

Simple baseball rules: the game

There are two teams-let's call them **Starter Team** and **Ender Team**--and each tries to make more points than the other. In baseball, however, we don't say "make points". We say score runs. **Starter Team** begins the game playing offense. Its players take turns being the batter (or "hitter"), the only offensive player allowed to touch the baseball. And he can touch it only with his bat, a wooden stick. **Ender Team** begins the game with its 9 players on defense. Most of the time the focus of attention is on a two-man battle: **Ender Team's** pitcher has incentives to deliver the baseball to **Starter Team's** current batter who has incentives to try to hit it.

Starter Team scores one run each time a batter moves completely around a circuit of four designated spots called bases. Sometimes he does so all at once. Most of the time he proceeds deliberately from one base to the next, where he stops until his team mates, taking their respective turns as the batter, create chances for him to advance around the circuit.

Sooner or later **Starter Team** will accumulate three events (outs) that are considered to be failures on its part. At that point the two teams change postures. **Ender Team** will begin to play offense, and **Starter Team** will have to play defense. When **Ender Team** makes three outs during this turn at bat, **Starter Team** gets a fresh chance: it can add runs to its total until it makes three outs again. Then the teams switch roles again.

In a usual game each team has nine turns on defense and eight or nine turns on offense, depending on who's winning. This is according to the Official Rules of Major League Baseball. Junior baseball leagues often have seven inning games, although time limits are set ensure that games do not last too long.

Since a game can't end in a tie, and **Ender Team** always gets a last chance to win, the contest could go on forever. **There's no clock and no time limit to a Major League baseball game.** It depends on how long it takes for a series of events (the outs) to occur: in this, it's like tennis. Most games, however, last about three hours. The usual baseball game is like a play that has nine acts (innings), each of which has two scenes (half-innings) ... each of which has three outs.

You can only score runs while you are playing in the offensive mode. In a lot of sports a team on the defensive can suddenly get hold of the football, the volleyball, the soccer ball, or the puck, and it can score points immediately. Not so in baseball: although the players currently playing defense touch the ball with their hands all the time, they cannot score..

Baseball can seem very complicated, but it doesn't have to be. On the other hand, you do have to learn a little more detail. In the following pages, we'll get further into the game, but we'll keep our promise to give you only the simple baseball rules.



Distance from home plate to fence can vary. MLB parks vary between 302' to 355' on the foul line and 390' to 435' at center field.

Field dimensions and diagrams

There are only 3 important sets of items on any baseball or softball field. The field dimensions vary, depending on the league in question.

Grass and dirt are not part of the field dimensions: they are only for the convenience of the players and viewing pleasure of the fans

1. Four bases

Home (or home plate, or the plate). Home is a flat, white, hard rubber plate embedded in the ground. The batter stands next to it as he tries to hit the baseball. He wants to advance around the other bases and return "home", thus scoring a run.

First (base)

Second (base)

Third (base)



These three bases are square white bags that are secured to the ground. They are safe havens for offensive players trying to make the difficult journey from home and back to home. The distance between bases is 60 feet in most junior leagues. By the time players reach mid-teens, they find the same field dimensions as Major Leaguers: 90 feet between bases.

2. The rubber (officially, the "pitcher's plate")

It's on top of a mound of dirt almost in the middle of the diamond, i.e., the area outlined by the four bases. The pitcher has to have one foot touching the rubber when he delivers the ball to his opponent, the batter. In Little League baseball, the distance from the rubber to home plate is 46 feet. Major League, the dimension is 60 feet, 6 inches.

3. Two straight white lines (the foul lines)

They extend from the outside edges of home plate, touching the outside edges of, respectively, first and third bases. Each line continues a lot farther, until it finally hits the wall that encloses the entire field. A tall pole marks the spot where each one meets the wall.

Major League Baseball rules don't dictate the wall's dimensions or shape, so each baseball park has unique characteristics. As long as both lines are longer than a certain minimum, they can be—and usually are—of different lengths. The distance from each pole to home plate must be at least 325 feet. At the halfway point between the poles, the fence or wall must be at least 400 feet from home. These two rules apply only to fields built after 1957—some older ones are smaller.

The lines and the poles divide the field into fair and foul territories, which is of the **utmost importance**, because they have a lot to say about



whether a baseball that is hit becomes a fair ball (maybe good for the offense) or a foul ball (almost never good for the offense).

