

Rules and Equipment



In this chapter we introduce you to some of the basic rules of Babe Ruth League, Inc. We don't try to cover all the rules of the game, but rather we give you what you need to work with players who are 4 to 18 years old. We provide information on terminology, equipment, field size and markings, player positions, and game procedures. In a short section at the end of the chapter we show you the umpire's signals for Babe Ruth Baseball.

Terms to Know

Baseball has its own vocabulary. Be familiar with the following common terms to make your job easier. In some cases we go into more depth on terms to explain related rules.

appeal—The act of a fielder in claiming violation of the rules by the offensive team; this most commonly occurs when a runner is thought to have missed a base.

balk—An illegal motion by the pitcher intended to deceive the baserunners resulting in all runners advancing one base as determined by the umpire.

ball—A pitch that the batter doesn't swing at and that is outside of the strike zone.

base—One of four points that must be touched by a runner in order to score.

base coach—A team member or coach who is stationed in the coach's box at first or third base for the purpose of directing the batter and runners.

base on balls—An award of first base granted to a batter who, during his or her time at bat, receives four pitches outside the strike zone before receiving three pitches inside the strike zone.

batter—An offensive player who takes his or her position in the batter's box.

batter-runner—A term that identifies the offensive player who has just finished his or her time at bat until he or she is put out or until the play on which he or she became a runner ends.

batter's box—The area within which the batter shall stand during his or her time at bat. Failure to do so will result in an out if the ball is contacted with a bat.

battery—The pitcher and catcher.

batting rules—A batter cannot leave the batter's box once the pitcher becomes set or begins the windup. Both feet must be inside the batter's box (the lines are part of the box). If the batter hits the ball—either fair or foul—with one or both feet on the ground entirely outside of the box, the batter is automatically out. Also, a batter may request time, but the umpire does not have to grant the request. If a batter refuses to take position in the batter's box, the umpire will order the pitcher to pitch and most likely will expand the strike zone because no batter is in place to use as a reference.

bunt—A batted ball not swung at but intentionally met with the bat in such a way that it rolls slowly onto the field of play.

called game—One in which, for any reason, the umpire-in-chief terminated play. This most commonly occurs when there is inclement weather.

catch—The act of a fielder in getting secure possession in his or her hand or glove of a ball in flight and firmly holding it, providing that he or she does not use his or her cap, protector, pocket, or any other part of the uniform in getting possession.

catcher—The fielder who takes his or her position behind home plate.

catcher's box—That area within which the catcher shall stand until the pitcher delivers the ball. Failure to do so results in a catcher's balk, with all runners advancing one base.

catcher's interference—An act, by a catcher, that hinders or prevents a batter from hitting a pitch.

choking up—Moving the hands up the bat handle to increase bat control.

coach—A team member in uniform appointed by the manager to perform such duties as the manager may designate, such as, but not limited to, acting as a base coach.

contact rule—If a runner attempting to reach home plate intentionally and maliciously runs into a defensive player in the area of home plate, he or she will be called "out" on the play and ejected from the game. The objective of this rule is to penalize the offensive team for deliberate, unwarranted, unsportsmanlike action by the runner for the obvious purpose of crashing into the defensive player rather than trying to reach home plate. It is an umpire's judgment call.

count—The number of balls and strikes on a hitter.

crow hop—Use of the body and arm in a throwing motion that generates maximum velocity on the ball. It is not really a hop, but represents a shuffling of the feet toward the target before releasing the ball.

dead ball—Occurs when the ball is taken out of play because of a legally created temporary suspension of play.

defense—The team, or any player of the team, in the field.

defensive interference—An act, by a fielder, that hinders or prevents a runner from advancing to the next base.

double—A hit in which the batter reaches second base safely.

double play—A play by the defense in which two offensive players are put out as a result of continuous action.

dropped third strike—If first base is unoccupied, or if it is occupied with two outs, and the catcher drops a third strike, the defensive team must put out the batter by either throwing to first before the batter reaches the base or by tagging the batter with the ball before he or she reaches first. This rule is not in effect in the Cal Ripken Division of the Babe Ruth League (ages 12 and under). Any runner attempting to advance in this situation can also be tagged out.

error—A defensive mistake on a routine play in which a runner who would have been out if the play had been made correctly is able to advance to the next base or reach first base safely.

fair territory—The area of the playing field between (and including) the foul lines.

fair ball—A batted ball that settles on fair ground between home and first base or between home and third base; or that is on or over fair territory when bounding to the outfield beyond first or third base; or that touches first, second, or third; or that falls on fair territory on or beyond first base or third base; or that, while on or

over fair territory, touches the person of an umpire or player; or that, while over fair territory, passes out of the playing field in flight.

fielder—Any defensive player.

fielder's choice—The act of a fielder who handles a fair ground ball and, instead of throwing to first base to put out the runner, throws to another base in an attempt to put out a preceding runner.

fly ball—A batted ball that goes high in the air in flight.

fly out—A fly ball that is caught, resulting in the batter being put out.

force play—Occurs when a runner is forced to advance to the next base because the batter hits a ball on the ground. Runners are forced to run when ground balls are hit in these situations: first base occupied; first and second occupied; first, second, and third occupied; first and third occupied (only the runner on first is forced to run). On force plays, a defensive player needs to touch the base while in possession of the ball before the runner reaches the base to record an out. An out resulting from a force play is called a force out.

foul ball—A batted ball that settles on foul territory between home and first base, or between home and third base, or that bounds past first or third on or over foul territory, or that first falls on foul territory beyond first and third, or that, while on or over foul territory, touches the person of an umpire or player, or any object foreign to the natural ground. A foul fly shall be judged according to the relative position of the ball and foul line, including the foul pole, and not as to whether the infielder is on foul or fair territory at the time he touches the ball.

