

Herndon Optimist Youth Baseball Cal Ripken League, Herndon, Virginia

Official Rules of Play

Major, Minor, and Rookie Leagues

Note: Not all leagues have teams associated with them every season

OVERVIEW

Major, Minor, and Rookie League games played within the Herndon Optimist Youth Baseball Cal Ripken League (HOYB) program will be played according to Official Baseball Rules 1.00 through 7.00. The HOYB is affiliated with Cal Ripken Baseball (formerly the Bambino Division of Babe Ruth Baseball), which has defined certain exceptions to the Official Rules. Accordingly, Cal Ripken Rules and Regulations 0.01 through 0.05 also govern HOYB games.

In addition, HOYB has established further refinements to these governing Rules and Regulations. Where exceptions have been established, the HOYB position takes priority over Cal Ripken, which takes precedence over Official Baseball Rules. Cal Ripken and HOYB exceptions/interpretations are noted in the left margin as CR and HO, respectively. Where applicable, these rules distinguish between Major League games played on a 70-foot diamond (Majors 70) and on a 60-foot diamond (Majors 60). Additional rules that apply only to HOYB's fall season are noted in *italics*.

1.0 TEAM COMPOSITION & REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1 CR Each team shall consist of no less than eleven (11) nor more than thirteen (13) players, a manager, and two coaches.
- 1.2 HO Each Major League team shall have no more than eight (8) and no less than five (5) twelve-year-olds. The Board can issue a waiver if necessary based on registration numbers.
- 1.3 HO To be eligible to play in a game, a player must conform to a uniform dress code which includes league-issued uniform jersey, solid gray pants, and team cap.
- 1.4 HO A team must have eight (8) or more players to play a game. A team's players must be present and ready to play within five (5) minutes of the start time of the game. Failure to meet either of these conditions will result in the game's forfeiture. *(Fall Season: This rule is suspended. Teams may "borrow" the other team's players to staff the outfield or recruit adults to only play in the outfield.)*
- 1.5 HO At the conclusion of a game, each manager must sign the opposing team's score book.

2.0 PITCHING

- 2.1 CR A pitcher, regardless of age, may not pitch more than six (6) innings per calendar week. If a pitcher delivers one (1) pitch in an inning, that pitcher shall be charged for one (1) inning pitched.

2.2 HO All competitive league pitchers are subject to the following pitch count limits:

National League 50/70 – 60 pitches in any one outing;
American League 46/60 – 50 pitches in any one outing; and
Minors – 40 pitches in any one outing

A pitcher may finish pitching to the current batter when the pitch count limit is reached.

The scorekeepers for each team will compare pitch count numbers between each inning. Both managers must agree on the final pitch count numbers at the end of the game so the winning manager will submit those numbers to the appropriate league commissioner.

(Fall Season: Pitchers are allowed a maximum of 50 pitches or two (2) innings, whichever comes first, before they must be removed from the game. The purpose of this rule is to allow the development of more pitchers during the fall season.)

2.3 CR The calendar week is Monday through Sunday.

2.4 CR A pitcher must have two (2) calendar days rest between pitching assignments if he/she pitches in more than two (2) innings in any one game. Example: A player pitching more than two (2) innings on Saturday cannot pitch again until Tuesday. (Exception: Any tournaments should follow the Cal Ripken/Babe Ruth tournament pitching rules.)

2.5 HO No pitcher shall pitch more than six (6) innings in any (3) consecutive days.

2.6 HO A Minor League pitcher shall not pitch more than three (3) innings in a game.

2.7 HO A Rookie League pitcher shall not pitch more than two (2) innings in a game.

2.8 HO All innings pitched by a player -- whether in regularly scheduled games, rainouts, make-up games, in-house tournament games, other leagues played in concurrently, or all-star games - - shall count as innings pitched under the above pitching rules.

2.9 HO Games in which an ineligible pitcher has been used as specified in the preceding rules shall be declared forfeited.

2.10 CR The balk does not apply to Majors 46/60, Minor, and Rookie Leagues. However, an illegal pitch (throwing while not in contact with the rubber or executing a quick pitch) shall be deemed a "no pitch."

