HOW TO SCORE A BASEBALL GAME

A Guide for Beginners

Prepared by Baseball Canada Scoring Committee

How to Score a Baseball Game

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So. You're just settling into your lawn chair, awaiting the start of your child's baseball game. Here comes the coach. He asks if you would mind keeping score for the game. You're terrified and decline, asking: "Isn't there anyone else?"

But you know he'll be back again another time and you will have to take a turn. Now what?

Well, if you have never been a scorer before. And if you have no clue about what a scorer does, but are interested in helping the team, this Guide is for you!

This Guide is one of many resources written to help people become familiar with and proficient at scoring a baseball game. Baseball Canada has prepared a set of materials to support parents, fans and other interested people in learning the Art of Scoring.

For the purposes of this Guide, we will assume that you are an absolute Newbie with respect to score keeping. If you are someone who has basic knowledge and experience, we would recommend you skip the Guide and proceed directly to more advanced materials available on the Baseball Canada website. (baseball.ca)

Ready? Relaxed? Let's go!

Baseball is a simple game but has a large number of rules. **Don't be intimidated**. As you gain more experience, the rules will become clearer and will make sense. Two basic concepts to think about:

Baseball – a game where two teams try to defeat their opponent by scoring more points (called RUNS) than the other team. There are two main components to a baseball game:

 a. Offence – attempts to score runs
 b. Defence – attempts to prevent runs from being scored.

Scorer (Often also called Score Keeper) – the person or persons who keep track of the runs scored. And, as you will learn, do a few other things as well. The fancy name for this process is compiling statistics. But that is only used by those who want to impress others with big words!

The scorer does two things:

 a. Observe – watches and listens while the baseball game is being played
 b. Record – makes a written (or lately, computerized) record of the game.

Sound simple? At first, being a scorer can be a very simple and interesting task. Many people who learn how to score games find that they watch the game differently and appreciate the subtleties of the game at a deeper level. Some may even want to continue to expand their knowledge and pursue scoring at a much higher and more intense level. Baseball Canada has an accreditation program designed just for those people.

OK. So – there you are. In your lawn chair. Score book and pencil in hand. Understanding that the game is about to begin, and you have a job to do. Here is a basic summary of your tasks. In a moment, we will delve a bit deeper into each task – and refer to other sources of more detailed information when you are ready to access that.

1. Line Ups entered into your book
2. Make note of the time the first pitch was thrown
3. Watch the game
4. Record what you see and hear.
5. Wrap up and summarize the game.

1. Line Up

A LINE UP is a list of the players who will participate in the game. The players are listed in the order that they will come to bat. There are many ways of listing the players and the formality of the list will be dependent on the league. Some leagues list only first names, or last, but you will learn that a line up should include at least 3 parts:

- Player's FIRST name
- Player's SURNAME
- Defensive Position of each player

In most situations, the coach of "your team" will already have written out the line up for his team. You will have to go to the other team to get their line up. This social interaction between scorers is often pleasant and frequently leads to developing a new friendship.

Each **Defensive Position** is assigned a number just so that easy and consistent reference can be made to the players. The chart below indicates these position numbers.

PITCHER = 1	SECOND BASE = 4	LEFT FIELD = 7
CATCHER = 2	THIRD BASE = 5	CENTRE FIELD = 8
FIRST BASE = 3	SHORTSTOP = 6	RIGHT FIELD = 9

DEFENSIVE POSITIONS CHART

For leagues where a 10th player is allowed on defence – a rover – use the position number 10.

2. **Note the Time the First Pitch is Thrown**
   This may become especially important, especially if the league has a time limit on games.

3. **Watch the Game**.
   As you know, one team is AT BAT – their job is to try to score runs. The other team is IN THE FIELD – their job is to try to prevent or limit the number of runs scored.

   How does a team score a run?
   The team at bat sends its players up and they try to advance to first base, to second base, to third base, and finally to touch home base, thereby scoring a run.

