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BASEBALL GRADE DIVISIONS, Grade for school year 2023/24

GRADE DIVISIONS
TK – K: Introduction to Baseball
1 st – 2 nd : Coach Pitch
3 rd – 4 th
5 th – 6 th
7 th – 8 th

BASE RUNNING

Base distance shall be:

GRADE DIVISIONS	Base Distance
TK – K: Introduction to Baseball	50 ft.
1 st – 2 nd : Coach Pitch	50 ft.
3 rd – 4 th	60 ft.
5 th – 6 th	65 ft.
7 th – 8 th	70 ft.

- All base runners must wear a helmet. Base runner will be declared out if helmet is removed intentionally, while ball is in play.
- Infield-fly rule (runners on first and second, or bases loaded with less than two (2) outs) will only be enforced 7th – 8th Grade Division.
- Base runners **MAY NOT** score on a wild pitch or passed ball by the catcher in any division besides the 7th – 8th Grade Division. **PENALTY:** Runner will be called out for illegal advance.
- Home plate is only open in 7th – 8th Grade Division.
- In 3rd – 4th and 5th – 6th Grade Divisions, base runners may not lead off their base. **PENALTY:** “No pitch” will be called by the umpire and the runner will be called out. 7th – 8th Grade Division base runners may lead off any time during a live ball.
- Base runners will be awarded one (1) base if a throw from the defensive player goes into the dead-ball territory. This territory will be discussed with both coaches by the umpire before each game (ground rules). **EXCEPTION:** If the throw becomes dead on the first play of an infielder, the award of two (2) bases will be made from the position of runners at the time of the pitch. This rule only applies to 3rd – 4th Grade Division and higher.
- In all divisions of play, base runners must slide **OR** attempt to avoid any fielder who has the ball in possession or who is attempting to field a batted or thrown ball. **PENALTY:** Runner will be declared out. If such illegal contact is intentionally used to break up a possible double play, two (2) outs may be declared. If such contact was malicious (umpire's judgment) the runner shall be ejected.
- 3rd – 4th Grade Division or higher: Any defensive obstruction (blocking of base or

baseline) will result in the award of extra bases to the runners that will, in the umpire's judgment, nullify the act of obstruction. A defensive player who has the ball in his possession or is legally attempting to field a batted or thrown ball has the right of position and the responsibility of avoiding contact rests on the runner.

BASE STEALING

GRADE DIVISIONS	Rule
TK – K: Introduction to Baseball	Not allowed
1 st – 2 nd : Coach Pitch	Not allowed
3 rd – 4 th	One (1) base per pitched ball, when the ball crosses the plate on a pitch, may not steal home
5 th – 6 th	One (1) base per pitched ball, when the ball leaves the pitcher's hand on a pitch, may not steal home
7 th – 8 th	During any live ball situation, home plate is open

BATS

All bats must have the USA Baseball stamp to be eligible. Bats may be aluminum or wood, and must conform to the specific league requirements. Bats without the USA Baseball stamp will not be eligible to be used during practice or league games. Bat barrels shall not exceed $2\frac{5}{8}$ ". Wood bats must be one piece or have the USA Baseball stamp. Please visit usabat.com for a complete listing of approved bats.



GRADE DIVISIONS	Bat Length Information
Introduction to Baseball: TK -K	Shall not exceed 26", (must read Tee Ball on the bat)
1 st – 2 nd : Coach Pitch	Shall not exceed 28"
3 rd – 4 th	Shall not exceed 30"
5 th – 6 th	Shall not exceed 30"
7 th – 8 th	Shall not exceed 34"

*BBCOR Certified bats are allowed for play in the 7th – 8th grade division only. Bat length cannot exceed 34" and the barrel cannot exceed $2\frac{5}{8}$ ". Must have the BBCOR CERTIFIED stamp (see image).



BATTING ORDER

The first batter in each inning (after the first inning) shall be the player whose name follows that of the last player who legally **COMPLETED** their time at bat in the preceding inning.

EXAMPLE: The batter who was at bat (regardless of ball and strike count) when a runner was caught stealing for the third out, will lead off the next inning with a new count.

