**9 & 10-YEAR-OLD LEAGUE RULES**  

(Updated Spring 2023)

All rules not addressed herein or in the HBA General Rules are implied to conform to the rules of Little League Baseball.

**HBA General Rules**

1. **Sportsmanship and General Code of Conduct**
   * Head Coaches are responsible for the actions and conduct of their spectators, players, and assistant coaches. Coaches are to demonstrate the highest level of sportsmanship at all times.
   * Spectators are encouraged to engage in supporting both teams during the game. A spectator may be removed from the facility if they engage in any unsportsmanlike conduct. Unsportsmanlike conduct includes, but is not limited to:
     1. Entering the field for any reason before, during, or after the game.
     2. Fans/Parents shall not address any opposing team coaches, players, or umpires. Note: Any items that fans/parents/spectators wish to address shall be done through the head coach of their team and/or via contacting an HBA Trustee.
   * There will be no arguing with umpires by any coach, player or spectators. Only the head coach can address the umpire if there is a question on a Rule Interpretation only. Judgement calls are not eligible for protest. No protest will be permitted under any circumstances. Coaches are responsible for the administration of this rule and are responsible to the HBA board for not enforcing the rule.
   * Use of profanity is prohibited during any HBA activity.
   * Use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, vaping, or alcohol is prohibited by any coach, player, or spectator during games or practices. If caught using tobacco or alcohol the offender will be requested to leave the premise.
   * Any player who throws equipment in anger, on the playing field or on the sidelines, will receive one warning. Upon second incident that player will sit out the remainder of the game. They will be skipped in the lineup at no penalty (out) to the team. Coaches are responsible for the administration of this rule and are responsible to the HBA board for not enforcing the rule.
   * Coaches and spectators may not yell “safe” and “out” calls during play. This unsportsmanlike conduct will get a warning the first time with additional offenses resulting in people being asked to leave the playing area for the remainder of the game.
   * Taunting of any kind against another team will not be tolerated. Players and/or coaches that take part in the this will be removed from the game and park by the umpires immediately and will also serve another game suspension. If severe, the player and/or coach may be banned from league play for a time to be determined.
2. **Uniforms**
   * Any player showing up for a game not in the proper uniform will not be permitted to play. Uniform Requirements:
   * HBA supplied hat and shirt:
     1. Correct shirt color must be worn.
     2. Hats are recommended but not required. If a hat is lost or forgotten, a replacement hat may be worn (e.g., non-team HBA hat).
   * Baseball pants (not supplied by HBA).
   * Molded cleats or athletic shoes. Metal cleats allowed only in Pony and Senior Pony Leagues.
   * Athletic supporter and cup (recommended).
     1. Required for all catchers in U 9/10 and up.
3. **Pregame**
   * Home team will occupy the third base bench, and the visiting team will take infield warm-ups first. Warm-ups are limited to seven (7) minutes for each team. Visiting Team must have their warm-ups completed in time to permit home team their seven (7) minute warm-up prior to the start of the game. All games must start on time.
   * Games must be started with 7 players. Games are subject to forfeiture and will be so forfeited if a team cannot produce seven (7) players prior to fifteen (15) minutes passed the scheduled game starting time. Coaches have no options. If desired, the teams may play a practice game.
   * Each team will have no more than the approved number of coaches total in the dugout or on the field. This includes the Head Coach.
     1. Unlimited coaches allowed in U 5/6 division.
     2. U 7/8 are permitted to have four (4) coaches.
     3. U9/10 and U11/12 may have four (4) coaches.
   * Batting practice on or around the field prior to any game is strictly prohibited for safety reasons. Hit sticks, batting nets, and whiffle ball practice is permitted as long as it is within the field of play during assigned warm up time. Coaches are responsible for compliance with this rule.
4. **Weather**
   * Any lightning and/or thunder requires a game to be delayed. All players and parents must leave the field area immediately and wait further instructions.
   * In the event of a quickly passing storm, and a game has not been determined to be an official game (see section below) games may be resumed 30 minutes after the last lightning.
   * To restart a game, the requirement is that the 30 minute timer must restart with any additional lighting and/or thunder.
