

**BUTLER COUNTY BASEBALL ASSOCIATION  
ROOKIE LEAGUE RULES 2025**

Games are scheduled between Cal Ripken Rookie League Teams (comprised of 8 olds). The rules which shall govern game play are the Official Baseball Rules (OBR) as used by Major League Baseball, the Cal Ripken OBR Exceptions (found in the Babe Ruth Handbook), and the Local League Rules listed below. Local League rules will supersede rules as found in the OBR. Each division within Butler County Cal Ripken is responsible for providing a copy of the rules to each manager, and for ensuring that each manager is knowledgeable of these rules.

- I. **TEAMS** – Each division is responsible for creating teams, and assigning managers for each team.
- II. **MANAGERS/COACHES** –
  - a. All managers, coaches, or any other adult involved in any way will be required to submit to a background check through their division. They will also be required to pass a course on concussion training for athletes. ***Failure to comply with these policies may result in immediate removal from position.***
  - b. Only players, 1 manager, and up to 3 assistant coaches are permitted in the dugout during game play. Umpires should instruct players who are not in the game, and coaches to remain in the dugout during game play. Exceptions to the rule: on deck batter, coaches in the coach's box while on offense.
- III. **PRE-GAME** –
  - a. Infield Practice: The home team shall take the field 35 minutes prior to game time and has the field for 15 minutes. The visiting team shall take the field 20 minutes prior to game time for 15 minutes. Grounds crews and division directors may dictate that no infield practice is permitted based on field conditions or scheduling.
  - b. Ground Rules: Each manager will meet with the umpire at home plate 5 minutes prior to game time. The home team's manager will present ground rules to the umpire and opposing manager. For all tournament games; the umpire will be paid at the conclusion of the conference.
- IV. **EQUIPMENT** –
  - a. Baseballs: Home team is responsible for providing 1 new and 1 used, but in good condition Cal Ripken approved baseball to the umpire prior to the start of the game. The visiting team is responsible for providing 1 used, but in good condition Cal Ripken approved baseball to the umpire. Both teams are required to help keep the umpire supplied with baseballs as the game proceeds. During/after inclement weather both teams may be asked to provide more baseballs to the umpire to keep the game moving.
  - b. Bats: The bat may not exceed 33" in length, and the bat barrel may not exceed 2-5/8" in diameter. Only 2-5/8" barrel non-wood bats marked with "USA BASEBALL MARKING" will be authorized. No BBCOR Bats are allowed. Wood 2-5/8" barrel bats are permitted. ***If a batter enters the batter's box with an illegal bat; the batter will be called out, and the batter and manager will be removed/ejected from the game.***
- V. **GAME PLAY** –
  - a. Continuous Batting: Rookie League teams will use a continuous batting lineup during game play. If a player is ejected from a game, their time at bat will be recorded as an out. If a player is sick/injured during the game, their time at bat will be skipped with no penalty (see rule VI, d for the exception to this policy). However, the player will not be

permitted to return to the game. Any player arriving after first pitch of game shall be added at the end of the batting order.

- b. **Mandatory Play:** It is mandatory that each player must play 3 innings on defense in every 5 inning game. The only exception will be games shortened due to run rule, or time limits, or at manager discretion for disciplinary reasons (this must be communicated to the opposing team during ground rules).
- c. There will be 10 fielders used (4<sup>th</sup> outfielder)
- d. Players cannot call time out to stop the runners from advancing. The ball must be in the hand of the pitcher and the pitcher needs to be in the vicinity of the pitching rubber to stop play.
- e. Overthrows at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> base allow only ONE additional base.
- f. **Game Length:**
  - i. Games will be played for 5 innings.
  - ii. A game is considered to be official after 4 innings (3 ½ if home team ahead).
  - iii. No new inning will start after 1 hour 30 regardless of the score of the game.
  - iv. Extra innings to break a tie are only permitted if there is time remaining.
  - v. Games suspended due to inclement weather, that have reached an official status will not be rescheduled. Games suspended due to inclement weather that have not yet become official will be rescheduled, and the game will be started over. (the only stats that will be accrued from a suspended, unofficial game will be pitching stats)
  - vi. After 4 innings (3 ½ if home team ahead) if a team is leading by 10 or more runs they will be declared the winner and the game will be over. If a team is leading by 12 runs after 2 1/2 or 3 innings the game will be considered official and the leading team will be declared the winner.
  - vii. Max runs scored per inning is 5 in the first 4 innings. From the 5th inning on there will be no limit on runs per inning or the last inning of the game. *(Ex. So if time runs out in the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning then there is not a limit on runs during the 3<sup>rd</sup> inning). Each coach and umpire needs to be aware that it is the last inning no run limit for that inning. Please announce to both teams before the inning starts that it is the last inning.*
- g. **Forfeits:** Each team must have eight players ready to play no later than 15 minutes after scheduled start time. If a team does not have enough players to start the game, they will be responsible for the entire umpire fee. If a game is started late waiting for a late arrival, the game clock will start at the time the game starts. Any late arriving players will be placed at the bottom of the batting order. In order to be added to the batting order though; the player must be on the original lineup card. So, managers should list all players on the lineup card, whether they are in attendance or not at game time.
  - i. A team that has a player injured during the course of the game they may finish a game with eight players. If a team is reduced to eight players due to injury, an automatic out would be recorded when the player who was injured is supposed to bat.
  - ii. A team that has a player ejected during the course of the game cannot finish the game with eight players. If a team is reduced to eight players due to an ejection the game is forfeited at that point.
  - iii. Any team that is a no show for a game will be responsible for the entire umpire fee. The team that is present for the game will not make any payments to the umpire.

