

Revised 2025

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Route 304 League Rule Book

The following rules will apply to all specified divisions within The Route 304 League. Any amendments or decisions to the interpretation of these rules will be decided and determined by The Route 304 Board of Directors, which consists of the Presidents from the communities of Girard, Hubbard, Liberty, McDonald, Mineral Ridge and Niles.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 1) To ensure a positive and safe environment for all participants while promoting sportsmanship, all participants or spectators are prohibited from...
 - inciting any actions detrimental to the game.
 - using foul language or gestures.
 - throwing a bat, helmet or other object.
 - willfully badgering, distracting or harassing any player, coach or umpire.
 - showing violent disapproval of a coach's or umpire's decision.
 - standing behind dugouts and backstops or standing within 30 feet of any dugout

*Any person **failing to comply** with these rules and any other rules as outlined in the Official Baseball Little League Rule Book may, at the discretion of the umpire and league officials, be ejected from the playing field and its surrounding premises (i.e. the park or complex) and subjected to a suspension from future participation.*
- 2) **One pre-determined coach can address an umpire** with a question or rule interpretation. No other coach or parent should approach an umpire to discuss a rule or call on the field.
- 3) **Each team shall be limited to 4 game-day coaches** in the dugout which includes the manager, assistants, and scorekeeper.
- 4) Any coach or manager that pulls their team from the field before a completed game must notify a league board member immediately. The 304 Board will then discuss the occurrence to determine a proper resolution.
- 5) **Game protests** must be made by the manager to the home plate umpire and the official (home team) scorer at the time of the alleged rule violation. It must be made before the next pitch is thrown. It then must be presented to the 304 League Board by 6:00 p.m. the following day. Protests can only be made on rule violations and not on the judgment call of an umpire. In the event one of the presidents is involved in a protested game, an agreed upon substitute will be named by a majority of the remaining presidents.

EJECTION RULE

Any manager, coach, player or spectator who is ejected from a game by an umpire or league official, will be subject to an additional one (1) game suspension from coaching, playing or viewing with his/her team. The full term of the suspension is to be served immediately beginning with that team's next game following the ejection. All ejections are subject to board review for additional disciplinary actions should it be deemed necessary.

In addition, any manager, coach, player or spectator who is ejected from a game a second time in the same season will be suspended from coaching, playing or viewing that team's games for the remainder of the season. The full term of the suspension is to be served immediately beginning with that team's next game following the ejection

Any manager, coach, player or spectator who is ejected from a game for any reason may be subjected to an immediate police report and be subject to the discipline of the police for their pursuant actions. If the offender is found to be in violation of any community baseball association rules or in violation of any local or city ordinance for disorderly conduct, the offender may incur additional and future restrictions from Route 304 League games.

Dugout Cheering and Chanting

Dugout cheers, chants and songs are only permitted when directed to teammates as a form of encouragement. These cheers, chants, or songs must be positive in nature and not include any connotation of foul language, negative content, or intimidation strategies. Teams are not permitted to direct these cheers, chants, or songs to opponents, fans, or umpires at any time. Teams not complying with this rule will be subjected to the team manager being suspended.

Residency Rule: It is the intent of the Route 304 League to be a community baseball & softball organization. Thus, it is required that a player shall reside in that community or attend a school in that community. Any other circumstances need to be approved by the league board of directors.