foul line—Either of the two straight lines extending at right angles from the rear of home plate through the outer edges of first and third bases to the outfield boundary. A batted ball that lands on a foul line is considered to have landed in fair territory. It is also fair if it lands in between the two foul lines or flies over the fence while in between the two foul lines. A structure called a foul pole often is extended straight up from the point that the foul line intersects the base of the outfield fence. Batted balls that strike either foul pole are considered fair and the player who put the ball in play is awarded a home run.

foul territory—That part of the playing field outside the first and third base lines extended to the fence and perpendicularly upward.

foul tip—A batted ball that deflects directly from the bat to the catcher's hands and is legally caught. It is not a foul tip unless caught. Any foul tip that is caught is a strike, and the ball is in play. It is not a catch if it is caught on a rebound, unless the ball has first touched the catcher's glove or hand.

ground ball—A batted ball that rolls or bounces close to the ground.

ground-out—A ground ball that is fielded by an infielder and results in the batter being put out at first base.

hit by a pitch—A batter is awarded first base for being hit by a pitch.

home run—A home run is recorded when a batter hits a fair ball over the fence or off a foul pole or circles the bases on a batted ball that is fair and remains within the confines of the field without being thrown out.

infield—The part of the playing field that includes the three bases and home plate. The infield ends where the dirt portion of the field becomes grass, which signifies the outfield.

infielder—A fielder who occupies a position in the infield.

infield fly—A fair fly ball (not including a line drive, nor an attempted bunt) that can be caught by an infielder with ordinary effort and when first and second or first, second, and third bases are occupied with fewer than two outs. The pitcher, catcher, and any outfielder who stations him- or herself in the infield on the play shall be considered infielders for the purpose of this rule. When it seems apparent that a batted ball will be an infield fly, the umpire shall immediately declare “infield fly” for the benefit of the runners. If the ball is near the baselines, the umpires shall declare “infield fly, if fair.” The ball is alive and runners may advance at the risk of the ball being caught, or retouch and advance after the ball is touched, the same as on any fly ball. If the hit becomes a foul ball, it is treated the same as any foul. If a declared infield fly is allowed to fall untouched to the ground and bounces foul before passing first or third base, it is a foul ball. If a declared infield fly falls untouched to the ground outside the baseline, and bounces fair before passing first or third, it is an infield fly.

inning—That portion of a game during which the teams alternate on offense and defense and in which there are three putouts for each team. Each team’s time at bat is a half-inning.

league president—Shall enforce the official rules, resolve any disputes involving the rules, and rule concerning any protested games. The league president may suspend any player, coach, manager, or umpire for violation of these rules, at his discretion.

line drive—A hard-hit ball that is in the air but isn’t considered a fly ball.

live ball—A ball that is in play.

manager—A person appointed by the club to be responsible for the team’s actions on the field and to represent the team in communications with the umpire and opposing team.

obstruction—The act of a fielder who, while not in possession of the ball and not in the act of fielding the ball, impedes the progress of any runner.

offense—The team, or any player of the team, at bat.

offensive interference—An act by the team at bat that interferes with, obstructs, impedes, hinders, or confuses any fielder attempting to make a play. If the umpire declares the batter, batter-runner, or a runner out for interference, all other runners shall return to the last base that was, in the judgment of the umpire, legally touched at the time of the interference, unless otherwise provided by these rules. In the event the batter-runner has not reached first base, all runners shall return to the base last occupied at the time of the pitch.

out—One of the three required retirements of an offensive team during its time at bat. An out can be recorded in a variety of ways, including strikeout, force out, tag out, and fly out.

outfield—The part of the playing field beyond the infield dirt and between the foul lines.

outfielder—A fielder who occupies a position in the outfield, which is the area of the playing field most distant from home plate.

overthrow—When a throw goes past the player it was intended for and ends up out of play (such as over a fence or in a dugout) and runners are awarded an additional base.

passed ball—A pitch not hit by the batter that passes by the catcher and should have been caught (see wild pitch). Typically passed balls are pitches that are dropped by the catcher or that hit the catcher's glove before bouncing. To be a passed ball, a baserunner must advance on the play.

penalty—The application of the rules following an illegal act.

person—The person of a player or an umpire is any part of his body, his clothing or his equipment.

pitch—A ball delivered to the batter by the pitcher.

pitcher—The fielder designated to deliver the pitch to the batter.

pivot foot—That foot that is in contact with pitcher's plate as he delivers the pitch. Failure to contact the rubber when delivering the pitch is a balk.

"play"—The umpire's order to start the game or to resume action following a dead ball.

put-out—A batter-runner or baserunner is called out (because of a force out or a tag out).

quick pitch—A pitch made with the obvious intent to catch a batter off balance. It is an illegal pitch.

retouch—The act of a runner in returning to a base, as legally required after a ball is caught in the air.

run—The score made by an offensive player who advances from batter to runner and touches first, second, third, and home in that order.

rundown—The act of the defense in attempting to put out a runner between bases.

runner—An offensive player who is advancing toward or touching or returning to any base.

running out of the baseline—A runner is out when she or he runs out of the baseline, which is more than 3 feet outside a direct line between the bases, in an attempt to avoid a tag. A runner will not be called out if he or she runs out of the baseline to avoid interfering with a fielder attempting to make a play on a batted ball.

running through first base—Runners are entitled to run past first base without risk of being tagged out. They give up this right if they turn toward second base, however. Once they turn toward second, they can be tagged out if the umpire believes that there was at some point intent to run to second.

sacrifice bunt—A bunt that results when the batter allows him- or herself to be put out so that other runners may advance.

sacrifice fly—When a runner on third waits for a defensive player to catch a fly ball and then runs home before being tagged out.

