



Scoring Fundamentals

A Primer

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Basic Notation and Pitch Outcomes



Fielding Position Numbering System and Recording Outs



Basic Notation & Pitch Outcomes

The fielding position numbering system we use is shown in the image. We use these numbers when referring to fielders on the scorecard.

For instance, instead of saying:

“The batter hit the ball to the shortstop, who threw to first base in time to get the out”

We would say:

“63 groundout”

6 is the shortstop. **3** is the first baseman. Even the word ‘groundout’ is not strictly needed here to get the same meaning across, we can tell that by the absence of any other symbols or letters.

For fly balls, we use:

F9 – Flyout to the Right Fielder.

L7 – Lineout to the Left Fielder.

P2 – Popup to the Catcher.

Scorers sometimes use a **U** to indicate the play was unassisted, though using WBSC notation we’d just use a single number:

3U or **3** – The ball was hit straight to the first baseman, who stepped on first base or tagged the runner for the out themselves.

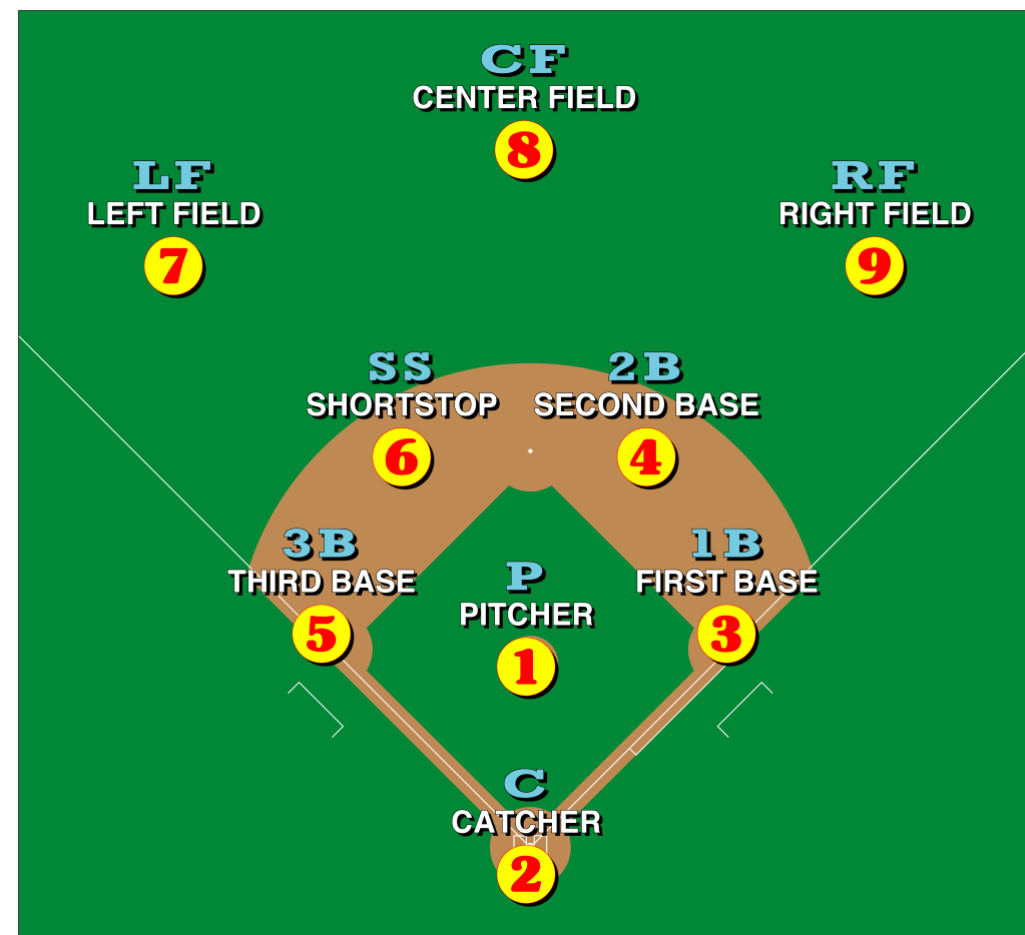


Image credit: Michael J - Wikipedia

Other non-fielding positions:

DH – Designated Hitter

PH – Pinch (Substitute) Hitter

PR – Pinch (Substitute) Runner

Assists and Putouts



Basic Notation & Pitch Outcomes

As well as hitters recording stats for their hitting, fielders also record stats for their fielding. The two main stats recorded are **Assists** and **Putouts**.

An **assist** is given to any fielder who fields and throws the ball, or prevents it touching the ground, which leads to an out (or would've except for an error by the receiving player), though does not put the batter out by themselves. Shortstops and third basemen tend to get the most **assists**.

A **putout** is given to a player who actually makes the catch/tag, or touches the base for a force out. First basemen and catchers tend to get the most **putouts**, along with outfielders on fly balls.

On the previous slide we saw a **63** groundout. The first player noted is the player making the **assist**, in this case the shortstop (6), who fielded the ball and threw it to first base.

The last player mentioned is the player making the **putout**. In our case this was the first baseman (3) catching the ball whilst touching first base to force the batter-runner out.

It's very possible to have multiple assists and putouts on the same play – we'll cover this later when we look at **double/triple plays**. The most common double play is the **643 GDP**: Shortstop fields the ball, throws to the second baseman for the first out. Second baseman then throws to first base for the second out.

Here, the shortstop gets an **assist**, first baseman gets a **putout** and the second baseman gets one of each as they both **put out** the lead runner and **assisted** the out of the batter-runner.

