

# THE BASEBALL LINGO CHEAT SHEET

## *Common Terms, Rules, Lingo & Concepts*

**1-2-3 inning:** Inning in which a pitcher gets all three hitters out in a row.

**Ace:** A team's best starting pitcher

**Ahead in the count:** when the player you're referring to has the count in their favor.

*The hitter is ahead 2-1; the pitcher is ahead 1-2.*

**Backdoor breaking ball:** can refer to any pitch that breaks from outside the strike zone back into the strike zone.

**Backstop:** the fenced area behind home plate

**Bag:** another term for base

**Balk:** When the pitcher makes an illegal movement or delivery. Results in baserunners being awarded the next base.

**Bang-bang play:** A play on the bases that is very close - where the runner is barely safe or barely out.

**Barrel it up:** When a hitter hits the ball hard, in the center of the barrel of the bat.

**Batters' box:** the chalk-lined rectangle the hitter stands in during an at-bat.

**Batting Average (average):** A primary hitting statistic - hits divided by at-bats.

**Base hit:** when a hitter reaches first on a batted ball that is not misplayed by the other team and does not cause any baserunners to get out.

**Base open:** when first base is unoccupied. Or, when second base is unoccupied with runners on first and third. Pitchers will adjust their pitch-calling strategy when there is a base open, because walks will not force runners to move up.

**Bases loaded:** when a runner is on every base

**Bat around:** When every batter in the lineup comes up to bat in a single inning, and the first batter of the inning is up at the plate for his second at-bat.

**Bat flip:** When a hitter tosses his bat into the air or into foul territory as he leaves the batter's box. Bat flips are gestures of pride following a home run.

**Batters' eye:** the darkened area beyond the center field wall that provides contrast with the white baseball, so the hitter can see the pitch better. Advertising and signage is not allowed in this area.

**Battery:** the pitcher and catcher combine to make the battery of a team. They are known as "battery mates."

**Bleeder (or seeing-eye single):** A poorly hit ground ball that barely makes it through the infield

**Blooper:** A fly ball hit weakly between the infield and outfield.

**Booted:** when a fielder makes an error. *He booted that easy ground ball.*

**Bullpen:** where the relief pitchers sit and get warmed up before entering a game. Also refers to a practice pitching session. *They're calling down to the bullpen to get someone up; he usually throws his bullpen two days before his start.*

**Bump (or hill):** another word for pitching mound

**Bunt:** When the hitter holds his bat out in front of the plate to let the pitched ball hit it, thus producing a bunt, which is an intentionally short hit, most typically used to move a baserunner over one base. *The hitter squared around to bunt; this may be a good bunt situation—we'll see if the hitter squares.*

**Breaking ball:** a pitch that breaks, such as a curveball, slider or slurve.

**Can of corn:** a fly ball to the outfield that is easy to catch

**Caught napping:** when a runner is picked off a base

**Checked swing:** When a hitter stops his swing early, trying not to offer at the pitch. Umpire has discretion to deem it a strike or not. Announcers will often say "excuse me" referring to a checked swing.

**Cleanup hitter:** Fourth batter in the lineup and usually the one with the most power on the team.

**Clear the bases:** When a hit scores all the runners on base.

**Clutch:** a strong performance in a pressure situation. That was a clutch hit; he's one of the team's most clutch hitters.

**Closer:** The team's best relief pitcher. Pitches the ninth inning in a save situation.

**Changeup:** an off-speed pitch that is mostly straight and looks like a fastball, but may have sinking action or arm side run

**Chin music:** when a pitcher throws one up and in to the hitter (near his head)

**Comebacker:** a ball hit back at the pitcher

**Count:** The number of balls and strikes on a batter. 3-2 = three balls and two strikes; 1-1 = one ball and one strike.

