

EBSA FARM DIVISION RULES

Spring 2026

FARM RULES AT-A-GLANCE

1. **FIELD SETUP:**
 - BASE DISTANCE: 60 feet
 - KID PITCH DISTANCE:
 - 1st grade: 40 feet
 - 2nd grade: 42 feet
 - HOME TEAM is responsible for:
 - the setup of bases and pitching rubber
 - providing 2 new baseballs for each game
 - END-OF-DAY GAMES: Both teams should work together to:
 - Replace all base anchor plugs
 - Store and lock all bases and pitching rubbers in orange equipment bins
 - Report lost/broken equipment via the Coaches App
 - Ensure all dugouts are clear of debris and equipment

 2. **GAME LENGTH:**
 - 6 innings or 90 minutes, whichever comes first
 - No inning may start after 80 minutes

 3. **PITCHING:**
 - COACH PITCHES PER AT-BAT: 5 (then switch to tee)
 - KID PITCH:
 - 2nd and 5th innings, at coach's discretion
 - Coach takes over after ball 4

 4. **BATS:** USA or wood. USSSA BATS PROHIBITED.
 5. **NO SCORE KEPT**
 7. **NO WALKS / LEADOFFS / STEALS / BUNTS / BALKS**
 11. **NO DROPPED THIRD STRIKE RULE**
 12. **NO INFIELD FLY RULE**
 13. **NO ADVANCING ON AN OVERTHROW**
 14. **UP TO FIVE OUTFIELDERS PERMITTED**
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I. OVERVIEW

1. **WHAT THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS:** This document contains the rules of the Farm Division of EBSA Baseball in particular. It does not contain a comprehensive list of every single rule of baseball. Any rule not covered by this document will default to the rules of Illinois High School Association baseball rules, which can be found at <https://www.ihsa.org/sports/baseball>.
2. **AMENDING THE RULES:** All questions, thoughts, and suggestions about the rules should be directed to the Farm Division commissioner, who will bring them to the Rules Committee for consideration at the appropriate time. Urgent concerns, such as those that pertain to player safety, should be brought directly to the EBSA President, whose contact information can be found on the EvanstonBaseball.com website.
3. **INTERPRETING THE RULES:** These rules should be interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with their purpose and intended effect, not by a rigid or technical reading of isolated provisions. Where the literal text and the evident purpose of a rule appear to conflict, the purpose and spirit of the rule shall govern.
4. **GOALS OF THE FARM DIVISION:**
 - a. Help players develop build skills, confidence, and a love for the game of baseball
 - b. Emphasize the importance of teamwork, positivity, and having fun
 - c. Introduce the growth mindset toward excellence that will lay the groundwork for competitive baseball at the next level
5. **TEAM FORMATION:** Farm Division teams are formed by the Farm Division Commissioner, in collaboration with EBSA leadership. At the Farm level, teams are formed mostly along address and elementary school lines. Our aim is for Farm to be a balanced division where every game can be safe, fair and fun, while giving players a chance to play baseball alongside their school and neighborhood friends.

II. SPORTSMANSHIP

The Farm Division is a developmental program focused on laying the groundwork for competitive baseball at the next level, while having fun and building baseball skills.

Sportsmanship is the bedrock on which the Farm Division is built.

1. **GAMEDAY PRIORITIES:** Each game involves the participation of many individuals, including parents, coaches, players, league officials, city officials, and more. Every participant shall promote and foster an environment of **safety, fairness, and fun**, in that order. Put differently, any action that detracts from these priorities shall be considered unsportsmanlike. Any individual who repeatedly defies these priorities may be subject to sanction by the league.
2. **NO SMOKING, VAPING, OR TOBACCO USE:** No smoking or use of tobacco or nicotine products, including cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes, vapes, chewing tobacco, and similar products, is permitted in the bench area or on the playing field.
3. **NO HARRASSMENT:** EBSA expects and demands nothing less than exemplary conduct from all players, coaches, managers, and spectators throughout the season. Harassing of the opposition or umpires by spectators, managers, coaches, or players is prohibited. Harassment or public humiliation of a team's players by a team's own manager or coach is prohibited. Offending spectators, players, managers, or coaches may be subject to sanction by the league.
4. **NO PROFANITY:** Use of profanity during games is prohibited.
5. **BENCH CONDUCT:** Managers and coaches shall monitor bench discipline of team members at all times and restrict all players to the sideline benches except for those occupying a defensive position, any runners, the batter and the batter on deck.
6. **EXCESSIVE DISPLAY OF ANGER:** A player or team may be subject to sanction by the league for actions including but not limited to:
 - a) Deliberately slamming or throwing equipment on the field OR in the dugout, while on offense or defense.
 - b) Physical contact with another player, coach, or official with the intent to harm or intimidate them
7. **RULES INTERPRETATION DISPUTES:** Coaches should make every effort to resolve rules disputes quickly, fairly, and cooperatively. Unresolvable rules disputes should be brought to the Farm Commissioner.