The following pages, using these dimensions and markings as a starting point, describe fair and foul territories and balls.

A first, simple look: fair is good and foul is bad

The foul lines separate fair from foul territory. The shape of those areas in a particular ball park depends on the layout of stands and walls.

Fair territory: a baseball hit here usually results in it being declared a fair-ball, which is what the offense wants. This territory, strictly speaking, is the ground between the two long white lines (the foul lines), i.e. the **green** and **brown** of Diagram 2. It is either amusing or confusing that the lines are officially called the **foul lines** and the poles are called the **foul poles** even though they are all in fair territory, as is the wall that abuts the fair ground between the poles.



Green represents what is traditionally, but not necessarily, the grass or artificial grass that lies in fair territory. The brown areas represent what is traditionally, but not necessarily, the dirt-covered portions of fair territory.

Practically speaking, the blue, which represents the stands that extend beyond fair territory, is also a part of fair territory ... a very good part, for the offense, as we shall see on the next page.

Foul territory: a ball hit here is usually a foul-ball, which is usually bad or indifferent for the offense. Strictly speaking, it is the **red** of Diagram 2, i.e., the ground covered by either dirt or grass that is outside of the foul lines. Practically speaking, foul territory includes the **yellow**, which represents the stands that abut the ground in question.

Diagram 2: A simple diagram of where the offense wants to hit the baseball. If it lands in the fair area, the batter may have a chance to proceed around the bases.

The **gray** area of Diagram 2 is hard to label as fair or foul, good or bad for the offense, even though we are just taking a first, simple look. The reason is that, because of their trajectories, more or less half of the balls hit into the gray are eventually judged to be fair balls, and half are judged to be foul balls. We'll explain this in the next section (Fair and Foul-Balls).

What's good and bad depends on trajectory, not just territory

The previous page gave a simple overview at what's good and bad for the offense. To be precise--and this is not too much information for a basic look at baseball--we have to understand the terms **fair ball** and **foul ball**.

Start by considering the batter standing at home plate trying to hit the pitched baseball into fair territory, which spreads out from him like a slice of pie. Under the original rules he was allowed to try to advance around the bases as long as the batted baseball touched fair territory sooner or later. But there are two problems with this. First, batters often hit baseballs that then bounce from fair territory into foul territory (and vice-versa, which is much less frequent). In fact, batters used to do this on purpose. Nine defensive players weren't enough to cover

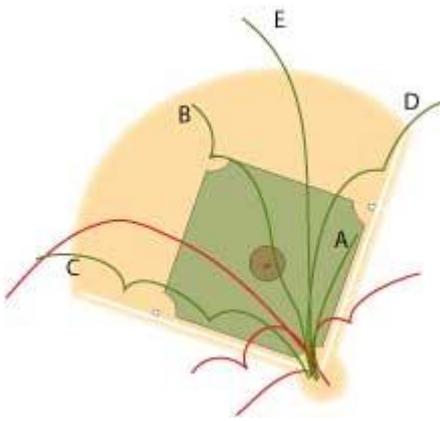


Diagram 3: Green represents fair balls, Red represents foul balls

all that ground. Second, batted baseballs sometimes fly so far and high beyond the playing field--all the while on a curving trajectory--that the umpire(s) can't judge where they land in relation to a foul line. **So now the distinction between a fair ball (possibly good for the offense) and a foul ball (almost always not good for the offense) is based on the path that the baseball takes with reference to not only the foul lines, but other markings: the bases and the foul poles.**

A (batted) baseball is fair if:

- ❖ it stops in fair territory before it reaches first or third base (A), or
- ❖ it hits a base (B), or
- ❖ bouncing or rolling, it passes first or third base on or above fair territory (C), or
- ❖ it passes first or third base in the air and makes its first bounce in fair territory (D), or
- ❖ the baseball is hit so far that it leaves the playing field between the foul poles or hits one of them (both of which types of events are very good for the batter) (E) or
- ❖ the defense touches it while it is moving on or above fair territory.

A (batted) baseball is a foul ball in all other cases.

A fair ball allows the batter to at least try to advance to first base or beyond. Maybe he'll be successful, maybe not. On the other hand, a foul ball is usually bad for the batter and his team, although in some situations it's just indifferent. We'll discuss the basics of all this elsewhere.

Let's return to the diagram of the previous page, the simple view of the parts of the baseball field that the batter aims for.

