



EAST NEPEAN LITTLE LEAGUE RETURN-TO-PLAY 2020

Guidelines and Protocols

Abstract

Leveraging the Baseball Ontario Return to Play protocol, this document describes the specific implementation details for East Nepean Little League.

Approved by ENLL June 27, 2020

Competition Committee

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1) INTRODUCTION

We will need everyone to help, if we are to return to baseball gameplay in a safe and responsible manner. The guidelines outline below are going to be challenging and uncomfortable. It will require understanding and patience as we learn new habits and social norms. The game will be modified.

These guidelines are based on the Baseball Ontario Protocol (Approved June 11, 2020) which has been reviewed by the Ontario Ministry of Recreation and Tourism, and by Baseball Ontario-aligned Physicians. This document adapts the guideline (as instructed) for use within East Nepean Little League.

While these guidelines will help mitigate the risk of COVID-19 infections - they cannot eliminate it completely. Persons, who do not feel safe in returning to baseball activities, are encouraged to refrain from doing so and are encouraged to contact the league to review options. The league will continue to be flexible.

There will be a learning curve, and the methods used to implement these guidelines will likely be adjusted over time as we learn. We will do this together and support each other. However, continued blatant disregard for these guidelines by parents and/or players will be cause for league intervention and potential discipline or removal.

In concert with these Return to Play guidelines, the ENLL spring rules are in effect. Unless otherwise stated, there is no “baseball penalty” for an infraction of these guidelines (perceived or otherwise). These guidelines are not to be used to press a competitive advantage – we are counting on our community to understand this. If a conflict arises between these guidelines and the ENLL spring rules, these guidelines must be enforced.

It is important to state that Umpires will not be made responsible to police these guidelines and will remain focused on safe and fair baseball. A new mandatory role for each team will be created; The Safety Manager (See section 5). The Safety Manager will work with the Head Coach to monitor, encourage, and support compliance of both the team and spectators. This role will be as critical as any on the field.

2) GENERAL

A) NUMBERS

- **Until the maximum number of persons permitted to gather by the Province of Ontario and/or the Ottawa Regional Health Authority is less than or equal to 100, the maximum number of non-participants (parents) attending events is limited to 1 per player.**
- Social distancing of all spectators is always required
- Ride sharing/carpooling should be avoided unless families are part of the same social bubble.
- **Coaching staff will keep an attendance tracker (written or electronic scorecard may be used) for all baseball activities including all players, coaches, and parents. On request, the coaching staff will provide the league with a copy of the attendance tracker. This document may be provided to Ottawa Public Health for contact tracing if required.**

B) SCREENING/DIAGNOSED WITH COVID - 19/RETURN FROM COVID - 19

- **Self-screening** through <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/> is required by all participants, volunteers, and spectators prior to attending any game, practice, meeting or other in-person team activity and any individual shall not attend if they fail the screening protocol.

- A person, who is identified as part of an at-risk group, but otherwise passes the screening questions is discouraged from participating in in-person baseball activities, but they are not considered to have failed the screening protocol.
- Any participant, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 or who has been in contact with any person having COVID-19 in the previous 14 days MUST not attend any game, practice, meeting or other in-person team activity and MUST notify their local public health authority and East Nepean Little League.
- Any participant, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 must be cleared by appropriate medical authorities prior to attending any in-person baseball activity. Evidence of the clearance needs to be provided to East Nepean Little League.

