



NEW ENGLAND LEGENDS BASEBALL LEAGUE

RULES OF PLAY

2026

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PART 3. NELBL RULE BOOK: RULES OF PLAY & PLAYOFF FORMAT

The New England Legends Baseball League (NELBL) shall follow and abide by standard Major League Baseball Rules of Play, except for defined modifications. The following baseball rules modifications are designed to promote fair play and minimize the possibility of injury for all NELBL teams and players. Last modified 2026-01-12.

3.1 Lineups

- 3.1.1 The Home team shall have first choice of the dugout.
- 3.1.2 Every eligible player who shows up to play must be placed into the batting order unless the player has some injury or valid reason not to bat, and has informed the other Manager prior to the game. No more than nine (9) fielders may play in the field at any time. The extra Batters will be called "Extra Hitters" (EH). Players have no defensive minimum number of innings they need to play.
- 3.1.3 Players arriving late to the game may be added to the bottom of the line-up at any time during the game.
 - 3.1.3.1 All games should be managed for the enjoyment of all players.
- 3.1.4 Players should not be held out of a game for competitive reasons.
- 3.1.5 Any player who feels they are being denied a reasonable amount of playing time should contact the Executive Council if unable to resolve the issue with the team Manager.
- 3.1.6 If, during a game, a Batter cannot bat due to injury or absence, they are removed from the batting order from that time. The injured players batting spot is skipped from that time forward, without penalty. A team shall not alter the batting order after the start of the game, except to add players to the bottom of the line-up. All reserve players must be placed at the bottom of the batting order.
- 3.1.7 An official game may not be played with fewer than eight (8) players in both batting and defensive line-ups, whether due to insufficient number of players or injury at any time before or during a game; when the number of available players falls below eight (8), that team will immediately forfeit the game. When a team is only able to field eight (8) players to start a game, the Manager with the player shortage must tell the opposing Manager during the pregame Home Plate meeting which method of player shortage accommodation they choose to move forward with:
 - 3.1.7.1 Option 1: The team with eight (8) players will bat eight (8) Batters and place eight (8) fielders in the field and will NOT be charged an automatic out for the ninth spot in the batting order, or
 - 3.1.7.2 Option 2: The team with eight (8) players will bat eight (8) Batters and borrow a fielder from the opposing Manager and WILL be charged an

automatic out for the empty ninth spot in the batting order; if the opposing Manager elects not to share a fielder, Option 1 must be used.

- 3.1.7.3 When a team's lineup is reduced to eight (8) players at any point in a game, the Manager with the player shortage must immediately tell the opposing Manager which method of player shortage accommodation they choose to move forward with from that point forward, whether Option 1 in 3.1.7.1 or Option 2 in 3.1.7.2.
- 3.1.7.4 Should a late player show up to a game at any point and increase the number of players to nine (9), regular rules apply and neither Option 1 nor Option 2 will need to be followed.
- 3.1.7.5 At any point in a game, if a lineup is reduced to seven (7) players, the game is automatically forfeited by the team with only seven (7) players.
- 3.1.8 There is free defensive substitution. This means that you can substitute defensively without any impact to the batting line-up. Substitutions should occur at the beginning of a half inning, unless a substitution is made because a player must leave due to injury, illness, or other commitment.
- 3.1.9 Any team Manager knowing that he will have less than nine (9) players available to take the field for an upcoming game may bring in temporary players from the "Reserve Players List." That list—if reserve players are available—will be found on the league website. Reserve players must fulfill NELBL age requirements as stated in Player Eligibility above and must abide by all NELBL rules including signing the NELBL Player Participation Contract before being able to participate in any NELBL game or activity. Reserve players may fill-in and play at any position **except Pitcher**. All reserve players must be placed at the bottom of the batting order.
 - 3.1.9.1 Reserve players should be called and asked to temporarily fill-in and play only when **necessary** to assure a minimum of eight (8) fielders for a particular game-day.

3.2 Stealing/Base Running

- 3.2.1 The NELBL will be using Major League rules for all overthrows, pass balls, wild pitches, etc. that stay in the field of play or leave the field of play.

3.3 Pitching Rules

- 3.3.1 Reserve players who have been called upon to temporarily play for a NELBL team that does not have enough players for a particular game may not pitch in the game.
- 3.3.2 A Pitcher may not pitch more than five (5) innings (or 15-outs) in any 9-inning game during the regular season and playoffs, Pitchers may not pitch more than five (5) innings (or 15-outs) in any 7-inning game. Note: Any inning that ends on the mercy rule (see

Rule 8) shall be considered one (1) complete inning (or 3-outs) pitched.

3.3.3 Major League rules for hit batsmen, Umpire discretion

3.3.4 Major League rules for intentional walks.

3.3.5 If a Pitcher is removed from a game in the middle of an inning, that Pitcher may not return to the mound until the next inning. The Pitcher does not need to remain in the field. A Pitcher may only re-enter as a Pitcher one (1) time during the same game.

