

## **Instructional Softball Minors Guidelines- Little League Ages 7-9 Yrs**

\*Consider 6-year-olds if they have had one year of t-ball.\*

This is an instructional softball division that combines player pitch (for the first inning) **AND** machine-pitch during the season.

To develop pitchers for the next level, this year we will have the kids pitch the first inning of every game. After the inning is complete, the pitching machine will be introduced into the game to replace the kids pitching and for the remainder of the game the pitching machine will be used. If there is no pitching machine available. Coaches will pitch to their own batters.

During the first inning, when the kids are pitching, the pitcher will pitch to the batter until they strike out the batter, or four pitches are executed, or the ball is put in play. If the batter has not hit the ball, or struck out, the batters coach will step in and is allowed **only 3 more pitches** (if necessary) to complete the at bat. When **7 total pitches are executed**, and the batter has not hit the ball, the at-bat is over and considered a strike out. There are no walks.

**Note: New this year, pitching distance is set to 32 ½ feet, instead of the 35 feet.**

When the pitching machine is used, the batter only gets 5 pitches total from the machine. There are no walks and the batter can strike out after three strikes, or after the 5<sup>th</sup> pitch if the 5th pitch is not a foul ball, the batter is considered out.

Inning Run Rule: 5 Runs are Scored or 1 time through the lineup change sides. Note: if 3 outs are recorded during the inning, change sides.

Runner can advance 1 base if a good hit (gets to the outfield), however they may advance at their own risk. Reward good hitting! This also allows outfielders to make a play on the ball and get it into the infield. However, unless the ball clears the fence, then there should be no "home runs."

Runners in this league must maintain contact with the base until the pitched ball has reached the batter. Runners who break contact prior to the pitch reaching the batter shall be called out immediately.

No Drop 3<sup>rd</sup> Strike

No stealing on overthrows or when the ball gets behind the catcher after the pitch. However, you should be working with your softball players to take their lead offs, once the ball reaches the batter.

No new inning after 1 ½ hours including weekend games. Any inning in progress at the time limit will be completed, unless darkness or weather conditions dictate otherwise, or unless the home team is ahead when it is their turn to bat.

In accordance with the Montana District 1 policy, continuous batting and free substitution MUST be used in all Majors and below Softball games.

If your league does not have a pitching machine, then coaches will pitch to their own team.

The 11" Jugs Softies Softball are to be used for this division and the pitching distance is 35 Feet. <https://jugssports.com/products/softie-softballs-game-ball-yellow.html>

Pitching machine speed set at 32-34 miles per hour is about perfect for the batters and is not too fast that catchers cannot catch the ball coming at them.

Score is not kept

Tips: Use a pitching screen behind home plate and behind the catcher to keep the game moving quickly and the kids from chasing every ball to the backstop. If you have a weaker catcher, consider two buckets. One bucket of balls for the pitcher and one bucket for the catcher to place the balls into once the ball is pitched.