

Baseball & Softball 2nd-8th Rules and Regulations

Playing rules not specifically covered in this document shall be covered by the Official Rules & Regulations of the South Carolina High School Baseball and Softball Leagues.

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Balks

In all baseball divisions, 5/6th grade and below, there will be no balks called. In the 6th/8th grade baseball division instructional balks will be called the first two weeks of the season with no penalty enforced. In the third week of the season, balks will be called and the penalty will be enforced. See pitching appendix for further explanation on pitching delivery and balk explanations.

Balls

A regulation baseball will be used for all baseball divisions. The ball cannot weigh less than five ounces and not more than five and one-fourth ounces and cannot measure less than nine inches and more than nine and one-fourth inches in circumference.

A regulation softball will be used for all softball divisions. In the 2nd and 3rd and 4th and 5th grade divisions an 11 inch ball will be used. In the 6th and 7th grade divisions a 12 inch ball will be used.

Base lines

2nd and 3rd / 4th baseball and all softball = 60 feet

5/6th baseball = 70 feet

6/8th baseball = 90 feet

Base Stealing

In all divisions 5/6th grade and below, a runner must remain in contact with the base until the ball reaches home plate. (5/6th baseball only, runner may take a 10' lead but may not cross 10' until ball reaches the plate) If a player is called for "leaving early", the defensive coach shall have the choice of having the runner return to the last base occupied AND whether to accept the pitch as called, or to consider it a "no pitch". Example: A runner on first leaves before the ball reaches the plate, as indicated by the umpire. The batter swings and hits a single into right field. The runner advances to third on the hit. After play is stopped, the defensive coach may send the runner back to first and consider it a "no pitch", where the batter would return to the plate and assume the previous count. Exceptions: a.) The batter hits a ground rule double, in which case all runners will advance two (2) bases. b.) The batter hits a fly ball over the outfield fence in fair territory (home run). c.) The batter is hit by the pitch.

In the 4th grade division of baseball and softball, a base runner cannot steal home on a passed ball. In the 6/8th grade division of baseball, a base runner may lead off and steal as in regular baseball.

Bats

Big barrel bats with a barrel diameter greater than 2 ¼ inches are allowed. 2 5/8 and 2 ¾ are legal bats as long as they are stamped approved for youth league play. All other bats must be stamped for approval in a national governing body – Dixie, Little league, etc.

Batting

In 2nd and 3rd grade division a batter shall receive up to five (5) pitches. A batter is out if he does not put the ball into play with one of the five (5) pitches. If the fifth pitch is hit foul, the batter continues until the ball is put into play or is missed. If the catcher catches a foul ball (pop up) on any pitch or a foul tip on the fifth pitch, the batter is out.

In all age groups, if a batter slings a bat the umpire will issue a warning to each team. All subsequent batters on either team that sling a bat are OUT.

Batting Order

The coach of each team shall create a batting order consisting of all players on the team roster present at the beginning of the game. Late arrivals shall be added to the bottom of the order. All players in the batting order shall bat before returning to the top of the order. The order will remain the same throughout the entire game batting everyone regardless of defensive position. This is a continuous batting order.

In all divisions the offensive team will bat until three (3) outs have been recorded. Exceptions: a.) If the home team is ahead and the 10-Run Rule goes into effect, the game shall end. b.) If the home team is ahead and time expires, the game shall end.

If a player is removed from the game for any reason, including sickness, injury, or ejection, then his spot in the batting order will be skipped with no penalty, unless the minimum number of players rule comes into effect. See number of players rule for further explanation.

Batting out of Turn

A batter shall be called out, on appeal, when failing to bat in proper turn and another batter completes a time at bat in place of the proper batter. (1) The proper batter may take position in the batter's box at any time before the improper batter becomes a runner or is put out, and any balls and strikes shall be counted in the proper batter's time at bat.

