

WRIGLEY JUNIOR LEAGUE RULES

Junior Division: The Junior Division is comprised of mostly 5–6 year-old players and is designed to prepare kids for the Rookie Division. The fear of being hit by a pitched ball is eliminated and makes the game safer, more fun, and improves playing confidence and ability of participants. The pitching machine provides a consistent location of a 34mph pitch. In local league play, the home team shall provide the pitching machine for a game. In tournament play, the host league provides the machines.

Dugouts: Manager, coaches, rostered players and a team mom may be in the dugout.

Coaches: Babe Ruth League, Inc. rostered managers and coaches in all divisions are required to complete coaching education and certification, and a league nationwide background check.

Weather: The pitching machine cannot be used in the rain. This goes for practice or game. Recovery requires no rain for an extended period that permits the ground to dry. The extended period should be at least 15 minutes.

Field Dimension: Standard youth base lengths of 60 feet. The pitching machine should be placed so that the front of the machine is 38 feet from home plate. The speed of the machine is 34 mph.

Bats: All bats must have the USA Baseball stamp clearly visible. The bat may not exceed 33" in length, and the bat barrel may not exceed 2 5/8" in diameter. Wood bats are allowed. If any bat in Cal Ripken Baseball or Babe Ruth Baseball cannot be clearly identified for its make and model to determine the barrel composition, then the bat should be removed from the game.

Pitching Machine Operation: Only coaches should operate the pitching machine. Each coach operating the machine should have league-approved certification. A parent or player should never operate the pitching machine. A pitching machine that is defective should not be used.

Equipment: Proper equipment for the player includes a protective cup. Only (NOCSAE) approved batting helmets may be used. Any offensive player not in the dugout must wear a batting helmet. On defense, the catcher must wear the full gear. No metal cleats are allowed.

Defense: Ten defensive players are permitted on the field, with a minimum of eight. The extra player should be in the outfield. Before the pitch, the player playing the pitching position should align next to, but not in front of, the pitching machine (either side). Helmet is optional for pitcher. The Catcher will catch the pitch from the pitching machine. Only rostered players may play.

Playing Rules:

Continuous Batting Order: In local league play, continuous batting order is required, which means each rostered player is in the batting order. This permits free substitution on defense. In the event a player is hurt or absent, his bat can be skipped without penalty, provided the minimum number of batters are present. When a batter is skipped without penalty, his manager must notify the umpire (and hence the opposing team coach and scorekeeper). A skipped batter must wait until his next at bat to bat. The manager is required to put all rostered players on the official lineup given to the umpire and may denote any absent players at that time.

Number of players: The minimum number of players is eight. Forfeit time is fifteen minutes after scheduled start time. A pitcher and catcher are MANDATORY.

Protest: A Judgment call cannot be protested. All protests must be filed with the chief umpire (if applicable) immediately. Play will be stopped until a ruling is given by the protest committee. Only the manager may make a protest. The decision of the protest committee is final.

Batting (league play): Each batter has five attempts to put the ball into play. If the batter fouls the fifth pitch, the batter will receive more pitches as necessary if each is fouled. Bunting is permitted off the pitching machine. There are no walks. A player hit by pitch shall be awarded first base. There is no T-Ball Arc in the Junior Division.

Bunting: Bunting is allowed. However, NO FAKE BUNTING IS ALLOWED. If the batter offers to bunt, then the batter must bunt the ball or pull the bat back to take the pitch. If the batter offers to bunt, pulls the bat back, and then swings at the pitch, the batter will automatically be declared out by the umpire.

Live ball hits pitching machine: In the case a live ball hits the pitching machine, the pitching machine should be treated as an umpire. According to (Official Baseball Rules 5.09(f) and 6.08(d).) if a fair ball touches an umpire working in the infield after it has bounded past, or over, the pitcher, it is a dead ball. If a batted ball is deflected by a fielder in fair territory and hits a runner or an umpire while still in flight and then caught by an infielder it shall not be a catch, but the ball shall remain in play.

Pitching machine adjustment: The pitching machine should only be adjusted between half innings. Fine adjustments up or down, i.e. in the vertical direction only can be made between pitches, provided that "check pitches" are not required. (A "check pitch" is one where the batter is taken out of the batter's box.) The speed at which the pitching machine delivers the ball shall be constant and unchanged throughout the game. (hitters making contact, fielders getting chances to make plays, etc.).

