

2026 PINTO/INSTRUCTIONAL LEAGUE RULES

Foremost this league is for instruction of fundamentals, and teaching the game of baseball on both offense and defense.

Baseball: Rawlings Level 1/ Wilson Level 5 or equivalent balls will be used. Home team is responsible for supplying game balls. 2 minimum.

Bats: Any sized USA bat is allowed. No USSSA bats are allowed. **1st offense of using illegal bat: Player is automatically out and warning for manager. The level coordinator will be notified of the warning. 2nd offense of using illegal bat: Manager is suspended next game. 3rd offense of using illegal bat: Manager is suspended rest of season.**

Time limit:

Do NOT start a new inning after 90 minutes. All games should **end** in less than 1hr 45 min. The exact time to stop the game will be left to the coaches, work together based on how the teams are responding. Early in the season in cold weather you may want to shoot for a good 3 or 4 innings.

Innings:

The inning ends after 3 outs have been made **or** 5 runs have scored. Throughout the entire season, please make the games about the children's learning

Umpires: Umpires are not mandatory for Regular Season games, but can be used if desired. Coaches from each team will call the games if no Umpire is present. Umpires will be used for Tournament games. Coach on mound is acting Umpire calling balls and strikes and plays at bases in the case of a dispute.

Playing time:

At most, 10 players will be on the field at a time (4-in the outfield, the 10th player should never be an additional infielder). **Every player should get a chance in both the infield and the outfield every game.** Coaches MUST rotate players off the bench at least each inning (if a coach wants to rotate players during the inning he can, to keep them all interested and active- don't hold up the game if you do this). No player should ever sit 2 innings in a row (even if the player asks) and will not sit 2 times during one game until everyone has sat at least once. Coaches will develop a plan to move players to several positions during the game. No player may play the same position more than 2 innings per game (**note special rule for pitchers**). **All players** will play in the infield and outfield every game. Don't lock a player into one or two positions.

Rainouts / Bad weather: **2 Hours Notice is preferred******

The HOME team coach should make the decision as to whether the field is playable. It is YOUR call, **not** the commissioner's decision to make. The HOME team coach should notify the AWAY coach and umpire (if one is planned) of the cancellation- **make this decision sooner than later, especially when other teams are travelling to play a game.** An effort should be made to make the fields playable when possible, using limited diamond dry, dirt, and rakes. In some cases the game can be moved to the grass without cancellation. If it rains during the game, use your

judgment as to when to delay or call off the game, except for lightning. If each team bats in 2 innings, the game won't need to be rescheduled.

Lightning rule – if any adult spots lightning the game is cancelled immediately.

Rescheduling of games – It is the HOME team coaches' responsibility to work with the AWAY team coach, field coordinator (and umpire coordinator if applicable) to define a make-up date and time – try to make this within two weeks of the rain-out date so you don't get too backed up with games. This date should be communicated to the HOME team field coordinator to ensure that field date & time get locked in. If you do not do this, and another team takes that spot and locks it in officially, it's their field, not yours. Near the end of the season, and if dates are backed up, coaches from both teams may mutually agree to cancel the game – this should try to be limited as much as possible, but sometimes it just happens.

Defense:

Teams should play at most 10 players on the field (10th player as an extra outfielder, NOT infielder). The defense can have 2 coaches in the outfield assisting and coaching their players.

Pitcher/Catcher - During Coaches pitch, a player will play "pitcher" and stand next to the coach pitching (not behind!). A coach from batting team will stand at the backstop and return the balls to the pitcher.

Infield - You are allowed a normal infield setup (first baseman, second, third, shortstop, catcher, and pitcher). You are NOT allowed to have extra infielders or to position an OF near second base to handle throws. The point is to teach the proper infield positions to the players. Infielders should be taught when and how to take a throw at second base, not the CF. Maintain the integrity of the infield defense at all times.

Outfield - Outfielders MUST be in the outfield, the point being to teach them the proper OF positions. You can have one extra outfielder, NO extra infielders! Outfielders are NOT allowed to run into the infield during a play to "help", but teach them how to backup the IF. Coaches in the outfield need to make sure players are at a sufficient distance into the outfield to make sure they are learning the positions and proper backup.