304 League- Preseason Rules and Guidelines

- 1) **Player Age Determination**
 - **Boys** – effective age is any player born on or before April 30
 - **Girls** - effective age is any player born on or before January 1
- 2) **Team Parity:** There is an emphasis on each community to maintain a relative balance of players from each age group on their respective teams. Each community must maintain the +2/-2 roster balance per teams in each age group. Carryovers from previous years do not override the roster balance rule. Failure to follow this rule will result in a ban from playoffs for that age group breaking the rule.
- 3) **Prior to selecting rosters, each team can designate 2 adults as coaches.**
- 4) No community will allow for 3 or more adults to dictate their coaching staff in an effort to “stack” a roster.
- 5) Prior to the beginning of each season, **teams must submit complete rosters** to their respective league representative by April 1st. The 304 League Board will accumulate and distribute the official league rosters (consisting of every team in the league) to each manager. The official league rosters shall list each player’s name, uniform number, birth date, and school system/ home address.
- 6) **Birth Certificates** must be provided to the league if a question arises concerning the age of any player.
- 7) **Play up restrictions:** Each individual community within the Route 304 League will govern the requests to “play up” on an individual basis. However, no community may permit a player to “play-up” 2 years of their age. For example: a 9 year old will not be permitted to “play-up as an 11 year old.
- 8) **The League Championship** is determined by a tournament held after the completion of the regular season. A playoff format has been determined by a majority vote of league presidents and may change from year to year. Teams may be seeded by win/loss records. Tiebreakers are determined by head to head competition during the regular season and then, if necessary, by a coin flip if a head to head advantage does not exist.

Route 304 League: Game Day Rules

Equipment

- **Batting Helmets: 7/8 and 9/10 Divisions:** All batters and base runners must have a football type facemask on their helmet. 1-piece jaw-guard types do not meet this requirement. **11/12 Division:** Although it is recommended, the batters and base runners are not required to wear face masks.
 - **Catcher's Gear:** Catchers must wear a 1-piece (hockey type) head protection (a batting helmet with a football type face mask is also approved for the 7/8 divisions), shin guards, and chest protector.
 - **Bats:** Softball bats must have a barrel of 2 ¼" diameter and must meet 1.2 BPF, Baseball bats can be USA bat certified, BBCOR certified, or wooden. The max barrel diameter for all certifications is 2 5/8".
Any player who uses a non-approved bat will result in an ejection for that player and manager. A second offense will result in a 3 game suspension for the manager.
- 1) **Game Length:** Games will last six innings or 1 hour 45 minutes. The game clock will begin as soon as the umpire's pregame meeting is complete. A new inning cannot start after the time limit has passed (A new inning begins with the home team's third out of the previous inning). It is recommended that the umpire set an alarm to avoid any dispute.
 - 2) **Tiebreaker Rule:** If the score is tied after 6 innings are completed and before the 1:45 time limit, (1) extra inning is allowed to be played. No game shall go longer than 7 innings. The continuation of any game shall not impact/delay the start of the later game scheduled on that field the same evening.
 - 3) **Games Shortened by weather or daylight:** All games will be considered official after 4 innings have been completed. If a game is stopped for any reason with the score tied, play shall be resumed the next time the two teams involved play again. If the teams do not play again it must be resumed within ten (10) days of the suspended game. A game called for any reason prior to 4 complete innings shall be resumed at the exact point of cancellation within ten (10) days or completed prior to the next game in which the teams are involved.
 - 4) **Number of Players Required:** A team must have eight players to start and finish a game. If a team starts a game with eight (8) players, an out will be recorded in the ninth (9th) spot in the batting order.
 - 5) **Player "Call-Ups":** A team can "Call Up" players from the age division directly below in order to fill a game day roster of 10 players maximum. The call up player must be a member of the community and already be participating in the 304 League. Once a player is called up to play for a specified team, he/she cannot play for any other team as a call up participant. A call up player is not allowed to pitch.

