

Branchburg Baseball Club Playing Rules for 2022

Majors 70, Minors 60, Machine Pitch and Rookie

Section A - General Rules / Reminders

- The Branchburg Baseball Club follows Babe Ruth/Cal Ripken Rules unless superseded in these rules.
- Alcohol is not permitted at the field or any other facility the Branchburg Baseball Club uses. Coaches, assistant coaches, umpires and/or spectators found with, or smelling of, alcohol will be removed from the field and will be suspended for at least one week.
- No children or spectators will be allowed to operate Branchburg Baseball Club machinery. Children are not to be near the fryer or grill, or on the club "Gator" / cart. Only authorized adults may use these machines.
- Do not drive personal vehicles outside of the designated parking areas. No cars are to be driven directly to the fields to drop off children or equipment. If you have a special need, you must first get approval from the Branchburg Baseball Club Board of Directors.
- Head coaches are responsible for making sure all equipment, tarps and scoring systems are returned to the proper areas in the club dugouts. Scoreboards should only be operated by team coaches or parents.
- Spectators should refrain from smoking cigarettes and cigars while the game is being played.

Section B – Conduct

- All participants, players, coaches, managers, as well as parents, are required to read and sign the BBC Code of Conduct prior to participating in the Branchburg Baseball Club.
- Only a manager can make an appeal to the ruling umpire on their rule decision. Judgment calls such as "strikes", "balls" (unless a check swing), "safe", "out", "fair" and "foul" calls cannot be appealed.
- If the manager feels the umpire has made a decision contrary to the BBC or Babe Ruth/Cal Ripken playing rules, the manager or acting manager (not a coach or player) shall call time and, if granted, may approach the umpire and discuss with the umpire their interpretation of the rule. The umpire's decision will be final. Time is not granted until the umpire says "Time".
- No Game Protests will be allowed. The plate umpire's judgment is final. Spectator control is the responsibility of the team manager.
- Spectators cannot observe the games behind the backstop within 25 feet. It is suggested they observe the game on the bleachers provided.

- Any player, manager or coach using foul or bad language shall be immediately ejected from the game.
- Managers, coaches, and players shall not dispute, question or appeal any judgment call made by the umpires. Any manager, coach or player that questions a judgment call will be immediately ejected from the game after one warning. If the umpire feels that their behavior is severe, they can be ejected from the game without a warning.
- If a manager argues and is belligerent or verbally abusive to an umpire or opposing manager or coaches, the umpire may award a victory by forfeit to the other team and will then leave the field.
- If an umpire feels that a manager has lost control of their players behavior, the game will be ended immediately and a forfeit will be awarded to the other team.
- The umpire's officiating begins upon their arrival on the field and ends upon their departure. Attempting to discuss any umpire's decisions with them before or after the game or after they have left the field is prohibited and may result in ejection from the game even though it has ended. Possible further disciplinary action from the Board may occur upon review.
- Throwing equipment is prohibited at all times. An umpire may eject a player for throwing equipment on the field, on-deck area or in the dugout after one caution. If the umpire feels that the behavior of the player is severe, the player can be ejected from the game without a caution.
- Player safety and the values of good sportsmanship are to be emphasized above all other considerations. Unsportsmanlike conduct, including off-color language, trash talk, intentional base path collisions, bean balls, and bat or helmet throwing are not to be tolerated and will result in an ejection without a warning from the umpire.
- Any manager, coach, player, or spectator ejected from a game will receive a mandatory minimum of one game suspension and may receive further discipline from the Board upon review. It is the manager's responsibility to report any player ejections to his or her league's commissioner immediately following the game's conclusion. The home plate umpire shall be responsible for informing the Umpire-in-Chief of any manger, coach or spectator ejections.

