

Lower Cape Recreational League Softball Rules

Section I - Lower Cape Recreational League Organization

The Lower Cape Recreational League Softball program is governed by the individual Towns Recreation Directors or their designee(s). The League shall be the only unit of organization. The Recreation Directors will interpret the rules where necessary and handle any issues or protests that may arise.

The Recreation Directors will meet at least once prior to the start of the season to prepare for the softball season and to review rule changes. Coaches may submit requests for rule changes to their Recreation Directors either directly after the completion of their current season or any time prior to this late winter meeting. Requests for rule changes will be discussed and voted upon by the Recreation Directors. A simple majority will be required to amend, delete or add a rule.

The Recreation Directors may, at their discretion, appoint a League Chairman from their membership to oversee the Softball Season. The duties of the League Chairman and the Recreation Directors are set forth below.

Chairman's Duties: It shall be the duty of the League Chairman to schedule all Directors meetings; obtain pertinent information relative to the upcoming season; prepare the Leagues schedule and to review the Leagues rules with the respective Recreation Directors, and subsequently disseminate League Rules to each Recreation Director for distribution to their appointed coaches. Further, to pay any league bills, when necessary, and to clear any changes and or problems by agreement with the proper Recreation Directors.

Recreation Director's Duties: To supervise all facets of their Town's Recreational Softball Program. Specifically, to conduct registration in accordance with league rules; determine the number of teams per division and to appoint coaches as necessary. Further, to identify local fields for use by the Lower Cape Recreational League for their home games and to maintain the same to the best of their abilities. In addition, it is their duty to schedule games in coordination with the League Chairman and to act on any problems concerning the League that may arise in an appropriate manner.

Section II - Eligibility

League Structure: The Lower Cape Recreational League Softball League will consist of two (2) different age groups. The Minor League will consist of children in second and third grade. The Major League will be comprised of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. Teams should be balanced, as much as possible, by age and ability.

Section III - Playing Field; Coaches & Participants

The size of the playing field may vary depending upon the facilities available. For reasons of safety, team players must be seated on their bench when not playing on the field or preparing to bat. Coaches are to remain near their benches unless retrieving loose equipment or pitching. When their team is batting, one coach may serve as a base coach on the third base side of the field, and one coach may serve as a base coach on the first base side of the field. The base coach(es) may not leave the coach's box nor interfere with play in any manner whatsoever. Parents and non-participants must stay behind the team benches.

Section IV - Game Regulations

Article I - Lower Cape Recreational League Rules

All players are required to play normal positions. i.e. infielders may not move into the pitcher's distance and outfielders may not play at the infielder's distances. Whenever possible, natural lines such as the edge of the infield grass shall serve to define position limits.

*Minor League teams may have up to 10 players in the field, with only 6 in the infield.

American Softball Association Fast Pitch Rules shall apply with the exception of the following Lower Cape Recreational League Softball Rules, which shall take precedence for players at the minor league (grades 2 & 3) and Major League (grades 4,5 & 6) levels:

1. No stealing
2. No bunting ***at the minor league level only*** (2004 rule change)
3. No passed balls
4. No leading until the ball is released by the pitcher.
5. No sliding head first into a base; sliding feet first into a base is permitted
6. Only roster players are allowed to participate. No player from the stands may play in a game in order to avoid a forfeit.
7. An individual pitcher may pitch no more than six (6) innings within one calendar week, with the exception of a re-scheduled game. Pitchers may not return to the mound after being replaced by a substitute.
8. No more than five (5) runs may be scored in an inning, except at the senior and major league levels during the sixth inning, in which an unlimited number of runs may be scored before three outs are reached. See Article II; subsection 3.

9. The dropped third-strike rule does not apply. i.e., the batter may not attempt to advance to first base on a dropped third strike
10. The infield fly rule does not apply.
11. The tenth player must play in the outfield. *Minor League teams would put their 7th player in shallow center field, unless they have more than 7.
12. Play is dead simply by getting the ball to the pitcher who must be within an approximate **eight-foot** (8') radius of the mound. Players can only advance one base on a ball that is thrown out of play. Players who are less than halfway to the next base must return to the original base. Runners more than halfway to the next base may continue to that base. Coaches should be teaching players how to stop play without always depending on the pitcher to control the situation. i.e., look a runner back to the base, on a base hit to the outfield, throw the ball to the next base ahead of the runner, etc.
13. **All players on the roster must bat continuously in order**, regardless of which players are currently playing in the field during the inning. In the case of an injury to the batter, the next batter due up will inherit the count at the time of the injury. Players who are handicapped may have a designated runner at the discretion of the umpire. The umpire and the opposing team's coach must be notified of this request prior to the start of the game. (Note: the designated runner must start from a position behind the umpire.
14. There is no limitation on the arch of a pitch. Windmill or fast pitching is allowed. A pitch is a strike if it crosses the plate between the back shoulder and the back knee of the batter.
15. The softball is to be thrown, preferably overhand, between players in the field. The softball is not to be intentionally rolled along the ground from one player to another in the field.
16. Throwing the bat constitutes a warning to the offending team. Each subsequent offense shall result in an automatic out for that team. This warning is in effect for each individual game, not for the length of the entire season.
17. Runners cannot advance on a passed ball.

