
Twenty Questions on the Pitch Count

The following are the twenty most commonly asked questions regarding the baseball "pitch count" regulation that takes effect in the 2007 season. This information was extracted from "Protecting Young Arms," a Little League publication available through <http://www.littleleague.org/>.

1. Why has Little League changed the pitching regulation for all baseball divisions?

Recently, researchers and medical professionals in the field of sports medicine have determined that the actual number of pitches thrown (i.e., pitch count) is a safer way to regulate pitching in youth baseball. Little League has a rich history of pioneering baseball safety innovations. As the world's largest organized youth sports program, Little League is again taking a leadership position in youth sports safety.

2. How will a league determine who is responsible for counting the pitches?

Selecting the person responsible for counting pitches will be a decision of each local league. That person's pitch count will be the officially recognized pitch count for the game.

In most leagues, this responsibility will rest with the game's official scorekeeper. In that case, a scorekeeper already keeps track of the balls and strikes on each batter, so he or she will additionally need to keep track of the number of foul batted balls that are hit with two strikes. Each pitcher's pitch count is computed by adding the number of balls and strikes, the number of foul balls hit with two strikes, and the number of fair batted balls.

Other leagues might assign a separate person who simply keeps track of every pitch on a piece of paper. Little League International will provide local leagues with a suggested form for this in the coming months. Leagues also can use any of the various digital or mechanical pitch counting tools that are available commercially. Still other leagues might assign the task to one or both of the managers, or to one of the base umpires.

3. What is the penalty for violating the pitch count regulation?

Violating the regular season pitch count regulation can be protested in accordance with Rule 4.19. As with all regular season games, the local league (by action of the local league Board of Directors through the Protest Committee) resolves all protests. The local league Protest Committee could decree a forfeit, or not, as it sees fit. The Board of Directors also could suspend or remove managers who willfully and persistently violate any rule or regulation.

4. What is the procedure for Inter-League Play games?

As with any procedure of this nature, the Inter-League Play Committee (formed from among personnel in the leagues involved before the start of the season) should decide this. The procedure for counting pitches should be agreed upon between all leagues involved in an inter-league arrangement before the first game is played.

5. What is meant by "calendar days" in the regulation?

The principle of "calendar days" remains the same. A calendar day is one full day as it is seen on a calendar. A calendar day begins at midnight and ends at midnight the following evening.

Example: If a pitcher in the Little League Major Division throws 70 pitches in a game on Saturday morning, that pitcher cannot pitch again until Wednesday, when he/she has had three calendar days of rest (Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday). It makes no difference what time of day the pitcher pitched on Saturday, as the rest period does not begin until midnight that night.

6. Can the same pitcher throw in consecutive games?

Yes, depending on the number of pitches thrown and the days of rest, the same pitcher could pitch in consecutive games (regular season).

7. Can the same pitcher pitch in both games of a doubleheader played on the same day? What about a partial game (such as a continuation of a suspended game) and a full game later in the day?

No, in both cases. The regulation specifically forbids a player from pitching in two games in one day. It does not matter if one of the two games is only part of a game. (Exception: In Big League Baseball, a player may pitch in up to two games in a day.)

8. Why do 7 and 8 year olds have the same pitch limits as 9-10 year olds?

The medical and expert advice Little League received shows that these age groups are essentially the same.

9. Could our local Little League place further restrictions on pitching in the Minor Divisions?

Yes, a local league could further limit the number of pitches that can be thrown by a player in the Minor League.

10. If a pitcher is pitching a perfect game or no hitter and reaches his or her maximum pitch count, does he or she have to be removed as a pitcher, or can he or she continue until the perfect game or no hitter is lost?

Any pitcher, without regard to his or her effectiveness, must be removed when he or she reaches the limit prescribed in the regulation. Remember, no game is more important than protecting pitchers' arms.

11. Is the pitch count regulation mandatory in all divisions of baseball? What about softball?

The regulation applies to all baseball divisions of Little League. It does not apply to and cannot be used in softball.

12. Is there a limit to the number of 12-year-olds that can pitch in a week?

No. A manager may use as many 12-year-old pitchers in a week as he or she chooses.

13. Can 12 year olds pitch in the minors?

No. The regulation prohibits 12-year-olds from pitching in the Minor Division. The Minor Division must be considered an instructional division for players who, because of age or ability, are not placed in the Major Division. It should be the goal of every league to place all 12-year-olds in the Major Division who are capable of playing at that level.

Note: A local Little League is limited to only one Major Division, but may have multiple levels of Minor Division play (player pitch, coach pitch, machine pitch, etc.).

14. Are warm up pitches calculated in the pitch count for a pitcher?

No. As always, however, umpires should be mindful that the rules permit a returning pitcher to have only eight preparatory pitches, or one minute, whichever comes first. (See Rule 8.04.)

15. If a Major Division pitcher has completed six innings in a game, and the game is tied, will that pitcher be permitted to pitch in the seventh inning if he or she has not reached the limit?

Yes. There is no limit to the number of innings a pitcher can pitch in a day. A limit is placed on the number of pitches only.

16. Is the Tournament Pitching Rule the same as the regular season regulation?

The Tournament Pitching Rule is similar to the regular season rule, but there are some modifications.

17. Last year, the Pitch Count Pilot Program was optional. Is it optional in 2007?

No. All leagues in Little League must use the new Pitch Count Regulation in all divisions of baseball.

18. Will local leagues have the ability to continue to provide feedback to Little League International regarding the new pitch count regulation?

Absolutely. As with any rule or regulation of Little League, local leagues and districts are encouraged to provide feedback through the regional office. This feedback is valuable in determining what, if any, changes need to be made.

19. Does this mean a pitcher could pitch in two games in a “calendar week.”

Yes, but the concept of the calendar week is no longer in use. Here’s why: A pitcher under the previous regulation could have pitched six innings (potentially 150 or more pitches) on a Saturday, and after three days of rest, could have pitched on Wednesday for six more innings (and potentially more than 150 pitches). That’s a potential total of 300 or more pitches in a five-day period.

Under the new regulation, the same pitcher could pitch on Tuesday (but no more than 85 pitches), and, after three days of rest, could pitch on Saturday (again, no more than 85 pitches). That’s a potential of no more than 170 pitches in a five-day period.

20. What about breaking pitches (curve balls, sliders, etc.)?

As of now, there is no solid medical evidence that these pitches are detrimental. However, Little League and many experts recommend they not be thrown until age 14. Little League International is currently conducting an epidemiological study on this issue to see if these pitches are harmful.