C) CLEANING/SANITIZATION

The following applies when ever the guidelines refer to cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, wiping or similar terms

- Teams are always to have soap and water or 70% (or higher) alcohol hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes (or acceptable option) readily available. A list of recommended disinfectants is available on the Health Canada website <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid19/list.html>
- **Players and coaches shall wash or sanitize their hands after each inning or at least every 30min.**
- Players and coaches are permitted to use their own sanitizer so long as it follows the Health Canada guidelines.
- Teams will be expected to wipe off benches, gate handles or other high contact surfaces at the end of each game.
- If possible, general cleaning should be done with microfiber cloths
- Only adults shall perform cleaning/sanitization functions.
- Those not involved in the cleaning/sanitization shall stay a minimum of 2 metres away from the cleaning/sanitization activities.
- Cleaning/sanitization products will not be used by or stored within access of young children.
- Where this document requires the use of protective gloves, this shall mean rubber gloves and not batting gloves or baseball mitts.
- When it is necessary to share critical or limited equipment. Increased attention should be paid to detailed cleaning of all equipment directly contacting the head and face (catcher's mask, helmets).
- When possible, allow as much time as possible for the wet surface to dry naturally (ideal 3 to 5 min)

D) IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFE PHYSICAL DISTANCE

- Maintain minimum of 2 metres distancing during physical activity, including warm-ups, pregame and post-game activities, wherever possible.
- Use of dugouts must respect safe physical distances – typically a coach and 2 -3 players.
- Use as much space as required outside the dugout (but in safe areas outside of the field of play) to maintain adequate physical distance
- Avoid congestion at points of entry to the diamond (i.e. gates, dugout doors, etc.) to allow maintenance of 2 metres distancing among participants
- All spectators must follow the physical distancing rules as required/recommended by Ottawa Regional Public Health and ensure they observe areas required for players.

E) ESTABLISHMENT OF HYGIENE STANDARDS

- Wash hands frequently for at least twenty (20) seconds
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands
- Sneeze and/or cough in a tissue or the internal crease of the elbow. Avoid contact of hands with personal respiratory points
- All potentially infected waste (i.e. disposable tissues, PPE masks, protective gloves, etc.), hygiene material, rubbish, debris, etc., in all shared spaces (diamonds, dugouts, washrooms, change rooms, etc.) shall be disposed of safely at the end of in-person baseball activity.
- **There will be no sharing or drinks (water bottle etc.)**
- **There will be no food present and in particular – NO END OF GAME SNACK.**

F) VENUES (FIELDS)

- Scheduling of diamonds will allow for a minimum of 60 minutes between the conclusion of the prior event and the start of the subsequent event to allow for: (1) the team(s) involved in the prior event to clean/sanitize equipment, dispose of garbage from common areas, and have all team members vacate the facility BEFORE (2) the team(s) involved in the subsequent event enter the facility and clean/sanitize common areas; without crossover between the teams participating in the two events.
- In the case of games, ENLL will use a time limit to ensure a safe crossover between events. Daylight rules are still under the discretion of the umpire.
 - Rookie: 2hrs
 - Minor / Major: 2.5hrs
 - Junior / Senior: 3hrs
- Participants, volunteers, and spectators for a subsequent game shall remain in/near their motor vehicle in the parking lot until participants the prior game have returned to their motor vehicles.
- For games, both the home team and the visiting team are responsible for cleaning/sanitizing their dugout before and after games.
- **ENLL will provide cleaning/disinfecting materials that coaches shall bring to home and away games. Material may be shared with the other team if needed but should still be used independently.**
- Washrooms are expected to be closed.
- BBQ/Snack Bars/Concessions/Canteens are prohibited from being operated until the provincial limit on gatherings is at least 250 persons.
- ENLL Coaches will ensure thorough disinfection of common spaces before/after use including:
 - Dugouts benches
 - Fence/gate latches
 - Any other spaces that come into frequent touch
- Every effort should be made by managers/coaches to physically distance. If not possible, they should wear a cloth face mask. Dugouts are not to be used, however players transitioning to the plate may not be physically distanced – in this case a face mask should be worn.

