



MTLL Low Minor Baseball Rules

Updated May 2024

1. GENERAL

- 1.1. Our purpose is to teach the game of baseball and allow our children to have fun. Let's be good teachers and set a good example to the players and fans.
 - 1.1.1. Negative cheering is not allowed at any time by any player, coach, or fan. Chanting or cheering directed towards the opposing team is not allowed. Each coach is expected to enforce this rule for his/her team and fans.
 - 1.1.2. Cooperation with the umpire is expected at all times. There will be no harassment of the umpire at any time by any player, coach, or spectator. Coaches are expected to enforce this rule. If an umpire has misinterpreted a rule, a team head coach or acting head coach should call time-out and speak to the umpire in the presence of the opposing team head coach. The umpire reserves the right to reverse his or her decision to reflect the correct rule interpretation. No intimidation of an umpire will be allowed. The umpire will have complete authority over the rules during the game. The umpire will report to the League Director any instances of non-sportsmanlike behavior by a player, coach or spectator and the umpire has authority to eject any violators from a game and/or ballpark. The MTLL Board will further reprimand offenders if determined as necessary.
- 1.2. Coaches are to remove a player from a practice or game if the coach determines that the player exhibits signs, symptoms, or behavior consistent with a concussion or head injury or the coach suspects the player has sustained a concussion or head injury.
- 1.3. A player's league is determined by his or her grade in January of the year in which play is conducted. The Low Minor League is for all 1st and 2nd grade players. All players must be registered and have a completed and signed medical release, MTLL Release of Liability Agreement, and Parent-Athlete Concussion Agreement to be eligible to practice or play in games.
- 1.4. Players are assigned to teams at random by the League Director. Parents cannot pick the team that their child should be on or a friend that should be on the same team. The only exceptions

are that siblings will be assigned to the same team and coaches' children will be assigned to the coach's team.

- 1.5. Head coaches will be assigned to a team by the League Director. Assistant coaches will be assigned to a team either by (a) the League Director or (b) the head coach recruiting from parents of the players assigned to his or her respective team.
- 1.6. Team rosters will consist of a maximum of 15 players
- 1.7. Foul language or use of tobacco is not allowed on or off the playing field. This applies to all players and coaches.
- 1.8. Players should be taught to control their emotions. If a player throws any equipment in anger, or threatens any other participant, that player may be ejected from the game.
- 1.9. Players must not wear watches, rings, pins, jewelry, or other metallic items. This includes necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. Players and the Umpire should keep their shirt tails neatly tucked into their pants.
- 1.10. Eyeglass lenses shall be unbreakable plastic, not glass. Goggle type sports eyeglasses are recommended.
- 1.11. Players with plaster or fiberglass casts are not eligible to play and cannot be included on the team's roster for the purpose of fielding a legal team.
- 1.12. Shoes with metal spikes or metal cleats are not permitted. Shoes with molded rubber or plastic cleats are permissible.

2. GAMES

- 2.1. Games will be played at Steffen Middle School in Mequon.
- 2.2. The team listed second on the schedule is the home team and shall occupy the first base dugout. The visiting team is listed first and shall occupy the third base dugout.
- 2.3. All games shall start promptly at 6:00 pm and **will be limited to 90 minutes**. For warm-up purposes, the visiting team shall have the field from 5:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. and the home team shall have the field from 5:45 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- 2.4. A minimum of seven players is required to start and continue regulation play. A team with less than seven eligible players will forfeit the game. Game start time may be extended up to five minutes to accommodate a late arriving player, only if that player is needed to reach the seven-player minimum. **If a team is short players, younger players may be brought up from the MTL Rookie League to field a complete team under the following conditions:**
 - 2.4.1. Rookie League players may be brought up only to complete a 10-player lineup. If 10 or more core Low Minor team members are present, Rookie League players may not be used.
 - 2.4.2. Rookie League players must wear their Rookie team jersey and hat. **The Rookie League player may not miss a scheduled game for his/her Rookie League team in order to "play up"**.

