

Majors Softball League Rules

4th/5th Grade

Updated 4/13/2024

Participating Leagues: Warren, Long Hill, Basking Ridge and Somerset Hills

Guiding Principle: The primary goal of this recreational league is to provide a good experience for all children. While making an effort to win games is part of that experience, winning is less important than being inclusive to all members of the team.

As a matter of policy, participants in this league shall abide by and adhere to the rules and regulations prescribed by Babe Ruth Softball. Babe Ruth Softball regulations and rules shall be found in the published pamphlet, Babe Ruth Softball Rules & Regulations ("Rulebook").

The Rulebook shall govern play organized by the League with the following exceptions, modifications or clarifications. There shall be no changes, modifications or alterations of these aforementioned rules without the specific and express action of the Warren Baseball and Softball, Inc. ("WBSI"), Long Hill Baseball and Softball Association ("LHBSA"), Ridge Youth Sports Inc (RYSI) and Somerset Hills Board Club (SHBC) Board.

Players:

1. Players of the Majors Softball team shall include girls from 4th and 5th grade. Any other participants required WBSI, LHBSA, RYSI and SHBC board approval.

Safety and Equipment:

2. An 11 inch softball will be used for each game.
3. Players must wear team uniforms for games.
4. Steel/metal cleats are not allowed at any time.
5. A batter may swing their bat only while in the on-deck batting area or while they are at bat.
6. Only one player is allowed in the on-deck batting area at any time.
7. Players who are in the dugout are to remain behind fences at all times and are not to stand in fence openings in order to watch the game.
8. Tossing or throwing of balls is not allowed in the dugout.
9. Helmets with face-guards must be worn by all batters and base-runners. Helmets are not to be removed until a player is off of the playing field.
10. Face masks for fielding must be worn by infielders and outfielders at all times.
11. Chest/heart guards while playing the infield and pitcher are recommended.
12. When playing the position of catcher during a practice, warming up a pitcher, or game, the player must wear full body protection gear (catcher's helmet with faceguard, chest protector and shin-guards).
13. No player will wear jewelry, including watches, earrings, or anything around their necks.
14. No fielder may play closer than 50 feet from home plate except for the pitcher.
15. A defensive player at first must ta the white bag, not the safety bag, to record an out.

16. Base coaches must adult coaches.

Game schedule and length:

17. Games will consist of 6 innings, unless called for game time limit, weather, darkness, and thereby, subject to the rules below.
18. In the event a game must end due to an unforeseen event (e.g. lightning), the game is considered “official” when three and one half innings are completed with the home team ahead or four complete innings with the visiting team ahead.
19. A time limit is in effect. No new inning will begin after 1 hour and 45 minutes past the start time. Once that time limit is reached, the inning in progress is to be completed and the game will end at the conclusion of that inning. Extra innings will not be played in the event that a game concludes with a tie score.
 - a. There is no time limit for playoffs. All playoff games must be played to completion (6 innings).
 - b. In order to ensure a playoff game does not carry on for longer than necessary, when a playoff game ends with a tie after 6 innings, at the start of the 7th inning, and each inning thereafter, the offense will begin its turn at bat with the player who batted last the previous half inning, at 2nd base. The team that scores the most runs at the end of the inning will win the game.
20. The official start time of the game should be established by the umpire during the pre-game meeting with the team coaches. Coaches should ask the umpires to establish the official start and end time. As the 1 hour and 45 minute time limit approaches, the umpire should remind the coaches (or vice-versa) of the time limit and determine if the next inning played would be the final uncapped inning.
21. Capped vs Uncapped innings: While there is no “mercy rule”, there is a “cap” on the number of runs allowed per inning. Each inning, except for the last inning, will be “capped” at 5 runs. The last inning (due to time constraint) or the 6th inning), whichever comes first, will be “uncapped” where-as there is no run limit.

Game Rules:

22. The pitching distance will measure 35’ from apex or point of home plate to front center of pitching rubber.
23. The distance between the bases is 60 feet.
24. A maximum of 10 players on the field at one time (4 players in the outfield). If a team is short-handed (e.g. has only 6, 7 or 8 players at game time), the coaches should try to work out how to best help that short-handed team and attempt to still play the game as scheduled.
25. All outfielders must be on the outfield grass when the ball is pitched, but can enter the infield once the ball is hit.
26. Coaches are not permitted to stand on field at any time unless coaching a base.
27. No pitcher may pitch more than three innings in any one game.
 - a. For purposes of this rule, a single pitch thrown in an inning constitutes an inning pitched.
 - b. A pitcher may only re-enter once to pitch.

28. If pitcher hits three batters, she must be removed from the position for the remainder of the game.
29. The strike zone is defined as the plate plus 3 inches outside only and from the shins to shoulders. A ball that hits the plate is not a strike.
30. No intentional walking is allowed (e.g., rolling the ball, throwing ball high in the air).
31. There will only be five warm-up pitches for each pitcher between innings.
32. A new pitcher may have 8 warm-up pitches.
33. A coach shall be allowed to request time and visit the mound. A second trip by a coach to the mound in an inning shall require a pitching change.
34. Walks will be limited to six total per inning. Thereafter, a pitching change is required.
 - a. HBP (hit by pitch) will be considered a walk and counted toward the total number of walks per inning.

