

**MANITOWOC COUNTY YOUTH SPORTS, INC.
YOUTH BASEBALL PROGRAM**

2026 PONY LEAGUE RULES

*******SPECIAL NOTE: Unless noted in this document, all league rules are to follow the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Baseball Rules Book. Reference <http://www.nfhs.org/>.**

Additions or clarifications to rules for 2026 are in bold block font. Deletions to rules for 2026 are struck out.
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I. ORGANIZATION

1. All entries for teams desiring to play in the Pony League must submit entry by the date established at the Annual Spring Meeting each year.
2. An official master schedule with designated Pony League regular season game dates and starting times will be released no later than one day after the Annual May Coaches Scheduling Meeting each year.
3. Pony League regular season games will be generally played on Tuesday evenings.
 - a. Any team may, by mutual agreement with the opposing team, change the date or time of play if necessary. Postponed games should be made up in good faith and in a timely manner. The Pony League Commissioner must be notified of the change.
 - b. Teams must schedule make-up games within 2 (two) weeks after postponement due to weather or other conflict. If a new date and time cannot be agreed upon, teams are directed to work with the Pony League Commissioner to facilitate rescheduling. If they are not scheduled within this time, a request may be filed by one of the teams with the Pony League Commissioner regarding forfeiture.
 - c. If one team does not show or is not ready to play 15 (fifteen) minutes after the designated starting time, a forfeit can be requested from the Pony League Commissioner.
 - d. A team failing to field 9 (nine) players at game time shall forfeit the game.
 - e. All forfeits in this rule must be presented to, and granted by, the Pony League Commissioner.
4. A Pony Tournament may be scheduled upon the completion of the regular season. A Pony Tournament will be structured as follows:
 - a. Team participation in the Tournament is voluntary.
 - b. Tournament bracket structure and seeding will be set by the Pony League Commissioner, but will be generally based upon regular season record.
 - c. Member Communities may bid on hosting the Pony Tournament Championship Games at the Annual May Coaches Scheduling Meeting.

- i. Pony Tournament championship games may be bundled with other League Tournament championship games.
 - ii. If multiple bids are received, the games shall be awarded to the Community with the longest time passing since last hosting.
 - iii. In case of a tie, a random drawing of bidding Communities will determine the winner.
 - d. In Tournament championship games for first/second or third/fourth places, establishing Home Team is by means of the flip of a coin - heads or tails.
 - e. If any team fails to show up for their scheduled first/second or third/fourth place championship games at the appropriate tournament site and date the MCYS would:
 - i. Impose a fine of \$500 (five hundred dollars) which would be paid by the Community who the team plays for and paid to the MCYS Treasurer. This monetary amount would be then given back to the community hosting the tournament.
 - ii. All MCYS awards acquired during the year would be forfeited.
 - iii. Penalties in this rule must be approved by the Steering Committee.
5. The following dimensions shall apply for the layout of the ball diamonds for Pony games:
 - a. Base path distance - 75 (seventy-five) feet.
 - b. Pitcher's mound distance - 54 (fifty-four) feet (this distance is from the front of the pitching rubber to the rear point of home plate).
 - c. Starting in 2020, an emphasis shall be placed on batter's & catcher's boxes being properly marked to start any Pony game. If they are not marked, or if the lines have been removed by normal play, the Home Plate Umpire's judgement shall apply to whether the batter or catcher is positioned correctly relative to the batter's or catcher's box, for all plays. See Appendix B for dimensions.
6. All Pony regular season and tournament (non-championship) games shall be 7 (seven) innings duration, unless tied. If weather or darkness interferes with play so that the game is called (ended) by the umpire, it is a regulation game:
 - a. If 5 (five) full innings have been played, or if the home team has scored an equal or greater number of runs in four or four and a fraction turns at bat.
 - b. If play has gone beyond 5 (five) full innings. If the game is called when the teams have not had an equal number of completed turns at bat. The score shall be the same as it was at the end of the last completed inning; except that if the home teams are in its half of the incomplete inning scores a run (or runs) which equals or exceeds the opponents score, the final score shall be as recorded when the game is called.
 - c. If a game is called before completion of the number of innings and conditions as specified above, the umpire shall declare the contest "no game". A "no game" shall be rescheduled, to be replayed from the beginning.
 - d. Any game that is tied at the end of 4 ½ (four and one-half) or at least 5 (five) full innings when the game is called, shall be a suspended game. Game shall

be rescheduled. The official score book is used to restart the game where it ended.