Article II - Game Length and Adverse Weather

1. A grace period of at least fifteen minutes shall be granted to field a team when necessary. There must be a minimum of 7 players to begin and finish a game. A tenth player may be utilized in the outfield. Because the ultimate purpose of the Lower Cape Recreational League is to provide playing opportunities to youth, coaches may agree to play a game with fewer than the minimum number of players or to create a playing situation that enables the players present on the field to have a game type situation on game day. Otherwise, if a coach knows that he/she will be short-handed on a given game day, it would be wise to inform their Recreation Director prior to game day and attempt to re-schedule that game
2. Minor League: A game will consist of four (4) complete innings, unless the home team is in the lead at the bottom of the fourth inning, in which case they will not need to bat. An inning shall consist of three outs or five runs per team, whichever comes first.

If one team is ahead by fifteen (15) or more runs after the completion of three (3) complete innings, the team which is leading shall be declared the winner.

3. Major League: A game will consist of six (6) complete innings, unless the home team is in the lead at the bottom of the sixth inning, in which case they will not need to bat. An inning shall consist of three outs or five runs per team, whichever comes first, except for the sixth inning which shall have an unlimited amount of runs prior to the three outs. In games that end before the completion of six innings, either due to darkness or adverse weather, the 6th inning rule may not be substituted for any previous inning.
 - i.e. The 5th inning may not be played with an unlimited amount of runs.

If one team is ahead by fifteen (15) or more runs after the completion of five (5) complete innings, the team which is leading shall be declared the winner.

4. In the event of adverse weather conditions or darkness, a game shall be considered complete if at least four entire innings have been played. The decision on adverse weather or field conditions will be made by the umpire(s) and the score of the previously completed inning will stand, providing at least four completed innings have been played.
5. All postponements due to inclement weather will be decided upon by the home team's Recreation Director no later than 4:00 p.m on game day. The home team's Recreation Director will then contact the visiting team's Recreation Director to announce the postponement. The Recreation Directors will then contact their respective coaches to announce the cancellation.
6. Games that are rained out will be re-scheduled by the Recreation Directors, if possible, based upon the availability of field space and the coach's respective schedules.

Article III - Player Regulations

The American Softball Association rules of re-entry for starting players shall apply. Each player on the roster shall play at least three (3) innings. The coach may substitute players in an unlimited fashion, provided the 50% participation rule is observed.

Article IV - Ground Rules

Copies of the ground rules for each field shall be distributed to all Recreation Directors prior to the start of the season and subsequently distributed to their coaches before the season and reviewed with the coaches and umpires before each game. Any disagreement after the commencement of the game, which was not explained before the first pitch, will be left solely to the umpire's judgment.

Note: This article pertains to individual field use in terms of identifying fair ball territory.

Article V - Pitching and Base Distances and Pitching Regulations

1. Minor League: The pitching distance is 30 feet from the pitcher's mound to home plate. The bases are 60 feet apart. A stride forward from the mound may be necessary. The umpire will decide whether a player may take a step forward based on that player's ability and safety.
2. Major League: The pitching distance is 35 feet from the pitcher's mound to home plate. The bases are 60 feet apart.
3. Pitching Regulations:

Preliminaries:

- A. Both feet must be on the ground within the 24" length of the pitcher's plate. The shoulders shall be in line with the first and third bases.
- B. Prior to pitching the ball, the pitcher shall hold the ball in both hands for not less than one second and not more than 10 seconds before releasing it.

Legal Delivery:

- A. The delivery must be an underhanded motion with the hand below the hip and the wrist not farther from the body than the elbow. The release of the ball and follow-through of the hand and wrist must be forward and past the straight line of the body.
- B. The pitcher may step back with the non-pivot foot at any time prior to the start of the pitch.
- B. In the act of delivering the ball, the pitcher must take one step with the non-pivot foot simultaneously with the release of the ball.
- C. The pivot foot must remain in contact with or push off and drag away from the pitching plate prior to the front foot touching the ground, as long as the pivot foot remains in contact with the ground.
- D. The following motions are illegal and shall constitute a no-pitch situation. The pitcher will be instructed to deliver a legal pitch.
 - 1.) Sliding the pivot foot across the pitcher's plate toward the batter or turning and/or sliding the pivot foot in order to push off the pitcher's plate while stepping forward with the non-pivot foot.
 - 2.) Raising the foot off the pitching plate and returning it to the plate creates a rocking motion and is illegal.
 - 3.) Pushing off with the pivot foot from a place other than the pitcher's plate. This includes a crow hop.

