

Saratoga Little League Local Rules

The following rules apply to all Saratoga Little League divisions, as appropriate. All Official Little League Rules apply unless specifically noted below.

I. **Start & End of the Game:**

- A. Pre-Game Warm ups, line-ups, line-up cards and LL Baseball pledge protocol:
 - 30 minutes prior to the start time: Visitor team warmups
 - 20 minutes prior to the start time: Home team warmups
 - 10 minutes prior to the start time: Lineup cards delivered to the plate umpire, immediately followed by team lineups, LL pledge and the home team taking the field. Failure to finish a team warmup is not an excuse to delay the on-time start of the game.
- B. The City of Saratoga will notify SLL if the field is not available for use because of field conditions. Field availability will be posted on the SLL website daily. If the City has approved the field for use but the weather or field conditions are poor, the team managers must both agree the field is acceptable. Once the game is turned over to the umpire-in-chief, only the umpire-in-chief may end a game for weather, darkness or time.

II. **Scorekeeping**

- A. The home team shall be responsible for keeping the official scoresheet.
- B. The official scoresheet shall be kept inside the scorekeeper's booth (or outside the home team dugout) at all times by the home team scorekeeper.
- C. Neither the official nor team scorekeepers seated outside the dugout may communicate with the manager, coach or others in the dugout during the game.
- D. The official scorekeeper is to record the last names and numbers of the players in their batting order for each team.
- E. All official scoresheets are to include the record of all pitchers and the number of innings and pitches thrown. Number of innings should be rounded up to the next whole number (a pitcher who throws 1 and 1/3 innings should reflect 2 innings completed).
- F. Upon completion of a game the official scoresheet will be signed by the plate umpire.
- G. Completed scoresheets should be dropped into the mailbox in the scorekeepers/umpire shed for Majors and AAA only. No official stats being kept below AAA.

- III. **Pitching:** The umpire shall issue a warning to any pitcher and the managers of both teams if the pitcher hits two batters in one inning and or in the plate umpire's opinion is a safety concern because of the pitcher's lack of control. Managers shall notify the plate umpire if they have such a concern. If in the opinion of the plate umpire the pitcher does not have adequate control, the pitcher may be removed.

- IV. **Batting:** All teams will use a "Bat-through" order. All players present and eligible to play shall be listed on the batting order.

V. **Home Team:**

- A. The home team shall occupy the 3rd base dugout.
- B. The home team shall provide two new approved baseballs to the plate umpire with their lineup card at the beginning of the game and have at least one ball in reserve if needed.
- C. The home team shall remove and or replace any rain tarps for the pitcher's mound and home plate areas. Home team shall drag the field immediately following their game.

- VI. **Pitcher / Fielder Warm ups:** In AA and below, there is no warming up of any players between innings, except for pitchers in AA.
- VII. **Dugouts:** All coaches/managers must remain in the dugout with the gates closed at all times except to coach a base when their team is on offense (batting). No player is allowed to leave the dugout except to enter the field of play or use the restroom. If a coach/manager would like to discuss a call with an umpire when on defense, they may enter the field of play once time out is granted. Only one coach/manager is allowed to enter the field of play. No siblings, parents, friends, or individuals other than a player of the team or official coach/manager are allowed in the dugout once the game has officially started. Exceptions made for player injuries or emergencies, and for parents designated by the manager to help maintain order in the dugout in the AA and Farm divisions.
- VIII. **Time Limit (applies to AAA and below only):** If there is a next game scheduled on the same field, then no new inning may start 45 minutes before the start time of the next game. Also note the specific time limit rules for other divisions in their respective division-specific local rules.

Majors-Specific Local Rules

Minimum Number of Players: If a team cannot field nine players within 10 minutes of the scheduled start of the game, the team shall forfeit the game. The game may be played if a 9th player arrives after the forfeit; however, the score will not count.

Minimum Defensive Play: Minimum defensive play for each player shall be nine defensive outs per six inning game. If a player plays fewer than nine defensive outs because the game was called before six innings were completed, and if the player did not play at least half the defensive innings, the player must start the next game and play at least nine defensive outs.

Player pull-up/replacement:

A manager or coach may make a request to the BOD (through the Player Agent) to remove any player that consistently misses practices or games. The Manager must notify the Player Agent by email the next day after any player has missed all games during a seven consecutive day period, whether excused or unexcused. The Player Agent will contact the parents to verify the situation and notify the Board as required pursuant to the Operating Manual. Injuries or illness requiring absence of six weeks rehabilitation or less do not require player replacement provided that they are corroborated by a physician in writing. Injuries or illnesses requiring greater rehabilitation time are at the discretion of the Player Agent based upon facts and circumstances. No requirement to pull-up for injury within last two weeks of regular season play.