**Crooked number:** when a team scores 2 or more numbers in an inning, they've hung a crooked number on the scoreboard.

**Curveball:** a breaking ball that curves downward more than it curves from side-to-side. *Also called: Curve, hammer, Uncle Charlie, Deuce, Hook*

**12-6 curveball:** breaks straight down (like 12 to 6 on a clock)

**1-7 curveball:** breaks from 1 to 7 on a clock (11/5 for lefties)

**Knuckle curve:** a grip variation in which the pitcher rests his index finger knuckle on the ball

**Power curve:** a curveball that is thrown extremely hard

**Cutoff man:** infielder who receives a distant throw from the outfielder for the purpose of making a relay throw or causing the play to come to an end.

**Cutter (cut fastball):** a fastball that curves very slightly and is nearly as fast as a standard fastball

**Cycle:** a player hits for the cycle when they hit a single, double, triple and home run in the same game.

**Double:** reaching second on a base hit. *The hitter doubled in his second at-bat.*

**Double play:** when two outs are recorded on the same play. *They turned a double play; the throw is just in time to complete the double play; and the pitcher gets out of the jam with a clutch double play.*

**Dropped third strike:** on the third strike, the catcher must catch it in the air, or else the batter is allowed to run to first base if it is not occupied. The catcher will have to tag the runner or throw him out at first.

**Ducks on the pond:** When there are multiple runners on base

**Earned run:** a run that scores without the help of any fielding errors.

**ERA (earned run average):** a primary pitching statistic - earned runs divided by innings multiplied by 9.

**Error:** when a fielder misplay a ball and does not record an out.

**Extra innings:** if tied after nine innings, the game will continue on, one inning at a time, until one team is ahead after both teams have batted in that inning.

**Fastball:** the hardest, straightest pitch a pitcher throws. Most easily located for a strike.

**4-Seam fastball (four-seamer):** Straightest, fastest fastball

**Two-seam fastball (two seamer):** fastball with slight arm side run

**Lingo:** Heater; gas, cheese; he reared back and threw a heater right by him.

**Find a gap (or hole):** Something players say to each other, encouraging them to get a hit that drops safely between the infielders or outfielders.

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**Five-tool player:** A position player who is very well-rounded and exceptional at all main baseball skills - hitting for average, for power, running, fielding and throwing.

**Flashing the leather:** when a player is making great plays in the field (with his leather mitt).

**Foul:** when a batted ball lands in foul territory. He fouled the slider off; he fouled out.

**Framing a pitch:** when the catcher sticks the pitch in the location he caught it and/or slightly moves it back toward the center of the strike zone

**Full count:** When the count is 3-2 - the maximum number of strikes and balls

**Gap (or alley):** the two areas in the outfield between outfielders - left-center gap and right-center gap.

**Golden sombrero:** When a player strikes out four times in a game.

**Goose egg:** a zero on the scoreboard

**Ground ball (grounder):** A batted ball hit on the ground

**Hack:** To take a big swing at a pitch

**Hanger:** refers to an off-speed pitch that stays up in the strike zone, where it's easy to hit. *That curveball was a hanger; he hung that slider.*

**Hard thrower (lingo):** When a pitcher throws hard, he throws: flames, pellets, gas, aspirins, fuel, Fuego, cheese, cheddar, fuzz, heat. (Applies to 95 or higher in MLB)

**Hit and run:** A play in which a baserunner steals and the hitter is expected to swing and put the ball in play, thus giving the runner a head start and forcing the fielding team to cover second base, which opens up part of the infield. *Coach put on the hit and run.*

**Hook:** When the manager removes a pitcher, he gives him the hook. Also refers to a curveball.

**Home plate:** known as the plate, the dish, home.

**Home run:** a hit over the fence or when a player touches all four bases. *Lingo: Dinger, Big Fly, Homer, Jack, Bomb, Tater, Long ball.*

**Infield fly rule:** Batter is called automatically out when he hits a fly ball in the infield with less than two outs, runners on 1st and 2nd or the bases loaded. Prevents fielding team from getting easy double plays.

**In the hole:** The batter up to bat after the on-deck hitter.

**K (or backwards K):** A strikeout is recorded as a K in the scorebook. A backwards K denotes when a hitter did not swing on strike three.

