

**UPDATED 2024**  
**Canton Spring Baseball**  
**Instructional League Playing Rules**

The following rules are for the Canton Little League (CLL) baseball Instructional 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 form a strong base that can be built upon in future play. There are no winners and losers at this level. The focus is on developing baseball skills and knowledge of the game as well as providing a positive experience in being part of a team. Most importantly – HAVE FUN.

**Goals**

- Ensure that all of the kids are having fun.
- Develop the basic skills of throwing, fielding and hitting.
- Introduce rules (e.g. runs, outs, and innings) and concept of positions.
- Do above in a non-competitive environment. No standings are kept.
- Try to keep all players engaged regardless of position.

**In-Game Expectations of Managers and Coaches**

- At all times with parents, players, and other coaches, maintain a sense of respectful decorum
  - Remember that these are instructional leagues, and thus non-competitive
- Ensure that all of the kids have fun and rotate evenly through all of the positions.
- **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, including behind the catcher helping to retrieve passed balls and wild pitches.
  - The hitting team shall have one coach on the pitcher's mound and one coach maintaining order on the bench. A third coach may help line the kids up at home plate and retrieve wild pitches.
  - Coaches act as umpires. Ties go to the **fielder**. Encourage the players to make plays.

**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 45 minutes beyond the start of the game.
  - Five-run limit per inning including the 5th inning.
- 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**.

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.

**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.

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.

**Fielding Safety**

All players must wear a protective cup in fielding situations, especially when playing catcher.

## **Pitching**

- Coaches should pitch to players from the knee, approximately 25-30 feet from home plate. Pitching from a knee allows the players to clearly see the ball as it is released from the coach's hand, and improves their ability to track the ball as it reaches the hitting zone.
- As the season progresses and players improve, coaches may want to throw standing from the mound. Bear in mind, the additional distance and change in trajectory will require hitters to make adjustments - do this when players are ready.
- There is a **7-pitch limit in effect**. If a player has not hit the ball by the seventh hittable pitch, the player will be out. Subject to the following exceptions:
  - If the 7th pitch is a foul tip, the player shall receive another pitch.
  - Coaches should use their discretion on the 7-pitch limit if:
    - the 7th pitch is not hittable
    - seeking to avoid the same participant(s) striking out each at bat
- **Pitching until the player hits the ball is not allowed. No walks.**

## **Fielding**

- Pitcher should stand on the first base side of the Coach.
- 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.
- Remaining players should be spread evenly across the outfield. Outfielders must be standing on the outfield grass.
- Outfielders cannot make a force-out or tag. They can catch fly balls and assist on outs by throwing the ball to an infielder.

## **Batting/Running**

- In general, the batter and runners may advance one base only on any hit ball, subject to being put out, regardless of any errors or overthrows.
- 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 two 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 reaching his 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.