

The Ephrata Invitational Wiffle® Ball Tournament

Official Game Rules

1. General Game Rules

- Rule 1.1** For regulation play, each half inning consists of three (3) recorded outs. Three (3) strikes is an out (except for fouled third strikes), and four (4) balls is a walk.
- Rule 1.2** A regulation game consists of four (4) innings, unless extended because of a tie score, or shortened (a) because the home team needs none of its half of the fourth inning or only a fraction of it, (b) the 45-minute time limit has expired, or (c) the “fifteen-run” or “ten-run” rule has taken effect.
- Rule 1.2.1** If the score remains tie after the completion of four (4) innings, an extra inning will be played. If the game remains tied after the extra inning, a “Pitch-to-your-own-team” tie-breaking procedure will be used. In this format, each team will choose a player to pitch to his/her own teammates following the declared batting order at the start of the game, excluding the person pitching. For the rookie circuit, the seven (7) player batting order is applied to this rule in the same manner. There will be one (1) pitch per hitter and no defense. Normal base running and hitting rules will apply. The team that scores the most runs after the completion of their entire batting order wins the game. In the event of a tie score following this format, a different pitcher should be selected by each team and the process continued until a winner is determined.
- Rule 1.2.2** If, at the conclusion of the first full inning, the away team is winning by fifteen (15) or more runs, a “Fifteen-Run Rule” will take effect and the game will be considered final. If the home team is winning by fifteen (15) or more runs at any point of the first inning, the same rule will take effect. A “Ten-Run Rule,” using the same criteria, will be applied to the second and third innings of play.
- Rule 1.2.3** There will be a forty-five (45) minute time limit imposed on all games. “Time limit” is defined as the expiration of forty-five minutes prior to regulation play or the extra inning being completed. Should an inning, regulation or extra, begin before the end of the time period and carry beyond the time limit, the inning will be played in its entirety. Time starts after the captains’ “bat toss” conference. In the event that a game is tied when the time limit expires, we will immediately begin, and follow, the “Pitch-to-your-own-team” tie-breaking procedure stated in Rule 1.2.1.
- Rule 1.3** Each team will be given five (5) minutes from the scheduled starting time to report or a forfeit will be ruled. Teams should plan on being at their designated “field location” fifteen (15) minutes before the scheduled game time.

Rule 1.4 Each Junior and Senior Circuit team's batting order consists of six players (the five (5) defensive players and an extra hitter). A game may be started with five (5) players with the "open" spot in the batting order becoming an automatic out each time that spot is due up in the batting order. If a rostered-player arrives after the game has officially begun (defined as "first pitch having been thrown to a batter"), that player may assume his/her position in the batting order.

Each Rookie Circuit team's batting order consists of seven (7) players (the six (6) defensive players and an extra hitter). A game may be started with six (6) players with the "open" spot in the batting order becoming an automatic out each time that spot is due up in the batting order. If a rostered-player arrives after the game has officially begun (defined as "first pitch having been thrown to a batter"), that player may assume his/her position in the batting order.

Each Adult Circuit team's batting order consists of five (5) players (the five (5) defensive players), and may include an additional sixth spot in the order for an extra hitter. **NOTE:** If an Adult Circuit game goes beyond the extra inning and into the "Tie-Breaking Procedure" and one team has a five-man batting order, and the other team has a six-man order, the team with a five-man order may choose to have one of its batters bat twice.

Rule 1.5 Each registered team in the tournament may carry an additional "reserve" player on its roster. The role of the reserve player is to (a) become activated as a substitute during the course of a game if one of the players listed on the official batting order is incapable of continuing their participation due to injury, illness, or prior engagement; or (b) become activated prior to a game's start due to the absence of another rostered player. A reserve player may not participate on another team's roster. Additionally, a reserve player may not be added to a team's roster once the tournament begins. **NOTE:** A reserve player may not be activated during the course of a game to replace an ejected player.

Rule 1.6 There will be five (5) players on defense for all Junior, Senior and Adult Circuit games. Defensive teams must have one (1) catcher (who is positioned behind the strike zone), one (1) pitcher, and three (3) fielders who may be positioned anywhere in fair territory. A team's "extra hitter" cannot play defense.

There will be six (6) players on defense for all Rookie Circuit games. Defensive teams must have one (1) catcher (who is positioned behind the strike zone), one (1) pitcher, and four (4) fielders who may be positioned anywhere in fair territory. A team's "extra hitter" cannot play defense.

