



METRO EAST RECREATIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

(MERBL)

HIGH SCHOOL RULES 2026

The "Metro East Recreational Baseball League" uses the National Federation of High School Association (NFHS) rules as its base set of rules. These are the same rules that are used by high schools in the state of Illinois. The rules listed here will supersede the NFHS rules, all other rules will come from the NFHS rule book.

CONDUCT: Please do not direct negative comments at players, coaches, or umpires. Inappropriate behavior by players, coaches, or spectators **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. Please understand you will be asked to leave the park as a result of any confrontation with an umpire in this league.** If it occurs more than once, you will be banned from **all** MERBL events for the remainder of the season.

The head coach is responsible for the conduct of everyone associated with his team. This includes assistant coaches, players, and fans. No member of the team (assistant coach or player) other than the head coach may leave the area of the dugout or coaching box to dispute an umpire's call. No team member, coach or player, may leave the area of the dugout or coaches' box to argue a call or ridicule an umpire. The penalty for this infraction will result in both the offender **and** the head coach being restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game. If the offender is a player, this will also result in an out each time his spot in the batting order is due. If the incident is severe enough, the offender may be ejected, with the head coach restricted to the dugout.

NOTE: Umpires will give the Head Coach an opportunity to deal with his fan(s), including pausing the game. If, in the opinion of the umpire, the Head Coach is not doing enough to control the fans, the Head Coach will also be penalized. Any penalties assessed to the Head Coach because of a fan, will be the Head Umpires' discretion.

A coach, player, substitute, attendant, or other bench personnel shall not do any of the following:

- a. Leave the dugout during a live ball for an unauthorized purpose (this includes the seating area with spectators)
- b. Fake tag without possession of the baseball
- c. Wear jewelry or bandanas (players only)

PENALTY: In a-c, at the end of the playing action, the umpire shall issue a warning to the coach of the team involved and the next offender shall be ejected. In b, it is also obstruction, with base runners awarded appropriate advancement to the next base(s).

- d. Commit any unsportsmanlike act to include, but not limited to;
 1. Use words or actions to incite or attempt to incite players or spectators;
 2. Use profanity, intimidation tactics, remarks reflecting unfavorably upon any other person, or taunting or baiting;
 3. Use language intended to intimidate;
 4. Behave in any manner not in accordance with the spirit of fair play or good sportsmanship;

- e. Enter the area behind the catcher while the pitcher and the catcher are in their positions;
- f. Charge an umpire;
- g. Deliberately throw bat, glove, helmet, etc.;
- h. Initiate malicious contact on offense or defense;
- i. Use tobacco or tobacco like products on, at, or near the field;
- j. Leave their positions or the bench during a fight or physical confrontation;
- k. Clap hand or use words to attempt to distract the pitcher while running the bases;

PENALTY: In d-j, the offender shall be ejected from the game. In k, the offender shall be called out for interference and removed from the base.

After an ejection has occurred, the ejected person must leave the vicinity of the playing area immediately and is prohibited from further contact either direct or indirect with the team (distance must be out of sight and out of sound). Failure to comply will result in a forfeit.

If for any reason a player or coach is ejected from a game, he will receive the following disciplinary action:

1. 1st offense will result in a one game suspension, served the next played game.
2. 2nd offense will result in a two-game suspension, served the next two played games.
3. 3rd offense will result in league dismissal for the remainder of the season, with loss of all registration fees.
4. **The penalties for ejections apply to the offender. If a player is ejected, the Head Coach will be restricted to the dugout for the remainder of the game. If the Head Coach shows a pattern of lack of control over the team, the Head Coach may also be subject to ejection and suspension penalties.**

All suspensions can be appealed to the league commissioner.

CONFERENCES: Each team, when on defense, may be granted not more than 1 charged conference per inning, or 3 charged conferences per a 7-inning game, without penalty, to confer with defensive personnel. 1 additional charged conference, (not cumulative) without penalty, is allowed for each inning in an extra inning game. Prior to reaching these limits, a conference is not charged if the pitcher is removed from the pitching position.

PENALTY: After 3 charged conferences in a 7-inning game, or for any charged conferences in excess of 1 in any inning, the pitcher shall be removed as pitcher for the duration of the game.

Each team, while on offense, may be granted not more than 1 charged conference per inning to confer with base runners, the batter, or the on-deck batter.

NOTE: LEGION PLAYERS are allowed to play in MERBL baseball games as long as their age requirements are met. MERBL reserves the right to revisit this rule, as needed. Players will have to be registered and paid for the summer rec league town they are playing for. The registration will be paid before the start of the summer season.

NOTE: Players can not register to play with more than one team!!

