



## **FIRST PITCH LEAGUE RULES AND REGULATIONS**

The coach pitch / kid pitch concept has been added to demonstrate the positive playing effects that will directly affect players at this level. Kids will transition from a coach pitched ball to hitting a kid-pitched ball. This is designed to improve the playing confidence and ability of all participants.

### **1. Game Length:**

- a. Six innings. – three (3) outs per inning or nine batters per inning, which ever comes first. Of the six total innings played, three innings will be coach pitched innings and three innings will be kid-pitched innings. Innings 1, 2 and 5 will be “coach pitch”. Innings 3, 4 and 6 will be “kid-pitched” innings.
  - b. No inning may start after 1:40 minutes from scheduled game time. In the event a game is tied, no game should go beyond six innings. The length of games averages one hour and forty minutes. All games must end 10 minutes before the next game is scheduled to begin (generally the 1 hour and 50 minute mark). This is to ensure a smooth transition between games.
  - c. The Home team is responsible for the official scorebook, and is required to submit results to the First Pitch League Coordinator.
2. **Field Dimension:** Standard youth base lengths of 60 feet. The pitching rubber shall be placed at 40 feet.
3. **Umpires:** For the coach pitched innings, the team at bat will be responsible for assigning a coach to be the official umpire for that half inning (normally this is the coach pitching from the mound). For the innings where kids are pitching, the umpire will be a member of the coaching staff from the team in the field. The coach/umpire will call balls and strikes, safe and out. and act as the official umpire during the kid pitch innings. The coach acting as umpire will stand behind the pitcher’s mound. The umpire may help coach the pitcher but may not coach any other players on the field, offense or defense. His role is as umpire and a pitching coach only. The

teams other coaches/manager can coach from the dugout (or from the base coach position if at bat)..

4. **Player Roster:** A suggested 12-13 man roster with all players placed in the batting order. (Game can be played with as few as 8 players.)
5. **Bat and Ball** – Bat rules have changed as of Jan 1, 2018. Bats must adhere to the new USA Baseball standard.
  - a. **New (current) ruleset/specifications:** Non wood bats must be stamped with official “USA Baseball” stamp (post production stickers are not allowed). If the stamp has rubbed off, the bat is no longer legal. Bat barrels can be 2 5/8 inches in diameter, if “USA Baseball” stamped. Solid wood bats can be used without a USA Baseball stamp (must be solid wood, not laminate or composite wood).
  - b. USA stamped bats approved “for tball use only” CAN be used in the First Pitch division.
6. **Playing Rules:** Normal youth baseball rules are applied with the exceptions noted herein.
  - a. **Defense:**
    - i. A fourth *outfielder* will be placed on the field defensively.
    - ii. The catcher takes his normal position.
      1. The catcher must be in full gear (catcher mask with dangling throat protector, chest pad, right and left chin guards).
        - a. The dangling throat protector must be used even on “hockey style” catcher’s masks.
      2. The catcher is required to wear a protective cup.
      3. The catcher is strongly encouraged to use a catcher’s mit, however may use their own glove if they want. The use of a mit will be required in the minor league, so it is encouraged for catchers to take this opportunity to get used to using one.
    - iii. This now means 10 players have been placed on the field defensively. Pitcher, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Baseman, Shortstop (“Infield Positions”) and Catcher and 4 Outfielders.
    - iv. Outfielders must be placed a minimum of 25 feet behind the bases. An outfielder is NOT permitted to make an un-assisted putout at any base. (Example: an outfielder is not permitted to field a ground ball and run to a base and tag that base or tag the runner going to that base. If this occurs, the runner will be declared “safe”.) The outfielder must throw to a base or infielder to make an out.
    - v. No player may play more than 2 innings at the same position and no player may play more than 2 consecutive innings at an Infield Position. Catcher is considered

an Outfield Position for these purposes.

