



2026 PONY Bronco 12U Tournament Play Rule Guidelines for Coaches

Disclaimer: *This document contains a summary of the 2026 Pony Rules, and Tournament Play Rules. This document is a guide to aid coaches and is not an official ruleset. It is the responsibility of the coaches to read and understand the official rules of play governing their Bronco 12u tournament play games. Where applicable, the official rule sections are referenced. The official PONY rules and MLB Smart Pitch Guidelines are referenced below:*

2026 PONY Baseball Rules: [2026 PONY Baseball Rule Book Final Proof \(1\)-1 \(1\) - Adobe cloud storage](#)

Pitching Guidelines for 9–12-year-old players: [MLB | Pitch Smart | Pitching Guidelines | Ages 9-12 | MLB.com](#)



2026 PONY Bronco 12U Tournament Play Rule Guidelines

Disclaimer: The following is a summary guide of tournament play rules and should not be used as the official rules. The guidelines below reference the appropriate section(s) of the official ruleset and tournament rule set.

Team Eligibility

- **Players:** Minimum of 12, Maximum of 15. All must dress in uniform. (Section 3A, Section T-2A)
- **League age:** 9-12 years old. **9–10-year-old players are allowed to pitch and must follow pitching guidelines.** League age is defined as the child's age as of April 30 of current year. (Section 4D(4), Section T-2D(5))
 - *Situation: Johnny turns 10 years old on September 2, 2026. Johnny is 9 years old as of April 30, 2026. Johnny is considered league age 9.*
- **Coaches:** One Manager, One Coach, One Business Manager. All must be in uniform if on the field (Section T-12, Section T-13)

Playing Fields

- **Pitching Distance:** 50 feet. Measured from the front of the pitching rubber to the back of home plate (Section 7B)
- **Base Paths:** 70 feet. Measured from the back corner of one base to the back corner of the next base. (Section 7A)
 - *Situation: Mustang 10u uses 60-foot base paths. The distance is measured from the back of home plate to the back of first base or third base.*
- **Home Plate to Second Base:** 99 ft. (Section 7C)
 - *Situation: The distance is measured from the back of home plate to the center of second base.*



- **Pitcher's Mound:** Height is 6 inches above home plate. (Section 7E)

Equipment

- **Bats:** With the exception of BBCOR (-3 ounce) bats, all bats must be marked with "USA Baseball". 2 3/4" Barrel bats are prohibited to use. (Section 8C)
- **Cleats:** Metal or rubber sole cleats are allowed. Alterations to cleats are strictly prohibited. (Section 8D)
- **Helmet:** Required by batter, on deck batter, baserunners and players in the coaching boxes must wear helmets. NOCSAE approved. (Section 8E)
- **Gear:** Required to wear a mask with **throat guard, chest protector, shin guards, athletic supporter and cup**, and **NOCSAE approved head gear** giving protection to head and both ears. Hockey style is acceptable. (Section 8F)
- **Cup:** Encouraged that all players wear an athletic supporter with a cup. (Section 8G)

Game Length (Section 11C, Section T-9)

- **Innings:** 7 innings
- **Time Limit:** No time limit

Mercy Rules (Section 11G)

- If the visiting team is leading by 15 runs at the end of 4 complete innings, visiting team is declared the winner.
- If the visiting team is leading by 10 runs at the end of 5 or more complete innings, visiting team is declared the winner.
- If the Home team is leading by 15 runs at the end of 4 or more complete innings, visiting team is declared the winner.
- If the home team is leading by 10 runs at the end of 5 or more complete innings, after the visiting team has batted, the home team is declared the winner.



Maximum Runs Per Inning (Section 11)

- No maximum runs per inning rules apply.

Tournament Pitching

The MLB Pitch smart guidelines must be followed (link above). For quick reference, the guidelines are outlined below: (Section 10C, Section T-7(A))

- **Eligible Pitchers:** Only pitchers who are league age 9-12 may pitch.
 - *Situation: Johnny turns 9 years old on June 1, 2026. Johnny is 8 years old on April 30, 2026. Johnny cannot pitch.*
- **Maximum Pitches Per Day 9-10 years old:** 75
- **Maximum Pitches Per Day 11-12 years old:** 85
- **1-20 Pitches Thrown:** 0 calendar days rest.
 - *Situation: Johnny is 12 years old and pitches 19 pitches on Monday, he can pitch 85 pitches on Tuesday.*
 - *Situation: Johnny is 12 years old and faces his last batter at 18 pitches. He pitches 6 pitches for a total of 24 pitches before being removed from the mound. Johnny is only charged with the daily maximum threshold of 20 pitches. He is eligible to pitch 85 pitches the next day.*
- **21-35 Pitches Thrown:** 1 calendar days rest.
 - *Situation: Johnny is 12 years old and pitches 35 pitches on Monday, he must rest Tuesday and can pitch 85 pitches on Wednesday.*
- **36-50 Pitches Thrown:** 2 calendar days rest.
 - *Situation: Johnny is 12 years old and pitches 39 pitches on Monday, he must rest Tuesday and Wednesday and can pitch 85 pitches on Thursday.*
- **51-65 Pitches Thrown:** 3 calendar days rest.
 - *Situation: Johnny is 12 years old and pitches 55 pitches on Monday, he must rest Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday and can pitch 85 pitches on Friday.*