4. Minor League Pitching Rules

- A. This league will be “coach pitch” for the first half of the season. Youth recreational pitchers will alternate innings pitched with their coach or his/her designee for the second half of the season. Each team’s personal coach, or his/her designee, will pitch to their own team during the first and third innings. The youth pitcher will pitch the second & fourth innings of the game against her respective opponents.
- B. Coach pitchers shall pitch no more than 7 pitches per batter, with the intent being that coaches are offering their batter pitches which can in fact be hit. Balls are not counted; strikes are. If a batter does not hit the ball after 7 pitches, that batter is out. If the batter fouls off the 7th pitch, they are out.
- C. Coach pitchers may not field the ball; the youth pitcher will stand next to the coach to field the ball.
- D. If a fair ball hits a coach pitcher before he/she can get out of the way, the ball shall be considered in play.

Article VI - Uniform Regulations

Each player on a designated team must have a shirt of the same color and design with numerals, if possible. Softball caps, if issued by the respective Town, are to be worn properly and shirts must be tucked in. Any player showing up to play in a league game who is not dressed properly in the team uniform will be issued one warning by their coach and not allowed to play in subsequent games if still not dressed in the team uniform. Neither shorts nor jeans will be allowed. However, a player may choose to wear sweatpants that are in good condition and match the color of the uniform pants distributed to players of her team. The coaches are responsible for enforcing these regulations.

Article VII - Regulation Softballs by Division

- 1. Minor League: An 11" synthetic cover soft training softball
- 2. Major League: An 11" official softball

Section V - Coaching Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the designated coach to review basic softball techniques with their players prior to the start of league games. This would include, but not be limited to, proper batting stance, proper pitching technique, basic rules for play and game situations such as relay throws, double plays, etc.

On game days, the coach is responsible for informing their players of the date, time, and field on which their game will be played. Instruct players to arrive early enough to warm up, have a brief infield/outfield practice, and, if possible, a brief batting practice before the start of the game. The home team and the visiting team are to share the field equally prior to the start of the game. Games, however, are to begin promptly as scheduled.

Sportsmanship: Coaches are reminded that the Lower Cape Recreational League Softball program is recreational in nature and meant to be instructional and fun for all participants. Please work to make this a good experience for all involved. Coaches should be practicing the fundamental skills of the game with their players and supporting the girls with a positive attitude. Coaches are also responsible for ensuring that their assistant coaches and their players exhibit excellent sportsmanship at all times. Problems with players, coaches, or spectators are to be brought to the attention of the respective Recreation Director immediately.

The umpire(s) is ultimately in control of each game. Unsportsmanlike conduct on the part of players, coaches, or spectators will not be tolerated and could result in an individual being ejected from the game or a game being suspended due to unacceptable spectator conduct. Again, please remember that the recreational philosophy of the Lower Cape Recreational League is to provide an opportunity for children to participate in a fun and instructional environment.

League Rule Changes

Revised May 2002	length of game for minor league level Sustained 5-run rule at the minor league level Legal delivery of a pitch
Revised March 2003	The Minor League pitching rules were changed for the first full two weeks of the season as per Article V; Rule 5 Subsections a., b., c. & d.
Revised April 2004	The Minor League pitching rules were further amended to include Article V; Rule 5 Subsection e., which includes language which appeared in a coaches memo at the start of the 2003 season explaining the purpose and intent of the pitching rule changes. While most coaches were well versed in the rules, not all of the coaches were aware of the memo. The purpose of the pitching rule changes was twofold; to help develop hitters, and to give beginning pitchers more time to develop their skills.
Revised April 2005	After two successful seasons of implementing the alternate pitching rule for youth and coach pitchers at the Minor League level, it was unanimously voted to extend this rule to the entire season for numerous reasons. The alternate pitching rule moves the game along; allows batters to hit, fielders to field and pitchers and catcher's to develop
Revised March 2012	Coach Pitch Rule for Minor League. Coaches will only pitch (7) balls. If on the 7 th pitch the batter fouls off the ball they are out. Previous rule stated that if batter fouled off the 7 th pitch, the batter would remain alive.
Revised March 2014	Youth pitchers will pitch second & fourth innings and the coach pitcher will pitch the first, third and fifth innings.
Revised March 2019	The Minor League will consist of 2 nd & 3 rd grade. Major League will now be 4 th , 5 th , and 6 th grade. This was in hopes of getting more participants. Minor league will now play four innings and will be coach pitch for the first half of the season. After that it will go back to player and coach alternating innings. Directors also spoke about having 7 players in the field (no outfielders), rather than 9 or 10, in hopes of getting more teams.
Revised April 2023	Minor League teams may have up to 10 players in the field, with only 6 in the infield. No leading until the ball is released by the pitcher. Minor League teams would put their 7th player in shallow center field unless they have more than 7. Players can only advance one base on a ball that is thrown out of play. Runners cannot advance on a passed ball.