

AA Playing Guidelines

[updated March 2009]

AA Baseball is the transition level in the average child's baseball development. Generally, AA teams are comprised of eight and nine year olds, although some exceptional 7 year olds and some ten year olds with limited experience, also occasionally play at this level.

AA leagues generally utilize a combination of coach/player pitch and pitching machine scenarios. We will use pitching machines where available in games to assist in hitting aggression and skills, defensive action and generally livening up the game.

Preliminaries

- Mouth guards and athletic supporters recommended. Athletic supporters are required and the use of cups is encouraged. Cups and all protective gear are required for all catchers. Rubber cleats only, no metal cleats. No jewelry worn (watches, bracelets, rings, etc.) No gum chewing, no sunflower seeds.
- If you are short players you may borrow players from another team to fill out your lineup so long as the borrowed players are registered Little League players. Borrowed players can not pitch in the game. If a team is still short players, they may borrow defensive players from the opponent. A loaned player may be rotated in order that he may take his turn at bat and not lose his spot.
- Managers and coaches should attend coaching seminars before and/or during season. Practice time is critical- develop practice plans in advance and execute practice time efficiently. Recruit coaches and parents for help with skills stations, drilling on key fundamentals and keeping kids moving. Proper throwing, catching and hitting techniques should be learned at this level.
- Try to make clear the distinction between parents as fans and coaches as authorities following the rules of baseball. Unlike T-ball and A-ball, where we have parents helping on the field, in AA baseball we progress to a game managed entirely by coaches. This includes the dugout or bench area. No parents are allowed on the field.
- Regular (hard) baseballs will be used in AA rather than Reduced Injury Factor (soft) baseballs for game play.
- A scorebook is kept to monitor 5-run rule, pitch counts, etc., but there is no official score or win/loss records. This is an instructional/recreational level of baseball- everybody wins!
- Home team supplies game balls and scorekeeper.

Game Playing Guidelines

- All play follows the current Little League Rulebook unless specifically noted here.
- 6 innings / game. Minimum 3 innings per game per player, unless disciplinary action is being imposed (i.e. late to practices, missed practices, poor sportsmanship). If less time is to be played, the coordinator must approve it and the opposing coach must be told before start of game.
- Try to keep games to two hours or less. No new inning begins after one hour 45 minutes.

- When/if coaches are needed to umpire the game, the coach at the mound calls balls and strikes and plays at 2nd base and home plate. Two base coaches allowed for team at bat, who will call the outs on their bases. This is an instructional level of baseball, therefore the coach umpire should take the time to “explain” the calls at the plate as they occur ... “that’s a ball high and outside”. Also try to “explain” field calls like the force out at 2nd base, etc.

Batting:

- No on-deck batter. Only the batter approaching the batter’s box may handle a bat. No one may handle a bat without a helmet on. Bats may not be swung in the area surrounding the bench. If allowed, and only when supervised by a coach, players may take warm up swings, one player at a time, in a safe area as designated by the coaching staff. No jewelry.
- Bat through entire roster. Late arrivals go to the end of the batting order. 3 outs per team per half inning of play. Player following the one making the third out of the last inning is the first to bat in the next inning. Batting order rotates as in actual baseball.
 - Hit away to get on base. No walks or bunting. The batter either hits the ball or strikes out ...but no walks are given. Batters hit by a pitch have the option of advancing to first base or, if they would prefer, continuing to hit.
 - Whether a player or coach is pitching (other than when pitching machine is used- see below), all strikes count. If the count gets to 4 balls, then a coach comes in to pitch, but the strike count continues. If the batter has strikes on him, the strike count continues normally until the batter either hits or strikes out (swinging or called strike). If the batter strikes out, he is out.
 - No fake bunts to swing. This is viewed as a serious safety issue.
 - No leading off bases. No head first sliding. No stealing on passed balls by catcher or pitcher. A runner may at his peril advance only one base on an infield overthrow. The ball is live once hit. Play is concluded when a fielder fields the ball and makes a play or returns the ball to the pitchers position.
 - 5 run max per inning, including for last inning (6th inning or last at-bat inning due to length of game as decided by managers). Home team allowed to bat in last inning even if ahead or down by more than 5 runs.
 - No infield fly rule shall apply in AA.

Fielding:

- 10 players allowed on the field, which includes 4 outfielders (must be on outfield grass) allowed at all times.
- Play ends when defensive team attempts to return the ball to the pitcher to end the play (i.e. no advancing on overthrows to the pitcher).
- Encourage the players to try all field positions. Try to avoid playing one kid at one position for more than a few innings at a time. Share infield and outfield time. Share pitching and catching time. Players should not sit for two consecutive innings unless benched for injury or for disciplinary reasons.



Pitching:

- Generally, the machine or Coaches pitch to own team first three innings, players pitch last three innings- this may be varied by agreement of managers depending upon the stage of the season.
- Balls and strikes are called by the umpire for all pitches. Players can strike out. We would like the umps to have a bigger strike zone so that the kids get used to going after the pitch if it is close, rather than waiting for the coach to pitch.
- With player pitching, if count reaches 4 balls, coach takes over for that batter, batter strike count remains in effect. When coach is pitching station player near coach to act as pitcher for defensive purposes.
- No walks or bunting, no fake bunts. If player pitcher hits three batters in a game he should be removed as a courtesy by his manager.
- Coaches to ask umpire (or other coach at mound) for timeout to approach the pitcher.
- The standard LL pitching distance of 46 feet should be used.
- Note that new Pitch Count and catching Rules may apply – consult current LL Rulebook. Managers are responsible and accountable for managing their pitchers' counts.
- The scorekeeper or another game official must be designated as the official pitch count recorder, and must provide the pitch count for a pitcher upon request. However, the manager is responsible for knowing a pitcher's pitch count.
- Refer to LL Rulebook for specifics.

Special Rules when Pitching Machines are used in AA Games:

- The pitching machine will be centered at the pitching rubber forty-six (46) feet from home plate. Any balls stopping within the dirt pitching circle (for grass fields) shall be deemed to be a "dead ball" and replayed. For dirt infields, an 8-foot diameter circle will be used to make the "dead ball" zone. If the batted ball hits the pitching machine, the ball is also deemed to be "dead ball" and shall be replayed.
- The defensive team must field one (1) of their ten defensive players at the "pitcher" position. That player must position themselves outside the eight (8) foot pitching machine circle at all times, on either the 3rd base or 1st base side of the circle prior to the pitch being delivered.
- The designated field coach/umpire will call strikes and balls, but only strikes will be counted. Players can strike out. There is no walking or other consequence to the machine throwing four balls.
- A player struck by a pitch from the machine will not be awarded first base and no runners may advance.
- Only Managers or Coaches are permitted to operate the pitching machine during the game.



Game Environment

- No negative comments about umpires or players from the stands (the players all know when they make mistakes). No “calling of the game” by parents on the sideline.
- It is the managers’ responsibility to control the parents. Fans must conduct themselves in an appropriate and sportsmanlike manner at all times. Fans may not go onto the field nor approach the dugout without express permission from the coaching staff.
- Managers/Coaches must conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner at all times. Remember this is for the players and not coaches’ egos. Focus should be on player development and enjoyment- let them have fun! Winning should not come at the expense of these objectives- success is achieved when all players (both teams) have had learned, improved and leave with their heads held high!