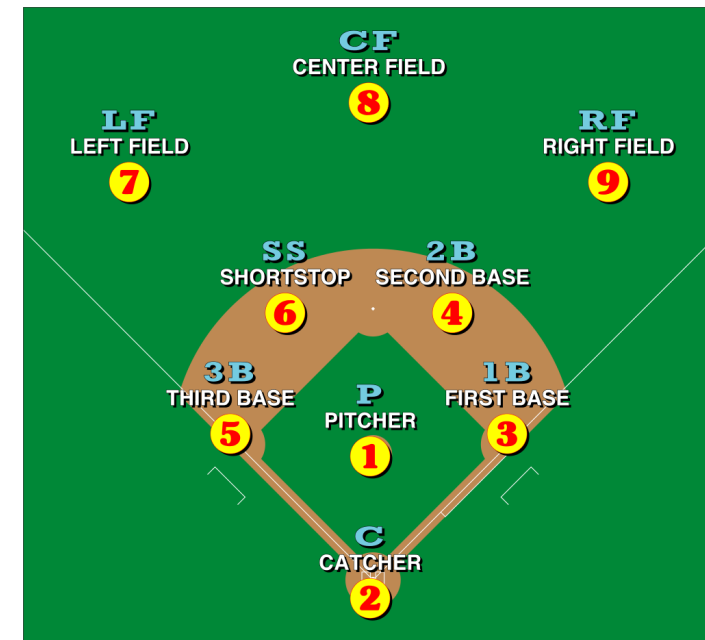


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Plate Appearances vs. At Bats

Basic Notation & Pitch Outcomes



A batter is charged with a **Plate Appearance (PA)** any time their time at bat is concluded by their own actions, like putting the ball in play or striking out, and the lineup moves to the next batter. If, with two outs already, a runner is put out on the basepaths and the inning ends (or in Single A, the 5th run is scored on a stolen base or wild pitch), the batter currently at the plate is not charged a **Plate Appearance** because they didn't get chance to finish. They become the leadoff batter for their team in the next inning (with the count resetting to 0-0).

An **At Bat** is a subset of plate appearance, and is the denominator used to calculate batting average, slugging percentage and other hitting statistics. All **At Bats** are **Plate Appearances**, however **Plate Appearances** are not always **At Bats** - not, for instance, if they end in one of the following:

Walk, Sacrifice, Hit by Pitch, Obstruction or **Catcher Interference**

Remember that **At Bats** are used to calculate batting average, so we don't want to include these outcomes in the calculation. **Walks** counting against a player's batting average would punish patient hitters, and lowering their average because they were **hit by pitch** or the **catcher interfered** with the batter just seems mean! This is why modern analytically-inclined people prefer On Base Average (aka On Base Percentage, OBP), which includes every method of getting on base (except for Errors).

Question: Why is a plate appearance ending in the batter reaching on an **Error** still considered an **At Bat**?

Answer: Because the batter should be out, so their batting average **should** be lowered!

If a batter reaches on an error, then we're saying they would've been out if not for the error. So we do want to lower a batter's average, because they "should" be out.

Plate Appearances vs. At Bats Recap



Basic Notation & Pitch Outcomes

Plate Appearance & At Bat

- Hit
- Fielder's Choice
- Reach base via Error or uncaught third strike
- Any time the batter is out before reaching first base safely (strikeout, groundout, flyout, infield fly, batter's interference, etc)

In general:

When the batter has done something to end the At Bat, usually putting the ball in play or striking out.

Plate Appearance, Not At Bat

- Base on Balls/Walk
- Hit By Pitch
- Sacrifice
- Batter reaches by Catcher's Interference/Obstruction

In general:

When the batter reaches first base without doing anything, or sacrifices their time at bat for the good of the team.

Not A Plate Appearance

- A baserunner is caught stealing or picked off to end the inning
- A baserunner steals home and scores the walk-off run to end the game
- In BBF Single A, a baserunner steals home and scores the 5th run of a limited inning

In general:

When the inning ends before the batter has finished, and the same batting order slot will be first up in the next inning.

Balls & Strikes



Basic Notation & Pitch Outcomes

A **ball** is a pitch thrown outside the strike zone, as judged by the umpire, which was not swung at by the batter. After four **balls**, the batter is entitled to go to first base.

This is a **BB** (**Base on Balls**), otherwise known as a “**walk**”.

The ball is still live after ball four, so other advancements can happen in the case of a wild pitch, passed ball, stolen base, etc. The fielding team (and you, as scorer!) need to stay alert for this.



A **strike** is a pitch either:

- thrown inside the strike zone, as judged by the umpire

or

- any pitch that the batter “offers at” (swings, or tries to bunt), wherever the pitch was located (a ball put into play by the batter is a strike for the purposes of counting how many balls and strikes the pitcher has thrown, regardless of where the pitch was, but is not counted as such for any other reason).

If the batter receives three strikes, they’re out via **strikeout**. In WBSC notation this is recorded as **KS** if the batter’s final **strike** was on a **swing-and-miss** by the batter, or **KL** for a **strike “looking”** (not swinging/a “called strike”). This is also represented in US scoring systems as simply a K, written forwards for swinging or backwards for looking. When determining if a batter struck out swinging or looking, only strike three matters.

Foul Balls & Hit By Pitch

Basic Notation & Pitch Outcomes



A **foul ball** - when a batted ball is touched in foul territory by a player, lands behind the foul lines in the outfield, or passes the front edge of first or third base whilst in foul territory on the infield - counts as a **strike**, *unless* the batter already has two **strikes** (then nothing happens).

You can't strike out on a foul ball except on a bunt (note: a *foul tip* is **not** a **foul ball**).

On a **foul ball** the ball is dead, so no runners can advance.

A *foul tip* – where the ball just nicks the bat, goes directly from the bat straight back and is caught by the catcher, is simply a swinging strike. No more, no less. If such a ball hits any other part of the catcher first, or hits anything else, it's a foul ball. You will often hear people use the two interchangeably – this is incorrect!

A foul ball is a foul ball, a foul tip is no more than a swinging strike.

Hit by Pitch is exactly what it sounds like – the pitcher hit the batter with a pitch which was not in the strike zone and was not swung at. The batter is entitled to first base, although unlike a **walk**, the ball is dead so nothing else can happen. If the batter is **hit** by **ball four** they don't get credit for the **walk**, only the **HP**.

Note: In WBSC notation a hit by pitch is abbreviated to **HP**, not HBP.

The count is the current tally of **balls** and **strikes**. **Balls** are always given first. A count of **2-1**, for example, is two **balls** and one **strike**. A **3-2** count is called a “full count” - because one more of either will end the **plate appearance** in a **walk** or a **strikeout**. Informally you'll hear “pitcher's count” or “batter's count” – this just indicates who is “ahead in the count”. A 3-1 count for example is a “batter's count” because it favours the batter – they only need one more **ball** in order to reach first base, whereas the pitcher needs to throw two **strikes**.



Reaching Base Safely





A “hit” in a scoring context refers to more than just making contact with the baseball. We mean a “base hit”. **Base hit** refers to any safe hit where the batter puts the ball in play and reaches at least first base safely - without the help of an **error** or a **fielder’s choice**.

