

AYLMER PIRATES



Jr. Rookie Rules and Coaching Guide

Updated May 20, 2024

Introduction

Welcome to Aylmer Minor Baseball's Jr. Rookie Ball program. This is a non-competitive, instruction program with an emphasis on teaching the fundamentals of baseball, having fun and stressing good sportsmanship.

Each session will be 75 minutes in length and will consist of practice time and games. The first session should consist of 40-50 minutes of practice and 25-35 minutes of game time in order to re-introduce the participants to the fundamentals of the game and also serve as an evaluation session to ensure the teams are evenly matched. Medals and a treat will be handed out at the last session.

Equipment

Jr. Rookie Ball is played on a regular diamond with regular baseball equipment. Pitching is performed by coaches and a pitching machine.

The following equipment will be given to each team or made available at each session:

- Bats (not exceeding 2 ¾ diameter)
- Bases
- Hitting tee's
- Helmets
- Baseballs
- Catchers equipment
- Assorted training equipment
- Pitching machine
- Electrical cord

The Game

Most of the standard Rookie Ball Rules published in the 2019 Baseball Ontario Constitution and By-Laws manual shall apply with some exceptions. The main rules and exceptions are as follows:

Pitching

- Pitching can be performed by coaches at the beginning of the season if necessary
- As players become more proficient at hitting pitched ball the pitching machine can be used.
- The yellow or orange pitching machine balls can be used for games. These balls are pitched more consistently from the pitching machine than regular baseballs.

- An 8ft diameter safety circle shall be marked off around the pitching machine. No player shall enter this safety circle. Any ball that lands inside the safety circle shall be declared a dead ball and will be retrieved by a coach.
- The pitching machine can be altered only at the end of an inning. Machine speed should be set to a maximum of 40mph and a minimum of 30mph. Height can be adjusted at any time.
- A ball that contacts the pitching machine will be called dead. The hitter will be given first base and each base runner will advance to the next base.
- One offensive coach will be required to feed balls into the pitching machine. This coach must avoid the live play and must not make contact with a hit ball or any defensive player.

Hitting

- The batting order will be determined prior to the start of the game and will not change during the game. The batting order should be rotated each game to ensure each player gets to hit at the top of the batting order.
- A hitter will receive a maximum of 5 strikes to hit the ball. A player cannot run on a fifth strike if it is dropped by the catcher. A foul ball does not count as a fifth strike.
- If the batter does not hit the ball after the fifth strike they will hit from a tee.
- If a player is scared of hitting from the pitching machine they may just hit directly from the tee.
- Batters must not throw the bat (intentional or unintentional) upon hitting the ball. After a thrown bat the play will be called dead. Players will receive one warning and a chance to hit again from the same strike count. Any further instances by the same player will result in the player being called out. All base runners will return to their starting base.
- No bunts or walks.
- Infield fly rule does not apply.
- Bats shall not exceed 2 ¾ diameter. Players may use their own bats if they are baseball approved. No softball bats will be used.

Fielding

- One defensive coach will be allowed on the field to assist players. The coach must stand just outside of the infield.
- Defensive players in the pitching position must wear a helmet with a mask and be positioned behind the release point of the pitching machine.
- Defensive players in the catcher's position must wear catcher's equipment. A defensive coach may fill this position in the event there are not enough defensive players and must wear a mask.
- There will be a maximum of 10 defensive positions consisting of 6 infielders and 4 outfielders.
- All players must play a different position from game to game. A player does not have to play certain positions such as catcher, pitcher or first base if they are not comfortable or not able to safely play the position.

Base Running

- Runners cannot leave the base until the batter makes contact with the ball. Infractions will result in a dead ball and one warning. If a player continues to lead off they will be called out. No stealing.
- In the case of a passed ball the base runner may only proceed to the base they are heading to. No extra base shall be awarded.
- Once a defensive player has gained control of the ball in the infield the base runners may only proceed to the base they were on path to.
- If the ball is hit into the outfield the base runners may advance until the ball is brought back into the infield.

General

- Each half inning will end after either 3 outs or once the batting team scores 5 runs
- A pitching machine yellow or orange dimple ball shall be used with the pitching machine
- No new inning shall be started after 45 mins have been played.
- Maximum number of innings to be played is 7 with a full game being 5 innings.
- No smoking or inappropriate language shall be used on the baseball grounds.
- Please leave the field setup once the game is over. Mosquitoes will use the same equipment.
- Home teams use the first base dugout and visitor teams use the third base dugout.
- Infield practice can be held prior to the start of the game. Coaches should coordinate to share the field. Teams can practice together.
- A copy of the lineup should be shared with the other teams score keeper prior to the game.

Field Setup

- Pitching machine setup 44 from the back of home plate.
- Bases are 60 feet apart.
- An 8 foot diameter circle will be drawn around the pitching machine.
- Standard batters boxes and foul line marking.

Tips and Fundamentals

The below tips and fundamentals are to be used as a guide and should not be considered absolute.

