

Scorekeeping...

Introduction

Keeping score in baseball is an art. There are many ways to do it, some more complex than others. It all depends on what you want to get as an end result. If you are on one end of the spectrum and want to be able to produce all kinds of statistics from the scoring sheet, then you are a 'hard core' scorekeeper. If you are on the other end of the spectrum and your biggest desire is to ensure the lineup and score are correct, then you are a 'soft core' scorekeeper. This guide to scoring is intended to be somewhere in the middle. No matter which way you choose to go, enjoy it and have fun.

Get a Scorecard

The first and foremost necessity in scorekeeping is the scorecard. You can't keep score without one. A book of scorecards can be purchased at almost any sporting goods store. If you prefer, you may print a copy of our [online scorecard](#).

The Scorecard

Now that you have a scorecard, let's examine it. Depending on the scorecard you have, there will be areas for different kinds of data, like game day information, batter performance, inning totals, and pitcher performance.

All scorecards are not alike but most do contain 5 basic sections:

Top Section	The top area of the scorecard usually is reserved for information about the game. Who is playing, who is visitor, who is home, the umpires, date, time field, weather, scorer etc.
Left Center Section	The columns on the left side of the scorecard are usually reserved for recording the player lineup.
Center Section	The center area of the scorecard is usually made up of squares. In conjunction with the horizontal rows of the player lineup, each square represents a batter or turn at bat. The columns of this section represent the inning being played. Each box usually contains a diamond shape. Some may indicate this diamond shape with 4 points or some other object. Irregardless, this diamond shape represents the baselines.
Right Center Section	The columns on the right side of the scorecard are usually reserved for totaling the batters statistics.
Bottom Section	The bottom area of the scorecard is usually comprised of two or more horizontal sections. The upper section is usually space reserved for totaling the columns of the innings/games activity. The lower section is usually reserved for pitching statistics and totals.

Most scorecards will also contain an area to record a summary of the players' game performance afterwards. The summary area should contain the following information for each batter: at-bats, runs, hits, runs batted in, and errors. Once armed with this information, you'll be able to compute all sorts of [player and game statistics](#).

The Basics

Once you've familiarized yourself with the scorecard layout, it is time to start filling it in. Normally at the top you'll find places to log information such as team names, date, and time. Some scorecards also contain spaces for location, temperature, weather, team win-loss records, and several other statistics. Some cards will even provide space for umpire and coach names. Fill in as much as you want, but be sure to fill in the team names, date, and time. If you don't, a few months from now you probably won't be able to remember which game these scores came from.

The Players

Next, find where you'll be entering player data. This will be a grid with inning numbers running across the top and spaces for the players' names, numbers and positions down the side. The lineup section will consist of several lines. Represented below is the space allocated on the scorecard for one player position.

#	Player	Pos	1
			
		Sub	

The top line is where the starting player's name is listed. The bottom line is reserved for a substitute player. The left column (#) on each line is where you enter the player's uniform number. The middle column (Player) on each line is where you enter the player's name. The right column (Pos) on each line is where you enter the player's position. Although some scorekeepers enter this information using abbreviations for positions, such as 1B, CF, 3B etc., you should be aware that using numbers is the standard way of recording positions. There are 9 fielding positions in baseball (in softball and some youth levels of baseball there are 10). The standard position numbers are shown below.



These numbers are easy to remember if you start with the pitcher and then work your way around the bases. The only hitch is the shortstop. You would think that the numbers for shortstop and third base should be reversed. One explanation that I've read was that the shortstop was originally considered part of the outfield. The position was originally known as a "short fielder".

Depending on your level of baseball, the managers will usually exchange lineup cards before a game. As the scorekeeper, you need to get copies of these and enter the lineup on your scorecards. Substitute players are usually listed below the starting lineup.

Finally, you'll notice an area where you can register the statistical totals. Some of these, such as runs and hits, are totaled after each half-inning. Others, such as player and team totals, are tallied after the game has been played. We'll discuss this section later.

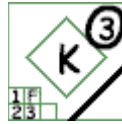
The Shorthand

Scorekeeping is accomplished by a sort of "shorthand," which is basically a combination of position numbers and abbreviations. Refer to the [scoring abbreviation](#) page to see some common numbers and abbreviations used when scoring a game.

