



# Baseball Basics for Brits

## Volume 6. Keeping Score by Matt Smith

In this volume of *Baseball Basics for Brits*, we will be looking at keeping score.

This includes:

- why a British baseball fan should keep score,
- choosing which scorecard and scoring method is right for you,
- introducing different scoring methods,
- pre and post game tasks,
- the role of the official scorer.

There's not much in the world more enjoyable than taking in a ballgame. Whether you're sitting in front of the TV, listening via a radio feed or actually there in person, the game has everything that a sports fan could desire.

Baseball can't be bettered by another sport, but perhaps it can be improved on its own?

Watching with a beer in one hand and a hot dog in the other is one way, but there's another less-obvious option that will increase your enjoyment of the game and also make you a more knowledgeable fan.

Why not learn to keep score?

Keeping score involves taking a shorthand record of the game as it happens, using a combination of abbreviations and symbols on a scorecard designed for the purpose. From strikeouts to double plays, home runs to sacrifice bunts, and stolen bases to fielding errors, they can all be noted down easily to leave you with your own personalised account of the contest.

As a British baseball fan, keeping score is an invaluable way to increase your understanding of the sport. While there are plenty of details to learn, anyone with a decent grasp of the game will quickly pick them up with a bit of practice.

You will be building on the basics in no time at all, adding in your own little touches to record all of the details you are interested in, in a way that makes sense to you.

### Why should you keep score?

There are many reasons why you should learn to keep score, so many in fact that they deserve an [article](#) on their own. To pick just a few:

- Keeping score allows you to learn the rules of the game (or to remind you of the rules, for people who have followed the sport for several years),
- It reveals the many tactical decisions that are made,
- You create a unique, personalized account of the game,
- It's fun!

## What you need to start

### The rules

Firstly, you need to have a decent grasp of the rules. That doesn't mean you have to study them for a month and be able to quote them chapter and verse before you can keep score, but it does mean that you need to have an understanding of the main points.

If you've watched MLB games on TV for any length of time, you should be fine to begin keeping score. It's probable that there are lots of little details that you haven't yet picked up, but that will soon change.

One of the great benefits of keeping score is that it exposes the holes in your knowledge. Your completed scorecards might not be perfect to start with (if there's such a thing as a perfect scorecard), but you'll soon be having 'eureka' moments ('so *that's* why he didn't get credited with an RBI' etc) that allow you to fill the gaps.

#### The Official Rules: Scoring

A whole section of the official rules is dedicated to scoring. It's worth re-reading it every now and then and, more than anything, it's an excellent reference for when you're not sure why a play on your scorecard doesn't match the official account.

See 'Resources' for a link to the rules.

### Tools of the trade

Keeping score is one hobby that won't break the bank. All you need is a pen/pencil and a scorecard.

You can normally buy a scorecard when you attend a game in the States and there are places on the internet where you can buy scorebooks, but there are hundreds of scorecards on the internet that you can download, print out and

use for free. They may simply vary in basic design, or they may allow you to record very different types of information.

Your choice of scorecard and scoring system will go hand-in-hand. Just want to record a basic account of the game? Pick a simple scorecard. Interested in charting every ball and strike? There are scorecards out there including a box or strip allowing you to do just that.

Which should you use? That's really down to personal choice. As you become a seasoned scorer, you may find that you use different scorecards depending on how you feel or based on the way in which you are taking in the game.

As a British fan, the majority of the games you witness are probably MLB contests broadcast on TV (or via MLB.tv). This increases your scorecard options because you have the benefit of close-up views, replays, explanations from the commentators and on-screen graphics to refer to. If you want to keep score in greater detail, you've got lots of help on hand.

Anyone who has a subscription for MLB Gameday Audio will testify that listening via a radio broadcast is a great way to enjoy a ballgame. The lack of visual references does leave you at the mercy of the commentators to describe the action when keeping score; therefore you may decide to record a more basic account of the game than you would do if you are watching on TV.

However having your own running account of the game to refer to can be particularly useful when listening rather than watching. No need to wait impatiently to be reminded what inning the game is in or how many outs there are; it's all in front of you on your scorecard (hopefully!).

Alternatively you may be watching the game in person. If you have the privilege of attending an MLB game or two in the States, you will no doubt have a large video screen and a PA announcer to help you with any details you might miss the first time around. If you are

taking in a game in Britain, that safety net is not available so it may be worth keeping a simple account in this case.

Once you've gained a bit of experience (and confidence) then taking a more detailed account could be particularly worthwhile at a British game because you don't have the luxury of hordes of websites providing you with detailed play-by-play accounts. Your scorecard could be a great resource to other British fans interested in knowing what happened.

