

2026 Essex Invitational Tournament Rules rev 6/3/26

The Father's Day tournament and will consist of one weekend.

The tournament is an invitational tournament and reserves the right to decline a team from registering for the tournament. The tournament will be conducted under the following rules:

All U15-U19 teams will use the American League Rules.

U8, U9, and U10 age groups will use the Official Little League Rule Book and

U11, U12, U13, and U14 age groups will use the American League Baseball Rule Book, except as modified by the following rules:

PLAYER AND TEAM:

1. Age cut off date is May 1, 2026. Younger players may play up into the next highest age bracket.

2. The Tournament Board will determine the division for all teams. Players' eligibility will be determined by the Tournament Board.

3. The Tournament Director will use his/her sole discretion in determining the eligibility of teams for each division. Factors will include, the bracket where they are placed in their particular league, does their program already have a team in the A bracket, win/loss record, ages of the players. Any team may request to play in a different bracket but they must do so before the schedules are prepared. The Tournament Board reserves the right to make changes for any team from one division to another at any time that it appears that they have been placed into the wrong division., i.e. a team in B division can be moved by us to A division, and an A division team can be moved to B division at any time. Decisions for such change in placement will be made by the Tournament Director and are non-appealable. In some age groups, there may only be one bracket, depending on the number of teams signed up for that particular age group. No guarantee is or will be made that there will be a B bracket in any age group, nor is there a guarantee for any single age groups. We will be using Division 1, Division 2 as opposed to A Division and B Division. We do not want the players to get hung up on which division they are playing in. Decisions such as these are based on the number of teams signed up to play. At the Tournament Director's discretion changes can be made to any schedule at any time prior to the tournament's first game.

4. Players, coaches, managers, parents, spectators, or umpires are not permitted to use alcohol, narcotics, or profanity during the game. Penalty is ejection from the game. No smoking is permitted on or around the benches, on the playing field or on school property. **NO PARENTS ARE ALLOWED ON THE FIELD FOR ANY REASON, AND ARE SUBJECT TO EJECTION IF THIS OCCURS. If a parent is ejected, the manager is also ejected. See Rule 17.**

5. Each team is entitled to a **maximum of 18 players** (but the winner team will still only get 15 trophies/medallions, whichever applies). **On Saturday, home team will be determined by a coin toss** before each game. On Sunday during the single elimination rounds, the team with the highest seed will be home team. Final decision is made by the Tournament Director and is non-appealable. Team rosters must match the roster turned into the Tournament Director. Rosters are frozen at the

time of your first game, except in extreme emergency situations. Manager must immediately contact Tournament Director if such a situation exists.

6. Managers, four (4) coaches, players, score keepers and batboy or girl are the only people permitted on the benches during the course of the game. See Rule 28. All managers, coaches must be easily recognized or they will not be allowed on the bench/field. The umpires will ask you to remove yourself from the bench/field. The Rule will be enforced by the Tournament Director.

7. All players and coaches are to remain on their respective benches in their designated areas during the course of the game. This rule will be enforced by the Tournament Site Director. No more than one player may be in the on-deck area at one time.

8. Players must wear headgear with earflaps while batting and while on base. Penalty for failure to do so is the batter or runner is out when the batter steps into the batter's box (Umpire's discretion). Catchers must also wear a catcher's helmet, athletic cup, and throat protector while catching, as well as use a Catcher's mitt.

9. Use of unauthorized players will result in game forfeiture. If it is brought to the Tournament Director's attention that a team is playing with a player who is NOT on their Roster, that team will forfeit the game to the opposing team. The team with the offending player must be prepared to prove that the player is rostered. The use of an illegal player must be brought to the Tournament Director's attention during the game or within one hour after the game. If the team has a game immediately after said game, then the offending player will NOT play in any subsequent games until a final decision is rendered by the Tournament Director. If it is challenged during the game, the manager will have the option of continuing the game with the offending player until the Tournament Director makes a decision and take a chance on a forfeit, or he can remove the challenged player immediately from the game and the game will not be forfeited even if it is determined that the challenged player is an illegal player.

10. Batting:

U8: No intentional bunting is allowed, however, swinging bunts are allowed. If a batter intentionally bunts a baseball in the umpire's discretion, the batter is out and the ball is dead with no base runners advancing. **No stealing of bases.** No leading off. The runner may not leave the base before the ball has crossed home plate.

U8 and U9 and U10 – dropped 3rd strike, batter is out.