8. **POST-GAME CONDUCT:** At the conclusion of every game, all managers, coaches and players are expected to line up and congratulate the opposing team for a game well-played. Managers and coaches are expected to set a positive example of good sportsmanship at all times.
9. **REFUSE:** The dugouts are to be left clean and free of debris and equipment at a game's conclusion. It is the responsibility of the managers, coaches and players to remove all refuse from the dugout and playing field at the end of each game.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL RULES AND GAME STRUCTURE

A. ROSTERS AND REGISTRATION

1. **RULES:** All rules apply to the Day, Time and Date games are actually played regardless of when originally scheduled.
2. **REGISTRATION:** Each player must be officially registered through league systems and all fees must be paid or scholarship processed prior to being placed on a team.
3. **COACHES:** Only coaches enrolled as volunteers in Team Sideline and cleared via automatic background check may participate. EBSA may remove coaches if necessary, based on disciplinary or interpersonal concerns.

B. GAME LENGTH

1. **TIME LIMIT:** Games in Farm Division are 6 innings in length with a 90 minute limit (hard stop). No inning may start after 80 minutes from the game's first pitch.
2. **WEATHER AND CONDITIONS:** If there is a darkness or weather concern, umpires will conference with managers to clearly determine if a game will end early and at what point. All attempts should be made to play the complete game.

F. PLAYING TIME RULES

1. **BENCH INNINGS:** No player may sit out for two consecutive innings or for more than a total of two innings per game.
2. **POSITIONS:** Players should be rotated regularly to provide opportunities to play both infield and outfield positions.
3. **POSITION ROTATION GUIDELINES:** Coaches are encouraged to rotate players frequently to support skill development across the field. However, safety, game flow, and competitive balance must be considered when assigning certain positions:
 - a) **FIRST BASE:** Only assign players to first base who can:
 - i. Protect themselves from thrown and batted balls
 - ii. Consistently catch throws of varying velocity to maintain game flow and reduce overthrows

- b) SHORTSTOP AND OTHER INFIELD POSITIONS:** These positions should be rotated when possible. However, coaches must ensure that players are capable of protecting themselves and others before being assigned to these roles.

G. GAME ADMINISTRATION

1. Coaches serve as umpires. The batting team's coaches should umpire in each inning.
2. Umpires should stand **BEHIND** the pitcher so that they may step in quickly to pitch when needed during modified kid pitch innings.
3. All umpire decisions are final
4. Score and results are **NOT** kept at the Farm Level

IV. SAFETY

1. **HELMETS:** Batters, base runners, and on-deck hitters must wear helmets
2. **CATCHING:** We recommend that Farm teams begin with coaches catching and move to kid catchers if/when it is safe to do so based on an individual catcher's skill set. If kids catch, catchers must wear full protective gear provided by the league. This includes a mask, chest protector, and shin guards. We highly recommend cups to be worn at this age for kid catchers.
3. **CATCHING ASSISTANCE:** A coach should assist behind the catcher and return balls to the pitcher on passed balls.
4. **THROWN BAT RULE:**
 - a. Bats are not to be thrown following a swing.
 - b. First occurrence: warning
 - c. Additional occurrences: batter is out
5. **PLAYER CONDUCT AND POSITIONING**
 - a. Players must remain on the bench unless batting, on-deck, running the bases, or in the field
 - b. On-deck hitters must warm up in a designated safe area
 - c. No player not involved in the current play may enter the field during live play
6. **CONTACT AND WEATHER**
 - a. Runners must avoid collisions. Dangerous contact results in an out.
 - b. Play stops immediately at the first sign of lightning or based on communication from the EBSA official on-site per EBSA weather policies.

IV. GAMEPLAY RULES

A. GENERAL

1. **NUMBER OF PLAYERS ON THE FIELD:** Coaches may choose to position either 9 or 10 players in the field, with the 10th player being positioned in the outfield.
2. **UNIFORMS:** Players must wear full uniforms with jerseys tucked in.
3. **WARMUPS:** Teams share the field for warmups

B. BATTING

1. **MAX 8 HITTERS PER INNING:** Each team may bat a maximum of 8 hitters per inning, unless 3 outs are recorded first. After the 8th batter, play ends with no additional advancement of runners or runs scored.
2. **BUNTS:** Bunts are not allowed.

B. COACH PITCH

1. **OVERHAND ONLY:** Coaches must throw overhand only.
2. **FOR BEST RESULTS:**
 - a. Coaches should throw from one knee to match the plane of kid pitch
 - b. Do not lob the ball. This creates an unnecessary and unnatural plane for kid swings. Throw on a straight line.
 - c. Throw slightly faster than you think is needed. It's easier to hit faster/straighter than slower/loopy.
3. **MAX 5 PITCHES:** Maximum of 5 pitches per batter during any coach pitch scenario.
4. **TEE USAGE:** If no fair ball is hit after 5 pitches, the batter may use a tee to put the ball in play.

C. MODIFIED KID PITCH

Safety, consistency, and pace of play should be the primary factors when selecting pitchers. Not all players will be ready to pitch effectively at the Farm level. Coaches should select pitchers who demonstrate basic control to ensure a fair and functional game.