- 2.4.3.** Rookie League players must bat in the last position in the batting order.
- 2.5.** Each head coach should exchange lineups five minutes prior to the start of the game. Lineup information should include players' names, jersey numbers, and batting order. No changes may be made to the batting order after the start of the game, except that players who show up after the start of the game are inserted last in the order. If a player must leave a game early, that player's position in the batting order is skipped.
- 2.6.** All ground and game rules should be discussed between head coaches and the umpire prior to the start of the game.
- 2.7.** As a general ground rule, because there are no outfield fences, any ball hit past the outfield is in play, including balls hit in the long grass. The out of play line is the extension of the fences behind the foul lines.
- 2.8.** All players are included in the batting order for the entire game regardless of whether or not they are in the game defensively.
- 2.9.** Coaches are required to rotate players defensively in order to provide players with opportunities to play various positions.
- 2.9.1.** Each player must play a minimum of four innings in the field defensively. The exception to this rule is when the game has been shortened due to darkness, time limit or when a player has been injured. No player may sit out a second inning defensively until every player has sat out one inning.
- 2.9.2.** Time in the field does not have to be consecutive. Free substitutions are permitted; players can enter and leave without restriction. Violations of the minimum playing time rule should be reported by coaches or parents to the League Director.
- 2.9.3.** A player may play a specific position for no more than two innings. Additionally, a player should not play infield positions for more than four innings per game. (Catching is not included in this limitation.)
- 2.10.** A regulation game consists of six innings, unless shortened due to darkness or threatening weather (upon agreement by the head coaches or by the umpire). If lightning occurs, stop immediately and seek shelter. Do not take chances. The Lightning and Thunder Suspension Rule set forth below shall apply. A game will be considered complete if called after four complete innings or 3-1/2 innings if the home team is ahead. If a game is called during the 5th or 6th inning, the final score is the total score at the end of the previous inning. No inning shall be started after 7:30 p.m.
- 2.11.** LIGHTNING AND THUNDER SUSPENSION RULE
- 2.11.1.** Criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
- 2.11.1.1.** When thunder is heard, or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play and take shelter immediately.

- 2.11.1.2. Thirty-minute rule. Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of lightning is witnessed prior to resuming play.
 - 2.11.1.3. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30-minute count, reset the clock and another 30 minute count should begin.
 - 2.12. A game can be canceled because of rain or wet fields by agreement of the head coaches or the League Director.
 - 2.13. Rained-out games and partial, unofficial games may be completed at the discretion of the League Director.
 - 2.14. Slaughter rule – a maximum of seven runs per inning at bat (for every inning, including the last). Teams will continue to play even if one team is mathematically out of the game until six innings or the allowed time has expired.
 - 2.15. The Head Coach of the winning team shall contact the League Director with the score of the game within 24 hours. The League Director shall update the standings on the MTLL website.

3. COACHES

- 3.1. The team on offense is allowed two coaches on the field, one at 1st base and one at 3rd base.
- 3.2. The team on defense can have a coach in the field in addition to the coach operating the pitching machine (see section 5 below). This coach is usually positioned in either the Left Center Field or Right Center Field areas.
- 3.3. Coaches, other than base coaches or the defensive coaches in the field, are to remain behind the fence line.
- 3.4. Coaches are allowed to take time (a minimal amount) to provide instruction to a player.
- 3.5. It is the obligation of the head coach to keep all their players participating in the League throughout the season. The League recognizes that family vacations and other conflicts may cause a player to miss some games. A coach that discourages any player from attending any game will be reprimanded by the MTLL Board of Directors. Parents are asked to report abuses to the League Director.
- 3.6. After the game, coaches should make sure that any trash in the dugout or stands area is picked up.

4. CATCHERS

- 4.1. Catchers must wear a full-length chest protector, shin guards, helmet and facemask during each warm-up, practice, and game.
- 4.2. Male catchers must wear an athletic supporter with a plastic cup. Be prepared to verify compliance with this rule if requested by an umpire.

5. PITCHING MACHINES

- 5.1.** The Low Minor League utilizes pitching machines.
 - 5.1.1.** A machine may only be operated by an adult.
 - 5.1.2.** The machines are manually spring-loaded and adjustable.
 - 5.1.3.** The machines will use baseballs (game balls).
 - 5.1.4.** The machines and balls are located in the storage boxes next to the fields. The League Director will supply the lock combinations to the coaches.
- 5.2.** The visiting team head coach is responsible for setting up the pitching machine prior to the game. He or she should fill a bucket with about 12 - 15 balls to be used during the game. Following the game, the home team head coach is responsible for breaking down the machine and returning it, any extension cords, and the balls to one of the storage boxes.
- 5.3.** The pitching machine should be positioned on top of the pitching rubber.
- 5.4.** A good rule of thumb is that a pitch should only have a slight arc to its flight. Once the machine settings have been set, it should not be changed during the game.
- 5.5.** A coach from the defensive team in the field will operate the machine during each respective half inning.
 - 5.5.1.** The coach should clearly show the ball to the batter before placing it in the machine.
 - 5.5.2.** The coach may re-adjust the direction of the machine (up or down or side-to side) if the pitches have begun to move outside the strike zone.

6. BATTING

- 6.1.** The strike zone is the space over home plate between the batter's armpits (top of) and knees (bottom of) when the batter assumes a natural batting stance.
- 6.2.** The batter's box extends back 36" from the center of home plate. If either foot is entirely out of the batter's box, and the batter makes contact with the ball, hitting it either fair or foul, the batter is out. If the batter is out of the batter's box and makes contact with the catcher, the batter is out, and the ball is dead (offensive interference). If the batter is in the batter's box and makes contact with the catcher, the batter is awarded 1st base, and the ball is dead (defensive interference). This is a judgment call by the umpire.
- 6.3.** There are no walks. The Umpire will call the first two strikes if the batter doesn't swing at pitched balls in the strike zone ("non-swinging strikes"). The third strike called must be a swinging strike. The batter is out on the third strike even if the ball is dropped by the catcher.
- 6.4.** Bunting is not allowed; any batter attempting a bunt will be declared out.
- 6.5.** A batted ball which strikes the pitching machine or bucket will be ruled "dead," a single will be given to the batter, and each runner on base will be allowed to advance one base.

