# A blue and white logo Description automatically generatedThe Optimist Club of Southwest Kitchener

# T-Ball (Junior and Senior) Rules – 2025

#### PURPOSE

* These rules are designed to avoid confusion and to guide coaches, players and parents to ensure fairness and equality during games.
* It is still the responsibility of all parties involved to demonstrate good sportsmanship conduct in line with the association’s objectives of developing player’s skills in a fun and learning environment.

#### GENERAL CONDUCT

* Arrive at the park 15 minutes before game time (or as directed by your coach).  This will ensure there is adequate time for warm-up and that games will begin on time.
* The use of tobacco or alcohol on the field or benches is Strictly PROHIBITED.
* The use of profane, derogatory or insensitive language towards and players, coaches or parents will NOT be tolerated and could result in disciplinary action.

#### GAME CONDUCT AND ASSOCIATION RULES

* The game begins at the designated start time when the coaches declare play ball (a 5 minute grace period is allowed if there are insufficient players to start).  Both coaches should discuss if a game should be canceled due to inclement weather.  The safety of the players must take priority and no game can continue if lightning is observed.
* The home team prepares the field for the game (tee, bases, lines, etc.).
* A complete game consists of 4 innings or 1 hour and 30 minutes.  Time begins when the first ball is batted, no new inning shall start after 7:30.  If time permits coaches may mutually agree to play an extra inning(s) so long as BOTH teams play their half of the inning on the field and batting.

**FAIR PLAY**

* Coaches may not sit players, all players play the game.
* Coaches must rotate players between the infield and outfield as best they can to promote development. No one player may play the same position for the entire game (or season) except where the player’s safety is an issue.
* Every player present at the game gets a chance to bat during their half inning.

#### PLAYING FIELD SETUP

* Distance between bases:

Junior - 45 feet

Senior – 60 feet

* The dead ball line is an imaginary line approximately 10 feet out from home plate.  Coaches may draw this line on the diamond connecting across from 1st to 3rd base lines.  Coaches should agree on the dead ball zone ahead of each game to ensure proper application during each teams at bats.
* The score line is marked parallel to the first base line from the corner of the plate. Runners must cross the score line and not touch the plate area. Runners cannot be tagged out after they cross the no return line.
* The pitcher’s mound is located between the 1st and 3rd bases.  A 3 by 6 foot rectangle should be drawn around this point and the pitcher must begin inside this pitchers box for every at bat.
* Out of Play is determined by imaginary lines out from the corner of the backstop or players’ benches.  (Determined by coaches before beginning of game.)
* The batter’s box is 2 feet wide by 4 feet long.  Coaches are encouraged to draw this out for players to ensure they are in the correct and safe position for all at bats.
* On full size diamonds, the coaches must determine where the outfield starts before the game begins.
* Home teams supply/setup the bases, setup the Tee and provide the game ball.

**UNIFORMS / EQUIPMENT**

 All players must wear a league cap and shirt. No metal cleats are allowed.  It is mandatory that enclosed shoes and long pants be worn.

* Pitchers must wear face guard helmets at ALL times while playing defense in the field.
* The catcher must wear full protective gear (mask, chest protector and shin guards).
* All players that are either on deck, batting or running the bases must wear a helmet with the chinstrap fastened before play can start.
* All players that are not batting (or on deck) or have already batted and are no longer on the bases are required to stay on the bench area at all times during their teams at bat.
* All players must use a suitable ball glove.
* Glove and bat size rules are modified from baseball rules to be reasonable in the circumstances, so as not to give either team an unfair advantage, as determined by the coaches.

**DEFENSIVE RULES**

 There are 11 defensive positions – 6 infielders and 5 outfielders.  If a team has more than 12 players the additional players MUST play outfield positions ONLY.

* A team must have a minimum of 8 players or the game may be forfeited (coaches must mutually agree)
* Pitcher must keep both feet in the mound area until the ball is put into play
* The catcher is the only player who can stop the play on last batter by gaining possession of the ball and contacting home plate.
* The infielders must be on the infield, positioned behind the base line until the ball is put into play.
* Outfielders must maintain both feet in the outfield until the ball is hit.
* Players may not change defensive positions after they have taken the field and the first batter is in the batter’s box, except due to injury, illness or player safety.  No player may play more than one inning more than any other player except due to injury, illness or lateness.
* If the ball leaves the field of play, an overthrow has occurred. Time is called and runners will be awarded the base they are running to.
* Defensive Interference – If in the opinion of the coach, a defensive player prevents a runner from reaching base safely, then the runner will be awarded the base they were prevented from reaching.
* A defensive coach may not touch a player when play is in progress.  That is, they may not push, pull or otherwise physically direct a defensive player towards a ball after the offensive team has hit it.  The ball is considered dead when this occurs.  The team will also be warned and on a second infraction, that team will also no longer be allowed to position a coach in the outfield.