Green and brown: now you know why we didn't say that baseballs hit there are always good for the batter. Their trajectory may make them foul balls, although this is not common.

Blue: on the other hand, blue is always good for the batter because a baseball that lands there could never be a foul ball. That is, it could never have left the field over foul territory (i.e., on the foul territory side of a foul pole) and then curved into the blue area. It would have broken the laws of physics.

Red: now you know why we can't categorically state that a baseball that stops there is always a foul ball. Once or twice a game, a fair ball bounces into foul territory next to or beyond first or third base.

Yellow: we're confident that a baseball that ends up there could not have taken the route of a fair ball.

Gray: baseballs that fly out of the playing field near a foul pole can easily curve into a gray area from either side of the pole. This is exciting because a fair ball that doesn't land until it reaches the stands is an automatic run for the batter and any other member of the offense who is occupying a base at the time: it's a homerun. And

baseballs can bounce into the gray from either fair or foul territory. The former case allows the batter to proceed to second base. The latter case is just a foul ball. Both cases are covered elsewhere.

Offense: the batter (or "hitter")

Defense: the pitcher, catcher, and 7 others



In Overview, we described how each team alternates between offense and defense. Let's give the name **Starter Team** to the one that begins the game playing offense. Its nine players take turns trying to help their team score runs. There is a slight variation in one of the two leagues of Major League Baseball.

When it is his turn, each one takes his bat and stands in a designated area very close to home plate, on the right or left side, as he chooses. He is the current batter (or "hitter"). The order in which the nine players bat has to be preserved throughout the game.

Ender Team starts the game with its nine players on defense. One of them, the pitcher, has the specialty of throwing the baseball from a designated spot toward home plate and **Starter Team's** batter.

For now it is sufficient to say that the pitcher has incentives to throw the baseball over home plate without bouncing it.

If the batter doesn't hit it, the catcher--who wears a mask and other protective equipment--catches the baseball and throws it back to his teammate, the pitcher, who tries again to throw the baseball past the batter.

The Other Players



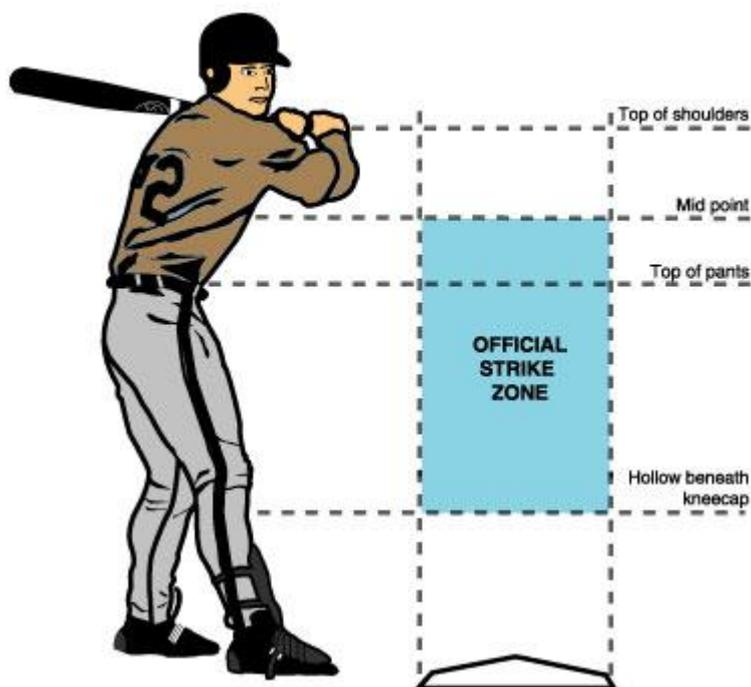
While taking their turn playing defense, the rules allow seven of the defensive players (to position themselves anywhere, as long as they're in fair territory. (The pitcher and catcher have special rules.) They usually spread themselves out in a way that is predictable: each one patrols an area, ready to catch any baseball that the opponent, the batter, manages to hit there. Some of the defensive players are feel responsible for defending a particular base, so they want to be near it. All defensive players, but especially these seven, are called fielders because they're spread across the playing field.

During any of the frequent pauses in the action, a team can send in a substitute for any of its current players, who cannot return to the game.

Don't get confused by the non-players

Beginners may confuse baseball coaches with players because they wear the same uniform.

While a team is playing offense, two of its coaches are allowed to stand in foul territory near first and third base, respectively. By words and signals they give orders and advice to the batter and any team mate(s) who may have been successful in arriving at a base.



