

American League Baseball - 2026 Rules
Eastern Suburban Youth Baseball League

www.esybl.org

Cambridge, Columbus, Deerfield, Jefferson, Lake Mills, Fall River, Marshall & Waterloo

Revised February 11, 2026

ESYBL MISSION, VISION & VALUES

The Eastern Suburban Youth Baseball League is a multi-community, volunteer-run, recreational baseball league for 3rd - 6th graders. The ESYBL serves the Wisconsin communities of Waterloo, Marshall, Deerfield, Columbus, Jefferson, Lake Mills, Fall River and Cambridge.

MISSION - *Provide a framework, expectations and tools for our communities to deliver a safe, competitive and enjoyable baseball season for all our youth and adult participants.*

VISION - *Utilize our community resources and participant talents to make each season a well organized, fair, and rewarding youth baseball experience.*

VALUES - *The success of the ESYBL will be a result of adhering consistently and honorably to the beliefs we value. To that end:*

- *We understand that the ESYBL is a recreational league, and our players, parents, umpires and coaches are all learning and growing their baseball skills and knowledge throughout each season. ● Respect for each other and good sportsmanship are more important than bending the rules, arguing with umpires, or simply winning games.*
- *Our children will learn lessons far beyond those of baseball while watching the adult behaviors of coaches, parents, umpires, administrators and fans.*
- *The ESYBL commits to fairness, good planning, communication and administration of the baseball season, and listening to the suggestions and ideas of its participants to improve our program each year. ● Young teens in all of our communities benefit from the training, experience and financial benefits the league provides in utilizing them as baseball umpires.*
- *We recognize that the number one reason players play sports is to have fun, and the number one rationale for why players quit sports or any activity is because they are not having fun. Our goal each year is that our youth have fun and elect to continue their baseball experience in future years.*

General Organizational Guidelines for Creation of Teams- *The ESYBL recommends the following care standards to develop even teams in an attempt to create as much of a competitive balance as possible:*

1. Each community must have a process in place that allows for a fair distribution of player talent.

2. Teams should only allow a maximum of one head and one assistant coach when forming teams. In the event that the head/assistant coach have children they are coaching, those players will automatically be assigned to their team and taken in the draft order based on their skill evaluation. If the coach/coaches do not have children in the league, coaches shall be allowed to draft a player of equal skill to the other teams coaches children.

3. Teams may end up with additional assistant coaches after the draft process based on the team that their children were drafted / assigned.

4. It is encouraged that each community share with the ESYBL board their “draft” or selection process.

5. Each community director will have the right to review and approve final team assignments. Key Dates: AL Games are originally scheduled to be played on Tuesdays and Thursdays

Event/Dates for 2026 Season	Date
Start AL Season	Thursday, May 21
Season ½ way point (toss up rule change)	Tuesday, June 16th start new rule
Last date to play and report regular season games	Thursday, July 9th
AL End Of Season Tournament Start Date (T-TH games)	End of season tournament is July 13-23th

Game cancellations due to rain or unplayable fields are decided at the discretion of each local community. Administrators in each community will make every effort to announce cancellations as early as possible to provide ample notice to parents, fans and coaches who are planning to travel to games, but game cancellations must be called no later than 4PM. If the heat index as shown on the <https://www.weather.gov/> web site reads 105 or greater at 3:55PM at your specific game location, league games are canceled. To determine whether games will be played due to rain, call the appropriate community notification numbers after 4:00PM for game status. For heat index cancellations, see the www.esybl.org web site.

Community Rain-Out Numbers	
Cambridge	608-423-8108
Columbus	920-319-0362
Fall River	608-213-9951
Deerfield	608-764-5935
Jefferson	920-674-7720
Lake Mills	www.lakemills.k12.wi.us/recreation/
Marshall	Call the coach
Waterloo	608-206-1418 Corey Powers

1. Banned Items and Carry-Ins Tobacco, alcohol or banned substances are not allowed at or near any ESYBL-sponsored event. If local rules allow for alcohol in specified sheltered areas, local rules will apply. No carry-ins. Concession stands will be open during games to raise funds for local baseball programs.