In the event that a player terminates the league, the Player Agent will instruct the manager to select a new player from AAA from the list of eligible players presented by the Player Agent. The list will exclude all AAA Managers', Coaches' and Assistant Coaches' sons/daughters unless the Manager/Coach parent agrees to allow their child to be considered for advancement to the Majors division. The Player Agent will not force any player to advance to Majors division against their or their parents' wishes. The Majors manager will have seven days from the date of the terminating player's last game to make a selection. If the Majors manager does not make a selection within that time period, the Player Agent will select a player, prioritizing 12 year-olds and any 11 year-old not selected in the Majors draft willing to advance to the Majors.

AAA-Specific Local Rules

Competition: The first five games of the season will be deemed "Preseason" and standings will not be kept. For the remaining games of the season, standings will be kept. Standings will be used to determine seedings for the season-ending tournament.

Pregame: No Manager/Coach should require players to be at the field more than one hour prior to game time for warm-up

Minimum Number of Players: No team may start a game with fewer than eight players. If a team cannot field eight players within 10 minutes of the scheduled start of the game, the team shall forfeit the game. The game may be played if an 8th player arrives after the forfeit; however, the score will not count.

Time Limit: Weekday games must end at the earlier of 7.30pm or 2.5 hours after the first pitch (with the score based on the last complete inning).

Pitching:

Pitch Counts: Each team shall be provided with two pitch count clickers. Pitch counts shall be maintained by a player or coach in the dugout and an adult outside the dugout. The higher of the two counts shall be recorded in the official scorebook.

Curve balls, sliders, and knuckle balls are considered illegal pitches and shall be called a ball. Fastballs and change ups are the only two pitches permissible at this level. Plate umpires shall first issue a warning to the pitcher and manager of the offending team before a penalty is enforced.

Batting: Managers shall rotate bottom of order, no player bats last more than two games, everyone gets to bat leadoff at least once.

Minimum Defensive Play: Each player plays two innings of a four inning game, three innings of a five inning game or four innings of a six inning game. No player shall sit on the bench more than one consecutive inning.

Last Inning: In the last inning of a AAA game, the 5-run limit for Minors games is removed. However, each team can still only bat through their lineup once.

AA-Specific Local Rules

Defensive Field Coach: In order to further provide defensive instruction, the defense may place a defensive coach in the field. The coach may talk to individual players during dead ball periods, but are not to cause a delay of the game. All other coaches will remain in the dugout at all times (exceptions include helping catcher adjust their equipment). The defensive coach will be allowed on the field for the first 6 weeks of the season.

Competition: Standings will not be kept until the playoffs. Preseason for AA is the first half of the season (important for AA pitching rules).

Pregame: No Manager/Coach should require players to be at the field more than one hour prior to game time for warm-up.

Minimum Number of Players: No team may start a game with fewer than eight players. If a team cannot field eight players within 10 minutes of the scheduled start of the game, the team shall forfeit the game. The game may be played if an 8th player arrives after the forfeit; however, the score will not count.

Time Limit: For weekday games only, no new inning may begin after 2 hours and no game may go beyond 2.5 hours; for games halted at 2.5 hours, the score will be based on the last complete inning.

Pitching:

Curve balls, sliders, knuckle balls and change-ups are considered illegal pitches and shall be called a ball. A "Fastball" is the only pitch permissible at this level. Plate umpires shall first issue a warning to the pitcher and manager of the offending team before a penalty is enforced.

Walks: Each pitcher may only walk two batters in an inning. After the second walk (during regular season and preseason games), an offensive adult base coach must pitch and close out the inning. During preseason games, teams must switch to coach pitching to finish the inning after 20 pitches have been thrown in the inning (ok for player pitcher to finish current batter). During the playoffs, the coach enters the game to finish the batter after there have been two walks and four balls to a subsequent batter. However, during the playoffs, the coach does not close out the inning but instead hands the ball back to the pitcher to face the next batter. The plate umpire shall notify the coach of the number of strikes when he/she enters to pitch.

Coach Pitching: Only one "warm up" pitch is permissible. Pitches must be thrown from the pitching rubber and cannot be thrown underhanded. Balls will not be called. The batter will be called out once three strikes are reached, either swinging or called. One adult must always remain in the dugout. There will be a maximum of five pitches per batter from the Manager/Coach, except that the batter can receive additional pitches if the fifth or subsequent pitch is fouled off. If the batter does not strike out or put the ball in play he/she will be called out. This will be recorded as a strikeout in the scorebook.

Batting:

A player shall not bat last more than twice during the season. Every player shall be given the opportunity to bat lead-off at least once during the season.