Bunting

In the 2nd and 3rd grade division bunting is not allowed. The batted ball must go past a 10 ft arc in front of home plate.

Calling "Time" to Stop Play

In the 2nd and 3rd grade division, umpires will call "time" after every play and declare the ball dead. "Time" will be granted when the defense controls the ball in the pitchers circle and asks for time. At this point the umpire will call time and then decide if any runners advancing are half way to the next base or not – any who are will be allowed the next base, any who are not will return to the previous base – this is the umpire's judgement and applies to all bases except 1st base for the batter.

Catcher's Equipment

The catcher must wear all appropriate protective gear, including an approved catcher's helmet with face mask and throat protector, a chest protector, and shin guards.

In addition, male catchers must wear a protective cup. Female catchers must wear sufficient padding to prevent injury. 2/3rd grade an adult catcher should catch and the player catcher may wear a masked helmet and stand along the backstop to the backside of the batter for safety.

Cleats

In all divisions metal spikes are prohibited.

Coaches

In all divisions coaches must remain in the coach's box. All other coaches must remain in the dugout. No coaches are allowed on the field. Exceptions: In Coaches Pitch, there may be an adult pitcher and an adult catcher on the field. The adult catcher is only used to speed up play and may not interfere with game play.

Base coaches shall not touch, push, or stop base runners during play. If a coach interferes or assists a runner in any way during play, then that runner shall be called OUT. Also, the adult pitcher and adult catcher are not to coach the base runners.

Complete Games

The table below indicates Complete Games and Official Games if a game is shortened due to inclement weather.

| | 2nd and 3rd Grade | 4th - 8th Grade |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| Complete Game | 5 Innings | 6 Innings |
| Official Game | 3 Innings | 4 Innings |
| Official Game if the Home Team is ahead | 2 ½ Innings | 3 ½ Innings |

If a game is shortened due to inclement weather and the game has not reached the point of being an Official Game, that game will be rescheduled as soon as possible and will resume at the exact point where the suspension began. Example: If a game is suspended in the top of the third with one out and a runner on second base, with the #6 batter at the plate, that is where play will resume. If a game is shortened due to inclement weather and the game has passed the point of being an official game, then the final score will be based on the score at the end of the last completed inning.

Courtesy Runners

In order to speed up the game, a courtesy runner should be used for the catcher. The courtesy runner shall be the player that made the last out. If there are two (2) outs, a courtesy runner is mandatory. (Does not apply to 2/3rd grade Coaches Pitch)

Defensive Substitution

There shall be free substitution on defense. Players, except pitchers, may be substituted freely at any position between innings. Substitutions may not occur in the middle of an inning except when there is a pitching change or a player is removed from the game due to sickness, injury, or ejection.

Dropped Third Strike

In all divisions except 6/8th grade baseball, a dropped third strike is considered an out. In the 6/8th grade baseball division a dropped third strike is a live ball and the runner must be tagged out or thrown out at first base as they would in high school baseball.

Dugouts

The home team shall occupy the dugout on the third base side of the field. The visiting team shall occupy the dugout on the first base side of the field.

In the 2nd and 3rd Grade divisions there should be no more than five (5) persons in the dugout that are not players.

In the 4th and 5th and 6th and 7th grade divisions there should be no more than four (4) persons in the dugout that are not players.

Ejection

In all divisions, the first ejection results in suspension for the rest of the game. The player or coach must leave the game site, which includes the parking lot, in which the ejection occurs and may also be suspended from the team's next game.

The circumstances of the suspension will be reviewed by the Recreation Department Staff to see if further action is necessary. Upon a second ejection, the Recreation Department WILL review the circumstances of the suspension and recommend disciplinary action, which could result in removal from participation in the league.

Forfeits

If a team has to forfeit a game for any reason, the score shall be recorded as the number of innings in a complete game to zero (0). Example: The score for a forfeited 4th and 5th grade game would be recorded as 6-0. See the table in the Completed Games section for complete game innings.