## Pre-game work

Whichever scorecard and scoring system you opt for, there are some standard details to write down before the game begins.

Firstly you will need to fill in the names of the teams that are playing, the date of the game and any other details that strike you as being important (weather, start time of the game, the win-loss records of the two teams etc).

There will be two sides to the scorecard (or the same sheet printed out twice), one for each batting lineup. In the left-hand column you will find nine main rows which represent the nine places in the batting lineup. Each main row typically will be split into two or three, allowing you to slot in any in-game substitutions.

Once the teams have been announced, you can write out the two batting lineups noting every player's name, fielding position (more on this in a moment) and uniform number. You will also be able to fill in the name and uniform number of the two starting pitchers.

To reflect the nature of the contest, a team's pitchers are listed on the opposite side of the scorecard to their batting lineup.

So if the Twins are playing against the Indians, the details relating to the Twins' starting pitcher (and the rest of their pitchers who take the mound during the game) will be filled in on the side of the card that has the Indians' batting lineup on it.

## Fielding Positions

Ever been confused by an announcer referring to a 'four-six-three double play'?

They are not quoting another obscure statistic at you. They are merely following the standard practice of using numbers to refer to fielding positions.

Every fielding position can be referred to by a number, as listed in the table below. These numbers can be used when you want to note which specific fielder(s) was involved in recording an out.

<b>Pitcher</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Catcher</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>First baseman</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1B</b>
<b>Second baseman</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2B</b>
<b>Third baseman</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3B</b>
<b>Shortstop</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>SS</b>
<b>Left fielder</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>LF</b>
<b>Centre fielder</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>CF</b>
<b>Right fielder</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>RF</b>
<b>Other position abbreviations</b>		
<b>Designated hitter</b>		<b>DH</b>
<b>Pinch hitter</b>		<b>PH</b>
<b>Pinch runner</b>		<b>PR</b>

In some circumstances, the positions will be represented by obvious abbreviations instead, as listed in the right-hand column. Sometimes scorers will use these abbreviations when writing out the batting lineups.

The main place you will see the abbreviations being used is in box scores.

With your scorecard primed for action, you can sit back and wait for the game to unfold, ready to note down all that happens.

## An Introduction to Keeping Score

The basics of keeping score revolve around a scorecard that contains nine main rows that represent the nine spots in the batting order and, on a conventional scorecard, nine columns representing the nine innings of play.

Using this grid, you can chart every plate appearance in turn as well as any action that takes place on the bases.

Beyond this starting point, there are many different ways to actually keep score. Even something as simple as a single can be represented by a wide variety of symbols and/or abbreviations.

It would be impossible, and probably extremely confusing, to try and cover all of the different methods. Instead, we will focus on a well-known 'fan' method that should give you a good grounding in one system while teaching you the basics that can be used as a starting point to learn other systems as well.

Broadly speaking, there are three different levels of scoring with each leading on to the other:

- Basic - plate appearance outcomes
- Standard - tracking base progression,
- In-depth - additional details.

### Keeping score – basic method

The most basic way of keeping score is to simply record the outcome of every plate appearance, using an abbreviation to note exactly what happened.

There are two main possible outcomes when a batter steps up to the plate:

1. He gets on base,
2. He makes an out.

(See: 'Outcome Number Three' for details of the third possible outcome. It's only rarely seen but it's useful to know about as it will crop up from time to time when you are scoring, even in Major League games).

## Getting on base

Let's go through the main possibilities one-by-one.

Firstly, the batter may get on base by recording a clean hit. If so, you will want to record how many bases his hit went for. There are many different ways you can do this, with the easiest probably being by stating 1B for a single, 2B for a double, 3B for a triple and HR for a home run.

The batter might get a free pass thanks to a walk and this can be noted as either a BB (for base on balls) or an IBB if it was an intentional base on balls (when the pitcher deliberately walks the batter).

The batter may be awarded first base after being hit by a pitch (HBP), he may get on board thanks to a fielding error (e – normally followed by the fielding position number of the player who committed the error) or due to a fielder's choice (FC).

He may also get on base due to interference (I) or obstruction (O), although this is rare in MLB.

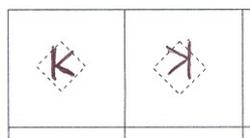
### Outcome Number Three

If a batter steps up to the plate with two outs, the inning can end in the middle of a plate appearance. This occurs when one of the base runners makes the third and final out (e.g. if they are caught stealing).

In this situation, the plate appearance is voided. The person who was batting at the time will lead off with an 0-0 count the next time his team comes to bat. Of course, sometimes this can work to the batter's advantage (if he was in an 0-2 hole) and sometimes it can work against him (although his team mate will not be very popular in the dugout if he was trying to steal on a 3-0 pitch).