   * If 1st games of the night or earlier games on Saturday/Sunday are postponed due to weather, later games will start on time, weather permitting.
5. **Time Limits and Scoring**
   * No new inning shall be started after the 1 hour 45 minute time limit. The 1 hour 45 minute time limit applies to all fields. If an inning is in progress at the 1 hour 45 minute limit, inning should continue. For example, games with a scheduled start time of 6pm can’t start a new inning past 7:45 pm. However, all games must be completed within two hours. If game is not completed within two hours, game score must revert back to previously completed inning. If the 2 hour time limit occurs in the middle of an at bat, then the at bat should be completed. If the home team ties the game but isn’t able to complete the inning by taking the lead or recording all 3 outs, then the inning has not completed.
   * The time cutoff still applies to games restarted after a weather delay.
   * No HBA scheduled games may be canceled without prior approval by the HBA Board or Commissioners. Any game cancelled without approval will count as a forfeit and not re-scheduled.
   * The winning team’s coach is responsible for reporting the score of the game to the respective commissioner or entering on the league app.
   * Official Games:
     1. If game is called due to weather or suspension: Games should go for 4 innings (3.5 Innings with the Home team ahead) to be considered a complete game. Games that do not meet or exceed this condition and cannot be continued due to weather, darkness, or exceeds time limits are ruled “Suspended”. Suspended games may be scheduled to continue at a later date starting from the game condition at the time of suspension or may be conceded by the team with the fewest runs at the time of suspension.  See resumption of suspended games below.
     2. Exception to the requirement for 4 innings: If any game has gone the full 2 hours (or 1:45 because of no new inning was allowed to begin) and had no weather delays but did not complete 4 innings the game is considered a complete game and the score should be determined by using the score at the completion of the last full inning played.
     3. If game is called due to weather, after it becomes a regulation game, the game reverts back to last previous completed full inning unless it is in the bottom of an inning and the home team has scored more runs. If the home team ties the game but isn’t able to complete the inning then the inning has not completed.
   * Resumption of suspended games:
     1. Suspended games will resume exactly where they were paused. A pitcher that already pitched in that game may not pitch again if they have reached their 3 inning limit, otherwise they may still continue until they have thrown a pitch in 3 innings. Any player that is present for the continuation that wasn’t present for the start of the game must be placed last in the batting order. Any player that was in the game and isn’t present for the continuation has their spot in the batting order skipped and no out is called. Otherwise, the batting lineup shall remain the same.
     2. Coaches and the umpire(s) will need to determine the following:
        1. Score, Inning, outs, base runners, pitchers used, and time played so it is clear how much time remains before the 1:45 no new inning and 2 hour hard stop which must be communicated to the commissioner prior to the resumption being scheduled.
   * Examples:
     1. If the home team is ahead in the bottom of the 4th inning and the game is called, it is considered a regulation game and the home team is declared the winner.
     2. Same situation as above, except the visiting team is ahead, the game reverts back to the bottom of the 3rd inning and declared a No Game.
     3. If the visiting team is ahead in the bottom of the 5th inning, the game reverts back to the bottom of the 4th inning, and whichever team had the most runs at the end of that inning is declared the winner.
   * Regular season games may end in a tie.
6. **Batting Lineup and On Deck** 
   * The use of hit sticks or other batting devices is prohibited during the game.
   * Swinging of a bat will only be permitted in the on-deck circle. Any team whose player swings a bat outside the on-deck circle will be given a team warning for first offense and an out for second offense. The out is added to the team total for the inning and no specific player is being called out. If this is the third out, the inning is over and the player at bat will start the next inning.
   * The batting lineup will consist of all players present at the start of the game. Any player arriving after the start of the game will be placed at the end of the batting order. No other changes to the batting lineup are permitted once the game begins. All players listed in the batting order must bat before the leadoff man takes his next turn. Any player who has played a defensive position must bat in their assigned hitting position, barring injury, or an out will be recorded.