- **66+ Pitches Thrown:** 4 calendar days rest.
 - *Situation: Johnny is 12 years old and pitches 68 pitches on Monday, he must rest Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday and can pitch 85 pitches on Saturday.*
- **Pitch Count Guidelines:**
 - A pitcher who reaches his maximum daily pitches mid batter, shall be allowed to finish the at bat. (Section 10F, Section T-7C)
 - Pitches are recorded as 75 for 9-10 years old and the pitcher is required to rest 4 calendar days.
 - Pitches are recorded as 85 for 11-12 years old and the pitcher is required to rest 4 calendar days.
 - A pitcher who is removed prior to reaching their daily maximum pitches, is charged with the total number of pitches thrown on the first pitch of the last batter faced. (Section 10H)
 - *Situation: Johnny started pitching to his last batter at a total pitch count of 34 pitches. He finished the batter at 39 pitches. He is only charged with 35 pitches (34 plus first pitch). His rest days are based on 35 pitches (1 calendar day).*
- **More than one game a day:** A pitcher may pitch in more than one game in the same day, provided he does not exceed his daily maximum pitches. (Section 10E, Section T-7B)
- **Starting Pitcher:** The pitcher named in the starting line-up, must pitch to the first batter. If the starting pitcher is deemed ineligible, one of the following must occur: (Section 10L)
 - (A) The pitcher must pitch to the first batter, and afterwards the pitcher and the manager are removed from the game.
 - (B) The team must forfeit the game.



- **Substitutions:** (Section 10I)
 - A pitcher may not re-enter the game as a pitcher once removed.
 - A player may re-enter as a pitcher only if that player did not pitch already in the game.
 - *Situation: Johnny is the star pitcher and started the game as a first baseman. The coach pulled Johnny to rest him for the second game later that day. In the fifth inning, the team needed Johnny to finish the last batter and Johnny enters the game as a pitcher.*

Playing Rules

- **Batting Order and Positions Fielded:** Only (9) players may bat and play on the field. (Section T2C)
 - *Situation: OVPB All-Star roster is (13 kids), all 13 kids may dress, but only (9) bat and play the field, (4) are substitutes.*
- **Substitutions:** Per PONY re-entry rules, starters may re-enter the game but must be placed in their original batting spot. (Section 9L)
 - *Situations: Johnny started the game batting 1st in the batting order and played third base. He was removed in the third inning. The manager put Johnny back into the game in the 6th inning to pitch and Johnny bats in his original leadoff position.*
- **Reporting:** All changes must be recorded on the line-up card and reported to the umpire.
- **Minimum Play Time:** No minimum required play time.
- **Dropped Third Strike:** There is a dropped Third Strike rule. (Section 9G)
 - *Situation: Johnny swings at strike three and the catcher drops the ball, Johnny may attempt to advance to first base.*
- **Designated Hitter (DH):** No designated hitter allowed. (Section 9P)



- **Courtesy Runners:** (Section 9Q)
 - May ONLY be used for the pitcher and/or catcher.
 - If the batting order comes around again, the pitcher or catcher who had a courtesy runner may bat in their normal line up spot
 - Only players who have not otherwise participated in the game (substitutes), may be used as a courtesy runner.
 - A courtesy runner may not be substituted in during the same half inning they are running in.
- **Batters:** Batters must keep 1 foot in the batters box at all times. If a batter steps out of the box, a strike is given. (Section 9R)
- **Bunting:** Bunting is allowed. If bunting with two strikes and the ball is fouled off, the batter will be called out. (Section 9E)
- **Infield Fly Rule:** The infield fly rule applies when there is less than 2 outs and baserunners on first and second base or bases loaded. (Section 9I)
 - *Situation: Johnny hits a pop fly to the second baseman with the bases loaded and 1 out. The umpire calls “infield fly” and Johnny is out.*
- **Lead-offs:** Base runners are allowed to lead-off. (Section 9O1)
- **Stealing:** Baserunner may steal bases (Section 9O1)
 - *Situation: Johnny is on first base, with a lead off. He starts running to steal second base as soon as the pitcher begins his motion to the plate.*
- **Stealing Home:** Stealing Home is allowed. (Section 9O1)