3.3.6 A Pitcher is entitled to 10 warm up pitches to start a game and 10 pitches between innings. A new Pitcher will be allowed the same number of pitches unless entering a game due to injury during an inning.

3.3.7 The NELBL will not use a pitch clock nor batter's clock, and there is no penalty if a Pitcher disengages from the Pitcher's Rubber three (3) or more times during on At-Bat.

3.4 Bunting

3.4.1 A "Slash Bunt" is defined as when the hitter assumes the position for a bunt and then changes grip and takes a swing at the ball. As such, Slash Bunts are not allowed, and if attempted or executed it's an automatic out.

3.4.2 A "Suicide Squeeze" is defined as when the runner at 3rd Base takes off for Home as soon as the Pitcher begins the windup to throw the pitch, and before releasing the ball. As such, Suicide Squeeze bunts are not allowed, and if attempted or executed it's an automatic out.

3.4.2.1 Sacrifice bunts or bunts for a hit with a man on 3rd base is allowed.

3.5 Game Length/Time Limit/Tie Games

3.5.1 NELBL games shall be nine (9) innings in length or 3-hours in duration, whichever occurs first. Seven (7) inning games shall be 2 ½ hours in length, e.g. two hours and thirty minutes.

3.5.2 No new inning shall begin after 3-hours has elapsed. For example, if a new inning starts at 2 hours 55 minutes, the new inning started shall be completed without regard to the time limit. The bottom half of the inning does not get played if the Home team has the lead.

3.5.3 In the event that an official game is tied at the end of 9-innings, the game shall be continued if there is unused time remaining. However, no new inning shall begin after 3-hours. Thus, a game can result in an ultimate tie and be recorded as such in the standings.

3.6 Game Delays

- 3.6.1 In the event that rain or threatening weather delays the prior to the start of the game, the Home team Manager makes the call, at least ninety (90) minutes before game start. A 30-minute grace period shall be allowed without impacting the length of the game. Thus, a game scheduled to start at 12:00PM which is delayed until 12:30PM will be subject to the 3-hour time limit rule from the start of the game, or 12:30PM.
- 3.6.2 After the game starts, the Umpires own the outcome, delays, stoppage, etc.
- 3.6.3 A game called because of rain will be considered a complete game after 5 innings or 4 and a half innings if the Home team is leading.
- 3.6.4 A game that has been suspended due to weather before it became an official game shall be continued at another time and place to be agreed upon by both Managers. A game that has been cancelled shall be rescheduled at the next available opportunity. Rescheduling games are the responsibility of both team Managers and they are responsible for finding a field. The NELBL Executive Council can assist in coordinating Umpires and fields. Teams will pay for additional field or Umpire costs, if any.
- 3.6.5 When a suspended game is continued, it will begin from where it was suspended. The continued game may be played with any rostered players that are available for each team. **It does not have to be played with the same players who were playing when the suspended game occurred.** The continued game should be played to 9-innings, unless either team has another game scheduled the same day, in which case the continued game would be played to 7-innings.
- 3.6.5.1 If a Pitcher in the suspended game already satisfied the 5-inning pitching maximum, that Pitcher will NOT be available for the continued portion of the game.
- 3.6.6 The only other exception to the time limit would be in the case of serious injury that delays a game for more than 30 minutes, e.g., delays caused by medical treatment or ambulatory services causing a delay.

3.7 Maximum Runs Per Inning/Game (Mercy Rule)

- 3.7.1 Each team may score no more than 6-runs maximum per inning, through the end of the 8th inning, e.g., a team's offensive half of an inning will end after that team has scored 6-runs in any inning prior to the 9th. Once the game progresses into the 9th inning, the number of allowable runs scored by each team then becomes unlimited.

3.8 Courtesy Runners

- 3.8.1 If a player who reaches base is unable to run due to injury, or if they are the current Pitcher or Catcher of record, or two (2) other named players (discussed at the pregame Home Plate meeting) they may request a Courtesy Runner. The Courtesy Runner must

be the last player to be put out (and NOT the current Pitcher or Catcher or the two (2) named players requiring Courtesy Runners). If in the event that more than a total of four (4) Courtesy Runners are needed for any reason, Managers are at liberty to increase the number of Courtesy Runners if requested and agreed upon by both Managers.

- 3.8.2 On a hit by pitch, walk, or clean hit, e.g., the ball is not touched by a defensive player when hit through the infield to the outfield grass, a player that had been designated as requiring a Courtesy Runner on the lineup card or at the pregame Home Plate meeting with the Umpires can simply go back to the dugout and let the Courtesy Runner take his place on First Base.
- 3.8.3 There are no limitations on Courtesy Runners' ability to steal a base or advance at their own risk.