2. Rules "OFFICIAL LITTLE LEAGUE® RULES" will be in effect to complement ESYBL rules stated here. ESYBL board members and umpire coordinators in each community have Little League rule books.

3. Game Rules and Numbers of Players Required

A. If lightning is present or thunder is heard during a game, the game will be stopped immediately. The game may resume 20 minutes after the lightning was last seen or thunder heard. If a delay has lasted 40 minutes since the initial lightning or thunder delay, or 40 minutes have passed since the scheduled start time, the game shall not be resumed that evening. That status of this game will be determined based upon the rules outlined below in 3.C

B. All games must be played as scheduled, unless postponed due to poor weather, unplayable fields or heat index warnings. There will be no rescheduled games for any other reasons. Home Team coaches are responsible for contacting visiting coaches and rescheduling make-up or postponed games.

C. A game is considered complete after 2 and ½ innings if the home team is leading and after 3 innings if the visiting team is leading. If a game is stopped before it is complete, the suspended game is restarted with the same batter, same score, same runners, and same count as when stopped. Pitcher eligibility remains the same and does not reset for the restarted game. Players not at original game may be included in the restarted game and will be added to the end of the batting order. The restarted game will resume at the time the original game was suspended, and played to the 85 minutes time limit or 6 innings as applicable.

D. If by the game start time, a team is unable to field 8 players for a regularly scheduled AL game, the game will be declared a forfeit and a 1-0 win for the opponent.

E. Any game not made up or completed by the end of the regular season will result in each team being charged with a LOSS in the final standings (used to determine playoff seeding/positioning).

4. Game Time Limit, Procedures, Appeals, Amendments

A. No "10 Run Rule" is in effect for the American League. Games are played to the time limit or completion no matter the score.

B. Head and/or assistant coaches and umpires meet at home plate 5' before the game start time. Prior to starting the game, the home plate umpire calls out the starting time of the game, and the scorekeepers will record the game start time. No new inning will commence after 85 minutes from the game start time. An inning is complete at the exact time the 3rd out or final play of the inning is completed. The running clock time is not interrupted for any reason other than for a significant injury requiring extraordinary medical attention. If the 85 minutes expires during an inning and the home team is leading and batting, the game is over and the inning is not completed. If the 85 minute mark is reached with the visiting team leading (regardless of who is at bat), the inning will be completed even if the outcome of the game can not be altered by the events that might occur that inning.

C. In the event of a tie California rules apply. At the end of 6 complete innings or after the time limit, the game will continue. Each team will start with a runner on 2nd base; that runner will be the batter making the last out in the previous inning. The batter will start with one strike and one ball. The team to score the most runs after both teams have batted will be the winner. If the score is still tied after one inning, the teams will

repeat this extra inning procedure until a team wins.

D. A “6 run per inning” rule is in effect in the American league. If the batting team scores 6 runs before 3 outs are recorded, their at bat ends, irrespective of how many runners score for the final batter.

E. Pitchers will be allowed 5 warm up pitches per inning. Catchers can make a throw to second following the last warm up pitch. Infielders and outfielders are permitted to field and throw between innings and throw balls into the dugout prior to the pitcher’s final warm up pitch. Players will have 1.5 minutes from the time their team makes the third out until their pitcher and fielders are ready to pitch to the opposing team. Umpires will keep track of time and warn coaches if their between inning changeovers take too long.

F. For the ESYBL End of Season Championship game, teams will play a full 6 innings without a time limit. Games are official after 3-innings (see above) in the event of inclement weather, and tie-breaker rules will be in effect in the 7th inning.

G. Coaches, other than two base coaches, must remain in the dugout in an “out of play” location. Coaches and players are not permitted to be behind home plate during game play.

H. No more than 3 coaches and one scorekeeper can be in the dugout during the game. The head coach holds the right to determine what coaches can be in the dugout during the game.

I. There are no appeals to umpires for judgment calls. Judgment calls include balls and strikes tag and force plays in the field as well as those involving the mandatory sliding rule. Coaches may ask umpires for clarification on rules as long as both team’s coaches are involved in the discussion.

