

To: All Fort Des Moines Coaches

From: Fort Des Moines Board

RE: 2026 Season

Welcome to the 71st season of Fort Des Moines Little League baseball! We hope you all are as excited as we are about the upcoming year.

We would like to start off by saying how appreciative we are that you have volunteered to coach. This league could not run without your help. Please know that the board is here to support you through your coaching journey.

In this packet, you will find a guide to all FDMLL major events for the year; coaching suggestions; and clarification to many of our policies.

If there is anything you feel we have left out or you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask throughout this meeting or call us at any time. We hope this is helpful and would appreciate any suggestions. Please remember there will be another meeting just before the start of league play with your commissioners to finalize any questions about league specific rules, etc.

Thank you in advance for your attendance and attention.

Sincerely,

Fort Des Moines Little League Board

THE BOARD

Fort Des Moines Little League is a volunteer based organization. We depend on volunteers to organize and conduct every aspect of the little league. Volunteers like yourself, take time out of their busy schedules to make this little league a success. With that being said **THE LEAGUE NEEDS MORE HELP!** The future of FDMLL relies on volunteers to be able to offer a program in the future. Please consider volunteering and/or becoming a board member. There are many opportunities to volunteer including: joining the Board, Adopting A Field, coaching, keeping fields maintained, fundraising, and the list goes on. Board meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of each month typically, and we encourage anyone who may have interest in joining the board to attend. April and May board meetings are held on the Wednesday before the third Thursday during the season.

FIELD DAY/EQUIPMENT

Field days will be held each Saturday in March.. This is the time that we get the park opened back up, fields ready, and things fixed and prepared for the season. **As a coach we require that you put in 4 hours of field time, but putting in more is always welcome as we always have plenty to do!** *Please check in and out in the concession stand to receive credit for your volunteer hours.*

Once you have put in your 4 hours of field time and the equipment bags are ready, you may pick your bag up by contacting John Carter at 515-802-2256. Equipment bags must be signed out and signed back in at the end of the year (it must contain everything we signed out to you). It is your responsibility as a coach to keep track of the league's equipment assigned to your team, and make sure you are using safe working gear. If something happens to a piece of equipment (a screw comes loose on a mask, a strap breaks on the catcher's gear, etc.) let us know ASAP and we will get you a replacement or fix it for you. **ALL EQUIPMENT MUST BE TURNED IN BY AWARDS DAY. IF YOU ARE AN ALL-STAR COACH YOU WILL RECHECK OUT A BAG. All bags not returned will be fined a \$300 fee to the coach.**

Bat Rules

USABat Standard bats must be used in the Little League Major Baseball Division and below. Either USABat Standard bats or BBCOR bats must be used at Junior (13/14 year old) League Baseball Division. At the Senior (15-16 year olds) League Baseball Division, all bats must meet the BBCOR standard. At FDMLL we refer to 13-16 year olds as "Seniors", but 13/14 year olds may use a USA Bat instead of BBCOR if desired. For more information on the USABat standard and a complete list of bats approved through the USABat Standard, visit usabat.com.

Baseball Bat Chart

Minors & Majors	USA Baseball marking 2 5/8" barrel maximum *Approved Tee Ball bats may be used in coach pitch/machine pitch divisions only with the use of approved tee balls.
Intermediate (50/70) & Junior	USA Baseball marking or BBCOR marking 2 5/8" barrel maximum
Senior	ALL bats must be BBCOR

T-ball and ROOKIE: T-ball bats Bats must state *ONLY FOR USE WITH APPROVED TEE BALLS*.

- Since tee balls are used in the Rookie League they may use TEE Ball bats

Minor/Major Divisions the bat shall not be more than 33 inches in length; nor more than 2⁵/₈ inches in diameter, and if wood, not less than fifteen-sixteenths (15/16) inches in diameter (7/8 inch for bats less than 30") at its smallest part. Wood bats taped or fitted with a sleeve may not exceed sixteen (16) inches from the small end.

Juniors/Seniors: USA or BBCOR Bats shall not be more than 34" inches in length for juniors, not more than 36" for seniors; nor more than 2⁵/₈ inches in diameter.