3.9 Base Running

- 3.9.1 A "Clean Hit" is defined as a batted ball that reaches the outfield grass without touching a defensive player and the batter is automatically awarded First Base.
- 3.9.2 On any Clean Hit through the infield or into the outfield, no defensive player will be allowed to throw out the Batter attempting to reach First Base. However, other Base Runners attempting to reach any other base on the Clean Hit can be thrown out.
- 3.9.3 Any base running activities, collisions, interference are Major League rules, and the Umpires will determine the outcomes.
- 3.9.4 The Catcher is not allowed to block Home Plate. Slide or Avoid Rule applies and expulsion is the Umpire crew's decision.
- 3.9.5 Dropped third strikes are now per MLB rules and the Batter may attempt to reach First Base.

3.10 Equipment

- 3.10.1 Rubber, plastic, or metal spikes (or sneakers) may be worn.
- 3.10.2 Only solid wood bats or wood-composite bats with a "BBCOR" or "BESR" indication are acceptable. Metal and metal-wood bats are illegal and bats cannot contain any metallic components.
- 3.10.3 Pitchers may not wear white or light color *long sleeves*.
- 3.10.4 Standard baseball batting helmets must be worn by all Batters and Base Runners and should be in good condition with no cracks. All batting helmets should have at least one ear flap (left for right-handed hitters or right for left-handed hitters) and preferably two (2) ear flaps.

- 3.10.5 Catchers must wear a protective mask with a helmet at all times while playing defensively.
- 3.10.6 Teams are required to dress their players in uniform. Minimum requirements include jersey and hat. Our goal is to give players a true baseball experience.
- 3.10.7 Rosin and pine tar are allowed in accordance with MLB rules.
- 3.10.8 At the pre-game managers meeting with umpires at the plate, umpires are to confirm that at least ONE of the competing baseball teams is equipped with a functioning Automated External Defibrillator (“AED”) before a game can be played. If neither team has a functioning AED, the game will NOT be played and each team will be responsible for paying their respective umpire.

3.11 Assigned Umpires

- 3.11.1 Two Umpires will be assigned to each NELBL game. It is strongly recommended that the Home team manger *phone and talk to both assigned Umpires* prior to the day of each scheduled game and get assurance that both Umpires will attend. In the event of only one Umpire showing up for a game, that game may be played without the second Umpire.

3.12 Playoff Format

- 3.12.1 Playoff “formats” and the number of teams eligible for playoffs will be determined by the Executive Council and the Board of Managers at our spring meeting.
- 3.12.2 Playoff format—for example-- involves two (2) brackets with four (4) teams playing a “Round Robin” tournament with the winner in each bracket playing a one (1) game championship. The 8th and 9th place teams in the standings at the end of the regular season will play a one (1) game elimination game prior to the Round Robin tournament to determine the 8th team. Playoff games have no time limit, no ties, no mercy rules, no substitute players allowed, and same game rules as regular season, except for the A/B rule as described in 3.12.7
- 3.12.3 Seeding for playoffs will be determined by team standings at the end of the regular season. Any regular season games that were postponed for any reason, **MUST, IF POSSIBLE**, be rescheduled, and played before playoff seeding begins. If the Board of Managers feel that a rescheduled game is not happening due to one or both Managers’ actions or inactions, then the Board of Managers may elect to take corrective actions, including forfeit(s) by one or both teams.
- 3.12.4 Playoff Seeding Determination at end of regular season (Points, e.g., 2-points per Win, 1-point per Tie, 0-point per Loss):
 - 3.12.4.1 Points
 - 3.12.4.2 Winning Percentage
 - 3.12.4.3 Head-to-head against tied teams
 - 3.12.4.4 Runs given up in regular season per game

- 3.12.4.5 Coin toss
- 3.12.5 The home team in the playoffs will always be the higher seed
- 3.12.6 Seeding at end of Round Robin Tournament for the Championship Teams
 - 3.12.6.1 Wins
 - 3.12.6.2 Record against tied teams in Round Robin
 - 3.12.6.3 Runs given up against tied teams in Round Robin
 - 3.12.6.4 Runs given up against all teams in Round Robin
 - 3.12.6.5 Runs scored against tied teams in Round Robin
 - 3.12.6.6 Seeding at the end of regular season
- 3.12.7 For the Playoffs ONLY, offensive lineups may be limited to the same number of batting positions as the team with the fewest batters. All players must bat unless previously agreed upon by both Managers; however, the team with the least amount of players cannot use the "A-B" batting order.
 - 3.12.7.1 Example: Team 1 has the least number of batters; in this example, they have a nine (9) batter lineup. To match the same number of positions in the opposing team's batting order, Team 2 may elect to bat the first six Batters as per normal, but can bat the next six (6) Batters in order as 7a, then 7b, then 8a, then 8b, then 9a, then 9b, e.g. each "A-B" batter in this 9-position lineup bats every other At-Bat throughout the game.