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About the Tutorial

Baseball is a game played between two teams. It has a little similarity to cricket but rules are much different. In this game also one team has to make runs and the other team has to chase it in order to win the game. This tutorial provides useful information regarding how to play baseball.

Audience

This tutorial will be useful for all those readers who have a passion to learn this game. It will help them learn the basics of how to play baseball.

Prerequisite

This is a simple elementary tutorial and we assume it can be easily followed without having any prior knowledge of the baseball. However, if the reader is familiar with cricket, then he/she will have no problem in learning this game.

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1. Baseball – Overview

Baseball, usually considered the national sport or pastime of the United States, originated in the country and quickly spread to Netherlands, Italy, Belgium, England, Spain, Australia, Tunisia, and other parts of the world.

Baseball was popularized heavily and is widely considered to mirror the spirit of United States. So many articles on the history of baseball, which were not very clearly based on historical reports, were made up and propagated by the media. But common consensus was arrived recently owing to its immense popularity in United States of America. It is said to be North American modification of older English games like Rounders and Stoolball which also influenced other similar games like Cricket.

The game turned professional after the Civil War in 1860's and attracted commercial interests, yet amateur baseball is equally popular and was separated from the professional one in 1871. Though the sport was initially played among teams of various ethnic groups in the States, like the German Americans, the African Americans, and the Irish Americans. The sport helped in bringing harmony among the diverse ethnic groups and the native Americans in the 80's and 90's.

Objective

Baseball is a team game played by two teams of nine players each on an enclosed Baseball field under the direction of a manager in accordance with rules under jurisdiction of one or more umpires.



An offending player tries to hit the ball away from the reach of the defenders and score runs by running around the bases. Players of the defending team try to out the player

who is batting. Both the teams take turns at batting and fielding. Three consecutive outs from each team make an innings, and nine innings make a game. The objective of each team is to win by scoring more runs and try to prevent opponents from scoring runs.

Team Members

Baseball is a team game; it has two teams of nine active players each. While one team plays defence (fielders), the other team plays offence (batters).

In leagues, the rules vary widely. Some professional teams contain as many as 25 players, including eight position players, five starting pitchers, six relief pitchers, and substitutes. Substitute players include **catchers**, **relievers**, **infielders**, **outfielders**, and another player specialising in pinch hitting. If a hitter replaces the starting player in the batting order he is called a **pinch hitter**. A player replacing a base runner is called a pinch runner.

The offensive team that has to bat sends its batsman as per the batting order decided by the umpire. The batsman, who is at bat, stays in the **batting box** to hit the balls pitched by the pitcher of the defending team. Some batsmen can strike with both their hands, such batters are called **Switch-Hitters**. The **Catcher**, also called **Behind**, stays behind the batsman to pick any balls he missed.



Players are further identified by their special skills. The team's best pitcher usually pitches first and is called an **Ace**. Anyone with all-around skills is called a Utility player and can fill any position the situation demands. A relief pitcher replaces the starting pitcher and the relief pitcher who finishes the game is called a **Closer**. Sometimes the starting pitcher pitches for the whole game, in that case he is said to have pitched a **Complete Game**.

Apart from players, training and managing personnel also work with players in a team. Each team has a manager to make strategic decisions like deciding the batting order, starting rotation, line-up, and deciding when to introduce pinch hitter as a substitute. Players of a team are trained in hitting, fielding, and pitching by two coaches. Base coaches stand on the bases to suggest the players. Two or more umpires declare outcomes and look over the running of the game.

Participating Countries

Baseball is undoubtedly more popular in the United States and many league matches have been organised in the country every year. Though many countries are part of IBAF, the international regulating body of Baseball, not all of them send their teams to major international tournaments. Baseball is more popular as a sport of league matches in the US, but league matches are also common in other countries that send their teams to international tournaments.

Some of the active participants in international competitions from Asia are Israel, Japan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and Taiwan. The game is very popular in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan; they have also won some international Championships.

The game is a prominent sport in other countries of Europe and South America. Some of the countries that participated in international championships are Italy, Spain, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Canada, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama. Cuba, Netherlands, and UK are also champions and many players from these countries participate in league matches in their countries and also in international league matches.