Section C – Participation

- Only adults certified by the New Jersey/Rutgers Youth Sports Council are to be allowed on the playing field or in the bench areas. No exceptions to this rule will be allowed. In addition to the Rutgers Safety certification we now require all managers and administrators to be cleared via league-approved and administered background verification service.
- Only uniformed players, managers, coaches and umpires shall be permitted on the playing field and dugout during the games.
- All players must remain in their dugout when the team is at bat except for the batter, base runners, the "on deck" batter and first and third base coaches. When the team is in the field, all reserved players and coaches shall be in the dugout. Only one manager and three assistants are allowed in the dugout.
- Players shall not be used for base coaches unless there is not a coach available. If the player does coach, the player must wear a helmet.
- No one is permitted to bring any food in the dugout while a game is being played.
- All players must be in the batting line up at all times. For example, a 12-player team will have a 12-player batting order.

- For any team in the field for six innings, a player must play four (4) innings. For any team in the field for five innings, a player must play for three innings. A player must not sit for more than one (1) consecutive inning at a time.
- Free substitution for players in the field is allowed but the batting order cannot be changed.

Section D - League-Wide Start and End of Play

Minimum Players

- At least eight players are required for a team to start an official game in all divisions in which scores are kept. Players who arrive after the game has started are placed at the bottom of the batting order. Play may continue with less than eight players in the event of an injury, at the managers' discretion. For the sake of fair play, the last batted out may play right field on a team with less than nine active players.

- A team is allowed to use a substitute player(s) if and only if it has less than nine (9) players present for a game. This player(s) must be a registered player in the Branchburg Baseball Club and will be supplied by the playing team's league commissioner. Commissioners will have a list of players from their respective league who are available upon request to play one league higher than their league. At no time will a manager attempt to obtain his or her own players directly to fill voids in their lineup. It is the manager's sole responsibility to make sure he or she can field a team prior to the day of the game. Managers should contact their league's commissioner as soon as they know they will not have enough players for a particular game. Substitutes must play the outfield and must be placed in the last spot of the batting order. If there are only eight (8) players, then the umpire will not declare an out for the 9th batter/player or injured player.

- If a player must leave during the game, the player's manager must inform the opposing manager. The player's turn in the batting order is skipped. No out will be declared whenever that player's subsequent turn(s) at bat occurs.

Forfeits

- If a team cannot field a team with the established minimum of players by 15 minutes after the scheduled start time, a forfeit is called unless both managers and the umpire mutually allow additional time.

Home Teams

- Home teams occupy the first base dugout and are responsible for raking, grooming, and lining the field, if needed.
- The home team is responsible for supplying three new baseballs for the game.
- Umpire pay will be handled through the snack shack.

Pre-Game

- For all fields except WOP1 and WOP2, all pre-game activity is to be conducted in the outfield area.
- The infield will be left in game-ready condition for all fields with a dirt infield, including WOP17.

Time Limits

- The home plate umpire will keep the official game time. No new inning may start after 1 hour and 45 minutes from the scheduled starting time.
- It is the responsibility of the managers and umpire to make certain the game begins at its scheduled time, including the assigning of a suitable replacement umpire if the scheduled umpire is not available.
- All games must end 10 minutes before the start of the next scheduled game.
- A game on a lighted field must end no later than 9:50 p.m.
- If a game ends due to darkness prior to the completion of an inning, the last full inning played will be the basis of the game's outcome.
- Games ending in a tie will be recorded as such.
- Delay tactics by managers, coaches, or players will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will not be tolerated.
- Four innings constitutes a complete game.
- Umpires will be the final word for calling games because of darkness. Coaches are not to involve themselves in the decision unless asked.
- Extra Innings (in the event of a tie after regulation play) are allowed so long as not conflicting with any of the other rules listed above.

Game Results

- The winning team manager is responsible for reporting game results immediately to the league commissioner or BBC VP.