Head First Slide

In all divisions 4th and 5th grade and below, there will be no head first slides into any base, except in returning to a base that the runner has already reached safely. A runner that slides head first into a base is automatically called OUT.

In the 6/8th grade division, a head first slide is allowed into any base except Home Plate. A runner that slides head first into Home Plate is automatically called OUT.

Helmets

In all divisions players must wear approved batting helmets. A chin strap is recommended but not required during league play.

A player may not remove his helmet while batting or running the bases. The on-deck batter, and the bat boy/girl, must wear a batting helmet when on the field.

Infield Fly Rule

In the 2nd and 3rd grade division there is no infield fly rule.

Intentional Walks

Every batter must be pitched to – to walk a batter intentionally the pitcher must throw four pitches and the catcher may stand but must remain in the catcher's box until the pitch is released – no notification to the umpire needs to be made.

Number of Players

In all divisions, a team may play a game with as few as eight (7) players. If a team has fewer than eight (7) players, then that team shall have to forfeit the game. Every effort should be made to play some semblance of a game EVEN IF the official record shows a forfeit.

In the 2nd and 3rd grade division, all players take the field on defense, with no more than six (6) players on the infield. The defensive team must supply a catcher if playing with eleven (11) or more players. If playing with ten (10) or fewer players, the defensive team's pitcher will have to cover home plate. An adult catcher may back up the catcher to speed up the game, but may not interfere with game play.

In all other divisions, ten (10) players will take the field on defense, with no more than six (6) players on the infield.

In all age groups, every player must play a minimum of two (2) innings on defense in a four (4) inning game and three (3) innings on defense in a six (6) inning game. A defensive inning is defined as a 3-out inning.

EXCEPTION: - 6/8 Baseball will play a regular 9 player defensive alignment.

Over throw to first base

In the 2nd and 3rd grade divisions, if the ball is overthrown at first base, then the runner or runners may advance only one base. If a play is made to get that runner out advancing to that base the defense has put the ball back in play and the runner can advance as much past 2nd base at his/her own peril.

Pitching

In 2nd and 3rd grade division, pitching is by the offensive team's coach or designate. The adult pitcher shall pitch from within the pitching circle. The adult pitcher may pitch underhand or overhand, from the standing or kneeling position. If the adult pitcher is hit by a batted ball or catches a batted ball in self-defense, it is considered a base hit and dead ball all runners move up one base(not to penalize the batter for a well hit ball). If, in the umpire's opinion, the adult pitcher intentionally interferes with a batted ball, the batter is OUT.

In the 2nd and 3rd grade division, the player in the pitcher's position must remain within the pitching circle until the ball crosses the plate. The player may stand behind or beside the adult pitcher, but not in front.

In all other divisions a pitcher cannot pitch more than 6 innings a week when there are 2 scheduled games in one week and 8 innings a week when there are 3 scheduled games in one week. A week is defined as Monday – Saturday.

4th & 5/6th Grade Only -Once a pitcher is removed from the mound they can return to the mound in that game one time. A pitcher may return to the mound after being taken out only one time in a game. If the pitcher comes back to the mound in the same inning, it will count as two innings pitched. One pitch in an inning counts as an inning pitched. Coaches must sign the umpires score card and pitch record after each game. This card will remain on file with the Recreation Department to make sure the players are not going over the allowed innings per week.

4th and 5th Grade division (softball) – if the pitcher walks a total of three batters the coach for the team batting will come out and pitch the remainder of that inning. The player pitcher will start each inning of the game. This should keep the game moving and still allow pitchers to work in the games and not penalize a pitcher with good control. When the coach pitches to the batters, they have 5 pitches OR 3 SWINGING STRIKES and all rules revert back to 2nd and 3rd grade division rules.

6/8th Baseball once a pitcher is removed from the mound the player may NOT return to the mound as a pitcher in that game but may move to any other defensive position – free defensive substitution applies by listing all players in the batting order.