- h. Game Delays: Any time a game is delayed due to adverse weather the umpire shall wait a minimum of 30 minutes prior to calling the game. During this time the umpire shall check with both managers to determine if playing conditions are safe and estimate a time to resume play. Once an umpire determines that a game cannot be continued due to weather, field conditions, etc both teams will be informed with the rationale for calling the game and then do so.
  - i. Base Runners:
    - i. There will be no stealing or leading off. Runners leaving base early will be first granted a warning, then will be called out for subsequent violations.
    - ii. There is no infield fly rule.
    - iii. Runners cannot advance on a passed ball.
    - iv. Runners cannot advance if the catcher overthrows the pitcher when returning the ball to him following a pitch.
    - v. A runner is out if he does not attempt to get around – “avoid contact with” – a fielder who has the ball and is waiting to make a tag, or if he intentionally (maliciously) runs into a fielder. For intentionally running into a fielder; the umpire shall eject the offender from the game. **Failure to comply will result in immediate forfeiture of the game.**
    - vi. With 2 outs; if the catcher is on base, he must be replaced by a courtesy runner (no exceptions). The courtesy runner will be the last *batted* out. The same courtesy runner can only be used once in an inning. *Note – while optional, it is permitted and recommended that a courtesy runner or the pitcher be used with 2 outs as well.*
    - vii. Fielders may be substituted in and out, except for pitchers.
      - A pitcher; once removed from pitching cannot pitch for the remainder of the game. This includes starting pitchers.
  - j. Batter’s Box: Each batter must keep at least one foot in the batter’s box throughout their time at bat. If the batter’s box is not visible, the umpire’s judgement shall prevail as to its intended location. The following exceptions to this policy apply:
    - i. The batter swings at a pitch.
    - ii. The batter is forced out of the box by the pitch.
    - iii. The batter attempts to drag bunt.
    - iv. The defensive team feints or attempts a play at any base.
    - v. The pitcher leaves the dirt area of the pitching mound or takes a position more than five feet from the pitcher’s plate after receiving the ball.
    - vi. A member of either team request and is granted “time.”
    - vii. The catcher leaves the catcher’s box area to adjust equipment or give defensive signals.
    - viii. The catcher does not catch the pitched ball.  
***If the batter leaves the batter’s box and none of the exceptions apply the umpire shall charge a strike to the batter. The pitcher need not throw a pitch, and the ball remains live.***
  - k. Teams will have one minute to switch sides between innings. It is the responsibility of the managers to ensure their players, especially their catchers are ready for the next inning.
- VI. **UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT** – Any unsportsmanlike conduct of any nature by managers, coaches, players, fans, parents, relatives, or anyone else in attendance at a game may result in suspension from all Butler County Cal Ripken parks and from the Butler County Cal Ripken

Association for an indeterminate amount of time. Relative to the ejection of a player, manager, or coach for unsportsmanlike conduct or any other reason for ejection the following policies will apply:

- i. 1<sup>st</sup> ejection – the offender shall be suspended for the next one (1) full game following that in which the ejection occurred.
- ii. 2<sup>nd</sup> ejection – the offender shall be suspended for the next two (2) full games following that in which the ejection occurred.
- iii. 3<sup>rd</sup> ejection – the offender shall be suspended for the remainder of the season.

**VII. TOBACCO, MARIJUANA, AND RELATED PRODUCTS POLICY**

- a. The use of all tobacco products, including but not limited to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, smokeless tobacco, vapes, and e-cigarettes is strictly prohibited.
- b. Additionally, the use or possession of marijuana, CBD, THC products, or any other marijuana related items, whether for recreational or medicinal purposes, is not permitted at any league event including games, practices, and team gatherings.
- c. This policy applies to all coaches, players, parents, spectators, and officials, regardless of age or local laws.