2.11 HO In the Rookie League, the base-on-balls rule [6.08(a)] is modified as follows:

a) Once a pitcher throws the fourth called ball to a batter (Ball Four), instead of the batter being awarded first base, the ball is dead, and the batter will be thrown four pitches by the player's coach, regardless of whether they are hittable.

b) Once the ball has been struck by the batter it is considered a "live ball" and the batter or additional base runners may be called out upon a successful play by the fielders. Batters, of course, can also reach base safely on the free swing from the batting tee. Runners on base are free to advance bases once the ball has been struck.

c) Runners may not advance bases on a called, Ball Four. If stealing or advancing on a passed ball, runners must return to their base and wait for the ball to be hit from the batting tee.

d) Positioning of pitcher when ball is placed on the tee. The pitcher should be on the top of the mound. He/she can react to one side or the other once the batter hits the ball. The pitcher may not be positioned (more than 1 step) in front of the rubber.

e) Positioning of the catcher when the ball is on the tee. The catcher should be positioned on the back edge of the batter's box opposite the hitter or a safe distance from the batter and the tee, i.e. the catcher would stand along the back edge of the left batter's box when a right-handed hitter is at bat. (Use your discretion on how far the catcher is away from the hitter.) The catcher should be in position to receive the ball from the pitcher or fielder on a throw to the home plate. The catcher should not be placed in front of the tee or anywhere in the field of play.

f) There is no bunting or striking out on the free swing from the tee. A hit ball must travel at least nine feet from home plate or the ball shall be declared 'foul.' The field should be lined with a nine foot arc as part of field preparations. This rule shall be in effect during the entire spring season.

This rule is instituted to avoid a "walk fest" that can occur at the Rookie League level. The Rookie League is the first season of "kid pitch" in the HOYB program. Without walks there are more batted balls and more opportunities for fielders to be involved. Managers and coaches will be more inclined to give all kids an opportunity to pitch knowing that the risk of poor control is mitigated.

2.12 HO In the Rookie League, each player who wants to pitch should be given the opportunity to pitch at least one (1) complete inning during the course of the season. However, player safety and confidence may be given consideration in making position assignments.

2.13 HO In the Minor and Rookie Leagues, on the third trip to the mound by a manager or coach in the same inning to the same pitcher, the pitcher will automatically be removed from the game as a pitcher only. In the Major League, a manager or coach must remove a pitcher on the second trip to the mound. (*Fall Season: A Major League pitcher is removed on the third trip to the mound*).

2.14 HO Use of pitches that involve a twisting motion of the arm or wrist is prohibited. These pitches include curveballs, sliders, and screwballs. Use of any pitch that involves a twisting motion of the arm or wrist will result in a one-time warning to the player and both managers. If that player or any other continues to throw breaking pitches after the umpire's warning, the player will be ejected from the game. The commissioner of the league in which the violation occurs may impose appropriate penalties (up to and including suspensions) upon players and/or coaches for throwing breaking pitches.

2.15 HO The Majors 50/70 league will enforce the pitching balk rules as explained in Section 8.0 of the "Babe Ruth League, Inc. Baseball Rules and Regulations and Official Playing Rules". HOYB umpires will provide an individual pitcher one warning (per game) during the first half of the season (prior to the bat-a-thon day). HOYB umpires will strictly enforce the official pitching balk rules during the second half of the 50/70 season and throughout the playoffs.

3.0 BASE RUNNING

3.1 CR In the Majors 46/60, Minor and Rookie Leagues, when a pitcher is in contact with the pitcher's plate and in the possession of the ball and the catcher is in the catcher's box ready to receive the ball, base runners shall not leave their bases until the ball has been delivered and has reached the batter.

