

# 2026 Little League ® Rulebook Significant Updates

## REGULATIONS

**Regulation IV(i) – Note 5 – Mandatory Play:** Clarifies that during tournament play and anytime the continuous batting order is used, a courtesy runner may be used for the pitcher and/or catcher of record

before that pitcher and/or catcher of record completes the requirements of mandatory play.

In addition to the above clarification, the following regulations also have minor edits and clarifications as

noted in Little League's *Official Regulations, Playing Rules, and Operating Policies*:

- Regulation I – The League (c)(5)
- Regulation V – Selection of Players (b)
- Regulation IX – Special Games (4)
- Regulation XIII – Commercialization (b)

## RULES

**Baseball and Softball – Rule 1.10 – Note 2 – Use of Pine Tar:** Permits the use of pine tar or any other similar adhesive substance at all levels of Little League Baseball and Softball.

NOTE 2: The use of pine tar or any other similar adhesive substance may be applied to the handle or grip of the bat at all levels of Little League baseball/softball. Pine tar or any other foreign substance shall not be added to the surface of the barrel or taper of the bat and shall not cover the USA Baseball Logo, BBCOR for the Intermediate/Junior/Senior League Division, or other key identifying information or logo on the bat.

PENALTY” If the bat has pine tar or foreign substance on the barrel or taper of the bat, or covers key identifying information on the bat, the bat must be removed from the game, and the player shall be warned. If the player repeats the infraction, the offending player and manager shall be ejected from the game. In such cases, all results from the use of such bat will stand, and this infraction is not cause for calling the batter out nor shall the bat be declared illegal.

**Baseball and Softball – Rule 1.10 – A.R. 2 – Products to Assist the Batter:** Updates wording to permit the use of thumb protectors and clarifies that products such as, but not limited to, choke-knobs and choke-up assists are not permitted.

A.R.2 – No bat, in any level of Little League Baseball or Softball play, is permitted to be altered. Products such as, but not limited to, choke-knobs and choke up assists are not permitted.

Penalty: If a bat has such a product, the product must be removed from the bat, and the bat shall not be declared illegal. The player shall be warned, and if he/she repeats the infraction, the offending player and manager shall be ejected from the game. In such cases, all results from the use of such bat will stand, and this infraction is not cause for calling the batter out nor shall the bat be declared illegal.

**Baseball – Rule 1.11(a)(3) – Sleeves Worn by the Pitcher:** Removed the “neoprene” sleeve distinction in the rule to now include all sleeves.

(3)-Any part of the pitcher's undershirt or T-shirt exposed to view shall be of a solid color. The pitcher's undershirt sleeves if exposed, shall not be white or gray. Sleeve may be worn by the pitcher and do not need to be covered by an undershirt, provided the sleeves is one color and is not white or gray.

**Baseball and Softball – Rule 3.04, 7.14(b), T-3(d) – Courtesy Runner:** Clarifies the placement of runners when a team courtesy runs for the pitcher and/or catcher of record with 2 outs at the same time.

Rule 3.04 NOTE 2: If the continuous batting order is used, the “courtesy runner” may be in the team's batting order and must be the payer in the batting order who made the last out. See 7.14(b)

Rule 3.04 NOTE 3: if the pitcher and catcher of record are on base with two(2) outs, the offense may use a courtesy runner for both the pitcher and catcher of record at the same time. When assigning courtesy runners in such situations, the player who is scheduled to bat soonest shall be placed on the base closest to scoring.

EXAMPLE: With two outs, the pitcher is on second and catcher is on third base. The offensive elects to use courtesy runner for both the pitcher and catcher. The player who made the second out of the inning becomes the courtesy runner for the pitcher at second base. The player who made the first out of the inning (due up soonest) becomes the courtesy runner for the catcher at third base.

Rule 7.14(b) NOTE 2 and NOTE 3 worded the same as above.  
T-3(d) A.R.2 reads the same as NOTE 3 above

**Baseball and Softball – Rule 3.17 – Malfunctioning One-Way Communication Device:** Clarifies that a reasonable amount of time must be provided to a team to correct a malfunctioning one-way communication device.