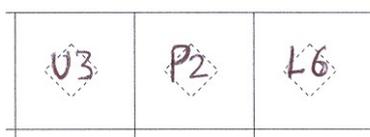
## Making an out

If he doesn't get on base, the batter has made an out. There are a variety of different ways in which a batter can make an out. The following selection covers the most common outs you will see.



*Strikeouts*

The most emphatic way for a pitcher to get a batter out is via a strikeout. This is recorded as a K. You can use Kc or a backwards K to show where a batter was struck out without swinging at the third strike (a 'called' third strike).



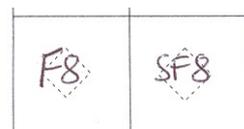
*Unassisted putouts, pop-ups and line-outs*

The fielding team may record an 'unassisted putout' if the batter hits a groundball that is then collected by a fielder who tags the bag or the runner to make the out. This can be notated by writing 'U#' (Note that for all the examples, you should add the fielding position number of the relevant fielder in place of the hash mark - #).

Normally you will see this play when a batter hits the ball down the first-base line. The first baseman will scoop the ball up and stamp on the bag to make the unassisted putout ('U3').

A pop-up (P#) is when the ball flies high in the air and is caught within the vicinity of the infield diamond. In the above example, the catcher (fielding position 2) makes the out.

A line-out (L#) is when a ball is hit hard rather than high, in this instance caught by the shortstop (number 6).



*Fly-outs*

A fly-out (F#) is your typical out where a batter hits the ball up into the air and it's collected by an outfielder. If a batter hits a sacrifice fly, this is recorded by adding an S on the front (e.g. SF8 if caught by the centre fielder).

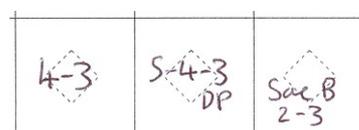
### Sacrifice Fly

Remember: only credit a sacrifice fly if a runner scores on the play.

For 'caught' outs you can also record whether the out was made in foul territory by adding an 'F' (upper or lower case) either at the start or end of the notation (e.g. if a catcher catches a pop-up in foul territory, you could note it as 'FP2').

The unassisted putout, pop-up, line-out and fly-out all involve just one fielder; however, many outs are made thanks to two or three fielders working as a team. By using the fielding position numbers and dashes to link them together, you can quickly note down which fielders were involved and in what order.

The final number recorded will always be the fielder who made the final putout on the play. The numbers before it show the path that the ball took along the way.



*Fielding groundballs*

This '4-3' example shows a typical groundball out in which the second baseman (4) picks up the grounder and throws it to the first baseman (3) to record the out. The second baseman gets credited with an 'assist', while the first baseman gets the 'putout'.

Just think of the dash as being the word 'to' and it's easy to see how you can note down plays involving two or more fielders. If the play was 'third baseman to second baseman to first baseman', it's just recorded as '5-4-3'.

More often than not, if three fielders are involved in a play then the fielding side has tried to get more than one player out, as in the '5-4-3 DP' example. The 'DP' shows that this amounted to a double play, most probably with the second baseman getting a runner at second base before the batter was put out at first. Some will note this as a 'GDP' to show the batter grounded into the double play.

You can use this simple method to chart how the ball travelled between fielders in any situation. For instance, the final example shows a notation for a sacrifice bunt, which in this case was picked up by the catcher (2) who threw the ball to the first baseman (3) to put the batter out.

### Other basics to note

'Getting on base' and 'making outs' are the two key areas for basic scoring, but you can easily add three more important details on to your scorecard.

When a player makes an out, it is useful to note which out of the inning this was. You can do this by writing the relevant number (1, 2, or 3) and circling it.

If a batter ultimately scores a run, you can record this by drawing a dot in the bottom left hand corner of his plate appearance box.

If a batter drives in any runs, you can record this by drawing a dot (one for every run driven in) in the middle of the diamond of his plate appearance box.

Some examples of how to note down runs and RBIs, including how to differentiate between earned and unearned runs, can be found in the next section.

### General scorecard management

Substitutions can be added on to the scorecard easily, whether inserting a new batter into the correct batting lineup spot underneath the previous batter or adding in a new pitcher. In these cases, it's important to note down when the new player came into (and left) the game.

#	Batters	P	Inn	1
20	ANDREWS	8	1	
7	BOONE	4	1	
35	WEST	4	8	
15	COLE	3	1	

*Substitution example*

In this example, West took over Boone's spot in the batting lineup in the eighth inning. Any batting appearances from that inning onwards on this row therefore relate to him.