BATTING OUT OF ORDER

Coaches must report lineup changes to the scorekeeper and umpire when players enter or re-enters the game defensively. In the event that an incorrect batter is sent up to bat, the opposing coach must bring it to the attention of the umpire after a pitch or pitches have been made to the incorrect batter. If it is found that the incorrect batter is at-bat, that batter is then declared out. The correct batter must then take their turn at-bat and assume the count of the incorrect batter. If no pitches are made to the incorrect batter, no penalty shall apply and the correct batter may then take their turn at bat.

CATCHER'S GEAR

- Catchers in all leagues must wear a catcher's helmet, mask, chest protector, and shin guards.
- Catchers in all divisions of baseball must wear an athletic supporter with plastic cup.
- Catchers warming up pitchers, on all levels of play, must wear a helmet with facemask (at practice or games).

COACHES RULES

- Teams are allowed a maximum of three (3) coaches: One (1) near first base and one (1) near third base, and one (1) in the dugout. They must not physically assist players in base running. The baserunner will be declared out if a base coach physically assists the runner.
- Only head coaches who have been assigned to a team may approach the umpire. In the event that official coaches are not able to attend the game, then a substitute coach will be designated to the umpire before the game, and this coach will be the only coach to approach the umpire with questions concerning rules. Other coaches will be allowed to coach bases, warm-up pitchers, etc., but will not be allowed to approach the umpire.
- Coaches may not protest balls or strikes called by the umpire. Immediate ejection will follow for protesting balls and strikes.
- Occupants of player's bench shall not demonstrate, by word or sign, violent disapproval of umpire's decisions. **PENALTY:** After the first warning, individual offenders shall be removed from the game. Repeated outbursts will result in forfeiture of the game.
- Coaches shall be responsible for their team's conduct on the field or as spectators.

Coaches are also responsible for spectators who follow their team. The umpire shall have the authority to stop the game or call for forfeiture of the game if spectator action warrants.

- A coach shall abide by an umpire's decision. **PENALTY:** Removal from the game and possible forfeit.
- Profanity from a coach or player will result in their **IMMEDIATE** removal from the game.
- Recreation staff will fill in at games in the absence of the head coach or assistant coach.
- Youth Sports Coordinator shall have authority to suspend any manager, coach, or player for sufficient cause such as profanity or unsportsmanlike conduct, whether on the field or as a spectator. Players suspended a second time for such violations may not be allowed to further participate in league play.

DROPPED THIRD STRIKE RULE

Explanation:

- With less than two (2) outs and without a runner on first base, the batter may attempt to reach first base if the pitched ball, that is ruled a strike, is not caught cleanly by the catcher.
- With a runner on first base, the batter will be declared out even if the third strike is not fielded cleanly with less than two (2) outs. The batter is declared out in this situation because of the positioning of the baserunner when the pitch was made.
- With two (2) outs, regardless of a baserunner on first base or not, the defense must record the third out.

GRADE DIVISIONS	Dropped Third Strike Rule
TK – K: Introduction to Baseball	Not allowed
1 st – 2 nd : Coach Pitch	Not allowed
3 rd – 4 th	Not allowed
5 th – 6 th	Not allowed
7 th – 8 th	Allowed

FIELDING GLOVES

- Players **MAY NOT** use a first baseman's type glove at any position other than 1st base. **PENALTY:** Glove removed from the game on appeal. No other penalty, except that if removed from game, its return will result in player's ejection for unsportsmanlike conduct.
- Pitcher's glove shall not be white in color.

GAME BALLS

GRADE DIVISIONS	Ball Type
TK – K: Introduction to Baseball	Safety rated baseball Level 5
1 st – 2 nd : Coach Pitch	Safety rated baseball Level 5
3 rd – 4 th Grade	Safety rated baseball Level 5
5 th – 6 th Grade	Official Baseball
7 th – 8 th Grade	Official Baseball

GROUND RULES FOR FREEMAN AND THORNBURG PARKS

FREEMAN PARK

- Fair balls hit through right field gate exit, and balls that lodge behind outfield trees: 3rd – 4th Grade and 5th – 6th Grade Divisions = **TRIPLE**.
- Dead-ball area (on throws): Both dugouts, and area outside the extension of left field and right-field fences.