Equipment

- Bats must conform to the 2018 USA Baseball Bat standards and contain the USABat Marking. Barrel Maximum on these bats is 2 5/8".
- Players must be attired in uniforms supplied by the League. Uniforms consist of a hat, shirt and pants. Players cannot pay in shorts.
- All catchers are required to wear a protective cup. All other players are encouraged to wear one. All managers must ensure that catchers are wearing a protective cup before they are placed into the game at that position.
- When behind the plate, the catcher must wear a protective mask with a throat guard, chest protector, shin guards, cup support, protective headgear and a catcher's glove.
- Catchers warming up new pitchers behind dugouts are required to wear a mask with a throat guard, helmet and protective cup.
- Batters and base runners must wear protective helmets. Although not required, all players should consider wearing a face guard and heart guard.

- Sneakers and molded cleat shoes are the only approved footwear allowed. Metal spikes are not allowed.

Batting

- The line-up will consist of all players on the team.

Player Rotation

- Each player must play at least one inning in the outfield and one inning in the infield before the end of the fourth inning. Catching and pitching positions are both considered to be infield positions. Further rotation of players through positions is strongly encouraged. The spirit of this rule is to give all players additional experience at playing different positions.

- No player can sit out a second inning until every player on the team has sat out at least one inning. Exception will be made in extreme instances only, such as injury.

Pitching

- Pitcher's Warm-Up - 8 pitches are allowed upon entering a game with 5 pitches in each ensuing inning.

- Pitcher's Equipment and Attire – Umpires, and not opposing coaches, have the authority to order appropriate changes if they deem that a pitcher's glove-color, undershirt, wristbands, etc. may create an unfair advantage.

- Pitcher's Removal - Once a player is removed from pitching, regardless of whether the player remains in the game or not, the player may not return to pitching in that same game.

- Pitchers' Sideline Warm-up - Pitchers warming up in foul territory must face the outfield fence with their back to plate. A "spotter" facing the field must be used to protect pitchers from batted and thrown balls. Catchers warming up new pitchers are required to wear a mask with a throat guard, helmet and protective cup. All players must wear helmets.

- Balks
    - No balks are called in Minors 60.
    - In Majors 70, a pitcher will receive a warning for the first balk committed. The pitcher's second offense will result in a balk being called by the umpire.

- Intentional Walks are not permitted.

- Pitching Conferences - A manager or a manager's designate may visit the mound twice in an inning. Upon the second visit, the pitcher must be removed from the pitching position. A pitcher must be removed after 3 visits to the mound in one game.

Courtesy Runner

- A courtesy runner may be used for the catcher with two outs in any inning.

- The player who made the last batted out becomes the courtesy runner.

- The runner who was replaced by the courtesy runner must take the field as the catcher.

- On exceptionally warm days, the managers of the game may agree to expanding this rule to include pitchers and catchers with less than 2 outs. This should be agreed to with the umpire prior to the start of the game.

Playoffs

- All playoff games are played under the same league-wide and division rules used throughout the regular season.

- Playoff games are played to a conclusion and therefore the 1 hour and 45 minute time limit rule does not apply.

- Minors 60 - The 5 run per inning rule will apply in playoff games. Due to the nature of the 5-run rule, there will be a mercy rule of 11 runs at the end of the 4th inning and 6 runs at the end of the 5th inning.

Strike Zone

- The strike zone is from the letters to the knees over the plate plus one ball width on each side of the plate.

- Machine Pitch – During kid pitch games, the strike zone will be expanded to head to toes and two ball widths on each side of the plate.

Base Runner Avoid Rule

- The base runner must avoid contact with a defensive player if there is a “play” at the base the base runner is attempting to advance to.

- If the base runner makes contact with the defensive player directly involved in a play, the base runner will be declared out. A “play” is defined as a defensive player attempting to put out the runner by tag or force play while the ball is in flight towards the play or the defensive player has possession of the ball.

- This is a judgment call made by the umpire.

Headfirst Sliding

- Headfirst sliding while attempting to advance to any base is prohibited and will result in an automatic out on the first offense and ejection on the second offense.

- Headfirst sliding when returning to a base is permitted.

Throwing the bat

- If a player throws a bat while at bat after swinging or hitting the ball, it will result in a warning to the batter.

- The second time the same batter throws the bat he will be declared out. If the action is severe, the batter can be declared out and ejected from the game without a warning.