7. All Pony regular season and tournament (non-championship) games shall have the following run rule limits.
 - a. The game shall end when the visiting team is behind 10 (ten) or more runs after 4 ½ (four and one-half) innings or after the 5th (fifth) inning, if either team is 10 (ten) runs behind and both teams have had an equal number of times at bat.
 - b. A 20 (twenty) run rule lead after 3 (three) complete innings shall constitute a complete ball game upon mutual agreement by both coaches.
8. There is no run rule limit for MCYS Tournament Pony championship games. Any MCYS Tournament Pony championship game shall be a 7 (seven) inning game unless tied, or unless called before 7 (seven) innings by agreement of both managers.
9. Lightning or thunder protocols during games shall be per NFHS Guidelines on Handling Practices and Contests during Lightning or Thunder Disturbances (see Appendix A). It is recommended that practices use these same protocols.

II. EQUIPMENT

1. Steel spikes are **NOT ALLOWED**. Any player actively listed in the lineup found wearing steel spikes after the first pitch is thrown shall be removed from the game immediately and **SHALL NOT** be allowed to participate in the present game that is in progress. Any player not in the active lineup found wearing spikes shall change them immediately before the player can be eligible to participate in the game.
2. All players shall wear baseball caps with the exception of the catcher, who must wear a full plastic cap along with a catcher's mask.
3. Players shall wear a full protective helmet while batting and running the bases. (This means a helmet equipped with earflaps).
4. The official ball for the Pony League will be determined each year at the Officer's, Director's, and Commissioner's Meeting. 1 (one) dozen balls are supplied with each team entry. See the General Commissioner to purchase additional balls from MCYS inventory, or to obtain the official ball make and model for purchase elsewhere.
5. The use of any bat meeting the following specifications is legal, however, if used, it must be intact. Any change in the basic form of the bat causes it to be outlawed.
 - a. In diameter at thickest part (wood or non-wood) - 2 5/8 (two and five-eighths) inches or less.
 - b. In length (wood or non-wood) - 36 (thirty-six) inches or less.
 - c. In weight (wood or non-wood) - A bat shall not weigh, numerically, more than 10 (ten) ounces less than the length of the bat. Example: a 33 (thirty-three) inch long bat cannot be less than 23 (twenty-three) ounces.

- d. All wood or non-wood bats must have a safety grip of cork, tape, or composite material. The grip must extend a minimum of 10 (ten) inches but not more than 18 (eighteen) inches from the handle of the bat. Slippery tape or similar material shall be prohibited.
- e. All wood bats shall meet the Batted Ball Coefficient of Restitution (BBCOR) performance standard and such bats shall be labeled with a silk screen or other permanent certification mark.
- f. No foreign substance may be added to the surface of the bat 18 (eighteen) inches from the end of the handle.

III. ROSTERS (PLAYERS-RESTRICTIONS)

1. To be eligible to play in the Pony League, a player may not reach his/her 15th birthday before June 1st of the current year.
 - a) Any appeal for an age or other MCYS roster exemption must be submitted to the MCYS Steering Committee before the Annual May Coaches Scheduling Meeting.
 - b) Pony League participation is open to both boys and girls, defined as male (boys) or female (girls) as indicated on the child's birth certificate.

2. No player may participate in this program unless they have a current liability form on file with the MCYS. A player is not eligible to participate in any game until a current liability form is properly filed with the Pony League Commissioner.
 - a) Penalty for using a player that does not have a current liability form properly filed will be forfeiture of those games played. Penalties in this rule must be approved by the Steering Committee.

3. No players shall change from one Pony team to another after the start of the season. Before the first league game is played, a roster is to be filed with the Pony League Commissioner. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of all games played until such roster is filed.
 - a. Players can be added to a roster at any time during the regular season. A player is not eligible to participate in any game until they have been added to the official roster. Penalty for using a player that has not been added to the official roster will be forfeiture of those games played.
 - b. Penalties in this rule must be approved by the Pony League Commissioner.
 - c. The number of players on a roster will be limited to 18 (eighteen) players.

4. Players are generally limited to play on one team and one league only within the MCYS program to give as many players as possible an opportunity to play.
 - a. Starting in 2020, Pony players that are currently eligible and actively playing on an MCYS Pony Team, may also play on an MCYS Colt Team. To be eligible for this special roster exemption, players must be registered to play on Pony and Colt teams from the same community, and must have reached their 14th (fourteenth) birthday by June 1st of the current year. This special roster exemption will apply for the regular season, and for tournament play.

- b. Starting in 2020, each Pony Team Roster may have up to 3 (three) players that are currently eligible and actively playing on an MCYS Peewee Team. To be eligible for this special roster exemption, players must be registered to play on Peewee and Pony teams from the same community, and must have reached their 11th (eleventh) birthday by June 1st of the current year. This special roster exemption will apply for the regular season, and for tournament play.
5. To be eligible for tournament play, players must have a current liability form on file and must be on the official roster in the Pony League Commissioner's possession before July 1st. Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the Steering Committee.
6. Note: There are no residency rules for all Leagues starting in 2017.