THORNBURG PARK

- Batted fair balls that lodge behind right-field trees; fly balls that hit tree overhang in centerfield which could have been caught (Umpire's judgment) regardless of fielders position; and batted balls that bounce over fence: 5th – 6th Grade Division = **DOUBLE**.
- Fly balls hit over fence are home runs; fly balls that hit trees but would have gone over fence (Umpire's judgment) are home runs.
- Dead-ball area (on throws): Both dugouts, and area outside the extension of leftfield and right field fence.

HIT BY PITCH

The batter is awarded first base when hit by a pitch, (ball becomes dead), even if ball bounces before touching the batter. If a batter swings at a pitched ball and gets hit by the pitch, the swing will supersede the result of the pitched ball.

LIVE BALL/DEAD BALL SITUATIONS

- Ball becomes dead when the umpire calls "time". For injured players, the ball remains live unless in the umpire's judgment, a safety factor is involved.
- Ball becomes live (after dead ball) when umpire signals or calls "play". While ball is dead (for any reason), no player may be put out and no runner may advance or

score (except on award by the umpire).

- Either team may ask for "timeout" provided such a request is not an attempt (umpire's judgment) to confuse a pitcher, base runner or batter and that no further play can, in the umpire's judgment, result while runners are on base.

MAXIMUM RUNS PER INNING

GRADE DIVISIONS	Maximum Runs Per Inning
TK – K: Introduction to Baseball	N/A
1 st – 2 nd : Coach Pitch	N/A
3 rd – 4 th	4 runs
5 th – 6 th	5 runs
7 th – 8 th	7 runs

PITCHERS

A pitcher shall pitch no more than:

GRADE DIVISIONS	Innings
3 rd – 4 th Grade	3 innings per game
5 th – 6 th Grade	3 innings per game
7 th – 8 th Grade	4 innings per game

Pitching Distance:

GRADE DIVISIONS	Pitching Distance
3 rd – 4 th Grade	35 ft.
5 th – 6 th Grade	40 ft.
7 th – 8 th Grade	50 ft.

- New pitchers will be allowed seven (7) warm-up pitches, and all others; two (2) warm up throws. If, in the umpire's judgment, a pitcher (or coach) has unnecessarily delayed the game, the number of warm-up throws allowed may be less (number to be determined by the umpire, keeping in mind the safety factor for prevention of injuries).
- Please note that one (1) pitch made in an inning constitutes an inning pitched. The total number of innings pitched does not have to be consecutive. For example, a pitcher may pitch every other inning in a game, provided that they do not exceed the total innings allowed per game.
- Pitchers may not wear white sleeves extending from the jersey and must remove any wristbands, bracelets, or any other arm/hand equipment while pitching.
- Pitchers must remove all rings, earrings, and chains around the neck.

Balk Rules (7th – 8th Grade Division Only)

All the balk rules from the Official Baseball Rule Book will be used.

What is a Balk in Baseball?

A balk is one of the lesser-known rules in the sport of baseball. A balk restricts the actions of the pitcher when there are runners on base. In general, a balk is called whenever a pitcher interrupts the pitching motion. Here are most of the situations that would cause an umpire to call a balk:

- Pitcher does not come to a complete stop while standing on the pitching rubber.
- During a pitch, ball slips out of a pitcher's hand. This would be a 'ball' if there were no runners on base.
- Pitcher begins to make the motions typically associated with their pitching stroke but ceases during its delivery.
- While on the pitching rubber, pitcher throws to a base before or without stepping toward that base. Note, that the pitcher can step off of the pitching rubber and throw anywhere.
- Pitcher fakes a throw to an unoccupied base.
- With runners on base, pitcher makes a pitch before the batter has had sufficient time to get set in the batter's box. This would be a 'ball' if there were no runners on base.
- Pitcher makes a pitch while not facing the batter.
- Pitcher makes a motion typically associated with their pitching motion but their foot is not touching the pitching rubber.
- After pausing in the pitching position, pitcher removes one hand from the ball. Dropping the ball once on the pitching plate is also ruled a balk.

What is the penalty for balking? Each base runner is allowed to advance one (1) base; runners on third advance to home and score one run.