The batter still gets credit for a **base hit** if they reach first base safely but are put out trying to advance further on the same play, such as trying to stretch a single to a double.

One-base hits, two-base hits, three-base hits and home runs (inside the park or over the fence) are all counted under “Hits” (H) in the box score.

After reaching first base on a **hit**, a batter can sometimes advance further via an **error** or **fielder’s choice**. This is **not** the same as an **extra base hit**!

Balls hit extremely softly, or extremely hard, so that they do not give the fielder a reasonable chance to make a play with **ordinary effort**, are not automatically **errors**. They can be **hits** if no misplays were made.



Determining The Value of Base Hits



Reaching Base Safely

As mentioned before, sometimes a batter-runner ending the play on second base does not mean they've achieved a **two-base hit**. If they achieved first base safely via a **hit**, they've "banked" a **one-base hit**, but often advancement from there is by **fielder's choice** or **error** rather than a genuine extra base hit.

A runner who reaches first base safely via a **hit** may not be entitled to an extra base hit if:

- They would not have advanced further without the help of an **error** or **fielder's choice**.
- A preceding runner was put out on a play that happened **after** the batter-runner reached base, and the batter-runner then continued to advance safely because of the distraction. Examples:

Batter-runner (BR) hits a fly ball into shallow CF with a runner on 1B. Ball lands in front of the CF, who picks it up and throws to first. The thrown ball was too late to get the batter-runner out, and is wide of the first baseman who can't catch it. Seeing the ball roll away into foul territory, the batter-runner advances to second base.

Scoring Decision: **One-base hit**, advances to second base on **e8T**.

Reasoning: With an on-target throw, BR would've been safe at first but wouldn't have advanced further.

So it's a hit, but then an advance on an error. **Not** a double. We'll cover the "small e vs. capital E" situation later.



BR hits a pitch into left-centre field with a runner (R1) on first base. BR rounds 1B, heading to 2B before the ball is fielded and thrown in. CF, seeing R1 rounding 3B and trying to score, throws home and gets the out. Seeing the throw going home, BR advances from 2B to 3B safely.

Scoring Decision: **Two-base hit**, advance to 3B on **Fielder's Choice**.

Reasoning: BR clearly hit a double here regardless of the lead runner, but the runner's presence caused the BR to advance to third. Regardless of whether the BR would've reached third safely anyway or not, the runner was put out at home, so the batter cannot be given a triple.

If R1 had been safe at home and scored a run, it would be the scorer's decision whether to award BR a **three-base hit** or a **two-base hit** and **FC**.

Determining the Value of Base Hits (cont.)



Reaching Base Safely



Some final notes on **Extra Base Hits**.

- If the winning run of the game (or 5th run of a limited inning) is scored, the batter only gets credit for the **number of bases needed to score the run**. Example: with the winning/5th run on third base, only a single is possible, no matter how far the batter-runner runs! The scorer of the final run only advanced one base, so the batter is only entitled to a one-base hit.
- The batter-runner must still legally achieve the base in order to be credited with it. If they run off to celebrate after touching first base, they only get a single no matter how far they hit it! Once a batter leaves the field and crosses the foul line, he's unable to return to complete the play.

The one important exception to this rule:

If the batter hits an **over-the-fence home run** then by rule the ball is dead instantly and all runners – including the batter – are allowed to score (they still have to touch all the bases and home plate, though.)

Pictured left, a man very well acquainted with this rule!

This rule **still applies** in Single A games with limited innings, which can lead to a team scoring more than 5 runs. A team who have scored 4 runs already and then hit a grand slam have now scored 8, despite the 5-run “limit”.

Fielder's Choice

Reaching Base Safely



A **Fielder's Choice** occurs when the fielder attempts to put a different runner out instead of the batter-runner **when an attempt to put the batter-runner out instead would, in your judgement, likely have succeeded.**

By recording a **fielder's choice** we're saying the batter was **only** safe because the **fielder chose** to try to put another runner out instead. It does not matter if the play actually resulted in an out, the attempt is enough.

In effect, we're saying *"this isn't a hit, because if there were no runners on base you'd be out with ordinary effort"*.

If the batter would have made it safely (in your judgement) even if a play had been attempted on them, you should score this as a **hit**, **unless** an out was made elsewhere on the play. **If an out is made on the play, it can never be a hit for the batter.** It must be a fielder's choice, by rule.

Examples

1- With a runner on first base, the batter hits a ground ball to the shortstop. Instead of throwing to first base to get the batter out, the shortstop throws to second base and gets the runner out there. The batter-runner is therefore safe at first base, but does not get credit for a **hit**. This is a **fielder's choice** instead.

2a- With a runner on second base, a batter hits a ground ball to the outfield. Instead of throwing all the way to first base, the left fielder throws to home plate to try to stop the runner from scoring from second base and forcing them to stay at third.

In this case, we'd record a **hit** for the batter, because on a ground ball to the outfield the batter likely would've reached first base safely anyway. We don't take that away from them just because of the presence of the runner.

2b- However, if the batter above had gone to second base as a result of the throw home, that would **not** be a double. It'd be a single, with an advance *on the throw*. On paper, we record this as "7T2" to indicate the runner advanced because the LF threw to home.

2c- If the runner was thrown out on this play before reaching the next base (third base in this example, or returning to second base), we could **only** score it as a Fielder's Choice for the batter, regardless of whether we believe the batter would've made it safely.

Uncaught Third Strikes



Reaching Base Safely

Per the MLB rulebook, strike three needs to be **caught** for the batter to be considered out by **strikeout**. If the catcher misses the ball, or it bounces out of their glove and hits the ground, the pitcher still receives credit for a **strikeout**, however the runner is **not** out automatically and is eligible to attempt to advance to first base. Essentially, most of the same scoring rules apply here as if the batter had hit a ground ball, except the batter won't be awarded a **hit** under any circumstances.

Common outcomes are:

- **23** (catcher throws to first base)
- **2** (catcher tags the batter-runner)
- **E2T** (catcher throws to first base but it's a bad throw)
- **Fielder's Choice** (catcher lets the batter-runner reach first base in order to try to put another runner out elsewhere, or deliberately holds onto the ball to prevent a runner on third base from scoring when they throw it)
- **Wild Pitch / Passed Ball** (the pitcher can still throw a **wild pitch** and get a strikeout if the batter swings. If the batter reaches first base we'd record it as a **KS WP** – a **strike out swinging**, and a **wild pitch**).

