

1. Purpose

West Winnipeg Minor Baseball Association (WWMBA) believes that every player should have the chance to play at a level that fits their abilities, to develop their skills and to enjoy the game throughout the season.

The **AA & AAA Player Development Policy** has been established to give guidance to coaches in supporting player growth over the course of the season, at the same time communicating expectations to players and their families.

WWMBA believes in developing players, meeting them at their current abilities and striving to get the best out of every athlete. We also believe that giving fair opportunities and having age-appropriate playing standards must continue to guide how we coach and manage our teams, no matter the playing level. As the season progresses, playing opportunities are earned through performance, effort, and commitment.

WWMBA emphasizes also that AA and AAA baseball are competitive environments. Coaches play a big role in helping athletes develop a healthy competitive mindset. When players learn to compete with purpose, they develop resilience and accountability which are valuable life skills they will carry with them beyond the field. Competition being a central part of the AA and AAA environment, winning should be a team goal, but not at all cost. The wins will happen when everyone is committed to the same goal.

2. Guiding Principles

WWMBA emphasizes the following principles:

- 1. Safety** - Protecting athletes and maintaining a safe, positive environment.
- 2. Skill Development** - Teaching baseball fundamentals and situational awareness. Coaches will make all efforts to get the best out of every player. All players should be given plenty of opportunity in both games and practices to develop their skills and learn the game.
- 3. Confidence Building** - Ensuring every player feels valued, challenged, and supported.
- 4. Team Cohesion** - Encouraging teamwork, leadership, respect, and a commitment to shared goals.
- 5. Competitive Growth** - Fostering a culture of healthy competition. As the season progresses, playing opportunities are earned through performance, effort, and attitude.

Program success is measured by athlete growth, retention, and enjoyment of the season.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all **11U AA, 13U, 15U, and 18U AA & AAA teams** operating under West Winnipeg Minor Baseball Association.

4. Coach Responsibilities

Coaches play a critical role in creating a development-first culture. They are expected to:

- Provide fair and meaningful opportunities for all players to develop and contribute.
- Make decisions based on effort, attitude, performance, and through ongoing evaluation.
- Track playing time (at bats, defensive innings and innings pitched) throughout the season.
- Communicate roles and expectations clearly with players and parents throughout the season.
- Document significant behavioural or disciplinary issues that may result in reduced playing time as a consequence.
- Model professionalism, consistency, and respect in all interactions, in alignment with the WWMBA Coaches Code of Conduct.

5. Positional and Skill Development

WWMBA expects coaches to provide all players with opportunities to develop a broad understanding of the game, gaining experience in multiple defensive positions and by learning the fundamentals of all aspects of play. Skill development must occur within a supportive environment that encourages effort, learning from mistakes, and continuous improvement. Positional specialization naturally increases with age but development opportunities should exist for secondary positions at practice through 18U.

Practices

Regular practices are essential to team building, player development and team success. Players at every age group should make an effort to attend all practices. If practice needs to be missed, this should be communicated with coaches well in advance of the practice if possible. Players that miss practices, depending on the regularity and circumstances, might receive reduced playing time. AA & AAA teams should strive to have a minimum of 2 practices a week depending on frequency of play.

Pitching Development

Pitching instruction and development are essential components of the AA & AAA program. All players at 13U and 15U must receive instruction and practice in pitching fundamentals. As players advance through age divisions, opportunities to pitch in games should be based on readiness, technical ability, and performance. At 18U, designated pitchers may receive most in-game opportunities, but all interested players should continue to have access to pitching development during regular practice sessions.

6. Playing Time Standards

Playing-time standards are evaluated across the regular season including league, exhibition, and tournament games, and are not assessed over short periods such as a single week or month. Coaches will monitor participation data and plan playing opportunities to ensure that each player experiences meaningful engagement throughout the year. Variations will naturally occur based on lineup needs, player development goals, and game situations, and the intent of this policy is not to enable families to track or compare individual players directly. If a player or their parent suspects that playing time isn't within the guidelines, it is reasonable to address the concern with the Parent Liaison. Parents should not have an expectation for where their player's playing time falls within the scale.

Playing-time ratios are determined by comparing both defensive innings and plate appearances across the roster. The ratio of participation by the player with the fewest defensive innings and plate appearances to the player with the most must not fall below the following minimum thresholds as set in the guidelines (see Appendixes).

Only games in which players are present and available to play are included in calculations. Absences and injuries are not subject to makeup opportunities. For clarity, the average number of defensive innings per game is determined by dividing total defensive innings by the number of games attended.

18U AAA Pitcher-Only Players: Pitcher-only (PO) players are excluded from all playing-time percentage calculations.

7. Competitive Discretion and Postseason Play

In must-win or elimination games, coaches may exercise discretion to prioritize competitive success. However, in games before and after, they should make reasonable efforts to balance playing opportunities for athletes whose time may be reduced as a result of such decisions. If these circumstances occur late in the season, minor deviations from established standards may be excused with valid justification.

At AAA, playing-time percentages do not apply to postseason play, but all rostered players must participate in the postseason. The coaching staff determines defensive assignments and batting orders during postseason competition based primarily on performance and attitude, and must communicate each player's role appropriately.

Players and parents are expected to respect postseason decisions, understanding that such assignments reflect team goals and performance.