   * Any players arriving after the game has begun will be placed at the bottom of the batting order, regardless of how late the player arrives.
   * Batters shall not throw the bat after hitting. Throwing bats is a safety issue and after a team warning, batters may be called out.
7. **Baserunning**
   * Players must attempt to avoid contact at all cost.
   * A player making contact with a fielder while a play is being attempted will be ruled out.
   * All plays at home where a fielder is in position to receive the throw, the runner must slide. Failure to do so will result in an automatic out.
   * All slides into a base, whether in the field or at home, MUST be done FEET FIRST.  There is NO HEAD FIRST slides permitted.
   * A player going back to a bag and not advancing may dive back to a base.
8. **Injuries**
   * When a player leaves during a game for any reason and it comes time for his/her turn at bat, it will NOT be considered an out. You are to just skip over the missing player.
     1. The opposing team and umpire should be notified prior to the next batter if a batter is skipped. Upon reentering, the injured player must assume their original batting spot in the order, and notification given to the opposing team and umpire. An injured player that re-enters into a defensive position, must bat in their assigned hitting position or an out will be recorded.
   * A player that left the game may not rejoin the game, unless the player leaves the game due to injury.
   * Teams that play games with fewer than nine players are NOT required to take an out when the "missing" player should be at bat.
   * Serious player injury stops all play at once. Advancing runners may advance to the next base and no further. If a batter becomes injured and cannot run the bases, only the person who made the last out can enter as a substitute base runner. The injured base runner may reenter the game at any time. If a batter is injured during an at bat and the at bat has not concluded, the batter on deck comes up. The count remains for the new batter.
9. **Disciplinary Actions**
   * Coaches will receive one verbal warning for any unacceptable behavior by Coaches, Assistant Coaches, Players or Spectators. A second incident will result in ejection from the game and the Coach being asked to leave the field area.
   * Any coach, player, or fan ejected from a game will be suspended at least from the next game and be subject to further disciplinary actions by the HBA Board.  This includes any reported incidents or unacceptable behavior at an HBA division without umpires.
   * A second ejection from another game results in that coach or player being suspended for the remainder of the season. Ejections will be used to determine future coaching assignments.
   * Use of profanity will result in an ejection from the game.
   * Failure to discontinue tobacco use or leave the premises could result in the game being stopped/cancelled until such individuals leave the premises.
10. **Miscellaneous** 
    * Both teams are responsible for cleaning up the field after the game.
    * Any player that arrives late to a game will be placed at the bottom of the batting order, regardless of how late they arrived at the game. However, the fielding requirements may not be followed if player arrives after the 2nd inning is completed.
    * The game balls used shall be the ones provided by HBA at the beginning of the season to coaches at the time of equipment pickup. No other balls are approved for game use.
    * The game is to be played in a manner that is realistic and baseball like. These are young players, and it does them no good to just run all over the place.
    * Please remember that umpires make mistakes and this is a learning environment for them also.
    * A courtesy runner may be used for the catcher or pitcher when there are two outs. If a team uses this replacement, the runner inserted shall be the player who made the second out of the inning.
11. **Bats**
    * For HBA play all bats must meet the following requirements:
    * Only bats that have the USA Baseball stamp of approval are allowed for use in HBA play.
    * Bat drop must be -12 or heavier.
    * Administration for these rules is the responsibility of the coaches, players and parents. If illegal equipment is found being used during a game, it should be brought to the attention of the umpires and the batter will be immediately called out, and the play is ruled dead, no runners advance. Additional disciplinary actions may be taken by the HBA board for the player and coach involved.
    * It is required that the coaches of both teams line up their bats for a pregame inspection.

