



FHTBA Rookie Ball Coaching Guide

2026 Season

Overview

This guide outlines the rules and procedures for FHTBA Rookie Ball, designed to keep all players engaged, develop essential skills, and complete full games within the designated time. These modifications were developed during the 2025 pilot season and finalized for consistent use in 2026, in collaboration with the league's Rookie Ball Coaches.

Equipment Requirements

Home Team Provides:

- Pitching machine (visiting team, please have your pitching machine readily available, just in case)
- 5 baseballs (start of season, may reduce to 3)

Each Team provides:

- Ball collection bag for their team
- A pencil for the scorekeeper

All Players:

- Plastic cleats only (no metal cleats permitted).
- Pants, no shorts (if a player shows up in shorts, to avoid making the child feel shame, quietly remind their parent(s)).

Pre-Game Setup

Before Game Starts:

Each team must designate the following parent volunteers before the game begins. These roles can be rotated each game.

- **Scorekeeper:** Tracks runs for their team.
- **Sportsmanship Representative:** Monitors parent and coach conduct on both teams, and models inclusive, appropriate behaviour.

Warm-Up (6:15-6:45 PM):

- Home team sets up the pitching machine for shared use.

- Players from both teams hit balls to fielders, who are also from either team.
- Half of each team lines up for batting practice, while the other half starts in the field. Teams rotate by a player (after batting), tagging a teammate from the field (who hasn't had a chance to bat) into the batting line-up and taking their place in the field.
- **Receiving Players:** Designate one player from the home team at first base and one player from the visiting team at third base to receive throws from fielders (these players will be tagged in and replaced as well).
- Receiving players drop caught balls in the grass beside them
- Team coaches periodically collect balls from their receiving player and return them in bulk to the pitching machine operator.

Game Rules

Catcher Throwback Protocol:

Purpose: *Eliminate repetitive drop/retrieval cycles, spread action across the field, and allow completion of 3 full innings.*

- **First pitch of each at-bat:** Catcher throws back to pitcher (develops fundamental skill).
- **Subsequent pitches:** Coaches collect balls directly in collection bag instead of the catcher throwing back to the pitcher.
- **Starting number:** Begin season with 5 balls, potentially reducing to 3 as player skills develop.

Batting Order & Outs:

- Every player bats, every inning (no traditional 3-out rule).
- Batting order stays consistent across innings.
- **Unequal team sizes:** If Team A has 10 players and Team B has 8 players, then 2 players on Team B bat twice per inning to balance at-bats and keep the game fair.

Base Running:

- No stealing.
- No sliding.

Scorekeeping:

- Designated parent scorekeeper tracks runs only.
- Total runs are compared by coaches at the end of the game.
- Final scores are sent to office@foresthilltball.com

- A neutral third party, FHTBA's secretary Nicole, then enters the final scores into the current rankings, and the rankings are shared with coaches each Sunday.

Implementation Tips for Coaches

Ball Collection:

- Position a coach near home plate with the collection bag
- After the first throwback, the coach collects subsequent pitches directly to maintain game flow.

Batting Order Management:

- Create a written lineup before each game starts.
- If your team has fewer players, clearly mark which players will bat twice and their second positions in the order.
- Communicate the lineup to parents so they can help track whose turn is next.

Player Development Focus:

- Rotate players through positions where they feel comfortable; use an empathetic approach to encourage them to try different positions as their skills develop.
- **Prioritize player emotional well-being** by allowing a flexible batting order. If a child expresses apprehension about specific batting positions, offer accommodations to ensure they feel safe and confident during their turn at bat.
- Acknowledge both the effort and the results.
- Remind sportsmanship representatives to model and reinforce positive behaviour.

Optional Snack Schedule:

- Rotating snack schedule, coordinated by parents or coaches (consider food allergies).

FHTBA's Culture of Belonging

FHTBA is committed to a **strengths-based approach to coaching**, valuing the unique perspectives each player and family brings to our community.

Our goal is to remove barriers to participation **through intentional equity and inclusion**.

We ask our coaches to prioritize the emotional and physical safety of every child, ensuring our field is a space where diversity is celebrated and every player has the support they need to thrive.