Substitutes (and players) may be warming up, always in foul territory.

Umpires, i.e. the referees. In the Major Leagues, there are usually four of them. They dress alike in gray, blue, or black suits or sportswear.

Simple rules about Pitching and the strike zone

The battle between the teams involves constant skirmishes between their respective pitchers and their opponent's batters. **The pitcher has incentives to pitch the baseball to an area, the strike zone, where it is relatively easy for the batter to strike it with his bat.** In other words, the pitcher does not want to throw the ball where it is relatively easy for the batter to hit it, but, on the other hand he runs the risk of being penalized if he doesn't throw the ball into the strike zone. We'll explain the penalties in the sections about batting.

The strike zone is an imaginary box above home plate, and the umpire judges whether or not a baseball has entered it. His judgement can cause controversy.

The dimensions of the strike zone vary according to the batter's height and stance. The 2004 Official Rules of Major League Baseball defines it as "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 (of the batter), and the lower level is a line at the hollow beneath the knee cap." Needless to say, his judgment can arouse controversy.

The baseball pitcher throws overhand. Needing to deliver the baseball where he does not want to, the pitcher uses all his skill and cunning to try to prevent the batter from hitting it.

A skillful player can throw it in ways that make it go straight, or suddenly drop, or slide from one side to the other, or curve downwards.

It's as hard as a rock, so batters fear them when pitchers throw them close (by mistake or otherwise).

Because ground-in dirt or grass can affect their flight and visibility, baseballs are replaced with great frequency.

Batting Situation 1: The batter does not swing his bat at the baseball

First let's assume the pitcher delivers the baseball and the batter does not swing his bat at it.

a) **If the umpire rules that the pitch is outside of the strike zone**, it's bad for the pitcher and good for the batter, because if it happens four times (not necessarily in a row), the batter gets to walk unhindered to first base. Remember, we're assuming the batter doesn't try to swing his bat at these four pitches.

The penalty on the pitcher (and, of course, his team) for not giving the batter enough of a chance to hit the baseball is called, fittingly, a **walk**. It is also called a **base on balls** because each such errant pitch is called, believe it or not, a **ball**. To avoid confusion, this book calls the physical object the "baseball" (even though it is more common to refer to it as the "ball"). **Remember: Four balls to a walk.**

b) **If the pitch enters the strike zone** (according to the umpire) and the batter doesn't swing the bat, the tables are turned: bad for the batter and good for the pitcher because if it happens three times, the batter has made an **out** ("the batter is out"). He has to sit down and await his next turn at bat. This pitch is called a **strike** ... even though the batter didn't strike at it with his bat. He should have! After all, the strike zone is the area where most people find it easiest to hit a baseball. Remember: **Three strikes and you're out.**

Batting Situation 2: The batter swings his bat, but misses the baseball.

When he swings and misses, he's penalized whether or not the umpire would have ruled that the pitch was in the strike zone. That makes sense: he's in a battle with the pitcher, and he's made a mistake. This is another variety of strike and it's added to all the strikes of all the varieties that he incurs in this time at bat. If they all add up to three strikes, he's out.

Batting Situation 3: The defense catches a baseball that has not bounced

If a player (defensive, of course) catches a batted baseball that has never touched the ground, the batter is out. **It doesn't matter whether it's in fair or foul territory:** all the consequences and possibilities that follow are the same. (When a batted baseball has yet to touch anything but air, it's called a **fly-ball**.)

When the baseball is not caught before it bounces

Assume, on the other hand, that the baseball lands, bounces, or rolls anywhere on or off the playing field—the ground, the stands, the street, etc.—before any fielder can catch it. There are 2 possibilities:

Batting Situation 4: Foul ball is not caught before it bounces

If—because of the path it has taken—it's declared to be a foul-ball, then it's another kind of strike. This one is special. If the batter already has two strikes, this foul-strike does not count against him.

Why a foul-ball isn't allowed to be the third strike: at least he hit the ball somewhere. It's a failure on his part, but not as bad as failing to swing at an easy pitch (one type of strike) or swinging and missing (another type). Give the guy a break—don't call it the third strike, don't call him out, let's pretend nothing happened.

