

2026 MEL HARDER BASEBALL RULES

	8U / COACH PITCH	10U / MINORS	12U / MAJORS	15U / PONY
Age Cut-Off (birthday)	4/30 - no older than 8 as of 4/30 of current year	4/30 - no older than 10 as of 4/30 of current year	4/30 - no older than 12 as of 4/30 of current year	7/31 - no older than 15 as of 7/31 of current year
Pitching Mound Distance (raised or flat)	40'	45'	50'	60' 6"
Base Distance	60'	60"	70'	90'
Umpires	None	1 certified umpire (1 non-certified, 15 or older, ok if necessary), scheduled & paid by home team PLAYOFFS: Ump fee is split	1 certified umpire (1 non-certified, 16 or older, ok if necessary), scheduled & paid by home team PLAYOFFS: Ump fee is split	1 certified umpire (1 non-certified, 17 or older, ok if necessary), scheduled & paid by home team PLAYOFFS: Ump fee is split
Game Balls	9 in./5 oz., 2 provided by home team (NO Soft Core)	9 in./5 oz., 2 provided by home team PLAYOFFS: 1 new & at least 1 good provided by both teams	9 in./5 oz., 2 provided by home team PLAYOFFS: 1 new & at least 1 good provided by both teams	9 in./5 oz., 2 provided by home team PLAYOFFS: 1 new & at least 1 good provided by both teams
Team Attire	- Players - Full matching uniforms with visibly clear numbers on shirts, batting helmets on offense, no jewelry - Coaches - Similar coach shirt, closed-toe shoes	- Players - Full matching uniforms with visibly clear numbers on shirts, batting helmets on offense, no jewelry - Coaches - Similar coach shirt, closed-toe shoes	- Players - Full matching uniforms with visibly clear numbers on shirts, batting helmets on offense, no jewelry - Coaches - Similar coach shirt, closed-toe shoes	- Players - Full matching uniforms with visibly clear numbers on shirts, batting helmets on offense, no jewelry - Coaches - Similar coach shirt, closed-toe shoes
Metal Spikes	No	No	No	Yes (molded cleats recommended)
Pre-Game Warm-Up		Teams may warm up in foul territory or the outfield, NOT in the infield	Teams may warm up in foul territory or the outfield, NOT in the infield	Teams may warm up in foul territory or the outfield, NOT in the infield
Game Start Time	6:30 weekdays / 10am Sat	6:30 PM	6:30 PM	6:30 PM
Grace Period	N/A	10 minutes - if game is not started by 6:40pm, team short on players will forfeit 6-0	10 minutes - if game is not started by 6:40pm, team short on players will forfeit 6-0	10 minutes - if game is not started by 6:40pm, team short on players will forfeit 6-0
Game Time Limit	No new inning after 8pm	2 HRS. - NO new inning to begin 2 hrs after official start time declared by umpire CHAMPIONSHIP GAME ONLY: No time limit	2 HRS. - NO new inning to begin 2 hrs after official start time declared by umpire CHAMPIONSHIP GAME ONLY: No time limit	2 HRS. - NO new inning to begin 2 hrs after official start time declared by umpire CHAMPIONSHIP GAME ONLY: No time limit
Minimum Number of Players to Start / Finish Game	8	8 - late players may be added to end of batting order through 3rd inning (no outs recorded prior to entry)	8 - late players may be added to end of batting order through 3rd inning (no outs recorded prior to entry)	8 - late players may be added to end of batting order through 3rd inning (no outs recorded prior to entry)