ILLEGAL PLAYERS: Any coach caught using an illegal player (someone not registered in our league) will be subject to the following disciplinary action:

1. **1st offense will result in ejections for the coach and the player, forfeiture of the game, and a one game suspension for the coach.**
2. **2nd offense will result in player ejection, forfeiture of game, plus a lifetime suspension for the coach.**
3. This penalty can be appealed to the league commissioner.

BORROWING PLAYERS: Teams may borrow up to 2 players total, to get to eight (the minimum number required to play a legal game), or to get to nine. You cannot borrow if you have less than 6 of your own players. These players must come from the roster of another MERBL team within the same age division. The borrowed players "Must" wear their own team jersey. The borrowed players cannot come from the opposing team. The borrowed players cannot pitch or catch, and they must bat at the bottom of the batting order. (Note: in an emergency, a borrowed player may be allowed to catch.) These arrangements must be made before the official start of the game to avoid a forfeit. Teams must use their own players in playoff games.

GAME LENGTH: All games, including playoff games, will have a time limit. The home plate umpire will keep the official time, which will begin at the conclusion of plate meeting. No new inning may begin after one hour and forty-five minutes (1:45) has elapsed from the official start time. The next inning begins when the final out is recorded in the current inning. Regular season games can end in a tie. No playoff games can end in a tie.

An official game must contain at least one (1) of the following:

- a) Four (4) completed innings, or three-and one-half innings (3 ½) if the home team is leading,
- b) Expiration of the time limit,
- c) Game ending due to the mercy rule.
- d) In the case of bad weather or darkness, 60 minutes have been played.

Note: games with less than 4 innings or 60 minutes played will be made up as scheduling permits.

NOTE: In the case of lightning being sighted the umpire will set a timer for 15 minutes. Play cannot continue until a period of 15 minutes, without lightning, has passed. The clock gets reset with each lightning strike. This time is not counted against the game time. The game clock stops during weather delays. In locations that have their own policy, we will follow that policy.

MERCY RULE:

If one of the following occurs during the game, the game will end in favor of

- A) The home team is leading by twelve (12) runs after 3½ innings.
- B) The visiting team is leading by twelve (12) runs after 4 innings.
- A) The home team is leading by ten (10) runs after 4½innings.
- B) The visiting team is leading by ten (10) runs after 5innings.

1. **NOTE:** If the score becomes lopsided before completing enough innings to invoke the "mercy rule", the leading team will remain on defense. The trailing team shall remain on offense until every player has had one turn at bat. If this requires more than 3 outs, the bases will be cleared after the third out, and they will continue to bat until every player has batted.

DELAY OF GAME: Intentional delay of game by the team with the lead to take unfair advantage of the time limit rule will result in a warning on the first occurrence, and will result in a forfeit on the second occurrence.

Teams have two (2) minutes to be ready for the start of the next half inning after 3 outs have been recorded in any half inning. This includes all warm up throws by the defensive players (including the pitcher). New pitchers are allowed a maximum of 8 warm up pitches, continuing pitchers are allowed a maximum of 5. After 2 minutes has elapsed, the defensive team will be penalized one (1) ball for every 20 seconds a pitch is not delivered. If the offensive team is not ready, they will be penalized one (1) strike for every 20 seconds he is not ready. **The batter must keep one (1) foot in the batter's box at all times while he is at bat.**

COURTESY RUNNER: Teams may get a courtesy runner for the pitcher or catcher at any time. **A courtesy runner for the catcher is MANDATORY when there are 2 outs.** This runner must be the last player that made an out while batting.

BATTING: The official batting order must list the player's name and number. No players on the same team may have the same number. Round Robin batting is used (all available players are in the batting order). Once a player is in the lineup and leaves for any reason other than injury, illness, or a predetermined reason, that position in the batting order will be an out each time it comes up for the remainder of the game after the player leaves. All predetermined reasons must be communicated to both head coaches and the umpires before the game begins. Players arriving late may be added to the bottom of the batting order at any time before the start of the fourth inning.

LINE-UP CARDS: **Line-up Cards** must be filled out with all player's last name and uniform number. A first name initial can be used in the case of the same last name. These line-up cards must be filled out and given to the plate umpire at the plate meeting. Coaches exchange their own lineup cards at the plate meeting as well. It is the coach's responsibility to have the line-up ready on time. NOTE: Players must play a minimum of one third (1/3) of their team's regular season played games to be eligible to participate in the playoffs. Example: If all 14 games are played, a player would need to play 5 games to be eligible for the playoffs. If a team only plays 12 games, the player would need to have played 4 games. **Games played for other teams as a borrowed player will not count toward satisfying the one third requirement.**

Assign a different number to each of your players. This number must be on the player's jersey. If a player is added to the roster after the season starts and does not have a team jersey, assign a number and put it on a t-shirt to make this player legal.

