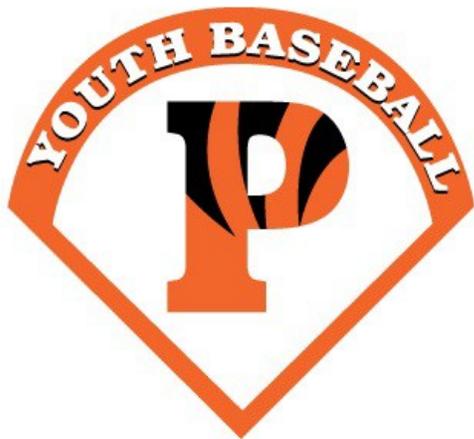


Princeton Little League Baseball

Spring 2019 President's Rules

for the Instructional Division



The Instructional Division

Welcome to the Instructional Division!

Princeton Little League Instructional Division is a non-competitive coach-pitch division designed to introduce players for the first time to the challenge, and thrill, of hitting a moving ball. Teams are kept small, so every player gets to play every inning, and coaches have an easy time moving players around. This means all players have the opportunity to play multiple field positions, not only throughout the season, but in every game.

As with all Princeton Little League divisions, coaches should stress player and team improvement, and having fun, over winning, though always strive to help players understand that all three are in fact closely related.

Instructional Division Overview

- Above all else be flexible! Instructional Division games are non-competitive and coaches are given wide latitude to adjust the rules of baseball, and the rules of the Princeton Little League Instructional Division, in order to achieve the greater good of making sure the players have fun. The below rules are meant to enhance the joy of the game, not get in the way of it. Of course this does not apply to safety rules which should be rigorously enforced at all times!
- **Base stealing is** not permitted in the Instructional Division. This means no advancing on passed balls and wild pitches. And no stealing of home. Base runners must maintain contact with their base until the pitch reaches the hitter.
- Runners may advance **only ONE base per at bat**. This gives the defense time to make the right play.
- **Outs are not recorded** in the Instructional Division. Runners who are forced out are allowed to stay on base.
- **All players bat each inning.**
- **The Ten Run Mercy Rule** is not in effect in the Instructional Division. The game proceeds until six innings have been played (not ending in a tie), or time has run out.

- **Ten fielders** are permitted in the field in the Instructional Division, six infielders (including a pitcher/pitcher's helper and catcher), and four outfielders.
- Batters who cannot hit a moving pitch successfully are allowed to use a tee.
- No **Infield Fly Rule** in the Instructional Division.
- Batting helmets with face masks must be worn by all Instructional Division players when batting, running the bases, and when playing the defensive position of pitcher's helper.

Special Safety Guidelines for the Instructional Division

- Some players at this age find it challenging to maintain their full attention for every pitch. Coaches should always take note of the attentiveness of all their players before every pitch, but especially of their infielders and pitcher's helper. All too common are players more infatuated with the dirt, or the birds, or sitting down staring off into space, especially in the outfield, than they are with the game itself. If a player has trouble focusing before the pitch, a coach should position themselves very near that player with a glove and be ready to protect the player in the event that a ball is struck in their direction with speed. This is especially important with infielders and a strong hitter at bat.
- Only players who have shown an ability to catch the ball should be positioned at first base. This is because of the possibility that a player with a strong arm, hoping to record an out at first might throw over with some velocity to the first baseman.
- The best way to begin to teach players how to catch a ball hit in the air is by throwing them tennis balls during practice. Never throw a hard cover regular baseball as a fly ball or pop up to an Instructional age player.
- Instructional players **may use USA Tee Ball bats** or USA Baseball youth bats. The baseballs used in this division (AD Starr 5) are approved safety balls, which allows for the use of tee ball bats.
- **Do not use the pitching machines.** The pitching machine balls are not approved for use with tee ball bats, and the AD Starr 5 balls will be torn up by the machine.

General Safety Guidelines

- **Head first sliding** is forbidden in all Princeton Little League games.
- Coaches are strongly encouraged to teach their players how to **slide feet first** as soon as possible in the season, and preferably before the first game.
- **Metal spikes** are not permitted in any Princeton Little League game.
- All male players must wear an **athletic supporter**. **Protective cups** are strongly encouraged.
- **Batting helmets with face masks** must be worn by all Instructional Division players while batting, while running the bases, and while playing the position of pitcher's helper.
- **Cleats** (not metal) are also strongly encouraged to be worn by all players, not only because they improve performance, but also because the better footing they provide make cleats much safer than sneakers.
- **No player except the batter is ever permitted to have a bat in their hands;** there is no on deck circle. All offensive players except the batter and the runners must remain behind the fence and in the dugout.
- Further safety rules and guidelines are discussed below.