IV. BASERUNNING

1. The Manitowoc County Youth Sports will adopt the National Federation of State High School Association Rules (NFHS).
2. It is recommended that all managers instruct the base runners that have run past first base and have not made a break or started for second base, to return to first base via foul territory so there is no question as to the runner's intent.
3. If a ball is being returned to the pitcher and is mishandled, runners **may** advance at their own risk.
4. Pony League play shall be subject to the NFHS baseball ground rules concerning overthrows
5. If a defensive player, in a force out situation has already touched the base and **is no longer in the base line**, the runner shall not go out of the baseline in an attempt to make contact with the defensive player. If such contact is, in the opinion of the umpire, malicious or flagrant, the runner's interference also prevented an out on the batter-base runner; the umpire shall declare the batter-runner out. ***(Special emphasis should be placed on double play situations where the rule will apply!)***
6. If a runner stands up and runs into a defensive player, the runner will be declared out for the interference. If such contact is, in the opinion of the umpire, malicious or flagrant, the runner's interference also prevented an out on the batter-base runner; the umpire shall declare the batter-runner out. ***(Special emphasis should be placed on double play situations where this rule will apply!)***
7. No base runner shall, upon seeing the catcher or another defensive player who has the ball waiting for the runner, deliberately and with great force, crash into the defensive player in hopes of jarring the ball loose. The umpire shall declare such runner out, and if in the umpire's opinion, it is flagrant act; the runner shall be ejected from the game.
8. For Appeal Process, see NFHS rules.

V. BATTING

1. In Pony League play, any of the 9 (nine) starting players may withdraw and re-enter the game once, provided such player occupies the same batting order spot whenever he/she is in the line-up. The original substitute player must be removed and may not re-enter the game. A substitute who replaces the pitcher whose team is not at bat, shall pitch to the first opponent to bat against them until that batter has advanced to a base or has been put out or until a 3rd out has been registered. *(Exception: If a pitcher is incapacitated or guilty of fragrant, unsportsmanlike conduct, this rule is ignored).*
2. A substitute who is withdrawn from the game may not re-enter. *(Exception: in the event Rule V.1 has been used, and after re-entering the game, any one of the starters is incapacitated by injury, this rule is ignored).*

VI. PITCHING

1. A Pony League pitcher can **only** pitch in **a maximum of** 4 (four) consecutive innings or 12 (twelve) consecutive outs in any 1 (one) **MCYS** game. Once a pitcher is replaced on the mound for any reason during a game, they are no longer eligible to pitch in that game, and must **have 3 (three) days** rest before pitching in their next **MCYS** game **according to the following schedule.**
 - a) Throwing any pitches in an inning without recording an out will count as 1 (one) inning.**
 - b) Pitching 2 (two) innings or less or recording 6 (six) outs or less in a MCYS game will require 1 (one) day of rest before pitching in another MCYS game.**
 - c) Pitching more than 2 (two) innings or recording more than 6 (six) outs in a MCYS game will require 3 (three) days of rest before pitching in another MCYS game.**
2. A Pony League pitcher who has reached their inning or out limit in a game, may remain in the game in another defensive position, but must occupy their original position in the batting order.

VII. HOME TEAM RESPONSIBILITY

1. The home team shall furnish the umpires, 2 (two) per game. Once a game starts, the umpires shall have complete control over how the game proceeds. The umpires shall eject from the game, any player, coach, or manager for using profane language. The umpires may also eject from the game, for good reason, any person or player at any time they feel it is necessary for the good of the game and the program. Such ejections shall be agreed upon by all umpires working the game and shall be reported to the Pony League Commissioner as soon as possible, but in no case later than the following day.

2. The umpires must be well versed in the rules of the game, especially MCYS special rules. At least 1 (one) adult umpire is required per game ... must be 18 (eighteen) years of age or older, while the second umpire must be 16 (sixteen) years of age or older. The adult umpire may be positioned either behind home plate or on the bases. The umpires shall, in all cases, be persons worthy of the position, of sufficient maturity to use good judgment, and do a satisfactory job.

The manager or coach of a team involved in a game shall not umpire that game, unless by mutual agreement with the manager or coach from the opposing team.