All age groups: One of these options must be selected **prior** to the start of the game. Once selected, the option cannot be changed during the game. At the plate conference before the game begins, each manager must notify the opposing manager which option they are using.

Note: The team must have eight (8) players available to continue the game.

Option 1: Bat nine (9) (or eight if you only have 8 players) with free substitution in the field. No re-entry rule. You would have free substitution of players, except for the pitcher. Once a player is removed from the batting rotation, he cannot go back into bat but may continue with the defensive free substitutions.

Option 2: Bat your entire roster and field nine (9) (or eight if you only have 8 players) (See Field for U8). You would have free substitution of players, except for the pitcher.

Designated Hitter: A DH can be used for any player at any time during the game for games played on a 90 ft diamond.

If a player is ejected from the game, and you have no player to replace him, he will be called "out" every time his batting position comes up. If a player is injured or leave the game, there will be no "out" called. Should a player arrive late he will be inserted at the end of the batting order.

Whatever batting arrangement you decide to use, you must declare which one you will be using prior to the start of the game and it cannot be changed after the game has started.

Lineup cards (which will be supplied at the field--please use legible writing) must be submitted to the umpire at the start of the game. All lineup changes but be given to the umpire, as well as opposing team. At the end of the game, both managers will verify the score, and sign the Lineup card given to the umpire.

11. The team at bat may use **runners for the pitcher and catcher** anytime regardless the number of outs. These runners must be players that are currently not in the game, but are eligible to enter. If batting entire roster, then runner would be last out.

12. **Fielding for U8 only:** Team can field 10 players in the field. 10th player must be in the outfield, thus playing with 4 outfielders. Outfielders must be in outfield grass and not on infield dirt, if playing on a larger field, umpire's discretion will be used.

Ending a play for U8 only: A play ends when the ball is in the pitcher's hand on the pitcher's mound circumference dirt area. It is the umpire's discretion as to whether or not the end of a play has occurred. A play may also end when a play is made at a base such as tagging a runner, or the ball is thrown out of the playing field. If the throw to the base results in a rundown play, then play will be maintained until the player involved in the rundown is either put out or successfully advances to the base he was attempting to reach. Out of play balls and overthrows will result in the placement of runners at the umpire's discretion. Final ruling on placement of runners is at the umpire's discretion.

Placement of Runners for U8 only: A runner who is more than halfway to the next base before the play ends will advance to the next base. If the runner is less than halfway to the next base when the play ends, the runner goes back to the base he was at. Placement of the runners shall be in

the sole discretion of the umpire. Players are not allowed to advance on throws from the catcher to the pitcher after a thrown pitch.

Collisions for U8 only: All players, whether on offense or defense, shall make a good faith effort to avoid unnecessary collisions at all times. This means that the offensive player must slide or take other appropriate action to avoid collisions, and the defensive player must avoid contact other than that necessary to attempt to get the out. The umpire is the sole authority in determining if the collision is intentional or incidental, and in determining the appropriate response. Failure to observe this rule may result in the awarding of the base and/or an out and may result in additional sanctions by the umpire, including a warning or ejection of the offensive and/or defensive player where necessary. **NOTE:** It is recognized that some degree of collisions are inevitable on plays at home plate; however, blatant (in the judgment of the umpire) attempts by the runner to dislodge the ball or cause injury are not allowed, and in likewise fashion the catcher must avoid contact other than that necessary to attempt to get the out.

Obstructions for U8 only: Defensive players shall have unimpeded access to attempt to field the ball. Likewise, offensive players' ability to advance must not be unnecessarily blocked by defensive players. In cases where the advancement would interfere with the fielding of the ball, the fielding of the ball shall take precedence. Offensive players must take any reasonable action (e.g., pausing or slowing their advancement, etc.) needed to provide that unimpeded access to the defensive player. If the defensive player's ability to field the ball is impeded – inadvertently or intentionally - by the offensive player, then the umpire may choose to call the impeding player out. If an offensive player's ability to advance is impeded by any defensive player's action other than that associated with fielding the ball then the umpire may award an advancement. The umpire's judgment is final.

Infield Fly Rule for U8, U9, U10: Infield fly rule **WILL NOT** be in effect.

13. **You must start with 9 players but can finish with eight (8) players.** If you start with nine (9), and one player is ejected you can still finish the game with eight (8) players, even if the reduction in players is due to an ejection.

NOTE: These Rules above supersede both Little League and American League Rules.