- vi. A player may sit on the bench for only 1 inning per game except for injury or illness unless a team has 13 or more players present and you play 6 innings. In such case, no player may sit on the bench for more than 2 innings per game.
- vii. Coaches may deviate from the play time rule if excessive absence is a problem. However, these cases must be documented and reviewed with the League Coordinator and Asst. Baseball Commissioner *before* a player is penalized playing time. At this age level it is most important players actively participate every moment and not waste time sitting on the bench and growing bored.
- viii. It is strongly recommended that any pitcher pitching from the mound wear sufficient safety gear, which may include a pitching helmet, heart guard, protective cup, etc.
- ix. It is strongly recommended that all players wear a protective cup at all times, it is required for any player in the catcher's position.

**b. Hitting:**

- i. All players on the roster will be placed in the batting order. 9 batters shall bat in each inning unless 3 outs are made. The next inning resumes where the batting order left off.
  - 1. When the coach is pitching, each batter receives a maximum of five pitches. If a batter fails to put a ball in play after the five pitches, they must sit down and the next batter is up; **no out will be recorded**, however that batter does count as one of the 9 allowed. Following the idea that only a player can get another player out, a coach can not make an out on a player. As stated earlier, when the coach is pitching, the offensive team's coach will act as umpire, calling safe/out.
  - 2. When the player is pitching, a normal 4 balls/3 strike count will be observed (with the customary exception of the 3rd strike can't come from a foul ball).
    - a. If the catcher drops the 3rd strike, the batter is still called out (they do not have the ability to attempt to get to 1st base).
    - b. 3<sup>rd</sup> strike foul tips (where the pitch is hit by the batter's bat, but the ball continues more or less on its original trajectory and is caught by the catcher) would result in an out. Please note the difference between a foul ball and a foul tip.
    - c. If the batter received a walk (4 balls), the batter's coach will then pitch a maximum of five pitches minus the amount of strikes

against that batter. At this point, if the batter does not safely reach base or is not put out, then the player sits down and no out is recorded (but she/he does count as one of the 9 batters). The goal is to eliminate walks and encourage batters to swing at strikes. (3 strikes equals a put out.) We also want to reward pitchers that are able to deliver some strikes but not strike out a batter (each strike translates to one less opportunity to hit off a coach's pitch). As stated earlier, when the player is pitching, the defensive team's umpire will call balls and strikes.

**c. Base Running:**

**i. The First Pitch division allows limited stealing.**

1. There will be no lead offs and stealing of home or 2<sup>nd</sup> base in First Pitch. Runners must stay on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> until the ball is hit. Under no circumstances shall a runner advance to 2<sup>nd</sup> or home, unless done so through a batted ball (or pushed in via a player pitcher that hit a batter with the ball). This includes after over throws to 3<sup>rd</sup> when trying to get a runner out during a steal attempt of 3<sup>rd</sup>. There is NO base awarded (automatic or at the runner's risk) in this scenario.
2. There will be no lead offs while on 2<sup>nd</sup> base. A base runner on 2<sup>nd</sup> base MUST remain on the base until the ball crosses home plate.
3. Runners on 2<sup>nd</sup> may attempt to advance to 3<sup>rd</sup> at their own risk (aka: try to steal 3<sup>rd</sup> base) under the following conditions:
  - a. During any coach pitch inning, if 3<sup>rd</sup> base is empty, and after the ball crosses the plate.
  - b. During any player pitch inning, if 3<sup>rd</sup> base is empty, and after the ball crosses the plate.
4. A runner that reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> base by stealing MAY NOT advance home in any situation (including overthrows) that play. They must wait until at least the next pitch, and then only after the batter has batted a ball into play (or if the bases are loaded, and they are pushed in by a player pitcher hitting the batter with a pitched ball).

