

MONTVALE ATHLETIC LEAGUE

MAJOR/MINORS

Baseball Rules



SPRING SEASON

LAST UPDATED MARCH 1, 2018

Introduction

The Montvale recreational baseball program is dedicated to teaching our children how to play and enjoy the game of baseball. Teamwork, good sportsmanship, self-discipline, and building self-esteem are the primary goals. The rules set forth in the next few pages are designed to increase the level of commitment in baseball by building confidence for all players over-time. This can only be achieved by providing a competitive, but fair set of rules that Managers should follow.

However, the rules set forth are simply common-sense guidelines. Exceptions can, and will occur. Nevertheless, the goal of each manager should be to make sure everyone on the team is having fun. Baseball is an individual, a team, and social sport all in one! Additionally, baseball teaches our kids a fundamental lesson of sports – *success is a by-product of hard-work and dedication*. These rules are designed to motivate everyone in the program to become a better player, person, and teammate.

Draft guidelines

- All drafts will be supervised by the coordinator and commissioner.
- Every attempt should be made to balance the competitiveness of each team.
- Each team should strive to have at least half of the players who can pitch.
- Teams should have roughly the same number of kids at each grade level.
- Managers are permitted to choose one primary assistant prior to the draft as long as it does not disrupt the competitive balance of the teams. For example, a team can't have 2 of the top 4 players in the league if there are 4 teams.
- Managers may request a second assistant as long as it does not disrupt the competitive balance of the teams.
- Managers or their primary assistant should be at the draft. Only one person should come to represent any given team.
- The draft will be conducted in the following order:
 - Each grade should identify "elite" travel/club players, and those players should be dividing equally via a random selection, or group discussion.
 - If any manager does not have an assistant, they should choose an assistant from the available pool.
 - Handling of special requests (e.g. carpool, siblings, kids who need to be on the same team), should be discussed and/or assigned.
 - The highest grade level will be drafted first. If last round for that grade is not even with amount of teams in league, those players go to end of draft.
 - The team with the lowest competitive score will draft first, followed by second lowest, and so forth. Teams will get re-ranked after each round, and the process will repeat. The final round will be reversed with the team with the highest competitive score assigned the weakest player left, the 2nd highest getting the next weakest player left and so on.
 - The competitive ranking is the collective judgement of all the managers with the commissioner breaking any ties. Teams should try to have equal amount of higher and lower grade players. No team should have 2 more players from one grade.

General

- For any rule not stated in these guidelines, managers and umpires should refer to the Little League Rule Book.
- Games are 6 innings, with no new inning starting after 2 hours.
- Games can end in a tie (exception for playoffs, see rules).
- Run limit per inning (minors – 4, majors – 5). No continuation on run limit, 6th inning has no run limit. Limit is increased for the playoffs (see rules).
- Bats must be wood, no longer than 33", and 2¼" in diameter.
- No metal cleats, must wear a proper uniform, baseball pants, tucked shirt, hat, and belt.

Playing time

- The goal is have a fair, but competitive rotation appropriate for recreational baseball.
- All players must play a minimum of 2 innings in the infield
- All players must play a minimum of 2 innings in the outfield.
- Sitting on the bench counts towards playing 1 outfield inning.
- If a game only goes 5½ innings, it's possible certain minimums will not be met. The manager should make sure this does not happen to the same players every game.
- Pitchers/catchers count as infield positions – meaning if a player has not played his/her minimum number of innings in the outfield, that player can't pitch in the 6th inning (or the 5th inning if they have not played the outfield at all).
- An inning is considered to be 3 outs.
- All players bat, free substitution in the field (with some restrictions, see fielding section).
- All players must sit 1x before another player sits 2x. No player should sit 3x, or back-to-back innings. *Guideline: Have players who sit 1x, sit 2x the next game.*
- Managers are responsible for creating the lineup, but should make an effort during the regular season to balance the number of at-bats players receive throughout the regular season. At bats for a player that missed a game would not need to be made up.
- If a manager feels a player is unable to play an infield position due to safety, he/she should contact the baseball commissioner. The commissioner after discussions with the parent can then make a final determination.

Fielding

- Defensive positions, unless accomplished as part of a pitching change, cannot be changed in the middle of an inning unless it is a safety issue with a weaker player. Example-the best hitter in the league is at bat and the weakest player in the league is playing 3b.
- Minors can play 4 outfielders, no short fielders (must be 10' behind 2nd base).
- There must be a minimum of 3 outfielders (10' behind the infield). The minimum is dropped to 2 when playing with a roster of 8.
- Infield fly rule is only in effect for the Majors.