PLAYER RULES

- Players shall not mingle with spectators during the game. Players shall remain on the bench or field of play. **PENALTY:** After warning, possible ejection from the game.
- Players shall not attempt to discuss umpire calls with the umpire. **PENALTY:** After warning, possible ejection from the game.
- Players (except pitcher or catcher) may be stationed anywhere inside the foul lines within fair territory.

PLAYER SELECTION

- Teams will be selected at random with the only exception being children of volunteer coaches will be placed on their team.
- Players signing up after teams are assembled will be placed on a waiting list and only allowed to register on a need basis; placement is not guaranteed.
- Siblings will be placed on the same team when playing in the same league and division unless parents desire otherwise before teams are assembled.
- Players will be placed in the selection pool regardless of past season team affiliation.

PLAYOFF RULES

- Each player present must play two (2) complete innings. **PENALTY:** Forfeit game.
- All regular season pitching rules shall apply.
- All playoff game times shall be as described in the regular season game times. The final inning of the game will be an open inning, meaning teams may score unlimited runs in that inning. The open inning will be called at the top of the inning before the game time limit expires. If tied after time limit, extra innings shall be played until a winner has been determined after the bottom half of the extra inning(s) has been completed, despite the time used to play the additional inning(s). Extra innings shall be played as open innings.
- Teams to receive a playoff "bye" shall be determined by final standings, if necessary.
- Playoff format will be decided by the Youth Sports Coordinator. In case of a tie in the final standings, head to head records shall be used. If still tied after head to head records, runs scored per team will follow. If still tied after runs scored, runs against will follow. If still tied after runs against, a coin toss will determine final standings.

PROTEST RULES

- Protests shall be considered only when based on the violation or interpretation of a playing rule or the use of an ineligible player. No protest shall be considered on a decision involving an umpire's judgment.
- Equipment deemed unsafe by an official and removed from the field of play shall not be the basis for a protest.
- Any protest for any reason whatsoever must be submitted by the head coach first to the umpire. The umpire shall confer with the coach of whom a rule violation is in question. Appropriate action will be taken to fix the violation. If an agreement can't be made recreation staff shall then be called to rule on the protest. The umpire shall also submit the protest information to the scorekeeper.
- Any coach who withdraws a team from the playing field under any circumstance prior to an official completion or suspension of play shall automatically forfeit such game and all rights to protest.

SCOREKEEPERS

- All players present and playing must be listed on the official lineup card. A copy of the lineup card must be given to scorekeeper and opposing coach. All players must appear in the official scorebook with a first and last name and a jersey number.
- Scorekeepers are not responsible for reporting when a team is batting out of order.
- Recreation Staff or an assigned scorekeeper will be present at all games. Home team may also be designated to keep score.
- The scorekeeper must remain **NEUTRAL** and report information only when an umpire or coach requests it. Upon request a scorekeeper is obligated to give the information requested.

STARTING AND ENDING GAMES

All teams shall start the game if a minimum of seven (7) players are present. If a team is unable to field at least seven (7) players, the game is forfeited at the scheduled game time.

SUBSTITUTION RULES

All leagues and divisions must use a continuous batting order of all players present. Such batting order **MUST** be used for that entire game. After the 12 consecutive outs playing criteria has been met, a player may be substituted freely in and out of the game defensively.

For all leagues:

a. All players present must play a minimum of two (2) complete innings (total of 12 consecutive outs) in all games that proceed past four (4) innings of play. **PENALTY:** Forfeited game if substitute players do not meet this play criteria.

b. All players who do not start the game defensively, must be entered into the line-up defensively, in the top of the third inning, before the inning begins. Game staff will remind both coaches to enter all substitutes before the top of the third inning. Substitutes must then play 12 consecutive outs. Players who start the game must play the first 12 consecutive outs. **PENALTY:** Forfeited game.

c. All players who are in attendance at the game, but who are not going to play in the game for whatever reason should be reported to the umpire, the scorekeeper and the opposing coach before the game starts, or as soon as player arrives if game is underway.

NOTE: Twelve (12) consecutive outs means six (6) outs on offense and six (6) outs on defense.

