

# **BASIC RULES OF BASEBALL**

Baseball is a game between two teams of nine players each, played on an enclosed field.

**THE PLAYING FIELD.** The field shall be laid out according to the instructions below

The infield shall be a 90-foot square. (Youth leagues use a 60-foot square.) The outfield shall be the area between two foul lines formed by extending two sides of the square from home plate. The distance from home base to the nearest fence, stand or other obstruction on fair territory shall be 250 feet or more. A distance of 320 feet or more along the foul lines, and 400 feet or more to center field is preferable. The infield shall be graded so that the base lines and home plate are level. The pitcher's plate shall be 10 inches above the level of home plate and 60 feet 6 inches from home plate (Youth leagues use 46 feet.) The degree of slope from a point 6 inches in front of the pitcher's plate to a point 6 feet toward home plate shall be 1 inch to 1 foot, and such degree of slope shall be uniform. The infield and outfield, including the boundary lines, are fair territory and all other area is foul territory.

The ball is a sphere formed by yarn wound around a small core of cork, rubber or similar material, covered with two stripes of white horsehide or cowhide, tightly stitched together. It weighs 5 1/4 ounces avoirdupois and is 9 1/4 inches in circumference.

The bat is a smooth, round stick not more than 2 3/4 inches in diameter at the thickest part and not more than 42 inches in length. The most common length used is 35 inches.

Each fielder, may use or wear a leather glove. A FIELDER is any defensive player.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE GAME**

The objective of each team is to win by scoring more runs than the opponent.

A RUN (or SCORE) is the score made by an offensive player who advances from batter to runner and touches first, second, third and home bases in that order. The order of the bases is in a counter-clockwise direction around the square from home to first, etc.

A BATTER is an offensive player who takes his position in the batter's box and attempts to hit a ball thrown to him by the pitcher. A PITCHER is the fielder designated to deliver the pitch to the batter. The pitcher pitches the ball to the batter and the batter attempts to hit the pitch and become a runner. The defense attempts to catch the ball after it is hit and put the batter and/or runners out.

A PITCH is a ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher.

The CATCHER is the fielder who takes his position back of the home base and catches the pitcher's pitch when the batter does not hit the pitch.

A RUNNER is an offensive player who is advancing toward, or touching, or returning to any base.

The winner of the game shall be that team which shall have scored, in accordance with these rules, the greater number of runs at the conclusion of a regulation game.

A regulation game consists of nine INNINGS, unless extended because of a tie score, or shortened (1) because the home team needs none of its half of the ninth inning or only a fraction of it.

If the score is tied after nine completed INNINGS play shall continue until (1) the visiting team has scored more total runs than the home team at the end of a completed inning, or (2) the home team scores the winning run in an uncompleted inning.

- An INNING is that portion of a game within which the teams alternate on offense and defense and in which there are three OUTS for each team. Each team's time at bat is a half-inning.
  - An OUT is one of the three required retirements of an offensive team during its time at bat.

When three offensive players are legally put out, that team takes the field and the opposing team becomes the offensive team.

## **HOW A TEAM SCORES**

One run shall be scored each time a runner legally advances to and touches first, second, third and home base before three men are put out to end the inning.

EXCEPTION: A run is not scored if the runner advances to home base during a play in which the third out is made (1) by the batter-runner before he touches first base; (2) by any runner being forced out; or (3) by a preceding runner who is declared out because he failed to touch one of the bases.

## **HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED**

The players of the home team shall take their defensive positions, the first batter of the visiting team shall take his position in the batter's box, the umpire shall call "Play" and the game shall start.

When the ball is put in play at the start of, or during a game, all fielders other than the catcher shall be on fair territory.

The **batting order** shall be followed throughout the game unless a player is substituted for another. In that case the substitute shall take the place of the replaced player in the batting order.

- Each player of the offensive team shall bat in the order that his name appears in his team's batting order.
- The first batter in each inning after the first inning shall be the player whose name follows that of the last player who legally completed his time at bat in the preceding inning.