Base Running

- No leading. Runners can leave the base after the ball crosses home plate. Leaving early will be a warning for the first offense, and an out for each subsequent offense.
- Batter may not advance to first on a drop 3rd
- Minors – stealing 3rd is only allowed, and capped at 3 per inning.
- Majors – stealing all bases are allowed, but capped at 4 per inning.
- Double steal counts as two stolen bases.
- Only 1 base can be stolen at a time per player. No advance on overthrows when defending against a stolen base.
- Stealing home is permitted only in the majors at a limit of 1 per inning. Stealing home counts towards maximum steals per inning. Runners may steal home on throws to bases between pitches (including defending another stolen base). However they cannot exceed the max per inning, and max of 1 home steal per inning.
- Other than 1 home steal an inning (for the majors), home must be earned via the following:
 - Force situation such as a walk, hit pitch, etc.
 - Live play – which is when the ball has been hit, but play has not been stopped (see below).
- Throwing a ball on another steal attempt or a pick-off play is not considered live play. The base-runner however, may be called out on a pick-off.
- Runners may advance on overthrows during live play. If the overthrow is out of the field-of play (determined during ground-rules), the runner will be awarded the base they were attempting, and an additional base.
- Runners must slide/avoid contact. It is the umpire's discretion if the runner should be out due to contact with the fielder.
- No head first sliding, unless the runner is going back to his/her original base.
- The catcher may be substituted when there are two outs.
- Runner substitution for any reason (injury/catcher), must follow the following preference: last batted out, last recorded out, last recorded out of the prior inning.
- Play is stopped when the ball is in the vicinity of the pitcher's mound. Bases awarded/taken away are at the umpire's discretion.

Pitching

- No pitcher may pitch more than 6 outs (i.e. 2 innings).
- Travel/club players should pitch no more than 3 outs (i.e. 1 inning).
- If a pitcher comes in relief to assist with the last out, that out will not count against the relieving pitcher. The idea here is keep the game moving and limit mid-inning pitching changes. However, if a pitcher gets the first two outs without giving up a run, but then is taken out for strategic reasons (e.g. a certain batter is up), that would be against the spirit of this rule, and thus that out would count against the pitchers limit.
- Managers should try and pitch at least 4 different players each game.
- If a team does not have enough pitchers for a given game, the Manager should discuss this with the opposing team on which travel/club players should throw multiple innings. It is expected that this topic be discussed during the draft so there are no surprises. Despite what the schedule states, if one team has less pitching that day, they should be visitors as there is a chance they will only have to cover 5 innings instead of 6 for pitching purposes if they are losing after top of 6th.
- If a Manager is planning on pitching an “elite” travel/club pitcher, that pitcher should pitch the 1st inning and the opposing coach should be informed. This way the elite pitcher is pitching against the best hitters of the opponent. We do not want elite pitchers pitching to the weakest 3 kids of the opponent. Those pitchers will be identified during the draft.
- A Pitcher must be removed after 3 hit batters, or 2 in a single inning.
- A ball that bounces and hits a batter is a hit by pitch and batter gets first base but not considered to be a hbp for the pitcher in that inning.
- A Pitcher once removed, may not pitch again in the same game.
- No balks, no drop 3rd.
- Managers are allowed 1 mound walk per inning per pitcher. Pitcher must be removed on the second trip.
- Intentional walks are not permitted, and instructing a pitcher to throw balls will be considered unsportsmanlike.
- Pitchers may not wear white sleeves, or a white glove, or any other clothing that may be distracting (e.g. wristbands). Distractions will be the judgement of the umpire.

Hitting

- All players must bat.
- Players who arrive late must be added to the end of the batting order (even if the entire lineup has not yet batted).
- Bunting is only permitted in the majors, however once committed to bunt a player cannot pull back to take a full swing. They can pull back on a bad pitch.
- Bunting with a runner on 3rd is not permitted. Unless very weak batter is at the plate and has had trouble making contact.
- Players who leave early are skipped in the lineup (no automatic out). Once removed, players cannot return to the lineup unless the reason for leaving was due to an injury.
- The strike zone extends from the arm pits to the knees of the batter and corner to corner. It can expand an inch or 2 (umpire’s discretion). This is rec. Game has to move along.
- Throwing the bat: 1 warning, then on it will be an out (umpire’s discretion).

Callups

- Teams may play with 8 without using a call up.
- Teams may only call up a player when they have 9 or less. When teams have 9 they should normally play without a call up, but it may be desirable to bring 10 to handle the situation of a last minute no show.
- Call up must be registered for recreational baseball in Montvale.
- Call up for a major team can be from the major or minor division.
- Call up for minors may be from minor or peewee division (i.e. 2nd grade).
- Call up player may not play the game in place of his/her own.
- Call up players should not be “elite” travel/club players, unless the call up is from the division below.
- If team roster is 10 or fewer, call up players should be assigned to teams during the draft.
- Call up players can’t pitch and must bat last. They must play the Outfield unless safety issue with weaker player in infield.
- Must send email notification to coordinator and commissioner in advance of game as well as opposing coach.

Playoff rules

- All of the above rules apply except with the following additions/modifications:
- Playoffs can’t end in a tie, and will not have a time limit. If the game is interrupted due to darkness, weather, or time, it will be made up from the exact point it was stopped.
- Extra innings: steal limits and rules apply in 7th inning, but then become unlimited from then on. For the majors this includes stealing home. For minors, it includes 2nd and 3rd, but not home.
- Double-elimination bracket, winner take-all championship (i.e. the team that has not lost, does not need to be defeated twice).
- Playoff seedings are randomly drawn.
- Players must have played in 60% of the regular season games to participate in the playoffs.
- Call ups not allowed
- Run rule limit per inning is increased to 5 for minors, and 6 for majors. Unlimited for 6th inning.
- Note: Brackets and rules can be adjusted by the commissioner if there are an odd number of teams, or shortage of players in general.