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Call-Ups Permitted to Make 9 Players ONLY	From same age division or one level down, must be registered with respective community league - no outside players	Regular season: From same age division or one level down, must be registered with respective community league - NO travel/outside players - cannot play infield PLAYOFFS: From one level down ONLY - NO infield	Regular season: From same age division or one level down, must be registered with respective community league - NO travel/outside players - cannot play infield PLAYOFFS: From one level down ONLY - NO infield	Regular season: From same age division or one level down, must be registered with respective community league - NO travel/outside players - cannot play infield PLAYOFFS: From one level down ONLY - NO infield
# of Innings per Game	3 minimum	6 - Games may end in tie - If game tied after 6th, play until winner declared or time limit reached (whichever is first) PLAYOFFS: No ties, play complete game	6 - Games may end in tie - If game tied after 6th, play until winner declared or time limit reached (whichever is first) PLAYOFFS: No ties, play complete game	6 - Games may end in tie - If game tied after 6th, play until winner declared or time limit reached (whichever is first) PLAYOFFS: No ties, play complete game
Suspended Games (due to darkness, weather, field conditions, etc.)		- If less than 4 innings (3 1/2 if home team is ahead) complete, game may be resumed from point of suspension (DO NOT revert to prior inning) - Batting order remains same, add previously absent roster players to end of order - Pitcher availability determined by most recent game played	- If less than 4 innings (3 1/2 if home team is ahead) complete, game may be resumed from point of suspension (DO NOT revert to prior inning) - Batting order remains same, add previously absent roster players to end of order - Pitcher availability determined by most recent game played	- If less than 4 innings (3 1/2 if home team is ahead) complete, game may be resumed from point of suspension (DO NOT revert to prior inning) - Batting order remains same, add previously absent roster players to end of order - Pitcher availability determined by most recent game played
Mercy Rule	N/A	10 runs after 4 complete innings (3 1/2 innings if home team is up 10) - coaches can decide to continue playing after mercy rule is reached, though game is officially over	10 runs after 4 complete innings (3 1/2 innings if home team is up 10) - coaches can decide to continue playing after mercy rule is reached, though game is officially over	15 runs after 4 or 10 runs after 5 complete innings (3 1/2 innings if home team is up 15, 4 1/2 if up 10) - coaches can decide to continue playing after mercy rule is reached, though game is officially over
Run Limit per Inning	5 runs/inning (continuous play, max 8 runs possible) unlimited last inning	5 runs max per innings 1-5, unlimited runs 6th inning and after ONLY	7 runs max per innings 1-5, unlimited runs 6th inning and after ONLY	10 runs max per innings 1-5, unlimited runs 6th inning and after ONLY
Mandatory Play Time	No more than 2 innings at any infield position, properly equipped catcher permitted	- Minimum of 6 defensive outs by the 4th inning (exceptions: discipline, injury, illness) - ROTATE players a minimum of 2 positions per game (pitcher excluded within restrictions)	Minimum of 6 defensive outs by the 4th inning (exceptions: discipline, injury, illness)	Minimum of 6 defensive outs by the 4th inning (exceptions: discipline, injury, illness)
# of Outfielders	4 (10' behind baseline)	4 - in grass, 2 right & 2 left, NO Shift, NOT behind 2nd base	3	3