PITCHING

Coach-Pitcher Rules in the Instructional Division

For Instructional Division games the coach should kneel down about two thirds of the way between pitching rubber and home plate – but for some hitters coaches might want to be even closer. Always make sure to show the hitter the ball to alert them that it will soon be on its way, then attempt to pitch it on an arc that gives the hitter the best chance for contact. A towel is recommended for kneeling on.

- Hitters are limited to seven hittable pitches, or until they make an out. If the 7th pitch is either swung on and missed, or not offered at, the player may hit off of a tee.
- Any pitch can be called off as unhittable and would not then count toward the seven pitches.
- The coach-pitcher cannot walk a batter. Everyone gets a hit.
- Foul balls not resulting in an out (i.e., not caught by a defensive player) struck on the final pitch of an at bat earn the batter an additional pitch. This teaches batters the important baseball skill of staying alive by fouling off 2-strike pitches.
- A batter hit by a pitch delivered from the coach-pitcher is awarded first base (very rare).
- The pitcher's helper is a defensive position player who fields for the coach-pitcher. Coaches who are pitching should avoid touching a batted ball (except for purposes of self-preservation). **The pitcher's helper must wear a helmet with a face mask at all times.**
- Before a pitch is delivered, the pitcher's helper must be positioned **behind** the pitching rubber with one foot on the dirt of the pitching mound and one foot on the grass of the infield. The pitcher's helper can be positioned on either the first, or third base side of the mound in this fashion.

In the Field

Six defensive players are allowed in the infield, as well as 4 players in the outfield who must be at least one step onto the outfield grass.

There can also be a maximum 3 coaches who meet the Little League safety criteria on the field at any time for each team. Coaches must not make contact with the players, or the ball, when the ball is in play. Instead they can instruct players before the pitch as to where to stand, and how to field ground balls, etc., and during the play on where to throw. However, sometimes coaches will want to let players figure some of this out on their own.

Moving players around

Coaches should make every effort to allow their players to play multiple positions during each and every game. This is critically important to cultivating in players a greater appreciation and enjoyment of the game, and of demonstrating to all players that they are an important part of the team. There is no greater way to turn off a young player. Therefore: all players unless they are a safety risk, or expressly don't want to, should play at least half the game in the infield.

And if there are more than six players present at a game, all players should spend some time in the outfield.

First Base

Only players who have demonstrated an ability to catch a thrown ball should be allowed to play first. This is an important safety rule.

Pitcher's Helper

A player playing the position of pitcher's helper must stand behind the rubber, but they can be to the right or left of the rubber. The pitcher's helper must wear **an approved batting helmet with a face mask** and they must have one foot on the dirt area around the mound and one foot on the grass before the pitch is delivered.

Catchers

Catchers are not used in the Instructional Division. Another coach should collect balls from the backstop and return them to the coach-pitcher. Stand well back from the batter while doing this.

Play Stops When the Ball Is in the Control of an Infielder

Once the ball is controlled by an infielder, runners must return to the nearest base. Runners should only advance one base at a time to allow the defensive team a chance to field the ball and make the correct baseball play. It takes time for our youngest players to do this.

A Catch

A catch will be called when a player controls the ball in the glove. If the player loses the ball upon transfer to the throwing hand, the ball will be ruled as caught. If the ball comes out of the glove on a tag, the runner will be safe unless the runner intentionally strikes the ball from the defender's glove.

Obstruction

Coaches should begin to instruct their fielders that they cannot get in the way of the runner unless they have the ball. Otherwise they might be called for obstruction. This includes standing on the base without the ball and blocking the base without the ball.

At Bat

Each team's batting order consists of all eligible players on the roster. If a player arrives late, they will be inserted into the batting lineup.

All members of the team will come up to bat each inning. We keep the team rosters small to allow this to happen.

There is no on deck circle; only one player may have a bat in their hands, and that is the player batting. All players must stay behind the fence and on the bench when not at bat, running the bases, or playing defense in the field.

All players at bat or running the bases must wear an approved helmet with a face mask.

When a team is batting, one coach must remain in the bench area, responsible for enforcing the proper conduct of players and safety rules. One coach may be at first base and another coach at third base.