G) SPECTATORS (PARENTS)

- When spectators are present, whether game or practice, they are expected to follow local City of Ottawa, league guidelines or host organization/ municipal guidelines if travelling.
- Ensure physical distance of 2m between non-family participants and spectators

- **Spectators are encouraged to bring their own chairs for personal use – bleachers will typically be closed for use and will not be disinfected by ENLL teams.**
- Spectators are encouraged not to wander to other areas of parks in which their diamond is located as other events are likely in progress.
- If a baseball event is interrupted by thunder, participants, volunteers, and spectators are to return to their motor vehicles until the baseball event is cancelled or able to resume. If someone does not have a motor vehicle; they should shelter in a safe location and try to maintain a minimum of 2 metres distancing from other.
- **Spectators are asked not to retrieve baseballs that leave the field of play – players will retrieve balls and ensure they are returned to the Safety Manager.**

3) PRACTICE

Practice or training is a more controlled environment than the game environment. Practice can also accommodate lesser numbers of participants than games. Accordingly, it is envisioned that return to practice will likely occur prior to return to play. The protocols listed under General also apply to Practice.

A) EQUIPMENT

- No sharing of equipment such as batting helmets, catchers' masks, or other equipment likely to have been exposed to respiratory droplets. Each player should have his/her own helmet, baseball mitt(s), batting gloves, etc. and store these items inside their personal bag when not in use.
- Avoid personal clothing, equipment or electronics etc. being left in common places. Store inside personal bag always.
- Equipment that must be shared must be cleaned/sanitized between player's use.
- If possible, each player should also have their own bat. If a player has their own bat, it cannot be shared with another player.
- Physical distancing is not possible 100% of the time. As such PPE masks may be worn at the discretion of the participant (recommended that it not be white or grey)
- Players should not wear protective medical gloves on the field during game play.
- Rules of acceptable behaviour cannot be contravened.
- Equipment must be sanitized between groups if it must be shared.

B) PARTICIPANTS

- No spitting
- No sunflower seeds or chewing gum
- No sharing of water bottles or food
- No shared coolers
- No handshakes, fist or chest bumps, high fives, hugs, kisses, etc

4) COMPETITION

Sports activity has been significantly affected by COVID-19 prevention measures in- place across the globe. Our traditional ways of competing will need to be altered in many instances to allow us to be back on the field of play while minimizing the risk of infection. The protocols listed under General and Practice also apply to Competition. Below are some competition specific protocols to be implemented.

A) PRE - GAME

- The two teams may share the field for pre-game warm up. Each team shall stay in the outfield and remain on its side of the field.
- There will be no hitting warm up before the game. No whiffle ball or live batting practice will be permitted.
- Minimum physical distance of 2 metres at Home Plate meeting. Meeting is limited to 1 coach from each team and 1 umpire.
- Line up cards must be prepared but will not be physically shared - photos may be taken by scorekeepers etc. and the lineup card must be made available to show the umpire when requested.

B) DUGOUT/BENCH

- **The dugouts will be used as little as possible, and when used physical distancing is required.**
- **Players should come to the game with a lawn chair, each player will be given a designated area outside of the field of play for them to sit at when not in the game. All their equipment that they need for a game should be kept at this location.**
- When a team is on defense the dugout may be used, so long as physical distancing can be accomplished.
- When a team is batting, the on-deck and in-the-hole batters are allowed in the dugout. All other players should sit in the chair in the designated area.