Batting Situation 5: Fair ball is not caught before it bounces

If—because of the path it has taken—it turns out to be a fair-ball, the batter tries to advance around the bases while the fielders (i.e., the defense) try to intercept the baseball.

a) If the fair-ball first lands in the stands or beyond, it's a **home run**, the best thing a batter can do. He slows down to a trot as he completes the circuit of the bases, scoring a run when he leisurely touches home plate. This happens almost every game.

b) If the fair-ball bounces off the ground and goes into the stands, the batter is allowed to occupy second base, unhindered. This happens every two or three games. There is a time-out as a new baseball is given to the pitcher.

c) In the frequent case that a fair-ball stays within the confines of the playing field, there's a race: If the batter does not get to first base before the defense can get the baseball there, he makes an out.

Remember: we're talking about a fair ball that lands, bounces, or rolls before being caught. If the defense catches a fair or foul ball before it touches the ground, the batter is out

Maybe the baseball travels so far inside the park that the batter can run to second base, or third, or even to home plate (which would complete the circuit and score a run). He's welcome to try to run between those bases, but makes an out if the defense retrieves the baseball and touches him with it while he is not touching a base.

The Basic Things that Baseball Batters Do

Good things a batter can do:

Get a hit. (See below.) He is now a runner.

Get a free walk to first base, i.e. be patient and don't swing the bat while the pitcher (usually by mistake) throws four balls (not necessarily consecutively) outside of the strike zone. He is now a runner.

Get hit by the pitched baseball—which hurts and which I have not mentioned until now. Awarded first base, he becomes a runner.

Types of "hits":

Hit a baseball so far that it flies over the wall in fair territory. It is a homerun. The batter (and any runners in front of him) automatically scores a run.

Hit a baseball so hard that it bounces over the wall and is judged to be a fair-ball. He is awarded possession of second base. He is now a runner.

Hit a baseball (that is judged to be a fair-ball) and reach any base before the defense can get him out. He is now a runner.

The bad thing a batter (or a runner) can do is make an out, a failure to perform.

If he makes the first or second out of the half-inning, he sits down on the bench. If he makes the third out, his whole team stops playing offense and starts playing defense. (The categories of outs are listed below.)

Types of outs:

A strike-out, comprised of any combination of three strikes, i.e., striking at any pitch, but missing it; not striking at a pitch in the strike zone; hitting a foul-ball that no one catches before it bounces, except that a foul-ball is not counted if it would be the third strike.

A fly-out: the defense catches any baseball, fair or foul, as it flies through the air before it makes any bounce.

Any of a variety of base-running outs: see the section on running.

You're free to run, but it's risky

As we mentioned in the Overview, an offensive player scores a run by completing a circuit around the bases, touching them in sequence. He usually proceeds from base to base with the help of his teammates as they take their turns at bat.

Definitions

Batter-runner: The batter must proceed toward first base (or beyond) when he is awarded a base or when he hits a fair-ball. Until the action of proceeding to first base or beyond stops, he is the batter-runner. This is a technical term writers use for clarity: you won't hear it in conversation.

Runner: When the above action pauses, a batter-runner who has not made an out (who is "safe") and who occupies first, second, or third base is called simply a runner.

Basic Principles of Base Running

Bases are islands of safety. If a runner has the right to occupy a certain base and is touching it with any part of his body, he cannot make an out.

There can be up to three runners at a time in addition to a batter-runner.

But a base is a safe haven for only one offensive player at a time. If two of them find themselves on the same base, one of them has made a bad mistake and is at risk of making an out until he returns to a base that he has a right to occupy.

A batter-runner or runner is automatically out whenever and wherever he passes another runner.

Runners do not have to stand on "their" base.

What is more, a runner is free to try to advance around the bases to home plate at almost any time. This is extremely important to realize. It makes no difference whether the current batter has hit the baseball, or whether the pitcher is pitching or just holding the ball, or ... almost any situation. It may appear that runners are obliged to stand on or near a base, but they usually are just being cautious. In fact, fast runners often try to steal a base, that is, run to it when the batter has not hit the baseball.

Exceptions to the freedom of runners to run when they want:

Exception 1: A runner cannot advance when there is a time-out. There are a lot of brief time-outs, some of them automatic, for example, when the umpire has to give the pitcher a new baseball or when a foul-ball is not caught before it bounces.

Exception 2: When a foul ball or a fair ball is caught before it bounces, the runner may not advance until it's caught. NB: he can advance as soon as it's caught.