- This is a judgement call made by the umpire.

Helmets

- Batting helmets must be worn at all times while in the batting cages, on deck areas and in the live ball areas. Violations will result in a team warning initially with a second offense resulting in an ejection.

On-Deck Batter

- The on-deck batter must be in the batting cage while swinging a bat to loosen up.

- The double-deck batter may get his helmet and bat but may not swing a bat until he enters the on-deck cage in his proper turn.

Catcher

- The catcher must properly wear catcher's gear at all times.

- The team manager is responsible for ensuring that buckles and clips are properly fastened, masks and helmets are properly fitted, and that protective cups are worn.

Jewelry

- When a player is in the live ball area all jewelry is to be removed, except for medical emergency alert chains which must then be taped over, or religious medals which must then be taped over and covered by clothing.

Inclement Weather

- Lightning
    - Umpires shall stop play at the first sign of lightning or nearby thunder.
    - Players and spectators should seek cover away from the field and bleachers preferably in a motor vehicle.
    - The game will resume 30 minutes from the last lightning/thunder.

- Rainouts
    - The BBC will communicate field closures through the BBC website at www.branchburgbaseball.com
    - Field closures will be determined prior to 4:30 p.m. for weeknight games and by 8:00 a.m. for Saturday games with a 9 a.m. start time.
    - If the weather is uncertain, assume there will be a game.
    - The BBC will reschedule rainouts as long as fields are available and time allows within the league master schedule. Leagues that end the season with playoffs will be given top priority to make up their games.

- Games should be played during showers until the umpire halts play, or, if an umpire is not present, until the managers agree to stop play. However, if umpires are not present, but games on adjacent fields have umpires, then managers must follow decisions made on those adjacent fields.

Tiebreakers

- Standings for all divisions will be maintained on the BBC website and will be used to determine playoff seedings.

- The first tiebreaker used will be head-to-head record.

- The second tiebreaker will be runs allowed.

- In the event there are two or more teams tied, runs allowed will be used as the tiebreaker.

- All official games count toward the standings, including games ending in a tie.

Section E - Division Rules of Play

Majors 70

- **End of Turn at Bat**
  - A team's turn at bat ends after three outs are recorded.
  - The 5-run rule does not apply in this league.

- **Pitching Limits and Safety**
  - A pitcher may pitch a maximum of 3 innings in one game. One pitch thrown in an inning constitutes one inning pitched.
  - Balks - During the regular season, one balk warning per pitcher per game will be allowed. After the first warning, all balk rules apply.

- **Infield Fly Rule** - The infield fly rule is used.

- **Dropped Third Strike** – This rule is used in Majors 70.

- **Bat Size** - As stated in league wide rules above, all bats must conform to the 2018 USA Baseball bat rules.

- **Mid-inning defensive changes are allowed only in the following instances:**
  - Due to a change of pitcher, the pitcher and one other field player may swap positions. The pitcher may also go to the bench and a bench player may replace the fielder who has come into pitch.
  - If a player is injured, the injured player may be substituted from the bench only and other players may not change positions.
  - The spirit of this rule is intended to keep players from swapping positions in the middle of an inning due to changing game situations.

- **Mercy Rule**
  - After 4 innings, if a team is leading by more than 12 runs, the manager of the losing team may decide to continue or end the game. No further score will be kept and the team leading will be declared the winner.

- **Base Stealing**
  - All bases are open for stealing.
  - Base runners may lead off from the base while the pitcher has the baseball.
  - Once a team has a lead of 10 or more runs, the team leading can no longer steal bases or advance to the next base on a passed ball. A player who steals a base or advances on a passed ball when his team is leading by 10 or more runs will be returned to the previous base. The team that is losing by 10 or more runs may continue to steal bases.

Minors 60

- **End of Turn at Bat**
  - A team's turn at bat ends after 3 outs or 5 runs are recorded.

- **Pitching Limits and Safety**
  - A pitcher may throw a maximum of two innings per game and a maximum of six innings per week. One pitch thrown in an inning constitutes one inning pitched. The week is defined as Sunday through Saturday.
  - A pitcher who pitches two innings in one game can pitch again the next day or evening.

