

IFPAA League Rules

(Instructional Baseball - 7-year olds)



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GENERAL: Instructional League is the second step in the sequence of baseball programs at IFPAA, leading the children through what is hopefully a long and rewarding involvement with organized sports for each of them. The goal for this year is to continue to present the basic skills of baseball (i.e., hitting, catching, throwing and running) to these young children in a relaxed, low-stress atmosphere, while simultaneously introducing them to a slightly more advanced level of skills that requires more thought and attention to the specific game situation on the field. Physical skills are naturally important and will develop over time with repetition, but the mental skills of preparation and awareness are critical to success in baseball and can be learned by children of ALL abilities.

Special rules for young children are still in effect which allow all of the basic skills to be utilized under real-game situations, but including provisions which guarantee equal playing time for everyone, provide experience by continuously putting the ball in play and encourage the kids to try their best by minimizing the risks and penalties possible on any play. These rules are structured in such a way so as to be flexible enough to allow all the kids to participate at their own pace: the most advanced will be able to hit a pitched ball and make putouts in the field, while others less experienced or physically mature can hit off the tee and still attempt to make fielding plays without severe penalties or potential for embarrassing errors. The major change at this level is the introduction of the Catcher position. Other changes from T-Ball include the elimination of the Rover and the more live action sequences that require the kids to complete each play a little further than before.

FIELD: The field dimensions for I-League consist of bases 50 feet apart, a foul arc 15 feet in front of home plate, a pitcher's line 45 feet from home, overthrow arcs 10 feet in foul territory from first and third bases and halfway lines between the bases.

The home team is responsible for preparing the field for each game. This includes setting the bases and tee, lining and raking the field, doing any general tidying up needed and making all decisions on field conditions due to weather. Because of the distance to Linbrook for some, it is imperative that the home manager, or his representative, check fields during questionable weather early enough to alert both teams in a timely manner.

EQUIPMENT: We will use the 1S T-Ball, the same one that is used in T-Ball. Uniform shirts and caps are provided by the league; the shirts should be returned at the end of the season and the

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caps are kept. Bats, bases, tees and catcher's equipment are kept in the boxes at the fields. Balls will be provided to the managers by the league. The kids must bring their own gloves and baseball shoes, and may bring bats if they wish, but everything should be prominently marked as equipment has a tendency to get misplaced at this age. *STEEL-SPIKED SHOES ARE NOT PERMITTED.*

PLAYERS: There will be 6 infielders: first base, second base, shortstop, third base, pitcher and catcher. The outfield will consist of all the remaining players available, as all children are guaranteed equal playing time.

A related matter is the rotation of players to different positions. Each child must play in the infield for a minimum of two innings up to a maximum of four. No child may play more than one inning per game at pitcher or first base or two innings per game at catcher.

GAME: The games will be five innings in duration. Each inning will end after three outs or on the play that scores the fifth run. Even after the fifth run scores, that play is allowed to run its course, during which time any runs that score will be counted. Therefore, it becomes very important for the kids to keep their heads in the game and finish each play.

Games should run no longer than an hour and forty five minutes. All games will be scheduled in two hour blocks to allow for some warm up time. **NO GAME** can run into the next time period, and any game reaching that point must be stopped immediately. Any game halted during play will be considered complete if the losing team has batted at least three innings. Games called before this point can be rescheduled with the agreement of both managers.

BATTING: With the batting team's coach pitching, each batter will have the opportunity to face up to five pitches and take up to three swings. There will be **NO** strikeouts. If the ball has not been put into play after five pitches or three swings (not counting fouls on the third swing), the batter will hit from the tee until a playable ball is hit. In addition to the standard foul lines, any ball not hit past the 15 foot foul arc will be ruled foul. If the batter's last swing results in a foul, he receives another pitch. Any time the batter loudly strikes the tee, the play will be ruled dead, and the swing will be played over. Full swings must be taken at all times, as there is **NO** bunting.

A batter may not throw the bat. If this occurs, play is ruled dead and the offending batter is warned. If the batter throws the bat again during the *SAME* at bat, the batter will be called out.

If a team bats out of order, and it is noticed during the inning, the team will rebat from the point of the last "legal" batter, with the game situation duplicated from that point. If it is not noticed at that point, the game will proceed with the original lineup from the last batter in the inning. No out is recorded for batting out of order.

