



BASEBALL'S NATIONAL PARTICIPATION FRAMEWORK

National Baseball Participation Framework

National Baseball Playing & Age Grades

NATIONAL BASEBALL GRADES		PLAYING PROGRAMME	PLAYER AGE GROUPS	PLAYER DOB MINIMUM	PLAYER DOB MAXIMUM
JUNIOR BASEBALL 4 – 11 Yrs	Club & Hub Baseball Programs	Cub Ball (formerly kiwi ball)	4 - 7 years	4yrs as @ 1 st Sept	7yrs as @ 1 st Sept
		Sluggers	8U (7 & 8 yrs)	7yrs as @ 1 st Sept	8yrs as @ 1 st Sept
		Rookie Ball	10U	8yrs as @ 1 st Sept	10yrs as @ 1 st Sept
YOUTH BASEBALL 12 – 16 Yrs	Youth Baseball Leagues - Regionally delivered, interclub competitions	12U Majors League	12U	10yrs as @ 1 st Sept	12yrs as @ 1 st Sept
		14U Juniors League	14U	12yrs as @ 1 st Sept	14yrs as @ 1 st Sept
		16U Seniors League	16U	14yrs as @ 1 st Sept	16yrs as @ 1 st Sept
OPEN BASEBALL 17+ Yrs	Adult, open grade leagues - Regionally delivered interclub competitions	19U League	17 – 19 years	17yrs as @ 1 st Sept	19yrs as @ 1 st Sept
		Reserves / Divisional League	Open 17yrs+	17yrs as @ 1 st Sept	NA
		Premier League	Open 17yrs+	17yrs as @ 1 st Sept	NA



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Baseball NZ introduced the National Participation Framework in the 2022/2023 baseball season to establish a national, unified, age and stage-appropriate, developmental playing platform throughout all of baseball in NZ. The National Participation Framework (NPF) provides a consistent approach and rule set to the delivery of baseball and baseball programs, throughout NZ.

- **National Participation Working Group (NPWG)**

A community working group, the National Participation Working Group (NPWG) was established with key stakeholders from our baseball community to provide a community-led direction and pathway to embedding the NPF. The NPWG recommendations provide the next steps and requirements for the delivery of club and community baseball for the 2023/2024 baseball season and beyond.

National Participation Framework Guidelines, Regulations & Updates

The National Participation Framework integrates Little League as the junior and youth league play model for baseball within the NPF. As we embed the NPF and Little League within this structure, and further develop and grow baseball in NZ, the following deliverables are required for the 2023/2024 season and beyond from all affiliated baseball clubs:

1. Highly recommend for 2023/2024 season, all baseball regional associations undertake and register an official Little League Charter.
 - There will be a requirement for all regions to undertake a Little League charter from 2024/2025 season and beyond.
 - It is NOT a requirement for Little League charters to compete or challenge at the National Little League All-Star Series. This can be determined annually by the committee.
2. All junior baseball leagues (minor ball league) & youth baseball leagues, as outlined in the National Participation Framework, will now consistently be played under the Little League model, rules, and regulations throughout all Baseball NZ affiliated clubs.
 - This includes both Little League chartered and unchartered regions.
 - This is now a requirement of all affiliated baseball clubs throughout NZ.
3. All Regional and Club junior development programs; Cub-Ball / Kiwi-Ball / T-Ball, Sluggers, and Rookie Ball programs are locally led programs along with other initiatives. These programs are outside league parameters.
 - All junior baseball programs must follow the nationally aligned age and grade structures outlined in the National Participation Framework.
4. All senior baseball leagues are played under WBSC International rules and regulations, which are also inclusive of the Official Baseball Rules (OBR).



