

UPDATED 2024
Canton Spring Baseball
Farm League Playing Rules

The following rules are for the Canton Little League (CLL) baseball Farm League division. These were reviewed and agreed on by various members of the CLL board of directors. Our goal is to teach the rules of baseball that are used at this level in order to develop discrete baseball skills, an understanding of the game, and an understanding of being on a team. There are no winners and losers at this level. The focus is on providing a positive experience for players in order to improve their knowledge of the game, and to find success that they can build on while continuing to learn. Most importantly – HAVE FUN.

Goals

- Work to make sure that all of the kids are having fun.
- Continue to develop the basic skills of throwing, fielding and hitting.
- Practice playing by the rules (e.g. runs, outs, and innings) and staying in position. Learn to play a variety of positions, including pitching.
- Do above in a non-competitive environment. No standings are kept.
- Try to keep all players engaged regardless of position.

Coaching the Farm League

Learning baseball should involve mistakes. Instruct players on mistakes during the game so that everyone on both teams can develop and grow. It will also help to create a welcoming environment where all players can encourage each other, try their best, and find a sense of belonging.

Coaches should be ready to be “more than just a body.” Canton Little League emphasizes instruction in baseball and in teamwork, so coaches should be prepared to help players develop skills to prepare them to be on a baseball team. While winning is fun, it can not be the primary purpose of coaching, nor can the development of a single player. All players on every team deserve to be coached in a positive, constructive environment created by the adults involved.

In-Game Expectations of Managers and Coaches

- At all times with parents, players, and other coaches, maintain a sense of respectful decorum.
 - Remember that this is still an instructional league, and thus non-competitive.
- Ensure that all of the kids have fun and rotate evenly through all of the positions (see note below on 1B and Catcher).
- **Coaches should prepare lineups and player rotation prior to the commencement of the game.**
 - In between innings, Coaches should assign players to their fielding positions as quickly as possible to avoid any delays in the game.
 - The fielding team’s coaches should be in the field to instruct the players.
 - The hitting team shall have one coach on the pitcher’s mound to call balls and strikes, and one coach maintaining order on the bench. A third coach may help behind home plate to instruct the catcher, give reminders to the hitter, and retrieve wild pitches.
 - Coaches act as umpires. Call anything close to the strike zone a strike and encourage hitters to swing. Ties go to the **fielder**. Encourage the players to make plays.
- Some important things to remember:
 - You can never have enough pitchers
 - Accurate throwing is not automatic - it must be taught
 - Clean fielding is not automatic - it must be taught
 - A good swing is not automatic - it must be taught
 - Nobody is scouting this level. Keep it fun and the players will improve.

Safety

Batter Safety

During any type of hitting drill, including batting practice or hitting off a tee, the batter must wear a helmet. Coaches must ensure players know how to properly hold a bat.

Coaches must teach and enforce the following:

- The only time a player should hold a bat is when s/he is batting.
- When walking with a bat, players should hold it by the barrel, not the handle.

- There is no on-deck batter. Players from the hitting team must be on the bench, not climbing fences, playing catch, or engaging in other non-baseball activities.
- Sliding must be taught and encouraged in practices and games. It may be tough when starting, but will get easier the more the players practice.

Fielding Safety

All players should wear a protective cup in fielding situations, and must wear a protective cup as catcher.

General Rules and Gameplay

- Games are five full innings even if the home team is ahead, subject to the following:
 - No inning may begin later than 1 hour and 30 minutes beyond the start of the game
 - Five-run limit per inning including the 5th inning
- Players who are not registered in the Farm League in Canton Little League are not permitted to play in games
- Players shall be treated equally throughout the season in terms of playing and position opportunities. **There is no discretion allowed with regard to this rule.**
- Coaches should rotate players each inning to ensure opportunities for each position are equal, and avoid allowing players to play the same position twice in the same game. For safety purposes coaches should use discretion in placing players at **1B and Catcher.**

Pitching

- Pre-season practices should ensure players have an opportunity to work on pitching. All players on the team must be allowed to pitch in a game setting during the season.
 - Not every kid is destined to be a pitcher - but it is in every kid's best interest to practice pitching
- Only players should be pitching in games, including opening day. Coaches do not pitch in the farm league.
- The coach from the hitting team is on the mound to provide support for the pitcher, and to announce balls and strikes.
- Batters strike out on 3 strikes and walk on 4 balls. The dropped third strike rule does not apply.
- Batters are awarded first base on HBP.
 - Batters should be taught how to safely avoid oncoming pitches
 - Teams should use discretion on pitchers who hit multiple batters in a game, and a conversation between coaches about player safety must take place after three hit batsmen
- **Pitching until the player hits the ball is not allowed.**
- **Pitchers are limited to 50 pitches per game, or two innings, whichever comes first**

Fielding

- Catcher and four infielders should assume normal positions. Regardless of the batter, players should not adjust their fielding positions to move closer to the hitter.
- There can be four outfielders in the outfield, evenly spaced. If there are more than ten players at a game, coaches must substitute all players equally. Outfielders must be standing on the outfield grass.
 - Players must be rotated in the field each inning. Players should not play more than one inning at a position per game, except for 1B and Catcher at which players may play two consecutive innings.
- Outfielders cannot make a force-out or tag. They can catch fly balls for outs and assist on outs by throwing the ball to an infielder.

Batting/Running

- Baserunners should be taught proper sliding techniques in order to slide into second base, third base, and home plate when outs are being attempted. Players must slide feet first.
- In general, the batter and runners may advance up to two bases only on any hit ball, subject to being put out
 - In the event of an overthrow to first base on a batted ball, runners may advance one base only.
 - The only exception to the rule above is a hit ball that lands in the outfield grass on the fly. In this case, the batters and runners may advance up to three bases, subject to being put out.
 - If the ball is retrieved and returned to the infield, even on a wild throw, prior to the batter or runner advancing past first base, then the runners shall not be permitted a second base.
- If a batted ball hits the Coach, the ball is dead and the batter and all runners shall advance one base.
- No stealing, advancing on passed balls, wild pitches, or over-throws to the pitcher from the catcher after a pitch. Leading off is not allowed.
- Once the ball is possessed on the mound by any defensive player the ball is dead.

- A courtesy runner is allowed (last player out on the batting team) at any time for the pitcher or catcher and MUST be used for the catcher if there are 2 outs.