The Reason for Exception 2

Remember that the batter is out if the defense catches a fly ball, a batted baseball that has never touched the ground. It makes no difference whether it is a fair ball or a foul ball. If Exception 2 didn't exist, a batter could intentionally hit a baseball straight up in the air so that runners could circle the bases and score even if the defense eventually caught it. It would be easy and silly.

Now, as soon as the defense catches a fly ball, the runner can try to advance provided that he starts his race by being in contact with his current base. This rule creates exciting situations when a baseball is hit a long distance in the air. The runner often hesitates half way between one base and another, judging whether or not the defense is going to catch the baseball and whether or not they can get the baseball to the next base before he arrives at it, which could make him out. (See the next page.)

Note that this is the only situation when runners may advance when there is a foul ball. While runners frequently try to take advantage of fair fly balls that are caught, they try only once every six or seven games, perhaps, when it's a question of a foul ball. It's simply geometry: foul territory tends to be small and relatively close to the bases. In any event, this is why we introduced the concept of a foul-ball as "almost always not good for the offense".

Why Run? How do you get a runner out?

Preliminary 1: The batter usually starts the action

The batter has to stay at home plate until he hits a fair ball, or is awarded a base, or acquires three strikes. In the latter case, he has made an out. In the other two cases, he must proceed toward first base.

Preliminary 2: At Risk or not at risk

Sometimes a batter or runner is awarded the right to advance to a base without the danger of making an out. He is said to be not at risk--until this brief action stops. You can usually spot these situations because the player walks or trots to a base--there is no need to run. The batter-runner is not at risk when he gets a walk, is hit by a pitch, or hits a fair ball that leaves the park on the fly or on the bounce.

Most of the time, however, a runner or batter-runner is at risk of making an out. In this case, he is in danger until he touches, and stays on, a base that he has a right to occupy.

The baseball hasn't arrived to the defensive player. The runner is safe.

Preliminary 3: Forced to move or not forced

Given that two offensive players can't occupy the same base at the same time, when the batter-runner--at risk or not at risk--is forced to advance to first base or beyond, he forces one or more runners in front of him to abandon their respective bases.

The only runners forced to move are those who are occupying a base that someone behind them has to occupy. There may be one or two runners who are not forced to do anything when a batter-runner is forced to go to a base, simply because no other runner is being forced to occupy those runners' bases. For example, consider that Runner F is on first base, and Runner T is on third base. If Batter H hits a fair-ball on the ground, H has to try to gain first base and F has to abandon it. But T does not have to leave third base, because no other runner "needs" it. Most anytime he wishes, T is free to leave his base. He may think it's a good time to try to score a run in this situation—but he is at risk of making an out.

Conclusion: Runners sometimes stroll and sometimes sprint

When the batter-runner is not at risk of making an out, any runners that he forces to move are also not at risk. For example, when the batter receives a walk or is hit by a pitch, any runner who has been occupying first base is "pushed" to second. If there were also a runner there, he would have to move to third base. If someone were already on third, he would have to take a pleasant stroll to home plate and score a run. Everyone takes his time because no one is at risk of making an out during this action. Similarly, if the batter hit a home run over the wall, all runners are calmly pushed to home plate, each scoring a run in the process.

When the batter-runner is at risk, any runners he forces to move are also at risk of making an out. So they should run to the next base as fast as possible.

How to Put (or "Get", or "Make") a Runner Out

The general conditions under which the defense can get a runner or batter-runner out are:

- ❖ He is at risk, i.e. he is not in the act of reaching a base that he has been freely awarded—because the batter got a walk, was hit by a pitch, etc.
- ❖ He is not touching a base to which he has a right.

Tag-out. In the above circumstances, the defense can **always** get a runner or batter-runner out by tagging him with the ball. That is, a defensive player can touch him with the hand (or glove) that is holding the baseball. The players in question don't have to be anywhere in particular on the playing field.

Force-out. This only works on a runner or batter-runner who is forced to run to a base. Again, he has to be at risk and not touching a rightful base. If he is forced to run to a certain base, a defensive player in possession of the baseball can simply make contact with that base with any part of his body, usually his foot. This is easier and faster than the other way of getting someone out, i.e. tagging him with the baseball—which also works in this situation.

An at-risk batter-runner is forced by the rules to try to reach first base. The force-out at first is perhaps the most common play in baseball.

If a runner leaves his base before a fly-ball is caught, the defense can either force him out at the base he left, or tag him out anywhere else on the field.

