
LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL CHANGES FOR 2018 SEASON

Last Updated May 22, 2018

The following is a summary of the changes between the 2018 Little League Softball regulations and rules and their 2017 counterparts. Items have been loosely categorized as to whether the change represents a clarification of existing practice that was simply added to the rulebook, or whether it represents an actual change to the rules or regulations.

Note that some of these changes were adopted after the 2018 rulebooks were printed, so are not reflected there. Little League indicates that they will be correctly reflected in the electronic version of the rulebooks. See <https://www.littleleague.org/playing-rules/rule-changes/>.

Throughout this document, text that is underlined represents the modified or newly added text.

REGULATION III(C)

REGULATION CHANGE

This change eliminated the limit of eight 12-year-olds on a Major team. That limit was replaced by the text:

It is recommended that the local Little League set a maximum and/or minimum number of participants of a particular league age per team..

REGULATION VI NOTE 3, RULE 4.10(D), TOURNAMENT RULE 11

REGULATION CHANGE

Previously, if a game was suspended before the first inning had been completed, the game was replayed from the beginning, and all records, including pitching, were not counted. This exception has been removed.

As a result, now under all circumstances, if a game is suspended, it is resumed from the point at which it is halted, and pitching rest requirements apply.

REGULATION VII(A), TOURNAMENT ELIGIBILITY

REGULATION CHANGE

Senior Softball

Previously, the minimum number of games that could be scheduled in the regular season was 12. For Seniors, this has been dropped to 10. As a result, the tournament eligibility section now reads:

The league must have scheduled and played, at a minimum, a 12-game [Senior League: Ten (10-game)] (per team) regular season, exclusive of playoffs and tournament games, for each division, or age appropriate division, entering tournament prior to the first game in their respective tournament. See Reg. VII. NOTE 1: Forfeited games shall not count towards the 12-game [Senior League: Ten (10)-game] regular season. NOTE 2: For Junior Tournament eligibility, Senior League players league age 13 and 14 must have played in a minimum of eight (8) games.

REGULATION XIV(A)

REGULATION CHANGE

This change extends the authority of the local league to address unsportsmanlike conduct through online or social media.

The actions, on or off the field, of players, managers, coaches, umpires, and league officials must be above reproach. Any player, manager, coach, umpire, or league representative who is involved in a verbal or physical altercation, or an incident of unsportsmanlike conduct, at the game site or any other Little League activity including through online or social media, is subject to disciplinary action by the Board of Directors.

RULE 1.10 NOTE 2

RULE CHANGE

The use of pine tar and other adhesives is now illegal.

NOTE 2: The use of pine tar or any other similar adhesive substance is prohibited at all levels. Use of these substances will result in the bat being declared illegal and removed from play.

RULE 1.15(A)

RULE CHANGE

Previously, the rule regarding pitchers' glove colors read:

- (a) The pitcher's glove shall be of one solid color other than white, gray, or optic yellow, or if multi-colored, white, gray, or optic yellow shall not be included in the colors. A glove that is judged to be distracting is illegal.

The explicit reference to colors has been removed, and the rule reworded as follows:

The pitcher's glove shall be of one solid color or multi-colored as long as the color(s) are not the color of the ball being used in the game. A glove that is judged to be distracting is illegal.

Thus, "gray" is no longer illegal, and a pitcher could wear a white glove in a game using an optic yellow ball or vice versa.

RULE 1.15(C) AND 8.02(A)(2)

RULE CHANGE

The rule now explicitly addresses items worn on the pitcher's arms:

Pitchers shall not wear any item on the pitching hand, wrist, or arm. A pitcher may wear items on the glove hand, wrist, or arm (non-pitching arm) of a solid single color: black, white, grey, or a uniform color. A pitcher shall not wear any items on his/her hands, wrists, or arms which the umpire may judge to be distracting. [See also Rule 1.11(j).] EXCEPTION: A pitcher may wear a compression sleeve on the pitching arm of a solid, single color: black, white, grey, or a uniform color.

This essentially brings Little League rules into conformance with those of other programs.

RULE 3.03

RULE CHANGE

Previously, during regular season play, a starter could re-enter the game in a slot in the batting order other than his/her original one, and only starters were permitted to re-enter. The regular season rule has been changed to match the tournament rule, requiring that a starter re-enter the game in the same position in the batting order that he/she originally occupied, and permitting substitutes to re-enter. Thus, the rule now reads:

A player in the starting line-up who has been removed for a substitute may re-enter the game, in the SAME position in the batting order, provided:

- (a) his or her substitute has completed one time at bat and;
- (b) has played defensively for a minimum of six (6) consecutive outs;
- (c) (unchanged regarding pitchers leaving the mound)
- (d) A starter and her/his substitute must not be in the line-up at the same time, except as provided in 3.03 Note 3. Once mandatory play is met, a starter and substitute(s) can enter/re-enter for each other as desired, but must re-enter in the SAME position in the batting order.