1. **SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR KID PITCHERS:** A player should have a demonstrated ability to throw at least two consecutive strikes or about 40% of their pitches for strikes from the league-designated distance before being assigned to pitch.
2. **GUIDELINES:**
 - a. **INNINGS:** Kid pitch will be used in the 2nd and 5th innings only if teams have athletes able to do so.
 - b. **COUNT:** At-bats begin with kid pitch and counts operate as they would in traditional baseball settings
 - c. **STRIKEOUTS:** Strikeouts CAN occur with kid pitch if a kid successfully throws three strikes as officiated by the coach-ump or if a batter swings and misses.
 - d. **NO WALKS:** There are NO walks at Farm Level (coach takes over after ball four).
 - e. **HIT BATTER:** A hit batter by kid pitch results in the runner being awarded first base
 - f. **COACH INHERITS THE COUNT:** Coach inherits the existing strike count and above tee rule comes into play.
 - g. **UP TO 3 PITCHES:** Coach may throw up to 3 pitches once they step in for a kid pitcher. Above that, keep the game moving.
3. **KID PITCHER LIMITATIONS AND SUBSTITUTION**
 - a. A youth pitcher should be removed for their own physical/emotional protection at 4 walks or 2 hit batters in an inning.

- b. Please make sure that all removal of pitchers is with encouragement and a growth mindset.

D. PLAYERS IN THE FIELD

1. **MAX NUMBER OF FIELDERS:** Each team will play a maximum of eleven players in the field each inning. Ideally, this includes no more than SIX (6) players in the infield including a pitcher position and excluding the catcher.
2. **OUTFIELD POSITIONING:** Outfielders shall play no closer to the infield than the edge of the outfield grass or at least 15 feet behind the infielders.

E. BASERUNNING

1. Runners may not leave the base until contact is made
2. Tagging up on fly balls is allowed
3. Infield hit - advance one base only
4. Outfield play - ball is dead once returned to the infield
5. No advancement on overthrows
6. No infield fly rule

V. EQUIPMENT

1. **USA AND WOOD BATS ALLOWED**
2. **USSSA BATS NOT ALLOWED**
3. **BATTING HELMETS**
 - a. **NO REMOVAL:** Offensive players must not remove their batting helmet at any time while in the field of play, including the on-deck area.
 - b. **PENALTIES FOR REMOVAL:** On the first instance of an offensive player removing their batting helmet while on the field of play, a team warning will be issued. Subsequent violations may result in sanction by the league.

VI. WEATHER

1. Commissioners determine field conditions and will relay cancellations and rescheduling to league coaches.
2. While EBSA will make best efforts to communicate globally, it is the responsibility of coaches to communicate cancellations to their teams.
3. **LIGHTNING WARNING SYSTEM IN SELECT EVANSTON PARKS:**
 - a. The City of Evanston's Recreation Division installed lightning prediction and warning systems at James Park and Robert Crown Park in Spring 2007.
 - b. The warning system measures the surrounding atmosphere's electrostatic energy and warns of an impending lightning strike. If you are in the area of the warning system and conditions favorable to the creation of lightning have been detected, you will hear one 15-second blast of the horn and a strobe light will begin flashing. This signals that you must immediately seek an appropriate, safe shelter. The strobe will continue flashing until safe conditions return.
 - c. You may resume activities only after three 5-second blasts of the horn are sounded and the strobe light stops flashing.
 - d. If you remain outdoors after the warning is issued, you are putting yourself at serious risk.
 - e. The system will operate from 9 am to 10 pm seven days a week from April through November.

4. ADDITIONAL LIGHTNING PROCEDURES

- a. **LIGHTNING WARNING SYSTEM:** The lightning warning system does not need to activate for the 30-minute rule referenced below to take effect. Umpires have been instructed to follow the 30-minute rule regardless of other "all clear" signals.
- b. **THUNDER:** When thunder is heard or a cloud to ground lightning bolt is seen, the storm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play and take shelter immediately.
- c. **30-MINUTE RULE:** Once play has been suspended, wait at least 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard or flash of lightning is witnessed prior to resuming play. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30-minute

count reset the "clock" and another 30-minute count should begin.

5. SHELTER INFORMATION

Not all parks have shelter for heavy weather or large groups.

- a. **JAMES PARK:** Use the Levy Center as a primary shelter, if the field house is open, it may also be used as a shelter. DO NOT use the metal canopy in the concourse as shelter during lighting events.
- b. **ROBERT CROWN:** Use the Robert Crown Center. All players are required to stay under the covered area by the main entrance if not inside the building.
- c. **FOSTER:** If open, use the Fleetwood-Jourdain Center.

VIII. COACH EQUIPMENT RETURN POLICY

A. EQUIPMENT RETURN

1. **AFTER THE SEASON:** Following completion of your last game, the Manager is responsible for making arrangements with the commissioner(s) to return the equipment.
2. **ALL EQUIPMENT MUST BE CHECKED BACK IN:** Regardless of whether you are coaching in the following season, all equipment must be checked back in either via communication, or in person to ensure proper inventory. Missing tees or catcher's gear will incur fees for coaches as detailed in initial welcome notes from commissioners or the league.