

LEVELED BOOK • M

Ichiro Suzuki

**Multi
level
J•M•P**

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Ichiro steals third base in a game against the New York Yankees.

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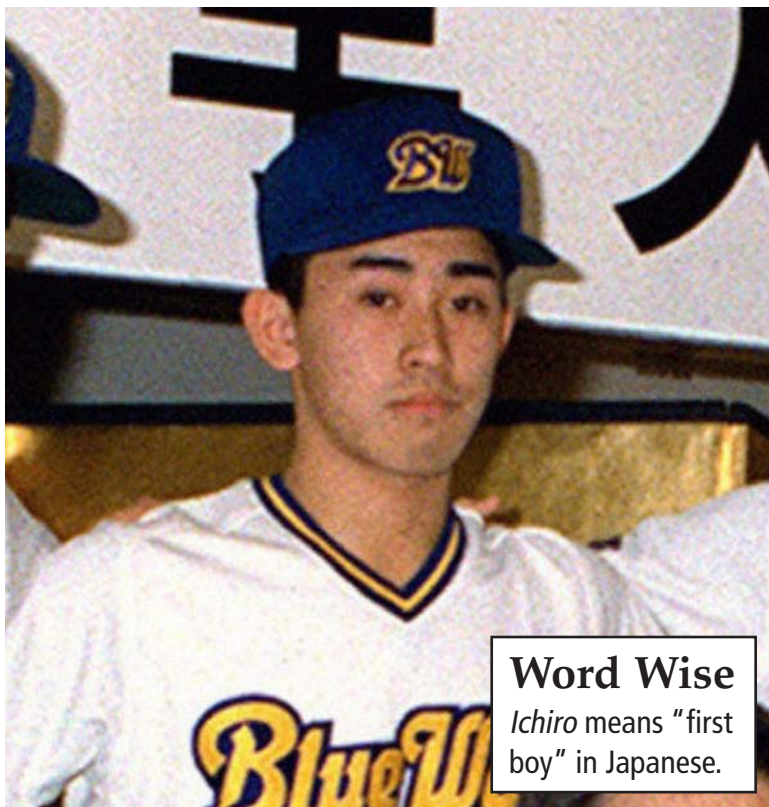
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Born to Play

Ichiro Suzuki was born in **Japan** on October 22, 1973. Ichiro's father wanted him to become a great baseball player. He made Ichiro practice up to four hours a day, every day.

His father also made Ichiro bat from the left side of the plate. That way, he would be closer to first base. Ichiro and his father didn't always get along.



Word Wise

Ichiro means "first boy" in Japanese.

Ichiro joined the Blue Wave when he was eighteen years old.

In high school, Ichiro woke up very early to do his chores. He wanted to make sure he had enough time to play ball and study.

All his hard work paid off. When he was eighteen, the Blue Wave chose him to be on their team.

ICHIRO SUZUKI

Height: 5' 11" (1.8 m)

Weight: 170 lbs (77.1 kg)

Position: Outfielder

Bats: Left

Throws: Right

Date of Birth: Oct. 22, 1973

Born: Kasugai, Japan



Ichiro hits a game-winning home run while playing for the Blue Wave in 1996.

Japan's Favorite Player

Ichiro played seven years with the Blue Wave baseball team in Japan. He led the team to its first **championship** in 1996. Ichiro also led the league in hits seven years in a row. He played in seven **all-star** games. In time, he became the most famous person in Japan.



One of Ichiro's many ads hangs over a busy shopping area in Tokyo, Japan.

Ichiro's fans loved him. They saw him on TV. They saw him in ads. They liked his hair and the way he dressed.

Ichiro was so popular that his father built a museum. The museum holds thousands of things from Ichiro's life. These include his report cards, clothes, and video games.



Fans in Tokyo, Japan, watch Ichiro play on television.

Later, when Ichiro began to play in the United States, many of his fans followed him. They watched his games on television. Some fans even flew across the ocean just to see him play.

Japan's Pastime

People in the United States love baseball. So do the Japanese. They have been playing the game since the late 1800s. They started their first league in 1936.

Babe Ruth sits with batboys during an all-star game in Japan in 1934.





Many pitchers fear Ichiro's swing.

Coming to the United States

Ichiro loved playing in Japan. Yet he wanted to show that he could play in the United States. He was thinner and smaller than most American players. He also didn't hit the ball hard. Instead, he slapped at it with his bat.



Ichiro steals a base in 2001. He is one of only a few baseball players who use their first names on their jerseys.

Ichiro joined the Seattle Mariners in 2001. He played very well as a **rookie**. Ichiro had a .350 batting average. He led the American League in hits with 242. He stole 56 bases and scored 127 runs.

Ichiro won the American League Rookie of the Year Award. He also won the Most Valuable Player (MVP) Award. It is not often that a player wins both.



Ichiro was one of the top players in the game. He played with the Mariners until 2012. That year, he was traded to the New York Yankees.

Ichiro has won many awards over the years. In 2007, he won the All-Star MVP Award.



Ichiro is known for making amazing catches.

Setting Records

Ichiro has won two Most Valuable Player Awards while playing in the United States. He also won two awards for batting and ten Gold Gloves. Ichiro doesn't hit many home runs. Still, he led the league in singles ten years in a row.

Ichiro by the Numbers

Year	Team	Hits	Home Runs	Runs Batted In	Batting Average
2001	SEA	242	8	69	.350
2002	SEA	208	8	51	.321
2003	SEA	212	13	62	.312
2004	SEA	262	8	60	.372
2005	SEA	206	15	68	.303
2006	SEA	224	9	49	.322
2007	SEA	238	6	68	.351
2008	SEA	213	6	42	.310
2009	SEA	225	11	46	.352
2010	SEA	214	6	43	.315
2011	SEA	184	5	47	.272
2012	SEA	105	4	28	.261
2012	NYN	73	5	27	.322
Total		2,606	104	660	.322

Source: ESPN



Ichiro remembers one hit the most. On October 1, 2004, he hit his 258th single. With this swing, he broke the **record** for single hits in one **season**. The record had stood for 84 years.

“Through my career, I think this is the best moment,” Suzuki said at the time. “I can’t really put it into words.”

Glossary

all-star (<i>adj.</i>)	made up of the best athletes, performers, or participants (p. 7)
championship (<i>n.</i>)	a contest to decide a winner (p. 7)
Japan (<i>n.</i>)	an island nation east of China in the Pacific Ocean (p. 4)
record (<i>n.</i>)	a measurement of an event or achievement that has never been exceeded (p. 15)
rookie (<i>n.</i>)	a person who is playing his or her first year in a sports league (p. 11)
season (<i>n.</i>)	a certain time of the year when something usually happens, such as a sport being played or a type of weather taking place (p. 15)

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