

Seattle PONY Baseball Pinto Division Playing Rules

The purpose of SPB's Pinto Division is to provide our youngest players a safe and supportive environment as they begin to learn the game of baseball and to cultivate appreciation and love of the game. Emphasis is on sportsmanship, teamwork, and enjoyment of practices and games. Baseball is a game of rules and decorum, and part of the appreciation of baseball is the knowledge and expectation that there is a proper way that things will be done. The following rules for game play are extended in that spirit. These are rules, not guidelines, and it is expected that all will be used by both teams in every game.

1. Length of Game. Games are 5 innings in length, or 1 hour and 45 minutes, whichever comes first. No new inning shall begin after 1 hour and 30 minutes have elapsed from the *scheduled beginning time* for the game. While runs are counted in each half inning for purposes of Rule 2, no cumulative score is kept, and the game has no "winning team" or "losing team."

2. Length of Inning. Each half-inning shall last until 5 runs have been scored or 3 outs have been recorded. This means that the maximum number of batters in a half-inning is 10 (maximum situation would involve 3 runners on base, 2 outs, and 5 runs scored; or 3 runners, 3 outs, and 4 runs scored).

3. Pitching Delivery and Distance. A coach will have discretion to pitch overhand or underhand, and to determine the proper distance from which to deliver a pitch, which may be different for different batters (though no farther than the pitching rubber on the field, which is 44 feet from home plate).

4. Batting. No batter will be declared out without putting the ball into play. That is, there are no strikeouts. If the batter has not put the ball into play after the coach-pitcher has delivered 6 good pitches (in the strike zone), a batting "T" will be used. Foul balls count as good pitches, except that if a foul ball is hit on the 6th good pitch, the pitcher may deliver another pitch. Pitching can continue after subsequent foul balls; the "T" will then be used after the 10th pitch overall or after the first pitch that is not fouled. Under no circumstances should an at bat last longer than 10 pitches. (The use of the "T" is recommended so that every at bat involves a ball in play; coaches have the discretion of having the batter "walk" to first base).

4a. Bunting. Bunting is not allowed. "Swinging bunts" are OK (when the batter takes a full swing, makes contact, but the ball travels as if it had been bunted).

4b. Throwing a Bat. On the first occurrence, the player is warned. On the second occurrence in the game, the batter is immediately declared out. On the third occurrence in the game, the batter is declared out, and because of the

significant safety risk posed by thrown bats, should be prevented from batting again in that game. Note that more than one occurrence can be in the same at bat.

5. Base running. There are no leadoffs and no stolen bases. If a base runner is off the base when a ball is put in play in fair territory the base runner shall be declared out (one warning may be given). Head-first slides are not allowed. Feet-first slides are OK. A runner may dive head-first back to a base. Runners must make a reasonable effort to avoid contact with fielders who are in the process of making a play.

6. “One base on an overthrow”. Runners are entitled to one “free” base when a ball is overthrown *and leaves the field of play*. Note that not all overthrows leave the field of play, as the *field of play* also includes foul territory. On most fields, the field of play extends through foul territory to the imagined continuation of the infield fence line to infinity. If a ball is overthrown but remains in play, that is, does not leave the *field of play*, runners may attempt to advance but they are at risk of being thrown out. If a runner has passed the halfway point between two bases when a ball leaves the field of play, that runner is awarded the base to which he or she was going plus the next base unless that is impossible because of the status of the runner(s) ahead of him or her.

7. Dead ball. The fielding team “kills the play” (stop runners from advancing) when the ball is in controlled possession of an infielder who is in the infield area, no force play is available, and no attempt is being made to throw out an advancing runner. A coach on the field should call “Time.” Runners who have advanced more than halfway may continue to the next base. Runners who have not advanced halfway to the next base shall return to the base they came from. Any runner “forced back” by a lead runner must return to the previous base regardless of whether they had advanced past the halfway point when “time” was called.

8. Defensive positioning. A “regulation infield” of 6 players (pitcher, catcher, first base, second base, third base, shortstop) shall be used at all times. All other players on the field shall be outfielders, and there can be any number of these (see Rule 10).

8a. All outfielders shall begin each play at least 15 feet behind the baselines. Coaches shall encourage more savvy outfielders to allow less experienced teammates at infield positions the first chance to take force plays on bases.

8b. Regardless of the position from which the coach-pitcher delivers the pitch (see Rule 3), the player-pitcher shall begin each play within 5 feet to either side of or behind the pitching rubber (not in front), in a position that allows an unobstructed view of the batter.

9. Rotation of Defensive Positions. It is expected that every player will have the experience of playing every position during the course of the season. Within a game, positions should rotate every inning; no player shall play the same position more than two consecutive innings. To the extent possible, players should play infield and outfield positions every game.

The following common-sense guidelines are offered:

- * No player should be forced to play catcher.
- * The most dangerous positions on the field are player-pitcher (hot shots off the bat) and first base (everybody keeps throwing the ball at 'em!). Special thought should go into these assignments; for example, some players should not play first base when the team's strongest-armed player is assigned to shortstop; some players should probably not be assigned the player-pitcher position.

10. "Resting on the Bench" on Defense. The general expectation is that every player will play a defensive position every inning. However, some coaches have felt that this occasionally leads to "overloaded" outfields, and have elected to have players rest an inning to avoid having too many players in the outfield. This option is available, but the following restrictions are required:

- * No player shall rest for more than one inning in a single game.
- * No player shall be "alone" on the bench – don't rest players unless there are enough to rest two at a time.
- * Make sure to communicate with parents about the intent of this approach.

11. Batting order. A continuous batting order shall be used from game to game, which means that the player left "on-deck" at the conclusion of one game shall be the first batter in the next game.