Note: *With fewer than two outs and a runner on first base at the time of the pitch, the batter-runner is automatically **KSR** – Struck out Swinging by Rule – on strike 3 even if it's not caught, because first base is not "available" for them to run to and the runner on first base is not forced to advance.*



We record uncaught third strikes as a regular strikeout, followed by how the runner was put out or got to first base: **KS** (or **KL**) for Strikeout Swinging (or Looking), then the outcome. So, **KS 23** means the batter struck out, the catcher dropped the third strike, so threw to first base to get the out.

Important: It is **not** an **error** on the catcher just for dropping the pitch. The catcher only gets an error if their subsequent play leads to the batter-runner being safe at first base.



Sometimes, a batter will intentionally give up their time at bat to help the team out, or hit a fly ball that scores a run even though the batter is put out. These plays are known as **Sacrifices** and come in two flavours, **sacrifice hits (SH)** - also known as sacrifice bunts - and **sacrifice flies (SF)**.

Sacrifice Hits are awarded when you as the scorer are convinced that the batter **intentionally** surrendered their own time at bat, in order to put the ball in play to **advance a baserunner** with fewer than two outs. This is always via a **bunt**. The batter-runner **must be out** on the play (or only safe because of an error) and **at least one runner** must advance **at least one base** safely.

All of the above criteria must be met for us to score a **sacrifice hit**.

- If the batter swings at the pitch, or you judge they're trying to get a base hit by fooling the defence, it's **not** a sacrifice.
- If nobody on the basepaths advances (or if there isn't anyone on the basepaths to begin with), treat it like a regular swing.
- If the batter-runner is safe at first base, without the aid of an error or fielder's choice, it's a **hit**. That's better than a **SH**!
- If there are two outs in the inning already it's not a sacrifice, just a really dumb decision - if the batter sacrifices their at bat with two outs, the inning ends and nobody advances or scores anyway!

Sacrifice Flies are awarded to a batter when, with fewer than two outs, they hit a flyout which allows a runner to tag up and score. Unlike a sacrifice hit, a **SF must** result in a runner **scoring** (not just advancing), otherwise it's just a fly ball out.

If you judge the batter *should* have been out except for a muffed catch **error**, but in your opinion the runner would still have scored if the ball was caught, the batter will still get credit for a **SF as well as** the fielder getting charged an **error**. Scoring it a straight **error** would count against the batter's batting average, remember, and it wasn't the batter's fault that the fielder dropped it!

Runs Batted In (RBI)

Reaching Base Safely



A **Run Batted In (RBI)** is a statistic credited to a batter who caused a run to be scored by their direct action, which doesn't always involve putting the ball in play or a base hit. The batter is credited with an RBI for each runner who scores on a play, including themselves in the case of a home run.

In general, a scenario where a run scores because a batter *did something* and the fielders didn't make a mistake, earns that batter an **RBI**. If the run scores because of a fielding mistake, or the batter isn't involved, it does not earn an **RBI**.

These are all **RBI** for the batter:

- A **groundout** or **flyout (sacrifice fly)** that scores a runner from third base.
- A **walk** or **HP** (or batter reaching via **Obstruction/Catcher's Interference**) with the bases already loaded.
- A **hit**, causing a runner to score.
- A **home run** – even with nobody else on base, the batter still batted themselves in!
- A runner scores after the batter reaches via an **Error - only if**, in your judgement, the run would've scored anyway with errorless play.

Examples of an **RBI** with an **Error**:

- A deep fly ball with fewer than 2 outs and a runner scoring from third base, where the ball is dropped by the outfielder.
- The runner scoring from third base after the shortstop made a throwing error to first base with fewer than two outs.

In both of these circumstances the error was not relevant to the run scoring - without the error they'd be a sac fly and a groundout respectively, both perfectly legitimate RBI scenarios. Don't forget that in the first example this is a **sac fly!** We don't charge the batter with an **at bat** for this even though they reached via error, as explained earlier.



Runs Batted In – When Not To Award



Reaching Base Safely

The batter should **not** be credited with an **RBI** if:

- in your judgement, the run scored *because* of an **error**, when it would not have been scored with errorless play. For example, the batter reaches on a fielder's choice where the shortstop throws to home plate, but the throw is bad and the run scores on the **throwing error** or **muffed catch**. With errorless play, this would not have been a run at all because the run-scorer would've been out! So, no **RBI**.
- any time the batter reaches via an **Error** with two outs – this is not an **RBI** because with errorless play the out would've ended the inning and no runs would've counted.
- any time, with two outs, that an **Error** is committed on a play on a different runner, before the run scores – again, the inning should've been over before the run scored, so it's not an **RBI** for the batter as the run wouldn't have counted with errorless play.
- a run scores after the batter hit into a **force double play (GDP)**. With no outs the run is still perfectly valid, but no **RBI** should be credited by rule. Essentially, the batter doesn't deserve it! With one out, the **GDP** would end the inning (assuming the batter was one of the people put out) so no runs score anyway.
- the runner scored without the help of the batter, such as a **steal** of home, a **Wild Pitch** or a **balk**.
- the run scores directly because of a **fielder's choice** on a play where the runner was not going to advance otherwise. For example, if a runner stops at third, then runs home when they notice the throw going to first base. If, in your opinion, the fielder's decision to throw to first base *enabled* the run to score, the batter should not get an **RBI**. If you judge that the run would've scored anyway, they get an **RBI**.
The key decision here is: did the runner stop to wait for the fielder to choose, or did they keep running regardless?



Recording Outs



Groundouts & Flyouts

Recording Outs



Groundout – A ball that **hits the ground** before being **fielded** and thrown to first base to get the batter **out**. Groundouts are recorded using the position numbers of the fielders involved: **63, 53, 41, 93, 3** and so on.

Flyout – Any ball that is **caught before it hits the ground** (or any other object in play, like a fence or tree). Specifically, “flyout” refers to a lofted ball that arches up and comes back down, usually in the outfield, or at least beyond the infield dirt.

There are other kinds of fly ball descriptions we use in scoring:

Lineout – A line drive caught by a fielder. This is a ball hit very hard, in a straightish line.

Popout - A popup caught by a fielder. This is a ball hit high into the air, but not very far from home plate, usually caught by an infielder – often the catcher.

Fly ball outs are recorded using the first letter of the type of out and the position number of the fielder:

F9 - flyout to the right fielder.

L6 - lineout to the shortstop.

P1 - popout to the pitcher.