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Continuous Batting Order	Yes - 1/2 inning over after 3 outs, max runs, or batted through the side	Mandatory ALL season - If player removed due to injury/illness/discipline, skip & no out, can't re-enter game - late players may be added to bottom of order no later than 3rd inning	Mandatory ALL season - If player removed due to injury/illness/discipline, skip & no out, can't re-enter game - late players may be added to bottom of order no later than 3rd inning	Mandatory ALL season - If player removed due to injury/illness/discipline, skip & no out, can't re-enter game - late players may be added to bottom of order no later than 3rd inning
Non-Permitted Pitcher Attire	N/A	No white sleeves, white mitts, sunglasses (prescription ok), batting glove under mitt	No white sleeves, white mitts, sunglasses (prescription ok), batting glove under mitt	No white sleeves, white mitts, sunglasses (prescription ok), batting glove under mitt
Pitch Count / Restrictions	6 - batter is afforded 4 strikes (no called strikes) before out is recorded, pitches must be straight line/NO lobs	Pitches/Days Rest 1-20 = 0 21-35 = 1 36-50 = 2 51-65 = 3 66+ = 4 75 PITCH MAX may finish batter if at-bat started before max pitch count DAYS REST starts on next calendar day	Pitches/Days Rest 1-25 = 0 26-40 = 1 41-55 = 2 56-70 = 3 71+ = 4 85 PITCH MAX may finish batter if at-bat started before max pitch count DAYS REST starts on next calendar day	Pitches/Days Rest 1-30 = 0 31-50 = 1 51-70 = 2 71-90 = 3 91+ = 4 110 PITCH MAX may finish batter if at-bat started before max pitch count DAYS REST starts on next calendar day
Pitches Permitted	N/A	Fastball & change-up	Fastball & change-up	Fastball, change-up, curveball
Pitcher No Re-Entry Rule		Once pitcher is removed from mound, they can't re-enter as pitcher later in same game	Once pitcher is removed from mound, they can't re-enter as pitcher later in same game	Once pitcher is removed from mound, they can't re-enter as pitcher later in same game
Final Score, Pitch Count Record & Pitcher Availability	N/A	Final score & pitch counts MUST be logged online within 24 hrs of game completion, failure to do so may result in forfeit (6-0) if protested before start of next game, verify scorebooks	Final score & pitch counts MUST be logged online within 24 hrs of game completion, failure to do so may result in forfeit (6-0) if protested before start of next game, verify scorebooks	Final score & pitch counts MUST be logged online within 24 hrs of game completion, failure to do so may result in forfeit (6-0) if protested before start of next game, verify scorebooks
Balks	N/A	No	Yes - 1 warning per pitcher before balk counts	Yes - No warning
Visits to Mound	N/A	1/inning per pitcher, must be replaced on 2nd visit in same inning	1/inning per pitcher, must be replaced on 2nd visit in same inning	1/inning per pitcher, must be replaced on 2nd visit in same inning
Hit Batter Limit	N/A	Replace pitcher on 3rd hit batter	Replace pitcher on 3rd hit batter	Replace pitcher on 3rd hit batter
Intentional Walks	N/A	No	No	Yes - announced by pitcher, catcher or team manager (no pitches required)
Catchers Required Equipment	Catcher's mitt, cup, chest protector, shin guards, helmet (throat guard optional)	Catcher's mitt, cup, chest protector, shin guards, helmet (throat guard optional)	Catcher's mitt, cup, chest protector, shin guards, helmet (throat guard optional)	Catcher's mitt, cup, chest protector, shin guards, helmet (throat guard optional)

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Catchers - # of Defensive Innings	2	Unlimited (though players must play 2 positions per game)	Unlimited	Unlimited
Bat Restrictions	Max. 2 3/4" diameter, -11, w/"official" baseball marking	Max. 2 3/4" diameter, -11, w/"official" baseball marking (no softball or tball bats)	Max. 2 3/4" diameter, -11, w/"official" baseball marking (no softball or tball bats)	Max. 2 3/4" diameter, -5, w/"official" baseball marking (no softball bats)
On-Deck Batter	No	Subject to home field rules or umpire discretion	Subject to home field rules or umpire discretion	Subject to home field rules or umpire discretion
Thrown Bats	One warning, out on each occurring offense	- One warning given to both benches on first offense by either team, batter out on each occurring offense	- One warning given to both benches on first offense by either team, batter out on each occurring offense	- One warning given to both benches on first offense by either team, batter out on each occurring offense
Sliding	No	Feet first ONLY, No collisions or malicious contact, offensive interference or defensive obstruction will be determined by umpire (if flagrant, player may be ejected)	Feet first ONLY, No collisions or malicious contact, offensive interference or defensive obstruction will be determined by umpire (if flagrant, player may be ejected)	Feet first ONLY, No collisions or malicious contact, offensive interference or defensive obstruction will be determined by umpire (if flagrant, player may be ejected)
Head-First Sliding	N/A	No (dive-back permitted)	No (dive-back permitted)	No (dive-back permitted)
Lead Offs	No	No - can attempt to steal once ball crosses plate - one team warning if early, out each time any runner leaves early thereafter	Yes	Yes
Steals / Advancements Limit (not on a play or walk)	N/A	Unlimited - HOWEVER, ONLY ONE STEAL/ADVANCEMENT HOME PER INNING, Cease if opposing team is down 10 runs	- STEALS (on the pitch) are limited to 5 PER INNING - ADVANCEMENTS (passed balls, overthrows, errors) are UNLIMITED -Cease both if opposing team is down 10 runs	Unlimited
Advancement on Walk	N/A	No - ball is dead on a walk	Yes	Yes
Courtesy Runner	N/A	- Use last out (or run last scored if no out recorded) for pitcher/catcher ONLY entering defensively next inning - No pinch runners used with continuous batting order	- Use last out (or run last scored if no out recorded) for pitcher/catcher ONLY entering defensively next inning - No pinch runners used with continuous batting order	- Use last out (or run last scored if no out recorded) for pitcher/catcher ONLY entering defensively next inning - No pinch runners used with continuous batting order
Dropped 3rd Strike	N/A	No	Yes	Yes
Infield Fly Rule	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