- **Infield Fly Rule**
  - The infield fly rule is not used in Minors 60.

- **Dead Ball**
  - The ball is dead when the pitcher controls the ball on the pitching mound, defined as the dirt rise in the middle of the infield about 6 feet in diameter.

- **Fielding Positions**
  - 4 outfielders will be used. 10 players total in the field.
  - Infield positions will be normal.
  - Teams with only 9 players will use 3 outfielders.
  - Games may be played with teams having only 8 players, but one outfielder should be borrowed from the other team to get to 9 fielders.

- **Base Stealing**
  - Stealing of 2nd and 3rd base is permitted.
  - Stealing of home is not permitted.
  - Base runners may not leave the base until the pitched baseball crosses the front of home plate. Base runners who leave early will be sent back to the previous base.
  - Baserunners may steal only one base per at bat. Baserunners advancing on a passed ball counts as a stolen base.
  - Baserunners may not advance to the next base on errors made during the stolen base attempt, i.e.: errant throws from the catcher, mishandled balls by the fielder, etc.

- Once a team has a lead of 10 or more runs, the team leading can no longer steal bases or advance to the next base on a passed ball. A player who steals a base or advances on a passed ball when their team is leading by 10 or more runs will be returned to the previous base. The team that is losing by 10 or more runs may continue to steal bases.

- **Bunting** – Bunting is permitted.

- **Dropped Third Strike** - This rule does not apply in Minors 60.

- **Mid-inning defensive changes are allowed only in the following instances:**
  - Due to a change of pitcher, the pitcher and one other field player may swap positions. The pitcher may also go to the bench and a bench player may replace the fielder who has come into pitch.
  - If a player is injured, the injured player may be substituted from the bench only and other players may not change positions.
  - The spirit of this rule is intended to keep players from swapping positions in the middle of an inning due to changing game situations.

- **Mercy Rule**
  - No more than 5 runs can be scored in one team's at bat, regardless of what inning it is. Once 5 runs are scored, the inning ends and the team at bat will take the field.
  - Example – The team at bat has already scored 4 runs in the same inning, the bases are loaded and a player hits a triple to drive in 3 runs - only 1 run will count towards the score.

Machine Pitch

- **End of Turn at Bat**
  - A team's turn at bat ends after 3 outs or 5 runs are recorded in an inning.

- **Infield Fly Rule** - The infield fly rule is not used in Machine Pitch.

- **Bunting** – Bunting is not permitted.

- **Base Stealing** – Base stealing is not permitted.

- **Dropped Third Strike** - This rule does not apply.

- **Pitching**
  - Pitching Machine games.
    - Games played during the month of April and on weekdays in May and June will use a pitching machine.
    - Teams on defense will have one pitcher on defense to either side of the pitching machine. Players in the pitcher position must wear a batting helmet while in the field.
    - From behind the machine an umpire will feed the pitching machine while calling balls, strikes and outs.
    - Batters are allowed 3 swinging strikes or a total of 5 pitches, whichever comes first. A batter fouling off the 5th pitch continues the at bat until either he or she takes a pitch, swings and misses at a pitch or puts the ball in play.

        - The umpire shall stop play if a batted ball enters the area of the pitching machine or strikes the pitching machine. The batter and runners, if any, shall be awarded one base.
        - Play will continue if a thrown ball passes cleanly through the pitching circle.
            - If a ball is thrown or batted into the pitching circle and makes contact with the pitching machine or the umpire, the umpire will stop play and award one base to the batter and runner or runners, if any.