Foulout – A foulout is a modification of the above fly ball types, to indicate it was caught in foul territory. You record them with an F added to the front of the fly ball annotations above:

FF7 – Foul fly ball caught by the left fielder.

FL3 – Foul line drive caught by the first baseman.

FP2 – Foul popup caught by the catcher.



Double and Triple Plays

Recording Outs



Double Play (DP) is a statistic for fielders that denotes that (at least) two outs are made consecutively.

Some examples:

Runner on first base.
Batted ground ball fielded by shortstop.
SS throws to 2B, runner put out.
2B throws to 1B, batter-runner put out.
64, 43 GDP

Two runners are out on the bases on the same pitch.
CS25, 54 DP

Batter strikes out swinging.
Runner caught stealing at second base.
KS, CS24 DP

Fly ball caught in right field
Runner on second base tags up...
...but is thrown out at third base.
F9, 95 DP

All of these, and many more, are examples of double plays.

All players involved in the sequence get credit for participating in a double play (except the pitcher for a strikeout).

However, the outs **must be consecutive** to count as a double play statistically.

An example of the outs not being consecutive:

Situation: Runners on first and second base, no outs.

Batter hits the ball right at the third baseman, who fields it. Third baseman steps on the base - 1 out (**5**).

Third baseman throws to second base to get a runner out, the throw is in time to get an out but the second baseman drops it – the runner is safe at second. (**5E4**).

Second baseman recovers and throws to first base in time to get the batter-runner out. (**43**).

Here we have two outs, but due to the error at second base we **don't** have a double play because the outs were not consecutive. More on this when we look at **Errors**, later.

Grounded Into Double Play (GDP)

Recording Outs



GDP means **G**rounded into a **D**ouble **P**lay, otherwise known as a “**force double play**”.

A **reverse force double play** (a **DP** where the first out removes the force play from the second runner, so they need to be tagged) still counts as a **GDP** for the batter - the order in which fielders chose to make outs is irrelevant to the batter’s stats.



A **GDP** is charged to the batter:

- Any time a **batted ground ball** results in two players being **forced out**
- Or would’ve, except for an error
- Regardless of whether or not the batter was one of the players put out

All plays that result in a **GDP** are double plays for the fielders involved, but not all double plays result in a **GDP** for the batter!

You should **not** charge a batter with a **GDP** if the outs were not **force outs**, as this cannot be considered the batter’s “fault”. For example, if a batter grounds out to first base and the runner reaches second base safely, but then comes off the base and is tagged out, this does not result in a **GDP** for the batter, even though it’s a **DP** for the fielders. It wasn’t the batter’s “fault” the runner was put out, as they initially made it to second base safely (nb: this is also an example of a reverse force DP).

Similarly, any flyout hit by the batter cannot result in a **GDP** as it was not a ground ball. Any runner tagging up is not the batter’s responsibility. Remember that if a fly ball double play does happen it’s still a **DP** for the fielders.

If a runner is called out due to **runner’s interference**, this is not a **GDP** for the batter either (but is a **DP** for the fielders – the interfered-with fielder gets credit for that putout).



Baserunning



Stolen Bases

Baserunning



A **Stolen Base (SB)** is a statistic credited to a runner when they successfully advance to the next base whilst the ball is live, without the benefit of:

- The ball being put into play (**even if** they were intending to steal anyway, a ball in play removes the steal).
- A **fielder's choice**.
- An **error** (except on the catcher's initial throw).
- A **wild pitch** or **passed ball** (unless they were already stealing).

A runner can attempt to **steal** the next base at any time whilst the ball is live - the **batter** is not allowed to steal first base, though!

If multiple runners are on base, they can all attempt to **steal** at the same time. This is called a "**double steal**" (or a **triple steal**).

If multiple runners attempt to **steal** and one is **put out** at or before reaching their first target base, no runners are credited with a **stolen base**. Remember – if an **out** is made on the play, any further advancement is via a **fielder's choice**. Same rules apply here.

Defensive Indifference/Undefended Steal/Fielder's Choice

One situation where you should **not** award a **stolen base** is when a deliberate choice is made by the fielding team not to attempt to throw the runner out, either because there's a large difference in score and nobody cares, or because there's a runner on third base who might score.

If it is clearly a tactical decision by the defence to hold the ball, do not award a stolen base. However, if you feel an opportunity was available to attempt to put a runner out, but the catcher was simply too slow, or the runner's jump was too good, **do** award a stolen base. **Fielder's Choice** should not be used as an "excuse" to 'rob' a baserunner of a legitimate stolen base just because there was no throw.

There must have been a tactical reason not to make a throw (usually, a runner on third base looking to score if a throw is made, or such a large deficit in the scoreline that the fielding team are literally "indifferent" to any runners advancing).



Caught Stealing

Baserunning



Caught Stealing (CS) is a statistic charged to a runner who is unsuccessful in a stolen base attempt - **or would've been if not for an error**. It's the bad ending to the **stolen base** game, from the runner's viewpoint.

If the runner is tagged before legally achieving the base, or they are only safe because of a fielding **error**, they are **caught stealing** (the **exception** is on a **catcher's initial throw** to the base - the catcher is **not** charged with an error because of a bad throw to prevent a **SB** - unless the throw is so bad that the target runner, or any additional runners, take a **further** base that they would **not have taken** without the bad throw. The runner in this case gets a stolen base if they're not put out).

Example: Runner attempts to steal second base. Catcher makes a bad throw which pulls the fielder off second base, meaning the runner is safe. The fielder does catch the ball though, so no runners are able to advance any further. **Result: Stolen Base, no Error.**

Example 2: Runner attempts to steal second base. Catcher makes a really bad throw that the fielder can't catch, the ball goes into the outfield. The runner touches second base and advances to third base safely. **Result: Stolen Base, Error (e2T).** Runner still gets credit for the first base they stole, but the second is an error on the catcher as it would not have happened at all without the poor throw.

A **pickoff** is when the pitcher (or sometimes catcher after receiving a pitch – called a “back pick”) throws the ball to a base (usually first base) instead of pitching to the batter and gets the batter out. A **pickoff attempt** that is unsuccessful because the runner is touching the base when the fielder receives the ball, or makes it back safely by avoiding the tag, is recorded as a “**Pickoff Attempt**” but nothing further.

If the runner does **not** make it back safely, record the play as a **Pick Off (PO)**, **Caught Stealing (CS)**, **Error**, **Fielder's Choice** or a **Stolen Base (SB)**, depending on what happens next!