As well as batting and pitching changes, teams can also make fielding changes as the game enters its latter stages. These are sometimes less easy to keep a track of in the main area on a scorecard so you may want to add them as additional notes around the side.

We mentioned earlier that the layout of a conventional scorecard uses a column to represent every inning. Most scorecards of this type actually have more than nine columns to give you the space for an extra inning or two if needed.

The extra columns also come in useful when a team sends more than nine batters up to the plate during an inning. This is known as 'batting around' and you simply continue scoring the inning on the next column (probably leading you to re-number the subsequent columns as a result).

Finally, you always need to make a clear note at the end of a team's half-inning so that you can immediately see where the next one starts (after flipping the sheet over to note the other team's half-inning, of course). This can be done by putting a diagonal line in the bottom right corner of the final batter's box.

4	ELLIS	5	1	
48	FOSTER	9	1	

*Marking the end of one half-inning and the start of the team's next*

## Standard - Tracking base progression

The basic method can provide you with a decent record of the game with the minimum of effort. This might be all you are interested in, but the basic method does leave out an important part of the game.

A plate appearance is only one part of the battle. The real action happens once a player has got on base. Building on the basics, it is easy to chart how every runner makes his way around the bases, or has his journey cut short by making an out/being left stranded, allowing you to build up a complete guide to the way the game panned out.

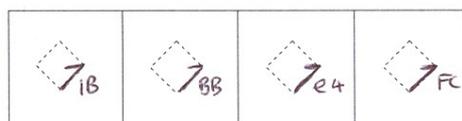
In traditional scoring methods, an individual player's path around the bases is all accounted for in a single box. Each box on the scorecard will have a diagram in it, normally a diamond shape, that represents the four sides to the diamond on the field and the four bases.

When a diamond is used, the right-sided point is first base, the top is second, the left-sided point is third and the bottom point is home plate.

You extend the line around the diamond as the player makes his way around the bases, using familiar abbreviations to provide an explanation as to how he moved from one point to the next.

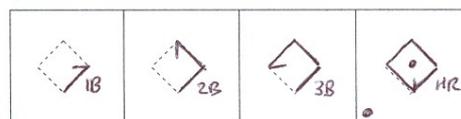
## Getting on base

If a player's plate appearance ends up in him being put out, you simply use the relevant abbreviation as described above in the basic method. However, if a player gets on base then you now need to start tracking his journey.



*Getting to first base*

If a player reaches first base, draw a line to first and put a tail on the end to show that this is where he stopped on the play. Then add the relevant abbreviation to record exactly how he got there - e.g. a single (1B), a walk (BB), reached on an error (e - plus the fielder's number), reached on a fielder's choice (FC) etc.



*A single, double, triple and a home run*

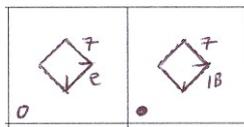
If the batter is able to get further than first base as a result of his plate appearance, draw the line up to the base he reached. Again, you should add in the relevant abbreviation to clarify that he reached that point solely due to his hit. The diagram above shows how you would record a single, double, triple or home run.

Notice that the home run example includes the run and RBI dots mentioned in the basic scoring section.

In this example, there is a dot in the bottom left of the box to show the player scored a run and one in the middle representing the single RBI he collected on the play. From this we can deduce that it was a solo home run.

If there had been two men on base ahead of him, you would put three dots in the middle of the diamond to represent the three runs batted in.

If you want to note the difference between earned runs and unearned runs, use a normal dot for an earned run and an outline of a dot for an unearned run.



*Unearned and earned runs*

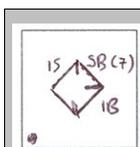
This is the best approach because a run that appears to be unearned initially can become an earned run. If this happens, you can easily account for it by filling in the outline.

### Progress around the bases

Once a player has got on base, you note each stage of his journey by extending the line to the next base he stops at and putting a tail (or a dot) at the end.

If a player advances because of a hit by a team mate, you record which hitter's plate appearance this refers to either by using his uniform number (as in the example below) or his batting lineup number. The latter is often easiest because you might not always get a chance to note down the uniform numbers of every player involved. It doesn't matter which you use, so long as you are consistent on the scorecard.

If a player advances for another reason, note this down by using the relevant abbreviation (e.g. SB for stolen base). To more accurately record when this took place, you can refer to the plate appearance by putting the number (again, either uniform or batting lineup) in brackets next to the abbreviation.



In this example, the batter got on base with a single. He then stole second while the batter wearing number '7' was batting and was driven home from there by the batter wearing number '15'.

### Outs on the basepads

As well as noting a player's progress around the bases, you can also record when a batter is put out once he has got on board. Draw the line halfway between his last safe base and the next and then cut it off, before recording the relevant abbreviation next to it.