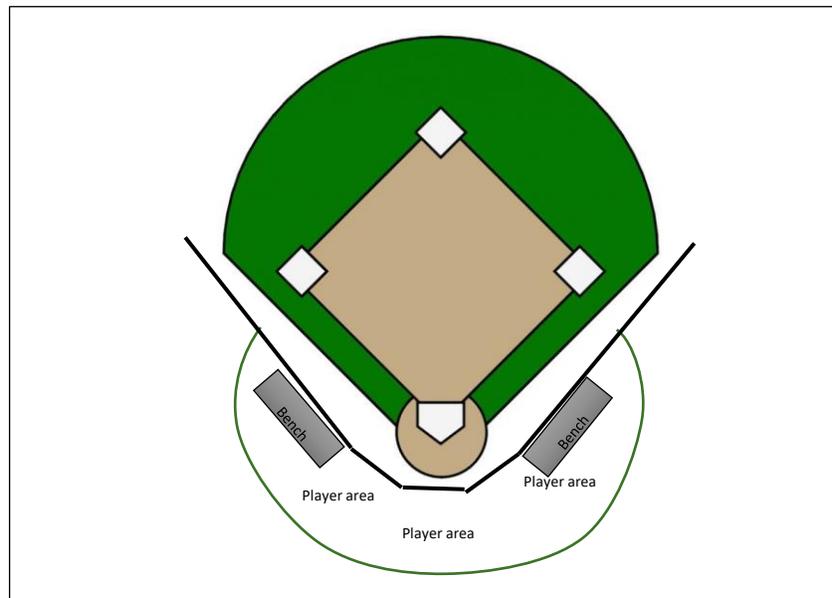


Figure 1: Recommended Player area. Spectator should avoid areas around dugouts and backstop.

C) BASEBALLS

- Each team will have the Safety Manager designated to handle the baseballs.
- Each team will use their own baseballs when playing defense. They will take their baseball on the field and then bring them back to the dugout when they leave the field.
- The defensive team will maintain control of the game balls used while they are on defense.

- Defensive team will need to chase all foul balls while they are in the field.
- Spectators will be encouraged not to touch any baseballs that leave the field of play.
- If a ball leaves play it shall be returned to the Safety Manger. Another ball can be thrown into play by the defensive team.

D) BATS

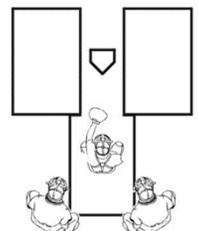
- Ideally every player would have their own personal bat. If this is not possible or realistic, designated team bats may be used (see below). Personal bats will not be shared by anyone else throughout the game.
- If a player does not have their own bat, they will use one of the team bats that will be disinfected after every use.
- If a batter does NOT get on base, they will retrieve their bat and bring it back to their designated area (lawn chair).
- If a batter DOES reach base and is therefore not able to retrieve his/her own bat, the Safety Manager shall pick-up the bat wearing protective gloves and sanitize.

E) OTHER EQUIPMENT

- 2 sets of catcher's equipment are available to each team. Each team will designate two players to catch per game. Catcher's equipment will be thoroughly sanitized after the game. No player will be forced to play catcher. East Nepean player rotation rules apply to all other positions. Pitch count rules are still in effect.
- In the event one of the catchers is unavailable due to injury, the equipment may be sanitized in-game for an alternate player. The Safety Manager MUST get parental approval prior to a new player wearing the equipment.
- No sharing of catcher's masks in warming up pitchers' pre-game, between inning or in the bullpen. If one of the designated catchers is not available, warm up pitches may be thrown to a player or coach who is standing, but not squatting.
- If a PPE mask is worn by the pitcher it will be assessed as per existing rules regarding distracting colours. It is recommended that it not be white or grey.
- A safety base may be used at first base. It is not mandatory to use it.

F) UMPIRES

- There are two options for umpire positioning.
 - The ball/strike umpire may choose to work 2 metres behind the pitcher. They may wear PPE masks at their discretion
 - If the umpire has their own equipment AND is wearing a PPE mask, they may work behind the plate in the position shown. They may not contact the catcher at any time.
- Umpire(s) will not hold game balls
- If incidental contact with baseballs or equipment occurs, umpire shall sanitize their hands.



G) SCORE KEEPER

- Should always work from a restricted area and keep safe distance from others.
- Scorekeeper can also track the attendance as described in section 2a.

H) IN-GAME CHANGES

- Players shall not lick their fingers, blow on their hands, or otherwise go to their mouth.
- **To maintain physical distancing between fielders and base runners; leadoffs are prohibited.**
- **For JR and above, stealing is allowed. The runner may leave the base once the ball leaves the pitchers hand. For Runners who leave early, rule 7.13 (per the LL green book) will be enforced.**
- Tag plays are allowed, but the defensive player should vacate the area as soon as reasonably practicable following the tag.