**COACHES IN PLAYING FIELD**

* You must still observe the no contact rule in regard to the players.
* For Junior T-Ball, a maximum of 2 coaches are permitted on the defensive playing field behind the base line to assist the players until June 1st.  After this time only 1 coach is permitted on the defensive playing field. You are to use the first half of the season to teach the players the proper fielding positions.
* For Senior T-Ball only 1 coach is permitted on the defensive playing field.  If comfortable coaches may elect NOT to be in the defensive field with the team and can coach from the bench area.

**OFFENSIVE RULES**

* All players bat. If a player shows up late to a game he / she will be added to the bottom of the batting order.   Coaches are encouraged to rotate the batting order for each game played.  The idea is to allow batters to bat equally at the beginning, middle and ends of the batting lineup.
* Batter’s Box – The batter must stay in the batter’s box while hitting the ball.  The coach should ensure the batter is in the box before the ball is put in play.
* Thrown Bat – If any player throws the bat in an unsafe manner, a team warning will be issued on the first offense.  All other incidences of a thrown bat will result in an “out”.  The batter will be called “out”, and all base runners will return to the bases they occupied before the offense occurred.
* Dead Ball - If the player hits many dead balls during the course of their at bat, then the coach may declare that the next batted ball in fair territory will be in play regardless of the distance that the ball traveled.  The coaches must ensure that both teams and the batter are aware that the next hit ball is in play.
* Junior players may take as many swings as necessary to put the ball into play.
* Play Ball – The home plate coach will place the batting tee on the plate, and call “play ball” in such a manner that all defensive players may hear.  If the batter puts the ball in play before the coach has called “play ball” the hit is called dead.
* Batting Orders – The proper batting order must be followed in each inning.  In the event a team bats out of order, it is up to the other team to notify the coaches after the batter reaches base and time is called.  The proper batter is out, all base runners must return to the base they occupied before the infraction and the next batter is up.
* Lead Offs – All runners must keep at least one foot in contact with the base until the ball is hit. If a lead off occurs (no tag up) the play is allowed to continue.  When time is called, all outs made on the play will stand. The runner(s) that lead off will be called out. If a lead off occurs on last batter, the play will continue and the runner(s) who lead off will not be counted as runs.
* Base Running Outs – The runner will be called out if a defensive player with control of the ball tags them.  The tag must be made with the hand or glove possessing the ball.  The player is forced out when a defensive player with control of the ball touches the base(s) before the runner.  If the runner runs drastically off the base path in an attempt to avoid being tagged or forced out they will be ruled out.
* Hit By A Batted Ball – If a base runner is hit directly by a batted ball, and no fielding player has made an attempt on the ball, time will be called.  The base runner will be out and all other base runners will be returned to the base they occupied before the infraction.
* Dead Hit – A ball hit without sufficient force to cross the dead ball line or hit such a way to disadvantage the infielders (such as half swings or chopping down the ball) is a dead ball.  The coach will call a “dead ball”, if a dead ball is caught in the air by a fielder the batter is out.  All runners will return to the base they occupied before the infraction.
* No bunting, chopping or half swings are allowed which place the defensive team at an unfair disadvantage.
* Base coaches may not touch a player when play is in progress.  That is, they may not push, pull or otherwise physically direct an offensive player towards a base when play is active.  The offensive team will be warned on the first infraction.  On the second and subsequent infractions, the runner will be called out and play will continue its normal course (that is, the defensive team can attempt to get additional outs).

#### LAST BATTER

* Objective – The objective of the last batter is to hit and drive all remaining base runners home including themselves, before the defensive team can retrieve the ball, throw it to the catcher who steps on home plate stopping all further play.
* Announcing Last Batter -The offensive team coach must inform the other coach that the last batter is coming to the plate.  The coach must announce last batter in such a way that all participants can hear.  Failure to properly inform the defensive team of last batter status will result in a dead hit and the play will be done over.
* Legal Runners – If a base runner leads off on last batter, the play will continue but the runner that lead off will be considered an illegal runner and will not be counted in the score.  If a fly ball is caught only the batter is out and all base runners must tag up by touching the base they occupied when play ball was called.  Any runner not tagging will be called illegal and will not count in the score.
* Encroachment – Any defensive player other than the catcher that crosses the dead ball line before time is called on last batter, will be called for encroachment.  If encroachment occurs, the play is allowed to continue until time is called.  All legal runners will score.
* Defensive Play – The defensive team must retrieve the batted ball and throw it to the catcher at home plate who will stop play by gaining control of the ball and stepping on home plate.  If the defensive team retrieves the ball on the outfield side of the dead ball line, they must attempt to throw the ball back across the line to home plate.
* Out of play – On last batter the out of play lines will remain in effect.  If the ball goes out of play on last batter, time is called, and all legal runners will score.  If the ball goes out of play by rolling underneath the backstop, then time is called and all legal runners  will score, except the last batter.
* Defensive Interference – both coaches should review any defensive interference on the base runner.  If, in their opinion, the runner would have scored in the absence of interference, then a run will be awarded.