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5. Each Little League charter must confirm their intention to challenge and compete at the National Little League Play-Off Series, in writing to Baseball NZ's Little League District Administrator (LL DA) by 1st December each year.
 - Confirmation to compete at National Little League All-Star Series is an annual process and may change each year.
 - Charters are able to compete in either/and 12U, 13U, 14U and 16U age grades.
6. Little League charter boundaries align to regional association boundaries, with local board and council boundary lines used to depict a charter boundary.
7. Any local variations to the Little League rule set must be formally applied for, by the league president, through Baseball NZ's Little League District Administrator (LL DA), by 15th October each year, before the baseball season commences, and approved by William Sport International.
8. All players in NZ who do not have a Little League charter in their region will be able to seek a waiver to participate in the regular season league play and tournament play (upon selection).
 - Out of charter waivers are sort through a players' club and the chartered regional association's league president completing and submitting to Baseball NZ's Little League District Administrator (LL DA) to forward to William Sport International for approval or otherwise.
 - Little League waivers should be submitted before the season commences or as soon as possible to ensure players are approved for play by William Sport International.
 - All youth players throughout NZ will have the ability to play both the Little League regular season and tournament season through the waiver process for each baseball season in NZ.
9. All players must be registered baseball members in the National Baseball Registration system (Sporty), to play ball.
 - Players considering transferring or moving clubs should undertake transfers outside of the baseball season, so as not to impact upon the team they are departing and the team they are entering.
 - Player transfers undertaken once the season has started should only take place or be approved by the regional association under extenuating circumstances.
 - Players transferring or moving between clubs MUST complete a 'Player Transfer Form'.
 - Any player that transfers or moves club MUST still have completed the four (4) official game minimum to be eligible to represent their new club at National Tournaments, in any age grade.
10. All players are required to be registered within and play within their playing age grade, as per the National Participation Framework guidelines.
 - A player may seek a dispensation from their regional association to play up, one age grade higher, to support/enable that higher age grade team to be able to participate in league play.
 - No player is to be granted a dispensation to play down an age grade. Any such request MUST come to Baseball NZ and would be carefully considered and highly unlikely to be granted.
 - To support a player's wellbeing, physical, psychosocial and game developmental needs, plus meet Sport NZ's Balance is Better philosophy and all



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Health & Safety requirements - No players should be dispensated to play up more than one age grade. Therefore the below applies:

- 12U players can be dispensated to play into 14U
- 14U players can be dispensated to play into 16U
- 16U players can be dispensated to play into 19U (not prems)
- A player may play for more than one team in their registered club, so long as it is age-appropriate (as per the above), the correct dispensation has been sort and confirmed and the player and parents are comfortable with this approach.

11. During the regular season a player's priority is their club baseball team/program and regional little league representative teams are in addition to club teams/programs.

12. Charters/regions must refrain from additional little league squad/team trainings until after the 1st Jan annually each year. In scheduling and providing additional little league squad/team trainings, charters must adhere to Sport NZ's balance is better philosophy and ensure:

- Consideration has been applied to a player's overall load as a junior or youth player
- Club baseball and club team training and games take priority over representative little league training and programs.
- National Team selection, training and tournaments take priority at a higher level over little league selection, training and tournaments.

Annual Timeline & Key Dates

October	1 st	▪ Confirmation of chartering to Baseball NZ and LL DA
	15 th	▪ Boundary map submitted and any local/regional rule variations submitted to Baseball NZ & Little League District Administrator (LL DA)
November	1 st	▪ All out-of-charter dispensations submitted to league presidents to sign off and submit to LL DA as soon as possible.
		▪ Expressions of Interests (EOI's) and application process for LL coaches can be advertised from 1 st Nov onwards.
		▪ EOI's from players to compete in Little League can be advertised from 1 st Nov onwards.
December	1 st	▪ Little League Coaches can be announced (1 st Dec onwards)
		▪ Little League squad can be formed from 1 st Dec onwards (note no additional squad or team trainings until 1 st Jan)
January	1 st	▪ Little League squad / team training can commence
	18 th – 21 st	▪ National Baseball Festival (12U, 14U) - Auckland



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National Little League All-Star Series

All NZ Little League charters who wish to challenge in the National Little League All-Star Series must confirm their intention and attendance by 1st December in writing to Baseball NZ.

- National Little League Play-Offs will take place between Feb & April each year. Dates TBC.
- The winner in each age grade, 12U, 13U, 14U & 16U, will host the following year.
- All National Little League All Star Series will be played under the Little League Tournament season rules and regulations
- The National Little League All Star Series host charter will be fully responsible for the cost of hosting the Play Off Series and each challenging charter will be fully responsible for the organization and costs of attending a National Play Off Series along with the management, health & safety of travelling with junior and youth players.

Official Games

To ensure community club baseball is developing the wider participants and volunteers in the game, adhering to the National Participation Framework and providing eligibility criteria for participation at National Tournaments, parameters have been established to define an 'official game'.

- All players on a team are registered baseball members
- Little League Rules & Regulations are applied and followed
- All Junior and Youth League games are officiated by a certified Community Club Umpire
- All Junior and Youth League games are scored by a certified Level 0 Scorekeeper
- Team Rosters, Pitch Counts, Game scores and/or results along with umpires' names and club details are loaded into MyBall Club