Pitching substitution:

The pitcher shall be removed from pitching upon the 2nd visit to the mound, in the same inning, by a coach. Coaches shall not send messages to the mound through players on the field. This will be considered a visit to the mound by a coach (umpire's discretion). Umpires should also use discretion and warn players and coaches about stalling if players continually visit the mound. **PENALTY:** Umpire **MAY** start calling automatic balls until pitcher begins to pitch. A pitcher will be removed from pitching duties for the remainder of the game, the second time he is replaced on the mound, during the game, by another pitcher of record.

TIME AND LENGTH OF GAMES

GRADE DIVISIONS	Game Time
TK – K: Introduction to Baseball	One (1) complete turn at-bat per team
1 st – 2 nd : Coach Pitch	Minimum of two (2) complete turns at-bat per team, or one (1) hour
3 rd – 4 th	1 hour 20 minutes, or six (6) innings
5 th – 6 th	1 hour 20 minutes, or six (6) innings
7 th – 8 th	1 hour 30 minutes, or seven (7) innings

For all divisions: If time criteria has been met and the score is mathematically out of reach based on the runs per inning rule, the inning being played will not be completed and the game will be finished.

Rule clarification: A new inning begins when the 3rd out of the previous inning is recorded. Time limits, in consideration of starting a new inning will not be marked by when a pitcher is ready to pitch to the batter in the top half of the inning but rather by when the 3rd out is recorded in the bottom half of the inning.

Extra innings: In a regular season game, if the score is tied at the end of each divisions' game time, additional innings will not be played. The game will end in a half win half loss for both teams.

UMPIRES

- Umpire shall be in full charge of the ball game after "play ball" has been announced and shall keep the official game time.
- Umpires shall establish and discuss ground rules with both coaches prior to each game. Ground rules will affect that game only.

- **UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT**

- All team players shall wear City-issued uniforms identical in color, with numbers appearing on their backs.
- All divisions of play must use complete uniforms (baseball jersey, pants, hats and socks). Parents are required to purchase baseball pants for their child and must be the same color as their teammates. The pant color will be determined by team at the first team meeting, prior to the beginning of the season. Players wearing altered uniforms without approval from the Youth Sports Coordinator will be declared ineligible to play in the said game.
- Players must wear athletic shoes such as molded rubber cleats or tennis type shoes. Metal cleats and bare feet are not allowed.
- All batters and base runners must wear protective headgear. **PENALTY:** Batter or base runner is out if helmet is removed intentionally, while ball is in play.

INTRODUCTION TO BASEBALL INFORMATION

- Game score and standings will not be kept.
- Rosters shall not exceed 12 players per team.
- A safety-rated ball shall be used during all games and practices.
- Recreation Staff will be in charge at all games and practices.
- Games shall not exceed one (1) complete inning. Team designated as visiting team shall bat first and through their complete lineup at the top of the first inning. The home team shall then follow and bat their complete lineup.
- Each batter shall receive a maximum of five (5) swings to hit the ball fair and past the "fair arch". The fair arch is an arch drawn 15 feet in front of home plate. If after the fifth swing the ball hasn't been put in play, the batter will be awarded first base.
- All batters must stop at first base after hitting the ball. Only the final batter of a team's lineup will be allowed to hit a "homerun" to clear the bases and signal the end of their half of the inning.
- Players may not play catcher.
- All players shall be put on the field during the team's defensive half of an inning.

COACH PITCH DIVISION INFORMATION

- Game score and standing will not be kept.
- Rosters shall not exceed 12 players per team.
- A safety-rated ball shall be used during all games and practices.
- Game umpire will be in charge at all games.
- Each batter will receive a maximum of five (5) pitches to hit the ball fair and past the "fair arch". The fair arch is drawn 15 feet in front of home plate. If after the fifth pitch the ball isn't put in play, the batter will be given three (3) swings off the batting tee.
- All batters must not run past second base if they hit the ball off the coach pitch (first half of the season). Batters must not run past third base (second half of the season) if they hit the ball off the pitcher. Batters that hit the ball fair off the batting tee must stop at first base.
- Outs will be recorded. Teams will not switch sides after three outs, but rather after all batters have batted during their team's turn at-bat. If a batter is called out they will return to the dugout.
- Each game will consist of two (2) complete innings, with each team batting their entire lineup during their team's turn at-bat.
- Players may not play catcher.
- All players shall be put on the field during their team's defensive half of an inning.