The AA strike zone shall be at least one ball width wider and taller than the NLL strike zone in order to encourage batters to swing at pitches. In general this means any pitch from the shoulders to the bottom of the knees and two ball widths on either side of the plate will be called a strike.

Minimum Defensive Play: Two innings of a four inning game, three of five innings or four innings of a six inning game. No player shall sit more than one consecutive inning.

Defensive Position Rotation: The defense is able to place a total of 10 players in the field, six infielders and four outfielders. A player may not play in a “key position” more than three innings per game. “Key Positions” are defined as: 3rd base, shortstop, 2nd base and 1st base. Managers must have a written defensive line-up card available before each game. The line-up may be altered during the game, but may be inspected by the opposing manager at any time.

Stoppage of play:

Base stealing is not allowed. During a play initiated by a batted ball, the play is over and no further advance of any runner is allowed once the defensive team controls the ball in front of the lead runner and forces the runner to stop at (or retreat to) an unoccupied base. An error on the return throw to the pitcher does not allow runners to advance.

In-field Fly rule will not be enforced.

Farm-Specific Local Rules

Pregame: No Manager/Coach should require players to be at the field more than 30 minutes prior to game time for warm-up. Pregame warm-ups on the playing field shall not include batting practice and should be kept to ten minutes per team to ensure an on-time start of the game. Coaches may hold a batting stick off the field for batting warm-up of their players if desired.

Defensive Field Coach: In order to further provide defensive instruction, the defense may place a defensive coach in the field. The coach must stay behind 2nd base and may not leave their assigned position during play. The coach may talk to individual players during dead ball periods, but are not to cause a delay of the game. All other coaches will remain in the dugout at all times (exceptions include helping catcher adjust their equipment). This rule will remain in effect until the end of April.

A player needing one-on-one attention in the field while on defense may be accompanied by a designated coach or parent who has received approval to do so by the Farm Commissioner.

Offensive Field Coaches: Official Little League rules specify that a team can utilize a maximum of three managers/coaches during a game, and that all other parents/adults must remain off the field and out of the dugout. However, the Farm division is unique because an adult manager/coach is required to operate the pitching machine. Under official Little League rules, at least one coach must remain in the dugout at all times to supervise the players, which means that only two offensive team coaches can be in the field. Generally this means that at least one base coach needs to be a uniformed player (wearing a batting helmet).

Minimum Number of Players: No team may start a game with fewer than eight players. If a team cannot field eight players within 10 minutes of the scheduled start of the game, the SLL Board has determined this team shall forfeit the game. The game may be played if an 8th player arrives after the forfeit; however, the score will not count. When fielding only nine players, the outfield is reduced to three positions. When fielding only eight players, the pitcher and fourth outfielder are eliminated. A catcher is required at all times.

Time Limit: During the regular season (weekday and weekend games) no game may exceed 2.0 hours regardless of the number of innings played. During the playoffs, no new inning may begin after 2.0 hours and all post-season games must end within 2.5 hours. Score reverts back to the last complete inning for all games halted due to time limit.

Standings: Division standings (regular season) will be maintained by the head scorekeeper for the Farm division and the Farm Commissioner only. Division standings (regular season) will not be posted and will not count towards any trophies or tournament.

Pitching: All players will hit from a pitching machine in order to provide pitch consistency. The pitching machine shall be operated by an offensive manager or coach who shall stay within six feet of the machine during play. The pitching machine speed shall not be changed during the game. Prior to delivering a pitch the machine operator shall hold the ball in the air to alert the defensive players of an impending pitch. No adjustments may be made to the pitching machine after the last out. The offensive coaches will keep the number of "test" pitches to a reasonable number between innings and only to calibrate the pitching machine if the pitching machine is throwing wild pitches.

Batting and batting machine/operator: The home team shall install and remove the pitching machine equipment. All teams will have continuous batting – rotate bottom of batting order, no player bats last more than 2 games, everyone gets to bat leadoff at least once.

No ball count is to be kept, therefore there are no walks. Only strikes are recorded.

All strikes must be swinging strikes, until batter allows three pitches to go through the strike zone without swinging at them. At that point, the plate umpire shall also call non-swing strikes.

Any batted ball that hits the pitching machine or the operator is a dead ball, no runners may advance, the batter returns to the batter's box and will receive a new count. Any thrown ball that hits the pitching machine or the operator is a dead ball, any runners shall advance to the base they were heading providing, in the umpire's judgment, they were past the half-way point between bases.

Stealing is not permissible at any time.

Defensive Play and Key Position Players: The defense is able to place a total of 10 players in the field, six infielders and four outfielders.