J. Rule changes during the season will be handled at the discretion of the ESYBL board.

5. Equipment

A. Metal cleats are not allowed but rubber or plastic spiked shoes are permitted and encouraged.

B. Bats bearing the USA Baseball logo are approved for the 2026 season. Softball, T-Ball bats, and big barrel bats not bearing the “USA Baseball” logo are not acceptable. **If an illegal bat is used, the player will be called out, runs may be reverted back, the player will not be ejected.**

Umpires may inspect bats at any time before or during a game and reserve the right to remove unapproved bats from play.

C. Batting helmets must be worn by all runners, batters, on-deck batters, bat boys/girls, and player coaches. Helmets must be in good and serviceable condition. Face guards are encouraged but are not required.

D. Catchers equipment must be in good and serviceable condition.

E. Players are to be equipped with a glove, protective cup (boys only), and cap. Jerseys should be tucked in at all times when involved in a game.

F. For safety reasons, players will not wear earrings, necklaces, rings, bracelets, bands or watches during games. Pitchers are not allowed to have distracting wristbands, batting gloves, reflective sunglasses or accessories while pitching. White undergarments on any part of the arms extending beneath uniforms are not allowed for pitchers.

6. Batting

A. All players will bat every time their at bat comes up in the lineup during the course of the game. There will be no changes to the batting order unless there is an injury or a player is removed from the game for disciplinary reasons. Batters may not step both feet out of the batter's box during their at bat. An exception to this requirement occurs when safety is an issue, or there is a play at the plate, or an umpire instructs the batter to step out. A batter may step one foot out of the batter's box to collect their thoughts or take a signal from a coach but an umpire has the right to instruct the batter to bat if that batter is causing undue delays.

B. The on deck batter must retrieve the bat from the previous hitter and return it to the dugout. There may be only one player on deck and the player in the hole must wait in their own dugout.

C. On a ground ball or infield hit, the batter must run through the orange or outside bag at 1st base. The fielder will have the white or inside bag for the play to avoid collisions. When the ball goes through to the outfield, the runner will then have a right to the white or inside base to advance toward second base.

D. Unless local rules differ, on deck batters will be situated on the 3rd base on deck circle for right handed batters at the plate, or on the 1st base on deck circle for left handed batters. On deck batters will always be looking at the back of batters to avoid being hit with foul balls. Coaches and umpires should call time and place on deck batters in the correct position should they be facing batters during a game.

E. Bunting is not allowed in the American League. If a player bunts, he/she will be called out and runners will return to their original base positions. A swinging hit that results in a short, soft grounder is not a bunt.

F. There are no walks in the American League for the first half of the season. After ball four is called, a base coach already on the field will soft toss the baseball from a position with both feet completely in foul territory and allow the batter to hit the ball into play. No additional coaches may take the field during toss up plays.

I. For the soft toss, the count remains unchanged and play continues with that count. If the batter misses the ball in the soft toss, or does not swing at a toss up, a strike is called. Coaches will soft toss and put the ball in play without batting instruction or delay. The batter will bat until he/she puts the ball in play or strikes out.

II. If the batter fouls off a soft toss with 2 strikes, he/she will be allowed to continue to bat as normal.

III. Catchers must remain in their regular playing position with their mask on and in "squat" position during the soft toss.

IV. Pitchers must stay in contact with the pitching rubber for the soft toss.

V. For a soft toss up play, the batter cannot advance past first base for any reason, including overthrows. If a batter incorrectly tries to advance a base and a play is attempted to get that runner out, the play immediately is dead and all other runners return back to the base they last passed and the batter returns back to 1st base.

VI. During the soft toss the batter must remain in the batter's box, and have both hands on the bat while attempting to hit the ball. The batter must make a full swinging attempt at the ball. A check swing or half swing at the ball will be called a strike (see bunting rule above). If it is the third strike the batter will be called out.

VII. Runners may advance at their own risk and as far as possible on a soft toss hit ball so long as the ball is in play. Base running may continue for overthrows made on a soft toss play.