"safe"—A declaration by the umpire that a runner is entitled to the base for which he or she was trying to advance.

scoring position—When a runner is on second or third base. Usually runners on these bases will score on a hit.

set position—One of the two legal pitching positions. Usually pitchers use the set position when runners are on base to prevent them from stealing.

single—A hit in which the batter reaches first base safely.

spectator interference—Occurs when a spectator reaches out of the stands, or goes onto the playing field, and touches a live ball. On any interference the ball is dead.

squeeze play—A term to designate a play when a team, with a runner on third base, attempts to score that runner by means of a bunt.

strike—A legal pitch when so called by the umpire that is struck at by the batter and missed; is not struck at with any part of the ball passing through any part of the strike zone; is fouled by the batter when he or she has fewer than two strikes; is bunted foul; touches the batter as he or she strikes at it; touches the batter in flight in the strike zone; or becomes a foul tip.

strikeout—A batter being put out as the result of having three strikes before hitting a fair ball or receiving a walk.

strike zone—An 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 and the lower limit of which is a line at the hollow beneath the knee-cap. The strike zone shall be determined from the batter's stance as he or she is prepared to swing at a pitched ball (figure 7.1).

suspended game—A game that is not considered complete and cannot be finished. It will be completed at a later date.

tag—The action of a fielder in touching a base with his or her body while holding the ball securely and firmly in his or her hand or glove; or in touching a runner with the ball, or with his or her hand or glove, while holding the ball securely and firmly in his or her hand or glove.

tag play—Occurs when a runner is not forced to advance (see force play) on a batted ball. When a runner is not forced to advance, such as with a runner on second, the runner must be tagged out (touched with the ball, which can be in a fielder's glove or bare hand) when the runner is not touching a base.

tag up—The action of a baserunner in stepping on a base after a fly ball has been caught with the intention of advancing to the next base. A runner cannot advance to the next base on a fly ball that is caught until the ball touches the fielder.

throw—The act of propelling the ball with the hand and arm to a given objective; it is always distinguished from the pitch.

tie game—A regulation game that is called when each team has the same number of runs.

"time"—The announcement by an umpire of a legal interruption of play, during which the ball is dead.

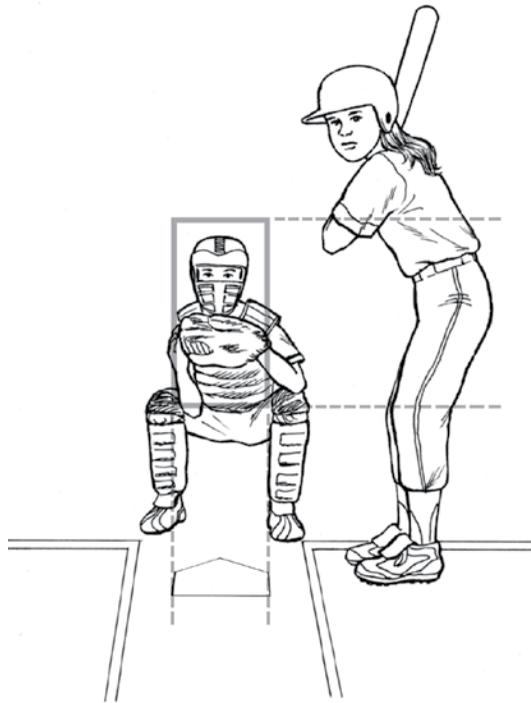


Figure 7.1 The strike zone.

touch—To touch a player or umpire is to touch any part of his or body, clothing or equipment.

triple—A hit in which the batter reaches third base safely.

triple play—A play by the defense in which three offensive players are put out as a result of continuous action.

umpire's interference—Occurs in two cases: 1) when an umpire hinders, impedes, or prevents a catcher's throw attempting to prevent a stolen base or 2) when a fair ball touches an umpire on fair territory before passing a fielder.

walk—A batter advancing to first base as the result of having a fourth ball. Also called a base on balls.

wild pitch—A pitch so high, so low, or so wide of the plate that the catcher cannot handle it with ordinary effort.

wind-up position—One of the two legal pitching positions, usually utilized when no runners are on base.

Rule Modifications

Table 7.1 contains our recommendations for modifying a variety of rules for baseball, including field dimensions, innings played, type of ball used, pitching restrictions, and so on.

Field

Baseball is played on a diamond-shaped field; home plate and first, second, and third bases form the corners (see figure 7.2). Foul lines run from home to first base and home to third base and extend beyond those bases to the

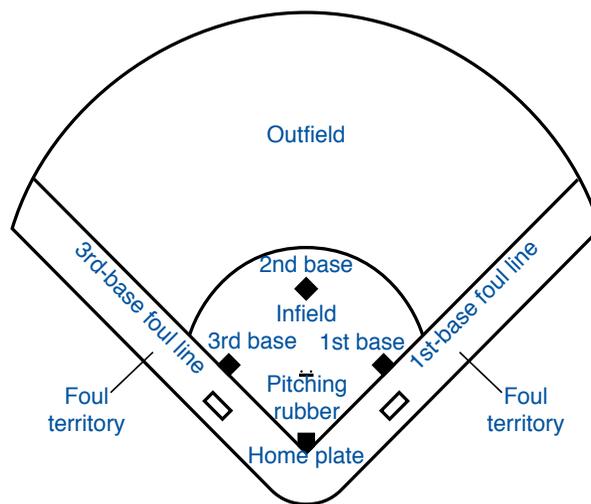


Figure 7.2 The playing field.

outfield fence. The area inside the foul lines, including the lines, is fair territory; anything outside the lines is foul. Fair territory around the base portion of the field is called the infield. Fair territory in the grassy portion of the field, beyond the dirt infield cutout, is called the outfield.

Table 7.1 Rule Modifications for Baseball

Item	Cal Ripken Minor Division	Cal Ripken Major Division	13-15 Babe Ruth	16-18 Babe Ruth
Players on field per team	9	9	9	9
Players on team	12-15	12-15	12-15	12-18
Basepaths	60 ft	60 ft or 70 ft	90 ft	90 ft
Pitching distance	46 ft	46 ft or 50 ft	60 ft 6 in	60 ft 6 in
Fence (down the lines)	200 ft (recommended)	200 ft (recommended)	320 ft (recommended)	320 ft (recommended)
Fence (to center field)	250 ft (recommended)	250 ft (recommended)	385 ft (recommended)	385 ft (recommended)
Ball	Regulation ball	Regulation ball	Regulation ball	Regulation ball
Pitcher	Player	Player	Player	Player
Pitching restrictions	6 innings per week	6 innings per week	7 innings per week	No official restrictions
Innings	6	6	7	7
10-run rule	Local league option	Local league option	Local league option	Local league option
Leadoffs	No	No (60 ft), Yes (70 ft)	Yes	Yes
Steals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extra hitter (local league option, not allowed in tournament competition)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Equipment

You're probably aware of most standard pieces of equipment: bases, balls, bats, gloves, helmets, and other appropriate apparel. But do you know how to tell when this equipment meets proper specifications and is in good repair? Here are some tips.