Each player will play 2 innings of 4, 3 innings of 5, 4 innings of 6. If a game situation (e.g., game called for time or darkness) prevents a player from playing her/his minimum innings for any given game, then that player will play additional innings in the next game. No player will sit on the bench more than one consecutive inning.

The key positions are: Pitcher, 1st base, 2nd base, shortstop and 3rd base. A player may only play three innings in any combination of the defined key positions. Managers must have a written defensive line-up card available before game time. The line-up may be altered during the game, but may be inspected by the opposing manager at any time. If a team is found not following the Key Position rule, the team forgoes all runs scored in the 4th, 5th and 6th innings.

The pitcher shall play within six feet on either side of the pitching machine.

Infielders, except the pitcher, shall not encroach more than three feet onto the grass area before the ball is put into play. Outfielders will stay beyond the dirt infield area before the ball is put into play.

Stoppage of play, dead ball: During a play initiated by a batted ball, the play is over and no further advance is allowed by any runner once the defensive infielder controls the ball in front of the lead runner and forces that runner to stop at (or retreat to) an unoccupied base. An error on the return throw to the pitcher does not allow runners to advance.

The play is also dead when the ball is thrown under control back to the coach who is operating the pitching machine. The coach operating the pitching machine should stay alert to receive the ball from the other team's fielders (leave the base coaching to the coaches stationed at first and third base).

In-field fly rule will not be enforced.

MiniBall-Specific Local Rules

Game Length: Three full innings will be played for all games--three innings at bat and in the field. Games not to exceed 1.5 hours.

Number of Players: Games can be played with 5 to a maximum of 10 players.

Defensive Play: Defensive team puts all players in the field, with preferably 4-5 outfielders. It is encouraged that players be moved to different positions each inning. If a child is thrown out at a base, the child moves off the base and returns to his/her team bench. This way both teams understand that their goal is to throw out the batter or runner.

Offensive Play: Every team member bats every inning, regardless of the number of outs. The batting order should be rotated from game to game such that no player bats last more than two games and that everyone gets to bat leadoff at least once.

No official score is recorded.

The last batter is the clean-up batter. In order to get this last batter out, the batter has to be tagged out or one of the defensive players must step on the lead base.

Coaches will pitch to their own players. After three pitches the ball will be placed on a tee to continue play. The catcher shall be a coach or a parent.

Runners should remain on base until the ball is hit.

Coaches: Defensive team coaches may coach at any position. Offensive team coaches may coach at first and third bases.

Overthrows: The play is "dead" with the base runner(s) being awarded the base(s) that they were running towards when the over throw occurred.

Example 1: Base runners on 1st and 2nd, the ball is put into play, and the 2nd baseman overthrows the ball to the shortstop at 2nd base, the play is "dead" with the base runners being awarded 2nd and 3rd and the batter being awarded 1st

Example 2: Base runner at 3rd, the ball is put into play, and the 2nd baseman overthrows the ball to the shortstop at 2nd base, the play is "dead" with the base runner on 3rd being awarded home and the batter being awarded 1st.

T-Ball-Specific Local Rules

Game Length: Three full innings will be played for all games--three innings at bat and in the field. Games not to exceed 1.5 hours.

Number of Players: No minimum number of players is needed to play a game. Everyone plays all innings.

Defensive Play: Defensive team puts all players in the field, with preferably 4-5 outfielders. It is encouraged that players be moved to different positions each inning. Preferably, a child who can catch the ball safely should be positioned at first base. If a child is thrown out at a base, the child moves off the base and returns to his/her team bench. This way both teams understand that their goal is to throw out the batter or runner. If a fielder overthrows first, second, or third base, the runner(s) must return to their respective base(s) prior to the overthrow.

Offensive Play: Everyone bats regardless of the number of outs per inning. The batting order should be rotated from game to game such that no player bats last more than 2 games and that everyone gets to bat leadoff at least once.

No scores or standings are kept.

The last batter is the clean-up batter. The defense should attempt to get an out as on any other play. Having the defense run to home for the out is not recommended due to safety concerns.

The T is used for all offensive at bats in accordance with Official Little League rules. Coach pitch is not allowed in T-Ball.

Be very careful to make sure players are not throwing the bat. This is an important safety habit to form at these young ages. A good technique is to place a hula hoop (or equivalent) near home on the first base side and teach the players to lay the bat in the hoop after hitting.

If the ball is hit beyond an outfielder, the runner may advance to second. There are no triples or home runs.

Runners should remain on base until the ball is hit.

Coaches: Defensive coaches may coach at any position. Offensive coaches should be at first and third bases. A coach should be at the catcher position so that he/she can place the ball on the T and adjust the height of the T for each player.