**Knuckleball:** a more rare pitch, it's thrown from the finger tips and has few rotations as it flies, which makes it dance around in the air. Thrown more slowly than normal.

**Lead:** when a base runner stands off the base to get a bit closer to the next base before the pitch is thrown. Pitchers will attempt to keep baserunners' leads short by picking off. A good lead improves a runner's odds of stealing a base or advancing.

**Lead runner:** The baserunner who is closest to scoring. Ex: with runners on 2nd & 3rd, the runner on 3rd is the lead runner.

**Left on base:** Baserunners who were still on the bases when a half-inning ends.

**Line drive (or liner):** A ball that is hit very hard on a low trajectory

**Lineup:** The batting order for a team

**LOOGY:** term for a left-handed pitcher who typically pitches to one or two hitters at a time. A Lefty-One-Out-GuY.

**Major Leagues:** also known as The Show or The Big Leagues.

**Meatball (cookie, or beach ball):** a pitch that is very easy to hit

**Middle reliever:** Relief pitcher who enters the game in innings 4-6.

**Nibbling:** when a pitcher is pitching to the corners of the plate, and often just missing

**No-hitter (no-no):** When a team gets zero hits in a full game.

**Nubber:** when the batter hits one off the end of the bat and it doesn't go very far.

**Off-speed pitch:** A pitch of significantly slower velocity than a fastball. Applies to all secondary pitches except cutters and sinkers - changeups, curveballs and sliders are all off-speed pitches.

**0-for:** When a hitter gets no hits in a game, such as 0-for-3 or 0-for-4.

**On-deck:** The next hitter up to bat. Warms up in the on-deck circle.

**On the screws:** when a hitter hit a ball very hard on the barrel of his bat. *He hit that one on the screws!*

**On the bump (or hill):** Refers to who is pitching. *Ricky is on the bump tonight.*

**Opposite field:** The side of the field opposite of the batter's box the hitter stands in. Right field for a righty hitter, left field for a lefty hitter.

**Jammed:** a hitter gets jammed when he swings at a pitch close to his hands

**Johnny Wholestaff:** When there is no starting pitcher for a game and numerous relief pitchers must combine to pitch the game. *No starter tonight - looks like Johnny Wholestaff will be pitching.*

**Junk:** when a pitcher throws lots of off-speed and breaking pitches, he's said to be throwing lots of junk.

**Painting the black:** Home plate is black around the edges. Painting the black means the pitcher is doing a good job of pitching to the corners of the strike zone.

**Pick-off:** when a pitcher throws to a base after coming set, to try to catch a baserunner off the base (or at least to keep their leads short).

**Pinch hitter:** A player called up to hit in the place of another hitter, as a substitute.

**Pinch runner:** when a substitute player goes in to replace a baserunner

**Pine tar:** Hitters rub sticky pine tar on their bat handles to improve their grip

**Pitching around a hitter:** When the pitcher stays away from the center of the strike zone against a hitter. This strategy is employed against very good hitters or in specific high-pressure situations or with a base open, when the pitcher won't be negatively affected if he walks the hitter.

**Pitch-out:** When the pitcher intentionally throws a ball high and outside the strike zone to give the catcher a good pitch to throw a stealing base runner out on. The pitcher and catcher must guess when they believe the runner will be stealing and call a pitch-out hoping he steals on that pitch, because it gives them a good chance at catching him.

**Pitch Movement (lingo)**

**Break:** when a pitch has curving action, such as with a curveball, slider, splitter or cutter

**Cut** - moves slightly toward the pitcher's glove side

**Run** - moves slightly toward the pitcher's arm side

**Sink** - moves downward (term only applies to sinking fastballs or change ups, not sliders or curveballs)

**Late life** - ball appears to speed up on the hitter (also called hop)

**Position player:** any player who is not a pitcher

**Pulling the ball:** when a hitter hits the ball toward the line of the same side of the field as the batter's box he stands in. Left field for righty hitters and right field for lefty hitters.

