



League Handbook

SCVBB LEAGUE RULES OF PLAY

The following rules are used by this league and are not meant to reflect the entire rule book as described in the *Spalding's Base Ball Guide of 1886*. Our leagues rules are summarized below. Local rules which have been adapted for our use are marked with an asterisk [*].

1. HITTING

COUNT: 7 Balls and 3 Strikes

HIGH OR LOW BALLS: The Umpire will call for the “Striker to the line.” The Striker (known as the Batsman in these rules) will immediately step to Home Base and express his desired strike zone preference. The Batsman may call for a low ball (belt to knee) or high ball (belt to shoulders) or both (open). The Umpire will then announce to the Hurler (known as the Pitcher in these rules) to deliver the ball as required. Throughout the entire at bat, only low or high strikes will be called. If a Batsman does not make a request, both high and low strikes will be called. Note: The belt area is a strike for either zone.

NO TIMEOUTS: Only a Club Captain can ask the Umpire to call for a timeout. A Batsman who steps out of the box can be quick-pitched and runner can be picked off at any time unless time has been called by the Umpire. When a player requires an injury timeout and completes the inning on the bench, he must come out for the remainder of the game.

FOUL HIT: (Known to many as a Foul Ball today) is not counted as a strike. When the ball is deemed a Foul Hit and not legally caught, the ball is dead until possessed by the Pitcher in the pitcher's box. Any foul tip caught by the catcher is an out regardless of the number of strikes.

FOUL STRIKE: A ball hit by the Batsman while not in the batter's box results in an out.



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HIT BATSMAN: Counted as a ball and no base is awarded. The play is a dead ball and no base runners may advance. If the Umpire feels the Batsman is leaning into the strike zone, he may call interference and call a strike. A Pitcher who is deemed to be intentionally throwing at a Batsman will be fined \$5 and subject to ejection for further offenses.

2. BASE RUNNING

BASE COACH: Only one Base Coach is permitted at any time. A single base coach may move from first base box to the third base box depending on the situation.

HUSTLE: A Base Runner shall be allowed to return to his bag without the threat of being put out, in the case of a foul hit not legally caught, provided he do so on the run.

BLOCK: A batted or thrown ball handled by any person not involved in the game. Base Runners may run freely without the ability to be put out, until the ball is returned to the Pitcher and held by him standing in the pitcher's box. This rule does not apply if said person kicks or throws the ball beyond the reach of the fielder. This rule does not apply if the batted or thrown ball merely deflects off a person not involved in the game.

SLIDING: *Local Rule: Base Runners **MUST** slide or avoid at all bases (especially Home Base). The Umpire will have full authority to remove a player from game for not doing so and further action may be taken by League Commissioner for not following these rules of play. This rule was created to avoid injuries.

3. PITCHING

PITCHERS BOX: There is no mound or rubber. Pitchers throw from a box that measures 4' wide x 7' deep and is outlined in chalk. The front line of the box is 50' from the center of Home Base.



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PITCHERS MOTION: The Pitcher must begin and end inside of the box on each pitch. Failure to so results in a balk. ***Local Rule:** Only one-step is allowed, and any leg kicks should not go above the knee, nor may the foot cross behind the plant leg. The Umpire can call a no-pitch violation. If a violation occurs twice in same at-bat, Batsman is awarded first base. This rule was created to avoid the wind-up and other modern forms of pitching mechanics.

NO INTENTIONAL WALK: Pitcher must pitch to the Batsman

BALK: A balk only occurs when a Pitcher starts his throw (with arm or legs) home but does not complete his throw to Home Base. Fake throws to any base while in or out of the Pitcher's box are allowed. All Base Runners are awarded to advance one base.

QUICK PITCH: During the Batsman's entire time at bat, a Pitcher can deliver the ball to him at any time unless the Umpire has called a Dead Ball.

HIDDEN BALL TRICK: There is no rule requiring the Pitcher to have the ball in his hand while he's in the Pitcher's box. However, he cannot start a pitch to the Batsman without the ball or a balk will be awarded to any base runners.