Approved USA Bat List can be found at <https://usabat.com/>

More information can be found at: <https://www.littleleague.org/playing-rules/bat-information/>

SAFETY

Fort Des Moines Little League wants to provide a safe environment for all players and spectators. Each year, Little League International requires a comprehensive Safety Program to be developed and implemented. In the event that an injury should occur, Little League requires proper documentation and forms must be filed with the Safety Officer (**Kumari Patell @ 515-344-6853**).

In order to keep our players safe please keep a few simple things in mind:

LITTLE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL REQUIRES THAT ANY ADULT HELPING ON THE FIELD OR DURING PRACTICE MUST SUBMIT A BACKGROUND CHECK AND COMPLETE THE LITTLE LEAGUE ABUSE AWARENESS TRAINING.

<https://www.littleleague.org/university/articles/abuse-awareness-training-course/>

Please follow the steps below:

1. Create an Account= select "Iowa District 5"

2. Start Course or Download Certificate

3. Please email your completed certificate to fdmlittleleague@gmail.com

- No games or practices shall be held when weather or field conditions are unsafe, especially when lightning is apparent. If games are canceled due to inclement weather you may not practice outside!
- Batters must wear approved protective helmets during batting practice and games. Helmets of Minor League and under must include the appropriate face mask. All helmets are subject to inspection. Any alterations of helmets (including C-Flaps) may void the NOCSAE certification making that helmet illegal to use in Little League (more information at <https://www.littleleague.org/playing-rules/modifying-helmets-with-additional-attachments/>). If there is a C Flap on a helmet the umpire may ask to see a letter of certification from the manufacturer affirming the C Flap does not void the NOCSAE certification.
- Protective cups are required for all male catchers in minor through Senior divisions.
- Batter may not take warm up swings in the dugout. He/she should not pick up a bat until he/she is ready to leave the dugout.
- All players must stay in the dugout with the field gate closed (seniors may have a batter on deck)
- *First Aid kits will be available in the score shacks and in the concession stand. We will no longer be requiring coaches to pick up the first aid kit before each game.*
- Concussion Information <https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/index.html>

GAME CANCELLATION POLICY

The decision to delay or cancel a game due to weather/field conditions will be made by the Fort Des Moines Little League Officer of the Day. Officer of the Day will make a decision **no earlier than 1 hour before the first scheduled game for the day or evening.** Games on Saturdays will be determined on a per game basis rather than canceling the entire day. It is not often, but sometimes we will decide to play the older kids and not younger kids. This is because of mandatory play required by Little League.

League Commissioners will attempt to notify their coaches when a delay or cancellation is definite. We ask that coaches notify their parents as well.

If games are delayed or canceled we will post it on our website at fdmll.org and on our Facebook page [FDMLL-Fort Des Moines Little League](https://www.facebook.com/FDMLL-Fort-Des-Moines-Little-League) as soon as the call is made on game day. It would be a good idea to remind parents that this will not happen till 1 hour before game time.

If games have already started and lightning or inclement weather occurs the Officer of the Day may/will call a Delay of Game. If the lightning or inclement weather continues after that waiting period, the Officer of the Day will work with umpires and officials on whether to call the game. We will then decide if need be when the make-up games will be played.

TOBACCO/ALCOHOL/PETS

In compliance with the "Iowa Smokefree Air Act" there is no smoking anywhere in the Fort Des Moines Little League complex. This also includes any sort of smokeless tobacco, vape, or e-cigarettes.

Alcohol of any kind is also not allowed in, to be open, or consumed in the park.

Due to liability issues pets are also prohibited in the fields. Service pets are only allowed with proper paperwork/certification.

OFFICER OF THE DAY

On game days, there will always be an Officer of the Day. The Officer of the Day is a board member who has volunteered to be "in charge" for the shift. This person shall have the complete authority and responsibility to enforce the rules of the league, and shall have the authority to eject any person displaying unsportsmanlike conduct within the premises and immediate vicinity of Fort Des Moines Little League. Any board member has the authority to enforce all FDMLL rules at any time as well.