Bases

Be sure that your organization uses breakaway bases if at all possible. As many as 70 percent of baseball injuries occur when players slide, so it is important to make the actual bases as safe as possible.

Balls

The local league must use a baseball stamped as an Official Babe Ruth League baseball. The leagues may select from the following baseballs to be used in their local league games: A softer baseball may be used for Cal Ripken Baseball, Rookie, and T-Ball local league play. The official baseballs include deBeer, Diamond, MacGregor, Nike, Pro-Nine, Rawlings, Riddell, Trump, Wilson, and Worth.

However, Rawlings is the only official tournament baseball to be used for all district, state, regional, and World Series competitions. The Rawlings baseballs marked BRO or RBRO are to be used for all 13-to-18 tournament competitions. The Rawlings baseballs marked CAL or RCAL are to be used for all Cal Ripken Baseball tournament competitions.

Bats

The bat is divided into three parts: the knob, the handle, and the barrel (figure 7.3). Choosing a bat is based on a player's personal preference as long as the bat conforms to the dimensions described in Official Baseball Rule 1.10. For the Cal Ripken Division, note the following exceptions: The bat shall not be more than 33 inches in length, and a bat barrel must not be in excess of 2 1/4 inches.

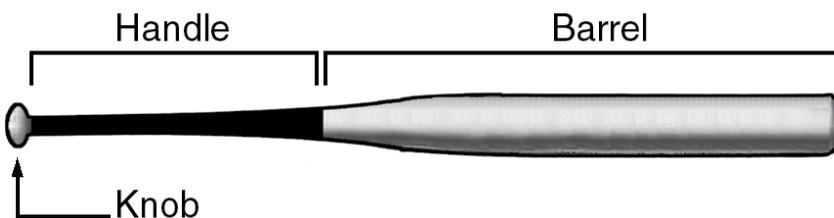


Figure 7.3 Parts of the bat.

Gloves

No piece of equipment will become more prized to your players than their gloves. Help your players select properly fitting gloves. It's better to start with a smaller glove than an oversized one. A mitt that has a huge pocket and is much bigger than a youngster's hand will be hard to control and can hinder skill development.

Choosing a Glove

The choice of what glove to use is a personal one. However, certain circumstances dictate what class or model of glove a player should consider. Middle infielders generally look for smaller gloves so that they can more easily make the transition from catching to throwing. Third basemen, who rely more on reflexes and have to handle balls that are hit hard and travel a short distance, may look for something that is a little larger, but still provides for a relatively easy transition. Pitchers may want the protection of a larger glove or the easy transition provided by a smaller glove. Outfielders generally look for something larger so that they can gain a little extra reach when running down a ball in the gap or trying to take away a home run. Catchers and first basemen have gloves specifically designed for their positions.

Players at each position can consider these basic classes of gloves. At the big league level the decision-making process for glove selection has changed over the past 15 to 20 years for one major reason: The players get bigger every year. In the early days of baseball right through the 1970s and into the early-to-mid '80s, most middle infielders were little guys. Some of the famous old-time middle infielders such as Luke Appling, Pee Wee Reese, and Louis Aparicio hardly were intimidating physical presences on the field. Pee Wee didn't earn his nickname because he was the biggest kid on the block! In the '70s and '80s guys such as Joe Morgan, Fred Patek, Mark Belanger, Ozzie Smith, Rick Burleson, and Bucky Dent were not causing baserunners to pull up short and avoid contact on potential double-play balls.

Since we began playing in the big leagues, however, it seems that for some reason teams have started gravitating toward bigger middle infielders. Look around today, and you see physical specimens such as Derek Jeter, Alex Rodriguez (before he moved to third), Nomar Garciaparra, and Brett Boone playing up the middle. Sure, you still have the more traditional smaller guys such as David Eckstein and Rafael Belliard in the mix, but big league players in general are bigger than in the past. The proliferation of bigger players has caused a gravitation toward bigger gloves, even for middle infielders.

At any level we think it is most important that a player find a glove that he or she is comfortable with, regardless of the size. At that point, through trial and error, the player should be able to figure out if he or she can successfully perform all of the skills necessitated by his or her position. If this is not the case, then maybe that player should look for a bigger or smaller glove that is more comfortable.

A young player may pick up a glove that is way too big, and this may be obvious. Maybe the player has seen a particular big-leaguer wearing a glove and wants to try the same exact model. Or maybe the bigger glove makes the player feel like he or she can catch the ball more easily or get to more balls. Or perhaps the glove just looks cool. As a coach or parent you can tell right away if a glove is just too big. The first clue is that the glove comes off sometimes when the player catches a ball. If the glove seems very flimsy when the ball enters it or if the player seems to have half of his or her arm in the glove to make it tight enough to catch the ball without the glove moving around, then it may be time to try a smaller model.

For the younger players, finding a glove that they consistently can catch with is the top priority. Don't worry about finding a specific infielder's or outfielder's model for the younger players. Making sure they have a glove that they like and that they catch with consistently is really what matters most. Players at the younger ages really should not specialize anyway. They should be learning the game and finding out what positions they like best by trying all of them. That will help them develop a good baseball knowledge base and allow them to develop all the skills a good baseball player needs.

For the absolute youngest players—those players looking for their first gloves—many options exist. Whatever the choice, we think that players should stay away from the vinyl or plastic gloves. These gloves don't really give players the feel for catching the baseball like leather gloves, and they often are either very hard to squeeze, don't squeeze at all, or squeeze so much that the glove becomes deformed and the ball is harder to catch.