ROSTERS: Players can be added to rosters (with proper registration and fees paid) until the end of the third week of the season. After this date there will have to be a meeting with MERBL personnel for permission.

PITCHING: Pitching restrictions are as follows:

1. When a player is removed from the pitching position, he cannot re-enter as a pitcher in the game.
2. Summer season four (4) innings/12 outs per player per day.
3. Fall season, three innings (9 outs) per player per day.
4. Pitchers cannot wear white hats, wrist bands, white batting gloves, or anything else judged by the umpires to be distracting to the batters.
5. If the pitcher's undershirt sleeves are exposed, they cannot be white.
6. The fake to 3rd base, throw to 1st base pickoff attempt is not a legal play. This is a balk.

EQUIPMENT:

Uniforms. Team uniforms must be worn. Each player must have his or her own number on the uniform shirt. If the player's name is on the shirt, it cannot be a nickname. The uniform must be worn **outside** all other clothing. **No uniform alterations are allowed.** Players must wear baseball pants, no shorts. Each player has to have a different number (no duplicates). One shirt, one number, per player.

Bat regulations. The NFHS bat rules will be used in MERBL.

Single pieces wood bats: maximum length is 36", maximum barrel diameter is 2 3/4".

All non-wood bats, including bamboo, must have the BBCOR logo silk screened on the bat.

All BBCOR bats can have a maximum length of 36", and must have a barrel diameter of 2 5/8".

All non-wood bats must have 2 5/8" barrel diameter, and a -3 length to weight ratio.

Shoes with metal spikes or metal cleats are strictly prohibited. If a player is caught wearing metal spikes, the player will be ejected from the game. No exceptions.

All male players must wear a supporter with a hard cup in all MERBL games. Any player not wearing one will be ejected from the game. No exceptions.

Catcher's must wear a hockey style helmet (with throat protector on the smaller size helmets), chest protector, protective cup, and shin guards. All players warming up pitchers on or off of the playing field must wear a facemask with throat protector. Skull caps are not legal.

All players will wear helmets while batting and running the bases. Any player who intentionally removes the helmet while running the bases will be called out. All other results from the play will stand. All batting helmets must have double ear guards.

Any player or non-adult must wear a helmet while acting as a base coach or protecting other players warming up in any live ball area.

Any player equipment judged by the umpire to be unreasonably dangerous is illegal, and must be removed from the game immediately.

Jewelry shall not be worn by any player, with the exception of a medical alert which must be taped down and visible. NOTE: The plate meeting is considered first warning. First offense is considered second warning. The second offense is considered the third warning and results in player and coach being ejected.

BAT THROWING: Players must hold onto the bat while swinging through the ball. Accidental throwing of the bat will result in a warning from the umpire. Each team will be given one warning. All subsequent offenses will result in a dead ball with the batter being declared out.

COLLISIONS: Baserunners do not have to slide, but must avoid contact with fielders, with the exception of 1st base. If a runner runs into the defensive player making a play, the base runner will be declared out for interference. If such contact is malicious or flagrant, the player will also be ejected from the game. This is for the safety of the players. A base runner may step, or jump, over a defensive player that is lying completely flat in the baseline in a defenseless position. A base runner may not step or jump over a sitting or standing defensive player. Diving over a defensive player is never allowed.

EQUITABLE PLAYING TIME: All players must play a minimum of three full defensive innings (9 outs recorded while playing defense) in a seven-inning game, or two defensive innings (6 outs recorded while playing defense) in a five or six inning game. **All players must complete two defensive innings (6 outs recorded while playing defense) by the end of the 4th defensive inning (this is possible unless you have more than 16 players on your roster).** It is the coach's responsibility to make sure that all players receive the required playing time. Failure to obey this rule could result in a forfeit.

FORFEITS: Failure to have a minimum of eight players available will result in a forfeit. A game can be started, continued, and finished with minimum of eight players. Should either team not be ready to start fifteen (15) minutes after the scheduled start time, the game will be forfeited to the other team. Should both teams violate the rule, it will be ruled a double forfeit. If a team gets enough players before the 15-minute forfeit time has expired, the game will be played, but game clock will still begin at the originally scheduled time.

NOTE: Teams that can not play a scheduled game after the final schedule is out, because of not enough players, will forfeit the game.

NOTE: Teams will not be allowed to play music at games.

NOTE: In order to be declared the winner, the team must have eight players on sight, properly equipped, and ready to play. If a coach knows more than 2 hours before a scheduled game

time that he will not have enough players, notify both the league and the opposing coach so the teams and umpires can be canceled.