A batter has legally completed his time at bat when he is **put out** or becomes a runner.

A batter may be **put out** in any of the following ways -

1. His fair or foul FLY BALL is legally caught by a fielder (catch);
  - A FLY BALL is a batted ball that goes high in the air in-flight straight from the bat without first touching the ground.
  - A CATCH is the act of a fielder in getting secure possession in his hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it; providing he does not use his cap, protector, pocket or any other part of his uniform in getting possession.
2. After he hits a fair ball, he or first base is tagged before he touches first base;
  - A TAG is the action of a fielder in touching a base with his body while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove; or touching a runner with the ball, or with his hand or glove holding the ball, while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove.
3. A third strike is legally caught by the catcher;
  - A STRIKE is a legal pitch when so called by the umpire, which -
    1. Is struck at by the batter and is missed;
    2. Is not struck at, but any part of the ball passes through any part of the STRIKE ZONE;
      - The STRIKE ZONE is that area over home plate the upper limit of which is a horizontal line at the midpoint between the top of the shoulders and the top of the uniform pants, and the lower level is a line at the top of the knees. The Strike Zone shall be determined from the batter's stance as the batter is prepared to swing at a pitched ball.

The batter becomes a runner and is entitled to first base without liability to be put out when -

1. Four "balls" have been called by the umpire;
  - A BALL is a pitch which does not enter the strike zone in flight and is not struck at by the batter.
  - A BASE ON BALLS is an award of first base granted to a batter who, during his time at bat, receives four pitches outside the strike zone.
2. He is touched by a pitched ball which he is not attempting to hit unless (1) The ball is in the strike zone when it touches the batter, or (2) The batter makes no attempt to avoid being touched by the ball;

The batter becomes a runner and is liable to be put out when -

1. He hits a FAIR BALL;
  - A FAIR BALL is a batted ball that settles on fair ground between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that is on or over fair territory when bounding to the outfield past first or third base, or that touches first, second or third base, or that first falls on fair territory on or beyond first base or third base, or that, while on or over fair territory touches the person of an umpire or player, or that, while over fair territory, passes out of the playing field in flight.
  - A fair fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and the foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the fielder is on fair or foul territory at the time he touches the ball.
  - If a fly ball lands in the infield between home and first base, or home and third base, and then bounces to foul territory without touching a player or umpire and before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball; or if the ball settles on foul territory or is touched by a player on foul territory, it is a foul ball. If a fly ball lands on or beyond first or third base and then bounces to foul territory, it is a fair hit.
  - FAIR TERRITORY is that part of the playing field within, and including the first base and third base lines, from home base to the bottom of the playing field fence and perpendicularly upwards. All foul lines are in fair territory.

### **The Runner.**

A runner acquires the right to an unoccupied base when he touches it before he is put out. He is then entitled to it until he is put out, or forced to vacate it for another runner legally entitled to that base.

In advancing, a runner shall touch first, second, third and home base in order. If forced to return, he shall retouch all bases in reverse order, unless the ball is dead under any provision of Rule 5.09. In such cases, the runner may go directly to his original base.

Two runners may not occupy a base, but if, while the ball is alive, two runners are touching a base, the following runner shall be out when tagged. The preceding runner is entitled to the base.

Each runner including the batter-runner may, without liability to be put out, advance -

To home base, scoring a run, if a fair ball goes out of the playing field in flight and he touched all bases legally; This is called a HOMERUN