14. Rubber cleats or rubber soled baseball shoes will be permitted for all age groups. Metal spikes are optional for all teams U13 and above.

15. Conventional baseball uniforms are required and will include shirt, pants, cap, and socks. Shirts are to be numbered and numbers must be visible with no duplications. Any duplications or missing numbers will result in a penalty or loss of time at bat and the batter will be called out. Neatness should be stressed. Special permission from the Tournament Director is needed to deviate from this requirement. We realize that some teams may have been put together just for the tournament so their uniforms may not all be identical. Contact the Tournament Director for permission.

16. Game balls will be at the field for the umpires to use during the games. However, some off-sites may run out of balls, and in that case please be prepared to bring balls to the field.

17. Unsportsmanlike conduct going to the bases will result in the runner being called out at the Umpire's discretion. Manager must notify Tournament Director immediately if a player/coach/manager has been ejected. Please text me (443-642-0349) immediately. If a player is ejected, he will not be allowed to play in the next game - one game suspension.

Ejections: If a manager/coach/player or parent is ejected for any reason, there is a minimum of one game suspension, no appeal. No parent should have any contact with an umpire, before, during or after the game. If there is such contact, the parent and manager will be ejected and subject to a minimum 2 game suspension. Failure to notify the Tournament Director of ejections could result in a forfeited game.

PLAYING FIELD

18. The following playing fields will be used:

Age group U8:	60' diamond with 40' pitching distance. Home to 2 nd Base 84'10"
Age group U9, U10:	60' diamond with 46' pitching distance.
Age group U11, U12:	70' diamond with 50' pitching distance.
Age group U13 and up:	90' diamond with 60'6" pitching distance.

19. No team player, coach or manager is allowed on the playing field prior to the coin toss.

PITCHING

20. Any team member may pitch, subject to other restrictions of the pitching rules. Batters must make an effort to get out of the way of the pitch. This is in the umpire's judgment. A player, who is removed as a pitcher, regardless whether the removal is during or in-between innings, is not eligible to pitch again in the same game. **For U8 only**, any pitcher hitting two (2) batters in one inning or three (3) in one game must be removed as a pitcher. For other age groups, there is no restriction on the number of hit batters by a pitcher. This is a decision for each manager.

21. We do not keep "innings pitched" so you do not have to report it. Number of innings allowed for each pitcher is:

Age group U8:	no more than three (3) innings <u>per game</u> - no balks.
Age group U9, U10:	no more than four (4) innings <u>per game</u> -no balks
Age group U11, U12:	no more than four (4) innings <u>per game</u>
All teams playing on 90 ft:	Unlimited – no restrictions.

If a pitcher has pitched more than the allotted innings above, the umpire should be notified immediately and the offending pitcher will be removed from the mound. If he is not immediately removed from the mound, the manager will be ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct.

If a player steps onto the mound and picks up the baseball, he will be considered the pitcher of record. **Please make sure that no one other than the pitcher steps on the mound at any time during the game.**

22. One pitch constitutes one inning pitched. In U8, it is child pitching, no coaches pitch.
23. Any pitcher who is withdrawn from the mound cannot return to the mound in the same game.
24. Warm up of pitchers and catchers during the game shall be in an area behind the fence sheltered from foul balls. **No warm up pitching on the field.** If a player is used to warm up a pitcher, they must wear a catcher's facemask or batting helmet with facemask and a protective cup. If a relief pitcher comes into the game, he is allowed five (5) warm up pitches, except in the case of injury.
25. Any manager or coach who goes onto the playing field two (2) times in an inning to talk to a player or pitcher must make a pitching change. The only exception to the rule is if the umpire in the case of injury or some equipment damage calls time.

MANAGER AND COACHES

26. **Refusal of a manager or coach to leave the field when requested by an Umpire will result in an ejection due to unsportsmanlike conduct.**

27. It must be apparent during the game who are managers and coaches. All managers and base coaches are to be dressed the same so that they can be distinguished from parents. **Only the manager, not coaches, are allowed on the field to talk to an umpire regarding any call or controversy.** Other coaches and parents are not allowed on the field. All managers must notify the umpires prior to the game that they are the manager and the appropriate party to discuss controversies with the umpires. Managers are responsible for their parents and must keep their parents under control at all times.

Umpire will issue warnings for unsportsmanlike conduct by player, parent, coach, manager. If it continues, it will result in an ejection AND the manager will be ejected. No warning for profanity (f-bombs), it will result in an immediate ejection by offending party.