Batting and Base Running:

35. Each team bats the number of players playing that game.
36. A pitch count will be maintained by the umpire; 3 strikes = out, 4 balls = walk.
37. Bunting is allowed. Batters are not allowed to fake a bunt and then swing at a pitch.
38. No dropped 3rd strike rule. If the ball is dropped by the catcher on the 3rd strike, the batter is out.
39. The Infield Fly rule will not be called.
40. A batter who is hit by a pitch will be awarded first base. If a ball hits the ground first and then hits the batter – provided the batter has made an attempt to get out of the way of the ball as determined by the umpire – the batter will be awarded first base.
41. Catcher interference with the batter shall result in a warning from the umpire to the defensive team manager and the replaying of the pitch (unless it is to the batting team's advantage to allow the result of the play to stand). A second offense by the same catcher will result in a dead ball and the batter will be awarded first base.
42. If a player does not bat in their batting position, the player is considered an out unless the player is injured or needed to leave the game. The injured player may return to the original batting position.
43. If a rostered player leaves the game and does not return (e.g., leaves for another commitment), the team shall skip that player's turn at bat in the batting order and not be penalized.
44. A player who arrives after the start of play is inserted at the end of the batting order. In the event a team began play with eight (or fewer) players, a player arriving late can enter the game immediately.

Base Running:

45. When the ball is put into play, runners may advance.
46. Runners advancing to next base must avoid contact with the fielder if there is a play at the base; by giving themselves up or sliding.
 - a. Sliding into first base is not allowed.
 - b. The judgement call as to whether or not a player should have slid will be decided by the umpire and is final.

- c. If a defender is blocking a base without being in possession of the ball, thereby preventing a base-runner from successfully reaching the base without making contact, the umpire is to award that base to the base-runner.
 - d. No headfirst slides (no warning, runner will be called out). However, when player is returning to a base, player may dive back headfirst.
47. Baserunners may leave the base as the ball is released by the pitcher.
48. Stealing is allowed from second to third base upon release of the ball by the pitcher. The runner may not advance home on a defensive misplay on the steal.
- a. Overthrows on pick off attempts to all bases are dead balls (i.e., the baserunner may not advance).
 - b. If the runner leaves the base early, play immediately ceases, and the runner is given one warning. The next time the runner leaves the base early, they will be called out. The batter's count will remain the same, or if the third out, the same batter will lead off the next inning with a clean count (0 and 0).
49. A base runner may not advance after the ball is returned to the pitcher, as long as the pitcher is in the appropriate circle.
50. Once the pitcher has control of the ball in the pitcher's circle, play is dead.
51. Advance on overthrows to 1st: On overthrows to first base, the batter cannot advance to second base. However, if there are others runners on base, those runners may attempt to advance one additional base after the overthrow to first. They may not attempt to continue advancing if the first basemen makes a subsequent overthrow to one of the bases.
52. Advancing on overthrows to any other base besides 1st: On overthrows to any other base besides 1st runners may attempt to advance as many bases as they can.
53. A runner cannot advance when the ball is being returned to the pitcher. A runner cannot advance on an overthrow to the pitcher unless the runner is half-way to the next base or home plate. The umpire will make the decision if the runner advances or returns to the previous base.
54. If less than two outs, if a play is made at a base other than home, run counts if the runner on 3rd base crosses home plate. If a runner was on 1st or 2nd base, and is more than halfway to home plate (in the umpire's discretion) before the ball goes back to the pitcher's circle, that run shall count also.
55. Tagging up is permitted when a fly ball is caught by an outfielder; if a fly ball is caught by an infielder, tagging up is not allowed.
56. To expedite play, with two outs, a courtesy runner for the catcher and pitcher shall be permitted; said runner shall be the player who made the last out.

Fair playing time:

57. Every player present must have an opportunity to participate in the field during the game.
58. All players must play at least three innings on defense, and cannot sit for more than 1 consecutive inning (e.g., free substitution).
59. A minimum of eight (8) rostered players (from your team) are needed to play if you have 11 or more active players on your roster. If you only have 10 active players on your roster (e.g., you started season with 11 players, and one broke a limb and is out), a minimum of seven (7) players is needed.

60. A player from the minor league, who is in third grade, may be called up to fulfill the minimum number of players required. If the minimum number of players are not available within 15 minutes of the schedule game start time, the game will be considered a forfeit (and be recorded as a 6-0 final score). The two teams are encouraged to play a scrimmage game in this scenario).

Conduct Code:

61. Umpires should be at least two years older than the age group for which he/she is umpiring.
62. A judgment call (fair, foul, safe, out, strike or ball) by an umpire is final. Coaches may not challenge judgment calls.
63. Interpretations of rules may be appealed. The coach challenging an interpretation must be in possession of an Official Rule Book and cite the correct interpretation. Rule interpretation is final by the umpire.
64. Unsportsmanlike language and/or behavior by players, coaches or spectators shall not be allowed. After one warning to the coach of the offending team, the umpire shall disqualify the player, manager or coach from the game, or in the case of a spectator, shall require that the spectator leave the game area.

Stoppage of Play:

65. In the event of an injury, the play immediately stops. The play stands. The umpire may stop play in order for the player to receive attention.
66. In the event of an injury resulting in a stoppage of play, the player must leave the playing field, but may return.

Other:

67. Official Scores: For each game, scorebooks will be kept by both teams. The winning team will report the final score to the League Commission within 24 hours after the end of the game. After each game, both coaches should agree on the results of the game – including the final score because the runs in a game may be used to determine playoff seeding.
68. Seeding: Seeding for playoffs will be determined by team points. Points will be awarded accordingly; Win = 3 points, Tie = 2 points, Loss = 1 point, Not played = 0 points. In the event of a tie, the tie breaker will be determined by, 1) head to head, 2) winning percentage, 3) runs scored against and 4) coin flip.