I) COACHES

- Team meetings, including pitching visits, shall maintain physical distance of minimum 2 metres.
- A maximum of 1 person (coach or player) and the pitcher may be included in a pitching visit.
- **All coaches must have access to a PPE mask and be prepared to wear if physical distance rules can not be maintained**
- If a coach must approach an umpire, physical distancing of at least 2 metres must be maintained. Failure to do so may result in ejection.
- While on offence, base coaches must always stay within their box, except to avoid a play being made in the coach's box. Any discussions between coaches and players (e.g. batter visiting 3rd base coach; coach talking to runners, etc.) must maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres.
- Pitchers, catchers, spotters, and coaches must always maintain a physical distance of 2 metres while pitchers are warming up in the bullpen.
- The three-coach limit will be waived for the remainder of the 2020 season.

J) INJURIES

- The player parent in attendance shall be allowed to attend the player directly and will be responsible for directing care once the player has been removed from play
- The Head Coach and Safety Manager will prepare a first aid plan for the team
- Coaches attending an injured player SHALL wear a PPE mask
- Critical injuries (head injuries, breathing, bones, blood) shall be dealt with as an emergency medical situation.

5) POLICY ENFORCEMENT

ENLL is responsible for the safety of its players, coaches, umpires, and spectators. The procedures laid out in this guideline are intended to ensure that all ENLL sponsored activities adhere to Provincial/City of Ottawa, Baseball Ontario regulations and Little League Canada best practise for player health and safety.

A) COMMUNICATION

- ENLL expects all our players and spectators to follow these guidelines and the onsite instructions of the ENLL representatives who are responsible for communication and enforcement of these guidelines:
- ENLL will communicate these guidelines to all League participants and ensure proper cleaning equipment is made available to coaches. ENLL Baseball Operations will monitor the progress of league actions, continue operating a League-wide Safety Program, and update these instructions as needed

B) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Umpires** – Responsible for the safety of all participants during game action and may intervene to ensure proper safe game play.
- **Head Coaches** - Responsible to ensure the safety of their players and coaches during all team activities, primarily at practices and games, involving both baseball activities and player health including COVID 19 procedures. Further, to allow Head Coaches to manage both baseball and player safety issues in real time, each team participating in 2020 League play should have three adults supporting the Head Coach.
 - **Assistant Coach** – Game play and practice baseball assistance as guided by Head Coach
 - **Team Manager** – Logistics and baseball administration (May also be one of the coaches)
 - **NEW! Safety Manager** – Physical safety and health practices. The Safety Manager and the Team Manager may be the same person. This person SHALL NOT BE the HEAD COACH. In addition to their spectator interface role, Safety Managers will support Head Coaches with team activities (games and practices), primarily focused on managing equipment and facility cleaning, as well as ensuring social distancing requirements.

C) PENALTIES

- Violations of ENLL safety protocols may result in penalties to violators from either the Municipal authorities for from ENLL/partner Leagues.
- For League related issues - except where a protocol identifies a specific sanction or penalty - enforcement should be by way of:
 - An initial warning against the violator
 - A subsequent request to leave the in-person activity in the case of repeated violation
 - Further disciplinary action, up to and including, suspensions
 - ENLL may also be subject to sanctions from District, Provincial or Little League Canada for failure to follow or enforce the protocols laid out in this guideline.

D) SAFETY MANAGER

The focal point for all aspect of safe baseball activities in ENLL rest with Head Coaches. This includes both ensuring safe playing conditions and maintaining a healthy playing environment. Coaches will be supported by ENLL, as well within each team by the mandatory assignment of Team Safety Manager. The primary safety responsibilities are:

- As per the 2019 guidance, ENLL instituted a Team Safety Manager program to focus on spectator behaviour and relationships with players, coaches, and umpires during games.
- For 2020 the Safety Manger will support the Return to play guidelines by monitoring and encouraging compliance
- Working with the Head coach on sanitization during games and practice
- Ensuring cleaning of facility is performed
- Reporting to the league any issues or need for league intervention

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