OFFICIAL GAME

28. There is a time limit for all games (unless designated otherwise at the start of the tournament). All teams will be notified when the schedule comes out as to the time limit. When the "time limit" is reached, if in the middle of an inning, the inning will finish, unless otherwise designated prior to the start of the tournament. **Note that the time limit will begin to run at the**

end of the ground rules at which time the managers and umpire will synchronize their watches.

Games on Saturday may end in a tie. In case of rain or darkness, it will be considered a completed game after 3 innings in U8, U9 and U10 age groups; and after 4 innings in all other age groups. If the game is in the middle of the inning when it is called for rain or darkness, the score will revert back to the last completed inning. If the game is not completed as noted above because of rain or darkness, the game will be suspended. The Tournament Director must be notified immediately will set a time/location for the game to continue. The game could be moved to another field with lights in the case of darkness.

2026 time limits (unless otherwise advised):

On Saturday: No new inning after 2 hours. You may finish the inning IF YOU CAN, OTHERWISE DROP DEAD AT 2 HRS AND 10 MINUTES. There can be a tie. If not finished, score will revert back to the last completed inning. THIS APPLIES TO THE TWO GAMES ON SATURDAY only.

On Sunday: No new inning after 2 hrs. If at the end of the 6th inning, it is a tie, we will then follow the International Tie Breaker rule, wherein for that next inning, a runner will be placed on 2nd base. The runner is the last batter to make an out in the previous inning. At least one full inning is played, allowing each team the same chance to score. If the score remains tied, the same process is used in each inning until a victor emerges. However for only the Championship games on Sunday, the game must finish in its entirety (this game will still be subject to the Slaughter Rule 39).

Game time will be set by the Tournament and forfeit time will be five (5) minutes after the time set. However, if on Sunday some teams are going from one field location to another, the umpires will wait until both teams arrive before starting the games.

Teams should be ready to play at least 30 minutes prior to game time. If both teams are there and field is ready, game will start.

29. Number of innings per game for the seeding rounds could change. All managers will be notified of any change once the tournament schedule comes out. Otherwise, it will be:

Age group U8: Six (6) innings
Age group U9, U10: Six (6) innings
Age group U11, U12: Six (6) innings

Teams on a 90 ft: Six (6) innings

30. The championship rounds for some age groups will be played at East Regional Park under the lights depending upon field availability.

31. **Scores:** It is very IMPORTANT that we get the scores as soon as possible, so we are also asking that you send a text to **443-642-0349** to report the scores. When texting, please be sure to put your AGE GROUP and Team Name along with the score and the name of the opposing team. I do not use Game Changer

32. **For U8 only. Scoring.** Innings will be three (3) outs or five (5) run maximum per inning for innings 1 through 5. However, if the bases are loaded and the final batter hits more than a single,

then those runners who come in to score will count (which could conceivably make it more than 5 runs max and that is okay.) During the 6th inning and extra innings, there is unlimited scoring.

33. Inclement weather policy. Rules may be deviated from due to inclement weather and the necessity to get the games played. Be prepared for last minute changes in the schedule. You will be given as much notice as possible.

OFFICIALS

34. The Umpire will make the decision concerning stopping the game in the event of darkness or wet playing conditions. The Tournament Director will have final authority as to the playability and use of the fields. We would like feedback on the umpires so feel free to email me about them.

MISCELLANEOUS

35. **Refund policy.** There are no refunds. At the discretion of the Tournament Director, all teams who pull their teams after the cutoff date for registration, will not be refunded their registration fee. However, if the Tournament Director decides to refund the registration fee, there will be a \$100.00 administration fee for all refunds.

36. The numbers on the uniforms will be recorded at the first game, and every game thereafter. Players must have the same number on their uniform throughout the tournament unless authorized by the Tournament Director to make such change.

37. **Bats:** Composite bats are allowed. All bats for 8U-13U must be stamped a USA or USSSA or 1.15 BPF Certification. (BBCOR is also allowed at 13U).

All bats for 14U to 19U must be stamped BBCOR.

It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that only authorized bats are used. During play, umpires have, at their discretion, the right to inspect bats at any time or upon the request of the opposing coach. If upon inspection, the bat is found to not conform to tournament rules, the player will be ruled out and the bat must be removed from play. Coaches please check your players' bats to ensure compliance.

