

## 2008 Junior League Format & Rules

**Purpose:** The 2008 Junior League format will be very similar to 2007, but I propose a few slight changes. There will be a Round Robin Tournament the last 3 weeks of play to give the players a sense of tournament play. Every team will qualify for the tournament.

For most 8 yr. old players this will be their first taste of competitive sports, baseball can be a difficult game to play and develop at the same time. BYBI prefers to eliminate the pressures of wins and losses in order to win the “biggest trophy or Championship jacket”. Eight and nine year old boys and girls are still in the development stage of their understanding of baseball game strategy, hitting, pitching, fielding and throwing skills. Let them learn and enjoy the great game of baseball.

Tournament match-ups will be randomly drawn.

The Junior League program will be focused on the development of skills. In addition, it is very important that the players understand the rules of the game and different game situations. For example, tagging up on pop flies is an area that this age group struggles with. It is acceptable to constantly remind players of the situation their in, I encourage it.

Practice time should be used to work on skills for position players, pitchers and catchers. I feel as though a coach should be as prepared for practice as they are for games. Create a practice plan and stick to it. Have various drills prearranged.

**Tell them what to do**  
**Show them what to do**  
**Let them try**  
**Observe their performance**  
**Praise and progress or redirect**

Trying to fix pitching mechanics in a game doesn't help. Save that for practice. Young players get too down on themselves too easily, they don't need our help. We want to promote an encouraging, positive game and practice environment.

**Work hard**  
**Play hard**  
**Most importantly – have fun**

There will be a 16 game schedule over an 8-week period. We will divide this schedule in half. The first 8 games will be **coach-assisted pitching (see item 8 – pitching rules)**. Second half of the season and the playoff tournament will be a standard pitching format. There will be a Round Robin Tournament to end the season where match-ups will be randomly drawn. Practice fields will be available once we receive permits from the parks Department. We expect 2 practices per week until the season begins and at least one practice per week once the season begins. Weekday games will begin at 6:00 pm.

This league is not about championships or wins and losses. It is about coaches, working together, developing *all* of the player's baseball skills.

1. **Umpires:** The first 8 games of the schedule will not require league assigned umpires. Coaches will stand behind his/her pitcher and call balls & strikes. A coach from the other team can handle the calls on the base paths. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the schedule and playoffs, we will use league assigned umpires. At such time the following rule will apply: We will not tolerate coaches intimidating the umpires. (NOTE: The League Director is to be notified in such a case and the head coach may face disciplinary action if this becomes a common occurrence.)
2. **Batting Order: Continuous Batting Order** – It will be mandatory for all teams to use the continuous batting order during the regular season. In the event that a player is injured or becomes ill and is removed from the game, his/her position in the batting order is removed with NO outs recorded. If a player is removed from the game for unsportsmanlike conduct, an out will be recorded each time his/her position is due to bat.
3. **Substitution:** Coaches are allowed free defensive substitution with the following restriction. A coach cannot make a defensive substitution after the first out of their defensive inning unless due to illness or injury.
4. **Injuries:** Injuries of any significance must be reported to the League Director.
5. **Disciplinary Action:** if a coach feels that a player should not play for disciplinary reasons, the coach must report action to the League Director within 24 hours or BEFORE the next game, whichever comes first. The director will dispose of the matter and no league action will take place (as long as the reason and the penalty are reasonable). The League Director will notify the Vice President and President of this matter.
6. **Undermanned Teams:** A team must have 8 players to start a game. In the event a team cannot get a player from another Junior League team, a player will be borrowed from the opposing team just for defensive purposes. The borrowed player will be the last player to make an out (or the last player scheduled to bat if it is the start of the game). The borrowed player will play either left or right field. In the event that the borrowed player's turn on deck for his/her team should come up while he/she is in the outfield, he/she will be returned to his/her team. The last player on the loaning team to make an out will take his/her in the outfield. The loaned player(s) must play the required 3 innings with his/her own team. Players showing up late for games can be inserted into the line-up as long as the replacement requirement has been met for the player being replaced. Coaches DO NOT have to insert a tardy player in to the line-up, but should use good judgment. **EXCEPTION:** A Junior League team with only 8 players may use a player from the Junior League at the field not involved with another game provided they have not played for this team during the season and have his/her parent's approval.

7. **Mercy Rule:** A 15-run mercy rule will be in effect once a game is called official. However, if the visiting team is up by 15, the home team must bat.
  