**9 and 10-Year-Old Division Rules**

1. **Field Dimensions** 
   * Bases will be set at 65 feet.
   * Pitching mound set at 46 feet.
2. **Game length and Scoring**
   * A Game consists of six (6) innings, unless tied (and still below the time cutoff rules above) or a team leads by ten (10) runs at the completion of 4 innings (3 ½ innings if the home team is ahead).
   * For the first five (5) innings, an **offensive inning consists of three (3) outs OR seven (7) runs scored; whichever comes first.  Each inning resumes where the previous inning left off.  When the last batter of the inning puts the ball in play with a hit, the inning is completed when the play is complete.  Any runs scored on the last play count, which means more than 7 runs can be scored in an inning due to the continuation of the final play.**
   * In the sixth (6th) inning or later, a team must record 3 outs to end the inning. Thus, an unlimited number of runs can be scored in the 6th inning.
   * Games may end in a tie during the regular season.
3. **Pitching and strike zone**
   * A player may pitch 3 consecutive innings per game. One pitch constitutes an inning. Pitcher may not be removed from pitching position and then reenter that position during the same game.
   * Two trips to the mound by a coach in one inning or three in one game requires a pitching change for the defensive team.
   * No Balks will be called.
   * The strike zone for this age group will be enforced from the player’s chest to the bottom of the knees and for pitches the are two balls outside and inside the plate. Players are encouraged to swing at this level. If a player steps out of the batter’s box during the pitch, a strike shall only be called if the pitch would’ve otherwise been determined to be a strike. A player simply stepping out of the box doesn’t result in an automatic strike call for a pitch that is an obvious ball. Remember that balls and strikes are judgement calls and shall not be argued by any coach, player, parent, or spectator.
4. **Fielding Lineup requirements**
   * All players will play a minimum of three (3) innings, (with two of those innings being played within the first four innings) of each game in a defensive position. Each player will have the opportunity to play an infield position in at least one inning, unless a safety risk is posed to the player.
   * **No player shall remain in a defensive position for longer than Three (3) innings, and every player will have the opportunity to play an infield position during each game.**
   * **The defensive alignment consists of 9 players. A team may play only three (3) players in the outfield position and a player at each infield position with no defensive shifts allowed.**
   * The catcher must wear protective catcher’s equipment while catching, to include a supporter and cup and have protection covering their ears, they also must assume the normal catching position.
5. **Base stealing** 
   * Stealing of 2nd Base & 3rd Base is permitted only on a pitch that results in a passed ball. At this age it is difficult for a young player learning how to catch to also throw out baserunners.
   * It is considered a passed ball when the ball passes behind the catcher. If it has been knocked down or bounces in front of the catcher, it shall not be deemed a passed ball.
   * Only one base may be stolen on a play (e.g., runner cannot advance from first to third) and there will be no extra bases taken for overthrows on attempts to throw out an attempted steal. Example: If a runner at second “steals” third on a passed ball, the play is dead and the runner CANNOT advance home and must stay at third base.
   * Players may also steal home and **must slide**. Not sliding will result in the player being called out.
   * In U9/10, players may leave the base to “lead off” once the ball has crossed the plate. Players leaving early will be made to go back to the base they were on and a warning will be issued. A second violation by a team during a game will result in the baserunner being called out.
   * Runners are encouraged but not required to slide on any close plays (including at home), but **all** stolen base attempts at home requires the player to slide or the runner is called out. It is also encouraged that players slide into plays at 2nd and 3rd base. If contact occurs that could’ve been avoided by sliding, the umpire may make a judgement call and call the runner out
6. **Advancement of baserunners on over-throws and balls in play** 
   * A bad throw will be defined as a ball which is not catchable and is not in the vicinity of either the player which the throw was intended or the back-up player. This will require some judgement, but the intent is to stop play when the ball has been stopped and not penalize a team for not making the catch, but the ball is in near the player.
   * If a runner previously at first base tries to reach third base on a hit from a teammate and the throw to third base while trying to get the runner out goes past the fielder, the runner CAN advance home.
   * If a batter is trying to stretch a double into a triple. A bad throw is made to third base. The runner CAN advance home.
7. **Slug Bunting** 
   * Bunting is allowed in the 9/10 and 11/12 divisions.
   * Slug bunting is not permitted (a slug bunt is squaring to bunt and then pulling the bat back and swinging away. This puts players in danger and will not be permitted for player safety purposes).
   * The batter will be called out and the play ruled dead if a slug bunt occurs.
8. **Other Playing Rules** 
   * The infield fly rule is NOT enforced for the 9/10 division.
   * Time out "may" be awarded by the umpire once the play is "controlled".
   * The “Hidden Ball” trick is not allowed in 9/10 or 11/12.

**Postseason 9 and 10-Year-Old Division Rule Adjustments**

The following identified items are the **ONLY** rule changes in effect during postseason play. All other rules stated above are in effect.

1. While no new inning may begin after 1 hour and 45 minutes, all innings started shall be played to their completion. If a game is tied past the time limit, the game is continued until there is a winner or the game must be delayed because of lights or another game that must begin after it**.**
2. Once a postseason game reaches extra innings (the 7th inning and later) a player may play a fielding position (NOT pitcher) for more than the 3 inning limit**.**