

CMBA 9U ROOKIE DIVISION GAMEPLAY RULES AND GUIDING PRINCIPALS

INTRODUCTION

CHANGES FOR THE 2022 SEASON ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN GREEN (2 CHANGES MADE)

Welcome to the official 9U program for Camrose Minor Ball Association. This program is a collaboration of multiple programs, such as the Baseball Canada Grand Slam Program and the Baseball Alberta recommended LMBA 9U Rookie Program. The program has been designed to develop skills in our young players by encouraging touches of the baseball through practice and game situations whether teams be on the offensive or defensive side of the game. We are looking to promote physical development of children through the game of baseball. The program helps develop physical literacy by using a modified game to teach the basic baseball skills to children and ensure success of everyone in the program.

We have seen multiple associations have excellent success over the past few seasons with implementing modifications to the “traditional” game format to ensure players are more engaged and having fun. Baseball traditionalists may not agree with the modifications, but the number one reason children stop playing a sport is because it’s not fun and/or they’re bored. There tends to be a lot of standing around both offensively and defensively in baseball, so for young players it’s necessary to modify the game while still teaching them the fundamentals to ensure they are ready to move up to the 11U Division.

The LMBA uses an analogy from a TV show called ‘**Blue Jays in 30**’ that shows you the highlights/action from a Blue Jays game earlier that day. To emphasize the amount of downtime in the game of baseball, consider the fact that most Blue Jays games last 3 hours (180 minutes), yet they’re able to summarize the actual action from a 3-hour game to just 30 minutes. Now take out the commercial breaks during the 30-minute episode and you’ll probably only watch about 20 minutes of action from a 3-hour game.....that’s 160 minutes (89%) of waiting/downtime. Using this same ratio for a 45-minute Rookie ball game **without any modifications**, that means there is only about 5-6 minutes of total player engagement as most action lasts 5 – 10 seconds within the game (ex: players hit a ground ball and runs to first base = approx. 5 seconds)

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

- Create a fun environment in which children and adults are actively engaged together in the game of baseball.
- Develop fundamental motor skills, teach baseball skills, and basic rules to our players.
- Promote increased self-esteem among players and to feel a sense of achievement through an improvement in their fundamental baseball skills.
- Experience success with an emphasis on good sportsmanship. Demonstrated via respect for Baseball facilities, the coaches & assistants, their teammates, their opponents, their equipment and themselves.
- Prepare players for the next level of Baseball no matter what that may be.
- Engaged participants resulting in a desire to return next season
- Continual physical skill development as athletes not just baseball players
- Promote the LTAD recommendation as described below by Baseball Canada

LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The LTAD plan identifies 7 stages in respect to the athletes physical, mental, and emotional development. 9U (Rookie) aged baseball players are in stage 2, which is the **FUNDamentals** stage of the LTAD plan. Coaches are reminded that children at this level need to participate in activities that develop basic skills. These activities need to maintain a focus on fun, and formal competition should only be minimally introduced. Below is a review of the LTAD recommendations as described by Baseball Canada for youngsters aged 8 & 9 years old:

- Length of the season: 8 to 12 weeks
- Ratio of practices / competition: 70% practices, 30% games
- 2 to 3 hours a week for a period of 8 to 12 weeks
- Parents/Coaches act as umpires
- No official scorekeepers
- Use of a pitching machine or a parent/coach acting as a pitcher
- At this stage, children should participate in a great variety of sports activities each week
- Game format: modified programs encouraging touches of the ball
- All players have equal playing time and experiment by playing all positions

Technical aspects covered:

Fundamentals in:

- hitting
- receiving
- running
- throwing
- + Agility, balance, coordination and speed

→ MAIN GOAL

To develop fundamental movement and basic baseball skills in a fun environment.

COACHING ROLES

Thank you to the individuals that have volunteered to be a coach this season. Each team needs a Head Coach and an Assistant Coach that will be responsible for aspects such as the equipment bag, participant safety, coordinating skill development activities (practice plan), cancellations due to weather, teaching basic rules and ensuring the participants are engaged.