    - Kid Pitch Games
        - Games played on Saturdays in May and June will use a combination of Machine Pitch and kid pitch.
        - The first 3 innings or 45 minutes of the game, whichever is shorter, will be played using machine pitch rules. The final 3 innings of the game will be played using kid pitch rules.
        - Game will have a 1 hour 45 minute time limit.
        - Players will pitch from a portable pitcher's rubber in front of the normal pitcher's mound, approximately 40' from home plate.
            - On WOP1 and WOP2, there is a portable pitcher's rubber in the field shed and posts on the field in front of the mound for placement of the pitcher's rubber.
            - ON WOP7, CS5 and CS15 there are portable pitcher's rubbers in the field boxes. The posts on the pitcher's rubbers have spikes which can be inserted into the dirt field in front of the pitcher's mound.
        - The count on the batter will not start until the pitcher has successfully thrown a strike.
        - The umpires will be instructed to call a large zone large – head to toes and a minimum of 2 ball widths wide of the plate. Umpires will call balls and strikes from behind the pitcher's mound.
        - Players will be limited to 1 inning pitched per game.

- **Fielding**
    - If a team has 10 players or more, the team will use 4 outfielders to involve more players in the game.
    - Teams with 9 players will use 4 outfielders. The pitcher position will not be used.
    - Teams with 8 players will use 3 outfielders. The pitcher position will not be used.
    - Coaches are allowed in the field of play to provide instruction during the game and should not interfere with batted balls.

- **Mercy Rule**
    - No more than 5 runs can be scored in one team's at bat, regardless of what inning it is. Once 5 runs are scored, the team at bat must take the field.
    - Example – The team at bat has already scored 4 runs in the same inning, the bases are loaded and a player hits a triple to drive in 3 runs - only 1 run will count towards the score.

Rookie League

- **Bases**
  - Using the provided portable bases, space the bases 45' apart.
  - Some fields used for Rookie at Old York School and Stony Brook School have bases already spaced 45' apart, so the portable bases will not be needed.
  - As the season progresses, teams may decide to use the normal 60' bases. This should be agreed to by the team managers prior to starting the game.
- **End of Turn at Bat**
  - A team's turn at bat ends after all its players have batted once.
  - No scores are kept.
  - Outs are not recorded.
  - Optional: If the teams playing each other have an unbalanced number of batters, the team with the lesser number of batters will allow enough players to bat twice in each inning to ensure an equal number at bats for both teams in the game.
    - Example - If one team has 8 and the other 6, two players on the team with 6 players should bat twice each inning.
- **Hitting**
  - No strikeouts.
  - Players hit from a batting tee.
  - Ball must land five paces from home plate to be considered a hit.
  - After the first few weeks of the season, or at least until May 1st, coaches may pitch to those batters ready to face "live pitching." Depending upon the player's ability and confidence, this can be underhand or overhand. If a fair ball is not hit after 5 "good" pitches, then the tee must be used to finish that particular at bat (to keep the game moving).
  - Bunting is not permitted.
- **Fielding**
  - Coaches are on the field to provide instruction throughout the game, including during plays, but they should not handle batted or thrown balls.
  - Everyone plays the field. Nobody sits out.
  - The four infield positions and the pitcher's "fielding" position remain intact, there are no catchers, and all other players play in the outfield.
  - Outfielders must play far enough behind infielders to be "fair" to the hitter, as well as to give infielders room to learn how to play their positions.
- **Base Running**
  - Players may only advance one base, even on balls hit to the outfield.
  - Once coach pitch begins in May, players may advance one extra base on balls hit to the outfield. Advancement stops when the ball is returned to the infield, even if it is not controlled by an infielder.
  - Any runner who is put out on the base paths will stay on base.
- **Catching -** Coaches catch.
- **Challenger Field**
  - For any games or practices located on the Challenger field, spikes or cleats are not allowed. Only sneakers allowed on this field.
  - Any violation of this rule may forfeit BBC use of the field.
- **Game time limits**
  - 2 hours of playing time have been allotted on each field for games. Managers are encouraged to use as much of that time as possible to work with the players to further develop their playing skills.
  - The first 30 minutes of the game should be used for warm-up and skill development.
  - A full 3 innings are normally played, but managers should feel free to extend the game beyond that at their discretion to continue working with the players as long as it fits within the 2 hours that have been allotted on the field