4. FIELDING

NO INFIELD FLY RULE: A Fielder may intentionally allow a batted ball to drop untouched to the ground to start a double play.

5. THE FIELD

BASES: Bases are 15" square bags filled with a loose material such as sawdust that are securely fastened at each location. ***Local Rule:** Bases need not be attached.

HOME BASE: It shall be a 12" square white rubber or white stone base affixed securely to and flush with the ground. A corner point facing the pitcher's box such that two sides form the lines of 1st and 3rd bases. ***Local Rule:** A modern Home Base is used.



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SUBSTITUTION: 9 Innings played. Each club will start and finish with 9 players. ***Local Rule:** Games are 7 innings. More than 9 players may be used. A team may play with 8 players. No more than 2 substitute players (non-roster) are allowed. Substitute players must be on an active roster and have league waiver signed to play. If subs are used, no more than 9 players total for the game. Subs may not play the hurler or behind position and must bat at the end of the order. A player pulled due to injury cannot re-enter the game.

6. GAME PLAY

BATTING ORDER: *Local Rule: The Manager must declare before the game whether he will bat ALL players in attendance, in order, throughout the entire game OR if we will only bat the players who were in the field the prior inning, from the established batting order. Batting order may not be changed to obtain more at-bats for certain players.

TIEBREAKERS: *Local Rule: Should a tie-breaker be needed due to unforeseen circumstances. It will be (First) head-to-head record between tied teams; and (Second) fewest overall runs allowed for the full season.

7. THE UMPIRE

There is one Umpire only and he is to be given unquestionable respect and full authority. He is to be addressed as "Sir".

POSTIONING: The Sir may be positioned in one of two manners, provided he be consistent to both teams within each inning: Positioned 15' behind and at a 45-degree angle to the Batsman, the Umpire will move from side to side depending on whether the Batsman bats to the left or right. Positioned behind the Hurler, slightly to either side as to best see the strike zone.



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MANNER: Calls are to be made in a raised voice so that players of both sides can hear. The Umpire must wear period dress and may smoke a cigar. (Common Umpires for town games were clergy and undertakers as these were the only men who were trusted in the eyes of God)

FINAL SAY: The role of the Umpire is to keep continuous play of the game from start to finish. The only such stoppage in play should be during injury to himself, a player, or in the event of rain, etc. He shall not reverse his decision on any point of play based on the opinion of any player or bystander.

GENTLEMAN'S RULING: *Local Rule: In the event the Umpire has "missed" a play, due only to a blocked view, a Captain can request a "Gentleman's Ruling" to reverse the call. The Umpire will then announce, "A Gentleman's Ruling has been requested" only players involved in the play may truthfully relate what transpired and a call may be reversed by the Umpire.

8. PLAYERS CODE OF CONDUCT

Sportsmanship is paramount in vintage base ball. Arguing with the Umpire, charging the Pitcher, taunting, and fighting are not tolerated. Players earning a reputation as unruly or un-sportsman-like will be banned from the league.

GENTLEMANLY PLAY: Respect must be shown for the game. There is no berating of the Umpire, the fans (known as the Cranks), or the opposing club. The team at bat may not yell or attempt to distract the Fielder or Pitcher during live play. Celebrations are limited to handshakes. No posing at Home Base, curtain calling, chest bumping, or high fives.

NOT ALLOWED: There is to be no betting, cursing, spitting in any game. Such infractions, especially in the presence of a lady, will result in a \$5 fine. Sitting among the spectators may also result in immediate ejection (not practical given wives and kids) The use of alcoholic beverages before or during any game is not allowed and will result in immediate ejection of the game and further action may be taken by League Commissioner at his own discretion for not following the rules and jeopardizing safety and local field policies.



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9. PERIOD AUTHENTICITY

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE NOT PERMITTED: Exterior protective gear, including batting gloves, helmets, wrist bands, elbow pads, shin guards, etc. No uniform numbers, player's names, sponsor logos, backward caps or jewelry. If, due to injury, a player needs to wear some type of brace or protection it must not be visible. Contact the League Commissioner for further clarification.