**Raking:** when a hitter has been hitting very well. *He's been raking in the month of April.*

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**RBI:** statistic denoting when a hitter scored a baserunner on a batted ball that was not misplayed by the fielding team - "Run batted in."

**Relief pitcher (reliever):** Any pitcher who enters the game after the starting pitcher. *They're bringing in a reliever; a reliever is getting warm in the bullpen.*

**Rubber arm:** When a pitcher is capable of pitching very often and/or with high pitch counts. His arm recovers and "bounces back" to normal quickly (like rubber).

**Run:** runs are like points. When a batter reaches base, then touches all the bases before touching home, he scores one run.

**Run down (or pickle):** When a baserunner gets caught between bases and has to be chased down.

**Runners at the corners:** when there are runners on first and third.

**Runners in scoring position:** when there are runners at second or third base.

**Save situation:** A pitcher gets a save when he pitches the final inning when his team is leading by three runs or less. A three-run-or-less lead thus is a save situation. When a pitcher fails to get a save in a save situation, it's called a blown save.

**Saying the score (lingo):** Always list the higher number of runs first, no matter what. *The Yankees lost 9-4; the Yankees won 9-4.*

**Set-up man:** Relief pitcher who pitches the inning before the closer comes in.

**Seventh-inning stretch:** between the top and bottom halves of the seventh inning, a song is played, fans stand up, stretch and sing along.

**Short porch:** when a section of the outfield is shorter than normal, which makes it easier for hitters to hit home runs to that part of the ballpark. *There's a short porch in right field - only 290 feet away.*

**Single:** reaching first on a base hit

**Sinker:** a fastball with sinking action

**Slide step:** the fastest possible delivery a pitcher can have from the stretch position.

**Slider:** a breaking ball that has diagonal break and is thrown harder than a curveball.

**Slump:** when a player is playing poorly for an extended period of time

**Southpaw:** A pitcher who is left-handed.

**Splitter (split-finger fastball):** pitch that dives downward but has less break than a curveball

**Stolen base:** when a base runner runs to the next base as the pitcher delivers the ball. The catcher will attempt to throw him out. If out, the runner is caught stealing. If safe, it's a stolen base. *The runner took off for second but was caught stealing. That's his third stolen base of the game.*

**Stranded:** when runners are left on base when the inning ends.

**Stretch position:** Pitchers pitch from the stretch position when runners are on base.

**Strikes and strikeouts:** When the pitcher gets three strikes on the hitter during an at-bat. Results in an out. Foul bunt attempts and foul-tips (when a pitch barely touches the bat but is caught by the catcher) count as the third strike, but normal foul balls do not.

**Sweet spot:** The center of the barrel of a baseball bat; provides the most power when a ball is hit.

**Switch-hitter:** a hitter who can bat as both a lefty or righty.

**Top or Bottom of the inning:** the home team bats in the bottom half of each inning, and the visiting team bats in the top half.

**Tag Up:** when a runner goes back to the base on a fly ball, then tries to advance after the outfielder has caught it.

**Trademark:** where the logo of the bat manufacturer is printed on the bat, which is below the barrel (and not a good place to hit the ball.)

**Triple:** reaching third on a base hit

**Turn two:** when infielders try to turn a double play on a ground ball

**Two seamer:** a two-seam fastball - has some arm side run action

**Umpire (Blue):** Umpires officiate the game, and are sometimes referred to as "Blue" because of their traditional navy blue uniforms.

**Utility player:** player who can play multiple positions

**Walk:** when the pitcher throws four balls to the batter, he is awarded first base. *Base on balls; free pass; losing the hitter; the hitter drew a walk; the hitter might try to draw a walk.*

**Walk-off:** a hit that wins the game in the bottom of the final inning.

**Warning track:** The dirt area bordering the outfield fence, and often surrounding the entire field. Helps warn players they are getting close to the fence.

**WHIP (statistic):** walks + hits per inning pitch. A good measure of pitcher performance.

**Wind up:** pitchers pitch from the wind up (a type of delivery) when there are no runners on base

**Wheelhouse:** the part of the strike zone in which a particular hitter likes to swing and has good power.



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