**Equip Sports Ministries**

**Baseball Rules and FAQ**

Equip follows Babe Ruth Baseball structure which is referred to as Cal Ripken for ages up to 12U. The rules of baseball are applied with modifications to simplify the game for younger ages. Some of the key items are below and applied to league at Equip Sports. All-star, challenge teams, etc. will need to review the individual event rules for any activities beyond league play.

**Rules of note and clarifications:**

**BATS** - **All age groups will ONLY allow USA stamped bats**, the stamps will not be green, but the logo will match the two on the right below. USSSA 1.15 and BBCOR .50 bats (red and blue on the left below) are **NOT** allowed. There are no restrictions on bat weights/drop. Tee ball marked bats should not be used in Rookie or beyond as they will quickly dent. Wood bats are allowed, but are generally too heavy for younger players to swing effectively.

NOT ALLOWED ALLOWED



**Game Time Limits** – All games are limited to 6 innings in each age group. Tee ball is generally scheduled in 1-hour blocks and games will not start a new inning after 50 minutes. Rookie will generally be scheduled for 1:15 blocks and will not start a new inning after 65 minutes. Minor and Major league will generally be scheduled for 1:30 blocks and will not start a new inning after 80 minutes. Rookie, Minor and Major leagues do not need to start the home team at bat, if the home team is ahead after time noted above. Similarly, if the time limit is reached and the home team is batting and leading, the game ends as time expires. If the away team is batting or the home team is batting and trailing when time expires, the inning will continue until the inning is completed or the game decided. \*The first game is assumed to begin on time for clock purposes, delays created by the team, coaches, etc. shorten the game, i.e. 6:00 game, clock expires at 6:50, 7:05 or 7:20 based age group.\* \*\*Adjustments to game length may be made as necessary for weather or other situations and will be communicated by Equip Director or the Age Group Director.\*\*

**Mercy Rule** – Rookie, Minor and Major League Games will be called after 3 innings, 2.5 if the home team is leading, if the lead is 15 runs. Similarly, the game will be called after 4 innings or after, 3.5 if the home team is leading, if the lead is 10 runs.

**Field Dimensions** – Tee Ball, Rookie, and Minor should be played on 60’ base paths. Major will be played on 70’ base paths. At Mount Vernon lower fields, 60’ bases are the only option. At Mount Vernon upper field 2 (original field) and Little Optimist, 65’ base paths are present, please make sure to use front 60’ or back 70’ inserts as appropriate. Minor pitching distance is 46’ and Major pitching distance is 50’. Tee ball and Rookie have specific rules regarding placement of the pitcher position as a defender below. Tee ball will use tee balls provided, which have a softer feel and synthetic covers. Rookie, Minor and Major will use real baseballs, hard balls with leather covers.

**Rosters and Line-ups** - Each team will have approximately the same number of players. All players present should be in the batting line-up for each game. If a player arrives late, they should be added to the bottom of the line-up. Players should not sit consecutive innings on defense. Each player from the bench each inning should be rotated into the field defensively.

**Defensive Alignment** – Major and Minor league will play standard 9 player defense. Rookie and Tee Ball will be played with 10 players on defense (four outfielders). It is suggested that coaches agree before each game to allow additional outfielders during regular season games to allow all to participate on defense. Suggestions are 12 or less in Tee-Ball (6 outfield), 11 or less in Rookie (5 outfield), and 10 or less in Minor (4 outfielders). This does not have to be even between teams, but rather is about participation without creating significant advantage. In tournament play, if tourney occurs, the standard number of players, 9 or 10, should be utilized. The Tee Ball defender in the pitcher’s position should begin in contact with the pitching rubber, or other marking 46’ from home plate. Rookie defensive pitcher placement is addressed in coach pitch section and is also 46’ from home plate.

**Coach Pitch (Rookie)** – Coaches should pitch from 35’ – 46’ away from home plate. Coaches should throw good hard pitches on a relatively flat plane that reaches the catcher in the air, as opposed to lobbing the ball across the plate. The defensive player at the pitcher’s position should have one foot in a half circle drawn from the rubber 5’ to each side and extending 5’ behind the rubber. Batters are allowed up to 5 pitches, the 5th pitch or ‘money ball’ is a must swing pitch for the batter. Lack of contact on the 5th pitch whether they swing or not is a strikeout regardless of the quality of the pitch from the coach. If the batter fouls off the 5th pitch, the batter will receive another ‘money ball’ pitch and remains at bat until a strikeout occurs or the ball is put in play. Foul tips caught by the catcher on strike 3 or any money ball are outs. Teams are allow to score a maximum of 5 runs per inning in Rookie league.