VIII. If a batter establishes first base on a soft toss play, but attempts to run to second base, the play will continue but following the completion of the play, the umpire will return the

batter to first base. If other runners advanced due to plays made on the toss up batter advancing past first base, those runners will be returned to their previous bases at the umpire's discretion.

- IX. For the second half of the AL season, walks will be awarded to batters unless a walk would result in a run being walked home. In the event a walk would result in a run scoring (bases loaded), a base coach will soft toss to the batter.
- X. If a batter runs into their own coach after putting a soft tossed ball into play, there is no call. Coaches are responsible for getting out of the way for their players after a soft toss. If, however, it is the umpire's judgment that a coach has obstructed the catcher or any fielder which is making a play on a soft tossed hit, the batter will be called out for coach obstruction and base runners will be returned to their original bases prior to the soft toss play.

G. A bat dropped by the batter following a hit will be the responsibility of the fielding team to remove during the course of play in an attempt to avoid that bat interfering with the ongoing play. An umpire may also assist with this but the responsibility is on the fielding team.

7. Base Running

A. Runners are allowed to steal second or third base on any wild pitch or passed ball behind the umpire, including a ball four pitch. A wild pitch or passed ball is considered any ball 'behind' the outward extended hands of the umpire. If a catcher blocks a wild pitch and keeps the ball to the side or in front of the umpire's extended and outstretched arms, the ruling is a block and a dead ball, and no runners may advance. It does not matter how far away from the catcher the blocked ball goes, as long as it is in front of the umpire's extended and outstretched arms. If runners advance on a blocked wild pitch, the umpire will call time and return the runners to their previously held base. Runners may not advance home on any wild pitches or passed balls. No base runner may advance on any overthrow made by the catcher on an attempted "steal" by the baserunner.

B. All runners on base must immediately return to their base on any pitch not put into play by the batter, unless advancing on a "passed ball". First infraction will result in a team warning. After initial warning, all further instances will result in the runner being called out.

C. There is no dropped 3rd strike rule in the ESYBL. Batters are out after strike 3.

D. Runners may not run into or interfere with any fielder when base running. Runners interfering with a fielder will be called out for interference. A runner purposely making contact or bowling over a fielder or catcher will be immediately called out and ejected from the game, and an out recorded for that spot in the lineup for the remainder of the game. In addition, that player will be suspended for the subsequent league or playoff game.

E. When the fielder has the ball and is waiting to make the tag, the runner has two options:

- Slide or

- Attempt to get around the fielder.

In a situation where the runner does not slide, the runner **MUST NOT accidentally**, deliberately or maliciously contact the fielder, but they are not required to slide. A runner will be called out in any situation where they do not slide if contact occurs between the runner and a fielder resulting in the ball being dropped on a play where the runner would have otherwise been called out as the result of the action.

Coaches should coach their base runners to slide on all close plays to avoid injury, and coach fielders and

catchers to move away from the base or plate if a tag is not possible.

F. Head first slides are not permitted except to dive back to a base. Runners who slide head first for any other reason will be called out.

G. Runners cannot 'lead off' bases during play. Runners may leave the base after the pitched ball passes the plate. If a runner leaves the base too early, the umpire will issue a team warning, and any subsequent runner on that team will be called out if they leave the base too early. If a runner leads off on a play which the batter hits safely, a warning may be issued but there is no penalty.

H. If an umpire observes a runner missing a base while base running, the umpire will allow the play to continue and rule on the missed base when the play is complete. If a runner misses a base and touches the next base, that runner is ruled out. If a runner misses a base and the following runner touches that base, the lead runner is out. Base runners behind a runner missing a base may run at their own risk. There are no appeals on missed base calls.

I. In order to speed play, coaches will utilize courtesy runners for a catcher who has become a base runner when there are two outs. This may occur immediately after the catcher becomes a base runner, or following an out or outs thereafter. The courtesy runner will be the player who made the previous out prior to the catcher's at bat. This rule is mandatory in an attempt to speed up the game. The courtesy runner will be utilized for the player who will be catching in the next half inning.