*Notes on rationale of this rule: In an effort to promote/encourage the development of catchers, LSO adding this rule. The hope is that this will encourage coaches to develop catcher's ability to receive balls from the pitcher and to develop catcher's ability to throw out runners trying to steal 3<sup>rd</sup>. Since there is no downside or risk in making a throw to 3<sup>rd</sup>, it is hoped that coaches will encourage their catchers to make the throw (also teaching their 3<sup>rd</sup> baseman to cover 3<sup>rd</sup>,*

*and their Left Fielder to back up the throw). LSO also hopes that this helps base runners learn to accept signs/direction from their coach at 3<sup>rd</sup> base.*

*We continue to not allow runners to steal 2<sup>nd</sup> in First Pitch because there is little chance of a catcher being able to throw a runner out trying to steal 2<sup>nd</sup>, and we want to continue to encourage force outs and the potential for double plays there.*

*We continue to not allow runners to steal home (even after an overthrow of 3<sup>rd</sup> base during an attempt to steal 3<sup>rd</sup>) as we want runs scored in this league to only be through the batter hitting in a runner. We also don't want any downside to attempting the throw to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, so as to encourage it to be done.*

*We hope by adding this rule, to further prepare players (pitchers, catchers, and base runners) as well as coaches for "the next level" of baseball, similar to how this division prepares pitchers.*

## **ii. Advancing Base-runners/Time-out**

1. *An infielder with the ball under control in the infield can request "time" from the coach acting as the umpire. Upon such request, the coach acting as the umpire shall immediately grant "time" to the defensive team and the ball will be "dead". In such case, base-runners will advance according to the following rules:*
  - a. *If a base-runner is on his way to the next base at the time that the umpire grants "time", such runner will be awarded the next base (and no more).*
  - b. *If the base-runner has stopped or hesitated (even if he is off the base) at the time that "time" is granted by the umpire, the base-runner must stay at or return to the base he last touched.*
  - c. *If the infielder requests "time", the ball is immediately "dead". No further put-outs can be made.*
2. *A player that does not request time can continue to make put-outs on any and all runners. In such case, if the play results in an overthrow, base-runners can continue to advance until he is put-out.*
3. *If the ball is under control by an infielder who is no longer attempting to make a put-out and in the umpire's judgment, base-runners are no longer attempting to advance to the next base, "time" will be automatically granted.*

4. **Coaches:** Do NOT send your base-runners to the next base if the ball is already under control in the infield (even if “time” has not been granted). You would be teaching your kids bad base-running habits that eventually (when the kids get old enough to make consistent throws and can consistently catch the ball) will result in “bad base-running” outs. **COACH YOUR PLAYERS IN A WAY THAT WILL PREPARE THEM TO PLAY AT THE NEXT LEVEL.**

**d. Pitching**

- i. A pitcher can throw 50 pitches per day. If a player pitches 36-50 pitches, they need 2 calendar days of rest and a game. If a player pitches 21-35 pitches, 1 calendar day of rest must be observed. If a player throws 1-20 pitches, no calendar day of rest must be observed. Under no circumstance will a pitcher be allowed to pitch 3 days in a row.
- ii. Pitchers are strongly encouraged to wear protection and safety gear while pitching (such as pitching helmets, caps, heartguards, protective cup, etc).
- iii. If the pitcher reaches the daily pitch limit while facing a batter the pitcher may continue to pitch until the batter is put out or reaches a base. The pitcher will only be required to observe the calendar days of rest for the threshold he/she reached during that at-bat, provided that the pitcher is removed before delivering a pitch to the next batter.
- iv. Example – The pitcher throws his or her 36th pitch while pitching to a batter, but stays in as the pitcher to finish pitching to the batter, resulting in 4 more pitches being throw (total of 40 pitches). If he/she is retired before delivering a pitch to the next batter, he/she only needs one calendar day of rest assuming the first pitch they threw to the batter was their 35th pitch or lower.
- v. When the coach is pitching, he/she may optionally sit on a bucket or kneel on a glove in order to pitch to the batters from a more realistic height. The coach needs to be at the pitcher’s rubber and no closer. If the coach hits the batter with a pitch, no base is awarded.