



## LAKELAND MINOR BALL LEAGUE

### 9U & U9 BASEBALL & SOFTBALL DIVISION PACKAGE RULES

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#### Revision History

Section	Date	Details	Revision	Contributions By	Approved By
All	May 5, 2023	Initial Document from previous rules	00	D'Arcy Evans	Dennell Anderson
All	May 1, 2025	Formatting and Minor Edits	01	Lindsey Stanton Margaret Bayduza Orry Gelowitz	Chris Moser

## **LAKELAND LEAGUE – 9U & U9 BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL DIVISION PACKAGE RULES**

### **BLUE JAYS IN 30 ANALOGY**

- 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 fundamental to ensure they are ready to move up to the 11U division
- There is a show called Blue Jays in 30 that shows you the highlights/action only 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 of waiting/downtime.
- Using this same ration for a 45-minute 9U ball game without any modifications means there is only about 5-6 minutes of total player engagement as most actions lasts 5-10 seconds within the game (eg. Player hits a ground ball and runs to first base = approx... 5 seconds)

Lakeland Minor Ball League ("*LMBL*") rules apply first, and all other Baseball Alberta rules apply thereafter.

### **SEASON FOCUS:**

1. Participant safety
2. Best effort by coaches, parents/guardians and players
3. Engaged participants resulting in a desire to return next season
4. Continual physical skill development as athletes not just baseball players
5. Life skills development (patience, respect, cooperation, communication, leadership, etc.)

### **VOLUNTEER COACH ROLE:**

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

### **PARENT HELPER ROLE:**

8. Parent helpers are essential to the success of the 9U & U9 baseball and softball programs and are really appreciated by the coaches.
9. The Lakeland league and associations do not consider this to be a drop off program and encourages parents/guardians to be involved on the field to assist the coaches. ***No ball experience is needed.***
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. It's also an opportunity for parents/guardians to learn along with their child.

### **TEAM ROSTER SIZE:**

13. Roster size preference is 8 players per team, but the maximum should be 9.
14. The concept behind this is that as quantity goes up, quality goes down.
15. This also assists inexperienced coaches with not getting overwhelmed with too many players.

### **PARTICIPANT & TEAM EQUIPMENT:**

16. Participants need to have a glove, helmet, protective cup and water bottle.
17. Team equipment bags should consist of appropriate bats, balls, batting tee, hoola hoops, cones (round flexible ones), a set of catcher's gear, and a first aid kit.
18. Helmets are mandatory for all hitters, on-deck batters, and base runners.

### **POOR WEATHER / CANCELLING A GAME:**

19. Team managers from each team will be responsible for contacting each other and deciding if a game is going to be cancelled due to poor weather or diamond playability.
20. If both teams agree to cancel, each team will contact their own team's players.
21. Please try to decide with enough time that team travelling can contact their team before they are on the road. Thunder/lightning = cancel.

### **SCORE KEEPING:**

22. Score will not be kept; this is introduced in 11U / U11; therefore, all you have to do is keep track of who bats next

### **GAME BALLS / PITCHING:**

23. The Easton Soft Stitch Incredi-ball will be utilized as the game ball.
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. Coaches pitch from being on one knee, essentially throwing darts (baseball), throw underhand (softball) as an adult standing and throwing results in a way too high of an arm angle that the ball comes from to home plate.
27. The coach places a regular plastic baseball bucket in front of themselves and use a glove as added protection.
28. The coaches are encouraged to move closer/further away depending on the hitter's ability and if they are throwing overhand or underhand to the hitter.
29. Baseball coaches are encouraged to throw underhand to all the batters for the first week, however, after the first week they can throw overhand or underhand based on the player's ability. The goal is to eventually get everyone hitting overhand pitching for the 9U division.

### **CATCHING:**

30. The catcher for the next inning should be the first batter so they have time to get the gear on.
31. Catchers do not throw each ball back to the coach/pitcher.
32. If the catcher misses the ball, they leave it and get ready for the next pitch.
33. If they catch the ball, they just roll it behind their back or flip it up to the home plate area coach that is helping out. Home plate area coach is making sure catchers don't get too close hitters, hitter's stand properly, etc.

### **BATTING / BASE RUNNING:**

34. The team that is batting will start with the bases loaded (one runner on each base). Same concept as if the first 3 batters of the game got walked and instantly engages 3 extra players beyond just the hitter and on-deck hitter.
35. Players get 6 swings in May and 5 swings in June.
36. If they swing and do not make contact, there will be a batting T near home plate that is then placed on the home plate and the struggling batter hits off the batting T.
37. Please respect the other players that the game is not for 'batting practice' and keep the game moving.
38. To ensure the on-deck batters and catchers remain a safe proximity to the batter; a hoola hoop can be used to represent the on-deck circle and the catcher's area.

39. 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.
40. The offensive team will bat every participant, there is not 3 "outs".
41. Once each participant has batted once per inning the teams will switch.

#### **INFIELD / DEFENSIVE POSITIONS:**

42. Players will be placed in the following defensive positions LF, CF, RF, 1ST, 2ND, SS, 3RD, catcher and pitcher (5 steps behind the coach that is throwing to the hitters) for a total of 9 positions.
43. If a team prefers, they can play with a 4th outfielder instead of having the pitcher position in the rotation.
44. Players will rotate one (1) defensive position after every inning.
45. Short, very flimsy soccer cones are placed at each infield position for the first couple of weeks to assist the players with where each position typically plays / position themselves.
46. It helps to avoid someone rotating to play second base and just standing on the base.
47. It also gives the young plays a visual of where to rotate to.
48. In the 2nd week the cones are removed halfway through the game, players are encouraged to help each other with where they need to rotate to after every 2 batters.
49. In the 3rd week the coaches can continue with the cones for half the game or not use them at all.
50. Thrown down bases will be set up 15-16 regular walking steps (approx. 45-50 feet) apart.

#### **OUTS / STEALING / LEADOFFS / ADVANCING ON OVERTHROWS**

51. "Outs" will be called (I.E. Thrown ball beats the runner to first base, runner is tagged while not on a base, etc.)
52. The participant that is "out" will just return to their bench and this baserunner position will remain empty.
53. Participants are not allowed to steal bases or lead-off.
54. Players can advance one base on overthrow.