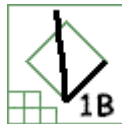
The Scoring

Each scorekeeper has their own way of recording events the scorebook. In addition to [abbreviations](#), several annotations are also used. Below are a few examples of annotations that you will probably want to use:

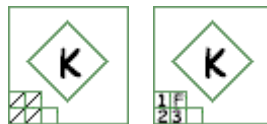
The end of an inning is usually noted by drawing a small diagonal slash in the bottom right corner of the last batter's box.



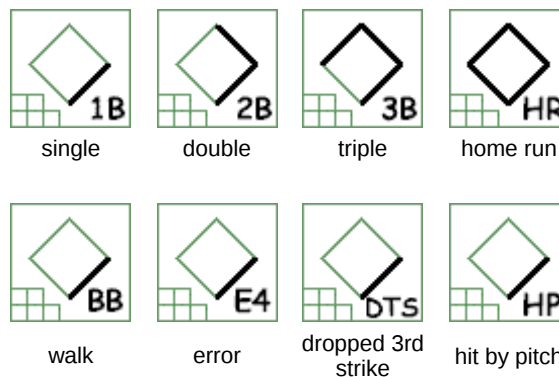
Balls that are hit are usually designated with a line drawn from the home plate area of the diamond in the batter's scoring box to the point where it is fielded. Some scorekeepers differentiate between fly balls and ground balls by drawing a straight line to represent fly balls and bumpy or wavy lines to represent ground balls.



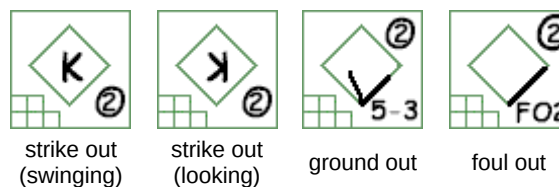
Depending on the level of baseball you are scoring, and the level of detail you want from the scorecard will dictate how you note each pitch. Most scorebooks have small squares within the batter's scoring box. The simple method is to put a diagonal line through the small strike or ball square that is within the batter's scoring box. For a ball that is hit in play you do not cross out one of these ball/strike squares. An alternate method is to write the pitch number in the ball/strike squares. Both methods are shown below:

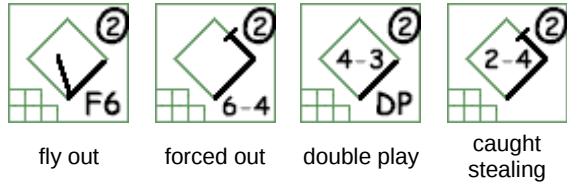


Below are several examples of annotations for some of the most common situations you will encounter with a batter getting on base:



Below are several examples of annotations for some of the most common situations you will encounter with a batter or runner getting put out:





The Batters

Let's see what we need to do as each player has his turn at bat. For this example, we'll confine ourselves to the top of the lineup.

#	Player	Pos	1
7	Dodson, C.	2	
	Sub		
13	Brown, J.	3	
	Sub		
32	Hudson, M.	6	
	Sub		
9	Jones, D.	8	
	Sub		

If you've familiarized yourself with the position numbers, you'll see that the catcher, first baseman, shortstop, and center fielder are the first batters up.

Dodson singles to center field. A lot of pre-printed scorecards will have a diamond representing the field in the middle of each box. To mark Dodson's single, we'll darken the line from home to first and place a 1B next to it. Many scorekeepers also like to draw a line to show where the batter hit the ball.

#	Player	Pos	1
7	Dodson, C.	2	
	Sub		

Brown is up next and he strikes out swinging. A "K" is placed in his box to indicate that he struck out. If it was a called strike three, a "Kc" or a backwards "K" would be placed in the box. A circled "1" is also placed in the box to indicate that it is the first out.