These two examples show a player being caught trying to steal second base (you could, and probably should, add which fielders were involved, for example the catcher to the shortstop: '2-6') and a runner involved in a double play.

### Putting it all together

Combining these techniques and abbreviations, you can chart virtually everything you need to on a normal scorecard. It's just a case of putting it all together, noting down the outcome of every plate appearance and updating the boxes of any players that are on base where necessary.

As a demonstration, we'll now go through a half-inning. In every example, the additions to the scorecard are noted in red. This will show how the scorecard builds up over the course of the half-inning.

The lead-off batter is the centre fielder Andrews, who wears number 20. He starts the game off on a positive note for his team by hitting a single. That's an easy start for us: draw a line to first base on the player's diamond, putting a tail at the end to show that's where he stopped on the play, and write '1B' next to the line to record that he reached first base via a single.

#	Batters	P	Inn	1
20	ANDREWS	8	1	

The next batter up is the second baseman Boone (#7). The batting team are clearly keen to get off to an aggressive start as Andrews steals second base during Boone's plate appearance. We go back and update Andrew's diamond by drawing a line from first to second (remembering to put a tail at the end) and then writing SB next to the line. In the example below, I've also added Boone's uniform number (7) in brackets next to the SB to clarify that the base was stolen during his plate appearance. It was a good job that Andrews stole second base as Boone is unable to advance him. Boone strikes out swinging, so we put a 'K' in his box and circle a '1' to show that this is the first out of the inning.

#	Batters	P	Inn	1
20	ANDREWS	8	1	
7	BOONE	4	1	

The third batter in the lineup is the first baseman Cole (#15) and he gets a single that allows Andrews to come home from second base to score the first run of the game. We can deal with Andrews' box first: drawing a line from second to home in his diamond, putting a '15' next to it to show that this relates to Cole's plate appearance, and putting a large dot in the bottom left of his box to record that he scored a run. As for Cole, we record his single as per usual (line to first base with a '1B' to the side) and put one large dot in the middle of his diamond to show that he picked up one RBI.

#	Batters	P	Inn	1
20	ANDREWS	8	1	
7	BOONE	4	1	
15	COLE	3	1	

It's not been a good start for the fielding team and it doesn't get any better with the fourth batter of the inning as the left fielder Day (#31) earns a walk. Cole advances from first to second as a result, so we draw a line from first to second on his diamond and put a '31' next to it to show he advanced during Day's plate appearance. As for Day, we draw a line to first base on his diamond and put 'BB' next to it to show that he reached first via a walk (base on balls).

15	COLE	3	1	
31	DAY	7	1	

Just when the first inning looks like turning into a disaster for the fielding team, they are able to get out of the jam. Ellis (#4) is up next and he makes contact, meaning that Cole and Day start running from their bases. Unfortunately for them, the groundball is scooped up by the second baseman. He flips it to the shortstop who stamps on second base to force out Day (for the second out of the inning) and then throws to first base to put out Ellis in a classic 4-6-3 double play to end the inning.

It's these sort of plays the can leave your head spinning when you first start to keep score, but if you break it down piece-by-piece you'll see that it's easier than you think. This is what the play should look like when scored:

15	COLE	3	1	
31	DAY	7	1	
4	ELLIS	5	1	

We can leave Cole's box alone as he was effectively left stranded. In Day's box, we draw a line up to the halfway point between first and second on the diamond and then cut it off, before writing 'DP' (to show he was involved in a double play) and then circling a '2' to record the fact that he was the second out of the inning.

For Ellis, we can simply write '4-6-3 DP' and then circle a '3' to denote that he was the third out of the inning.

The complete half of the inning would look like this:

#	Batters	P	Inn	1	2
20	ANDREWS	8	1		
7	BOONE	4	1		
15	COLE	3	1		
31	DAY	7	1		
4	ELLIS	5	1		
48	FOSTER	9	1		

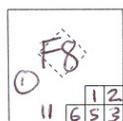
The final task is to draw the diagonal line in the bottom right of Ellis's box, making it clear that the second inning begins with Foster's at-bat. In this case, Foster grounds out to the second baseman.

### Additional Details

You can record a detailed account of a game using this standard method, but if you want to note down even more information then there are several parts of the game that deserve your attention. Two of the most common are 'balls and strikes' and 'hit types'.

### Balls and Strikes

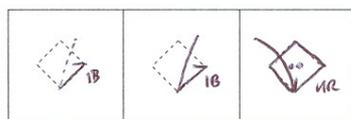
Some scorecards allow you to keep a track of every single pitch that is thrown. This is very useful as it reveals how the count changed during the plate appearance. So for instance you can quickly see if a pitcher was consistently throwing the first pitch for a strike, or if he was struggling by falling behind the batter. It also allows you to record how many strikes a pitcher has thrown.