Pitching Distance

In the 2nd and 3rd Grade Division a 10 foot circle will be drawn around the pitching rubber. The coach must pitch from within that circle.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 4th Grade Division: | Baseball = 42 feet | Softball = 35 feet |
| 5/6th Grade Division: | Baseball = 50 feet | 6/8 th Softball = 40 feet |
| 6/8 th Grade Division | Baseball=60'6" feet | |

Runner Collisions

A runner is not required to slide at any base. But a runner IS required to attempt to avoid contact at any base whenever a tag play is evident. Such an attempt may be to slide or run around, but NOT jump over the defensive player. In the event that a runner does not attempt to avoid a collision and runs into a defensive player who is in possession of the ball, or if the runner attempts to jump over the defensive player, that runner shall be declared OUT. If the umpire determines that the contact was malicious and/or intentional, the runner may also be ejected from the game.

Scorekeeper

Each team shall appoint a Scorekeeper. The Home Team Scorekeeper shall be the Official Scorekeeper for the game.

Seven Run Rule

In all divisions the offensive team shall score no more than 7 runs in an inning. When the 7th run crosses the plate, play stops and the offensive team assumes three (3) outs.

Sickness/Injuries

A player removed from the game due to sickness or injury may re-enter the game at any time. He must re-enter in the same batting position he had when he left the game. If removing the player results in a team having only eight (8) players, then an Out must be recorded when that player 's position comes up to bat. If removing the player results in a team having only seven (7) players, then the game is forfeited.

Slash Bunt

A player that squares to bunt may not attempt to "swing away" at that pitch. Any attempt to do so shall result in the batter being called OUT. **Exception 6/8th Grade baseball**

Sportsmanship

All players, coaches, and parents are expected to behave in a sportsmanlike manner at all times. The umpire's judgment calls may not be argued. Any player, coach, parent, or fan whose conduct is unbecoming or abusive will be warned and may be removed from the playing field or the game site. A player who removes his helmet and throws it on the field shall be immediately ejected from the game. Players who throw their helmet in the dugout should be disciplined by the coach.

10-Run Rule

There will be a 10-Run Rule in effect for all divisions. The 10-Run Rule shall be in effect for all tournament games, including championship games. (Time permitting the game may be called officially and the teams continue to play out the time limit to get each team more playing time)

| | 2nd and 3rd Grade | 4th – 6th Grade |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|
| 10-Run Rule Applies after | 3 Innings | 4 Innings |
| If the Home Team is ahead, 10-Run Rule Applies after | 2 ½ Innings | 3 ½ Innings |

Tie Games

During the regular season, games may end in a tie. It is permissible to play one (1) extra inning, but only if the "No New Inning After Limit" has not been exceeded. See the Time Limits section for additional information.

During a tournament, games may not end in a tie. If a game is tied after the regulation number of innings, one (1) additional inning will be played. If the game is still tied after the additional inning, the International Tie Breaker Rules will go into effect. For the International Tie Breaker, the last out of the previous inning is placed on second base. The team assumes one (1) out and resumes batting with the next batter in the line up. Play continues in this manner until there is a winner.

Weather

In the event of bad weather we will make a decision before 4pm if possible. We will send an email to all participants when we cancel games.

School Events

Due to the numerous schools that have kids in our program we cannot change schedules to work around fields trips, testing, performances, awards ceremonies etc.

Time Limits

The umpire shall provide both teams with the official starting time of the game. The official time should be recorded in the scorebook by each team's scorekeeper. The time limits begin with the official starting time, not the scheduled game time.

