

# BASIC BASEBALL RULES

For young players and parents unfamiliar with the rules of baseball, here are the basic rules:

## Batting, Outs, and Strikes

A youth baseball game usually consists of 6 innings. In each inning, each team will pitch and field while the other team bats. When the batting team gets 3 outs, the other team bats.

## Outs

A batter is out when any of the following occur:

- They get 3 strikes
- They hit a ball that is caught before the ball hits the ground
- The ball is thrown to the first baseman and the first-baseman touches the base with their foot while the ball is in their glove or hand.
- Any member of the fielding team tags the batter with the ball or the glove containing the ball before they get safely to 1st base.
- Any member of the fielding team tags the batter with the ball or the glove containing the ball when the batter is on their way to 2nd base, 3rd base, or home.

Any base runner is out if any of the following occur:

- The base runner is forced out before arriving at the next base. (See Force Out vs. Tag Out below)
- The base runner is tagged out while off base.

## Strikes and Fouls

A batter may get a strike in 3 different ways:

- A swing and a miss at a ball
- A ball thrown into the strike zone that is not swung at but called a strike by the umpire
- A ball hit "foul". A "foul" ball is one that is hit so it rolls to the outside of the line from home plate to 1st base or outside the line from home plate to 3rd base. A ball that is hit within the two lines previously described is a "fair" ball. A batter never receives a 3rd and final strike for hitting a foul ball. If foul balls are hit after 2 strikes are obtained, the batter keeps batting. The exception is that if a foul hit ball (or fair ball) is caught before it strikes the ground, the batter is out.

## The Strike Zone

The strike zone is approximately the width of the home plate (or a little wider) and has height from about the knees to the shoulders of the batter. This zone will vary slightly among leagues and umpires. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, if the pitched ball is within the strike zone and the batter does not swing, the umpire will call a strike.

## Balls and Walks

If the pitcher pitches to an area outside the "strike zone" that is called a "ball" by the umpire and the batter does not swing, this will count as a "ball". If the batter is awarded 4 balls before striking out or getting out in any other way, they will be given a "walk". In a walk, the batter is allowed to safely proceed to first base.

## Running the Bases

After a batter hits a fair ball, they will attempt to do one of the following:

- Run to *1st base only*.
- Run to 1st base, then 2nd base (called a double).
- Continue past 2nd base and run to 3rd base (called a triple).
- Continue past 3rd base to home plate (called a home run).
- In addition, any previous batters that are on one of the bases may advance to subsequent bases and finally home. A run is scored for each player of the batting team successfully reaching home plate.

## Over-Running the Bases

After a fair ball is hit, the batter proceeds to run to first base. If the batter is only going to run to first base, they are allowed to overrun the first base and are "safe" if they touch base before the first-baseman catches the ball while standing on base. The batter is still safe even if they are off base, provided they run straight past the first base and turn to their

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right. If the batter, however, tags first base and rounds the corner to 2nd base, they may be tagged out if they are not successful! Also, players running from 1st to 2nd or 2nd to 3rd base may always be tagged out if they overrun the base and the 2nd or 3rd baseman tags them. So in summary, overrunning a base without danger of being tagged out is only allowed for a batter running straight past first base.

### Tagging Runners Out

Any player of the fielding team may tag any runner out by touching the player with the ball in hand or the glove containing the ball provided the runner is off base with exception of the first base over-run covered in the previous paragraph.

### Force-Out vs. Tag-Out Situations

Two runners of the batting team can not occupy a base at the same time. This means that if there is a runner at 1st base and the next batter hits a fair ball, this runner on 1st must advance to at least 2nd base. This is known as a "force out at 2nd" situation. If this is the case, the second baseman only has to tag the base before the runner arrives, rather than tag the runner. If the second baseman has enough time, they may even throw to first base to get the hitter out as well –if successful, this is known as a "double play". In a "bases loaded" situation with runners at each base, a force out is possible at 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base, or home since all of the runners and batters are *forced* to advance to the next base. On the other hand, if a runner is already at 2nd base with 3rd base empty and the ball is hit, the 2nd base runner trying to reach 3rd may only be tagged out by actually tagging with the ball (as opposed to simply tagging base). This last case is a "tag out" situation. So in summary, if a runner is forced to advance, a force out is possible. If a runner is not forced to advance, they must be tagged out. A force-out on the batter is always possible at first base.

### Rule Concerning Runs Scored When 3rd Out Is Made

All runs scored before the 3rd out is actually obtained will count if the third out occurs in a tag-out situation. So for example, if there are two outs and runners at 2nd and 3rd and the batter hits a ball that results in the 2nd base runner being tagged out at 3rd for the 3rd out yet the 3rd base runner made it home *before* the actual out was made, the run would count. If on the other hand, the runner made it home after the 3rd out was *actually* made, the run would not count. If the 3rd out occurred on a force-out situation, the run at home would not count, even if it was achieved before the 3rd out was made.

### Rules Concerning Pop Fly Balls

A "pop fly ball" is a ball hit into the air so a fielder can catch it before it hits the ground. If a pop fly is caught before it hits the ground, the batter is automatically out. In addition, any runners that start to advance to another base *before* the ball is caught are out if the ball is thrown back to the baseman and the baseman tags the base with his/her foot before the runner returns back to base. So for example, a pop fly is hit. While the fly ball is in the air, a runner on 2nd base advances to 3rd. The ball is caught and thrown back to the 2nd baseman and he/she tags base before the runner can get back on base. The runner would be out. A runner may "tag up" however, and then safely run to the next base. "Tagging up" means the runner waits until *after* the fair-hit pop-fly ball is caught and then runs to the next base. So, if our 2nd base runner had waits until the ball is caught before proceeding to 3<sup>rd</sup> base, the runner would be safe, provided they did not get tagged out at 3rd base.

### Stealing Bases

In youth baseball leagues for ages 9 and below, stealing bases is generally not allowed although there are exceptions. For youth baseball leagues for ages 9-12, stealing bases is allowed. An existing runner may run to the next base after the pitch is thrown and arrives at the catcher, even if the ball is not hit. This is known as a steal. The pitching team may try to tag this runner out. This is a tag-out situation. Note that a runner may not steal on a ball hit foul - in this case the stealing runner is allowed to safely return to the original base. Also note that some leagues may allow stealing bases before the ball gets to the catcher. Check your local rules.