Pitching:

Pitchers are only allowed to throw **1 inning per game**. Use this to build as many pitchers as possible, and not to focus on just one or two throughout the season. The official pitching distance is 40-ft for this league; at the coaches' discretion, the pitcher can be moved in if he is not getting the ball across the plate. When possible use a thrown-down pitching rubber so the player has a consistent place to start from. For stronger pitchers move them further back for batter safety. The key for pitchers is to try to find a spot that is comfortable for them that will allow them to throw more strikes while maintaining safety. Be mindful of the power hitters, for the pitchers safety you should move them back, even though they may not get the ball across the plate. At all times, coaches must stand next to the pitcher for protection against line drives. **Coaches must pitch from 40ft, but with agreement from the other team, may move up if it is obvious that batter is struggling.** **After the pitcher has thrown 4-"balls", the coach will come in and pitch.**

Kids pitch - Batters can't be walked. The pitcher pitches until they accumulate 4-"BALLS" against the batter, strikes are called swung or un-swung through the strike zone. A pitcher CAN strike out a batter. If after 4-balls are accumulated, then the coach comes in, and throws 5-pitches... **THE PITCH COUNT DOES CARRY OVER WHEN THE COACH TAKES OVER. BATTER WILL RECEIVE MAXIMUM OF 5**

PITCHES FROM COACH. NO CALLED STRIKES ON COACH'S PITCHES ONLY SWINGING STRIKES.

Foul ball/ foul tip on the last coach pitch the batter stays in & has to swing until they get a hit or strikes out, if they look at a post-5 coach pitch, they're out. Caught 3rd strike foul tips and the batter is out. Batters who are hit by a solid pitch have the option to take their base or continue hitting. If a batter decides to keep hitting, then the coach should come in to take over pitching immediately. The coach should encourage the player to continue their at-bat if possible. Batters who are hit by a pitch during coach pitch do NOT go to first base but should stay in and hit.

Batting:

A continuous batting order should be maintained, regardless of the “size” of the other team. Make sure kids carry all bats at all times pointing towards the ground with handle below their waist unless in the batter’s box. No child should have a bat in their hands unless they are up to bat or on deck. On deck batters must be in the on-deck circle behind the batter (left handed batters, on deck is on the first base side... Right handed batters, the on deck is on the third base side). **No bunting is allowed.** Balls hit off the plate into fair territory are foul balls, little “drizzler” hits in front of the plate are fair balls. Be sure to watch for players who throw their bats after hitting. Teach the proper way to drop or lay down the bat.

While inside the playing fence, runners MUST have their helmet on their head at all times on offense. They should not remove it until they are inside the dugout.

Base Running:

Runners may advance as far as they can when a ball is hit to the outfield, until it is returned to the infield. Runners may advance to the next base at their own risk as long as they have made the turn prior to the ball coming under control; the defense may make a play to get the player out. On an overthrow on that defensive play, the batter may not advance. On balls that are hit to the infield, runners should only advance one base at a time. Do NOT send runners on overthrows or missed throws to any base. Remember, we are only allowed 5-runs per inning.

Stealing:

Limited stealing is allowed, **on kid pitch, not on coach pitch.** No stealing of home. Each player can only steal once per game. Team may steal 1-base per inning. No running on wild pitches or passed balls. Again, we’re preparing the runner as well as the catcher and infielders for the next level where stealing is allowed. **Catcher must catch the ball first.**

Field prep and clean-up:

As applicable, each team should abide by their own field prep and clean-up policies. When applicable, both teams should take part in the setup and clean up of the field. Setup includes chalking the lines, putting in the bases, making sure the field is ready. Clean-up involves putting the bases away, raking the entire infield. Encourage parents to help with the setup so you can begin working with the kids. Encourage parents to begin clean-up immediately following the game so you can wrap up with the kids. Each team is responsible to clean out their dugout after the game. There should be nothing left behind. Empty the garbage bucket in the dugout also.

When visiting teams are traveling for play, the home team will be responsible for field prep and any required clean-up. The visiting team should ensure their dugout is completely clean. Also check the stands where the parents and families viewed the game.

