

The New Baseball Bat Requirements for Little League in 2018 and What You Need to Know

OVERVIEW

Starting on January 1, 2018, Little League Baseball® will be implementing at the Minor, Major, and Junior divisions of Little League a new baseball bat standard. Little League Baseball® requires that all bats adhere to the new USA Baseball Standard. No bats previously approved for use in Little League Play will be permitted to be used in any Little League game or practice, or other Little League function, event, or activity.

This is a **huge change** – both from a participation and performance standpoint. We at Eastlake Little League (ELL) understand that this is a challenging change for all of us, so we are trying to help by giving you as much information as we know.

WHY THE CHANGE?

Testing and evaluating youth baseball bats has evolved into a science. So much so that the standard has also evolved to where USA Baseball, the national governing body for the sport of amateur baseball in the United States, is adopting a new method for measuring bat performance in youth bats.

Little League has stated that the change was not driven by an increase in safety. “Youth baseball continues to be one of the safest of all sports for youth participants.” However, since the new USA bat standards ensure that bats perform like wood bats, balls will not achieve the same exit velocity as they previously did.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES AND HOW WILL PERFORMANCE BE AFFECTED?

The new USA Bat Standard does two things.

First, as stated, the maximum force of the ball coming off the bat will be standardized. This will ensure that all bats perform more like wood bats with less exit velocity than previously approved Little League bats (“exit velocity” is the speed in which the ball travels off the bat when hit).

Second, the barrel size is allowed to be larger. Yes, the previous barrel size of 2 1/4" is still available, but so is a larger barrel up to 2 5/8". The larger barrel increases surface area and, potentially, the sweet spot.

SO, WHAT DO THESE CHANGES MEAN FOR MY CHILD? DO I REALLY HAVE TO BUY A NEW BAT?

While we wish the answer wasn't so cut and dry, the answer is **yes***. As a league that follows the rules and requirements that our charter mandates, we have no choice but to follow and enforce the new bat standard. (The one exception is at the T-ball level. If 26" or shorter bats are used, they are not required to follow USA Baseball standard).

*Eastlake Little League appreciates the impact that new bat purchases can have on families, thus ELL will furnish 2 of the newly approved USA Baseball bats for each team to use. This only applies to A, AA, AAA and Coast divisions (Does not include Majors or Juniors teams).

HOW DO I KNOW IF THE BAT IS LEGAL?

New bats will have the USA Baseball "stamp" on the bat. If this logo is not visible, the bat is not legal. The picture below shows you what to look for.



The only exception to the new bat standard is for a solid, one-piece wood bat. If it adheres to Little League's regulations, it will be allowed for play with or without the USA Baseball mark. Multi-piece wood bats must have the USA Baseball mark to be approved for play.

WHAT IF I USE AN ILLEGAL/OLD BAT?

Regulation 1.10 states that the bat must be a baseball bat which meets Little League® specifications and standards as noted in this rule. (See complete explanation in the current year's Little League Baseball® Official Regulations, Playing Rules, and Policies). If rule 1.10 is violated, the batter is called out and one coach is removed from the game. On second offense, the batter is out and the manager is ejected from the game.

At ELL, we want to be proactive about this so we never have anyone violate the rule or buy a non-compliant bat by mistake. If there is a question about a bat's legality, please ask a league official.

MORE INFORMATION

Here are links to help you navigate this new rule.

Little League: <http://www.littleleague.org/learn/equipment/baseballbatinfo/USA-Baseball-Bat-Standard-FAQs.htm>

USA Baseball Bats: <https://usabat.com/>

American Amateur Baseball Congress: <http://www.aabc.us/page/show/2282307-the-future-of-bats>



Maximum Barrel Size:
2 ⁵/₈ inches

What To Look For

- Approved bats have the USA Bat marking when purchased
- The maximum barrel size for all levels of play is 2 ⁵/₈ inches
- No drop weight limit
- Only multi-piece wooden bats require markings. One-piece wooden bats do not.

USA BASEBALL