8. **Pitching Rules:** A player once removed, as a pitcher may NOT pitch in the same game again. A pitcher can be replaced at any point in the game by another eligible pitcher provided Rule 3.05 (Minimum Pitching Requirement) has been met. Pitchers are limited to a maximum of 3 innings per game. Every player is allowed a maximum of 6 total innings pitched per week. Even if a pitcher only throws one pitch in an inning, it is considered a full inning pitched. A pitcher is removed without exception when he/she hits 3 batters in one game. Most of the kids will want to try pitching and they should **all** get a chance. Coaches are required to implement a team rule of 4 walks allowed per inning. In my experience coaching, if the kids all understand this rule then they don't have a problem and start to cry when you go out to replace them. During the regular season games, the batter should be allowed to put the ball in play and have a productive at bat. If a player is worried about getting hit by a pitcher, he is not going to have a productive at bat. Walks and strikeouts are not going to help the kids learn baseball. If the ball is put in play, kids learn baseball. If the ball is put in play every time, the fielders will get a chance to handle the ball many more times in a game and the kids learn how to run the bases.

**How do we do this?** First, we have the pitcher pitch to the batter under normal game circumstances. If the batter puts the ball in play, great! Let the fielder's try to make the out. If the pitcher strikes the batter out, then the out is recorded, but the batter stays in the box and his coach pitches to the batter from one knee about 12-14 ft. away. Give the batter five decent pitches to try and hit the ball. Most kids will be more comfortable with the coach pitching and put the ball in play. Let the play run its course, but return runners to previous spots and the original strikeout is recorded. Do the same thing with all walks. It does no good to anyone if the batter can't get a good pitch to hit. Keep kid in batter's box, but after the play runs its course, go back to original walk. This rule will only be in effect for regular season games. Tournament games will be same as last year.

9. **Appeals:** Coaches can only appeal umpire calls regarding a specific Little League rule. No appeal can be made on an umpire's judgment, i.e., runner is out or safe, balls and strikes. A written appeal explaining the situation must be made within 24 hrs. or before ht next scheduled game to BYBI's board.
  
10. **Game Times:** Time limits are only in effect if there is a scheduled game to follow. If there is a game to follow no inning shall start after you've reached the 1:45 time limit. This rule is in effect for weekend games and games played under the lights at Tuttle Field. In games played under the lights no inning shall start after 9:15 pm. It is the umpire's discretion on calling a game due to darkness, weather conditions, etc.

11. **Throwing the Bat:** Batter throwing the bat will result in the following actions. There will be two warnings per team for throwing the bat. The umpire will rule the batter out for each additional violation. **EXCEPTION:** If in the umpire's opinion, the batter intentionally throws the bat, but does not strike another player, coach, or umpire with the bat, he will use his own judgment as to the extent of the disciplinary action. However, if the batter intentionally throwing the bat strikes another player, coach, or umpire, the batter will be removed from the game for unsportsmanlike conduct. In either case of intentionally throwing the bat, the umpire shall report the incident to the League Director for further disciplinary action.
12. **Defensive Time Out:** Each team will be allowed one defensive time (per inning) called by the coach for the purpose of having a conference with his players.
13. **Substitution Runner:** If a player who has earned a base cannot run due to injury or illness, he/she will be replaced by the last batter to make an out.
14. **Substitution Batter:** If a batter is injured during his/her at bat and cannot continue, the last batter who made an out will complete his at bat.
15. **Slap Bunt/Swinging Bunt:** NOT ALLOWED IN IN-TOWN PLAY. If a player turns to bunt and takes a full swing he/she shall be ruled out by the umpire and given a warning for unsportsmanlike conduct. If the same player does this a second time during the game, he/she shall be ruled out and removed from the game.
16. **Uniforms:** Junior League players must wear either gray or white baseball pants, team jersey, socks and league provided team hat. EXCEPTION – Replacement players are exempt from this rule.
17. **Head Coach:** The head coach is responsible for the team's actions and the actions of the players' parents on the field and to represent the team in communications with the umpire and opposing team. The head coach shall always be responsible for the team's conduct, observance of the official rules and deference to the umpire. If the head coach is not present, he/shall designate an assistant coach to substitute as head coach and the substitute head coach shall have the same duties, rights and responsibilities as the head coach. If a dispute arises, it is the head coach's responsibility to pull him/herself away from the game and search out a director on duty. BYBI would prefer all disputes be handled fairly and swiftly.

**Disciplinary Actions:** Any coach found in violation of official playing rules and the BYBI exception rules will be subject to any one of the following actions:

1. A verbal or written reprimand
2. Suspension from one or more games
3. Suspension for the remainder of the season