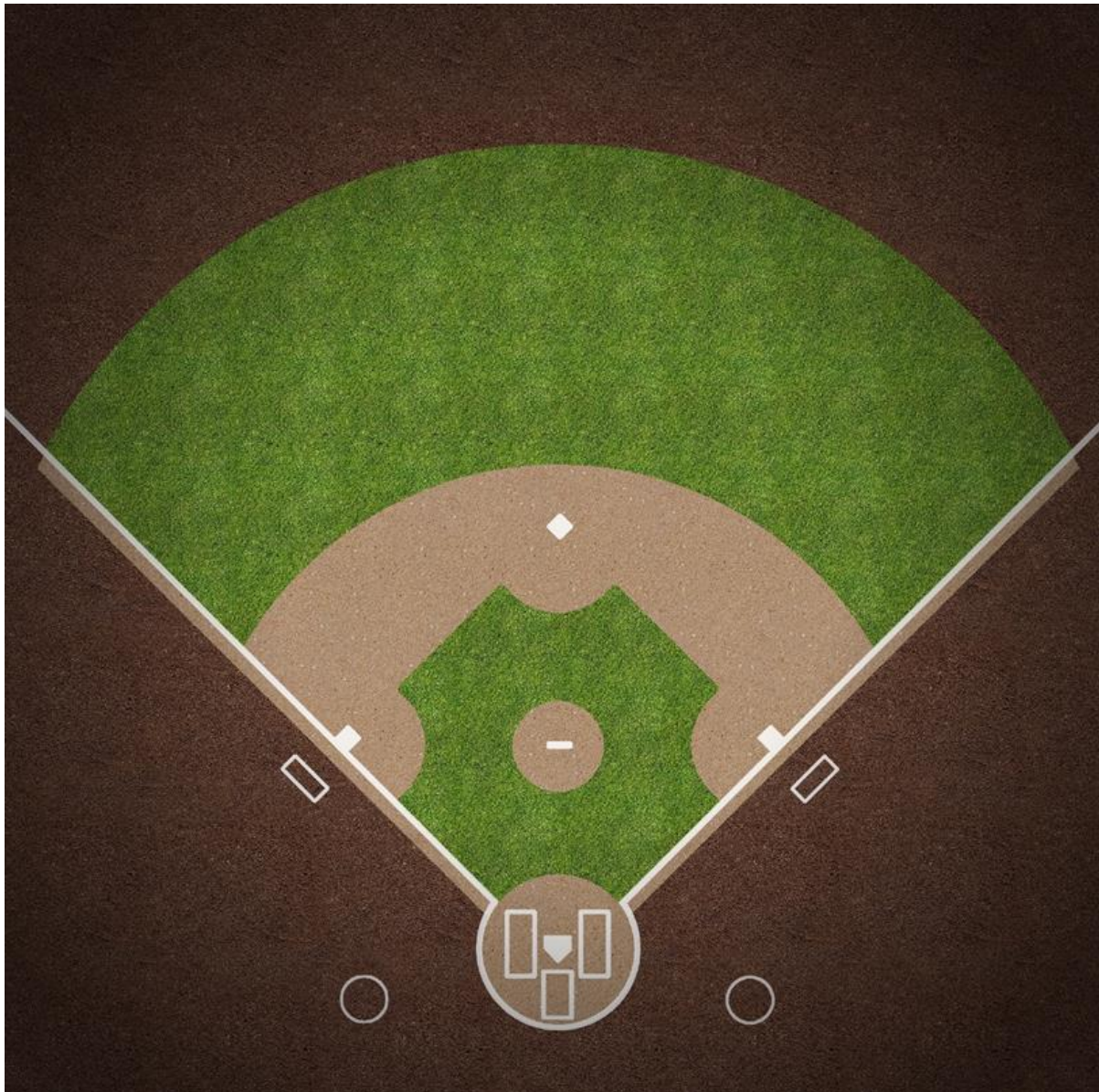
2. Baseball – Playing Environment

The baseball field, also called the baseball diamond, is a specially-designed field composed of two basic parts: the infield and the outfield.