- 3.2 HO In the Rookie League, all base runners must return promptly back to their bases once a play has been completed and the pitcher has control of the ball, regardless of where the pitcher is standing. The purpose of this rule is to prevent exaggerated leads off a base designed to “taunt” the pitcher into making a throw over to a base.
- 3.3 HO In the Rookie League, stealing home plate on a pitch or a throw back to the pitcher by the catcher after a pitch is prohibited. Upon a passed ball or a wild pitch, the runners may not advance home but may steal any other base.
- A runner may not advance home from third base if the catcher attempts to throw out another runner stealing second base. If the throw is mishandled at second or sails into the outfield, the runners must stay at second and third and do not advance further. (This rule is intended to allow the catcher an opportunity to stop the runner moving to second without concern for the runner at third scoring). However, a base runner stealing third may advance home upon an overthrow by the catcher trying to throw out the runner stealing third.
- 3.4 HO Headfirst sliding is prohibited. The two exceptions are when a player is caught in a rundown and when a player is returning to a base to avoid being picked off. Penalty: the umpire shall declare a “dead ball” at the conclusion of play and declare the runner out.
- 3.5 HO When the catcher is a base runner and there are two outs, a pinch runner may be used to allow the catcher additional time to put on equipment for the next half inning, except in the bottom half of the final inning. The runner substituting for the catcher should be the player who made the second out.
- 3.6 HO Any player that is able to bat yet is not able to run in a normal manner because of a permanent physical disability (i.e., muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy) may have a pinch runner run for the batter. Guidelines for implementation can be found at: herndonbaseball.com/special-needs.html. It is league policy to make appropriate accommodations to allow these children to safely participate in our baseball program. For other children with special needs, HOYB runs a Buddy Ball League.

4.0 BATTING

- 4.1 CR In the Majors 46/60, Minor and Rookie Leagues, the batter is out whether a third strike is caught or not.
- 4.2 HO Immediate and appropriate action as outlined below shall be taken by the Head Umpire when a batter throws a bat:
- Unintentional.** On the first such occurrence the Head Umpire shall advise the manager of the problem, allowing the manager to take appropriate action (usually an explanation to the child of what happened and an admonition to him/her and other players not to repeat it). On any succeeding occurrence, the Head Umpire shall call the batter "out" and declare a "dead ball" situation. Runners may not advance in a "dead ball" situation.
- Intentional.** The Head Umpire shall call the batter "out" and declare a "dead ball" situation. The batter shall be removed from the game if the Head Umpire considers the incident to have created an unsafe condition. The decision is the Head Umpire's alone to make. He/she may consult with his/her partner, but no managers, coaches, players, or parents should attempt to influence the Head Umpire's decision. A second occurrence of an intentionally thrown bat by the same player in the same game is cause for automatic expulsion.

- 4.3 HO When there is a play at the plate and the batter is still present, as in the case of a runner stealing home plate, the batter must remove him/herself from the immediate area of home plate so as not to interfere with the fielders' attempt to make a play. If, in the view of the umpire(s), the batter did not attempt to move away from the plate and/or interfered with the play, the runner may be called out at home plate. Other runners may advance at their own risk.
- 4.4 HO Players are prohibited from swinging a bat in the dugout or dugout area.
- 4.5 HO Batters are prohibited from assuming a bunt stance just prior to and/or during a pitcher's windup and delivery of a pitched ball and then, prior to the ball reaching the plate, adjusting their stance and executing a normal swing.

Upon the first occurrence, the Head Umpire shall declare a "dead ball" and advise both managers of the violation in the form of a warning. On any succeeding occurrences involving any batter on either team, the Head Umpire will call the batter "out" and declare a "dead ball." The intention of this rule is not to eliminate batting strategies such as the fake bunt (i.e., a batter assuming a bunting stance and then not offering on a pitch), the drag bunt, or the bunt for a hit. Rather the rule is instituted for safety reasons, primarily with regard to first and third basemen who might be induced to charge in response to a bunt stance and then unknowingly be put at risk if that batter quickly re-adjusts his/her stance and takes a full swing.