**Closed Bases** - Tee Ball, Rookie, and Minor will all utilize closed base rules. The runners cannot leave the base until the ball is hit in Tee ball or the pitch crosses home plate in Rookie and Minor.

In Tee-Ball and Rookie the runners can only advance when the batter puts the ball in play through contact. Runners will be stopped from advancing when the ball is in possession of an infielder and lead runner’s forward momentum stops. If the infielder continues to run at or throw the ball in an attempt to get the runner out, the ball remains live. If runners are bouncing around attempting to bait a throw, time should be called and the runner will be sent back to the last base reached safely. Any runner attempting to reach second when a runner has rounded third will be sent back to first unless they have reached second before the lead runner’s momentum is stopped.

In Minor league, the runners can advance at their own risk once the ball crosses the plate, this includes stealing bases, advancing on passed balls or wild pitches. Once the pitcher goes to the rubber, the runners must remain on the base until the pitch crosses home plate.

**Open Bases** – Major league only will allow open bases, runners can take leads and steal bases when the ball is in play. Runners are also at risk anytime the ball is in play. The umpire notifies the pitcher when the ball is put in play and the ball remains live until an umpire calls time or a dead ball occurs.

**Catchers** – Catchers should always be legally and properly equipped. This includes a protective cup as well as the visible gear of leg/shin guards, chest protector, helmet with throat guard or with extended chin (hockey style). Tee ball will play a modified catcher position, that should be out of the way of bat contact and foul ball risk, but able to cover home plate for a play.

**Infield Fly Rule** – the infield fly rule is not in effect for Tee-Ball or Rookie. The infield fly rule is in effect for Minor and Major Leagues.

**Balks** – with closed bases in Minor league, no balks shall be called. Balks will be called in Major league, with one warning per pitcher in early season games.

**Dropped Third Strikes** – Dropped third strikes are strikeouts in Rookie and Minor league, the runner cannot attempt to reach first base on dropped third strike and the runners cannot advance. In Rookie league the batter is out and cannot attempt to reach first, but any runners on base can advance at their own risk on dropped third strikes. In Major leagues, dropped third strikes are live and the batter can attempt to reach first with two outs, or if first was not occupied with less than two outs.

**Bunts** – Bunting is not allowed in Rookie league. Bunting is allowed in Minors and Majors. Once a player squares to bunt, they cannot pull the bat back and swing (slash bunt) or they will be called out immediately.

**Pitch Clock or Pick-Off Limits** – there is no pitch clock or limit on pick off attempts for Minor and Major leagues. However, the pace of play must remain reasonable and the umpire will manage if necessary.

**Pitching Limitations -** Equip follows USA Baseball Pitch Smart Guidelines. For Minor league, pitchers can throw 75 pitches in a game. Major League pitchers can throw 85 pitches in a game. There are rest requirements based on number of pitches thrown. No pitcher can pitch three consecutive days, regardless of number of pitches. The table below does not allow for finishing the batter, however at the daily max the pitcher can finish the batter given 4+ days of rest is required.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Daily Max | 0 Days Rest | 1 Day Rest | 2 Days Rest | 3 Days Rest | 4 Days Rest |
| Minor | 75 | 1-20 | 21-35 | 36-50 | 51-65 | 66+ |
| Major | 85 | 1-20 | 21-35 | 36-50 | 51-65 | 66+ |

Example – Pitcher throws 35 pitches on Tuesday, he is eligible to pitch on Thursday based on 1-day rest (Wednesday). However, if they throw 36 pitches or more, they are not eligible to pitch on Thursday. Keep in mind schedule adjustments for weather, etc. could impact the eligibility of the pitchers.

**Pitching Required Changes** – In Minor and Major, any pitcher who allows 4 consecutive free bases, any combination of base on balls or hit by pitch, must be replaced.