If, after a pickoff attempt, the runner successfully advances to the next base they **do** get credit for a **stolen base**, even if they didn't originally intend to **steal** it! They do not, obviously, receive a **stolen base** just for making it back to their **original** base safely, this would either be nothing at all (if they just avoided the tag) or an error (if they made it back due to a bad throw or muffed catch).

Wild Pitches and Passed Balls



Baserunning

Wild Pitches (WP) and **Passed Balls (PB)** are two sides of the same coin, depending on who is deemed to be “at fault”.

They happen when a pitch is not successfully fielded by the catcher and gets away from them enough for a runner to advance **who wouldn't have advanced otherwise**.

If it happens because the pitch couldn't reasonably be expected to be fielded with **ordinary effort**, it's a **Wild Pitch**, charged to the pitcher.

If it happens on a good pitch that the catcher should have fielded with **ordinary effort**, it's a **Passed Ball**, charged to the catcher.

It's important to remember though that **Wild Pitches** and **Passed Balls** are methods of **advancing baserunners**. If nobody advances, it isn't a **wild pitch** or a **passed ball**, even if runners clearly could have advanced but chose not to.

It's just a regular **ball** or **strike**.

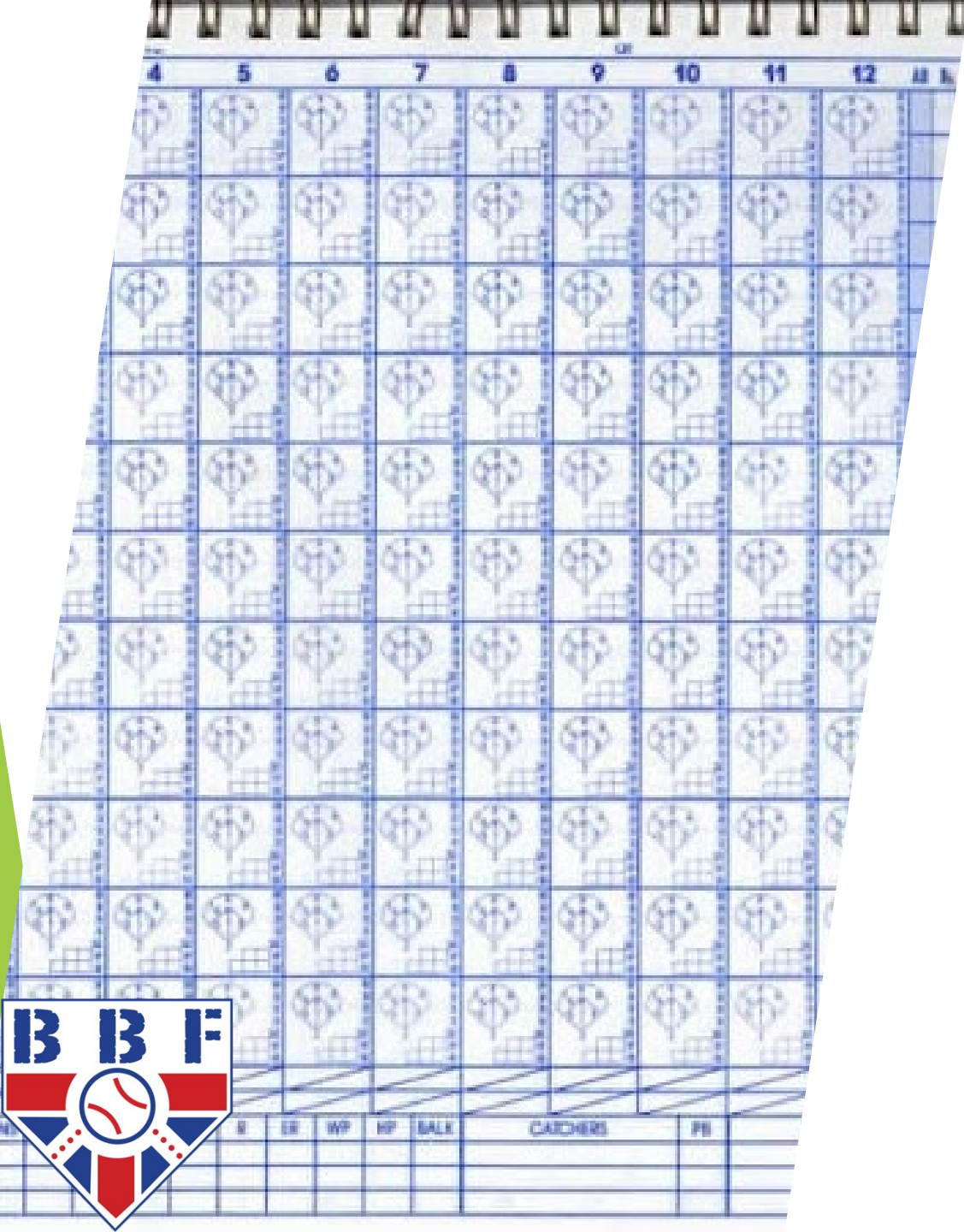
If a baserunner, intending to **steal** a base, starts to do so before the pitch is delivered then it should be recorded as a **stolen base** (or **caught stealing**, if they're put out), not a **WP** or a **PB**.

It's only a **WP** or a **PB** if the runner advanced **because** of the errant pitch. Take the photo opposite, for instance: this runner is clearly stealing a base – we don't take that away from him just because the pitch might be wild. He's not waiting to find out!

However, if – having **stolen** one base already – the **WP/PB** allows them to advance further, then this further advance is via a **WP/PB** as it wouldn't have happened otherwise. So a **SB** and a **WP** on the same pitch is very possible.

Finally, if – after trying to advance because of a **WP/PB** - any runner is put out before reaching the first base safely, no **WP/PB** should be charged. Instead, that runner is put **out** (NOT caught stealing – they weren't stealing), and any other runners advancing do so on a **fielder's choice**.





Errors



An **error** is charged to a fielder when they misplay a ball that, with **ordinary effort**, should have been fielded correctly. **Ordinary effort** can vary from level to level – **ordinary effort** for a BBF Single A player is different to **ordinary effort** for a professional Major League Baseball player!

Generally speaking, any play that involves a player making an exceptional effort, such as...