8. Communication and Feedback

Each team must hold a preseason meeting to review this policy and the age-specific guidelines with players and their families. Each team must also hold a meeting prior to postseason to set expectations. Individual player and coaching staff meetings must be held at the beginning of season, midway, and prior to playoffs where players and coaches have an opportunity to share growth opportunities, set goals and address behaviour or attitude.

When concerns arise, the following process applies:

1. Players should first discuss the matter directly with their Head Coach. Parents may help prepare for this discussion but should not intervene initially.
2. If the concern remains unresolved, parents may address the issue first via the Parent Liaison, observing the 24-Hour Rule. The Parent Liaison will bring the matter to the Head Coach, and if necessary, a meeting may be arranged to discuss privately with the Head Coach.
3. If the issue persists, parents may contact the AA / AAA Directors or the WWMBA President for further review.

10. Player Expectations and Conduct

Players are expected to compete and practice with intensity, demonstrate respect for all coaches, teammates, officials, and facilities and uphold the WWMBA Code of Conduct at all times. A positive attitude, effort, and good sportsmanship are required both on and off the field. Poor effort, negative behaviour, poor attendance, or disrespect may result in reduced playing time or positional opportunities.

11. Additional Considerations

Age (major versus minor) is not a factor in determining playing opportunities. Roles and playing time are earned through ability, effort, and attitude. Coaches must evaluate players fairly, regardless of their off-season activities. Off-season baseball participation is family's choice and is not a consideration for playing opportunities or role assignment.

WWMBA supports multi-sport participation outside the baseball season; however, during the AAA season, players are expected to prioritize baseball commitments to support team development and competitive readiness.

12. Accountability

Head Coaches are accountable for implementing this policy in full. The AA/AAA Director or any member of the WWMBA Executive may review playing-time data or development plans at any time. Non-compliance with this policy may affect a coach's eligibility for future appointments within WWMBA, and, in significant or repeated disregards of policy expectations, may result in removal from their current role.

13. Policy Review

This policy and its guidelines will be reviewed annually by the WWMBA Board of Directors to ensure alignment with Baseball Manitoba and Baseball Canada requirements, as well as with WWMBA's mission and guiding principles.

Appendix A: At-A-Glance Coach Guidelines for AAA by Age Level

Parameter	13U AAA	15U AAA	18U AAA
Competitive/ Development Focus	Strong development focus with competitive decisions throughout postseason.	Transition from fundamentals to competitive focus.	Strong competitive focus with continued development for all players.
Minimum Defensive Innings	70% of most-used player	60% of most-used player	50% of most-used player
Minimum Plate Appearances	70% of most plate appearances	60% of most plate appearances	50% of most plate appearances
Position and Skill Development	<p>All players learn most positions and receive pitching instruction.</p> <p>Specialization may occur, but players must play 2-3 positions, and have game experience both infield and outfield early in the season.</p> <p>All players receive equal pitching instruction. In-game pitching opportunities should exist for all, but are not equal.</p>	<p>Specialization may increase, but most players should play a minimum of 2 positions.</p> <p>Players should have the opportunity to play various positions in practice based on player's goals.</p> <p>Players demonstrating interest and ability in pitching must receive appropriate instruction and in-game opportunities based on readiness</p>	<p>Positional specialization is appropriate but development opportunities should exist for secondary positions at practice.</p> <p>Pitching opportunities may be limited to those designated as pitchers; however, coaches should continue to support pitching development for all players interested.</p>
Postseason Play	Playing-time percentages do not apply in postseason play. However, all rostered players must participate in the postseason.		
Batting Order	At coach's discretion.		

Appendix B: At-A-Glance Coach Guidelines for AA by Age Level

Parameter	11U AA	13U AA	15U AA	18U AA
Competitive/ Development Focus	Strong development focus with competitive decisions throughout postseason.	Strong development focus with competitive decisions throughout postseason.	Strong development focus with competitive decisions throughout postseason.	Competitive focus with continued development for all players.
Minimum playing time	85% of most-used player	80% of most-used player	75% of most-used player	70% of most-used player
Position and Skill Development	<p>All players learn most positions and receive pitching instruction.</p> <p>Players must play 2-3 positions, and have game experience both infield and outfield early in the season.</p> <p>All players receive equal pitching instruction. In-game pitching opportunities should exist for all, but are not equal.</p>	<p>All players learn most positions and receive pitching instruction.</p> <p>Specialization may occur, but players must play 2-3 positions, and have game experience both infield and outfield early in the season.</p> <p>All players receive equal pitching instruction. In-game pitching opportunities should exist for all, but are not equal.</p>	<p>Specialization may increase, but most players should play a minimum of 2 positions.</p> <p>Players should have the opportunity to play various positions in practice based on player's goals.</p> <p>Players demonstrating interest and ability in pitching must receive appropriate instruction and in-game opportunities based on readiness</p>	<p>Positional specialization is appropriate but development opportunities should exist for secondary positions at practice.</p> <p>Pitching opportunities may be limited to those designated as pitchers; however, coaches should continue to support pitching development for all players interested.</p>
Postseason Play	No player should sit more than 1/2 a game at a time in post-season.		Playing-time percentages do not apply in postseason play. However, all rostered players must participate in the postseason.	
Batting Order	At coach's discretion.			