The allowed maximum bat sizes for this tournament are below, however, **“if you can swing it you can use.”**

8U to U13 - No barrel restrictions, minus unlimited
14U to 19U- BBCOR. Note: **“If you can swing it you can use.”**

No inappropriate heating of bats will be allowed in the tournament. If any coach, player or parent is found to have altered the temperature (and thus performance) of a bat by an inappropriate means – such as propane, heating pads, heaters, etc. – the HEAD COACH of the offending team

will be ejected for the remainder of the tournament. The altered bat will be removed for the rest of the tournament.

38. **Slaughter Rule:** A twenty (20) run rule will be in effect for all ages groups after two (2) innings. A fifteen (15) run rule will be in effect for age groups after three (3) innings; or twelve (12) run rule after four (4) innings; or ten (10) run rule after five (5) innings. **This includes championship games.**

39. If all players have been used and an injury occurs and the injured player cannot continue a player who had exited the game, if available may re-enter the game. That player may not pitch, if he has pitched previously in the game.

40. Bat throwing by batter: 1st offense, there is a warning to offending team. 2nd offense by any batter on offending team becomes an “**OUT**”. *All subsequent offenses are also OUTS.*

41. The Umpires will follow the NCAA Force Play Slide Rule.

For U8 only: Runners must avoid contact. Any runner who in the judgment of the umpire fails to slide, slides with malicious intent, or otherwise does not avoid contact shall be called out and may be ejected from the game (umpire’s discretion). **HEAD FIRST SLIDING IS NOT ALLOWED.** No sliding into 1st allowed under any circumstances.

42. Action taken for violations of these Rules may result in game forfeiture, game suspension, or removal from the tournament. Verbal or physical threats of personal/physical assault to any umpire will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. Unsportsmanlike conduct by players, managers, coaches, parents, or spectators will not be tolerated. Managers are responsible for their team, their conduct, and the conduct of the team’s parents, and spectators. Failure to control any of the above may result in a game forfeiture being issued by the home plate umpire, if in his judgment, he has issued the appropriate warning with no positive results. **No use of AIR HORNS or COW BELLS during the games.** This is extremely annoying to the other team as well as onlookers. Razzing of players is not allowed. The use of profanity and/or fighting among players will result in the removal of the players involved. The throwing of equipment and/or uniform parts (gloves, hats, etc.) will result in a warning being issued to the Team for the first offense. The second offense will result in the player(s) being removed from the game. **At no time are players, coaches, managers, or spectators allowed in the area immediately behind and/or along the backstop and/or out-of-bounds marker.** If, in the judgment of the umpire, any person is in flagrant violation of the above rule, that shall constitute grounds for warning, ejection, and/or forfeiture of the game by the offending team.

43. **All controversies of any kind will be decided by the Tournament Director and those decisions will be final and non-appealable.**

PROTEST

44. A protest based upon a play that involves an Umpire’s judgment is not permitted.

The Umpire's word is final. If the Protest concerns Rule interpretations, the objecting manager must notify the Umpire **PRIOR TO THE NEXT PITCH** that the game is being played under protest. The Umpire will notify the opposing manager and make a public announcement to the scorekeeper. The game must be completed. After the game is completed the protesting manager must submit in writing to the tournament director with the protest fee. The written notification must be completed within four (4) hours of the completion of the teams last scheduled game for that day.

45. The protest fee is \$100.00 cash and must be submitted at the time of the Protest. The protest fee is non-refundable and is an administrative fee which will be placed in the Tournament treasury.

46. Decision on Protest made by Tournament Director is final.

TROPHIES

48. **Father's Day Tournament:** Trophies will be awarded to a maximum of 15 players for each First and Second place teams in each age bracket unless otherwise decided by the Essex Baseball/Softball board. Team trophies will be awarded.

TIE BREAKER RULES FOR SATURDAY

49. If there is a tie, such as two teams have a 1-1-1 record – then we will look at that team's "runs allowed". The team with the least "runs allowed" will take the higher seed. If the teams are still tied, then we will look at that team's "run scored". The team with the highest "runs scored" will take the higher seed. If there still results in a tie, then it will be a "coin toss" decision (actually, it will be done via email and the choosing of numbers). There is **no head-to-head tie breaker**, because in most cases there is no pool play.

Because of the above, it is very **IMPORTANT** that the scores are checked by each manager after the game so that the correct score is turned in. If there is a discrepancy, the Tournament Director will use the first score turned in. Thus, **PLEASE CHECK** the score with the opposing manager **BEFORE** you leave the field.

50. The decision of the Tournament Director will be final in this regard.