8. Pitching

A. Pitchers can throw no more than 2 consecutive innings per game. Extra inning games do not allow any pitcher to exceed these restrictions.

B. Pitchers may not re-enter the game as a pitcher once he or she has been relieved or reached their maximum allowed innings.

C. A pitcher who has warmed up has to pitch to at least one batter who will either reach base or record an out. One pitch thrown constitutes an inning pitched for any pitcher.

D. The pitching distance is set at 46 feet from the front of the pitching rubber to the back white point of home base. Pitchers must contact the rubber to start the wind up. Umpires may instruct pitchers to speed up play in the event the pitcher is taking too long a time between pitches.

E. A coach may confer with his/her team or pitcher once an inning. A second conference in any inning must result in a pitching change. **If a conference or timeout is called with 10 minutes or less on the game clock, the game clock will be paused until play resumes.**

F. Catchers and other infielders may not visit the mound to confer with the pitcher, this includes coach visits.

G. Umpires have the right to remove pitchers for any safety reason impacting any player.

H. The strike zone is located from the batter's arm pit to the middle of the bent knees, and in width from any part of the ball crossing the white or black portion of home plate. Umpires will call pitches judged 'in between'

a strike and a ball a strike.

I. Intentional walks are not allowed in the American League.

J. Upon hitting a third batter in any inning, the pitcher will be removed from the pitching position, and may either stay in the game at another position, or be substituted for with a bench player.

K. Curve balls are not allowed by pitchers. A pitcher snapping their wrist to impart spin to the ball will be warned for the first offense, and will be removed as a pitcher for the second offense.

L. Pitchers are not allowed to have distracting wristbands, batting gloves, reflective sunglasses or accessories while pitching. White undergarments on any part of the arms extending beneath uniforms are not allowed for pitchers.

9. Fielding

A. Fielders may not make fake or phantom tags to deceive a runner. If the umpire calls a fake tag, the runner will be allowed to advance one base for runner obstruction.

B. There is no "Infield Fly Rule" in effect for American League games.

C. For safety reasons, catchers or fielders may not block the base path, home plate or bases. without possession of the ball. Blocking will result in the runner being called safe due to obstruction. It is the umpire's judgment whether a fielder or catcher is obstructing a runner. There are no appeals on judgment calls when a fielder or catcher is called for obstruction. Coaches should instruct young first basemen to avoid obstruction and yield to runners rounding first when a ball is hit to the outfield.

D. Coaches may not be on the field to instruct fielders during or between plays. If a conference or timeout is called with 10 minutes or less on the game clock, the game clock will be paused until play resumes.

E. Rover Rule - Four traditional positions should be played in the outfield at all times, rovers are not allowed.

10. Participation, Substitutes, Rosters

A. All players must play a minimum of 2 innings in the field per game. Players may not sit on the bench for more than 2 consecutive innings. This rule applies to all games including games shortened by time limits.

B. Free substitution is in effect throughout the course of the game with the exception of re-entering pitchers.

C. A coach may remove a player from a game for disciplinary reasons. A coach must declare an ineligible player for disciplinary reasons to the plate umpire and opposing coach. Players declared ineligible for disciplinary reasons will be an automatic out in the batting order.

D. If teams have less than 10 players, they may use a player from a pool of registered Coach Pitch players (2nd grade). Teams may pick up Coach Pitch players to have 11 total players and no more. Substitute player(s) may play anywhere in the field and bat in any spot in the batting lineup.

E. American League teams must have 8 players to begin a game. There are 10 positions in the field for the

American League, with 4 outfield positions instead of the usual 3. If after a game starts, a team encounters injuries and has less than 8 players, the team may continue play at the discretion of the coach with the injured players.

F. All players present will be in the batting order and will bat in turn. Players arriving to the team dugout after the first pitch to start a game will be placed at the bottom of the batting order.

G. A player who is injured, becomes ill or leaves the grounds early will be removed from the batting order without penalty. A team will not be charged with an out due to an unoccupied spot in the batting order. H. Any player leaving any game due to a possible concussion must be reported to the umpire and opposing scorekeeper. That player may not re-enter the game under any circumstances and there will be no out recorded for that player in the batting order.