- 6.6. Any 2-1/4" diameter bat is allowed. 2-5/8" and 2-3/4" diameter bats are allowed only if they contain the USA Baseball or USSSA 1.15BPF stamp. There is no bat weight restriction.
- 6.7. Batters, base runners, and on-deck batters must wear batting helmets. No other offensive players are allowed inside the fence lines.
- 6.8. A batter batting out of order is automatically out.
- 6.9. Throwing the bat after hitting is not allowed. The batter should drop the bat straight down. A batter throwing a bat will be given a warning by the umpire. A second violation by the team will result in the batter being called out.

7. BASERUNNING

- 7.1. To avoid injuries at 1st base, the 1st Baseman should use only the inside half of the base and the batter/runner the outside half of the base. (The 1st base paths have dual first bases; the batter/runner should always try to touch the orange, or outside, base when running to 1st.) A batter/runner cannot be tagged out after over-running or over-sliding 1st base if the runner promptly returns to the base and doesn't make any movement toward 2nd base.
- 7.2. A base runner must always slide while running into 2nd, 3rd, or Home, if there is a play being made at that base (a "close play"). This rule is to prevent collisions on the bases and to teach players when to slide. **Base runners failing to observe this rule will be called out. No warnings will be given. Base runners will also be called out for sliding headfirst. The only exception for sliding headfirst is if the runner is returning to a base he has already occupied.**
- 7.3. A base runner must stay in contact with the base until the pitch passes home plate; leading off is not permitted. **Base runners failing to observe this rule will be called out. No warnings will be given.**
- 7.4. A runner is out when running more than three feet away from the baseline to avoid being tagged, unless avoiding interference with a fielder fielding a batted ball.
- 7.5. A runner is out when intentionally interfering with a thrown ball or hindering a fielder attempting to make a play on a batted ball. (The umpire will declare other base runners out or safe, based on best judgment of what would have happened had the interference not occurred).
- 7.6. A runner is out when touched by a fair batted ball in fair territory before the ball has touched or passed an infielder other than the pitcher. The ball is dead, and no runner may score or advance except runners forced to advance.
- 7.7. The runner advances one base determined by his position at the time of a throw that ends up out of play beyond the fence i.e. the runner advances to the next base. The ball is dead when a wild throw is the first play by an infielder after the ball is hit, the position of the runners is at the time the ball was pitched.
- 7.8. Runners may continue to advance, at their own risk, on overthrows that occur during a play in the infield if the ball remains in the field of play.

- 7.9.** Runners may continue to advance on either base hits or outs to the outfield until the ball is returned to the infield area and controlled by an infielder. The umpire will determine if/when control has been attained; runners that are at least half-way to the next base will be allowed to finish advancing to the next base. Those runners that are less than half-way to the next base must return to their last base. Until time has been called, the defense can still attempt to make a play on any runner.
- 7.10.** A pinch runner will be allowed only for a player that is injured while batting or base running. An exception can be made if prior to the game a coach can demonstrate that a player is injured and should not be base running but is capable of batting. **All pinch runners should be the player who made the last out.**
- 7.11.** With two outs a pinch runner must be substituted for the catcher. **The pinch runner should be the player who made the last out.**
- 7.12.** If a runner fails to tag after a catch, the umpire will call the runner out without an appeal.

8. FIELDING

- 8.1.** Each defensive team will play 10 defensive players consisting of the following positions: Pitcher, Catcher, 1st Base, 2nd Base, Shortstop, 3rd Base, Left Field, Left Center Field, Right Center Field, and Right Field.
- 8.2.** The Pitcher must be positioned on either side of the pitching machine, (a) no more than 5 feet away and (b) no closer to the batter than the pitching machine when the pitch is made.
- 8.3.** Infielders may be positioned even with or behind the 2nd and 3rd base paths. No outfielder may be positioned any closer than 10 feet from a base.
- 8.4.** Fielders must give runners the right of way (unless they are in the process of fielding the ball). If a violation occurs, the umpire, using best judgment, will award the runners the bases they would have reached had the violation not occurred.
- 8.5.** Blocking the plate, or any other base, is not allowed, unless the catcher or other fielder has the ball. If the fielder blocks the runner's attempt to reach the base prior to the ball arriving, the runner will be declared safe.
- 8.6.** All bases, including home plate, are in fair territory. (The orange, or outside, bases at 1st base are to be counted as foul territory.)
- 8.7.** A foul ball caught inside the fence lines is an out, and base runners can advance after the catch at their own risk. A foul ball caught outside the fence line is out of play and is not an out. The ball is dead, and runners cannot advance.
- 8.8.** The infield fly rule does not apply. However, if it's obvious that an infielder intentionally let a ball drop for the purpose of getting a double play, the batter will be called out, and the runners will return to their bases. In all other situations, the ball is in play, whether it is caught or not.