5.0 EQUIPMENT

- 5.1 CR Protective headgear shall be worn by the offensive player when on deck, at bat, or while a base runner during all games and practices.
- 5.2 HO Any base runner who intentionally removes the protective headgear while base running shall be called out. For scoring purposes, the out shall be ruled as if the runner had been tagged out.
- 5.3 HO In the Major and Minor Leagues, all protective headgear, HOYB issued or personal, must have a face guard or a "C-Flap." In the Rookie League, all protective headgear must have a face guard.
- 5.4 HO Any player warming up a pitcher must wear a mask and a protective cup. Any adult warming up a pitcher must wear a mask. During all games and practices, the catcher must wear a protective supporter cup and protective headgear. A throat protector is considered part of a catcher's mask and must be attached.
- 5.5 CR The bat shall be no more than 33 inches in length, nor have a bat barrel in excess of 2 1/4 inches in diameter.
- 5.6 CR Metal cleats may not be worn by any player, manager, or coach.
- 5.7 CR Jewelry is prohibited. Players shall not wear jewelry. Medical (including medical alert and advocacy bracelets) and religious bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry for purposes of this rule, but must not cause a distraction to other players.
- 5.8 HO Pitchers are not permitted to wear white on their forearms or wrists. (For example, long sleeve white shirts or wristbands.)

6.0 SUBSTITUTION

- 6.1 HO If a pitcher is removed from the mound at any time during the game, he may not pitch again during that game.
- 6.2 HO All players will be included in the batting order at all times during a game. Players may be moved to or from a defensive position at any time, subject to Substitution Rules 3 and 4. Exceptions may be made for disciplinary reasons or illness and the opposing manager must be notified promptly when the player is both removed and reinserted. The affected player may return to his/her place in the batting order once he/she has recovered or the punishment has been lifted. The player's team will not be penalized during his/her absence by having that player's spot count as an out.
- 6.3 HO In the Majors (50/70 and 46/60) and Minor Leagues, no player will be kept from playing defensively for more than one (1) consecutive inning and not more than twice (two innings) during a six-inning game. **In addition, no player will sit out a second inning until all players present for that game have sat out one inning.**
- Notes:
1. In leagues where a run limit is being used, when the offensive team reaches the designated run limit, it will be considered a complete inning.
 2. Exceptions may be made for disciplinary reasons or illness.
- 6.4 HO (deleted)
- 6.5 HO A player who arrives after lineups have been exchanged must be placed at the bottom of the batting order.
- 6.6 HO In the Rookie League, a fourth outfielder may be positioned on the field at equal depth with the other outfielders.
- 6.7 HO In the Rookie League, during the course of each game and the total season, each player must be given the opportunity to play one or more of the six infield positions (1B, 2B, 3B, SS, P, C) for at least 1/3 of the total innings played. Each player must also play at least 1/3 of the total innings in one or more of the four outfield positions (LF, LC, RC, RF).
- 6.8 HO In the Major (50/70 and 46/60) and Minor Leagues, in games lasting three (3) or fewer innings, each player present must play at least one inning in the infield. In games lasting four (4) or more innings, each player present must play at least two innings in the infield.
- 6.9 HO The only exceptions to rules 6.7 HO and 6.8 HO above are for player injury or illness, or due to a manager's concern for a player's safety. However, if a manager feels a player's safety is involved should he/she play certain positions (e.g. infield), then the manager must consult with the player's parents and receive approval from the league commissioner for an exemption to the rule.
- 6.10 HO *Fall Season: The fall baseball season is principally designed to have an instructional focus. There are no league standings kept during the fall season as all games are considered scrimmages. Managers and Coaches are required to rotate players more frequently and to allow the players to have opportunities to play positions that they might not have played during the competitive spring season. Particular emphasis should be on the development of new pitchers and catchers.*

7.0 INTERFERENCE/OBSTRUCTION

- 7.1 HO Obstruction shall be called on any defensive player who blocks, or attempts to block, a runner from reaching a base, including home plate, without having full possession of the ball. Umpires should be aware of basemen, due to inattention or lack of awareness, fail to move out of the baseline for advancing runners.
- 7.2 HO An advancing base runner must attempt to avoid a collision by sliding or some other action. If the runner does not attempt to avoid a collision with the fielder, even if they are obstructing the base, the runner will be called "out" for interference. A batter/runner running from home to first within the 3-foot restraining line or a runner in a rundown and unable to see the defensive player cannot be called out for interference unless he/she takes a flagrant or intentional action.