- Rule 1.6.1** No gloves are allowed and no hats may be used by any member of the defense to field a batted or thrown ball.
- Rule 1.7** Walls in foul territory are out of play and are ruled dead immediately upon contact with a batted ball and are counted as foul ball strikes.
- Rule 1.8** Any batted ball that hits any portion of the ceiling (or apparatus attached to it) considered to be over the field of play is declared an out. The “field of play” will be clarified prior to the start of each game at the captain’s “bat toss” conference.
- Rule 1.10** Players must sit together on the bench when not in the field. No players are allowed to be “on deck”.
- Rule 1.11** Inappropriate language (swearing, taunting) or throwing of equipment (specifically, the bat) will not be tolerated. The penalty will be an ejection from the tournament.
- Rule 1.12** The official Wiffle® brand is the only authorized bat and ball to be used in competition.
- Rule 1.13** Each team’s designated captain (as documented on the official “Team Registration Form”) will be considered the acting “manager” for each game. Starting line-ups, submitting official batting orders, pitching rotations, and rule clarifications must be completed by the team captain. No other player or person can be authorized to perform these duties.
- Rule 1.14** A “bat toss” will be used at the start of each game to determine the home and away team. Any member of the team can act as the team’s representative for the bat toss.

2. Pitching Rules

- Rule 2.1** Each team’s captain must document their “starting pitching” rotation and “relievers” using the official line-up card and submit it to the official scorekeeper prior to the start of the game.
- Rule 2.2** A different pitcher must start each inning of regulation play.
- Rule 2.2.1** No player may start an inning, and then re-enter as a reliever in regulation play. Therefore, once a pitcher is used, as a starter or as a reliever, that player is no longer eligible to pitch during regulation.

- Rule 2.2.2** If the extra inning is needed to determine a winner, all pitchers “regain” eligibility to pitch. Therefore, any pitcher designated as a “starter” on the official line-up card may start the inning. However, relief appearances will be limited only to the “four consecutive walk” rule.
- Rule 2.3** Following the start of the game, the team captain is responsible for announcing all pitching changes to the official scorekeeper.
- Rule 2.4** Once a player becomes the pitcher of record, that player is required to finish a time at bat before the team can make an official pitching change. An “intentional walk” constitutes a time at bat.
- Rule 2.5** If a pitcher walks four (4) consecutive batters, one of the designated “relief pitchers” must be brought in to the game. Once that pitcher has made a relief appearance, he is no longer eligible to enter the game as pitcher during regulation play.
- Rule 2.6** Any designated “reliever” may make a relief appearance at any point during regulation play following the completion of the opponent’s first time at bat.
- Rule 2.7** The pitcher must pitch from the rubber placed between the tape marks and must “pivot” to throw the ball. Walking or running starts are prohibited.
- Rule 2.8** Any type of pitch is allowed except a ball with a foreign substance placed on it (i.e., spit, Vaseline, etc.)
- Rule 2.9** A strike will be any pitch that hits the net on the inside of the strike zone frame. A pitch that hits the frame before entering the net is a strike. A ball that hits anything else, (except the bat) before hitting the netting is a ball (i.e., the batter, the floor, the catcher’s hand).
- Rule 2.10** A hit batter will be a “ball” unless the umpire rules the batter did not attempt to get out of the way and interfered with the ball becoming a strike. If so, it would then be called a strike.
- Rule 2.11** An intentional walk may be made by the pitcher telling the umpire, “I am walking the batter,” or the team captain announcing “We are walking the batter.” If this walk occurs within a series of four consecutive walks, a relief appearance is required.
- Rule 2.11.2** An opponent’s batter may only be intentionally walked once a game.

3. Hitting Rules

Rule 3.1 Each player must use an official Wiffle® brand bat. The bat may be taped for decorative purposes, but its natural shape may not be altered (umpires will judge if a bat is legal prior to the start of the game). No other alterations or modifications may be made. Two hands must be on the bat when swinging.

Rule 3.2 The batter should remain in the designated batter's boxes during the time at bat. If a player is judged to be standing outside of the batter's boxes at the point of contact with the ball, the umpire may issue a warning. If a player has already received a warning, the umpire may rule that illegal contact with the ball has been made with the result being ruled an out.

Rule 3.3 "Roundies" rules will apply.

- **Single** Any batted ball that goes beyond the "Hit Line" markings in the air or on the ground.
- **Double** Any batted ball that hits the wall on the ground or in the air between the designated marks and cones (a hit cone is a double) or that bounces over the "Home Run Line."

If a batted ball is touched by a defensive player beyond the "Hit Line" and is not contained in fair territory, and before coming to rest is judged to be out of play (i.e., crossing over into another field of play, touching the bleachers, rolling into the scorer's table, etc.) the batted ball will be ruled a "ground rule double."
- **Triple** Any batted ball that hits the wall on the ground or in the air between the designated marks and cones.
- **Home Run** Any batted ball that hits the wall in fair territory, in the air, over the designated "Home Run Line;" or any ball that clears a fence in fair territory.

Rule 3.4 Any ball which is going to travel over the "Home Run Line" or fence that is batted back into play by a fielder without being caught and before it makes contact with the wall will be ruled a double.

Rule 3.5 A fair fly ball, with a runner on third base and less than two outs that hits the any portion of the ceiling or apparatus attached to it may become a sacrifice fly scoring opportunity if the captain of the offensive team declares, ***“We are sending the runner.”*** A defensive player then has the opportunity to throw out the runner at home by standing in the location directly below where the umpire ruled the ball hit the ceiling. If the throw goes into the strike zone netting and remains there, the runner will declared out at home. Otherwise, the run safely scores.

