

Little League Baseball and Softball

2025 Rule Changes

Baseball and Softball

Regulations

Regulation I(c): Updates made to Regulation 1(c) 8 & 9 to require all background checks to be conducted through J.D. Palatine (JDP), with no other providers being accepted.

Regulation I(c): Updates made to Regulation 1(c) 10 to require all individuals who complete the volunteer application to complete the required annual abuse awareness training through the Little League Abuse Awareness Course, available at LittleLeague.org/AbuseAwareness.

- Please note that the Child Protection Program has been updated for the 2025 season.
- Please review all updates at LittleLeague.org/ChildProtection.

Regulation II: Updates made to Regulation II to reflect that starting with the 2025 season, children at the youngest level of the program (league age 4-7) will have the ability to register for any program they register under this option will also be fully eligible to participate in all aspects of league play, including International Tournament play, for the duration of their Little League careers provided they have continuous and unbroken participation within the specific league where initially registered and provided all other participation eligibility requirements have been met.

- Additional information regarding this change may be found at LittleLeague.org/2025Registration.

Regulation IV(i): Mandatory Play for Senior League: Eliminates Mandatory Play for the Senior League Division only.

Softball

Regulation VI(d): removes the restriction on the number of pitchers that a team can use in one game in the Little League (Major), Junior, and Senior League Divisions.

Significant Rule Changes (Summary)

Regular Season Changes

Baseball and Softball

Rule 1.10 – A.R. 2 – Alterations or Modifications made to the Bat: Clarifies that products, such as, but not limited to, choke-knobs, choke-up assists, or thumb protectors are considered alterations to the bat and are not permitted.

Rule 1.11 (a)(3) – Neoprene Sleeves: Permits neoprene sleeves to be worn without being covered by an undershirt, provided the neoprene sleeve is a solid color and not white or gray.

Rule 1.11 (j) – Jewelry: Removed Rule 1.11 (j) to remove the requirement that jewelry, other than medical alert, should be removed, permitting jewelry to be worn.

Rule 1.16 – Helmet Stickers: Permits the use of helmet stickers or decals, provided that such usage is not excessive.

Rule 2.00 – At-Bat (Note 1 and Note 2): Clarifies that when using the continuous batting order, players do not need to meet the running portion of the mandatory play.

Rule 2.00 – Courtesy Runner, Rule 3.04, Rule 7.14(b), and Tournament Rule 3(d): This change provides clarifications for using a courtesy runner with both the traditional batting order and the continuous batting order. It also clarifies that when using the continuous batting order, the offense may use a courtesy runner for both the pitcher and catcher of record at the same time when there are two outs.

Rule 3.01 – Pregame Equipment Inspection: Removes the requirement for umpires to check equipment prior to the start of the game by placing responsibility for legal and proper equipment on the manager.

Regulation VI(b), Rule 3.03(c), 8.06(b)-Note Tournament Rule 4(c), Tournament Rule 9(a), and Tournament Rule 10(h) – Pitchers Moving to a different defensive position once removed from the mound: Provide consistency and clarification in the working that a pitcher, in the Intermediate (50/70) division/Junior/Senior Baseball, remaining on defense in the game but moving to a different position, can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once per game. To return as pitcher, once removed from the mound, the player must remain in the game defensively.

Rule 3.17 – Electronic Devices: this change permits a team to use one-way communication to the catcher while the team is on defense.

Rule 7.15(g) – Procedures for the use of a double first base. Makes the working of 7.15(g) consistent with the wording provided in the Softball Rulebook for the same rule.

Softball

Rule 8.02 (a)(1)- Approved Substances on the Pitching Hand or Fingers: Clarifies non-approved substances on the pitching hand or fingers versus the use of approved substances under the judgment of the umpire.

Tournament Rule Changes

Tournament Rule 3 – Playing Rules (Pregame Equipment Inspection): Removes the requirement for umpires to check equipment prior to the start of the game by placing responsibility for legal and proper equipment on the manager.

Baseball

Tournament Rule 14 – Tie Game: This change eliminates playing the seventh inning (Intermediate (50/70)/Junior/Senior League): eighth inning) by placing the player who is scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning on second base to begin each extra inning.

Softball

Tournament Rule 14 – Tie Game: This change eliminates playing the seventh inning (Junior/Senior League: eighth inning) as normal. Now, the tiebreaker will begin immediately in the seventh inning (Junior/Senior: eighth inning) by placing the player who is scheduled to bat last in that respective half inning on second base to begin each extra inning.

Regular Season Rule Changes

Baseball and Softball

Rule – 1.10

A.R. 2 – No bat, in any level of Little League Baseball or Softball play, is permitted to be altered. Products such as, but not limited to, choke-knobs, choke-up assists, or thumb protectors are considered alterations or modifications to the bat and are not permitted.