   In the score book, the scorer records the action of the BATTER and notes his progress around the bases. This is done by **drawing a line** from one base to the next, forming a diamond when complete. To show a run has been scored, the diamond is shaded – so that tallying the overall score is visually easy. (*Foreshadowing – Later you will learn that different kinds of runs can be scored, and the notation is different. Interested? There are more detailed explanations awaiting you!*)

4. **Record What You See and Hear**

   You will use your score book to replicate on paper what you see on the field. Basically, two things will happen for each batter:

   - The batter gets ON BASE
   - The batter is PUT OUT

   If the batter gets **ON BASE**:
   - Indicate **how** he got to first base (each of these possibilities will be explained in a moment.)
     1. Hit
     2. Error
     3. Fielder's Choice
     4. Other
   - **Draw a line** from home base to first base (Your line will replicate the advance of the runner as he moves around the bases)

   If the batter is **PUT OUT**:
   - Indicate **how** he was put out (each of these possibilities will be explained in a moment).
     1. Ground out
     2. Fly out
     3. Strike out
     4. Other
   - Draw a circle around your notation – or use the score book notations (this will vary from score book to score book)

1. Ground Out

A batter is said to **ground out** if he hits a ball along the ground which is fielded by a defender. The defender either tags the batter or throws the ball to first base before the batter reaches there.
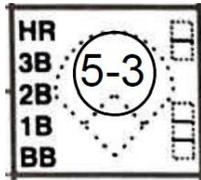
This example shows a batter put out because his ground ball was fielded by the third baseman who threw the ball to the first baseman. The first baseman caught the ball and touched the base.

2. Fly Out

A batter is said to **fly out** if he hits the ball in the air and a fielder catches it before it hits the ground.
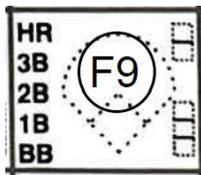
This example shows a batter put out because his fly ball was caught by the right fielder.

If the ball is hit on a low trajectory – on a line, so to speak – and a fielder catches it in the air, the usual term used is **line out**, rather than fly out.
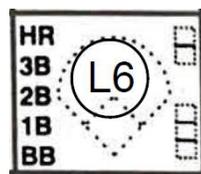
This example shows a batter put out because his line drive was caught by the shortstop.

If the fly ball is caught in foul territory (outside the base lines), the fly out is called a **foul fly out**
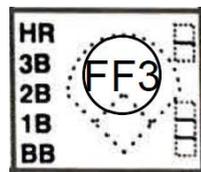
This example shows a batter put out because his fly ball was caught by the first baseman in foul territory.

3. Strike Out

A batter is said to **strike out** when he either swings and misses for a third strike, or the umpire calls a third strike. These are called **strike out swinging** and **strike out looking** to differentiate between the two.
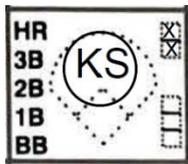
 Strike out **swinging**
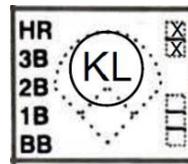
 Strike out **looking**

4. Other

There are a number of other ways a batter can be put out. These are called automatic outs and are noted with a symbol OBR (Out By Rule). These are uncommon and will be addressed in the more advanced levels.

However, two automatic outs which sometimes happen, especially for younger players, are:

a) Batter stepping out of the batter's box and hitting the ball
b) A runner running outside of the base path

In both cases, to note the out, draw a circle as before, write **OBR** and the position number of the closest defender.
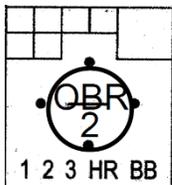
 This example shows a batter who has been called out because he stepped out of the batter's box when he hit the ball. Credit the put out to the catcher who was the closest defender.
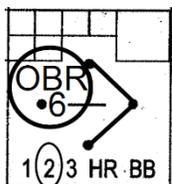
 This example shows a runner who was called out because he ran outside the base path to avoid being tagged by the shortstop.

<u>Batter Gets On Base</u>

- Hit – In the rules of baseball, there are many and detailed explanations of different kinds of hits. For the purposes of this Guide, we will use the notion that a hit is any ball that is hit between the fielders or lands safely in front of, or behind the fielders and is not touched by anyone until the batter has reached first base. *(Foreshadowing – In the rules of baseball, there are 6 definitions of a hit. Those of you interested in advancing will learn those later.)*

    Value of a hit – a hit is described as one of four things:
    - Single – batter stops at first base
    - Triple – batter stops at third base
    - Double – batter stops at second base
    - Home Run – batter crosses home plate

    <u>Examples of hit notations:</u>

    - 1B – a single; 2B – a double; 3B – a triple; HR – a home run
    - Many score books have the list of hits written for the scorer already – you just need to circle the type of hit
    - If the score book does not have such a list, you can write the symbol near the line showing the advance of the runner to first base, or wherever the batter stops.
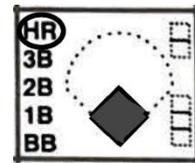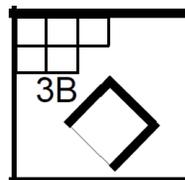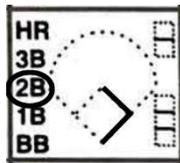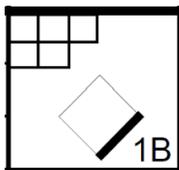
- Error- In the rules of baseball, there are many and detailed explanations of what an error is. For the purposes of this manual, we will use the idea that an error is any play by the defence that allows a batter to reach base when he should have been put out – and here is a *critically important phrase* – using **ordinary effort**.