Infield

The infield is the centre of action. It is marked by four rugged pads or bases, also called bags usually made of canvas. They are set equidistant at 90 feet from one another on the ground in a square, aligned diagonally, forming a diamond shape. The third base is also called the **hot corner**.

A **home plate**, where the batter bats, is larger and is on one of the bases, closer to the deck. Unlike the other bases the home plate is a flat slab of rubber, pentagonal in shape and has a batter's box allocated for the batter with a barrier called **backstop** behind it.



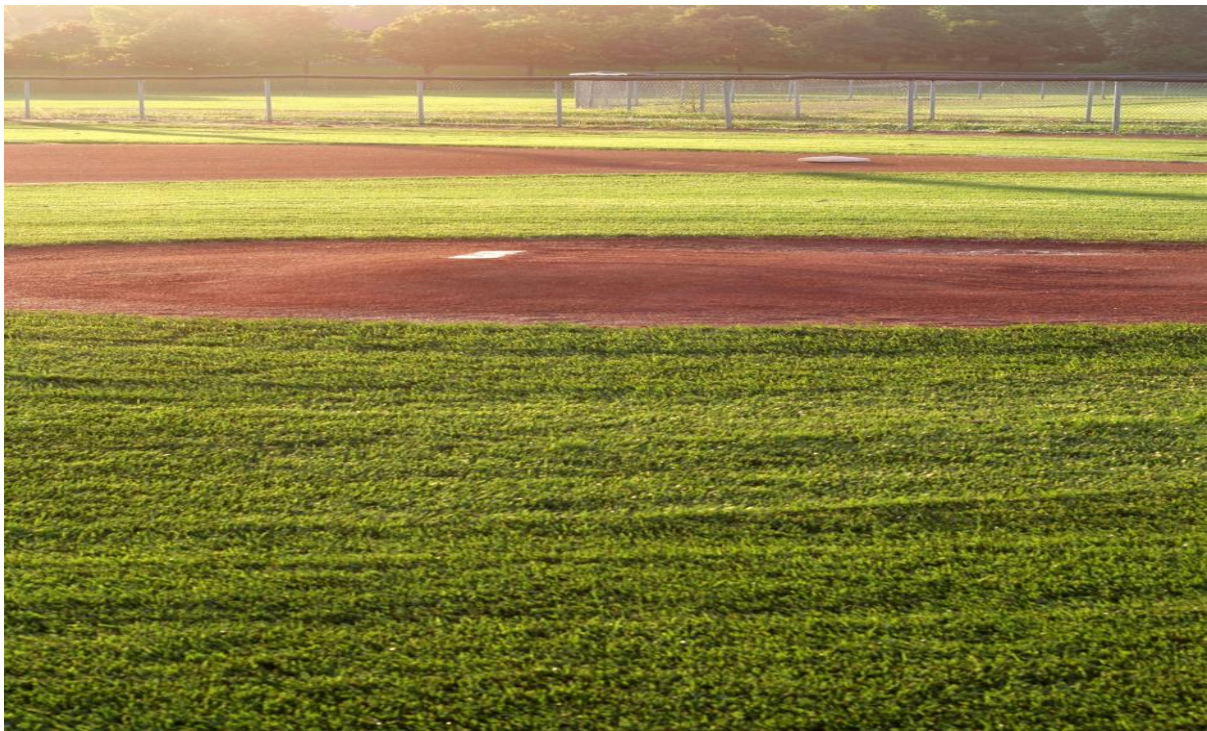
The other three bases are equal in size and are numerically labelled from the right side of the batter standing on home plate facing the outfield. Players must run from the bases to reach the home plate and score runs.

The path joining a base to the next is made of mud or dirt, and the diamond is enclosed by base lines covered in grass or in artificial turf. The rest of the infield outside the diamond and enclosed by the outfield is not covered with grass.

Pitchers' Mound

Inside the grassy infield and near the middle of it is a dirt mound called pitchers' mound. The circular mound is 18 ft in diameter and a white rubber slab rectangular in shape of 5 ft × 3 ft levels it at the top.