Batting Tee: To promote a positive baseball experience, during the first half of the season, a tee can be used. Batters will receive 3 pitches off pitching machine and then two swings off the tee for a total of 5 swings. Both teams must agree on this and should be discussed/decided prior to the start of the game.

Game Length: The game shall last six innings (5 and one-half if the home team is ahead) or 90 minutes, whichever comes first. The official time is taken when the previous inning ends, not when the next inning starts. So, for example, if the fifth inning ends at 89 minutes, the sixth is played and completed. At the first call to "Play", the umpire shall note and announce the start time of the game according to his watch, in accordance with Official Baseball Rule 9.04(a)(7). This shall be recorded by the official scorekeeper. If teams are tied through six innings, then no game should go beyond six innings during league play and will result in a tie.

Scoring: When the Sixth run of a half inning occurs, the half inning shall be considered over, even if the batting team has no outs. The game shall be considered over if one team is ahead by ten runs after four innings (3-1/2 for home team) or eight after five innings. Ties stand in league play.

Stealing: Each runner must stay in contact with his base until the ball is hit. Stealing is not permitted.

Infield fly rule: There is no infield fly rule.

Timeout request: In accordance with the rules of baseball, a timeout request by a coach or a player is granted only by the umpire at the umpire's discretion. Before a timeout shall be granted to the defensive team in a live ball situation, the defensive team must cause the offense to cease play. This means the defense must force the base runner(s) into a non-advancing position. This is considered to be an important component of baseball, particularly in postseason tournament play, that defensive players learn the importance of stopping advancement of base runners. The umpire should always call timeout in a definitive manner to end play when he is satisfied that play has ended. At such time, the ball should be returned to the pitcher. In this case, runners are not permitted to advance if there is an overthrow back to the pitcher.

Defensive Coaches: Two defensive coaches are permitted in foul territory, 15 feet beyond 1st and 3rd base. A third defensive coach is permitted to help the catcher with passed balls, but he must avoid distracting the batter as the pitch is being delivered. For example, the third defensive coach could be distracting if he yells defensive moves as the ball is being delivered.

Scoring/Gamechanger: Please keep an accurate score using the last name of the players, as these are required to be turned in as proof of eligibility for all-stars.

Courtesy Runner: A courtesy runner may be used for the catcher (keeping game pace up); runner must be whoever made the last out if coach chooses to use a runner.

Contact rule: If a runner attempting to reach home plate intentionally and maliciously runs into a defensive player in the area of home plate, he will be called out on the play and ejected from the game. The objective of this rule is to penalize the offensive team for crashing the defensive player, rather than trying to reach home plate. Obviously, this is an umpire's judgment call.

Dead ball:

A. The ball will be declared dead when the defensive team stops the lead runner, or the runner abandons the effort to advance. Once play has been stopped, no other runners may advance beyond the last base tagged.

B. The ball will be declared dead when a player is injured and in the umpire's judgment is unable to continue the play.

C. If a batted fair ball hits any part of the pitching machine without touching any defensive player first, the ball is immediately dead. The batter will be awarded first base. All other runners return to the base they occupied before the ball was hit unless forced to advance as a result of the batter being awarded first base (Rule 5.09f and 7.04a). If a batted fair ball is first touched by a defensive player and then hits any part of the pitching machine, it is a live ball.

D. If a batted fair ball touches an umpire on fair territory before it touches an infielder including the pitcher or touches an umpire before it has passed an infielder other than the pitcher, the ball is dead, and the batter is awarded first base. All other runners return to the base that they occupied before the ball was hit unless forced to advance as a result of the batter being awarded first base (Rule 5.09f and 7.04a).

E. If a thrown ball hits any part of the pitching machine, it is a live ball.

Base stealing: Base stealing is not permitted. Runner(s) leaving their base(s) before the batter hits the ball or before the ball reaches home plate shall be regulated by the Special Base Running Rule found in the current edition of Babe Ruth League Baseball rule book. The runner(s) will not be called out.

Baseballs: Must use approved Diamond Babe Ruth baseballs.

Ten-run rule: The ten-run rule (4 complete innings, or 3-1/2 innings if home team is ahead) will be in effect (tournaments only).

Umpire: The umpire(s) can declare "no pitch" if the umpire judges that it is not reasonably hittable. This is a judgment call and thus not subject to protest.