11. Eligibility

A. Leagues are determined by academic year.

B. American League rosters are comprised of players in 3rd & 4th grade. 5th graders are eligible to play in the American League only if their skills and abilities are unsuitable or unsafe for National League play, and they do not confer a competitive advantage to the American League team. It is not acceptable to place 5th grade players in the American League to develop pitching skills.

C. Each community will ensure players are age eligible. Any community who wishes to have a player participate that is not age eligible (as stated in 11.B), shall notify the Board of Directors of the age exception. Any such requests are subject to review and eligibility determination if questions/concerns arise.

D. Once rosters are set in the beginning of the season, players must play for the team assigned. It is not permitted to move players from one AL team to another. If teams have less than 8 players to begin a game, they may use a player from a pool of registered Coach Pitch players. Teams may pick up Coach Pitch players to have 10 total players and no more. Softball players of the same grade/age are acceptable. Substitute player(s) may play anywhere in the field and bat in any spot in the batting lineup.

Lateral player moving- If players are moving between teams and are discovered, the team will automatically forfeit the game.

12. Umpiring and Sportsmanship

A. Immediately prior to the start of each game, umpires and coaches from both teams will meet at home plate to review local ground rules and points of emphasis. At this time coaches will ask umpires to sign their scorebooks for the purpose of providing umpiring feedback following the game.

B. Umpire decisions are final and will be respected by players, coaches and spectators. Judgment calls such as balls and strikes and field calls are not to be challenged by players or coaches. Questions on the interpretation of rules must be asked at home plate with both coaches present.

C. Head coaches for all ESYBL teams are responsible for the sportsmanlike behaviors of their players. Profanity, trash talking and bullying by players is not permitted. For a first offense, umpires will stop the game and warn coaches about the player behavior. A second player offense will result in ejection from the game and an automatic out in their batting spot in the batting order.

D. Head coaches for all ESYBL teams are responsible for the sportsmanlike behaviors of their coaches, players and fans. If a coach or fan uses profanity or demonstrates unacceptable behaviors, the umpire will stop the game and give a first warning to the head coach of the offending team. A second offense by the fan or coach will require that the coach or fan immediately leaves the premises, or the game will be forfeited by the offending team with a 10-0 score.

E. Player, coach or fan ejections will be investigated and reviewed by the local league directors and if necessary, the entire ESYBL board of directors. The ESYBL board of directors reserves the right to exclude

participation of any player, coach or fan, or to declare game or season forfeits in extreme situations.

F. Each game shall have two umpers unless for unforeseen circumstances. One umpire may call the game as long as that umpire has two or more years of experience. That umpire then can call the game on their preference of either behind home plate or behind the pitcher's mound. They MAY NOT call pitches and strikes behind 2nd base.

13. Reporting Scores, End of Season Tournament, and Trophies

A. The coach of either the winning or losing team will report the final score at www.esybl.org within 24 hours after the game has been completed. In the event a game is suspended or postponed, coaches are asked to report the game as 0-0 score to indicate the game has not been completed. In the event games are not posted in a timely manner, the board of director representatives from each community will be asked to facilitate game score posting. Any scores not reported by the last day of the regular season will not be included in the team Won/Loss record.

B. An end of season tournament will be held. Seeding of teams for the tournament will be based on regular season records. Any game not made up or completed by the last date for regular season games will result in each team being charged with a LOSS in the final standings. Team seeds are automatically updated on the www.esybl.org website with the following rules: **UPDATED: HEAD TO HEAD, RUNS ALLOWED, RUNS SCORED FOR TIE BREAKERS** In no circumstance should any team attempt to run up a score to obtain a seeding advantage. For the championship game only, there is no time limit and the game will be played 6 innings or under the rain completion rules above.

C. Trophies and/or Medals will be awarded to teams for the end of season tournament as determined by the Board of Directors.

D. An end of season team sportsmanship plaque will be awarded to the team voted by peer coaches to have demonstrated the best overall sportsmanship for players, coaches and fans during the season.