The front side of the plate is about 60 ft, 6 inches from the home base and the plate is elevated by 10 inches at its back. Another rectangular pitchers' plate or pitchers' rubber is placed in the rectangle at about 6 inches from the front, 18 inches from the sides, and 24 inches from the back.



The ball is pitched from the pitcher's mound at the batsman who tries to hit it with the bat from the home plate.

Outfield

The sides of infield that corner the home plate are extended and marked by mud, they are foul lines and they enclose outfield between them. The outfield is enclosed by a fence and its distance from home plate varies from 290 ft to 400 ft.

A painted box called **catcher's box** is behind home plate; it is where the catcher crouches to catch the ball if the batsman misses it. Coaches' boxes and on-deck circles are outside the foul lines. A bull pen or simply a pen is a warm-up area for relief pitchers. Officials involved in the game and teammates not in play sit at a designated area called **Dugout**.



The distance of fence from the field and audience varies significantly from one field to another.

3. Baseball – Equipment

Here is a list of all the necessary equipment that are used while playing baseball:

Batting Helmet

Helmet is worn by a batter to protect his/her head and the ear facing the pitcher from the ball. While some helmets have ear protectors only on one side as only the ear facing the pitcher should be protected, helmets with ear protectors on both sides are more common as some batters are left handed and some right handed.

Baseball cap

All players wear a hat to shade their eyes from the sun. Baseball hat design has become so popular with the general public that they are also used to make a style statement.

Catcher's helmet

Catchers wear a helmet with face mask similar to a hockey goalkeeper mask to protect both their head and face. Sometimes they might wear a separate helmet and a facemask.

Uniform

All players, coaches and managers wear shirts and pants. Each team has a uniform dress of a specific colour and design.

Sliding shorts

Players sometimes wear padded support shorts to protect the player's thighs when he/she slides into the bases. Some sliding shorts contain a pocket for a cup that serves as a jockstrap.

Baseball Cleats

These are baseball specific shoes made of rubber or metal that players wear for better traction.

Bat

Baseball bat is a round, solid wooden or hollow aluminium bat. Wooden bats are traditionally made from ash wood, though sometimes maple and bamboo is also used.



Ball

The ball used in baseball is called a baseball. Layers of yarn or string is rolled on a cork sphere and a leather coat is stitched over it to make a baseball.

Gloves

Players wear leather gloves to protect their palms. A webbed "pocket" between the thumb and first finger helps the fielder to catch the ball easily.

Catcher's mitt

Catchers wear leather mitts with connected finger pockets that are much wider and better padded than a normal fielder's glove.

First baseman's mitt

First basemen wear leather mitts that are longer and wider than a standard fielder's glove. They are similar to catcher's mitt as the four fingers are connected; additionally, it is rounded and has more padding than a standard fielder's glove

Batting gloves

Batsmen wear gloves on one or both hands for additional grip and to avoid shock when they strike the ball.

4. Baseball – Terms

Given below is a list of some frequently used terms in baseball:

- **Around the Horn:** The runner who runs from the third base, to the second and then to the first is said to have run 'Around the Horn'.
- **Backdoor Slider:** If a pitch that seems to be a 'ball' lands on the plate, it is called a backdoor slider.
- **Balk:** The pitcher may trick runners as if he is pitching to make them advance to the next base. This is illegal in a game.
- **Baltimore Chop:** A popular hit named after the Baltimore Orioles, where the batsman strikes in such a way that the ball bounces high off from the home plate and the batsman gets a chance to make a single.
- **Base Hit:** The batsman strikes in such a way that the ball reaches at least the first base without any error.
- **Box Score:** Runs scored and other information of innings is presented by checking a series of relevant boxes. The score board is called the Box Score.
- **Brush-back:** Sometimes the ball that is pitched comes close to the batsman, but the batsman narrowly escapes getting hurt. Such a pitched ball is called a brush-back.
- **Circus Catch:** The outfielder might dive, jump or skid to catch a ball, such a tough catch is called a Circus Catch.
- **Bunt:** If the ball hits the bat in the infield though it is not pitched at it, it is called a Bunt.
- **Called Game:** If the umpire temporarily stops the game for some reason, then the game is said to have been 'Called'.
- **Change Up:** Sometimes the batsman might be tricked to believe a slow ball to be a fast one. Then the ball is said to have 'Changed Up'.
- **Force Play:** The batsman starts running, so the next baseman is forced to advance. Forcing a runner to advance is called 'Force Play'.
- **Texas Leaguer:** The ball that lands on the ground between an infielder and an outfielder is called a Texas Leaguer.
- **Chin Music:** The ball that comes close to the batsman's face and sometimes might hurt his face is called Chin Music.
- **Cycle or Natural Cycle:** If a batsman scores a single, double, triple, and a home run in the same game, he/she is said to have finished a Cycle.
- **Donut:** A donut shaped weight is attached to the bat to practice during warm up.