Many softer leather gloves are on the market today that don't even need to be broken in much, if at all. Catching is probably the most difficult skill to teach T-ball-aged players, so it is helpful to these little guys and girls if they have a glove they can actually squeeze a little bit when the ball comes to them. At first, all catches will be with two hands below the chest. But if you really want the players to make progress and learn to catch the ball with their fingers pointing up, they need to have a glove that they can squeeze at least a little. So, for the smaller and younger players, look for something that their hand fits snugly in and that they can squeeze.

As players get older, many more glove options are available—and the prices seem to rise. If you as a parent or coach want to buy your child a top-grain leather glove and don't have a problem making that financial commitment, we would never tell you not to do that. However, keep in mind that these gloves can be costly and that the players are going to outgrow them. As players get older and approach the game more seriously, they will ask you for the top-of-the-line gloves. We guarantee it!

We can't stress enough that it is important for the players to be comfortable with their gloves and to be able to use the gloves effectively. It is also important for players to choose gloves that they like. If they really like the glove because it has Derek Jeter's autograph on it or because it looks cool or because it's a brand used by their favorite players, they are more likely to respect, take care

of, and not lose the glove. These are all valuable lessons for when players do get older and want to purchase the \$150 models.

As players get older you will hear infielders talking about using 11-inch gloves or even 11.5-inch gloves. Some may even look at a 10.5-inch glove. Again, a middle infielder needs a glove that fits his or her hand or body and that allows for an easy transfer from catching to throwing. Third basemen can use a little bit bigger model if their hands allow for it. Outfielders may use 12-, 12.5- or even 13-inch gloves. Herm Winningham, an outfielder for the Montreal Expos in the '80s, used a huge glove; it might have been about 14 inches. Again, it really is an individual choice.

Once the player has chosen a glove, the next step is to break it in properly.

Breaking In a Glove

Breaking in a glove can be a tedious, time-consuming process. If a young player starts the season with a new, stiff glove, he or she is going to be at a disadvantage in comparison to other kids with broken-in models. The player may not be able to catch very easily and may make some errors, which can lead to frustration. People have told many stories about how they break in their gloves. The best and most effective way to really break in a glove is to use it. Have players put some glove oil in the pocket and the webbing, and get out there and play catch!

The one cardinal rule to breaking in a glove that should not be compromised is to never let someone else put his or her hand in the glove. As a parent or coach, you might be tempted to take a player's new glove and jam your hand in it to loosen it up and start to alleviate some of the stiffness. Don't do it! Once your handprint is in there and once the palm is stretched out, your little player's hand will never feel absolutely right inside the glove.

Once you have oiled the glove pretty thoroughly, it is time to start the real breaking-in process. Playing a simple game of catch is the best way to have the glove start to take shape and fit your hand. One thing to watch out for, especially with younger players, is how they actually catch the ball. The ball should be caught in the pocket, not the webbing. The pocket is really the palm of the glove. Many times kids catch the ball in their webbing. In a game situation, it is harder to transfer a ball from the glove to your throwing hand if you catch it in the webbing. When breaking in a glove, catching the ball in the webbing will not allow the pocket to form. The pocket is the stiffest part of the glove. It is the part that needs to be shaped to fit your hand and the ball, so that's where players should try to catch the ball when breaking in a new glove.

Another trick is to oil the glove up and wear it when sitting around the house watching television. Take a baseball and pound it into the pocket over and over to help shape that part of the glove. Again, the emphasis should be on forming a pocket appropriate for the player's hand and a baseball.

Once again, with kids, the challenge is to get them to leave their comfort zones in order to use and break in their new gloves. First, explain why the

player needs to use the glove. Tell the player that a bigger model will be needed next year and that he or she will be behind the other players if the new glove is not ready to use. Second, tell the player that he or she can use the old glove for half the time when playing catch, for half the time at practice, and all the time during games.

Finally, when choosing the new glove, let the player actually go to the store and pick out the one that he or she wants. If the player gets a glove that he or she thinks is really cool for one reason or another, it is more likely that the glove will be used enough to get it broken in.

Additional Equipment

Your players must wear helmets at practice and in games while on deck, at bat, running the bases, and when in the coach's box. Bat boys and girls must also wear helmets while outside of the dugouts in both local league and tournament play. Such headgear should properly fit the player wearing it. It must cover the top of the head and have extended earflaps that cover both ears. If a player refuses to wear headgear, he or she shall be removed from the game.

Shoes with metal cleats or spikes are not permitted to be worn by any player, coach, or manager in the Cal Ripken Division. Metal cleats are acceptable in the Babe Ruth 13-15 and 16-18 divisions. Double-tying shoelaces prevents them from coming untied, which can cause a player to trip. Players should wear caps to keep hair and sun out of their eyes.

Some positions require special equipment. Catchers need a helmet that covers the ears and has a mask strapped to it or a hockey goalie-style mask. The helmet and mask should fit snugly enough so that the player can move his or her head up and down and from side to side without having parts of the helmet or mask obstruct vision. The throat area must be protected—either with a throat guard or by a mask that has a throat extension. Any player, manager, or coach warming up a pitcher at any location must wear a mask.

For younger catchers, the chest protector should have a flap that covers the groin/upper thigh area. Older players usually prefer a shorter chest protector that extends to the waist and provides more mobility, but this is only safe for experienced catchers who, of course, are wearing a protective cup. Make sure that the chest protector isn't so loose that it leaves certain critical areas exposed or makes it difficult for the catcher to throw. All catchers, regardless of which chest protector they prefer, must wear a protective cup.

Catchers always wear shin guards that are hooked on the outside of the leg. The shin guards should cover as much of the top part of the foot as possible without restricting movement.

Jewelry is prohibited. Medical alert and religious bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewelry. If worn, they must be taped to the body so as to remain visible.

