

# EPYAL JR. PONY/COACH PITCH DIVISION

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## *Rules and Recommendations – Updated Spring 2025*

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The EPYAL Jr. Pony division is an instructional division intended for players ages 6-7 who have had at least one previous season of experience in Tee Ball. As an instructional division, the following rules are designed to meet these objectives:

- Reinforce the basic skills that were gained during play in the Tee Ball division
  - Fielding grounders between legs
  - Turning shoulders to throw
  - Basics of hitting: stance, step, swing
  - Direction to run the bases and when
- Introduce the concept of balls, strikes, and strikeouts
- Introduce the concept of getting outs at bases other than first base (tag outs, force outs)
- Introduce the concept of base running decisions on overthrows
- Introduce the position of catcher
- Introduce the role of an umpire
- Introduce the responsibilities of outfielders and the importance of quickly fielding and throwing balls into the infield
- Understand the purpose of scoring runs on offense and getting outs on defense

## General Game Rules

- Games will be considered completed after **5 full innings, or a 90-minute** time limit is reached (whichever comes first). Reminder: this is an instructional division, and we are not keeping a true score, so there will not be wins or losses.
  - The 90-minute time limit is a hard stop, not a “begin and finish the whole inning if it starts before the time limit is reached” policy.
  - There are no extra innings.
- **Each half inning will conclude after four (4) runs scored or three (3) outs**, including strikeouts.
  - No unlimited runs in the last inning
  - If the home team is “winning” and there is still time remaining, the home team should still hit in the bottom half of the 5<sup>th</sup> inning.
- It is not necessary to reschedule rainouts/cancelled games, but an attempt can be made if both team’s schedules and field availability allow it. Please coordinate with the Jr. Pony Commissioner for field availability when rescheduling cancelled games.
- **Bats must meet the Little League current bat standard (with approved USABat stamp/logo).** [Approved bat list available at usabat.com.](#)
- This division uses low compression “Level 5” baseballs, [considered by Little League to be tee balls](#). Due to this, tee ball bats are allowed. (This is the last EPYAL division where tee ball bats are allowed.)

## Player Safety

It is every coaches' obligation to ensure the highest level of player safety; this applies to players on both teams. If you see conduct that puts any player in an unsafe situation—swinging bats around each other, climbing fences, throwing at players not looking—please speak up and correct the behavior, even if the player is on the other team.

- All batters are required to wear proper batting helmets. Players taking their helmet off in the field of play will be warned one time. A second offense in the same game will result in that player being called out, removing them from the basepaths.
  - **If a player has a bat in their hands, their helmet must be on. This always applies, during practices and games.**
- **An on-deck batter IS NOT permitted to take warmup swings** at any time (Rule 1.08).
  - This applies everywhere, even at fields with enclosures, such as the fenced in on-deck area at AR-5. It is a global Little League rule that applies to all divisions Major and below.
- Players should be strongly discouraged from throwing their bat or any other equipment under any circumstance. **Please don't ignore a thrown bat.** After the play ends, address it immediately and let the player know they did it the first time.
  - If it happens a second time, give them a final warning and let them know if it happens again, they won't be allowed to bat the remainder of the game.
  - The third time they throw the bat in a game, tell them they're no longer allowed to bat in this game because they threw the bat three times.
- The catcher is required to wear the catcher's gear (mask, chest protector and shin guards), and **protective cups are required for all male catchers**, without exception.
  - Whether they use the supplied catcher's mitt or their regular fielder's glove comes down to the preference of the player.
  - All players should be encouraged to try the catcher position, but no player should be put in the position if it is determined to be unsafe for that player by a manager/coach.

## Offensive Rules

- Each team will bat with a continuous lineup, meaning every player on the roster (in attendance) will be a part of the batting order, which shall be maintained throughout the game, regardless of whether they are in the game defensively. If play has started and a player shows up late, he/she will assume the last position in the original batting order. (See Rule 4.04 in the Little League Handbook.)
- The offensive team must have a coach to pitch and should have coaches at first and third base. These coaches are responsible for making the respective calls at first and third base.
  - By Little League rule, **one coach must always remain in the dugout with the players.** If only two coaches are in attendance, one must pitch and the other must manage the players on the bench.
- A courtesy runner for the catcher is recommended—but not required—and will be permitted with two outs, so the catcher can put on their protective gear in advance of the next inning and keep the game moving. The replacement runner will be the last player to bat that is not on base.
  - This will either be the last player put out or it could be a batter who reached 7 pitches and had their at bat skipped. The hope is they'll still have their helmet on and speed up the transition.