- sprinting flat-out to reach a ball, or running a long way across the outfield
- diving/sliding to reach a ball, when doing so was needed
- stretching fully extended (or “doing the splits”) to reach a ball whilst remaining in contact with a base

... should be considered **extraordinary** effort and should **not** result in an **error**, even if unsuccessful.

In essence, going above and beyond shouldn't penalise a player just because they didn't pull it off.

A player who did not try as hard would get nowhere near such a ball, and so wouldn't be charged with an **error** anyway.

This assumes these actions were **necessary** to give the player an opportunity of course. If the extraordinary effort was only needed to make up for their own earlier misplay - diving to catch a routine fly ball because they misread the initial flightpath and ran the wrong way, for instance – or just to show off, this does not excuse them from an **error** if one would otherwise appropriate. In other words, you don't avoid an error just **because** you dived.

Also bear in mind that **fielding** a ball and **throwing** it are two **different** actions: a fielder who shows extraordinary effort to reach a ball they would not be expected to, but then messes up the throw, should still be charged with an **error** on the throw if appropriate, even though with **ordinary effort** they may not even have fielded the ball in the first place.

Things That Are Not Errors



Errors

You should **not** charge a player with an **error** if the same batter/runner is put out at the same base they otherwise would've been on the same play.

For instance, a second baseman dropping a popup, then picking the ball up and throwing to first base for the out. This is **not** an **error**, because the same out was still made. Note that this is still true even if a different player makes the out: the second baseman misses a routine popup but the shortstop picks it up and throws to first base in time – no **error**, the same out was still made (this is known as “saving an error” for your teammate).

Even if a different out was made – with a runner on first base for instance, a popup is dropped but the out is made at second base instead - this would be a **fielder's choice**, not an **error**.

If no physical misplay is made, there cannot be an **error**. An example is a shortstop fielding a ground ball but then not making a throw, or taking too long to decide where to make a throw. They fielded it correctly, and either didn't throw it or threw it correctly but too late, so they can't have made an **error**. Similarly, a veteran second baseman who dives to block a ground ball, but then takes so long to get to his feet and make the throw that the runner is safe anyway. No **error**, the player did nothing wrong.

Finally, throwing to the wrong base. This is **only** an **error** if there was no justification for making that throw and the fielder at the base didn't catch it as they weren't ready for it. Do not award an **error** if the throw was made successfully but in your opinion was the wrong throw to make. If there was no physical error, your opinion of their thought process is irrelevant! Example: With runners on first and second base, the shortstop fields a very slow groundball and throws to second base, where the runner is safe. Because of the throw, the batter-runner is also now safe at first. You cannot give an **error** here, the throw was fine mechanically, it was just a bad decision. That's a **fielder's choice**.

However, if with a runner on first base the shortstop fields the ball and throws to third base, where the third baseman is not expecting it and does not make the catch, that's an E6, not an E5. There was no reason for the 3B to expect a throw there.

Deciding Who To Blame

Errors



Sometimes it can be difficult to determine who is at fault for an **error**, though you can see one has obviously been made somewhere. A frequent example for me is throws from the infield to first base on a ground ball.

When deciding whether an error should be attributed to the **throwing** player or the **receiving** player in cases where it is not obvious, pay attention to how much effort/movement the receiving player needs to make to field the throw:

If the receiver needs almost no movement/effort to reach the ball, and the throw looked to be ok, it's often the receiver's **error**. If the throw was bad, they would've had to move more to try to catch it. A good first baseman will step towards the player throwing to them and extend their glove in order to shorten the distance the ball needs to travel. If they step towards the throw but then the throw sails past them, it's not usually their fault.

If they make a lot of effort/movement to get to the ball but still can't catch the throw, or if the runner is safe because the receiver had to break contact with the base to catch the ball, it was probably a bad throw, so the **error** should go to the thrower.

Similarly, when a group of players standing under the ball all fail to make a catch that you judge they should've made with ordinary effort, the error should be attributed to the player who you judge had the easiest catch to make (ignoring the pitcher). Often a player will make this decision easy for you by loudly declaring "mine!" or "leave it!" before dropping it – in which case, it's their **error** as they "called off" the other players! If the ball is dropped because another fielder collides or interferes with the player trying to make the catch, the **error** still goes to the person attempting the catch.

Note: Sometimes with a runner on first base the fielder will let a fly ball drop to the ground so that they can try to turn a double play – if it's clear this is their intention, do not award an **error** for the "failed" catch.

Even if all runners end up being safe, that'd be a **fielder's choice**.

Errors are categorised into two types; decisive errors and advancement errors, depending on the type of play they were made on.

Decisive Errors

An **error** is considered **decisive** if it directly cost the team an out.

For example: a dropped fly ball, a throwing error that would've resulted in an out if accurate, or a dropped catch by a first baseman on a throw from the shortstop. These are all **decisive errors**.

In WBSC notation they're represented by a capital **E** and are sometimes referred to as “capital E errors” for that reason.

Advancement Errors

An **advancement** error, as the name suggests, is an **error** which allows a player to advance at least one extra base, but does not directly cost the team an out. For instance, throw which was too late to get an out, but goes wide of first base and allows the batter-runner to advance to second base. Errorless play would not have given the team an out, but would not have allowed the runner to advance either.

In WBSC notation these are denoted by a lowercase **e**.

All errors count as an **error** in the box score, but the type matters when calculating **earned** and **unearned** runs.

In general, **decisive** errors cause a run scored by that runner to be **unearned**, as with errorless play they would've been out, and therefore unable to score the run. Whereas **advancement** errors by themselves usually don't, unless the run would not have been scored without the advancement. To work this out, we must reconstruct the inning.



Earned and Unearned Runs

Decisive Errors

Earned and Unearned Runs



When the batting team score a run, it will either count as **earned** (meaning the pitcher ‘deserved’ to concede the run) or **unearned** (meaning that the poor play of the fielding team contributed to the run scoring).

When calculating **Earned** and **Unearned** runs, **decisive errors** are the easiest to deal with, so let’s start there.

A run is always **unearned** by the pitcher if:

- the scorer of the run initially reached base because of a **decisive error**
- the scorer of the run should’ve been out at a prior base, but was saved by a **decisive error**
- the scorer of the run had their time at bat prolonged by a **decisive error** (i.e., a dropped foul ball during their at bat), even if they later reached base ‘legitimately’, such as a via a **walk**, a **hit** or even a **home run**
- the run itself was scored during a play that benefited from a **decisive error** (a runner scoring from third base on a dropped fly ball with two outs, or on a ball that reached the outfield due to a fielding error)
- the run scored after the inning should’ve been over already with errorless play (any combination of outs and **decisive errors** that add up to three, in any order)

On that last point, it’s important to remember that no runs can score after the third out is made, and **decisive errors** “count as” **outs** for the purposes of earned runs. So, if the first three batters of the inning all reach base due to **decisive errors**, or the first batter reaches on an **error** and then two outs are made, **none** of the runs scored in that inning from now on are earned, because the inning should be over already.