PROTESTS: No protests will be allowed when it involves a question of an umpire's judgment. You may protest rule violations and illegal player violations. The following procedure needs to be followed:

- a. The notification of the intent to protest must be made immediately before the next pitch, concerning infraction of given rule.
- b. The manager of the protesting team must immediately notify the umpire and the opposing manager that the game is being continued under protest.
- c. The umpire will notify both scorekeepers that the game is under protest and both scorebooks will be initialed by the umpire indicating the point at which the protest occurred.
- d. The protest of any game shall be made in writing and filed with a fee of \$50 to the MERBL no less than 24 hours after the game in which the alleged rule violation occurred.
- e. The letter of protest must include the date, names of umpires, and all matters pertaining to the alleged infraction, citing which rule(s) were violated. The letter of intent must be generated by the protesting manager and accompanied by the \$50 fee.
- f. All specifics relating to a protest must be included in scorebook:
 - i. Name of the batter
 - ii. Name of the pitcher
 - iii. Name(s) and locations of baserunner(s)
 - iv. Number of balls
 - v. Number of strikes
 - vi. Number of outs
 - vii. Inning number
 - viii. Amount of time remaining
- g. All protests shall be acted on by a MERBL committee of a minimum of three members. The decision will be final.
- h. The \$50 fee will be reimbursed to the protesting manager if the protest is won. If the protest is lost, the entire \$50 will go into the MERBL operating fund.

MAKE-UP GAMES: All make-up games will be rescheduled by the scheduling director in conjunction with the head umpire.

PLAYERS ON BENCH: All players in league games must remain in their respective dugouts when not on deck, batting, running bases, acting as a base coach, playing defense, or warming up other players. Only players and coaches are allowed in or near the dugouts. **Family members and friends are not allowed in this area.**

INDIVIDUALS BEHIND BACKSTOP: No managers, coaches, or players are allowed directly behind the backstop during the progress of the game. **Fans or spectators located directly behind the backstop are not allowed to give advice or coaching instructions to the players during the game. Persons in this area will be asked to relocate to another location in a non-playing area if this rule is violated.**

UMPIRES: MERBL management, in conjunction with the Head Umpire (UIC), is responsible for the hiring, training, and assigning of umpires.

1. Any umpire(s) assigned by the UIC shall be in complete charge of the game. Profane language, harassment, physical contact, and any other unsportsmanlike conduct, including unnecessary delay, by any manager, coach, player, or spectator, is strictly prohibited, will not be tolerated and can lead to ejection without warning.

2. Any umpire has the authority to eject, after proper warning, any manager, coach, player, or spectator at any time, if in the umpire's judgment, such action is warranted in order to eliminate conduct which the umpire deems offensive, or in any way interferes with the orderly playing of the game. If the game is delayed longer than deemed appropriate by the umpire while waiting for a manager, coach, player, or spectator to leave the area after being ejected, the game will be forfeited in favor of the opposing team.
3. In any case, whether or not ejected, a party interfering with any umpire's control of the game, is subject to probation or suspension by a majority vote of the MERBL. Sign up fees, or any portion thereof, will not be refunded to any player who is suspended or banned from league play.
4. Any umpire's decision which involves interpretation of playing rules may be discussed by the "Head Coach" only. Head Coach is defined as the team representative that attends the "plate meeting." No other person will be permitted on the playing field to discuss such playing rule decisions. The ultimate decision of the umpire(s) is final, subject only to pursuant to the rules governing protests.
5. Any umpire's decision which involves judgment such as, but not limited to, whether a batted ball is fair or foul, whether a pitch is a strike or ball, or whether a runner is safe or out, is final. No player, manager, coach, or spectator shall object to any such judgment decisions.

The team representative that attends the pregame plate meeting, becomes the Head Coach, and the person who will represent his team during any disputes that occur during the game. This representative will be the only person that can approach the umpires to dispute calls, once the game starts.

As previously stated, the coaches are responsible for the actions of their fans. There could be an occasion that you are unable to control a fan. We may have to call "911" for an escort of an individual from the premises. You can usually have some control of your fan base, simply by the way in which you conduct yourself on the field. Fans and parents, as well as the players, will feed off of your reactions to situations. On site league administrative personnel have the same authority as umpires to remove any persons from the game **outside** the confines of the playing field if their behavior warrants such action.

The umpires should not be expected to show up to games with baseballs. This should be the responsibility of the home team. At the end of the game, you will get the baseballs back from the umpires. Make sure your side of the field chases foul balls. This keeps the game flowing.

NOTE: During the Playoffs-

1. No games will end in a tie.
2. Teams cannot borrow players.

Updated 6/30/26