- a. If the home team has not supplied the required, qualified umpires within 15 (fifteen) minutes after the designated starting time, a forfeit can be requested by the visiting team (**see Rule I.3.e**).
 - b. If both teams agree to use umpires that do not meet these requirements, then all decisions made by those umpires will be upheld as final (MCYS will not allow protest of the game results).
3. The home team shall furnish the official scorer. Both teams shall submit full names, first and last, to the official scorer.
 4. The winning team shall be responsible for reporting results to the Pony League Commissioner. Results should be phoned, texted, or emailed to the Pony League Commissioner, preferably the night of the game or the morning following the game, but in no case, later than 2 (two) days after the scheduled date of the game
 5. The home team shall have available a current year or one year old copy of the Baseball Rules Book from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), and the current year Pony League Rules for each game. The MCYS shall provide a new NFHS rules book to each coach in every even-numbered year. (The expectation is that new coaches in odd-numbered years will receive their copy of the NFHS Rules Book from their predecessor).
 6. The home team shall furnish official game balls for regular season and non-championship tournament games, 1 (one) in new condition and others in good condition, as needed.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS MCYS RULES

1. To promote sportsmanship and fair play, umpires, managers, and coaches should insist that conversation between opposing teams during the game be addressed to play position, rather than name, nickname, or other forms of razzing. This is of prime importance in the younger leagues. We feel it is equally important for spectators to act in the same manner.
2. The Steering Committee will be composed of the Officers, Directors, and Commissioners of the MCYS. It shall be their responsibility to evaluate any problems or questions submitted to them by any member of this program and to make such

decisions and take such action as they feel is necessary to rectify these situations. They shall have authority to suspend temporarily or permanently any member of the program, or to make such reprimands as they deem necessary.

3. Game Protest Procedures and Requirements.
 - a. All game protests must be submitted verbally (no texting) to the appropriate MCYS League Commissioner within 24 (twenty-four) hours of game completion.
 - b. The protest shall then be presented in writing (email is acceptable – texting is not) to the MCYS President within 48 (forty-eight) hours of the verbal submission.
 - c. A \$100 (one hundred dollar) protest fee shall accompany any written protests and must be in the MCYS President’s possession before the protest will be reviewed. This fee will be refunded if the protest is ruled in favor of the protesting team.
 - d. No protests will be allowed on judgement calls. Protests will only be allowed on the application of MCYS or NFHS rules.
 - e. Any protests will be decided by the MCYS Steering Committee and the teams involved. If a protest is upheld, the original game shall be declared a “no-game”, and will be rescheduled by the appropriate MCYS Commissioner, with the rule infraction corrected.
 - f. There will be no protests allowed in tournament games.
4. Smoking or alcoholic beverages will not be allowed on the playing field or in the play area (dugouts, benches, etc.).
5. Any proposed changes or modifications of these rules must be submitted in writing to the MCYS General Commissioner by February 1st of the next year. The appropriate League Commissioner (or Commissioners, should the requested change directly affect multiple Leagues) shall review the request and shall decide whether to submit the request to the full Steering Committee for review and a formal vote on adoption, or to place the request on the MCYS next business meeting agenda as a discussion item only. If the decision is to submit for review and formal vote, the Commissioner(s) shall work with the Requestor and the MCYS General Commissioner to draft language for the Steering Committee review. If the decision is for discussion only (not to submit for review and formal vote), The Commissioner(s) shall provide feedback to the Requester after the Steering Committee discussion has been completed. The Steering Committee shall conduct either the reviews with formal vote, or the discussions only, at a regular or special business meeting prior to the annual Spring Meeting.

Appendix A

NFHS GUIDELINES ON HANDLING PRACTICES AND CONTESTS DURING LIGHTNING or THUNDER DISTURBANCES

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC)

These guidelines provide a default policy to those responsible or sharing duties for making decisions concerning the suspension and restarting of practices and contests based on the presence of lightning or thunder. The preferred sources from which to request such a policy for your facility would include your state high school activities association and the nearest office of the National Weather Service.

Proactive Planning

1. Assign staff to monitor local weather conditions before and during practices and contests.
2. Develop an evacuation plan, including identification of appropriate nearby safe areas.
3. Develop criteria for suspension and resumption of play:
 - a. When thunder is heard or a cloud-to-ground lightning bolt is seen, the leading edge of the thunderstorm is close enough to strike your location with lightning. Suspend play for thirty minutes and take shelter immediately.
 - b. Thirty-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.
 - c. Any subsequent thunder or lightning after the beginning of the 30-minute count will reset the clock and another 30-minute count should begin.
4. Review annually with all administrators, coaches and game personnel.
5. Inform student athletes of the lightning policy at start of season.

For more detailed information, refer to the "Lightning Safety" section contained in the NFHS Sports Medicine Handbook.

Revised and Approved October 2014

DISCLAIMER – NFHS Position Statements and Guidelines

The NFHS regularly distributes position statements and guidelines to promote public awareness of certain health and safety-related issues. Such information is neither exhaustive nor necessarily applicable to all circumstances or individuals, and is no substitute for consultation with appropriate health-care professionals. Statutes, codes or environmental conditions may be relevant. NFHS position statements or guidelines should be considered in conjunction with other pertinent materials when taking action or planning care. The NFHS reserves the right to rescind or modify any such document at any time.

Appendix B

Batter's & Catcher's Box Diagram for Pony League

Baseball Diamond Marking
Batter's Box Dimensions
Catcher's Box Dimensions