This example is taken from a game scored using the 'Swingley' scorecard (see: 'Resources'). The two boxes at the top are for strikes and the three boxes below are for balls.

In this case, the first two pitches were strikes, the third pitch was a ball, the fourth pitch was fouled off (so a I is noted next to the strikes/balls box), the fifth and sixth pitches were balls, the seventh pitch was fouled off (another I is added) before the eighth pitch is put in play (leading to a flyout to the centre fielder).

### Hit types



Groundball, line drive, flyball

Some people like to record extra information about each hit: which location it went in and what type of a hit it was in terms of groundballs, line drives and flyballs. That's easily done by adding in an extra line to your diagram, as showed below. The most common method is to use a dotted line for groundballs, a solid straight line for line drives and a curved line for flyballs.

As you can probably tell, adding in this extra info can make it difficult to also fit in details of how a player advances the bases. So, it may be a case of choosing to chart one or the other on a standard scorecard.

## **Post-game: Totals and proving your scorecard**

There's still work for the scorer to complete once the game is over. There are totals to be tallied and the all important process of 'proving' your scorecard.

### **Offensive totals**

You will normally find the 'total' boxes for the batters on the right-hand side of the scorecard. All you need to do is go over every batter's plate appearances and note on the correct row the relevant totals in the boxes.

The scorecard design will determine which totals you need to record. The most common totals listed are the number of at-bats (AB), hits (H), walks (BB), runs scored (R) and runs batted in (RBI). You may also find columns for home runs (HR), strikeouts (SO or K) and stolen bases (SB).

### **Pitching totals**

The space to enter the pitching totals is generally right next to the pitcher's name. As with the batting totals, the scorecard will dictate which pitching totals you need to record. This will typically include innings pitched (IP), the number of hits allowed (H), runs allowed (R), earned runs allowed (ER), walks given up (BB), strikeouts (SO or K), and home runs given up (HR).

Other additional totals may include the number of batters faced (BF), batters hit by a pitch (HBP or HP), balks (BK), wild pitches (WP), number of strikes thrown (S) and number of total pitches thrown (P).

### **Fielding totals**

Most fan-focused scorecards do not include space for fielding totals, although they are a required feature on any official scorecard.

If you are going to record fielding totals, they will include the number of innings played (IP),

putouts (PO), assists (A), errors (E) and the number of double plays the fielder was involved in (DP).

A few scorecards also include an additional column for triple plays (TP), but they happen so rarely that this column would almost always be left blank on most occasions. Consequently, a triple play can just be recorded as another double play, with a separate note being made on the scorecard to show that a triple play took place and who was involved.

You can also record three additional fielding totals specifically for the catchers. They are the number of passed balls (PB), number of bases stolen against him (SB) and number of base runners caught attempting to steal (CS).

### **Proving your scorecard**

Your final task is to 'prove' your scorecard doesn't contain any fundamental mistakes.

The equation is simple. Firstly, add up every at-bat, sacrifice (flies and bunts), walks, hit-by-pitches, and interference/obstructions from one side of the scorecard.

Then add up the number of runs scored, put outs, and runners left on base.

The two totals should be the same. If they are not, check your sums and then, if they still don't match, refer to the official account of the game to work out where you've gone wrong. Repeat the process for the other side of the scorecard.

### **Learning through experience – some tricky plays**

The more you keep score as a fan, the more times you'll come across a play that you're not completely sure how to record.

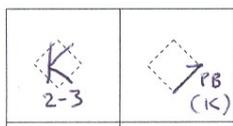
Don't worry: you will learn through experience. Maybe you will be reminded of a rule you had forgotten? Perhaps you never knew the specific rule existed?

## YOU ARE THE SCORER

Our 'You are the Scorer' feature is published every Friday lunchtime at *BaseballGB* and this is a great resource for solving tricky scoring plays. If you come across any plays that leave you scratching your head, get in contact and we'll use it as an example.

To help you along, here are three fairly basic plays (from many) that I never really grasped until I had to note them down.

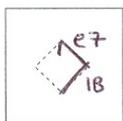
### When the catcher drops a third strike



**Post-K: Throw out, reached base**

If a catcher drops the ball on the third strike, the catcher has to throw the ball to first base before the batter gets there to record the out. The pitcher will get a strikeout to his name regardless, but if the runner beats the throw then he gets on base. Depending on who was considered to be at fault, the batter would have reached base via a passed ball or a wild pitch.

