SAME** position in the batting order.
- c. 8 to 10 Year Old Division, 9-to-11-Year Old Division, Little League [Tournament Rule 4 (d)]: A pitcher removed from the circle or withdrawn from the game

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defensively can return as pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once in the same inning as he/she was removed.

Junior League, Senior League [Tournament Rule 4 (c)]: A pitcher removed from the circle or withdrawn from the game defensively can return as pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once in the same inning as he/she was removed. Senior: 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) in their applicable division.

- d. Defensive substitutions must be made while the team is on defense. **Senior League Only:** Offensive substitutions must be made at the time the offensive player has her/his turn at bat or is on base.
- e. A starter and her/his substitute must not be in the lineup at the same time, except as provided in [Rule 10\(a\)](#).
- f. **8- to 10-, 9- to 11-, 10- to 12-, and Junior League:** Mandatory Play improper substitutions [see Tournament Rule 9], if discovered, shall be dealt with as a “Batting Out of Order.” See Rule 6.07. **Senior League Only:** Improper substitution is a basis for protest. Protests involving improper substitution not resolved before the next pitch or play shall not be considered. **Junior/Senior League:** Ineligible pitcher under 1) a Tournament player pitches during the regular season or special games concurrently; 2) a pitcher, starter or substitute, violates substitution or 3) a pitcher moves to another defensive position twice and then returns as pitcher twice in the same inning, will be considered an improper substitution.
- g. [Tournament Rule 3\(e\)](#) will replace [Rule 7.14](#), as the Courtesy Pinch Runner (8- to 10-Year Old, 9- to 11-Year-Old, Little League, Junior League) and Special Pinch Runner (Senior League) rule.
- h. **Senior League Only:** Rule 3.03, Designated Player (DP)/Flex, WILL apply during the tournament.
- i. **Senior League:** Any player in the starting lineup, including the Designated Player (DP)/Flex, who has been removed for a substitute may re-enter the game ONCE, provided such player occupies the same batting position as he or she did in the starting lineup. A substitute (non-starter) may not re-enter the game in any position once they are removed from the lineup.

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- 11. SUSPENDED GAMES:** Any game in which a winner cannot be determined in accordance with the playing rules shall be resumed from the exact point at which it was suspended regardless of the number of innings played. Incomplete (not regulation) or tie games are considered suspended games.

NOTE: A contest decided by forfeit does not constitute a “game” for the purposes of this rule, unless one complete inning was physically played before the game was forfeited. (Forfeits are only by decree of the Tournament Committee in Williamsport.)

- 12. RUN RULE:** If at the end of three (3) innings (**Junior/Senior League:** four innings), two and one-half innings (**Junior/Senior League:** three 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.

NOTE 1: If the visiting team has a lead of fifteen (15) or ten (10) or more runs respectively, the home team must bat in its half of the inning.

NOTE 2: A game determined by the 15-run or 10-run rule, shall be considered a regulation game.

NOTE 3: There is no 8-run rule in Tournament Play, as outlined in Rule 4.10(e) for Regular Season only.

- 13. REGULATION GAME:** Each tournament game must be played to the point of being an official game:
- a. Regulation games are of four or more innings (five or more innings in **Junior/Senior League**) in which one team has scored more runs than the other [three and one-half (3½) if the home team is ahead or four and one-half (4½) if the home team is ahead in **Junior/Senior League**].
 - b. Regulation games (when a winner can be determined) terminated because of weather, darkness, or curfew must be resumed if the visiting team ties the game or takes the lead in its half of the inning and the home team does not complete its at bat or take the lead in an incomplete inning. This does not apply to games suspended or delayed by weather that may still be resumed before darkness or curfew (as defined in Tournament Rules and Guidelines – Curfew) on the same day.

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- c. If two games are scheduled for the same site, no “time limit” may be imposed on the first game.
14. **TIE GAME:** When the completion of six innings (Junior/Senior League: seven innings), and the score is tied, starting in the top of the seventh inning (Junior/Senior League: eighth inning), and each half inning thereafter, the offensive team shall begin its turn at bat with the player who is scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning being placed on second base. **EXAMPLE:** If the number five batter is the lead-off batter, the number four batter in the batting order will be placed on second base. An eligible substitute or special pinch runner may be inserted for the runner.
15. **REPLAYING GAMES:** No tournament game may be replayed without specific approval from the Tournament Committee at Williamsport.
16. **UNAUTHORIZED AGREEMENTS:** No agreements shall be made between managers, and/or Tournament Directors, and/or umpires contrary to Tournament Rules.
17. **ALTERCATIONS:** 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. The Tournament Director shall refer all incidents to the Tournament Committee who may impose additional penalties and/or actions towards individuals and/or teams up to and including forfeiture of a game, further suspension and/or disqualification.

18. **EJECTIONS:** Any manager, coach, or player ejected from a game will be suspended for the next physically played game (See [Rule 4.07](#)). This includes pregame and postgame activities. Ejections shall be noted in the tournament team’s eligibility affidavit in the Record of Ejections on page 4. Entry should include member’s name and date ejected and signed by the Tournament Director or District Administrator.