

Massachusetts 2020 Baseball Rules Changes

We are now playing NFHS Rules. Below is a summary of the rule changes. For more information, visit the Baseball Page of the MIAA website. This will be updated as needed.

miaa.net → “Sports & Tournaments Tab” → Sport Pages → Baseball → 2020 Baseball Rule Page

Per the MIAA, all leagues at all levels need to follow all NFHS Rules without any adjustments.

HIGHLIGHTS (“TOP TEN” LIST)

1. **Pitch Counts** ~ The official Pitch Count Limitations & Procedures are available on the MIAA baseball site (and attached here) Coaches are required to have someone track the number of pitches that their pitchers and their opponents throw. At the conclusion of each game both coaches will need to sign the official Pitch Count Sheet and keep these with them. The MIAA will email AD’s a PDF of the official sheet that coaches need to fill out
2. **Courtesy Runners**
 - Allowed at any time for pitcher or catcher
 - Runner is tied to position he runs for; a given runner may not run for both pitcher and catcher
 - Anyone who's been in the game may not be a runner; runner may not be sub in same half inning in which he courtesy runs
 - Courtesy runners need to be reported as such. Failure to do so makes them a “normal substitute”
 - Umpires need to record courtesy runners on line-up card
 - Once a player is a courtesy runner for a position, he can only continue to courtesy run for a player in that particular position
 - Case Book Plays are available on the MIAA Website
3. **Designated Hitter (DH) can be used in two ways**
 - The DH can be listed as the tenth starter replacing one of the other nine players when it is their turn to bat. (Same as in the past)
 - The other method is that any one of the starting defensive players can be their own DH (in effect having two positions) within the confines of the rule requirements. Start with a nine-player line-up, one player is listed as possible DH as well. For example: on a line-up card it would say: P/DH. If that player is removed from the defense, they may remain as the DH for the person that took the new defensive spot. This must be designated at the pre-game conference
4. **Complete / Suspended Games**
 - All games that are regulation games (games played through 4 1/2 or five innings) which are stopped by the umpire in chief, are completed games, if not tied or if the home team has had an equal amount of at bats
 - If tied or if the home team has had an unequal amount of at bats, the game will be resumed at the point of stoppage. These games must complete a minimum of 6 1/2 or 7 innings until a winner is declared
 - All games played that are not regulation games (under 4 1/2 innings) which are stopped by the umpire in chief are suspended games and will be resumed from the point of stoppage
 - These are for both regular season and tournament
5. **Conferences**
 - Three defensive conferences per regulation game (no limit per pitcher or per inning)
 - On fourth visit, pitcher must be removed
 - One visit per inning in extra innings, but no roll-over. After the 1st visit, the pitcher must be removed
 - Visit to replace a pitcher is not a charged visit
 - Time out to attend to injured player is not a charged visit
 - 1 offensive conference per inning
6. **Base running**
 - Legal slide or avoid contact
 - Pop-up slides that draw contact are not legal
 - Can't dive over a defender that is standing or kneeling. OK to do so if fielder is lying down
 - Running lane interference – out regardless of the throw
 - Walk – off scoring: All runners must touch the next base

7. Equipment

- All high school catchers will have to have new body/chest protectors beginning January 1, 2020 with the NOCSAE stamp.
- Catcher's helmets need to protect the ears and throat.
- Batter's helmets needed to meet NOCSAE standard at the time of manufacture.
- Baseballs also need to have the NOCSAE stamp.
- Coaches will be asked to verify that all equipment is legal prior to the game
- Bases can be movable, but do not have to be. Bases that stake into the ground are still OK

8. Line-up cards – need to be given to umps at the beginning of the game and list all starters, pitcher/DH designation (if applicable), substitutes, and denote those not eligible to pitch that day

9. No catch-and-carry - If a fielder steps into dead-ball territory with both feet, or falls in dead-ball territory, you have an immediate dead ball

10. Pickoff: The feint to third and then throw to first is allowed

OTHER RULES:

- Umpires do not call out runners if they miss a base or leave early unless there is an appeal
- Check Swing Appeals: Home Plate Ump does not need to check
- Batter's Interference now includes the follow-through
- Strike 3 that catcher doesn't catch. The batter can decide to run to first base until he enters the dugout area
- Batting out of order
 - If a player has batted out of order and there has been a third out of a half-inning, the defensive team must appeal the batting out of order situation before their infielders leave fair territory
 - If they don't do so, the player who had batted out of order becomes legal
 - The next time that team comes up to bat, the batting order picks up with the player listed after the legalized batter
- Batter's Box – 1 vs 2 feet
 - If the pitcher, with a runner on base, stops or hesitates in his delivery because the batter steps out of the box (a) with one foot or (b) with both feet or (c) holds up his hand to request "Time," it shall not be a balk
 - In (a) and (c), there is no penalty on either the batter or the pitcher. The umpire shall call "Time" and begin play anew
 - In (b), a strike shall be called on the batter for violation of 7-3-1. (batter's box rule)
 - In (a), (b) and (c), if the pitcher legally delivers the ball, it shall be called a strike and the ball remains live. Thus, two strikes are called on the batter in (b). If the umpire judges the batter's action to be a deliberate attempt to create a balk, he will penalize according to 3-3-1n. (n. call "Time" or use any command or commit any act for the purpose of causing a balk)
- Obstruction is always a delayed dead ball
- Ball lodged in equipment – dead ball
- The catcher or any fielder is not allowed to use their equipment (mask or hat) to field/touch a pitched ball
- No Fake Tags
- 1 foot in fair territory at the time of pitch (The 1st baseman can hold a runner on base with one foot in foul territory)
- Pitcher from the wind-up can only 2 things – pitch or disengage – can't attempt a pickoff
- Pitcher's legal position on windup: Free foot (or part of) must be behind line extending through front edge of rubber.
- Balks – immediate dead ball
- Hidden Ball – OK as long as no deceit and 5 feet plus from rubber
- 20 seconds to pitch – umpire's discretion (they will not be holding a stop watch)
- Appeals during dead balls are OK now
 - Game ending plays – need to appeal before umps leave field
 - If the offense initiates a play, defense can still appeal
- Substitutions – Same re-entry rules as in the past
- Mercy Rule – 10 after 5 innings. Can stop after 3 innings if both coaches and umps are OK
- OK to finish a game with 8 guys. Must start with 9
- Base coaches (coach or player) – must be in full uniform
- Strike 1 – Strike 2 Rule for ejections: Same as past years
- Dugouts – everyone (including coaches) must be in the dugout during a live ball except for 1 on-deck batter