    - Ordinary effort is a concept that a scorer must always keep in mind. Clearly, an eleven-year-old player in a recreational league would have neither the experience nor skill equal to that of an eighteen-year-old player on Canada's National Team. The ability to field a ground ball or catch a fly ball or to make a throw across a diamond are all skills that develop and increase with age, strength, and experience. What may be an error for a national team player may well not be an error for a novice player. When decisions about errors are made, the scorer should always ask – could the average player in this league have made that play? If the answer is no – always award a hit to the batter, rather than an error to the fielder
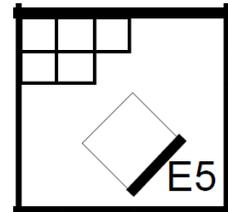
- Error Notation – Two Parts:
  - Write a large **E** just under the line showing the batter's advance to first base
  - Include the **DEFENSIVE POSITION NUMBER** of the fielder who has made the error.
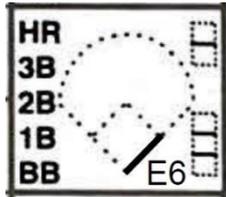
|		
Shortstop fumbles the ball	Center fielder drops fly ball	Third baseman makes bad throw
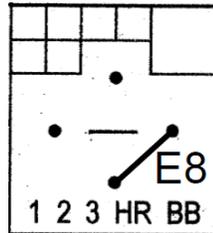
- Fielder's Choice
  - Sometimes a batter will get on base because the defence tries to make a play on another runner. For example, if there is a runner on first base and the batter hits a ground ball to the shortstop, typically the shortstop will attempt to put out the runner coming in to second base. Often the batter is safe at first on this play.
  - You can't score a hit – the batter has helped put out a teammate and likely would have been out if the shortstop had *chosen* to make the play on him instead.
  - You can't score an error – no error has been made. What to do? This is scored as a **FIELDER'S CHOICE.**

  - Use the same concept for showing **how** the batter gets to first base as you did for a hit:
    - Draw a **line** from home base to first base
    - If your score book has the **FC** symbol, circle it.
    - If your scorebook does not have the FC symbol, write FC under the line you have drawn to first base. (For those who are interested in a more sophisticated notation, include the position number of the fielder who made the choice. In the example above, you would write FC6.
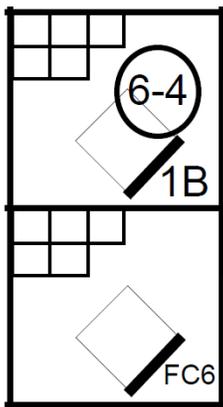
This example shows:
- A player is on first base because he hit a single
- The next batter hits a ground ball to the shortstop, who throws the ball to the second baseman to put out the first player
- The batter is safe at first – score a **fielder's choice**. (The 6 indicates that it was the shortstop who made the choice where to throw the ball.)
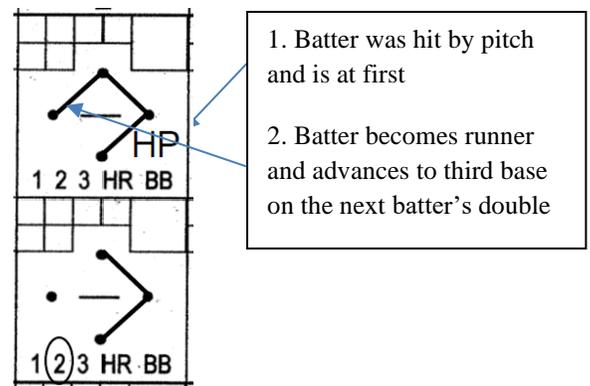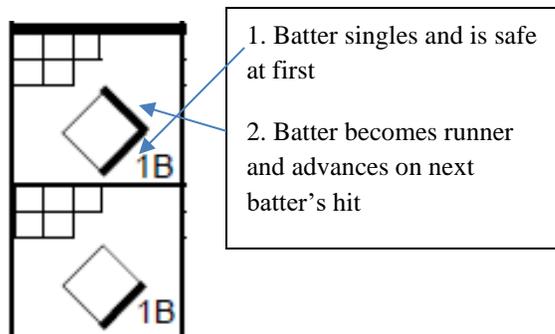
- Other
  - A Batter can also get on base by means of three special circumstances *(Each of these is detailed in the Official Rules of Baseball for those of you who are interested in precise definitions.)*:

    - Base on Balls (Walk – batter has received four pitches outside the strike zone)
    - Hit by a Pitch (Batter has been hit by a pitch outside the strike zone)
    - Catcher's Interference. (The catcher has interfered with the batter's swing.)

  - Use the same concept for showing **how** the batter gets to first base as you did for a hit:

    - Draw a line from home plate to first base
    - Write BB, HP or INT, depending on whether it was a walk, hit by pitch or interference.
    - Some score books will have notations for these situations – circle the appropriate symbol.
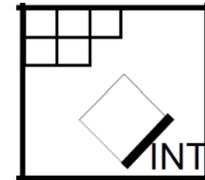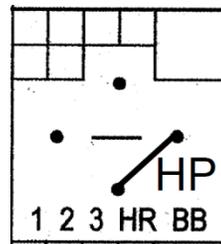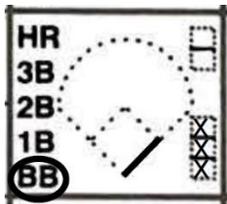
- Advances by a **RUNNER:**

  - Once a batter has reached first base safely, he becomes a runner.

  - Indicate advances by a runner from one base to the next in the same way as you indicate a hit – draw a line from one base to the next; follow the progress of the runner as he advances

  - If the runner crosses home plate safely, shade in the diamond that you have formed as you recorded the runner advancing.

1. Batter singles and is safe at first

2. Batter becomes runner and advances on next batter's hit

1. Batter was hit by pitch and is at first

2. Batter becomes runner and advances to third base on the next batter's double

- Advances by a **RUNNER** continued:

1. Batter singles and is safe at first

2. Batter becomes runner and scores on next batter's homerun
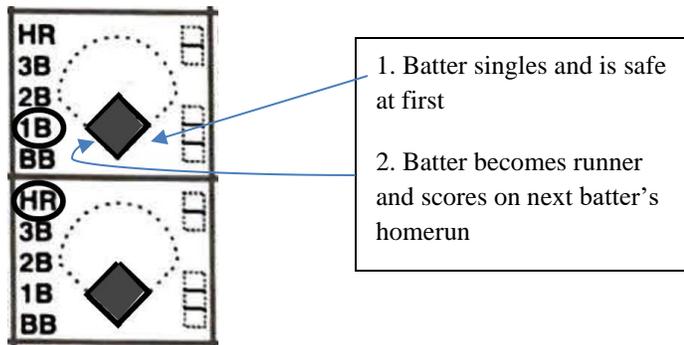
- **Special Advances**:
    - Stolen Base – When a pitch is delivered, and the ball is not put into play by the batter, the runner advances safely to the next base

    - Wild Pitch – The pitch delivered is too high, wide, or low for the catcher to control and the runner advances safely to the next base.

    - Passed Ball – a pitch is delivered that the catcher should have controlled with ordinary effort and the runner advances to the next base.

    Record these special advances in the same way as for any other advance, except that you write the symbol for the type of advance above the line you drew to record the advance.

    If more than one runner is on base and advances on the same play, use the same symbol for every runner who advances.
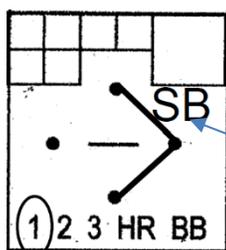
1. Batter is safe at first because he hit a single.

2. Runner advances to second because he stole the base.

A runner was on second base and advanced to third because of a passed ball.