All teams participating in Babe Ruth local and tournament competition are required to wear the Official Cal Ripken Baseball (5- to 12-year-olds) or Babe Ruth Baseball (13- to 18-year-olds) shoulder emblems (shown in *Official Babe Ruth Supply Catalog*) on their left sleeves.

Player Positions

Baseball is played with nine players in the field on defense. The busiest of the defensive players are the pitcher and catcher, known as the battery. Infielders, who handle ground balls and pop-ups on the dirt portion of the field, include the first baseman, second baseman, shortstop, and third baseman. The outfielders are the right fielder, center fielder, and left fielder. Figure 7.4 illustrates the nine defensive positions.

One of your biggest coaching decisions involves answering the question, *Who should play which position?* Here are some tips to help you choose wisely:

- Set your lineup to maximize your players' strengths and interests. At the youngest ages it is best to expose players to all positions, but never force a player to play a position he or she doesn't want to play. As players get older, it still is in their best interest to learn as many positions as possible, but specialization will naturally begin to occur.
- Play your best defensive players up the middle as catchers, middle infielders (second base and shortstop), and in center field.

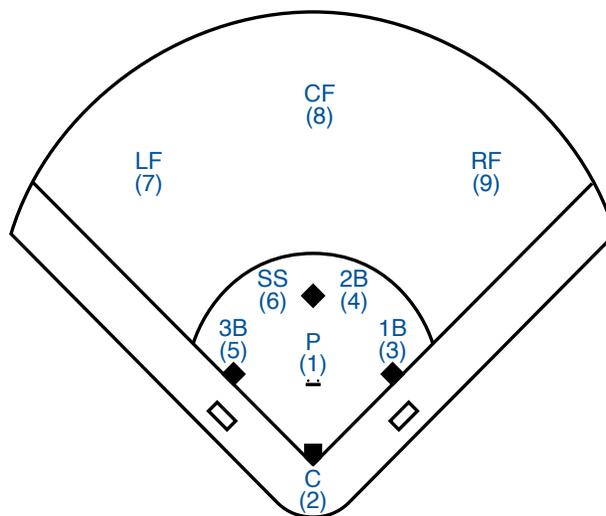


Figure 7.4 Player positions.

The following specific suggestions should help you determine where on the field each player should play. Included with each position is the number associated with it. Numbers are assigned to the positions for the purpose of keeping score.

- **Pitcher (1)**—Arm strength or velocity is an indication that a player may make a successful pitcher. A solid mental and emotional makeup will also make a pitcher effective, because a pitcher must stay poised throughout the game. Your pitcher should be a smart, tough, and confident competitor who will rise to the occasion when confronting a challenge. The player must be able to throw strikes; control is the number one priority. Spend a lot of time with your pitchers. When you have a player with exceptional arm strength, the lure to have that player pitch can be overwhelming. But be careful not to force a player to pitch who is reluctant. Let the player make the ultimate decision. All young pitchers should throw mostly fastballs when pitching. When they advance to the point physically where they can throw a breaking ball correctly, please monitor and limit its use. Players may be able to get batters out with a curveball that is thrown improperly at a young age, and doing so might help your team win games, but remember that winning games is not the ultimate goal in the developmental stages. A young pitcher who throws too many curveballs incorrectly risks injury, and will not develop the arm strength necessary to pitch at more advanced levels.
- **Catcher (2)**—The catcher is to a baseball team what a quarterback is to a football team. All the action takes place in front of this player. Good catchers are rugged individuals. If they are not big and strong, then they should be tough. The position requires strength, endurance, and exceptional hand-eye coordination. The catcher is up and down from a squat position on every pitch, throwing balls back to the pitcher or to the infielders, backing up first base on ground balls when other runners aren't on base, and chasing short foul balls. The catcher must be able to receive pitches, throw effectively, and communicate to the rest of the team, so an overall understanding of the game is essential.
- **First base (3)**—The ability to catch all types of thrown balls is essential for a first baseman. From a defensive standpoint first base is an undervalued position at all levels. Many coaches want to put the big, slow power hitter at first. However, a solid defensive first baseman can save a surprising number of runs for a team. While it is a nice luxury to put a big player at first base, size should not be the ultimate determining factor. The first baseman should be able to catch most, if not all, types of thrown balls, be agile enough to perform the footwork necessary to play the position correctly, and be able to field routine ground balls consistently. The first baseman makes more unusual plays than a player in any other position. A strong and accurate arm is a bonus at this position.

- **Second base (4)**—Players of all different statures have become excellent second basemen. Whether big or small, however, a second baseman must have a sure pair of hands to field ground balls, pop flies, and thrown balls. In addition, a second baseman must be able to foresee fielding situations and act instantly.
- **Third base (5)**—The third baseman must possess agility, good hands, and quick reflexes. This player must be able to come in fast on the ball and throw accurately while on the run. He or she must be able to make off-balance throws and bare-handed pickups on bunts and slowly hit balls. Third base provides the least reaction time for hard-hit balls of any position (except pitcher), so good reflexes and fearlessness are two traits that most good third basemen possess. The third baseman must have a strong arm to make the long throws to first base.
- **Shortstop (6)**—A shortstop often is the team's best overall athlete. He or she usually is the leader of the infield, so the player must be alert, be able to start and stop quickly, possess a sure pair of hands and, above all, have the strongest arm of any infielder. This player must also have excellent reflexes and soft hands. The shortstop will be required to make more tough plays than any other player on the field. The shortstop has the priority on all pop-ups in the infield.
- **Left field (7)**—The left fielder can have less speed and a weaker arm than any other outfielder, because many of the throws do not cover a great distance. However, this player must still be alert, have a strong enough arm to get the ball to the plate, and be a good fielder of ground balls. Most hitters are right-handed, so there probably are more hard-hit balls to left field than to right field. The left fielder backs up third base and the shortstop whenever necessary.
- **Center fielder (8)**—This player is the quarterback of the outfield and usually is the fastest of the outfielders. A strong arm also helps, but it is not always essential if the player is fast and can get rid of the ball quickly while still making an accurate throw. The center fielder covers more territory than any other player and will make the greatest percentage of outfield put-outs. It is his or her job to back up at second base on a variety of plays. The center fielder has priority on all fly balls that he or she can run down.
- **Right field (9)**—The right fielder should have a strong, accurate throwing arm. This player backs up first base on many plays, including bunted balls, throws from the catcher to first base, and all plays when there is a possibility that an errant throw might end up in right field. The right fielder also backs up second base on all balls hit right at the second baseman and when balls that are hit to the left side of the diamond result in a throw to second.