- **Ground Rule Double:** If the ball that was hit bounces and flies beyond the wall or fence, runners on bases can advance by two bases.
- **Designated Hitter:** A Non-field player is called a designated hitter if he has to bat from the pitcher's position.
- **Double Header:** A team is said to be a Double Header if it plays two games continuously.
- **Fielder's Choice:** When a fielder, for some reason, chooses to throw the ball to a base the batter is not running towards, it is called the Fielder's Choice.
- **Fireman:** The relief pitcher that closes out the game.
- **Infield Fly:** A batsman hits the ball in such a way that it flies in the infield and can be easily caught by an infielder.
- **Intentional Walk:** A batsman might be forced to advance to the first base; intentionally, by pitching four times.
- **Line Drive:** It is a kind of hit that drives the ball straight to a fielder.
- **Left On Base:** If the bases are loaded despite three outs, the runners are said to be 'Left on Base'.
- **Mendoza Line:** Named after the legendary shortstop Mario Mendoza, it indicates a batting average of over .200.
- **Passed Ball:** The ball sometimes escapes from the catcher and gives runners a chance to advance to next base.
- **Perfect Game:** The game is considered perfect if the pitcher could prevent every batsman from advancing to first base.
- **Pick Off:** To tag a base runner and prevent him from scoring a run, the pitcher throws the ball to a fielder. The throw is called a 'Pick Off'.
- **Pull Hitter:** A Hitter is called a pull hitter if he drives the ball towards the batting side of the field.
- **Sacrifice Bunt:** The ball is carefully tapped to put out a batsman by forcing a base runner to advance.
- **Sacrifice Fly:** The runner scores a point but the fly ball lands in a catch.
- **Save:** A relief pitcher is credited with a 'Save' if three or more innings are pitched without a tie game or if the team leads even when the opponent is tying or winning runs on base.
- **Wheelhouse:** The power zone or sweet sport of a hitter.
- **Can of Corn:** The ball sometimes is shot in such a way that the outfielder can catch it easily without moving from his position. Such an easy fly-ball catch is called a Can of Corn.

- **Run Batter In (RBI):** A player earns credits for helping his teammates in scoring points while up to bat. Such a record is called RBI.
- **Grounder or Ground ball:** A batsman hits a Ground ball when it bounces off the ground or rolls in the infield.

5. Baseball – How to Play?

There are two main aspects of playing the game. A team has to bat initially and the other team has to defend the pitch. Once the innings is complete the roles are reversed, and this goes on for up to nine innings at professional level.

As discussed earlier, nine players of a team stand at specific defensive positions on the field during defensive play. During offensive play, all players act as batsmen, taking turns and try to hit the ball.

Once the batter hits the ball, he/she can begin to run from home plate counter clockwise from one base to the other and back to the home plate to score a point. The defensive team that fields the court tries to get the ball and tag it to the batsman to end the run chase.