1. The first batter hits a double.

2. The second batter hits a single. The first batter does not advance on this hit.

3. Both runners advance one base because of a wild pitch thrown on the first pitch to the third batter.
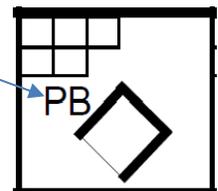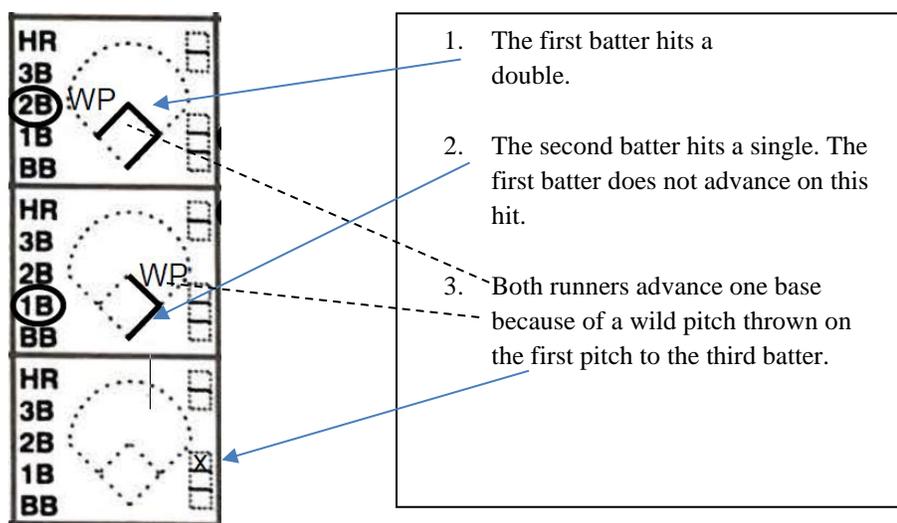
- **Very Special Advance – SACRIFICE**

  - Don't worry, no one will be harmed – it is not a human sacrifice!
  - In baseball, sometimes a batter will be put out, but a runner will advance. Sometimes the batter deliberately puts himself at risk of being put out in order that a teammate will either score or advance to a scoring position. This strategy is called a **sacrifice**. (The Official Rules of Baseball define clearly what a sacrifice consists of for those of you who wish to pursue the concept in more detail.)
  - There are TWO forms of sacrifice:
    - Runner on any base
    - Runner on THIRD base.
  - If there are runners on base and the batter bunts the ball *(an action when the batter deliberately tries to hit the ball softly so that it comes to rest only a short distance from home plate – full definition in the Official Rules of Baseball)* and a runner advances safely to the next base, the Batter is credited with a **sacrifice**. This is called a sacrifice bunt.
  - (*Foreshadowing: Later you will learn advantages of a sacrifice and the statistics that are associated with the action.)*
  - If there is a runner on third base with less than two outs and the batter hits a fly ball that is caught in the outfield and the runner scores, the batter is credited with a **sacrifice**. This is called a sacrifice fly
  - For these special advances, show the runner moving ahead as you have done previously. For the batter, record the out with a circle as you have done before, but add the symbol **SAC** above the put-out indication. (See the examples on the next page.)

- For those of you who want to demonstrate a skill level one notch above *beginner, you can use one more symbol – if you are into bragging, of course! That symbol would be to add to the runner's advance by showing who made the sacrifice that allowed the advance to happen. You do this by writing the batting order number of the player who made the sacrifice near the line showing the runner's advance. (See the last example below. The* **FANCY ONE!***)*

1. Runner who was on first base advances to second base because of the sacrifice of the next batter.

2. The batter is out at first after his bunt was fielded by the pitcher and who throws the ball to the first baseman.

1. Runner who had tripled and was on third base scores because of the sacrifice of the next batter.

2. The batter is out at first after his bunt was fielded by the second baseman and who throws the ball to the first baseman.

1. Runner who had tripled and was on third base scores because of the sacrifice of the next batter.

1. The batter is out because the centre fielder caught his fly ball.

'FANCY ONE|"

1.The fourth batter in the order hits a triple to right field when the count was two balls and one strike. He scores when batter five hits a fly ball which is caught by the right fielder

2. The fifth batter in the order becomes the first out of the inning when his fly ball to right field is caught. The count was two strikes at the time. Because it was deep enough, the fourth batter tagged up and was able to score. This is a SACRIFICE FLY and will not count as a time at bat

The "*FANCY ONE*" is included to demonstrate some other things you will learn as you progress through the levels of scoring. A score card is really a story of the ball game. People familiar with scoring symbols and notations can read the story and get a very clear picture of what transpired on the field for each play. This is the goal of scorers!

