

2020 Freedom Machine Pitch League Rules

Our main objective as coaches is to help develop the children's athletic skills, encourage sportsmanship, as well as to teach the game of baseball. But most importantly, is for the children to have fun and enjoy playing the game. Our goal is to provide a great experience for **all of the kids**, regardless of skill level or competitive interests. Kids who have a fun experience this summer, are more likely to stay with the game – and continue to have fun and further development in the years ahead.

At the Machine Pitch level, all players get equal playing time regardless of the score. Learning to be competitive and developing an understanding of winning and losing is important, but teaching fundamentals is our primary goal in this developmental league. Move your kids around, make sure all get plenty of time in all infield positions. Move players between outfield and infield.

Basic things to teach: *Play a lot of catch with the kids (above waist thumbs together, below waist pinkies together) *Running the bases correctly – Running through 1st base on infield hit. Not running through 2nd and 3rd base *Proper defensive stance *Proper batting stance *Proper throwing motion *Game Situations (What base to throw to, hitting the cutoff, etc.) *Rules of the game

When a situation occurs on the field, please take time to explain it to the players. This will help the players gain a greater understanding of the game. Where you can, explain not just what to do, but also **why**.

League Rules

- Games will consist of 5 innings or 1 hour whichever comes first. **If there is a game after you, all games should end promptly or before the start of the next games time. Don't penalize the game behind you, even if you start late.** Time goes by very fast so be ready to go right at start time, have your kids there 15 minutes early at least to warm up. If you are getting close on time, some teams will limit the last inning to 2 or 3 runs instead of 5 per inning. But again, do not go over - stop your game so that the next game can start on time. If you go over 10 minutes the next game will only be 50 minutes, which is not fair to those teams.
- The 1st & 3rd base coaches will act as umpire for those bases. Both will act as 2nd base umpire.
- A coach from the team that is batting will operate the pitching machine. This coach will act as the home plate umpire. The offensive team will also supply a coach by the backstop. That coach will help gather balls and also put a tee out after **up to 5 pitches or 3 strikes**. Do not return the balls to the pitcher until after the ball is put in play (helps save time). Coaches please keep things moving so we get as many as bats as possible.
- So on offense, a parent at first base, a parent at 3rd base, a parent working pitching machine and a parent behind the plate. On defense, two parents in the outfield.

Weeks 1-5

During the first five weeks of the season, all players should get a chance to play every position multiple times.

Batting

- Each batter will get **up to** 5 pitches from the machine. If they swing at the first 3 pitches, they only get 3 pitches. If they don't put the ball into play, a tee will be brought out.
- No bunting. Batters must attempt a full swing of the bat.
- If ball is hit from Tee, **only one base is allowed by all runners on base and the hitter.**
- On balls hit off the machine, runners may take multiple bases but once the ball is in the infield, they may not advance beyond the next base.

Base Running

- Work to get kids out of the habit of going one base at a time.
- Base Runners cannot lead off until the ball crosses the plate. No stealing bases. One base will be allowed on any ball that goes out of play.
- Runners must slide at all bases when played upon. Intentionally running into a fielder will be an out. Not sliding into a base when played upon is an out.

Fielding

- The infield will consist of 6 players including the catcher, the outfield will have the remaining players. Nobody sits out on defense.
- The outfielders must stay on the grass until the ball is hit.
- Infielders cannot be ahead of the baseline until the ball is hit.
- Pitcher must stay even with the pitching machine until the ball is hit.

Miscellaneous Items

- A team will be allowed five runs or three outs or until time expires.
- All players must wear a batting helmet while batting, on deck, while on base.
- One warning for throwing the bat, 2nd time will be an out.
- There is no infield fly rule.

Remaining Weeks

- During week 6 and beyond, we will no longer use the tee. If a player strikes out, they are out. They still only get up to 5 pitches unless they foul off the 5th pitch and/or any subsequent pitches. If they foul off a pitch with 2 strikes, they will continue to hit until they strike out or put the ball in play.
- At this point, coaches may re-shuffle their fielding assignments and batting order and play more to win.
- Coaches should take this opportunity to teach good sportsmanship for both winning and losing.
- There are no rules regarding how many innings a player may play at one position.
- There is no limit on the number of bases a player may take.
- Only 5 runs are allowed per inning. We still only have one hour. No new inning can start after 50 minutes.
- Runners should try to slide at all bases when played upon, however, do not call a runner out for not sliding unless they interfered with the fielder.