BASERUNNING: With no leads or stealing, the runner must wait until the batter makes contact with the ball. Once the ball is in play, runners can advance until play is stopped, at which point, runners are awarded the base they are entitled by the halfway line (lead runners take precedence over trailing runners). The base runner should stay within the baseline. The only exceptions to this are to avoid a batted ball or interference. The runner has the right of way at all times, except

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when a fielder is making a play. If a runner interferes with a fielder while playing the ball, the runner is out and play is stopped. If a runner runs out of the baseline to avoid a tag, he is out. The runner may round first base to the right or left providing there is no deliberate move toward second. However, it is really time to encourage runners to go toward the right. To encourage infield throws, runners will NOT be awarded an extra base when the ball goes out of bounds (past the 10 foot arc surrounding first and third). Other throws are still in play and runners may continue. Base coaches may not physically interfere with any runner. Runners must avoid contact with fielders at all times or they will be called out.

FIELDING: At the start of each play, the infielders must be in the traditional defensive positions, outfielders must be evenly spaced in the outfield and 30 feet past any of the bases, the pitcher must be stationary behind the pitcher's line and the catcher must be in either of the two accepted positions as discussed below.

After a fair ball is hit, play will continue until one of the following occurs: an outfielder throws the ball to an infielder who must control and hold it, an infielder holds the ball after making a play or receiving a throw, the ball goes out of bounds (past the 10 foot arcs) or the umpire stops play to prevent an unsafe situation. At this point, the halfway lines are used.

If an infielder receives a throw and wishes to relay it quickly to another position for an out, he has a split-second to continue his motion and keep the play alive. Once he holds the ball or appears indecisive, the umpire will call time.

We strongly stress that the players should defend the area appropriate for their own position and not try to play the whole field. Players should throw the ball when trying to make a play at a base *if* there is a fielder at that position. NOTE: If it appears that a team has a set play or a player decides to continuously run the ball to a base rather than risk a throw, the umpire will allow the play one time but warn the manager, after which point all subsequent runners in similar situations will be ruled safe.

Fielders not in the act of fielding cannot obstruct base runners - bases "lost" will be awarded by the umpire. Batting team coaches may request that fielders standing in the baseline move before a play starts. There is no infield fly rule.

The outfield consists of all players remaining after the 6 player infield is established. No outfielder can make a putout at a base. However, the outfielder is permitted to make an assist by throwing to an infielder. For this reason the outfielders must start each play 30 feet behind the bases.

The catcher position is introduced for the first time this year. The catcher will have the option to either crouch behind the plate in the traditional way or stand behind the batter, becoming active only for a play at the plate. Those catchers who are able to, can catch the pitches. However, if a catcher is trying to do this, and misses too many, he will be asked to move behind the batter and allow the umpire to act as catcher for the pitches.

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All outs at home plate will be considered forceouts to prevent injury as the catchers are learning the position. This will work as follows: when an unforced runner is coming from third base, he retains his unforced status and is able to return to the base as long as he has not crossed the halfway line - once he crosses the line, he becomes forced at home.

COACHES: The league can use as many parents as possible to help at this age level. Besides the manager, two base coaches are needed, one coach serves as pitcher to the team when batting, a batter coach may be used to help adjust the stance and instruct a batter and two outfield coaches are allowed to keep outfielders alert and organized. The outfield coaches should be cut back to one and eventually eliminated during the season.

UMPIRING: The home team for each game is required to provide the home plate umpire, while the visiting team will provide the infield umpire. The infield umpire will be responsible for all plays at first and second bases as well as calling time when an infielder decides to hold the ball. The home plate umpire is responsible for plays at third base and home. Before each batter steps in and before each tee placement, the home plate umpire will check on fielder awareness and say "Play Ball". He will stop play immediately when a bat is thrown or loudly hits the tee, remove the tee and bat immediately after the batter leaves the home plate area, serve as catcher for the pitches when the child catcher is not doing so, and enforce safe practices on the field of play.

The home plate umpire will have the final word on all plays. Managers and coaches should NOT question or discuss umpire calls on the field. If an inexperienced parent makes a mistake as an umpire, the manager should wait until after the game to clarify the rule so that the parent will understand the correct ruling for the next time.

Revised and approved by IFPAA Board of Directors, April 4, 2002.