RULE 4.04 A.R.

CLARIFICATION

For leagues using the continuous batting order, the following Approved Ruling was added.

A.R. - For the purpose of continuous batting order, all players listed in the batting order shall be considered starters.

This essentially specifies how the players should be treated under some of the other rules.

RULE 4.07 SUSPENSIONS

CLARIFICATION

Previously, the rule read.

4.07 - When the manager, coach, or a player is ejected from a game, they shall leave the field immediately and take no further part in that game. They may not sit in the stands and may not be recalled. A manager or coach ejected from a game must not be present at the game site for the remainder of that

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game. Any manager, coach, or player ejected from a game is suspended for his or her team's next physically played game and may not be in attendance at the game site *from which they were suspended*. This includes pregame and postgame activities."

The italicized text ("from which they were suspended") has been removed from the rule.

RULE 4.10(E), TOURNAMENT RULE 12

RULE CHANGE

Additional "mercy rule" provisions have been added:

If after three (3) innings [Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League: four innings], two and one-half innings [Intermediate (50-70) Division/Junior/Senior League: three and one-half innings] if the home team is ahead, one team has a lead of fifteen (15) runs or more, the manager of the team with the least runs shall concede the victory to the opponent. If after four (4) innings [Intermediate (50/70) Division/Junior/Senior League: five innings], three and one-half innings [Intermediate (50/70) Division/Junior/Senior League: four and one-half innings] if the home team is ahead, one team has a lead of ten (10) runs or more, the manager of the team with the least runs shall concede the victory to the opponent. NOTE: (1) If the visiting team has a lead of fifteen (15) or ten (10) runs or more respectively, the home team must bat in its half of the inning. (2) The local league may adopt the option of not utilizing this rule.

RULE 8.01(Q)

CLARIFICATION

The wording of the rule has been adjusted as follows:

- (q) The release of the ball and follow through of the hand and wrist must be forward and past the straight, vertical line of the body.

The word "vertical" was inserted as a clarification.

RULE 8.01 NOTE

CLARIFICATION

Junior and Senior Softball

The case of a batter being hit by an illegal pitch has been clarified:

NOTE: **Minor/Major Divisions:** A batter hit by a pitch shall be awarded first base without reference to the illegal pitch. **Junior/Senior Divisions:** A batter hit by a pitch shall be awarded first base and all base runners advance one base without reference to the illegal pitch.

Previously, the note only addressed the batter being awarded first base, and did not address what happened to the base runners.

RULE 8.06(A) AND (B), TOURNAMENT RULE 7

REGULATION CHANGE

Majors and above

Previously, a manager could visit a pitcher twice in one inning and three times in a game without having to remove the pitcher. For Majors and above, both limits have been reduced by one. For Minors and below, the old limits apply.

- (a) A manager or coach may come out once (Minor Division: twice) in one inning to visit with the pitcher, but the second time (Minor Division: third time) out, the player must be removed as a pitcher. Example: If a manager visits Pitcher A once in the first inning, then makes a pitching change in the same inning, Pitcher B would be allowed one visit in that inning before being removed on the second visit.
- (b) A manager or coach may come out twice (Minor Division: three times) in one game to visit with the pitcher, but the third time (Minor Division: fourth time) out, the player must be removed as a pitcher. Example: If a manager visits Pitcher A twice in the first three innings, then makes a pitching change in the fourth inning, Pitcher B would be allowed two visits in that

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game before being removed on the third visit, subject to the limits in (a) above.

For Tournament play, the Majors rule is used in the 9-11 year old division. The 8-10 old division uses the Minor division rule.

RULE 9.01(E)

CLARIFICATION

The note regarding sign stealing has been reworded slightly:

NOTE: The local league has the option to adopt this rule application. The stealing and relaying of signs to alert the batter of pitch selection and/or location is unsportsmanlike behavior. If, in the judgment of the umpire this behavior is occurring, those responsible including any player(s), coach(es), and/or manager shall be ejected from the game.

Previously, the rule said “may be ejected.” This clarification indicates that, if a league adopts this rule, and if an umpire detects the behavior, ejection is not optional.