Basically, a runner can run to another base whenever he wants

Good things a batter-runner or runner can do:

- ❖ Be aware of when he has to run to a base, and when it is an option.
- ❖ Constantly calculate the risk of making an out versus the reward of advancing to another base.
- ❖ Steal a base

Bad things a batter-runner or runner can do when he's at risk and not touching a base:

- ❖ Get tagged out.
- ❖ Get forced out, which can only happen if he has been forced to advance, or he leaves his base too soon in the case that a fly-ball is caught.

How the game ends

The game ends after nine innings

... provided that one team has scored more runs than the other.

Consider the following scenarios, assuming that the game began with "**Starter Team**" playing offense (batting) and "**Ender Team**" playing defense (pitcher, catcher, and 7 other fielders).

Case 1: The ninth inning begins. Ender Team is winning.

Starter Team bats for the ninth time, but it makes three outs—thus ending its half-inning—without tying the game or going into the lead. The game is over, because **Ender Team** does not need to take its offensive turn, and is not allowed to add to its margin of victory.

Case 2: Starter Team finishes its turn at bat--its half of the ninth inning. Starter Team is winning, or the score is tied.

Ender Team gets a last chance to bat.

- ❖ If **Ender Team** scores enough runs to have a greater total than **Starter Team**, the game ends with the action that scores the winning run.
- ❖ If the ninth inning ends in a tied score, the teams play as many extra innings as necessary to determine a winner. **Ender Team** is always given a last chance to tie or win the game.

Baseball Terms

Balk: An illegal motion by the pitcher with one or more runners on base, entitling all runners to advance one base. A balk can be one of a number of movements related to the pitching motion but the intention is to catch the runners off balance.

Ball: A pitch which does not enter the strike zone and is not struck at by the batter.

Base: The four points of the baseball diamond (first through third bases and home plate) that must be touched by a runner in order to score a run.

Batter: The offensive player who is currently positioned in the batter's box.

Batter's Box: Either of the areas next to home plate where the batter stands during his time at bat.

Bottom: The second half of an inning.

Bunt: A legally batted ball, not swung at but intentionally met with the bat and tapped within the infield.

Catch: The act of a fielder in getting secure possession in his hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it.

Catcher: The defensive player whose position is directly behind home plate.

Defense: The team currently in the field.

Designated Hitter: A player who may be designated to bat instead of the pitcher.

Double: A play in which the batter makes it safely to second base without stopping.

Double Header: Two games played in immediate succession.

Double Play: A defensive play in which two offensive players are put out as a result of one continuous action.

Dugout: The seating area for team members not currently on the playing field.

Fair Ball: A legally batted ball that settles on or over fair territory.

Fair Territory: That part of the playing field within and including the first base and third base lines, from home plate to the playing field fence and perpendicularly upwards.

Fielder: One of the nine defensive players, including pitcher, catcher, first baseman, second baseman, third baseman, shortstop, left fielder, center fielder and right fielder.

Fielder's Choice: The act of a fielder who handles a fair grounder and, instead of throwing to first base to put out the batter runner, throws to another base in an attempt to put out a preceding runner.

Fly Ball: A ball which goes high in the air when batted.

Force Play: A play in which a runner loses his right to occupy a base when the current batter becomes a runner.

Forfeited Game: A game declared ended by the umpire for violation of the rules, and awarded to the offended team.

Foul Ball: A batted ball that lands on foul territory between home plate and first base or third base, bounds past first or third base on or over third territory, first touches foul territory beyond first or third base, or touches a player, umpire or any object not part of the playing field while over foul territory.

Foul Territory: That part of the playing field outside the first and third base lines extended to the outfield fence and perpendicularly upwards.

Ground Ball: A batted ball which rolls along the ground.

Ground Rule Double: When a line drive bounces on the field and over the wall in fair territory the hit is scored as a ground rule double and the batter advances to second base.

Home Plate: The base over which an offensive player bats, and to which he must return after touching all three bases in order to score a run.

Home Run: A play in which the batter makes it safely around all bases and back to home plate without stopping.

Home Team: The team on whose field the game is played. If the game is played on neutral grounds, the home team shall be designated by mutual agreement.

Infield: The diamond-shaped portion of the playing field bordered by the four bases.

Infielder: A fielder who occupies a position in the infield.