While they are there to handle disagreements and issues if they arise, they are also there to help do anything from grill hamburgers to answer any questions you may have. Typically the Officer of the Day can often be found around the concession stand, but if they are not there, they can be paged by the concession stand staff.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

If you or a parent has an issue or problem, there is a proper procedure that we ask you to follow:

1. Have the person with the issue first speak with the commissioner of your league. Your commissioner will then try to resolve the problem.
 - Do not send the parent to talk to the commissioner while they are coaching a game; they are a coach at that time. If it cannot wait, have the parent see the Officer of the Day. They may defer to the commissioner and have them get back to the parent at a later time.

2. If he/she cannot resolve the problem they will then go to the Vice President or President of the League. PLEASE DO NOT call the President or Vice President without first addressing the issue with your Commissioner and give them **time** to resolve the matter.

MOWING

Our ballpark mowing and maintenance is also done by volunteers. If you are able to help out, please reach out to a board member.

FIELD PREP

Field prep is something that is essential to keep all of the fields in good shape throughout the season.

There are small things we would like each coach to do to help keep the fields in decent shape:

1. The bunker rake is available to drag the field but needs to be returned immediately to the garages upon completion of your field.
2. Chalk is available in all the score shacks along with the chalkers. A backup supply of chalk is in the garages. If you take the last bag of chalk out of the shack please replace it out of the back-up supply.
3. Rakes and small equipment are typically found in the score shacks as well.
4. **Both teams should make sure their dugouts and surroundings are clean after every game.**
5. The HOME TEAM needs to make sure there is a trash can out at their field before the start of each game and dump them in the dumpster at the end of each night. Please leave empty trash cans by the dumpsters.

ALL FIELDS:

EACH TEAM MUST CLEAN THEIR DUGOUT AND SPECTATOR AREA AFTER EACH GAME.

Failure to comply will result in a one game suspension for the manager.

Home Team prepares the field for play:

- Before each game, drive the bunker rake around to soften up the ground and smooth it out before chalking the fields. Raking can also help soften up the fields if the bunker rake is not available.
- Coaches should also walk the field before the game to remove any trash, large rocks, pieces of glass etc. that players could be injured on. Report any holes or field issues to the officer of the day.
- Chalk the fields prior to the start of the game.
- Minor, Major, and Senior home teams are responsible for keeping the official scorebook and running the scoreboard.
- While it is the responsibility of the home team to prepare/close the field, it is helpful if the visiting team pitches in and helps especially on incredibly wet days.
- Minor, Major, and Senior Divisions pick up pitch count/score sheet in coach room before game! And return pitch count sheets in the coach room after each game. Both coaches need to sign the form before returning it.

At the conclusion of the game Home Team is responsible for:

- Rake around the bases
- Level off the batters' boxes
- Rake around the pitcher's mound
- Check the fringe of the infield and rake off any major mounds of dirt off the edges of the infield. This will help keep

the grass from dying.

- **Empty the trash; leave the cans by the dumpster.**
- Minor, Major, and Senior Divisions turn In Pitch Count/Score Sheet!!!! You must return this after each game to the coach room!

SPORTSMANSHIP

(PLEASE COVER THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR TEAM MEETING WITH YOUR PLAYERS. All coaches must have their commissioner or a board member present for their first parent meeting.)

Please remember that you need to conduct yourself as a role model at all times. **This is not Major League Baseball and we are not playing for the World Series.** Your responsibility as a coach is to teach your players how to handle themselves in an appropriate manner at all times-even in tough and stressful situations. The best way to do this is to lead by example.

Coaches are expected to have their player's line up at the end of each game to give high-fives and say good game to the other team no matter what the outcome of the game is!

While we all love to win; we are here to teach, and part of teaching is learning how to win with grace and lose with dignity.

We have Junior Umpires training this year and they will eventually graduate our program and be in charge of games. We expect all coaches and spectators to be respectful to umpires of all ages. No unsportsmanlike conduct will be tolerated period. Any unsportsmanlike conduct to a Junior Umpire will be reprimanded with the highest disciplinary level.