- The **pitcher** pitches the baseball at a certain level towards the batsman, over the **home plate**. A clever pitcher pitches a difficult ball to make it difficult for the batsman to hit it far and score runs.
- The **catcher** takes his position behind the home plate with heavy protective gear and a special mitt. He crouches to pick the ball up if the batsman misses it and also fields if the ball lands close by.
- The first baseman, who should be a good catcher, stands at the first base and tries to get hold of the ball before the batsman reaches the first base and tags him.
- The second baseman tries to tag the batsman by guarding the area between the first and the second base, and helps catch ground balls before they roll into the outfield.
- The third baseman closely guards third base; he is skilled in sending the balls back to the first base across the diamond with a strong throwing arm.
- Three players, called the **out-fielders**, guard each of the left, right, and centre sections of the outfield. They catch balls that reach far when the batsman hits hard to score more runs.
- The umpire shouldn't favour any team and should act unbiased. He watches the game closely to announce runs scored in each play.
- Only offensive team members who bat can get an out. Once a player is out, he or she is removed from the batting rotation and from play for the rest of the inning. Once three players of the offensive team are out, the defensive team gets a chance to bat.
- A batsman can hit either a fair ball or a foul ball. If the batsman advances to a base without any errors, it is called a hit.
- When the batsman swings at the ball but misses it, it is called a strike. Foul balls too result in strike. Three strikes will make the batsman out and is called a Strike Out.

- Once a batsman is out, the next batsman in the batting order gets the chance to bat.
- When a ball is pitched too far from the hitting area to be hit by the batsman, it is called a **ball**. After four balls, the batsman gets a free advancement to first base. The situation is also called **base on balls** or **walk**.
- When the batsman hits the ball outside the foul lines, it is a **foul ball**.
- When a foul ball is caught and turned into **flyout**, the **foulball** is counted as a strike.
- Besides the batsmen, the runners too stay at the bases to score runs. They try to steal the bases by running even before the batter hits the ball, this is called hit and run.

Pitching Styles

There are many styles of pitching. The defending team members pitch the ball in such a way that it is difficult for the batsman to hit and score runs. They also try to out the batsman.

- **Checked Swing:** A ball pitched in such a way that it rotates almost halfway around.
- **Cheese:** A great fastball pitch.
- **Curveball:** A ball that bends leftwards when pitched with the right hand, and rightwards when delivered with the left.
- **Cutter:** A fast ball is called a cutter or a cut fastball when it breaks slightly before reaching home plate.
- **Fork Ball:** A ball pitched by holding it firmly with the index and middle fingers to pitch it slower and usually ground it.
- **Fast Ball:** A ball pitched straight and fast.
- **Throw:** It is different from a pitch. A pitcher uses the hand to drive the ball towards a teammate or to a specific spot.
- **Sinker:** A fastball pitched downwards.
- **Wild Pitch:** A ball is pitched too wide by mistake that the catcher cannot block it and runners get time to advance and score runs.
- **Slider:** A curveball made with a straight wrist, to trick the hitter that it is a fastball, but it breaks on reaching the home plate.
- **Knuckle Ball:** Holding the ball with knuckles to prevent it from spinning.
- **Quick Return Pitch:** A pitch intended to throw off the batsman, sometimes pitched when the batsman signals joy after a home run.

Scoring Runs

Runners stay on bases and make runs by running to the next base. Apart from the batsman, base runners also run to have a head start while trying to score a point. Maximum of three runners can be at the field, one runner may be placed at each of the bases.

The run can be made in singles, doubles, triples and home runs, as runners advance to first, second, or third base, or back to the home plate in one hit without any errors. A homerun hit while all bases are loaded is called a **Grand Slam**. Singles and doubles are more common than triples and home runs.

In some cases, the pitching might be so tough and the outfielders closely guard the defending team that the team might fail without any runs; in that case, the team is said to have **shut out**.

Outs or Errors

A batsman or a runner can be put out or run down when they cannot reach the next base before getting tagged. Tagging is done by making the runner touch the ball. Otherwise, runners reach the base safely and score a run.

If the ball lands in the foul territory after it is hit, it is also considered to be an error. When the bases are loaded, more than one runner can be put out. Two outs in a single hit is called **Double play** and three outs is called a **Triple play**.

Sometimes the runner is forced to advance to the next base and get out because there is a runner behind him. Such outs are called **force outs**.

A Game might be forfeited when a team is awarded a win as the opposing team commits a foul.

6. Baseball – Tournaments

Let us now discuss some of the major tournaments held in baseball:

World Series

This popular annual championship is also called **Fall Classic** where champions of American League and National League, the two popular professional baseball leagues of North America, compete for the title.