Baseball and Softball

Rule – 1.11

(a) (3) - Any part of the pitcher's undershirt or T-shirt exposed to view shall be of a solid color. The pitcher's undershirt sleeves, if exposed, shall not be white or gray. Neoprene sleeves may be worn by the pitcher and do not need to be covered by an undershirt, provided the neoprene sleeve is one solid color and is not white or grey. The use of play calling bands by defensive players is permitted under the following conditions:

(j) - Any jewelry worn by a player that poses harm to injury will be subject to removal. This rule applies regardless of the composition of such jewelry, hard cosmetic item, or hard decorative item. Hard items to control the hair, such as beads, are permitted.

EXCEPTION: Jewelry that alerts medical personnel to a specific condition is permissible.

Softball

(c) - Pitchers shall not wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist, or arm. A pitcher may wear items on the glove hand, wrist, or arm (non-pitching arm) of a solid single color: black, white, gray, or a uniform color. (EXAMPLE: Play-calling wrist band.) A pitcher shall not wear any items on his/her hands, wrists, or arms which the umpire may judge to be distracting. [See also Rule 1.11(j).] EXCEPTION: A pitcher may wear a compression sleeve on the pitching arm of a solid, single color: black, white, gray, or a uniform color, provided it is not the same color as the ball being used in the game.

Baseball and Softball

Rule – 1.16

Each league shall provide in the dugout or bench of the offensive team six (6) [seven (7) for Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League] protective helmets which must meet NOCSAE (National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment) specifications and standards. Use of the helmet by the batter, all base runners, and base coaches is mandatory. Use of a helmet by an adult base coach or any defensive player is optional. Each helmet shall have an exterior warning label. Helmets must have a non-glare surface and cannot be mirror-like in nature. Each helmet must meet NOCSAE specifications and bear the NOCSAE stamp as well as an exterior warning label as noted above. Warning! Altering the helmet in any form, including painting or adding decals (by anyone other than the manufacturer or authorized dealer) may void the helmet warranty and/or NOCSAE certification. Helmets may not be re-painted and may not contain tape. Little League recommends that no alternations be made to any type of helmet.

Rule 2.00

Baseball and Softball

An AT-BAT, for the purposes of meeting the requirements of Mandatory Play when using the traditional batting order (if applicable), is when a player assumes the position of a batter with no count and one of the following occurs:

He/she is retired as a batter; or
He/she is retired as a batter-runner; or
He/she reaches base and scores; or
After he/she reaches base, the inning or game ends

APPROVED RULING: While at-bat, if the third out of the half-inning is recorded by putting out another base-runner prior to the occurrence of any of the above, that batter must return as the first batter in the next half-inning.

NOTE 1: For the purpose of satisfying the requirements of Mandatory Play when using the traditional batting order, when appearing offensively for the first time in the game, a player must remain in the game until one of the following occurs:

He/She is retired as a batter; or
He/She is retired as a batter-runner; or
He/She reaches base and scores: or
After he/she reaches base, the inning or game ends.

NOTE 2: Does not apply in Tournament Play or anytime the continuous batting order is used.

Baseball and Softball

COURTESY RUNNER is a player not currently in the batting order who may become a base runner for the pitcher and/or catcher of record provided there are two (2) outs in the half inning. See Rules 3.04 and 7.14(b) for conditions if adopted by the local league during the regular season only.

NOTE 1: When using the traditional batting order, a player may not be used as a courtesy runner more than once in a game.

NOTE 2: 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.

Baseball and Softball

Rule 3.01 – Before the game begins the umpires shall –

(a) - require strict observance of all rules governing team personnel, implements of play, and confirm with the managers of both teams at the plate conference that all equipment is proper and legal for play according to Little League rules.

NOTE: Umpires are not required to inspect equipment prior to the start of the game. The manager of each team is responsible for ensuring that all equipment is legal and proper for play according to Little League rules. PENALTY: If illegal equipment is used during the game, the manager of the team will be ejected from the game and the player who used the illegal equipment will also be ejected from the game. Both the manager and the player who used the illegal equipment will be suspended for their team's next physically played game and may not be in attendance at the game site. This includes pregame and postgame activities.

Baseball and Softball

Rule 3.17

Players and substitutes shall sit on their team's bench or in the dugout unless participating in the game or preparing to enter the game. No one except eligible players in uniform, a manager, and not more than two coaches (Tee Ball/Minor League Instructional Division: three coaches) shall occupy the bench or dugout. When batters or base runners are retired, they must return to the bench or dugout at once. Batboys and/or batgirls are not permitted. The use of electronic communication equipment during the game is restricted. No team shall use electronic communication equipment, including walkie-talkies, cellular telephones, etc., for any communication with on-field personnel including those in the dugout, bullpen, or field.

