

Winnipeg South Grand Slam (9U) Baseball Rules

Grand Slam Baseball is an instructional, non-competitive program for children under the age of 10 years. The purpose of Grand Slam is for players to learn to love playing baseball, by developing baseball skills and an understanding of the game, encouraging participation and healthy competition, and making the game fun! Grand Slam is a transitional league that focuses both on developing basic baseball skills and playing actual games (without keeping score).

1. Field Dimensions and Set Up

- A. The home team should set up the field **prior to 6:30 pm**
- B. The home team will supply the pitching machine, game balls, and a batting tee positioned against the backstop near home plate.
- C. If a pitching machine is not available, the coaches shall pitch to their own players, either underhand or soft overhand, remembering that the goal is to help the batter hit the ball.
- D. A softer version of a baseball (Flexi-Balls, pitching machine balls, Rawlings ROTC, or Rawlings ROTB1) shall be used for all Grand Slam games and practices (Rawlings ROTB1 is the Baseball Manitoba recommended ball).
- E. Grand Slam fields have base paths of **60 feet**.
- F. The pitching machine should be set **40-42 feet** away from the back of home plate.
- G. Both head coaches should agree with the speed setting of the pitching machine before the game begins. The speed setting should not be adjusted during the game unless both head coaches agree it needs to be changed.
- H. The infield includes the area approximately 15-20 feet past the bases. On some fields, this area is clearly marked by the boundary between a dirt infield and the outfield grass. On fields with larger areas of dirt or gravel, coaches should mark this boundary with cones/pylons where possible. This boundary is useful for parent helpers in the outfield to call out whether a ball is a single or double, or a home run. See Section 6.

2. Players Equipment

- A. Catchers need to wear full equipment: mask, chest protector, shin guards, *and is strongly recommended to wear an athletic supporter*. Catchers must use a catcher's mitt.
- B. Bats (wood, composite or metal) cannot exceed 32 inches in length or a diameter of 2 ¾ inches.
- C. Batting helmets must have double ear flaps and chin straps.
- D. Batting helmets must be worn by batters, base runners, and on-deck hitters.
- E. Players most often wear runners as footwear in this league (good ankle support is recommended). Soft plastic or rubber cleats are permitted.

3. Team Play

- A. Throughout the season, all players should play all fielding positions.
- B. Defensive changes are unlimited – Coaches are encouraged to have their players play a different position each inning.
- C. A team will normally consist of six (6) players, maximum of eight (8) players.
- D. Six players fill the regular infield defensive positions: pitcher, catcher, 1st -2nd -3rd base and shortstop. A 7th player is a second defensive pitcher, and an 8th player is behind second base.
- E. All players on the team are placed in a continuous batting order.
- F. Any player arriving late is added at the bottom of the batting order.
- G. The player(s) acting as the defensive pitcher(s) must be positioned behind and to the side of the pitching machine, and be no more no more than 8 feet away from the pitching machine.

4. Game and Inning Length

- A. Grand Slam Baseball begins at 6:30 PM for all evening games. Coaches may ask their families to arrive earlier for a pre-game team warm-up.
- B. **Each game day begins with a minimum 30-minute skill-development practice.**
Coaches of the two teams can choose to have separate practices, or work together to plan a combined practice. Coaches are encouraged to use the two Grand Slam manuals and the on-line resources on the NCCP website to help design their skill-teaching practices.
- C. If the teams are practicing separately, each team gets the infield for 15 minutes. Parent volunteers should be used to protect the two groups of players from stray balls hit from the other team's practice.
- D. The game between the two teams is to begin at 7:00 PM and continue until 8:00 PM. If coaches, parents, and players all agree, games may be extended until 8:15. Games may also be shortened if the 2 head coaches agree their players are tired and/or cold, and are no longer having fun.
- E. An offensive inning is complete after all team members have batted once regardless of defensive outs. Any offensive team players remaining on bases at the end of an inning may run around the base path to home.
- F. Teams are strongly recommended to have an additional 1 hour practice each week. Baseball Canada's Long-term Athlete Development Program (L.T.D.P) recommends a 70/30 practice to competition ratio.