Caribbean Series

Cuba, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela, the prominent Latin American countries participating in Baseball leagues, compete in the Series every year. The countries take turns to host the series, usually held every year in February.



World Baseball Classic

This Championship is approved by World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC), the international regulating body of baseball, where the winner of this Championship earns the title 'World champion'. It grew in popularity, mostly outside United States, after it was decided in 2005 to remove baseball from Olympics. The championships were held in 2006, 2009, and in 2013; the upcoming one is scheduled for 2017.

Olympics

Baseball was a part of Olympics from 1992 to 2008. But, since the game is not popular throughout the world and was not attracting many international audience it was removed from Olympics from 2012.

Baseball World Cup

World Cup tournaments have been organised since 1938, but they were not regular. Even though professional players participating in league matches were allowed to participate in World Cup matches after 1996, not many league players preferred to participate in them. From 2001 to 2011, baseball World Cups were organised every two years. After 2011, World Cup tournaments were discontinued as World Baseball Classic replaced it and has become popular and attracted players of prestigious professional leagues.

7. Baseball – Variants

Softball

Softball also called diamond ball, indoor-outdoor, kitten ball, mush ball, play ground ball is just like baseball as the rules and strategies of both the games are very similar. But, it is played on a smaller court with different equipment and each game has only seven innings. The game is very popular in the United States. The ball circumference is only 12 inches though sometimes it is also played with a ball of 16 inches circumference and between two teams of ten members each.

Stickball

Stickball originated from Baseball and is modified to play in the streets. The ball is usually a bouncing rubber ball, and the bat has a broom handle. It is similar to other stick and ball games that we find in the streets where buildings serve as boundaries and the rules are defined locally.

The batsman bats the ball into the air and if the ball is caught the batsman is out. Hits are defined by how far the ball is shot; if the ball lands on a porch or if it breaks a window, it is usually considered a home run. Some versions of stickball don't involve running between bases.

T-ball

T-ball is a popular game for kids aged 4-7 that is used to train young kids in hitting a ball and prepare them for other games like baseball and softball. It involves hitting a stationary ball that is not pitched but placed on a flexible rod, firmly fixed on a movable base.

Wiffle Ball

Wiffle ball was invented in 1953 by David.N.Mullany for his twelve-year-old son. It is played with a bat and ball similar to that of baseball but made of plastic in an enclosed indoor or outdoor court. It is a popular street and backyard sport and is also played at summer camps.

Rounders

Rounders is as old as Baseball and is considered to be a primitive version of Baseball played in England in the 18th century. This bat and ball game popular among school children involves batting and fielding. The rules and equipment are similar to that of baseball and cricket; the ball is small, hard, and enveloped in a sheet of leather, and the bat is shorter, made of wood, metal, or plastic and is rounded at the end. Batting rules and innings are similar to that of baseball, but batsmen earn points only when they finish a circuit past four bases without getting out.

Rigoball

This recent field game was developed in Dominion Republic in the lines of baseball, but players in the game don't need any bats at all. There is no batsman, and the ball is thrown and caught among players. It is played on a court without any pitcher's mound and the game progresses faster than baseball. The teams may include both men and women. The game is considered to be safer and less strenuous. The rules are similar to that of Baseball but are modified to make the game faster and more interesting.

8. Baseball – Champions

Baseball, though is not widely played throughout the Globe, it is played with a lot of passion and enjoys enormous respect in the United States. So, most of the international champions are from United States.

George Herman Ruth (Jr) or Babe Ruth

He is a former American professional baseball player of the early twentieth century, and has nicknames Babe Ruth, the Bambino, and The Sultan of Swat. Though he came from a very modest background and was educated in a Baltimore asylum, he rose to popularity through baseball and is widely considered the most celebrated athlete in the States.

He won World Series in 1916 and in 1918, and won 87 games between 1915 and 1919. This great left-handed pitcher is also the greatest hitter and is still remembered for his magnificent homeruns.