Hitting Fundamentals

- Bat selection – the proper bat size for the average Rookie Ball player should be between 25-28 inches and 16-19 ounces
- Batters should stand adjacent to the plate in an athletic position (feet shoulder width apart, back straight, and bent slightly at waist with butt out). Hands holding the bat should be

together (not spaced) and above shoulder. Be sure to have players stand back far enough to be able to extend arms as the tendency at this age is to stand too close to the tee or plate.

- Beginners should swing in balance without spinning around, starting with the weight back. Follow through over the opposite shoulder. Do not let the bat go.
- Advanced players can be taught the use of a timing step. Transferring power from the back leg forward.

Baseball Grip



Bat grip – knuckles aligned.

Catching and Fielding Fundamentals

- Be prepared - knees slightly bent and weight on the balls of their feet
- Balls thrown above the waist should be caught with thumbs together.
- Balls thrown below the waist should be caught with pinkies together.
- Ground balls should be fielded with 2 hands either in the “alligator” position or with pinkies together with palms up starting with hand(s) on the ground.
- Move to catch the ball



Proper ground ball fielding stance

Throwing Fundamentals

- Grip ball along the seam with two or three fingers along with the thumb.
- Point shoulder to target when setting up to throw.
- Throwing arm should be even or above the height of the shoulder.
- Step with opposite leg toward target when throwing.
- Follow-through to opposite pocket when throwing.
- Ball should be held with finger tips, not touching palm of the hand.



Proper 4 seam grip

Baserunning Fundamentals

- After hitting the ball, lay the bat down – do not throw the bat!
- Run directly to first base. Tail to the left for close plays, turn to the left if there is a chance for additional bases.

Remember to keep the fundamentals fun, basic and simple. The key to learning is by doing!

AMBA Rookie Ball Sessions

Coaches should show up 10-15 minutes early for each session to help with field setup. Proceed to your area of the field as designated on the schedule. For the first session coaches should introduce themselves to their team and try to get their players to introduce themselves.

Session 1

1.0 Introductions

Introduce yourself to the players and parents. Encourage the players to introduce themselves. Remind players about safety rules such as not touching pitching machines, being careful when swinging bats, not throwing the ball when someone isn't looking, etc. Also ask players to respect and take care of all the equipment provided.

2.0 Take attendance

3.0 Warm up (3 min)

4.0 Practice (45 mins)

For the first session the teams should practice for approximately half the practice. This should help to get the kids comfortable and allow the coaches to get an idea of the ability level of each player. Teams should share the field and rotate between hitting and infielding on the diamond and throwing and catching in the outfield.

Diamond: Hitting / Fielding

The Jugs pitching machine will need to be set up on the diamond. Split the players up into two groups so you have half your team ready to hit and half your team fielding. The players not hitting will field the balls. Give each batter approximately 10 pitches.

Outfield: Throwing and Catching

Coaches should re-familiarize and demonstrate how to properly throw and catch the ball as per the throwing and catching fundamentals. Use any of the following activities:

- Throw and catch amongst players to warm up
- Break up into a couple of groups. Have the player's line up and have the coach throw grounders. Players field the ball and throw back to the coach. Coach throws to the next player, etc.
- Practice catching overhead / pop-fly's. Use tennis balls. (5 mins)

Game Sessions

1.0 Take attendance

2.0 Warm up (5 min) – short jog / stretches

3.0 Practice (15 min)

Below are some ideas for the warmup. Ensure you are spending time practicing all the fundamentals but don't be afraid to spend a little extra time on skills the players are weaker at. Breaking the team up into small groups is a good way to bring variety, keep the players active and maintain their attention.

3.1 Throwing

- Player throwing back and forth (sitting, on knees, standing)
- Throwing balls into the baskets of the backstop / screen / target
- Competition throwing at strike zone counter.
- Players line up and coach throws to each player down the line (small group)
- Competition to see who can throw the farthest.

3.2 Catching / Fielding

- Players play catch back and forth. Without glove and with glove.
- Coach throws to a small group of players back and forth.
- Roll grounders, at the players and side to side.
- Toss pop fly's, higher or side to side for more difficulty
- Use tennis balls, wiffle balls or baseballs

3.3 Hitting

- Soft toss into practice screens
- Hit off tee
- Pitching machine
- Coach pitch
- Mini game

3.4 Base running / Infielding

- Setup diamond and run different scenarios.
- Have players simply run the bases
- Simulated game.
- Players practice throwing around the infield (Coach calls out where to throw).
- Teach base runners to stay on base if not a force play.
- Tagging up

Final Session – Week 10

1.0 Awards

Players are presented with medals at the end of the season.

Wrap Up

Congratulations on completing the 2024 Jr. Rookie Ball season. We hope you have found this guide to be useful. This is the second season we have run this Jr. Rookie Ball division. Please let us know what worked and what did not so we can continually improve the program.

Coaches and volunteers are critical in putting together and running a well-organized, development based program. Aylmer Minor Ball sincerely appreciates the commitment you have made to your community and hope that the experience was fulfilling for you as well. We also hope that you will continue to support and offer assistance for years to come be it as a coach, board member or volunteer.

Thank you on behalf of Aylmer Minor Baseball