- 6) **Runner / Defender Collisions:** If in the opinion of the umpire, a player unnecessarily or intentionally collides with another player, that player will be called out and ejected from the game. If a defensive player blocks a base inhibiting a slide or causes the runner to leave the base path to avoid a collision, the umpire may award the runner the base. If in the opinion of the umpire, a player does not slide on a close play that caused the potential of an injury, that player will be called out. Sliding, in itself, is not mandatory, unless in cases described above.
- 7) **Head First Slides:** Head first slides are strictly prohibited. If one occurs, the runner is called out and the ball is ruled dead. **Note:** There is no warning to a player or team. An exception to this rule is if a player dives back to a base.
- 8) **DOUBLE FIRST BASE BAG**
- A batted ball that hits the white section of the double base shall be declared fair. A batted ball that hits the colored (orange or green) section shall be declared foul.
 - Whenever a play is being made on the batter-runner, the defense must use the white section of the double first base.
 - The batter-runner must use the colored (orange or green) section on his/her first attempt to tag first base. Exception: On extra base hits or other balls hit to the outfield when there is no chance for a play to be made at the double first base, the runner may touch either the white or colored (orange or green) section of the base. Should, however, the batter-runner reach and go beyond first base, he/she can only return to the white section of the base.
 - Use of the double first base does not change any other rule concerning Interference or Obstruction at first base.

Rules Specific to 7/8 Softball and Baseball

- 1) Each manager will set a **continuous batting order**. This means all players present must bat in their pre-determined order for the entire game. If a player shows up after the game has started, they will be inserted into the last batting position.
 - Any player who does not bat, but is listed in the batting order, is an out unless the player has been injured. A player does not bat out of order until the at-bat is completed. If it is noticed that the batter is out of order before the at-bat is over, the actual batter assumes the count of the previous out of order batter.
- 2) **Player Playing Time:** Every player must play at least 3 innings defensively in a 6-inning game or 2 innings if a game is shorter than 6 innings.
- 3) **Defensive Positioning:** Each team will field a maximum of 10 players. They will consist of four outfielders, a catcher, a pitcher, a first, second and third baseman, and a shortstop. The rover position is not permitted.
- 4) Outfielders must position themselves on the grass until the ball is put into play. **No “rovers.”**
- 5) Outfielders cannot make a force out by running and tagging a base themselves.
- 6) Infielders must position themselves no closer to home plate than four feet from their respective bases. The base path will be used to determine this distance for the shortstop & second baseman. Once positioned, no infield player may move towards or rush the batter until after the ball is put into play.
- 7) The catcher must be in full catcher's gear & position themselves in a crouched position between the backstop and a line four feet behind home plate until the batter hits the ball.
- 8) **The pitcher must wear a helmet with a football type face mask and a heart guard.**
- 9) The pitcher must start with at least one foot in circle until the pitch crosses home plate.
- 10) **Coach Pitch Rules:** The coach will pitch 35 feet from home plate. Each batter will receive a maximum of 6 pitches. If the batter does not put the ball in play after six pitches, the batter will be considered out. A batter may not be called out on a foul ball.
- 11) **2 coaches are permitted on the field with their defensive team** as long as the coaches position themselves in the outfield and do not physically move players to help a defensive play in any manner.
- 12) **Bunting** is not permitted.
- 13) Any ball hit within a **12-foot arch** in front of home plate is a foul ball. A ball landing on the line is deemed fair.

- 14) Any foul ball hit higher than the batter's head may be caught for an out.
- 15) The **infield fly rule does NOT apply** to this division.
- 16) **Batted balls that hit the coach pitcher** will be dead & do not count. The pitch does not count as one of the six pitches to the batter.
- 17) **No leadoffs or stealing** of bases is allowed. Base runners may not leave a base until the ball is put into play. First violation per team will be a warning; any subsequent violation for that team will result in the runner being called out.
- 18) **Live play, Runners advancing:** Play is live until an infielder has possession/control of the ball and is positioned on the infield dirt. Any runner can attempt to advance to the next base as long as he/she has already cleared the previous base and is in motion at the time the infielder gains control of the ball on the infield dirt.
- 19) **Overthrows:** There is no opportunity for any runner to advance to the next base on overthrows involving a throw from one infielder to another infielder. This rule is intended to encourage all players to attempt to make the proper "baseball play" without penalty thus deterring the coaching practice of instructing players to field the ball and immediately hold it in the air in order to stop play.
- 20) **An infielder may request a timeout** once they have control of the ball, however, the timeout may not be granted due to a runner that may still be in motion towards the next base, or towards the base from which he/she came. Coaching Point: *Players must learn that all timeouts requested may not be granted.*
- 21) **Runs per Inning Limit:** There is a 5 run rule per inning for innings 1 thru 5. Both teams can score unlimited runs in the 6th inning only.
- 22) **Mercy Rule:** There will be a 12-run mercy rule after 4 complete innings.
- 23) The most recent edition of the Official Baseball Little League Rule Book will govern league play with the exception of the rules listed above.