If there is an issue at any time, please get the Officer of the Day ASAP. If you don't know who the OD is for that day, please go to the concession stand pick up window and they will call the OD over the intercom or walkie talkie.

UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT

Fort Des Moines Little League has a zero tolerance policy for unsportsmanlike conduct on the part of the coaches, players, and spectators. All reported incidents regarding unsportsmanlike conduct will be reviewed by the Executive Board and League Commissioner associated with the reported incident. They will then review the incident and make a determination whether the event falls into one of the three disciplinary levels below.

- A.** Unsportsmanlike conduct with no physical contact. Includes, but not limited to the following: use of profanity; questioning subjective umpire calls such as balls/strikes repetitively; and repeated offenses of coaching rules discussed in the FDMLL handbook & ground rules.

Penalties:

- If an incident involves an ejection from a game, the offender shall immediately be ejected from the ballpark for the duration of the day.
- The offender shall not be allowed to return to the ballpark up to the start of the second-scheduled game played by the team the offender is affiliated with as a coach, player, or spectator, subject to the discretion of the Executive Board.
- If that game is rained out, the penalty will be the next played game.

- B.** Unsportsmanlike conduct involving slight physical contact. Includes, but not limited to: light pushing; shoving; or bumping.

Penalties:

- The offender shall immediately be ejected from the ballpark for the duration of the game.
- The offender shall not be allowed to return to the ballpark up to the start of the 6th scheduled game played by the team the offender is affiliated with as a coach, player, spectator, subject to the discretion of the Executive

Board.

- If that game is rained out, the penalty will be the next played game.

C. Unsportsmanlike conduct involving physical contact or threat of harm to any person, or the family or property of that person.

Penalties:

- The offender shall immediately be ejected from the ballpark for the duration of the day.
- The offender shall be subject to a one year suspension, subject to the discretion of the Executive Board.

***Repeat violations of our policy: A second level of "A" offenses results in Level "B" penalties; a second level of "B" offenses will result in Level "C" penalties.

***Any person ejected from the ballpark shall have the opportunity to be heard and able to plead their case if so desired. **The request for hearing must be in writing and presented to the President of the league within 24 hours from the time of misconduct.** A special board meeting may be called by the President and shall be held within 48 hours of receipt of the written request.

UMPIRE RULE 9:01

1. The umpire shall be responsible for the conduct of the game in accordance with official rules for maintaining discipline, safety, and order on the playing field during the game.
2. The umpire is authorized to order any person to do or refrain from doing anything that affects the administering of these rules, and to enforce the prescribed penalties.
3. The umpire has the authority to rule on any point not specifically covered in these rules.
4. The umpire has the authority at their discretion to eject any person from the playing field area **and any spectator.**

AMENDMENT TO UMPIRE RULE 9:01

1. The umpire has the authority to eject any person from the park with the assistance for the Officer of the Day on duty.
2. If the ejected party refuses to leave the park; the Officer of the Day or League Officer will contact Warren County Sheriff's Department to assist with removal.

PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Know the rules and abide by them.
2. Respect the game officials and refrain from commenting on their decisions during the game. This could result in suspension (under Unsportsmanlike Conduct)
3. Players are expected to arrive 30 minutes early for older leagues (rookie and above) & 15 minutes early for younger leagues (t-ball & bam bam) for games and on time for scheduled practices. Failure to do so and failure to notify the team coach in advance may result in forfeiture of playing time.
4. Players will not use abusive language or violence of any sort. This will result in suspension (under Unsportsmanlike Conduct).
5. Players will respect the coaches and players of both their own team and opposing team and demonstrate appropriate gestures of sportsmanship at the end of the game.
6. Players will follow all building rules and regulations, respecting at all times the property of others.
7. Players are responsible for cleaning up after themselves in the dugout at the end of the game.

COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Know the rules and abide by them.
2. Respect the game officials and refrain from commenting on their decisions during the game.
3. Coaches are intended to provide a positive learning experience through your leadership. You are to present a positive image to players in conduct, attitude, and sportsmanship. Your conduct on the field is constantly being watched by players, parents and board members at all times.
4. Coaches are expected to inform all players/parents of scheduled team practices and games. This also includes collecting player's fundraising money, making sure parents are aware of picture day, parade day, awards day and all other activities.
5. Coaches will not use abusive language or violence of any sort. This will result in suspension (under Unsportsmanlike Conduct).
6. Coaches will respect the other coaches and players of the opposing team and demonstrate appropriate gestures of sportsmanship at the end of the game.
7. Coaches are responsible for their team to clean up in the dugout and spectator areas after each game.
8. Coaches must remember that they are setting an example for all players.
9. Coaches are responsible for their own team's behavior while they are on the playing field.
10. Coaches must keep players in the dugout during the game when the player is not participating, unless the player has left the game.
11. Coaches will control the conversation of his or her players toward the other team in a sportsmanlike manner. No derogatory chanting, etc. will be allowed. No direct gesturing (ex. clapping on the bases) intended to distract the pitcher will be tolerated.
12. Coaches will not allow any player to question an umpire's decision or judgment.
13. Coaches will always approach the umpire in a sportsmanlike manner.
14. Any umpire's decision which involves judgment is final. No player or coach shall object to a judgment decision. The coach should bring umpiring complaints to the Head Umpire after the game. A complaint form must be completed.
15. If there is a reasonable doubt that any umpire's decision may be in conflict with the rules, the coach may appeal the decision and ask that a correct ruling be made. The appeal shall be made only to the umpire who made the protested decision. The game may be protested if the coach does not agree with the umpire's interpretation of the rule, in the normal protest sequence, as in the Little League Rule Book.
16. The coach will cooperate with the umpire in an effort to control the conduct of the fans of family members and/or friends of their player's teams.
17. Coaches that are also a board member...when you are on the field at your game you are just a coach, no matter what your status is on the board. Do not try to use your board status to influence parents or umpires.
18. Download the rule book app on the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. It is now FREE!
19. Know the rule changes for 2026 <https://www.littleleague.org/playing-rules/rule-changes/>

PARENTS/SPECTATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Respect the rules of the game
2. Respect the game officials and refrain from commenting on their decisions during the game.

3. Parents are expected to have their child arrive early or on time for all scheduled practices and games. Failure to do so and failure to notify the team coach may result in forfeiture of playing time for your child.
4. Parents will respect other coaches, players and umpires at all times.
5. Parents will not use abusive language or violence of any sort. This will result in suspension (under Unsportsmanlike Conduct).
6. Parents are expected to turn in fundraiser money on time.
7. Demonstrate appropriate sportsmanship.

ALL STARS

FDMLL offers the opportunity for players to advance to Little League International's official All Star tournament for 9u and up. We also offer in house All Star games for t-ball and Rookies. If you are interested in coaching an All Star team you must be a coach during the regular season per Little League International rules. Please let your commissioner know if you are interested in coaching an All Star team. The goal is for all our coaches to work together to create the most successful teams possible.

ALL STAR MEETING WILL BE 05/01/2026 AT 7:30 AT FDMLL. WE ENCOURAGE ALL MINOR, MAJOR, AND SENIOR COACHES TO ATTEND THIS MEETING.

We also have in-house All Stars for Tee Ball and Rookie divisions. Information will be provided to you by your commissioner when it's closer to the end of the season. This is one game and is usually the week after our Parade/Awards day. If you're interested in coaching an in-house All Star team, please let your commissioner know.

FUNDRAISER MONEY

Remind your parents when you call to introduce yourself that their fundraiser money will be due at your first team meeting or practice. All candy bars must be sold, returned candy bars will not be accepted.

*Parents may also Venmo the funds at any time to @FortDesMoines-LittleLeague-1

Please remind them to put their child's name and division in the Venmo payment or on their envelope.

All fundraiser money must be turned in by March 21st, 2026 or your player's uniform **WILL NOT** be released until it is all collected. The board will provide you with a list of which players owe fundraiser money.

If you are having extreme problems getting money from a particular parent and they simply will not cooperate with you or return your calls, please let our treasurer know and she will help you. Most parents are responsive so this is not typical but if issues arise just give us a call.