Any runner is out when -

1. He is tagged, when the ball is alive, while off his base.
  - EXCEPTION: A batter-runner cannot be tagged out after overrunning or oversliding first base if he returns immediately to the base;
    - A TAG is the action of a fielder in touching a base with his body while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove; or touching a runner with the ball, or with his hand or glove holding the ball, while holding the ball securely and firmly in his hand or glove.
2. He fails to retouch his base after a fair or foul fly ball is legally caught before he, or his base, is tagged by a fielder. He shall not be called out for failure to retouch his base after the first following pitch, or any play or attempted play. This is an appeal play;
3. He fails to reach the next base before a fielder tags him or the base, after he has been forced to advance by reason of the batter becoming a runner. However, if a following runner is put out on a force play, the force is removed and the runner must be tagged to be put out. The force is removed as soon as the runner touches the base to which he is forced to advance, and if he overslides or overruns the base, the runner must be tagged to be put out. However, if the forced runner, after touching the next base, retreats for any reason towards the base he had last occupied, the force play is reinstated, and he can again be put out if the defense tags the base to which he is forced;
  - EXAMPLE of when a runner is forced to run:  
When the batter hits a fair ball he must run to first base. If a runner is on first base, that runner is forced to run to second. If a runner is on second and no runner is on first, the runner at second is NOT forced to run when the batter hits a fair ball, because first base is vacant.
4. He is touched by a fair ball in fair territory before the ball has touched or passed an infielder. The ball is dead and no runner may score, nor runners advance, except runners forced to advance.
5. He passes a preceding runner before such runner is out;
6. He fails to return at once to first base after overrunning or oversliding that base. If he attempts to run to second he is out when tagged. If, after overrunning or oversliding first base he starts toward the dugout, or toward his position, and fails to return to first base at once, he is out, on appeal, when he or the base is tagged;

7. In running or sliding for home base, he fails to touch home base and makes no attempt to return to the base, when a fielder holds the ball in his hand, while touching home base, and appeals to the umpire for the decision.

First base and home may be overrun, second and third may not.

### **ADDITIONAL DEFINITION & INFORMATION**

The BATTER'S BOX is the area within which the batter shall stand during his time at bat.

The BATTERY is the pitcher and catcher.

A DEAD BALL is a ball out of play because of a legally created temporary suspension of play.

The DEFENSE (or DEFENSIVE) is the team, or any player of the team, in the field.

A FORCE PLAY is a play in which a runner legally loses his right to occupy a base by reason of the batter becoming a runner.

A GROUND BALL is a batted ball that rolls or bounces close to the ground.

An INFIELDER is a fielder who occupies a position in the infield.

IN FLIGHT describes a batted, thrown, or pitched ball which has not yet touched the ground or some object other than a fielder.

OFFENSE is the team, or any player of the team, at bat.

An OUTFIELDER is a fielder who occupies a position in the outfield, which is the area of the playing field most distant from home base.

"SAFE" is a declaration by the umpire that a runner is entitled to the base for which he was trying.

After the ball is dead, play shall be resumed when the pitcher takes his place on the pitcher's plate with a new ball or the same ball in his possession and the plate umpire calls "Play." The plate umpire shall call "Play" as soon as the pitcher takes his place on his plate with the ball in his possession.

### **LEGAL PITCHING DELIVERY.**

**There are two legal pitching positions, the Windup Position and the Set Position, and either position may be used at any time.**

1. The Windup Position.
  - o The pitcher shall stand facing the batter, his entire pivot foot on, or in front of and touching and not off the end of the pitcher's plate, and the other foot free. From this position any natural movement associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without interruption or alteration. He shall not raise either foot from the ground, except that in his actual delivery of the ball to the batter, he may take one step backward, and one step forward with his free foot.
2. The Set Position.
  - o Set Position shall be indicated by the pitcher when he stands facing the batter with his entire pivot foot on, or in front of, and in contact with, and not off the end of the pitcher's plate, and his other foot in front of the pitcher's plate, holding the ball in both hands in front of his body and coming to a complete stop. From such Set Position he may deliver the ball to the batter, throw to a base or step backward off the pitcher's plate with his pivot foot. Before assuming Set Position, the pitcher may elect to make any natural preliminary motion such as that known as "the stretch." But if he so elects, he shall come to Set Position before delivering the ball to the batter. After assuming Set Position, any natural motion associated with his delivery of the ball to the batter commits him to the pitch without alteration or interruption.