Rule 3.17 NOTE 2:- A reasonable amount of time must be provided to a team to correct a malfunctioning one-way communication device.

**Baseball and Softball – Rule 4.04 – Note 2 – When a Player is Injured, Becomes Ill, or Must Leave the Game Site:** Provides guidance for situations when a player is unable to complete a plate appearance or run after reaching base safely due to injury, illness, or ejection while using the continuous batting order during the regular season.

Rule 4.04 NOTE 2: If a player is unable to complete a plate appearance due to injury, illness, ejection, the next batter in the lineup shall take his/her place at the plate and assume the count of the original batter. If a batter becomes a runner by reaching base safely and is unable to run the bases due to injury, illness, ejection, he/she shall be replaced by the player who recorded the last out or with a Courtesy Runner, if applicable.

**Baseball and Softball – Rule 4.18 – Forfeited Games:** Removed the requirement for the scorebook to be signed by the Umpire-in-Chief for forfeited games.

Rule 4.18 – Forfeited games shall be so recorded in the scorebook. If requested by the League President, the umpire will send a written report stating the reason for the forfeiture to the League President within 24 hours of the request. Failure of the umpire to file this report shall not affect the forfeiture.

**Baseball and Softball – Rule 6.06(d) – Illegal Bats:** Reworded to provide consistency with Tournament Rule 3(b).

Rule 6.06(d)- the batter enters the batter's box with one or both feet entirely on the ground with an illegal bat(see bat specification rule 1.10) or is discovered having used an illegal bat prior to the next player entering the batter box. The ball is dead. Runners must return if they advanced on the play.

**Baseball and Softball – Rule 7.15(g) – Procedures for Use of a Double First Base:** Clarifies that on an uncaught third strike, the fielder and the runner can use either part of the base.

Rule 7.15(g) – In majors, Intermediate, Junior, Senior League division, when the batter becomes a runner on a third strike not caught by the catcher, the batter-runner and the defensive player may use either the color (orange or green) or white base.

NOTE: When the batter becomes a runner on a third strike not caught by the catcher, the batter runner may run in fair territory when the throw is coming from the foul side of the base, and if hit by the thrown ball, it is not interference. If the intentional interference is ruled, the runner is out.

**Baseball – Rule 8.06(b) Note – Visits to the Pitcher and Returning as Pitcher (INT/JL/SL):**

Clarifies that in the Intermediate (50/70), Junior League, and Senior League Divisions, the number of visits remaining does not prevent a pitcher once removed from the mound as pitcher from returning as pitcher.

Rule 8.06(b) A.R.- A pitcher once removed as pitcher from the pitcher's plate may return to the pitcher's plate as pitcher even if they have no visit remaining. In such case, a manager or coach may only come out to remove the player as pitcher and is prohibited from conferring with any defensive player.

**Softball – Rule 8.06(b) Note – Visits to the Pitcher and Returning as Pitcher:** Clarifies that the number of visits remaining does not prevent a pitcher once removed from the pitcher's plate as pitcher from returning as pitcher.

Rule 8.06(b) A.R.- A pitcher once removed as pitcher from the pitcher's plate may return to the pitcher's plate as pitcher even if they have no visit remaining. In such case, a manager or coach may only come out to remove the player as pitcher and is prohibited from conferring with any defensive player

## TOURNAMENT

**Baseball and Softball – Tournament Rule 3(b) – Illegal Bats:** Reworded to provide consistency with Rule 6.06(d). SEE Rule noted Above.

In addition to the above clarification, the following Tournament Rules also have minor edits and clarifications as noted in Little League's *Official Regulations, Playing Rules, and Operating Policies*:

- Tournament Organization – Tournament Eligibility Affidavit
- Tournament Organization – Player Eligibility
- Guidelines for Conduct of Tournament: Expenses