Infield Fly: A fair fly ball which can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort, which first and second, or first, second and third bases are occupied before the second out. Infield Fly Rule: On the infield fly rule the umpire is to rule whether the ball could ordinarily have been handled by an infielder not by some arbitrary limitation such as the grass, or the base lines. The umpire's judgment must govern, and the decision should be made immediately. When an infield fly rule is called, runners may advance at their own risk. If on an infield fly rule, the infielder intentionally drops a fair ball, the ball remains in play.

Inning: That portion of the 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.

Line Drive: A ball which is batted directly to a fielder without touching the ground.

Offense: The team currently at bat.

Out: A declaration by the umpire that a player who is trying for a base is not entitled to that base.

Outfield: The portion of the playing field that extends beyond the infield and is bordered by the first and third baselines.

Outfielder: A fielder who occupies a position in the outfield.

Pitch: The ball delivered by the pitcher to the batter.

Pitcher: The fielder designated to pitch the ball to the batter.

Quick Return Pitch: An illegal pitch, made with obvious intent to catch the batter off balance.

Run: The score made by an offensive player who has rounded the bases and returned to home plate.

Runner: An offensive player who is advancing toward, touching or returning to any base.

Safe: A declaration by the umpire that a runner who is trying for a base has not been tagged or forced out, and is therefore entitled to that base.

Single: A play in which the batter safely makes it to first base.

Strike: A legal pitch when so called by the umpire, which:

- ❖ Is struck at by the batter and missed;
- ❖ Is not struck at, if the ball passes through the strike zone;
- ❖ Is fouled by the batter when he has less than two strikes;
- ❖ Is bunted foul;
- ❖ Touches the batter as he strikes at it;
- ❖ Touches the batter in flight in the strike zone; or
- ❖ After being batted, travels directly from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught by the catcher (foul tip).

Strike Zone: An area directly over home plate, from the bottom of the batter's kneecaps to the midpoint between the top of the batter's shoulders and the top of the batter's uniform pants.

Tag: The action of a fielder in touching a base with his body while holding the ball, or touching a runner with the ball, or with his hand or glove while holding the ball.

Throw: The act of propelling the ball toward a given objective, usually a teammate. A pitch is not a throw.

Top: The first half of an inning.

Triple: A play in which the batter makes it safely to third base without stopping.

Triple Play: A defensive play in which three offensive players are put out as a result of one action.

Umpire: The official who judges the legality of individual plays and who otherwise enforces the rules of the game.

Offensive Statistics:

Batting Average (AVG): The number of base hits per at bat.

Games Played (G): The number of games the player has played in.

At Bats (AB): The official number of times the player has taken the plate as a batter, not counting walks or sacrifices.

Runs (R): The number of times a batter has crossed home plate.

Hits (H): The number of times a batter has safely reached a base, not including walks or sacrifices.

Doubles (2B): The number of hits that resulted in the batter hitting second base.

Triples (3B): The number of hits that resulted in the batter hitting third base.

Home Runs (HR): The number of hits that resulted in a home run.

Runs Batted In (RBI): The number of times a batter has made it possible for his teammates to score. Does not include hits resulting in a double play or runs scored because of an error.

Stolen Bases (SB): The number of times a base runner has successfully advanced to the next base without the help of the hitter.

Base on Balls (BB): The number of times a batter has been awarded first base as a result of four balls being pitched outside the strike zone. Also known as walks.

Strikeouts (SO): The number of times a batter has swung and missed on three pitches.

Pitching Statistics:

Games Pitched (GP): The cumulative total number of games in which a player has pitched.

Innings Pitched (IP): The cumulative total number of innings pitched by a player.

Wins (W): The number of games won. A starting pitcher will be credited with a win if he pitches at least 5 complete innings, his team is in the lead when he leaves the game and his team continues to maintain the lead for the rest of the game.

Losses (L): The number of games lost.

Win/Loss Percentage (PCT): The total number of wins divided by the sum of wins and losses.

Saves: The number of times a relief pitcher finishes a game where the potential tying or winning run is on base, at bat or on deck.

Hits Allowed (H): The number of hits given up while pitching.

Base on Balls (BB): The number of times a pitcher has thrown four balls, allowing the batter to be awarded first base.

Strikeouts (SO): The number of times a pitcher retires a batter after three strikes.

Earned Run Average (ERA): Earned Run Average The number of Earned Runs (scored without an error) that pitcher allows every nine innings. Computed by multiplying the total number of earned runs by nine and dividing by the number of innings pitched.