### Extra bases

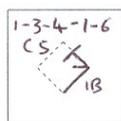


This example is one of the reasons why it's useful to record the type of hit next to the line you draw on the player's diamond. At first glance, this seems to be a waste of effort: if you've drawn a line all the way to second, surely it's obvious that the player got a double? Well, in most cases that would be true, but not in all. The most common example is when a batter hits the ball into the outfield in a way that would typically just lead to a single, but the fielder then commits an error which allows the player to get to second base.

You can't say he reached base on an error, as that would rob the player of a hit, but at the same time it would be wrong to say he had hit a double. So the announcer will say that he hit a single and reached second on an error and that's what you should record. Occasionally a player will be put out trying to stretch a single into a double. Although this is commonly referred to as a single and a 'caught stealing', strictly it is just a single and an out on the bases.

### The 'rundown'

If a player is caught trying to steal a base, he can sometimes get caught in a rundown in which he is chased back and forth several times before he is finally put out. This will involve the ball being thrown to several different fielders and you can chart this by using the standard #-#-# method.



In this example, the pitcher has 'picked off' the runner at first base by throwing the ball to the first baseman, who throws it the second baseman. The runner retreats back to first base so the second baseman chucks the ball to the pitcher who is now covering first. The runner changes direction and tries to get to second after all, but the pitcher throws it to the shortstop who then tags him out. The 1-3-4-1-6 is complete!

You would certainly be forgiven for not recording the full sequence, so you can simply record it as a 'CS' in the normal fashion instead.

(Note that in the statistics, a fielder can only be awarded one assist on a 'rundown' even if they are involved more than once – as the pitcher is in the above example).

### Official Scorers

Every game, from MLB to the British National Baseball League, needs to have an official scorer. Their job is to accurately record an account of the game, while making scoring rulings along the way (such as when a possible hit goes down as an error).

It is from these official accounts that the lifeblood of the game, statistics, are created. Consequently, official scorers play a very important role in both the initial reporting of the game and in maintaining a record of what took place for historical purposes.

There are a few obvious differences between scoring as an official scorer and as a fan. Firstly, everyone is relying on you to have a comprehensive knowledge of all the scoring rules. Secondly you have the responsibility of making actual decisions that will affect players' statistics. Finally, the role will require you to be completely accurate and to record specific information.

None of the above is to suggest that being an official scorer is any less fun. Far from it. If playing the sport isn't your forte, this can be the next best thing. You're a true part of the game, playing a vital role.

Although official scorers are sometimes allowed to choose their scoring system, the Great Britain Baseball Scorers Association (GBBSA) strongly recommends following the system described in the International Baseball Federation Scoring Manual, available in full on the Association's website. This is quite different to the method explained above, but once you gain a good grounding in a 'fan' system you should have no trouble learning it with a bit of practice.

## The Reisner Scorekeeping system

Lots of the scoring methods out there are really just variations on the same system. However, Alex Reisner's system is genuinely different and is worth mentioning here.

In the traditional method, every box relates to a single player in that it represents their (potential) tour around the bases in isolation. Using Reisner's method, every box relates to the game situation as a whole at that specific point.

The best way to understand the system is to read Reisner's tutorial, but the approach can be

illustrated by using Reisner's system to chart the same half-inning as seen in the 'tracking base progression' section.

# Batters			
1	20 ANDREWS	1	
			1B
2	7 BOONE	2	
			K
3	15 COLE	3	
			1B
4	31 DAY	4	
			BB
5	4 ELLIS	5	
			GDP 4-6-3
6	48 FOSTER	6	
			4-3

Let's focus on Andrews' tour of the bases. He leads off the game with a single; therefore he (#20) is standing at first base on the diamond next to Boone's name.

Andrews steals second during Boone's at-bat so this is noted in Boone's box (not in Andrews' as you would using the normal method). He is standing at second base when Cole comes to the plate and the circle around his number here shows that Cole drove him home.

Cole's single and Day's walk means that there are runners on first and second when Ellis steps up to the plate. You would have to look back at Cole and Day's own boxes to know this when using the traditional method. In Reisner's 'situational' method, you can see exactly what the situation was for Ellis's at-bat.

The system has advantages and disadvantages when compared to the traditional method precisely because it is looking at the same task from a different perspective. It may be a fun alternative to try occasionally at the very least.