Baseball Game Procedures and Rules

Knowledge of the basic rules and procedures of Babe Ruth League Inc. will ensure that the game runs smoothly. Be aware of any special rules that are required for a particular playing field or any unusual boundaries. Here are some elements common to baseball games:

- Home team (the team that bats second) usually is predetermined by league officials; if it has not been, flip a coin to determine the home team.
- Only players, substitutes, a manager, two coaches, and a bat boy or bat girl shall occupy the bench during the game.
- Babe Ruth League Inc. prohibits the use of all tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco, for both local league and tournament competition. This rule applies to all field personnel, which includes managers, coaches, and umpires.
- A game is divided into innings. Each team gets one turn at bat per inning. See table 7.1 for the number of innings played by each league age group. Each offensive team is allowed three outs per inning.
- The batting order must be followed throughout the game unless a player is substituted for another. Substitutes must take the same place in the batting order as the replaced player.
- Please see Babe Ruth League Rules 0.08 and 11.05 for proper rules regarding protests during a game.
- Any of the nine starting players may withdraw and re-enter once provided that the player occupies the same batting position whenever he or she is in the lineup. A substitute who is withdrawn may not re-enter.
- All pitchers are governed by the provisions of Official Baseball Rule 3.05 if withdrawn while on the mound pitching. The pitcher withdrawn while a batter or baserunner may re-enter the game immediately. If the pitcher is removed from the game because of a second trip in the same inning he may re-enter the game at any position except pitcher.
- Babe Ruth League Inc. will allow re-entry of already used players if all substitutes have been used and injury occurs or a player is ejected. The opposing manager may choose the substitute. This type of re-entry can only take place when an injury prevents a player from continuing in the game or a player is ejected. The injured or ejected player, once removed from the game, cannot re-enter.
- Each batter is allowed a maximum of three strikes or four balls (upon the fourth ball, the batter is awarded first base; three strikes result in an out).
- A batter who, in hitting the ball, avoids making an out and safely reaches first base has a hit (or has reached base on a fielder's error). The player

may try to advance to another base. Players are allowed to over-run first base at any time as long as they run straight through the base and don't make any sort of a movement toward second. If a runner makes a movement toward second and the umpire determines that there was intent to advance at any point, the runner can be tagged out.

- A batter makes an out by striking out (three strikes), grounding out (the ball touches the ground before being caught and is thrown to first base or another base that a runner is forced to run to before the batter or runner arrives), or flying out (the ball is caught by a fielder before it touches the ground).
- The pitcher must take signs from the catcher while standing on the rubber. Penalty: After a warning by the umpire the pitcher, on the next offense, shall be removed from the mound as a pitcher for the remainder of the game. See Rule 8.01.
- A second trip to the mound by a manager or coach in the same inning visiting the same pitcher shall automatically result in the removal of that pitcher from the game (as a pitcher only). See Rule 8.06.
- A run is scored if an offensive player advances from first base to home plate, touching each base in the process, without being tagged out or forced out (a defensive player with the ball touches the base before the runner arrives, and the runner cannot retreat to the previous base because a teammate is already advancing there).
- With the third out, a team's turn at bat ends. That team takes the field, and the opposing team bats.
- The team with the most runs at the end of the game is the winner.
- Extra innings are played to determine the winner if a game is tied at the end of regulation play. Once a team is ahead after a completed extra inning (with both teams having a chance to bat), the game is over.

A Regulation Game

In the Cal Ripken Division, a regulation game shall consist of 6 innings or 4 innings if the game is called and if the home team has scored more runs in 3 turns at bat than the visiting team has scored in 4 turns at bat. All Cal Ripken tournament games shall be 6 complete innings, unless the home team leads at the end of 5-1/2 innings of play. In the event a game is called before completion, it shall be completed from the point of discontinuance. Any Cal Ripken district, state, area, or regional tournament game must be terminated once becoming a regulation game (4-1/2 or 5 innings) if one team is ahead by 10 or more runs and both teams have had equal times at bat, or the home team is ahead by 10 or more runs and has had equal times at bat. The 10-run rule is in effect for Cal Ripken tournament pool play.

For the 13-to-15 and 16-to-18 Divisions, refer to Official Baseball Rule 4.10 with the following exception: A Babe Ruth League regulation game shall consist of 7 innings. Therefore, where reference in Official Baseball Rules, here or elsewhere, is made to 9 innings, substitute the word "7" for "9." All 13-to-15 and 16-to-18 tournament games shall be 7 completed innings, unless the home team leads at the end of 6-1/2 innings of play. In the event a game is called before completion, it shall be completed from the point of discontinuance. Any 13-to-15 or 16-to-18 district, state, or regional tournament game must be terminated once becoming regulation (4-1/2 or 5 innings) if one team is ahead by 10 or more runs and both teams have had equal times at bat. The 10-run rule is in effect for 13-15 and 16-18 tournament pool play.

Pitching Limitations

In local league play, a Cal Ripken Baseball pitcher, regardless of age, may pitch 6 innings per calendar week. A 13-to-15 Babe Ruth pitcher, regardless of age, may pitch 7 innings per calendar week. There are no written restrictions as to the use of pitchers in Babe Ruth 16-to-18 local league play. Babe Ruth League Inc. strongly cautions that extreme care be used to ensure that an individual player is not overextended; in other words, use common sense to protect the player's arm.