**VIII. BLOOD RULE** – A player or coach who is bleeding or who has an open wound shall be prohibited from participating further in the game until appropriate treatment has been administered. If medical care or treatment can be administered in a timely manner per the umpire’s judgement, the individual would not have to leave the game. If there is an excessive amount of blood on the uniform it must be changed before that individual can participate in the game.

**IX. PITCHING** – Butler County Cal Ripken Rookie Leagues will monitor pitches through a pitch count program. The purpose of the pitch count program is to ensure the safety of pitchers by preventing overuse through the utilization of pitch count limits. The policies outlined below should be used in the interest of protecting pitchers, not attempting to garner a “cheap” win. These rules are to be strictly adhered to and there will be severe penalties for failing to do so. The pitch limit chart can be found at the bottom of these rules.

- a. Prior to the start of each game; opposing managers/scorekeepers should communicate with other regarding pitchers who are eligible to pitch for both teams. The Sports feed website should be used to check the pitch counts prior to games being played.
- b. Each pitch thrown in a game counts towards the pitch count. That includes pitch outs, foul balls (including those hit with 2 strikes) as well as ball four. Warm up pitches are not included, nor are pitches thrown when a balk is called. It is not necessary to throw four pitches to intentionally walk a batter. The manager should just inform the umpire to put the batter on base.
- c. Managers/scorekeepers should compare scores, and pitch counts with each other after every inning in order to ensure accurate tracking of pitch counts. If someone is consistently difficult in this process, contact your league director.
- d. As a pitcher approaches the pitch count limit ensure that the opposing team and umpire are aware. When the pitch limit is reached, announce to the umpire and the other team that the pitcher has reached their limit. At that time the pitcher can finish the current batter, but can pitch no more after that.
  - i. The coach must remove the pitcher following completion of the current batter or be penalized. **The penalty for failing to remove a pitcher who has reached the pitch limit is forfeiture of the game at that point.**
- e. At the conclusion of the game; teams should confirm each other’s pitch counts.

- f. It is the responsibility of the winning team’s manager to post the score and pitch counts for all pitchers to the league time site.
  - i. The winning manager should post the score and pitch count for ALL pitchers on BOTH teams.
  - ii. The losing manager should check the site to ensure accuracy. Any discrepancies should be settled by communication through the managers. If this is not possible, inform your league director.
  - iii. **Game scores and pitch counts should be entered by midnight the day the game was played, but there will be a 24-hour grace period allowed.**

**THE PENALTY FOR FAILING TO REPORT A SCORE AND PITCH COUNTS WILL BE FORFEITURE OF THE GAME.**

- iv. If a manger is found to be exceeding pitch limits through late or inaccurate reporting, he will first be notified that his actions have been recorded. If the behavior continues the manager could be subject to a 3 game suspension. If the pattern still continues the manager could be subject to a 6 game suspension. Any further violations could result in removal of the manager.

X. **UMPIRES** - Leagues to provide umpires for games

XI. **PITCHING & BASE DISTANCES** – 41’ Pitching, 60’ Bases

**PITCHING COUNT CHART (ROOKIE)**

NUMBER OF PITCHES THROWN	DAYS REST REQUIRED
20 pitches of less	0 (no more than 3 days pitching in a row)
21-30 pitches thrown	1 day of rest
31-45 pitches thrown	2 days of rest
45-60 pitches thrown	3 days of rest (60 is pitch limit)

**XII. Safety bases, added 2026 season**

- *A two-colored base placed at first base (often half orange, half white or orange/red + white).*
- *One color (white) is for the fielder, the other (orange) is for the runner.*
- *Purpose: reduce collisions and injuries at first base.*
- *Usage rules*
- *The runner should touch the orange (runner) portion when running through first base.*
- *If a runner uses the wrong bag on a run through, they can be considered out on an appeal or the umpire's discretion.*
- *Fielder should touch the white (fielder) portion when making a play at first.*
- *If the ball carries the fielding player to the orange bag, an out can still be called (ie, dropped third strike, or a ball that carries into foul territory). The runner and fielder shall switch bags during this play.*
- *If both use their correct halves, contact is usually avoided, and no interference/obstruction is called.*
- *Common officiating interpretations*
- *Force play: The play remains a force unless the fielder is making a tag on the runner instead of merely touching the base; the fielder should use the white half for force outs.*
- *If the fielder tags the runner (off the base) while the runner is not on the orange half, standard tag/interference rules apply per league.*
- *If the runner uses the white half and is obstructed by the fielder standing on that half, umpires may call obstruction/award the runner as appropriate.*
- *If the fielder occupies the runner's half and a collision or contact occurs, umpires judge based on obstruction/avoidability and may call obstruction or interference per rulebook wording.*
- *If a runner misses touching the base entirely (neither half), normal appeal/tag rules for missing a base apply.*

**\*\*\*Last revision 4/16/2026**