If parents have given you their fundraiser money please turn it into the concession stand on Field Days or get ahold of our treasurer, Nicole Foust.

CONCESSION STAND

The concession stand is the most important fundraiser for our park. After the recent fire, the board is working hard to set up a temporary concessions stand for this season. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we navigate this process. Volunteers are essential to keeping food costs affordable, so we kindly ask parents/coaches to consider helping out. Please see Sarah Swackhamer to learn how to volunteer in Shari's Snack Shack. Please also continue to support the league by purchasing food items from our temporary stand this season-every dollar truly makes a difference and will help us rebuild for the future.

TREAT TICKETS

Treat Tickets will also be different this year. We are hoping to be able to offer them this season. More information will be released as decisions are made. Below is information about how treat tickets are usually handled:

We would like to encourage every coach to have their teams buy treat tickets. It is not required, but it is a FDMLL tradition, a great way to encourage the kids, and it gives them something they look forward to at the end of the game. Typically coaches have found that during your first meeting with the parents they ask that each parent pay \$40 for their child's treat tickets. The coach then buys the treat tickets at Shari's Snack Shack and hands them out to each player at the end of each game throughout the season.

Treat tickets can also be purchased for individual families to use. This is a great way to feed the kids on the long Saturdays at the ballpark!

PICTURE WEEK

Picture week is scheduled to be at the end of April at the Little League. Your team's date and time as well as your picture packets will be handed out approximately 2 weeks in advance. Announcements will be made from the concession stand when picture packets are ready to be picked up by the coaches. Please make sure that you hand these out to the parents in advance so they can plan accordingly if wanting to purchase pictures. Players may bring their bat and glove for individual pictures. All players should be in their full uniform and we encourage all players and coaches to attend regardless if they are making a purchase.

Please have your team in full uniform arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled time. We cannot hold the picture line for any late players arriving after the scheduled time.

PARADE DAY/AWARDS Day

We will be doing the parade again this year on June 20th at 10:00 AM sharp! Parade and awards are on the same day. We start with the parade and end with awards. All divisions are asked to participate in both, from BamBam to Seniors! It's still early in the season, but it's a good idea to start thinking about lining up trucks and trailers for the parade. Please encourage your parents to volunteer on that day as well.

CLOSING - COACHING TECHNIQUES

We could not do this without your help and appreciate you as a coach no matter your ability! We know that we have coaches with all different levels of experience and that is ok. Some coaches have been doing this thing for years and yet others have been coerced into their first stint as a coach. We are grateful for all our volunteers and just want to offer a few suggestions:

- First remember that we are out to teach the kids about baseball. If we happen to create a few all-stars along the way, then fabulous, but most of the kids you coach will simply be middle of the road average players. We hope that you keep this in mind and try to remember to coach all of the kids: the good, the bad, and yes sometimes the ugly. Remember it is fun to win, but the most important thing at every division is to prepare them for the next level of play and teach them to love the game of baseball! We are successful as a coach and a league if our players learned something, had fun, and come back next year.
- Second, if you don't know a lot about baseball, do your research! You can start by checking out the Little League International website, Googling, or discussing different coaching techniques with fellow parents. Some of our greatest coaches at Fort Des Moines started off by knowing very little about baseball. Little League International has great tools, videos, and tips for coaches to access and we encourage you to take time to do so no matter what your coaching ability. There is always something more to learn! Information can be found at: <http://www.littleleague.org/coaches/> <https://usabdevelops.com/>
- Third, get as many people/parents as you can to help you out. Dividing kids into small groups keeps them more focused and gives them more one-on-one support. The less time you have kids standing around, the better off you

will be. Just make sure that every person who has repeated contact with the kids fills out a volunteer application and gets it submitted for a background check before the help with games or practices.

- Fourth, do not feel alone! If you have questions, comments, suggestions, issues please do not hesitate to contact any of our board members. We are here to work with you to make this league successful and we value your opinions and support.

- **FDMLL Website: fdmll.org**

- **Like us on Facebook: FDMLL-Fort Des Moines Little League**

- **Email: fdmlittleleague@gmail.com**