This is true even if the run itself is scored perfectly legitimately, like in the case of a home run. The batter gets all the glory of having hit a grand slam, but none of those four runs are **earned runs** for the pitcher because with errorless play the batter would never have come up to bat this inning.

Advancement Errors

Earned and Unearned Runs



As we learned earlier, sometimes an error only leads to an **advancement** along the bases, it does not cost the team an out. In these cases, it's up to the scorer's discretion whether the runner counts as **earned** or **unearned** if they later score.

To do this we “reconstruct” the inning, removing any errors and **passed balls** (but not **wild pitches**!) to see if the run would still score. If it would not have, it's an **unearned** run. If it would have scored anyway, it's an **earned** run.

As an example: a batter hits a single, but an outfielder makes a bad throw, and the batter-runner advances to second base on the **error**. If the next batter hits a home run, that's two **earned runs**. It wouldn't matter which base the runner was on when the home run was hit, as long as they got on base legitimately.

However, imagine the following scenario beginning with nobody on base and 1 out:

Anna: **Single**, advances to second on an **e9T**.

Bob: **Single** into right field, Anna scores from second base. **RBI** for Bob.

Charlie: **GDP** to end the inning.

When we reconstruct this inning with errorless play, we get:

Anna: **Single**.

Bob: **Single** into right field, Anna advances from first to third base.

Charlie: **GDP** to end the inning.

When reconstructed in this example Anna does not score without the benefit of the error. Therefore, the run Anna scored is considered **unearned**. We're saying it wouldn't have happened without the **advancement error**, as she would've been stranded on third base without it.

The Pitcher Pitching vs. The Pitcher Fielding



Earned and Unearned Runs

One other factor to consider when determining earned and unearned runs is the pitcher. Especially when it comes to **wild pitches** and **passed balls**.

PBs can be treated like **advancement errors** (remembering though that they're not technically errors) when we are reconstructing innings. If the run would've scored anyway, it's an **earned** run. If the run relied on the **PB**, it's **unearned**.

When in the act of pitching the ball, the pitcher is not considered to be a fielder. If he pitches the ball way over everyone's head and a run scores as a result, that's the pitcher's fault, and as it happened in the act of pitching, not fielding, it's not a **fielding error**. Therefore, a **wild pitch** does not cause a run to be **unearned**. We don't remove them when reconstructing.

The catcher, meanwhile, is always a fielder. Therefore, whilst a **passed ball** is not considered a **fielding error** (because it happens during the process of the pitch), it's not the pitcher's fault either. Therefore, any run scored because of a **passed ball** that wouldn't score without it is considered **unearned**.

Once the ball has been put into play however (or a WP/PB has occurred), both the pitcher and catcher are considered fielders in all respects. If they make a **fielding** or **throwing** error that leads to a run scoring, that's an **unearned** run. The pitcher is just a fielder at this point, so any **errors** they make are **fielding errors**.

In essence, the pitcher is treated as a fielder as soon as the bat makes contact with the pitch or it gets past the catcher. Umpires will be familiar with this concept as it factors into several rules of concerning batted and thrown balls.

In summary: a **WP**, **HP** or a **BB** that drives in a run **can't** make it **unearned**. That was the pitcher's fault whilst pitching. But an **E1T** whilst fielding a batted ball **can** make the run **unearned**, because that was the fault of the pitcher whilst fielding. It helps to think of them as different entities, just like a non-pitcher is governed by different rules when they're at bat vs. on base vs. fielding.

Reconstructing Innings: More Examples



Earned and Unearned Runs

Anna: Hits a line drive to the shortstop which deflects off their glove. You decide this is an **E6**.

Bob: Pops up to the catcher.

Charlie: Grounds out to shortstop, but Anna advances to second base.

Dev: Doubles, scoring Anna from second base.

Emma: Doubles, scoring Dev from second base.

Here, Anna would be an **unearned** run because she herself reached base via a decisive error.

Dev and Emma are both also **unearned** runs, because Charlie's groundout should've ended the inning with errorless play.

Anna: Singles.

Bob: Walks, Anna advances to second base.

Charlie: Singles to right field, Anna and Bob advance one base. The throw by the right fielder to second base is wild, so everyone advances a further base, scoring Anna.

Dev: Hits a home run, scoring Bob, Charlie and himself.

Even with errorless play Dev would still have had an at bat, so the home run and Bob and Charlie's runs are all **earned** runs. Anna scored on an **advancement error**, however she would've scored anyway on the home run had she still been on base, so her run is also **earned**.

Anna: Gets a three-base hit as the lead-off batter.

Bob: Strikes out swinging but reaches due to a wild pitch, Anna scores as a result.

Earned. Remember, a wild pitch is considered the pitcher's fault, and in the act of pitching.

Reconstructing Innings: One More Example



Earned and Unearned Runs

Here's a trickier one to end on. New inning, no outs:

Anna: Hits a double – **2B**

Bob: Hit by the pitch – **HP**. Anna to second base.

Charlie: During the AB, Anna and Bob advance on a **passed ball**. Charlie then strikes out swinging, but advances to first on a wild pitch. **KS WP**. Anna scores from third on the wild pitch, Bob advances to third base.

Dev: Hits a home run, scoring himself, Charlie and Bob.

Earned or Unearned?

Anna: **Earned** – If we reconstruct the inning, Anna scores on the home run anyway.

Bob: **Earned** – Like Anna, Bob scores on the home run regardless of which base he's on.

Charlie: **Unearned** – If we reconstruct the inning, that passed ball never happens, which means Bob is still on first base when Charlie strikes out. Charlie is thus out by rule **KSR**, he's not allowed to advance to first base because it is occupied. Therefore, he's not on base to score when Dev hits the home run, so it's an **unearned run**. Bonus points if you got this correct for the right reason!

Dev: **Earned** – Even with Charlie striking out, there would only be one out in the inning, so Dev's home run is earned.

Thank you for your time!

Any Questions?

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