## Resources

### Books on keeping score

The best introduction to keeping score is Paul Dickson's excellent book "The Joy of Keeping Score". This takes a fan's-eye view of the activity and includes a guide to various scoring systems as well as an A-Z and some brilliant photos. ([BGB review](#))

For those of you interested in becoming an official scorer, "Baseball Scorekeeping: A Practical Guide to the Rules" by Andres Wirkmaa is an essential purchase. ([BGB review](#))

### The official rules

The full set of official rules can be found on MLB.com's website. This includes section 10.00, which specifically relates to 'The Official Scorer'. This section is an essential reference for defining terms (e.g. what actually *is* a putout?) and for learning about scoring matters such as when a batter gets credited with an RBI. [http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official\\_info/official\\_rules/foreword.jsp](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/official_info/official_rules/foreword.jsp)

"Baseball Field Guide" by Dan Formosa and Paul Hamburger is a brilliantly designed guide to the rules, both for newcomers and for experienced baseball fans/players. ([BGB review](#))

"The Official Rules of Baseball Illustrated" by David Nemecek looks at the rules by recounting anecdotes of famous incidents. ([BGB review](#))

### 'Keeping Score' on the internet

For information about keeping score in Britain, as well as an incredible array of statistics and historical information about the sport in the British Isles, visit the **Great Britain Baseball Scorer's Association's website**: <http://www.gbbsa.org.uk>

There are several websites that offer scorecards and tutorials on how to keep score. My own scoring methods detailed in this guide are the product of nine years of scoring as a fan and I picked up many techniques from these sites during that time. Naturally, some of the elements from the following systems have influenced my own methods. They should each be consulted as essential starting points.

The **Baseball Scorecard website** includes a complete tutorial on keeping score and downloads of many different scorecards. <http://www.baseballscorecard.com/>

**Christopher Swingley** offers some excellent scorecards to download (especially useful for anyone who wants to record 'balls-and-strikes' info) and a comprehensive tutorial. <http://swingleydev.com/baseball/index.php>

As noted above, **Alex Reisner** has created a unique approach to keeping score. His website provides a full introduction to the method as well as allowing you to buy scorebooks full of blank copies of his scorecard. <http://www.alexreisner.com/baseball/scorekeeping/>

## Abbreviations List

### GETTING ON BASE

1B: Single.  
2B: Double.  
3B: Triple.  
HR: Home run.  
BB: Base on Balls (Walk).  
IBB: Intentional Base on Balls.  
HBP: Hit by Pitch.  
E: Error.  
FC: Fielder's Choice.  
I/O: Interference/Obstruction

### OUTS

(Note: # = insert number of the fielder)  
K: Strike out (Backwards 'K' for a called third strike).  
U#: Unassisted putout.  
P#: Pop out.  
L#: Line out.  
F#: Fly out.  
SF#: Sacrifice fly out.  
SacB: Sacrifice bunt.  
FO: Force Out.  
DP: Double Play (also GDP – Grounded into double play)  
TP: Triple Play.  
CS: Caught Stealing.

### BASE ADVANCEMENT

BK: Balk  
SB: Stolen Base.  
WP: Wild Pitch.  
PB: Passed Ball.

### OFFENSIVE TOTALS

AB: At-bats.  
H: Hits.  
BB: Base on balls (walks).  
R: Runs scored.  
RBI: Runs Batted In.  
HR: Home runs.  
SO or K: Strikeouts.  
SB: Stolen bases.

### PITCHING TOTALS

IP: Innings pitched.  
H: Hits allowed  
R: runs allowed  
ER: Earned runs allowed.  
BB: Base on balls (walks) given up  
SO or K: Strikeouts  
HR: Home runs given up  
BF: Batters faced.  
HBP or HP: Hit by a pitch.  
BK: Balks.  
WP: Wild Pitches.  
S: Number of strikes thrown.  
P: Number of total pitches thrown.

#### *Also*

L/R: Left or right-handed.  
WLS: Win, Loss or Save.

### FIELDING TOTALS

IP: Innings played.  
PO: Put outs.  
A: Assists.  
E: Errors.  
DP: number of double plays the fielder was involved in.  
TP: number of triple plays the fielder was involved in.

#### *Also for Catchers*

PB: Passed balls.  
SB: Stolen bases (against).  
CS: Caught stealing.

### FIELDING POSITIONS

1: Pitcher.  
2: Catcher.  
3: First baseman.  
4: Second baseman.  
5: Third baseman.  
6: Shortstop.  
7: Left fielder.  
8: Centre fielder.  
9: Right fielder.  
DH: Designated Hitter.  
PH: Pinch Hitter.  
PR: Pinch Runner.

## **PROOF BOX**

AB: At-bat.

BB: Base on Balls (Walk).

SAC: Sacrifices\* .

HBP: Hit by pitch.

I/O: Interference/Obstruction

R: Runs.

PO: Put outs.

LOB (or L): Left on base

*\*Sometimes split into:*

SH: Sacrifice Hits.

SF: Sacrifice Flies.