No alcohol or tobacco products should be consumed at the field or practices. No exceptions. Violators will be banned from fields.

Substitute players may be used if the team falls below ten (10) players. A substitute player cannot play ahead of a normal roster player. Substitutes must bat last in the order and only play the outfield. A team should only use 1 more player than a starting roster of 10 and no team may play with more than 3 such substitutes. All substitutes from other teams must wear their own normal team uniform in order to make enforcement of the position and batting order rules easier to identify.

Overall Philosophy

- **Make the game fun and interesting for the players.** It's your # 1 job!!
- **Players with a cast or any other injury must be able to field the position without any assistance from a coach.**
- Teach and coach, do not "manage" the game to WIN at this level.
- They will make mistakes, don't yell about it. Explain what they did wrong and how to fix it for next time. If you can't fix it, don't say anything!
- Parents and spectators should ONLY cheer words of encouragement, no profanity, no arguing, no arm chair coaching to the coaches. If the person is not able to bring themselves under control, the manager will be warned once, after that, if it occurs again, both the manager and the unruly person will need to leave the game. They all signed a code of conduct as well, and should adhere to it.
- Parents are NOT allowed to speak to or yell at an umpire. There is zero tolerance. Any infractions and the parent must be removed by the home coach. Coaches, you need to control yourselves too. If there is an issue, bring it up with the umpire coordinator after the game. In most cases these are very young kids who are umpiring, they will get it wrong sometimes.
- This is a step up from instructional/tee-ball, so raise the level somewhat. Work towards getting them ready for the Mustang/Minor level, especially your 8 year olds.
- Don't change the rules around pitching to the batter, either for coach pitch or kids pitch. It gets too confusing for the players when rules change from night to night. These rules have evolved over the past many years.
- The lack of record isn't to protect a team from losing, and isn't "participation trophy" playing. It's done to free the coaches up to play different players at different positions without fear of giving up runs. This gives the kids a better chance to be given an opportunity at many positions.
- Throughout the season, every player should play every position, with the possible exception of catching. There is no official tracking of this, but give the players chances to play all over. Don't stick a kid in the outfield all year or determine a player is a "first baseman" at age 7.

- Each player should be coached on pitching and given the opportunity to try it during practices and games. It may seem like you don't have more than 2 or 3 that can do it when you start, and you very well may have only 2 or 3 to begin with. But work with all of them and give them all a chance. You might still end up with one or two that just can't do it, but at least you worked with them and almost everyone got a chance. All kids want that chance to pitch.
- Don't put one player behind the plate and leave him there for a game or the entire season, even if you have one that loves it. Others need a chance and he needs to learn other positions too. If a player shows obvious signs of fear during catching, take him out – encourage him to try again in a later game. Don't force him to play the position if it becomes obvious that it is too much stress for him to handle.
- On plays at the bases, the standard is to reward the defense on close plays. When an umpire is NOT present, the base coaches are to make the calls at 1st and 3rd base. One of the defensive coaches on the field makes the call on any play at 2nd base. Work together for the betterment of the kids and be fair. **Absolutely no arguing!** If it's close reward the defense for a good throw and catch.
- Base coaches should teach good base running techniques such as getting off the base with each pitch – as the ball crosses the plate, when to run on a ground ball/fly ball and when not to, etc. Do not try to sneak anything in, or take the extra base at this level. You end up costing your own team turns at bat by pushing for runs through aggressive base running. They'll learn all those tricks at the next level.
- Work together with the other team's coaches during the game. Communicate throughout the game; help other team's players out if needed without over-coaching them or interfering with that coach's instruction.
- **This is about the kids, not wins and losses. Keep that in mind all season!**

TOURNAMENT PLAY:

- Umpires are used for tournament games.
- Game time starts at the first warm-up pitch. This time should be noted by both teams and the umpire.
- If after exceeding the time limit (“no new inning may start after 90-minutes”), if the game is tied the game will continue until a winner is determined. HOWEVER, in these extra-innings there is no run limit.
- In extra innings, the pitching rule still applies. Pitchers cannot throw more than 1-inning per game. If a pitcher has already thrown in that game, they can't throw in extra innings.