8.0 PROTESTS AND RULE INTERPRETATIONS

- 8.1 HO Notice that the game is being played under protest must be filed with the Head Umpire (the home plate umpire) by the team manager immediately at the time of the disputed decision and before the next pitched ball. A protest arising on a game ending play may be filed until noon of the following day to the League Commissioner.
- 8.2 HO A written report setting forth all the facts of the protest must be filed with the League Commissioner within forty-eight (48) hours of the date of the protest.
- 8.3 HO The League Commissioner shall appoint two (2) members of the League not associated with the teams involved and the HOYB President or his delegated representative to serve on the Protest Committee.
- 8.4 HO Final decision of the protest shall be made by a majority vote of the Protest Committee, reviewed by the HOYB President and League Commissioner. The League Commissioner will advise the managers and umpires involved of the final decision within 72 hours after receipt of the written report setting forth the facts of the protest.
- 8.5 HO No protest shall be recognized on a judgment decision by the umpire (For example, calls of balls and strikes, or safe or out on a play at a base.) Only when a manager claims that the umpire's decision is in violation of the rules will a protest be recognized.
- 8.6 HO There are no protests in the Rookie League. Managers are expected to reach a quiet mutual resolution to rule interpretation questions at the game. If managers think that additional action is appropriate, they should refer the question to the Rookie League Commissioner.
- 8.7 HO Should a dispute arise during the course of a game, managers are expected to act responsibly and respectfully toward the umpire(s) as well as members of their own team and the opposing team. In addition, the manager is responsible for all those affiliated with his/her team (coaches, players, parents) acting in the same manner. Any person who is judged by the umpire(s) to be acting in an inappropriate manner is subject to expulsion.

9.0 GENERAL

- 9.1 CR A regulation game shall consist of six (6) innings, or four (4) innings if the game is called, or 3 1/2 innings if the home team has scored more in three at bats than the visiting team has in four at bats when the game is called.

- 9.2 CR Any game called because the time limit has been reached becomes a regulation game with the score reverting to the last complete inning regardless of the number of innings played. The appropriate League Commissioner may waive this rule if significant time was lost due to injury or a rain delay.
- 9.3 HO A game not considered a regulation game must be replayed in its entirety as a new game.
- 9.4 HO Major League games will be considered complete, once becoming regulation, if one team is ahead by ten (10) runs and has equal times at bat or the home team is leading.
- 9.5 HO LINEUPS SHALL BE EXCHANGED 10 MINUTES BEFORE GAME TIME. Only players present at that time may be included in the lineup. Players arriving later will be added at the bottom of the batting order in order of arrival. Any position in the lineup card containing the name of a player not present ten (10) minutes prior to the start of the game, shall cause an out to be declared each and every time that position in the lineup would have come to bat. (Note: The player will still bat at the end of the order. The penalty is assessed to the team because of the manager's failure to submit a proper batting order.)
- 9.6 HO Any delay in beginning a game at the Scheduled Start Time that is due to either team (and not the umpire), shall be considered lost time and will not be made up by pushing back the Scheduled Start Time. An exception to this is for the second game of back-to-back evening games played on weeknights. In this case, the umpire will decide on an appropriate start time.
- 9.7 HO **No New Inning** For all games, no new inning shall start after one hour forty-five minutes (1 hr 45 min) of play has been completed. Inning run limits for Minors (4) and Rookie (3) will remain in force for all innings. *(For the fall season, this rule is suspended.)*
- 9.8 HO **Last Inning** (Removed February 2009)
- 9.9 HO **Drop Dead Rule** For all games, the umpire will stop play at two (2) hours (This rule may be amended for 50/70 based on the league commissioners request to the Board). If an inning is still ongoing, the score will revert to what it was at the end of the previous inning. *(For the fall season, drop dead will be 1:30 hours during the week and 2 hours on Saturdays.)*
- 9.10 HO In the Major Leagues, there will be no run limit per inning. *(Fall Season: There is a four (3) - run limit per inning.)*
- 9.11 HO In the Minor League, there will be a four (3)-run limit per inning.
- 9.12 HO In the Rookie League, there will be a three (3)-run limit per inning.
- 9.13 HO League standings shall be determined as follows:
- a) The team with the most points is ranked first. Each win is two (2) points, each tie is one (1) point, and each loss is zero points.
 - b) If two or more teams are tied, the first tiebreaker is head-to-head competition.
 - c) The second tiebreaker is total runs scored in head-to head competition.
 - d) The third tiebreaker is total wins.
 - e) If the teams are still tied, rankings will be determined by coin toss;
 - f) Since the managers are responsible to make up any rain out games, those not made up by the end of the regular season will not count or be made up.