This rule applies to all games, regardless of when played. It includes rescheduled and make-up games. If a pitcher delivers one pitch in an inning he or she shall be charged for one inning pitched. The calendar week for Cal Ripken Baseball and Babe Ruth Baseball is Monday through, and including, Sunday.

A Cal Ripken Baseball pitcher must have two calendar days of rest between pitching assignments if he or she pitches in more than two innings in any one game. A Babe Ruth 13-to-15 pitcher must have two calendar days rest between pitching assignments if he or she pitches in more than 3 innings in any one game. Each game in which a pitcher pitches is considered one assignment.

In Cal Ripken tournament play, no pitcher shall be allowed to pitch in more than 6 innings in any two successive tournament games within the same tournament level. (All players have full pitching eligibility beginning at each level of tournament competition; tournament levels are district, state, regional, and World Series.)

No pitcher in 13-to-15 tournament play shall be allowed to pitch in more than 7 innings in any two successive tournament games within the same tournament level. (All players have full pitching eligibility beginning at each level of tournament competition; tournament levels are district, state, regional, and World Series.)

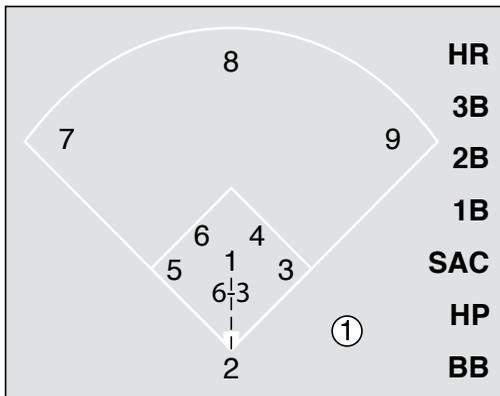
In 16-to-18 tournament play, although no written restrictions exist as to the use of pitchers, Babe Ruth League Inc. strongly cautions that extreme care be used so an individual player is not overextended; in other words, use common sense to protect the player's arm.

Keeping Score

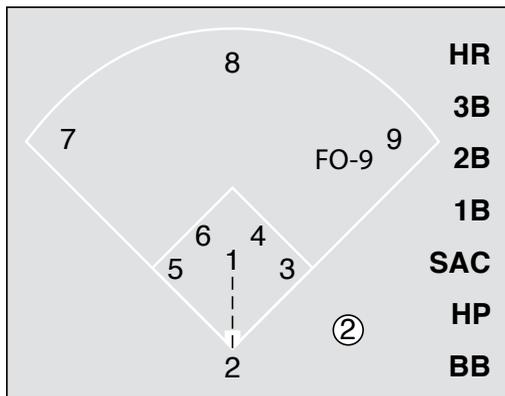
Using a scorebook is easy once you know the numbering system (see “Player Positions” on pages 84-86) and a few abbreviations.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| AB—Times at bat | IBB—Intentional base on balls or walk |
| B—Bunt | K—Strikeout |
| BB—Base on balls; walk | Backward K—Called third strike |
| BK—Balk | L—Line drive |
| CS—Caught stealing | O—Out |
| DP—Double play | PB—Passed ball |
| E—Error | R—Run |
| F—Foul fly | RBI—Run batted in |
| FC—Fielder’s choice | SH—Sacrifice hit (bunt) |
| FO—Fly out | SF—Sacrifice fly |
| G—Ground ball (unassisted infield out) | SB—Stolen base |
| H—Hit | TP—Triple play |
| HBP—Hit by pitch | WP—Wild pitch |

Every time a batter goes to the plate, use the numbers to indicate how the player was retired or reached base. For instance, the batter who grounds to the shortstop and is thrown out at first base is scored 6-3 in your scorebook (see figure 7.5a). If he or she flies to the right fielder, use FO-9 (see figure 7.5b). If the batter fouls out to the right fielder, use F-9. If a batter reaches first base on an error made by the second-base player, steals second, goes to third on a wild pitch, and scores on a passed ball, your scorebook would look like figure 7.5c.



a



b

(continued)

Figure 7.5 Scorebook samples a and b.

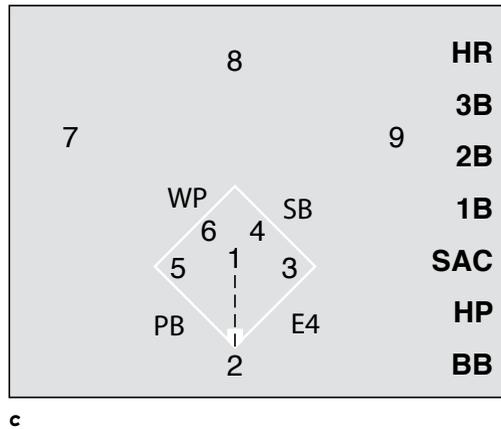


Figure 7.5 Scorebook sample c.

Umpires

Babe Ruth League Inc. created the National Umpires Association to assist the local leagues affiliated with the program in improving the officiating in their games. We recommend using National Umpires Association members for local Cal Ripken and Babe Ruth League games.

Umpires are officials who enforce the rules of the game. There are usually two umpires—one at home plate and another positioned according to the number of baserunners and bases they occupy. Sometimes there will be only a home plate umpire who is responsible for balls and strikes as well as all calls on the bases. Before the game, the home plate umpire meets with both coaches to exchange their lineups. Umpires decide whether a pitch is a ball or strike, a hit is fair or foul, and a runner is safe or out. The home plate umpire is the ultimate decision maker on any ruling.

From time to time an umpire will make a mistake. How you react when you think an umpire has erred is important. Be a good role model for your players. If you think a rule was not properly enforced, calmly call a time out and discuss it with the umpire. Don't mutter about the call in the dugout or interrupt the game by arguing. Remember, you are not allowed to contest judgment calls (ball/strike, safe/out, fair/foul), only rules interpretations. See figure 7.6 for common umpires' signals.



Figure 7.6 Some signals commonly used by umpires are (a) time-out or foul ball, (b) strike, (c) out, (d) safe, and (e) fair.