CATCHERS GEAR: Includes glove, mask and chest protector but no shin guards. As a substitute for shin guards, catcher may wear soccer shin guards under uniform socks. Catcher may also wear a half-finger glove on throwing hand as was the custom.

PLAYERS NICKNAMES: Nicknames were an important part of 19th century base ball. All players in SCVBB should have nicknames. Players may not give themselves nicknames. They should be earned and bestowed on by their teammates by the end of the third game played. Current nicknames include: Kentucky, Boxcar, Lefty, Woody, Sugar, Ace etc.

10. AUTHORIZED EQUIPMENT

In preparing for play, it should be noted that there are several suppliers of vintage equipment. Many of them make fine products but they are not correct for our time period. Only the products below may be used in the SCVBB.

1. K&P WEAVER

(www.baseballamericaspastime.com)

- Uniform

2. VINTAGE BASE BALL FACTORY

(www.vbbf.com)

- Foxy Irwin Original Glove (Recommended)
- Foxy Irwin II (Although not to spec, it can be used if the web is cut out.)
- 1870-1880's Base Ball (The only base ball we use)



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3. **STOCKBRIDGE SEWING WORKS** (www.stockbridgesewingworks.com)

- Custom Caps

4. **BULLDOG BATS**

(www.bulldogbats.weebly.com)

- BAV-S: Standard knob. 35", 40oz, max 2.50" barrel & min 1.25" handle.
- BAV-T: Tapered knob. 35" 43oz, max 2.50" barrel and min 1.25" handle.
- Vintage Chest Protector (19th century with straight top)

5. **HANDMADE BATS**

Handmade bats are only allowed if the maker is approved in advance by the SCVBB League Commissioner. Each handmade bat must be approved. Bats must be no less than 35" and no greater than 37", not less than 40 oz with a max barrel of 2.50 inches and a min handle of 1.25". Bats must have most minimal taper possible. It is suggested that you consult your Captain or League Commissioner to verify you are using properly approved equipment. Modifications to bats are not permitted and cannot be used in league play. The umpire may inspect equipment at any time.

6. **J & H BATS**

(wonderboy71@outlook.com)

- **Custom Bats** (Must meet league specs)

7. **SHOELESS JOE GLOVES**

(www.shoelessjoeballgloves.com)

- 1915 Catcher's Mitt (Must remove web laces)

8. **CATCHERS MASK**

Rawlings PWMX Catcher's mask with ear flaps removed. Vintage era mask with modern padding and straps are allowed with league approval.



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11. VINTAGE BASE BALL TERMS

Aces - Runs

Baller, Ballist - Player

Behind - Catcher

Blind, Blinder - No score

Hurler - Pitcher

Bound - Bounce

Bounder - A bouncing ball that doesn't go out of the infield

Capital - The best, first rate. A spectacular catch is a "Capital Play"

Captain - Manager

Cranks - Baseball fans

Daisy Cutter - A sharply hit ground ball

Garden - Outfield

Ginger - Determination, quick fierce play

Hand - An out. "Three hands down" ends an inning

Match, match game - A game between two clubs, as opposed to intra-club games.

Muff - A muffed ball is a missed catch or grounder.

Muffin - A muffin is a less talented player on a club. Also call a "scrub"

Picked Nine - An early type of all-star team. The best local players picked to play versus a specific club passing through the area.

Safety - A safe hit.

Sky ball - Pop up

Short Field - An early name for the shortstop.

Striker - Batter

"Striker To The Line" - Batter up

Tally - To score a run, score.



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12. REFERENCES & SUGGESTED READINGS

Always on Sunday, The California Baseball League, 1886 to 1915, John E. Spalding

Baseball in the Garden of Eden, The Secret History of the Early Game John Thorn, 2011

Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide, 1886, reprint

Base Ball, America's National Game 1839-1915, re-print 1991, originally released, 1911

Catcher, How the man behind the plate became an American folk hero, Peter Morris, 2009

A Game of Inches, the stories behind the innovations that shaped Baseball, Peter Morris, 2006

The Great Encyclopedia of 19th Century Major League Baseball, David Nemec, 1997