## Coach Pitching

- A coach from the offensive team will pitch to their own batters.
- **Coaches must pitch from a minimum distance of 35-feet** (approximately 10-feet in front of the pitcher's plate/rubber). Before the game, a chalk line at the 35-foot mark should be added to assist with identifying the distance.
- **Coaches must throw overhand.**
- **Coaches may choose to throw from a standing or a kneeling position.** Pitching from kneeling position is recommended because it simulate a similar trajectory that players will face when hitting against their peers.
- Coaches should not bring a bucket/bag of balls to the mound. In the interest of keeping the game moving, the coach pitcher should have 3 game balls with them while they are pitching. Coaches are encouraged to keep the extra baseballs in their glove or their pocket to avoid the hazard of a ball in the vicinity of the player playing pitcher and trying to field a hit nearby.
- Coaches' pitches should throw at a velocity to mimic a pitch delivered by a Pony player and should not simply be lobbed to setup a hit.
- During a pitch, coaches should refrain from giving commands or signals to indicate when a player should swing.
- The pitching coach must attempt to get out of the way of a batted ball.
  - If a batted ball hits the coach, it shall be played as a live ball, but must be considered an infield hit, and runners cannot advance extra bases (even if the ball ricochets into the outfield).

## At Bats

Please do not exercise discretion or bend these rules. Apply them uniformly for every player.

- **5 pitch max**; after 5 pitches, the coach pitch at-bat ends. **If the batter did not swing during their at-bat, they are ruled out.** (This counts toward their 3 outs in the half-inning.)
  - There are no called strikes and no balls, thus no base on balls/walks.
  - If the 5<sup>th</sup> pitch is hit foul, the batter earns another pitch. This applies to each subsequent pitch until the ball is hit into play, there's a swing and miss, or the batter does not swing.
  - If the catcher catches a foul tip and it is the third strike, the batter is out.
    - A foul tip is a foul ball that goes sharply and directly to the catcher and is caught by the catcher.
  - The batter will be presented with a batting tee to hit from after they fail to put a ball in play after 3 swinging strikes, or after the 5-pitch max **if the batter swung at a pitch during their coach pitch at-bat.**
    - The batter gets one swing with the tee. If they fail to hit the ball cleanly – by hitting the tee, tipping the ball, or swinging and missing – the batter will be ruled out and return to the dugout.
      - This counts toward their 3 outs in the half-inning.

## Batted Balls

- If a batted ball does not leave the infield, no more than one base may be taken by any baserunner.
- If a batted ball is hit to the outfield, runners may attempt to advance multiple bases. When an outfielder attempts to throw a ball toward the infield, this effectively limits the advancing baserunners to the base they are attempting to gain at that moment. All baserunners who were in the process of advancing at the time of the throw can continue their attempt to gain the next base at their own risk, but they cannot

advance beyond that base, regardless of the outcome of the throw. *See the defensive section for details regarding overthrows.*

- Example: There is a baserunner on second base when a ball is hit to left field. The baserunner from second base runs directly to third base, does not attempt to advance home, and is standing still on top of third base when the left fielder throws the ball toward the infield. The batter-runner, without stopping or hesitating, has already rounded first base at the time of the throw and is a few steps away from first base, attempting to advance toward second base. The batter-runner may continue to try to reach second base, while the defense can try to make a play to tag him/her out. The runner at third cannot initiate an attempt to advance to home because they were not in the process of advancing at the time of the throw from the outfielder toward the infield; even if there is an overthrow or bobble in the infield while attempting to get the batter-runner out at second base.

### Prohibited Offensive Actions

- Bunting
- Leading [A player can't leave or lead from the base until the pitch is past the batter (Rule 7.13)]
- Stealing
- Sliding head first [Rule 07.08(4)]

### Defensive Rules:

- The defensive team may have up to 3 coaches in the field—one coach behind home plate to field/collect passed balls and up to two coaches positioned in the outfield behind the players.
  - Coaches may not interfere by touching the ball or the players while the ball is in play. No defensive coaches are allowed in the infield.
  - **If any player is on the bench, they must be accompanied by a coach.**
- Positioning - Up to ten (10) players can play in the field. Up to four (4) players in the outfield, with six (6) players assuming the normal infield positions, including the catcher in full catcher's gear. The outfielders must be at least fifteen (15) feet away from the basepaths before the ball is put in play by the batter.
  - The pitcher must play within a 6-foot radius of the rubber and cannot be positioned anywhere else in the infield.
    - Until the pitch is put in play, the pitcher must remain even with the pitcher's plate/rubber or behind it, they cannot be positioned in front of the pitcher's plate.
  - If all players are not present for the game, reduce the number of outfielders by up to 2 players. A team cannot play with less than 8 players.
- When a ball is hit to the outfield, the outfielders must throw the ball to an infielder. Encourage them to throw to the closest base or to the pitcher. When an outfielder attempts to throw a ball into the infield, this initiates a delayed halt to baserunners. They may continue their attempt to advance to the base they were currently attempting to gain the moment the ball was thrown, but they are not allowed to advance beyond that base. *See offensive rules for more details.*
  - Outfielders cannot run the ball from the outfield to the infield to make an out. If attempted, do not charge an out to the offensive team; call the play dead and position the baserunners at the base they were attempting to advance to. Explain to the outfielder they must throw the ball into the infield.
- Overthrows – Simply put, **runners cannot advance on any overthrow.**
  - If a throw goes out of play, no additional bases are awarded to the offensive team.