

Foothills Little League
2024 Spring Rules
Minors Tier 'A'



Minors 'A' Rules "Handbook"

Welcome to 2024 Minors 'A' Spring Ball and thank you for volunteering as a coach. Coaching youth sports is an exciting and rewarding way to give back to the community..

This handbook will assist you with some basic information and rules for Rookie Ball.

The focus of Rookie Ball is on player development. The rules are designed to get the ball in play as much as possible, this will allow players to gain experience in real game situations, learn the rules of the game and prepare them for future years in Minors and Majors.

Rookie Ball is primarily machine pitch but players will be allowed to have the coach pitch to them if they are not comfortable with the machine. The goal is to have all players hitting off the Zooka Pitching Machines by the end of the season.

Division Coordinator: Jennifer Wickson is the Minors Coordinator for 2024. All questions can be emailed to jennifer.wickson@gmail.com

Head Coach: The Head Coach is the leader and primary communicator with the team and other Head Coaches for deciding cancellations due to weather. The head coach should also prepare plans for each practice and game.

Assistant Coaches: The head coach will select assistant coaches. Assistant coach volunteers have been identified by the Division Coordinator.

Umpires: Umpires are not used for this division. All safe/out calls will be made by base coaches.

Weather Conditions: The head coaches from the two teams scheduled to play are to decide between them if they need to cancel due to bad weather. All games are scheduled for 6:30pm, cancellations should be decided by 5:00pm. Make-up games should be re-scheduled if possible. The home team head coach is responsible for contacting the Minors Coordinator to reschedule the game.

Machine Pitch General Information

- Practice time is allocated by the Minors Coordinator. Each team has a diamond and a day scheduled, you may use the diamond at any time you would like on your scheduled evening. It is recommended to start practices early in the evening (5:00 or 5:30pm due darkness).
- Each player is to have their own batting helmet and glove.
- Batting helmets, protective cups, and catching gear must be worn.
- The home team is responsible for setting up the diamond. The diamond should be drug and chalked and the bases will need to be put out. Base shall be 60' apart. It is

recommended that you create a volunteer schedule for 2 or 3 parents to take care of this for each home game.

- The home team shall take the bench along the 1st baseline and the visiting team will take the bench along the 3rd baseline.
- The batting team shall provide a coach/parent operator as either the machine pitch operator or the coach pitcher. Only adults may operate the machine. The batting team shall also provide 1st base and 3rd base coaches.
- The fielding team shall provide a coach to assist the catcher.
- The team rosters are intentionally made smaller to maximize the number of at bats and time spent on the infield for the players. Teams are **NOT** required to have 9 players for a game, outfielders are optional. Teams are encouraged to share players if there is an imbalance of players at the games.

Game Play

A half inning will be complete when either three outs are recorded or 5 runs are scored. Games scores will not be kept, just the runs per inning will be kept so the teams know when to switch.

No new inning shall start after the 1 ½ hour mark.

Players will choose if they want to use the pitching machine or if they want the coach to pitch. Coaches should encourage players to hit off the machine. A maximum of 7 pitches will be used for each player, therefore the player has to try to make contact with the ball. If a player does not put the ball in play after 7 good pitches, they shall be called out. If the batter hits a foul ball on the 7th pitch they are entitled to another pitch. If the batter receives a pitch that is deemed unhittable by the machine operator/coach pitcher, the pitch shall **NOT** be counted as one of their 7 pitches. A batter who is hit by a pitch is either entitled to first base or can remain at the plate to complete their at bat. There are no walks and bunting is not allowed.

Once a ball is put in play all regular baseball rules will be used with the following exceptions:

- Players can advance past first base on balls hit to the outfield. Base runners can advance until the ball is returned to the infield at which point they must stay on their current base
- If an overthrow occurs at 1st or 3rd and the ball goes out of play then runners are entitled to the base they were approaching at the time of the throw
- There are no lead-offs and no stealing bases at anytime

Batting: All players will bat in a continuous batting order and must wear a batting helmet when they are on the bench, up to bat and running the bases. All players should be sitting on the bench according to the batting order and be ready when it is their turn to bat. No one should have a bat in their hands until it is their turn to bat.

Throwing of Bats: A batter who throws a bat is to be given a warning the first time and if they do this again they will be called out.

On deck: For safety reasons, there is no on-deck circle. No practice swings until up to bat.

Base Running: Mandatory sliding is in effect for close plays at all bases. Players are expected and should be encouraged to slide feet first at any base, other than first, whenever there is a play. No head first slides.

Defensive play: Recommend that defensive players are rotated each inning. No player is to sit out more than 2 innings. Every player should have the opportunity to play every position, however coaches are responsible for safety and not all players may be able to play each position without risk of injury.

Throws: Every attempt must be made to throw the ball to make a defensive play. It is highly recommended that this be taught to help develop the player and better prepare them for the next level of play.

Player Pitcher: The pitcher is to be positioned on either side of the pitching machine/coach pitcher, but not in front of it and may not move until the ball is hit.

Catchers: Each team will be assigned catchers gear. Teams are encouraged to use catchers to help develop more players at this position. Players must wear full catcher's equipment and a protective cup. A defensive coach shall help catchers gather up pitched balls for the next batter. Pitched balls that go to the back stop will be picked up by the defensive coach. Pitch balls that are caught by the catcher will be rolled to the defensive coach. The catcher will **NOT** throw balls back to the pitching machine operator.

Defensive coaches are encouraged to be on the field to help direct play, teach kids, and keep their focus. Any balls contacting a coach will be declared a dead ball and players may advance to the base they were running to at the time of contact.

Coaching and Practice Tips

1. Keep the focus on safety, fun and development.
2. Make your players' safety your #1 concern at all times.
3. Make every player feel like an important member of the team.
4. Teach every player basic baseball skills.
5. Be patient with your players. Especially when teaching new skills. Baseball skills take years to develop.
6. Encourage team spirit and camaraderie. Praise the performance of your team and players.
7. Every improvement, however small, deserves a compliment.
8. Try to make practices fun and interesting for all your players. Plan practices ahead of time and keep them moving and organized.
9. Don't assume anything, go over all the basics: Where all the bases are, the defensive positions, which way to run to first, when to start and stop running, how to hold a bat and glove etc.