Rules Specific to 9/10 Softball and Baseball

- 1) Each manager will set a **continuous batting order**. This means all players present must bat in their pre-determined order for the entire game. If a player shows up after the game has started, they will be inserted into the last batting position.
 - Any player who does not bat, but is listed in the batting order, is an out unless the player has been injured. A player does not bat out of order until the at-bat is completed. If it is noticed that the batter is out of order before the at-bat is over, the actual batter assumes the count of the previous out of order batter.
- 2) **Player Playing Time:** Each player must play at least two (2) innings of defense or six outs and get at least 1 at bat.
- 3) **Defensive Positioning:** Each team will field a maximum of 10 players. They will consist of four outfielders, a catcher, a pitcher, a first/second/third baseman, and a shortstop. The rover position is not permitted.
- 4) A **courtesy runner for the catcher** is allowed with 2 outs in the inning. Courtesy runner will be the last player who recorded an out.
- 5) **No lead offs are allowed.** Base runners may attempt to steal a base but cannot leave a base until the pitched ball crosses the front edge of home plate. First violation per team will be a warning; any subsequent violation for that team will result in the runner being called out.
- 6) **Delayed stealing is prohibited.** A delayed steal occurs when a base runner attempts to advance any time after the catcher has possession of the ball and up until the next pitch is thrown. It is still considered a delayed steal if the catcher holds the ball for an abnormal amount of time or if the pitcher does not cleanly catch the ball when thrown back by the catcher therefore the runners cannot advance. First offense for delayed stealing results in a team warning and runners returned to their original base. The second offense will result in the runner being called out.
- 7) **Continuous walks are not permitted**, meaning a player is not permitted past the base granted unless a play is made at the base.
- 8) A catcher can try to throw out any runner attempting to steal without penalty of the runner advancing to the next base in the event of an overthrow. **1 base per steal attempt.**
- 9) **Runs Per Inning:** There is a 5 run rule per inning for innings 1 thru 5. Both teams can score unlimited runs in the 6th inning only.
- 10) **Mercy Rule:** There will be a 10-run mercy rule after 4 complete innings.
- 11) The most recent edition of the **Official Baseball Little League Rule Book** will govern league play with the exception of the rules listed above.

Rules Specific to 9/10 Girls Softball

1) Base Running:

- Hesitation Rule is in effect.
- **A runner on 3rd base may NOT attempt to score on a pitched ball that gets passed the catcher (passed ball).** No Stealing of home.

2) Pitching:

- Regardless of how many games played per week, a player is **eligible to pitch a maximum of 12 innings per week** (Monday thru Sunday). – 1 pitch constitutes an inning
- **No player can pitch more than 4 innings per game** (6 innings in double header situations).
- **A 9 year old player is required to pitch** a minimum of 2 innings or 10 consecutive batters in a 5-6 inning game (1 inning if the game is completed in 4 innings).
- **The starting pitcher only can re-enter to pitch again in the same game.**
- After a coach visits the mound 3 times in the same inning, the pitcher must be replaced.
- A pitcher must be replaced if he hits five batters in the same game.
- A team not in full compliance to pitching rules will be subject to forfeit and the manager will face a 1 game suspension

Rules Specific to 9/10 Boys Baseball

Base Running:

- **A runner on 3rd base may NOT attempt to score on a pitched ball that gets past the catcher (passed ball).** No Stealing of home.

