

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE PITCH COUNT

Here are some commonly asked questions regarding the regular season baseball pitching regulation (pitch count).

Why has Little League changed the pitching regulation for all baseball divisions?

Recently, researchers and medical professionals in the field of sports medicine have determined that the actual number of pitches thrown (i.e., pitch count) is a safer way to regulate pitching in youth baseball. Little League has a rich history of pioneering baseball safety innovations. As the world's largest organized youth sports program, Little League is again taking a leadership position in youth sports safety.

How will a league determine who is responsible for counting the pitches?

Selecting the person responsible for counting pitches will be a decision of each local league. That person's pitch count will be the officially recognized pitch count for the game. In most leagues, this responsibility will rest with the game's official scorekeeper. In that case, since a scorekeeper already keeps track of the balls and strikes on each batter, so he or she will additionally need to keep track of the number of foul batted balls that are hit with two strikes. Each pitcher's pitch count is computed by adding the number of balls and strikes, the number of foul balls hit with two strikes, and the number of fair batted balls. Other leagues might assign a separate person who simply keeps track of every pitch on a piece of paper. Little League International will provide local leagues with a suggested form for this in the coming months. Leagues also can use any of the various digital or mechanical pitch counting tools that are available commercially. Still other leagues might assign the task to one or both managers, or to one of the base umpires.

What is the penalty for violating the pitch count regulation?

Violating the regular season pitch count regulation can be protested in accordance with Rule 4.19. And, as with all regular season games, the local league (by action of the local league Board of Directors through the Protest Committee) resolves all protests. The local league Protest Committee could decree a forfeit, or not, as it sees fit. The Board of Directors also could suspend or remove managers who willfully and persistently violate any rule or regulation.

What is the procedure for Inter-League Play games?

As with any procedure of this nature, the Inter-League Play Committee (formed from among personnel in the leagues involved before the start of the season) should decide this. The procedure for counting pitches should be agreed upon between all leagues involved in an inter-league arrangement before the first game is played.

What is meant by "calendar days" in the regulation?

The principle of "calendar days" remains the same. A calendar day is one full day as it is seen on a calendar. A calendar day begins at midnight and ends at midnight the following evening. Example: If a pitcher in the Little League Major Division throws 70 pitches in a game on Saturday morning, that pitcher cannot pitch again until Wednesday, when he/she has had three calendar days of rest (Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday). It makes no difference what time of day the pitcher pitched on Saturday, as the rest period does not begin until midnight that night.

Can the same pitcher throw in consecutive games?

Depending on the number of pitches thrown and the days of rest, the same pitcher could pitch in consecutive games. However, pitchers who deliver a certain number of pitches beyond the threshold stated in the regulation/rule must also have a game of rest. The “game of rest” refers only to pitching. A pitcher completing his/her “game of rest” may play in any other position. (See also question 17.)

Can the same pitcher pitch in both games of a doubleheader played on the same day?

No. A player may not pitch in more than one game in a day. (Exception: In the Big-League Division, a player may be used as a pitcher in up to two games in a day.)

If a pitcher is pitching a perfect game or no hitter and reaches his or her maximum pitch count, does he or she have to be removed as a pitcher, or can he/she continue until the perfect game or no hitter is lost?

Any pitcher, without regard to his/her effectiveness, must be removed when he or she reaches the limit prescribed in the regulation. Remember, no game is more important than protecting pitchers’ arms.

Is the pitch count regulation mandatory in all divisions of baseball? What about softball?

The regulation applies to all baseball divisions of Little League. It does not apply to and cannot be used in softball.

Is there a limit to the number of 12-year old’s that can pitch in a week?

No. A manager may use as many 12-year-old pitchers in a week as he/she chooses.

Can 12-year old’s pitch in the minors?

No. The regulation prohibits 12 year old’s from pitching in the Minor Division. The Minor Division must be considered an instructional division for players who, because of age or ability, are not placed in the Major Division. It should be the goal of every league to place all 12 year old’s in the Major Division who are capable of playing at that level. Note: A local Little League is limited to only one Major Division, but may have multiple levels of Minor Division play (player pitch, coach pitch, machine pitch, etc.).

Are warm up pitches calculated in the pitch count for a pitcher?

No. As always, however, umpires should be mindful that the rules permit a returning pitcher to have eight preparatory pitches, or one minute, whichever comes first. (See Rule 8.04.)

If a Major Division pitcher has completed six innings in a game, and the game is tied, will that pitcher be permitted to pitch in the seventh inning?

Yes. There is no limit to the number of innings a pitcher can pitch in a day. A limit is placed on the number of pitches only.

Is the Tournament Pitching Rule the same as the regular season regulation?

The Tournament Pitching Rule is similar to the regular season rule, but there are some modifications.

Will local leagues have the ability to continue to provide feedback to Little League International regarding the new pitch count regulation?

Absolutely. As with any rule or regulation of Little League, local leagues and districts are encouraged to provide feedback through the regional office. This feedback is valuable in determining what, if any, changes need to be made.

What about breaking pitches (curve balls, sliders, etc.)?

As of now, there is no solid medical evidence that these pitches are detrimental. However, Little League and many experts recommend they not be thrown until age 14. We are currently conducting an epidemiological study on this issue to see if these pitches are harmful.

Why is there a regulation prohibiting a player from moving from pitcher to catcher in the same day?

Medical authorities and experts say that a player who warms up to pitch, and then pitches, should not play catcher for the remainder of the day. Doing so does not provide enough “cool down” time for such a player. The same is not true for catchers who may become pitchers.