A coach may also stand near the hitter helping them as to where to put their feet in relation to the plate, how to hold the bat, how to make a good swing, etc.

Bat Throwing

Give an appropriate warning for any swing that results in a thrown bat. Be sure to inform the player that in higher levels of baseball, a thrown bat will result in the batter being called out – no matter the result of the hit. If the problem persists, the player should be asked to only field for the remainder of the day.

A Player Having Trouble Hitting Live Pitches

If a player is unable to make contact with a live pitch after 7 hittable pitches have been thrown, a coach should bring out a batting tee and let the player hit off that. If a player is embarrassed by this, let them know that many Major League hitters hit off a batting tee every day. Allowing the player to use the tee also gives the defensive team an opportunity to field a live ball.

Outs

Outs are not recorded in Instructional Division. All players bat, and all players make it to base. If the defensive team does make a successful play and forces a runner out, that runner will continue as a base runner.

BASE RUNNING

There is **no stealing of bases** in the Instructional Division. Runners must maintain contact with their base until the pitched ball reaches the batter.

Runners must tag up, and there is **no infield fly rule**.

Overthrow

The runner may not advance on overthrown balls.

Play Stops When the Ball Is in the Control of an Infielder

Once the ball is controlled by an infielder, runners return to the nearest base.

Interference

Coaches should instruct their runners that they must not get in the way, or make contact, with a fielder attempting to field a ball. They must instead go around even if it takes them out of the base path. If they don't, they might be called for interference. The penalty for interference, the runner is out.

General Guidelines

Time Parameters for Games

Instructional sessions are 90 minutes long and meet twice per week.

In the Saturday session, the teams warm-up and practice for 30 minutes, take a five minute break, then play a game for 55 minutes.

On the weeknight session, the teams warm-up and practice for 40 minutes, take a 5 minute break, and play a 45 minute game.

Rained-out Games & Rescheduling

If a field is unplayable, or if a game is rained-out while in-progress, the league will reschedule the games ASAP, in this priority order:

Intermediate

Minors

Rookies and Instructional

NOTE: The league has reserved the Grover 2 and Grover 3 fields on Friday evenings and on Sunday afternoons to accommodate make-up games. The league reserves the right to **move or cancel any** scheduled practices so as to allow games to be played.

Wet Field Guidelines

Here are some general guidelines about wet field conditions.

Monday through Friday, the Recreation Department makes the call on whether games are played. They have a hotline that you can call after 4:00 pm: 688-2054. Sometimes

there is rain after 4:00PM and the coaches and umpires together make the call based upon field conditions at 6:00PM.

On Saturdays, the coaches and umpires make the call at the scheduled game time, e.g., 9:00AM. Sometimes on Saturdays, the 9:00AM games have to be canceled, but later games can be played, because if it has stopped raining, field conditions will generally improve as the day goes on.

On weekends, **ALL** of the coaches with scheduled games are responsible for making every effort to make the field playable for **ALL** games on that day. For example: in the case of rain on Friday, even the coaches who are scheduled to have a game on Grover 2 starting at 2:00 on Saturday afternoon should join the other coaches scheduled on that field **on Saturday morning**, along with any other volunteers, to prepare the fields for games.

We generally do not play when there is standing water in the infield base paths. If the infield is damp or slightly muddy, coaches are encouraged to rake the surface and may apply a limited amount of infield mix on the slightly muddy area. Infield mix is **NOT** to be used in the case of standing water.

If there is standing water, there will quite likely not be a game on that field for several hours, as the raking will not cure it in a timely fashion, and the use of infield mix is not appropriate. If more than a few bags of mix must be used, this will damage the field and still not render a playable surface.

When raking water on the infield, **DO NOT PUSH THE WATER ON TO THE GRASS AT ANY TIME**. Pushing the water on to the grass causes damage to the field. It should never be done. If there is a large puddle, the only thing that can be done is to rake the water onto another section of the infield dirt or mix (NOT THE GRASS).

If there are soft muddy conditions, coaches or a volunteer parent recruited by the coach, should rake the section of the infield between innings. Also, between games on Saturdays, coaches and volunteer parents should rake and drag the infield, batter's box and pitcher's mound areas.

If there is no standing water in the infield, we will normally play the game.

The Batting Cages: The Grover batting cages are available for League use. They are labeled 1 and 2, left to right. All teams playing games on Grover 2 and 3 have priority access to the cages for the 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time. Grover 2 will be associated with the cage on the left (#1), while Grover 3 will have the right cage (#2).