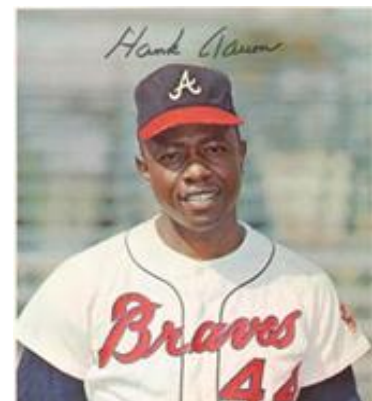
Willie Mays

Willie Mays, also called 'Say Hey Kid' was an American Professional Baseball all-rounder. This wonderful batsman and is also popular for his astounding diving and leaping catches. Though many believe that he didn't receive the respect his talent deserved, he gained popularity and achieved much success after colored players were included in major leagues. He played for the National League New York Giants when the team won National League pennant and World Series and later for New York Mets in 1972-73.



Hank Aaron

Hank Aaron, who played for the Boston Braves team of National League, has a batting average of 0.305 and broke batting records set by many batting legends during his career of 23 seasons. He won the batting league championship in 1956 and steered his team for a World Series win in 1957. He joined Milwaukee Brewers in 1974, took retirement in 1976 and was inducted to Baseball Hall of Fame in 1982.



Ted Williams

Ted Williams or Theodore Samuel William, also fondly called the Splendid Splinter and Teddy Ballgame, played for Boston Red Sox of the American League from 1939 to 1960. Though he spent five peak years of his career in military service, he could still get back to baseball without any hiccups.

Notable for his unusual ability to bat with his left hand but throw with his right, he was the last player to hit 0.400 in Major League Baseball, and he achieved a lifetime batting average of 0.344.



Ty Cobb

Ty Cobb, whose full name is Tyrus Raymond Cobb, is lovingly called 'the Georgia Peach'. He played 22 seasons of his 24 season career as an outfielder of the Detroit Tigers. Though he couldn't win any world Series, his team won three American League(AL) pennants one after the other from 1907 to 1909. He, like Ted Williams, batted with his left and threw with his right and is considered on the greatest offensive players.



Honus Wagner

Honus Wagner, also called the Flying Dutchman, is considered to be the best shortstop for his agility and a strong throwing arm, and was also a good all-around player. He was a member of the Pittsburgh Pirates and led the team to three National League Pennants.

During his tenure, the Pirates also won their first World Series in 1909. He had 3420 hits during his 21 year long career, and his batting average is 0.328. Though he did not enjoy large home run scores, he was an extraordinary power hitter.



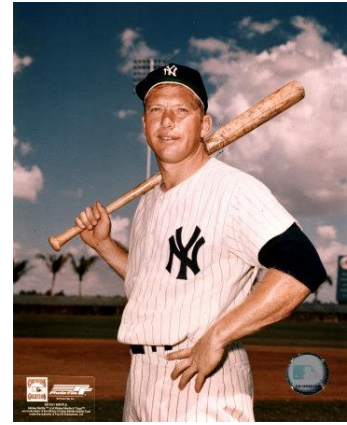
Ken Griffey Jr.

He was a member of the American League Seattle Mariners and was a popular power hitter and a centre fielder of 1990's. He won the American League Gold glove award from 1991 to 1999 for his wonderful fielding skills, and was declared the American League's Most Valuable Player in 1997.



Mickey Mantle

Mickey Charles Mantle is also called The Commerce Comet or The Mick. He is considered to be the best switch hitters that any centre fielders are afraid of. His fielding percentage when playing center field is an extraordinary 0.984, and he was also popular for his tape-measure home runs. He played twelve World Series, is a Golden Glove winner, and was chosen to be the Most Valuable Player thrice.



Jackie Robinson

Jack Roosevelt Robinson or 'Jackie' is the first African American in Modern era to cross the colour bar and participate in Major Baseball Leagues. In his ten year long baseball career he won many prestigious awards like National League's Most Valuable Player Award in 1949. He played in six World Series and also played in World Series Championship in 1955.

This exceptional baseball player was honoured with Congressional Gold Medal and Presidential Medal of Freedom after his death, for his contributions to Civil Rights Movement.