Pitching:

- Regardless of how many games played per week, a player is **eligible to pitch a max of 9 innings per week** (Monday thru Sunday). – 1 pitch constitutes an inning
- **No player can pitch more than 2 innings per game** (4 innings in double header)
- **A 9 year old player is required to pitch** a minimum of 1 inning or 10 consecutive batters in a 5-6 inning game
- **No pitcher can re-enter** as a pitcher once he is removed from the mound.
- After 3 mound visits in the same inning, the pitcher must be replaced.
- A pitcher must be replaced if he hits three batters with the baseball in the same game.
- A team not in full compliance to pitching rules will be subject to forfeit and the manager will face a 1 game suspension

Rules Specific to 11/12 Softball and Baseball

- 1) **Extra Hitter:** Each team “can” use an extra hitter (EH) to create a 10-man batting order for every game. NOTE: The EH may move to a fielding position and a fielder may become a EH as long as they maintain their same positions in the batting order. A player cannot play two consecutive games as the full time EH.
- 2) **Player Playing Time:** Every player must play six (6) outs in the field and have one (1) at bat in each complete game, with the exception of a complete game EH. To accomplish this, every player should enter the game by the fourth inning. Only players who start the game may re-enter provided the player being replaced has batted once and played six (6) outs in the field. **PENALTY:** If it is discovered that any player did not receive their minimum playing time, the offending manager will receive an automatic 1 game suspension.
- 3) Coaches can utilize a **continuous batting order** allowing all available players to bat in the lineup. In this instance, players are still required to play at least 6 outs on the field.
- 4) **Defensive Positioning:** Each team will field a maximum of 9 players.
- 5) A Batter-Runner can advance to 1st base on a **dropped-3rd strike** by the catcher when first base is either unoccupied or there are already 2 outs in the inning. A dropped 3rd strike occurs anytime the ball hits the ground before the catcher receives it.
- 6) **A courtesy runner for the catcher** is allowed with 2 outs already recorded in the inning. Courtesy runner will be the last player who recorded an out.
- 7) The 10 run rule will be in effect after 3 ½ or 4 innings.
- 8) The most recent edition of the Official Baseball Little League Rule Book will govern league play with the exception of the rules listed above.

Rules Specific to 11/12 Softball

Pitching

- Regardless of how many games played per week, a player is **eligible to pitch a maximum of 12 innings per week** (Monday thru Sunday). – 1 pitch constitutes an inning
- **No player can pitch more than 4 innings per game** (6 innings in double header situations).

- **An 11 year old player is required to pitch** a minimum of 2 innings or 10 consecutive batters in a 5-6 inning game (1 inning if the game is completed in 4 innings).
- **The starting pitcher only can re-enter again in the same game.**
- After a coach visits the mound 3 times in the same inning, the pitcher must be replaced.
- A pitcher must be replaced if he hits five batters in the same game.
- A team not in full compliance to pitching rules will be subject to forfeit and the manager will face a 1 game suspension

Rules Specific to 11/12 Baseball

Base Running

- **Base Runners are not permitted to lead off any base.** A base runner can attempt to steal upon the pitcher's release of the ball.

Pitching

- Regardless of how many games played per week, a player is **eligible to pitch a maximum of 9 innings per week** (Monday thru Sunday). – 1 pitch constitutes an inning
- **No player can pitch more than 2 innings per game** (4 innings in double header situations).
- **An 11 year old player is required to pitch** a minimum of 1 inning or 10 consecutive batters in a 5-6 inning game
- **No pitcher can re-enter** as a pitcher once he is removed from the mound.
- After a **coach visits the mound** 3 times in the same inning, the pitcher must be replaced.
- A pitcher must be replaced if he hits three batters with the baseball in the same game.
- A team not in full compliance to pitching rules will be subject to forfeit and the manager will face a 1 game suspension

304 League Governing Board:

Girard: President Justin Kay (330.501.4742)

Hubbard: President Ted Theiron (330.509.1279)

McDonald: President John Metzinger (330.717.5137)

Mineral Ridge: President Pete Goche (330.646.7002)

Niles: President Kyle Leonard (330.716.4379)