5. Pitching and Hitting

- A. A coach or parent volunteer should operate the pitching machine (NEVER let a player operate the pitching machine). If that particular pitching machine is tricky to operate, both head coaches can agree before the game begins that one adult will operate the pitching machine for both teams for the entire game.
- B. The team that is batting should have a coach behind the catcher, to help correctly position the batters.
- C. The first and third base coaches should promptly and decisively call all FOUL balls.
- D. For fielding plays, prompt decisive calls of SAFE or OUT should be made by the following coaches at the following bases:
 - 1st base - the first base coach
 - 2nd base - the person operating the pitching machine
 - 3rd base - the third base coach
 - Home - the coach standing behind the catcher
- E. There is no bunting.
- F. There are no bases on balls (walks).
- G. A batted ball is declared dead if it hits a coach on the mound or the pitching machine. The batter is credited with a hit and the base runners advance one base.
- H. Each batter will receive the standard pitch count (4 balls or 3 strikes) balls from the pitching machine.
- I. Strikes are a hittable ball defined as a ball arriving between the batter's knees and armpits, and within the width of the home plate. If a batter swings at a pitch but does not hit the ball (regardless of whether it was a hittable ball or not), OR if the batter hits a foul ball, that pitch is a STRIKE.
- J. A batter who hits a foul ball with a count of 2 strikes does not strike out, and is eligible to receive another pitch. In order to keep the game moving, the player will be eligible for one more pitch.
- K. If a batter has not hit a fair ball after 4 balls or has not struck out:
 - a. The coach behind the catcher will place the batting tee over home plate so the upright part of the tee is just in front of home plate.
 - b. The strike count continues, but the batter swings at the ball on the tee rather than a ball from the pitching machine. (Example: if the batter has 1 strike after 5 hittable pitches, they get two chances to successfully hit the ball off the tee.)
- L. If the batter strikes out:
 - a. The coach will bring out the tee and the player will be allowed to put the ball in play. Alternately
 - b. The coach standing behind the catcher will hold up the baseball and call GET READY to the fielders.
 - c. The coach will toss the baseball randomly into the infield and call GO!
 - d. The ball is now live and the batter will begin running toward first base.

Remember: one main goal of Grand Slam is lots of fielding practice during the game for the defensive players.

Teaching hitting skills should be done one-on-one during practice, not delaying game play.

6. Base-running

- A. No stealing is permitted. Base runners cannot leave their base until the ball has been hit.
- B. Baserunners do not advance on an overthrow.
- C. Once the play is declared dead, the base runner must stay on or return to the last base they touched.
- D. If the ball is hit only a short ways into the infield (i.e. just in front of home plate) the ball is live, and should be fielded by the catcher.
- E. To ensure players are taught correct baseball sense, limits are placed on how far a player may advance on a hit:
 - a. Balls hit into the infield are limited to a single base.
 - b. Ground balls hit into the outfield are limited to two bases (doubles).
 - c. Balls hit in the air into the outfield are home runs.
 - d. EXCEPTION: **If the player hits off a tee** - any ball hit, *regardless of how far the ball travels*, is a 'single', and all runners may only advance a maximum of one base. Play is live and the hitter can still fly out or be thrown out.
- F. **Although limits are set as to how far a player may advance, the fielding team is encouraged to attempt to make defensive outs. Alternately, although a player may hit a double they may opt to 'hold up' to avoid a tag out.**
- G. Players should be encouraged to throw to the correct base and not just 'back to the pitcher'.
- H. Players that are put out by the defensive team must return to their dugout.

7. Fielding

- A. The infield fly rule does not apply.
- B. Infield balls are played by the infielders.
- C. The catcher shall retrieve any passed ball which remains in play and is not otherwise ruled a dead ball.
- D. Parent volunteers will be situated in the outfield in order to help speed up the game.
 - a. Field parents will prevent ground balls from entering the outfield – parents should stop the ball at the end of the infield, then back away to permit the player to retrieve and field the ball. The ball is considered live until returned to the area inside the base paths.
 - b. Field parents will retrieve home run balls. This is to allow players to return to the infield quicker for the next batter. Parents will return balls to the pitching mound at the top or bottom of the next inning (or when requested by the pitching coach).
- E. Play is declared dead once:
 - a. The batter successfully reaches base on a hit to the infield (and any other base runners have advanced one base), and the ball is picked up by the defensive team.
 - b. The batter successfully reaches second base on a ground ball hit to the outfield (and any other base runners have advanced two base), and the ball is picked up by the defensive team.
 - c. The ball thrown from the outfield hits the ground in the infield.
 - d. A single runner is put out by either tag or force.