The game shall be ended if the Time Limit is reached and the Home team is ahead. No new inning shall be started after the limits indicated for "No New Inning After".

| | 2nd and 3rd grade | 4th – 8th grade | 4/5 & 6/8 Softball |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| Time Limit | 1hour | 1 hour 30 minutes | 1 hour 30 minutes |
| No New Inning After | 50 minutes | 1 hour 20 minutes | 1 hour 20 minutes |
| | | | Drop dead 1hr 35min Revert to last complete Inning |
| | | | |

Trips to the Mound

When a team is charged with its second trip to the mound in an inning, the pitcher must be removed from the pitching position for the remainder of that inning and may only re-enter as a pitcher one time(4th & 5/6th grade only) provided no other pitching rules are broken. The pitcher may be moved to another defensive position.

Appendix A

6/8th Grade Pitching Rules

There are two legal pitching positions, the Windup Position and the Set Position, and either position may be used at any time. Pitchers may disengage the rubber after taking their signs but may not step quickly onto the rubber and pitch. This may be judged a quick pitch by the umpire. When the pitcher disengages the rubber, he must drop his hands to his sides. Pitchers will not be allowed to disengage the rubber after taking each sign.

The Windup Position - The pitcher shall stand facing the batter, his entire pivot foot on, or in front of and touching and not off the end of the pitcher's plate, and the other foot free. From this position any natural movement associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without interruption or alteration. He shall not raise either foot from the ground, except that in his actual delivery of the ball to the batter, he may take one step backward and one step forward with his free foot. When a pitcher holds the ball with both hands in front of his body, with his entire pivot foot on, or in front of and touching but not off the end of the pitcher's plate, and his other foot free, he will be considered in the Windup Position. The pitcher may have one foot, not the pivot foot, off the rubber and any distance he may desire back of a line which is an extension to the back edge of the pitcher's plate, but not at either side of the pitcher's plate. With his "free" foot the pitcher may take one step backward and one step forward, but under no circumstances, to either side that is to either the first base or third base side of the pitcher's rubber. If a pitcher holds the ball with both hands in front of his body, with his entire pivot foot on or in front of and touching but not off the end of the pitcher's plate, and his other foot free, he will be considered in a windup position. From this position he may: (1) deliver the ball to the batter, or (2) step and throw to a base in an attempt to pick off a runner, or (3) disengage the rubber (if he does he must drop his hand to his sides). In disengaging the rubber the pitcher must step off with his pivot foot and not his free foot first. He may not go into a set or stretch position if he does it is a balk.

The Set Position - Set Position shall be indicated by the pitcher when he stands facing the batter with his entire pivot foot on, or in front of, and in contact with, and not off the end of the pitcher's plate, and his other foot in front of the pitcher's plate, holding the ball in both hands in front of his body and coming to a complete stop. From such Set Position he may deliver the ball to the batter, throw to a base or step backward off the pitcher's plate with his pivot foot. Before assuming Set Position, the pitcher may elect to make any natural preliminary motion such as that known as "the stretch." But if he so elects, he shall come to Set Position before delivering the ball to the batter. After assuming Set Position, any natural motion associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without alteration or interruption. Preparatory to coming to a set position, the pitcher shall have one hand on his side; from this position he shall go to his set position as defined above without interruption and in one continuous motion. The whole width of the foot in contact with the rubber must be on the rubber. A pitcher cannot pitch from off the end