- 9.14 HO All Major Leagues playoff games will be six (6) innings in length, unless tied, with no time limit. The ten-run rule shall be in effect.
- 9.15 HO All Minors and Rookie League playoff games shall be six (6) innings in length, unless tied, with no time limit. Regular season inning run limits for Minors (4) and Rookie (3) will remain in force for the first five innings. For the sixth inning of these playoff games Minors will have no run limit and Rookies will have a six (6) run limit.
- 9.16 HO All game scores shall be reported to the League Commissioners by the manager of the winning team within 24 hours of the completion of the game.
- 9.17 HO All rescheduled games will be scheduled by the League. The manager of the home team is responsible for contacting the umpire coordinator in a timely fashion to obtain umpires for the rescheduled game. The home team manager should also notify the league commissioner (and the league scheduler) of all rescheduled games.
- 9.18 HO Deliberate action taken to delay a game is considered unsportsmanlike conduct and should be reported to the League Commissioner. If it occurred, such conduct could result in the game being forfeited by the offending team.
- 9.19 HO The home team will occupy the third base dugout and be responsible for keeping the official score book.
- 9.20 HO **Only** rostered players and coaches of the competing teams are allowed in the dugouts during the game.
- 9.21 HO Any individual ejected from a game by an umpire must leave the field area for the remainder of the game and stay at a distance no closer than the parking area of the park where the game is being played. Failure to leave in a prompt fashion or continued unsportsmanlike behavior may result in the forfeiture of the game by the team affiliated with that person. (Note: If a parent is not with the ejected player then the team manager shall designate a coach or seek a parent volunteer to contact the player's parents for transportation or wait with the player until transportation arrives.)
- 9.22 HO Prior to the start of a game, the home team manager shall decide if the field is in playable condition.
- 9.23 HO Once a game has begun, **the two managers shall be jointly responsible for suspension or cancellation of play**. If the two managers cannot agree, then the home plate umpire's decision will be final. In case of ongoing or impending weather conditions such as lightning, rain, high winds, or severe cold, either of the managers or umpires may call for a meeting at home plate to discuss if play has become unsafe. A prompt decision should be made about whether to suspend (and for how long) or cancel play. If play is suspended or cancelled, the managers will direct everyone in attendance to proceed quickly and in an orderly fashion to their automobiles or to some other safe haven.
- 9.24 HO The Infield Fly Rule is in effect for the Majors and Minors Leagues, but not for the Rookie League.

9.25 HO *Fall Season: In the Fall Season, if there is a single Major League, it will play all games by rules for the Majors 60 League, with the exception that the League Commissioner may, in consultation with all the managers, provide for a small number of games to be played by rules for the Major 70 League at the conclusion of the fall season.*

In the Fall Season, if the Minor and Rookie Leagues are combined into a single league, the league will play all games by Rookie League rules, with the exception that the League Commissioner may, in consultation with all the managers, provide for a small number of games to be played without the modified bases on balls rule (2.11) at the conclusion of the fall season.

9.26 HO Violation of rules could result in forfeiture of a game, suspension of a manager, or other penalty to be determined by the League Commissioner or HOYB President.