Coaching Principles:

- **Safety:** Ensure all Safety rules come first and are enforced.
- **Fun:** Baseball is a game. Make sure it stays fun!
- **Sportsmanship:** Encourage players to put their best effort into improving their game regardless of the situation. Encourage players to recognize and respect the fact that this is a learning environment, everyone is working to improve some aspect of their skills.
- **Development:** Review the basic skills and fundamentals of baseball. Encourage children to practice them on their own. Congratulate good performance to promote a sense of accomplishment. Help to correct mistakes by reinforcing fundamental skills. Keep it simple.
- **Preparation:** Keep the games interesting and moving at a good pace by being prepared. For example, have a defensive plan ready for each game, make sure your players are ready to bat on offense, keep track of who your catcher will be and make sure they are dressed and ready for the following inning.
- **Motivation:** Motivate players through positive reinforcement. Keep practices and games moving and active in order to maintain player's attention. Ask players what they are going to do in certain potential situations to keep their minds in the game.
- **Unique Talents:** Baseball is a unique sport. It draws on a wide variety of physical and mental skills of the players. Every player has unique talents that can be improved through instruction and individual attention.
- **Role Model:** Portray the behaviors you're trying to develop at all times.

VOLUNTEER AND PARENT HELPER ROLES

Parent helpers are essential to the success of the 9U Rookie program and are really appreciated by the coaches. This is not considered to be a drop off program and encourages parents/guardians to be involved on the field to assist the coaches. No baseball experience is required. This assistance may include setting up the bases, organizing/picking-up equipment, ensuring a participant gets to a portable toilet and back, helping a participant find their glove/bat/helmet/water bottle, assisting players in rotating positions, directing base runners, etc. It is not the expectation that parent helpers are responsible for coordinating any of the skill development activities, they are there to just assist the coaches with these activities. It's also an opportunity for parents/guardians to learn along with their child.

Field of Play

1. Diamond & Game Play Setup:

- Home team to set up, take down and clean up diamond.
- Bases placed at 55'.
- Home team to supply 3 game balls.
- Head coaches and Umpires should discuss ground rules prior to any games and mutually agree on how any special situations will be handled (ex: standing water in the field, players arriving late, reminder of infielder and outfielder placement, etc.).
- Team Equipment must be stored in an area out of the way of play during the game.

CMBA 9U ROOKIE DIVISION GAMEPLAY RULES AND GUIDING PRINCIPALS

- During games, bench players must stay in the designated bench area. No one should be climbing the fence or leaving the field area. Adult supervision is required on the bench.
- Pitching will be from 38' whether a coach pitches or pitching machine is used. Ensure whatever your team uses it is consistent.
- Coaches must pitch being one knee down (use a base as padding if needed), essentially "throwing darts". *An adult standing and throwing results in way too high of an arm angle that the ball comes from to home plate.* Coaches are encouraged to move closer/further away depending on the hitter's ability if needed. More so in the beginning of the year.
- Coaches must pitch to their own teams.
- To ensure the catchers remain a safe proximity to the batter, it's recommended to make a circle representing the catcher's area.
- An area for the on-deck batter should also be designated away from the bench, with only the on-deck batter allowed.

2. Poor Weather/Cancelling a Practice/Game:

- Coaches from each team will be responsible for contacting each other and deciding if a practice/game is going to be cancelled due to poor weather or diamond playability. If they do decide to cancel, they will contact (phone, email, etc.) their team and inform the CMBA Scheduling Director and/or CMBA Umpire Director. With starting at 6:00pm it is preferred that coaches try to decide by 5:00pm but this is not always possible. Thunder/lightning = cancel.

3. Player Safety:

- Helmets are mandatory for all hitters, on-deck batters, and base runners.
- A soft touch baseball will be utilized as the game ball. *As the coach's pitch to their batters from such close proximity, using these balls provides a safety factor when coaches get hit with a line drive/hard ground ball. This also encourages players to get in front of the ball and not just hold their glove out to the side of their body when attempting to field or catch a ball.*
- Throwing equipment is not allowed. A player throwing any piece of equipment should be informed that it is against baseball rules. If the action is repeated by the same player, he can be removed from the game. At this age it's common for batters to inadvertently throw a bat after swinging at a ball. Regardless of intent, this rule needs to be reinforced for safety.

Game Modifications, Guidelines/Rules

1. Scorekeeping:

- Score will not be kept. This is introduced in the 11U Division.

Purpose: This is introduced in the 11U Division. The 9U Division should be solely a developmental and non-competitive division

2. Roster Size:

- Roster size preference is 9 players/team, but 10 is the maximum and no less than 8 (this will be dependent on registrations). Games can not be played with less than 7 players on a team.