13	Brown, J.	3	
	Sub		

Hudson is batting next, but while he is batting Dodson manages to steal second. The line in Dodson's scoring box from first to second should be darkened and an "SB" along with a number

to indicate who was at bat is written to indicate that Dodson stole second during Hudson's plate appearance. I like to use the batter's jersey number for this. It makes it easier for me to keep track of things. Other scorekeepers use the batter's position number. So, I could have just as easily written "SB6" instead of "SB32". If Hudson hit or sacrificed the batter over to second, you would place just the uniform or player number next to the path from first to second to show how Dodson got to there.

7	Dodson, C.	2	
	Sub		

Hudson manages to draw a walk. The line from home to first is darkened and either a "BB" or "W" is written to indicate the walk. I prefer to use BB for "Base on Balls."

32	Hudson, M.	6	
	Sub		

Jones is now at bat and hits it to the short stop who tosses it to the second baseman who tags the bag to get Hudson out. The second baseman then throws to first to get Jones out. A classic 6-4-3 double play, which is what is written in Jones' box. Of course, both outs must be recorded. So a line is drawn halfway between first and second in Hudson's box and is marked with a "9" to indicate that Jones was the batter. A circled '2' is also entered to indicate that Hudson was the second out.

32	Hudson, M.	6	
	Sub		

In Jones' box a 6-4-3 is written along with a 'DP' for the double play and a circled '3' to indicate the third out. A 'DP' could also have been entered in Hudson's box to indicate that he was caught up in the double play as well. One other method is to draw a line connecting the two boxes.

9	Jones, D.	8	
	Sub		

The '6-4-3' above is an example of how all players who were involved in putting the runner out are given credit.

Since this is the third out, a slash is drawn across the lower right-hand corner of Jones' box to indicate the end of the inning. This is what the scorecard should look like after the first half-inning.

#	Player	Pos	1
7	Dodson, C.	2	59 32 1B
	Sub		
13	Brown, J.	3	K
	Sub		①
32	Hudson, M.	6	② 9 BB
	Sub		
9	Jones, D.	8	DP ③ 6-4-3
	Sub		

The Substitutions

I've never seen a game where at least one substitution was not made. There are many reasons to replace a starter: pitchers get tired, batters aren't hitting, players get injured, someone's ejected, or the manager makes a strategic move. Whatever the reason, sooner or later you're going to have to mark a substitution on your scorecard.

So, how do you do this? It depends on the substitution.

For batter substitutions, I draw a line between the last score box of the previous batter and the first score box of the new batter.

#	Player	Pos	8
7	Dodson, C.	2	K
	Sub		①
13	Brown, J.	3	
24	Taylor, A.	PH	

Taylor pinch hits for Brown

If the new batter is a pinch hitter, place "PH" in the position box. If he is taking a position in the field, use the normal position numbers. If players are moved around in the field, you'll want to show that on your scorecard. Usually, I make a note by the player's name indicating the move. When a substitution is made for the pitcher, place a line under the score box of the last batter the previous pitcher faced.

After The Game

When the game is over, you can tabulate all the data you've compiled. If you haven't been keeping up with it during the game, now is the time to add up the statistics for each inning: runs, hits, errors, passed balls, and men left on base. You can also add up the data for each pitcher: innings pitched, batters faced, strikeouts, walks, hits, runs, earned runs, wild pitches, batters hit, and balks. There may be other statistics that you can fill in on your card, but these are the fields on the online [scorecard](#). Professionally printed scorecards may contain several fields to tally a batter's performance: at-bats, runs, hits, singles, doubles, triples, home runs, runs batted in and others. It's up to you to decide how much you want to do.

If you want to learn the formulas for calculating batting average, earned-run average, on-base percentage, or several other stats, check out the [statistics](#) page.

Proven Scores

The official scorekeeper must prove the official box score, which is what becomes part of the official record. The formula is very simple and must be applied to each team's scorecard.

First, total the number of runs, men left on base and opponents' putouts for one team. Next, total the number of at-bats, walks, sacrifices, batters hit by pitcher and awards of first base due to interference for the same team. If these two totals are equal then this team's box score is "proven." Repeat the process for the other team.

Your Turn

Hopefully, the above examples will give you an idea about how scorekeeping is done. Give it a try next time you go to out to the ballgame. Also, don't be afraid to experiment. What works best for others may not be best for you. Now go to a ballgame and try your hand at scorekeeping!

Team _____

Inning _____