Rule 3.5.1 If the offensive team says nothing immediately after the ball has been retrieved from hitting the ceiling (umpires should use the “5-second rule”), then the runner is assumed to have held at third.

Rule 3.6 Bunting with the intention of getting a base hit is prohibited.

Rule 3.7 To sacrifice bunt with the intention of advancing a base runner, a player must pivot or square around at the plate and then bunt the ball so that it remains in fair territory. A sacrifice bunt will advance all runners one base. **NOTE:** The defense may not make a “double play” attempt on a batter that has attempted to bunt.

Rule 3.7.1 If third base is occupied, the bunt will be considered a “squeeze.” If the ball is missed on the attempted bunt and stays in the strike zone netting, the runner will be declared out at home. If the ball does not stay in the netting, the runner safely remains at third.

4. Fielding Rules

Rule 4.1 A hit ball must be “contained” in fair territory and before it crosses the designated “Hit Line” to be considered a put out.

Rule 4.1.1 If a ball is touched by a defensive player and not contained in fair territory without crossing the designated “Hit Line,” the batted ball will be declared a foul ball.

Rule 4.2 A player is considered to be out of play and thus is prohibited from recording a put out if he/she enters into the bleachers prior to catching a batted ball. However, if it is determined that a player’s momentum carried him/her into the bleachers after the catch has been recorded, or the player is ruled to be “falling into the bleachers” while attempting to make a play on a batted ball, a player may enter the bleacher area to record a put out. The act of juggling the ball prior to securing it for a put out is considered to be “attempting to make a

catch.” There is no subsequent penalty for catching a ball and entering into the bleacher area.

Rule 4.3 A ground ball that is fielded cleanly (without a bobble) in front of the “Hit Line” with runners on first, first and second, bases loaded, or first and third, and with less than two outs may be turned into a traditional double play if the fielder immediately throws the ball into the strike zone netting and the ball remains there. There is no penalty for attempting to “turn” a double play by throwing and missing the strike zone.

Rule 4.3.1 With the bases loaded it becomes a home-to-first double play. In all other situations, the traditional double play will consist of runners being put out at second and first base and without any other runners advancing one base.

Rule 4.4 Fielder’s choice ground balls always get the lead runner out.

5. Base Running Rules

Rule 5.1 “Ghost runners” will be used at all times and will advance the number of bases according to the type of hit.

- Example 1 With a man on first, a single will send the base runner to second base.
- Example 2 With a man on second, a single will send the base runner to third base, or a double will advance the runner two bases and score the runner.

Rule 5.2 A team can successfully steal **second base** once a game. To do this, the team that is batting needs to declare to the umpire and the opposing team, **“We are stealing second base.”** If the batter takes a pitch or swings and misses and the pitched ball stays in the strike zone netting, the runner shall be declared “caught stealing” and is ruled out. If the batter takes the pitch or swings and misses and the pitched ball does not stay in the strike zone netting, the runner successfully steals second base. If the batter swings and gets a hit during the attempted steal (a “hit and run”), the advancing runner will be awarded third base.

Rule 5.2.1 A team may attempt an unlimited amount of stolen bases prior to a successful steal; however, once a team has successfully stolen second base, they may no longer make a steal attempt.

Rule 5.3 A pinch runner may be used once per team, per game. The team at bat needs to declare to the umpire and the opposing team, ***“We are pinch running for the base runner on _____ base.”*** In the event of a hit, the pinch runner advances one base beyond what a normal base runner would advance. This advantage continues until that runner either scores, is forced out, or the inning is completed. Once the pinch running advantage expires, this option is no longer available to a team. The pinch running advantage does not affect the batting order, and once that option is exhausted, normal base running rules resume for the remainder of the game.

6. Championship Round

Rule 6.1 All circuit championship games will be decided by a one game, “winner takes all” format. Therefore, once two teams have made it into the finals, either through the double-elimination format or otherwise, only one game will be played to determine the circuit champions. More specifically, in the double-elimination format, a team with no losses entering the championship, will be declared the “runner-ups” for the circuit with a single loss in the finals.

Rule 6.2 In circuits using a double-elimination format, the undefeated team entering the championship game will be declared the home team.

7. Umpires and Scorekeepers

Rule 7.1 There will be at least one umpire and one official scorekeeper present for each game.

Rule 7.2 The team captain should report the starting line-up, including the batting order and the pitching rotation/relievers, using the official line-up card prior to the start of the game.

Rule 7.3 The official scorer will keep track of all plays, outs, where runners are located on base, and pitching changes.

Rule 7.4 Team captains shall seek clarification of rules prior to the start of a game.

Rule 7.5 Any situation not covered by the “The Ephrata Invitational Wiffle® Ball Tournament Official Game Rules” will be handled by the commissioner and his committee.