3. Game Length:

- Game format will be the following
 - 6:00 – 6:05pm: Players arrive/Coach Welcome
 - 6:05 – 6:30pm: Pre-game Warm up Activities (stretches, playing catch, etc.)
 - 6:30 – 7:45pm: **Games will consist of a MINIMUM of 4 innings. No new innings starting after 7:45pm.** Started innings should be completed to ensure equal at bats & defensive outings.

4. Fielding/Defensive Positions:

- Players will be placed in the following defensive positions LF, CF, RF, 1st, 2nd, SS, 3rd, catcher and pitcher (5 steps behind the pitching coach that is throwing to the hitters) for a total of 9 positions. If a team prefers, they can play with a 4th outfielder instead of having anyone sit on the bench.

CMBA 9U ROOKIE DIVISION GAMEPLAY RULES AND GUIDING PRINCIPALS

- Defensive changes are unlimited. Coaches are encouraged to have their players play multiple positions per game. Players should not play the same position more than twice in a game.
- Players can not play the same position more than 2 innings in a row.
- Catchers should be dressed and ready to be on the field as soon as their team is done hitting.
- We encourage having 1-2 coaches in the field with the defensive team helping with positioning and keeping kids focused. Players should be coached to play the correct fielding positions (no standing on or right next to the bases)

Purpose: This should allow players to learn all positions in the game and to become more well-rounded baseball players.

5. Offensive Play:

- Innings consist of every batter batting. Ensure the catcher for the next inning always bats 1st. This will help to speed up the game so they can be dressed in the gear before the inning ends.
- The team batting will start with bases loaded using the bottom 3 batters to start on base. Defensive teams should challenge themselves to make as many outs as possible. When play is dead for last batter, the inning is over. Do not force to make the last batter run all the way if its not a good “baseball” play.
- The batting order should change every inning, allowing more opportunity for everyone to run the bases more times. We also want every player to have opportunities to bat all over the lineup, discouraging coaches “stacking” their lineups.
- If a hit ball strikes the coach or pitching machine, it is ruled a dead ball and the batter gets first base, with no outs being made on the play.
- **BATTING CHANGES FOR THE 2022 SEASON: For the First 4 innings of the game each batter gets a MAXIMUM of 6 pitches, there will be no strike outs or walks allowed. A foul ball on the batters last pitch earns them another pitch. If no contact occurs in the 6 pitches, the batter will return to his dugout/bench. NO ADDITIONAL PITCHES WILL BE USED.**
 - **In the event a Game goes past the 4th inning, and a batter does not get a hit in the 6 pitches they are allotted, the coach/player then has the choice of either having 3 additional pitches/soft toss (In order to keep the game flowing, we are adamant batters do not receive more than 3 Additional Pitches) or choose to use a batting tee. TEE PLACEMENT- Tees should be placed out in front of home plate, so the batters are hitting the ball in the proper location.**
- No Bunts, Lead offs or stealing allowed.
- No infield Fly rule in 9U
- Sliding is permitted into every base except 1st.
- Runners can advance only 1 base on an overthrow, no matter what, even if an additional overthrow is made.
- If a player hits the ball far enough and can get a double, triple or homerun they are encouraged/allowed to, with the base runners in front of them also advancing **until the ball reaches the infield (controlled or uncontrolled by a fielder)**. If a runner is advancing to a base when the ball reaches the infield, they will be allowed to reach that base unless they are put out. *This will eliminate runners and coaches taking advantage of players not knowing what to do when the ball reaches the infield and will also teach proper baserunning skills as the players are not just running wildly around the bases.*
- The offensive team should have base coaches at 1st and 3rd.

Purpose: We want everyone getting to bat equal amounts every game (ex: 3 up and 3 down does not develop players). We also want to see more opportunity for players to “make plays” (more batters per inning means more plays being made). This will promote players learning to throw to the correct bases, learn defensive strategy and not just “throw it back to the pitcher”.

6. Outs:

- “Outs” will be called (ex: strikeouts, thrown ball beats the runner to first base, runner is tagged when not on a base, caught flyballs, etc.). The participant that is “out” will return to their bench and the base will remain open.
- Double or even triple plays are permitted to be made.

Purpose: To teach players what an out is and defensive strategy.