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Appeals		ONLY head coach may make an appeal to umpire on rulings or rule interpretation (not judgement calls)	ONLY head coach may make an appeal to umpire on rulings or rule interpretation (not judgement calls)	ONLY head coach may make an appeal to umpire on rulings or rule interpretation (not judgement calls)
Protests		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protest of a rule infraction must be declared by head coach to umpire - Game under protest may continue play - Notify community director of protest immediately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protest of a rule infraction must be declared by head coach to umpire - Game under protest may continue play - Notify community director of protest immediately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protest of a rule infraction must be declared by head coach to umpire - Game under protest may continue play - Notify community director of protest immediately
Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow league rules, do not make adjustments - No noisemakers or actions meant to distract players - Inappropriate activities (drugs, alcohol, profanity, harrassment, unsportsmanlike behavior, etc) are grounds for ejection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow league rules, do not make adjustments - No noisemakers or actions meant to distract players - Inappropriate activities (drugs, alcohol, profanity, harrassment, unsportsmanlike behavior, etc) are grounds for ejection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow league rules, do not make adjustments - No noisemakers or actions meant to distract players - Inappropriate activities (drugs, alcohol, profanity, harrassment, unsportsmanlike behavior, etc) are grounds for ejection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow league rules, do not make adjustments - No noisemakers or actions meant to distract players - Inappropriate activities (drugs, alcohol, profanity, harrassment, unsportsmanlike behavior, etc) are grounds for ejection
Player / Coach / Parent / Spectator Ejections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st Offense: suspension rest of game, plus next game - 2nd Offense: suspension for remainder of game, plus minimum of 2 games - 3rd or Severe Offense: removal for remainder of season or longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st Offense: suspension rest of game, plus next game - 2nd Offense: suspension for remainder of game, plus minimum of 2 games - 3rd or Severe Offense: removal for remainder of season or longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st Offense: suspension rest of game, plus next game - 2nd Offense: suspension for remainder of game, plus minimum of 2 games - 3rd or Severe Offense: removal for remainder of season or longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st Offense: suspension rest of game, plus next game - 2nd Offense: suspension for remainder of game, plus minimum of 2 games - 3rd or Severe Offense: removal for remainder of season or longer
End-of-Season Tournament	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

- Unless noted, above rules apply to regular, playoff and championship games
- Refer to OHSAA rules if not specified above
- Insurance, background checks, concussion certificates and Lindsay's Law training for coaches are the responsibility of each community
- All players and coaches must be registered through community recreation league
- Roster limits are at the discretion of each community league
- Community league boards may place players one level higher than their age group if they deem it appropriate
- **Rosters should be as balanced as possible if a community has more than one team in any division**

*updated 3/15/26