of the rubber with just the side of his foot touching the rubber. The pitcher, following his stretch, must (a) hold the ball in both hands in front of his body and (b) come to a complete stop. This must be enforced. Umpires should watch this closely. Pitchers are constantly attempting to "beat the rule" in their efforts to hold runners on bases and in cases where the pitcher fails to make a complete "stop" called for in the rules, the umpire should immediately call a "Balk." (c) At any time during the pitcher's preliminary movements and until his natural pitching motion commits him to the pitch, he may throw to any base provided he steps directly toward such base before making the throw. The pitcher shall step "ahead of the throw." A snap throw followed by the step directly toward the base is a balk. (d) If the pitcher makes an illegal pitch with the bases unoccupied, it shall be called a ball unless the batter reaches first base on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter or otherwise. A ball that slips out of a pitcher's hand and crosses the foul line shall be called a ball; otherwise it will be called no pitch. This would be a balk with men on base. (e) If the pitcher removes his pivot foot from contact with the pitcher's plate by stepping backward with that foot, he thereby becomes an infielder and if he makes a wild throw from that position, it shall be considered the same as a wild throw by any other infielder. The pitcher, while off the rubber, may throw to any base. If he makes a wild throw, such throw is the throw of an infielder and what follows is governed by the rules covering a ball thrown by a fielder. If there is a runner, or runners, it is a balk when — (a) The pitcher, while touching his plate, makes any motion naturally associated with his pitch and fails to make such delivery; If a left-handed or right-handed pitcher swings his free foot past the back edge of the pitcher's rubber, he is required to pitch to the batter except to throw to second as on a pickoff play. (b) The pitcher, while touching his plate, feints a throw to first base and fails to complete the throw. (c) The pitcher, while touching his plate, fails to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base; requires the pitcher, while touching his plate, to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base. If a pitcher turns or spins off of his free foot without actually stepping or if he turns his body and throws before stepping, it is a balk. A pitcher is to step directly toward a base before throwing to that base but does not require him to throw (except to first base only) because he steps. It is possible, with runners on first and third, for the pitcher to step toward third and not throw, merely to bluff the runner back to third; then seeing the runner on first start for second, turn and step toward and throw to first base. This is legal. However, if, with runners on first and third, the pitcher, while in contact with the rubber, steps toward third and then immediately and in practically the same motion "wheels" and throws to first base, it is obviously an attempt to deceive the runner at first base, and in such a move it is practically impossible to step directly toward first base before the throw to first base, and such a move shall be called a balk. Of course, if the pitcher steps off the rubber and then makes such a move, it is not a balk. (d) The pitcher, while touching his plate, throws, or feints a throw to an unoccupied base, except for the purpose of making a play. (e) The pitcher makes an illegal pitch; a quick pitch is an illegal pitch. Umpires will judge a quick pitch as one delivered before the batter is reasonably set in the batter's box. With runners on base the penalty is a balk; with no runners on base, it is a ball. The quick pitch is dangerous and should not be permitted. (f) The pitcher delivers the ball to the batter while he is not facing the batter. (g) The pitcher makes any motion naturally associated with his pitch while he is not touching the pitcher's plate. (h) The pitcher unnecessarily delays the game. (i) The pitcher, without having the ball, stands on or astride the pitcher's plate or while off the plate, he feints a pitch. (j) The pitcher, after coming to a legal pitching position, removes one hand from the ball other than in an actual pitch, or in throwing to a base. (k) The pitcher, while touching his plate, accidentally or intentionally drops the ball. (l) The pitcher, while giving an intentional base on balls, pitches when the catcher is not in the catcher's box. (m) The pitcher delivers the pitch from Set Position without coming to a stop. PENALTY: The ball is dead, and each runner shall advance one base without liability to be put out, unless the batter reaches first on a hit, an error, a base on balls, a hit batter, or otherwise, and all other runners advance at least one base, in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk. APPROVED RULING: In cases where a pitcher balks and throws wild, either to a base or to home plate, a runner or runners may advance beyond the base to which he is entitled at his own risk. APPROVED RULING: A runner who misses the first base to which he is advancing and who is called out on appeal shall be considered as having advanced one base for the purpose of this rule. Umpires should bear in mind that the purpose of the balk rule is to prevent the pitcher from deliberately deceiving the base runner. If there is doubt in the umpire's mind, the "intent" of the pitcher should govern. However, certain specifics should be borne in mind: (a) straddling the pitcher's rubber without the ball is to be interpreted as intent to deceive and ruled a balk. (b) With a runner on first base the pitcher may make a complete turn, without hesitating toward first, and throw to second. This is not to be interpreted as throwing to an unoccupied base.