5. Wrap Up and Summarize the Game

Once the game has ended, the scorer is responsible for completing a summary.
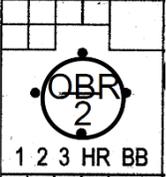
- Tally the runs
- Complete any LINE SCORE boxes
- Complete any post-game forms required for the league, for example:
  - Pitch Counts for the players who pitched in the game
  - Summary of the score
  - Winning and Losing Pitchers (this is a topic for more advanced levels)
- Obtain any signatures required (Leagues will have different regulations)
- Sign the score book
- Return the score book to the person responsible.
- Pick up your child and drive home excitedly explaining all the fun things you were doing. Oh, and maybe listen while your child explains all the fun things, he / she was doing and how much fun it was!

Line Scores

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Bunnies	1	3	1	0	1	1	4	11
Eagles	0	0	1	3	1	0	2	7

QUICK REFERENCE

Batter on Base	Batter's Box	Batter Out	Batter's Box
HIT • Draw a line to the base • State the value of the hit.		**GROUND OUT** • Draw a circle • Indicate the positions involved	
ERROR • Draw a line to the base • Identify the position who made the error		**FLY OUT** • Draw a circle • Indicate the position who made the catch	
FIELDER'S CHOICE • Draw a line to the base • Identify the position who made the choice		**LINE OUT** • Draw a circle • Indicate the position who made the catch	
WALK • Draw a line to the base • Write BB		**STRIKE OUT** • Draw a circle • Indicate a swinging (KS) or looking (KL) third strike	
OTHER • Draw a line to the base • Write HP (or INT - interference)		**AUTOMATIC OUT** • Draw a circle • Write OBR and the position of the closest defender	
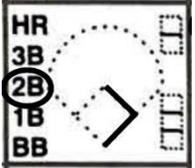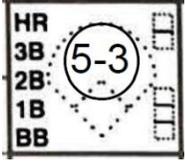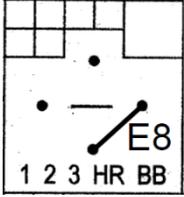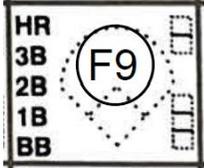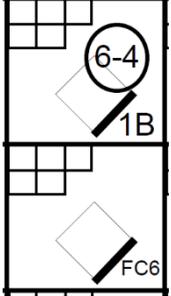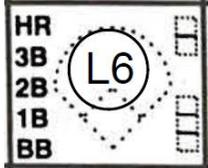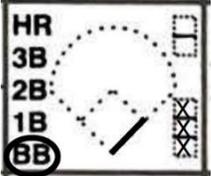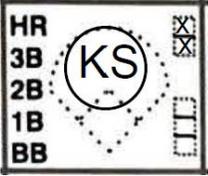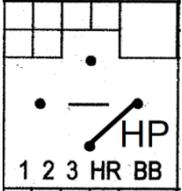
QUICK REFERENCE
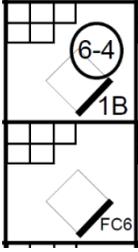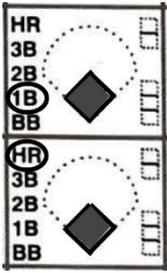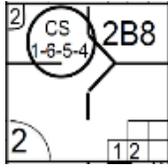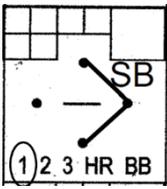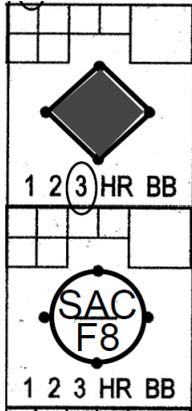
RUNNER ADVANCES		RUNNER OUT	
Basic • Draw a line to the base to follow the runner as he moves to each base		**Out at a Base** • Draw a circle near the base of the put out • Write the positions of the fielders involved	
Run Scores • Draw a line to the base to follow the runner as he moves to each base • When he scores, shade in the diamond		**Caught Stealing** • Draw a circle near the base of the put out • Write the positions of the fielders involved (catcher + fielder making the tag)	
Other – Stolen Base • Draw a line to the base to follow the runner as he moves to the next base • Write SB above the line		**Sacrifice** • For the **runner**: Draw a line to the base to show the advance; shade in the diamond if a run scores • For the **batter**: Draw a circle; write the position(s) of the fielder(s) involved	
SPECIAL ADVANCES • Draw a line to the base • Write PB (passed ball). Or WP (wild pitch)		**AUTOMATIC OUT** • Draw a circle • Write OBR and the position of the closest defender	