EXCEPTION: A manager or coach is permitted to use one-way electronic devices from the dugout to the catcher while the team is on defense for the purpose of calling pitches. A manager or coach is prohibited from using the device to communicate with any other team member while on defense or any team member (including a manager or coach) while on offense, and a manager or coach shall not use the device outside the dugout/bench area.

PENALTY: If, in the umpire's judgment, any player, manager, or coach uses an electronic communications device during the game, the penalty is ejection from the game.

NOTE: A manager or coach is permitted to use a rulebook, scorekeeping, and/or pitch-counting application on an electronic device without penalty, provided such device is not used to receive messages of any sort.

Baseball

Rule 7.15 (g)

In Majors, Intermediate (50-70) Division, Junior, and Senior League divisions, when the batter becomes a runner on a third strike not caught by the catcher, the batter-runner and the defensive player may use either the colored (orange or green) or the white section to a:

(1) - On any force out attempt from the foul side of first base; or

(2) - On any errant throw pulling the defense off the base into foul territory; or

(3) - When the defensive player used the colored portion of the double base, the batter-runner can run in fair territory when the throw is coming from the foul side of first base, and if hit by the thrown ball, it is not interference. If intentional interference is ruled, the runner is out.

Softball

8.02 - The pitcher shall not –

(a) (1) - apply a foreign substance of any kind to the ball, pitching hand, or fingers. The pitcher may bring the hand in contact with the mouth or lips provided he/she distinctly wipes off the pitching hand before contacting the ball. Under the supervision of the umpire, powder rosin may be used to dry the hands.

NOTE 1: Pitchers may only use dirt, powdered rosin, or comparable drying agents that are listed on the USA Softball's certified equipment webpage to dry the hand.

NOTE 2: A pitcher may use a rosin bag for the purpose of applying rosin to the bare hand or hands. Neither the pitcher nor any other player shall dust the ball with the rosin bag; neither shall the pitcher nor any other player be permitted to apply rosin from the bag to their glove or dust any part of the uniform with the rosin bag.

PENALTY: Illegal Pitch – See 8.05(b).

(2) - wear a sweatband, bracelet, or similar type items on the wrist or forearm of the pitching arm. Items worn on the glove arm must be of a solid, single color: black, white, gray, or uniform color. See also Rule 1.15(c).

(3) - deface the ball in any manner;

(b) - intentionally delay the game by throwing the ball to players other than the catcher, when the batter is in position.

PENALTY: If, after a warning by the umpire, such delaying action is repeated, the pitcher can be removed from the game.

Baseball

Rule 8.06

This rule, which applies to each pitcher who enters a game, governs the visits of the manager or coach to the pitcher at the mound.

(a) - A manager or coach may come out once (Minor Division: twice) in one inning to visit with the pitcher, but the second time (Minor Division: third time) out, the player must be removed as a pitcher.

Example: If a manager visits Pitcher A once in the first inning, then makes a pitching change in the same inning, Pitcher B would be allowed one visit in that inning before being removed on the second visit.

(b) - A manager or coach may come out twice (Minor Division: three times) in one game to visit with the pitcher, but the third time (Minor Division: fourth time) out, the player must be removed as a pitcher.

Example: If a manager visits Pitcher A twice in the first three innings, then makes a pitching change in the fourth inning, Pitcher B would be allowed two visits in that game before being removed on the third visit, subject to the limits in (a) above.

NOTE: Intermediate (50/70) Division / Junior / Senior: A pitcher remaining in the game defensively, but moving to a different defensive position, can return as a pitcher anytime in the remainder of the game, but only once per game. If returning to the position of pitcher, they shall retain the number of visits from their previous appearance as pitcher. To calculate the number of visits for a pitcher, all visits, regardless of the pitcher being removed and returned to the pitcher's position, shall be applied.

(c) - A manager or coach may confer with any other player(s), including the catcher, during the visit with the pitcher. 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.

A.R. 1 – When a manager requests timeout to make a pitching change, it shall not be considered a visit to the pitcher provided the manager makes the pitching substitution prior to speaking to any defensive player. Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior: This applies when a pitcher moves to another position and returns as a pitcher later in the same game.

A.R. 2 – A conference with the pitcher or any other fielder to evaluate the player’s condition after an injury shall not be considered a visit for the purposes of this rule. The manager or coach should advise the umpire of such a conference, and the umpire should monitor the conference.

Tournament Rule Changes

Baseball and Softball

Rule 3. - PLAYING RULES:

g. - 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.

Baseball and Softball

Rule 14: Tie Game: when the completion of six innings (Intermediate (50/70) Division/Junior/Senior League: seven innings), and the score is tied, starting in the top of the seventh inning (Intermediate (50/70) Division/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.