

Baseball: A National Tradition

http://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/48_3_6_feature-article.pdf

Through this activity, your students will learn some baseball-related terms that are used in everyday English. Prior to class, prepare two sets of word cards. On one set of each card, write a term and its original meaning as used in baseball. On the other set of each card, write its extended meaning as used in everyday conversation. The following provides some expressions that would work, but you can find other ones as well.

Term	Original meaning	Extended meaning
Ninth inning	The last part of the baseball game	An event or process coming to an end
First base	The first stop for a player after hitting the ball	An initial goal
Hit or miss	Hit or fail to hit the ball with the bat	Something with unpredictable results, success or failure
Home run	Hitting the ball far so that a player can run around all four bases, thus winning one point	A big, complete success
On deck	A player waiting to take a turn as the next player to hit the ball	The next in line
Rain-check	A ticket given to a spectator to be used for a later game when the game is cancelled due to rain	An opportunity to repeat something that cannot be done as planned
Hit singles	Hitting the ball only far enough to advance one base at a time	A step-by-step approach
Strike	Failure to hit the baseball while at bat	A failure
Out in left field	Part of the outfield that is far away from the player who is hitting the ball	Far away from what is normal or expected

Have your students read the article “Baseball: A National Tradition.” If you don’t have enough time, have them just read the following passage, which is excerpted and adapted from the second section (Baseball Basics) of the article, to familiarize them with the basic rules and terms of baseball.

Baseball Basics

Baseball requires two teams of nine players each. A game consists of nine innings. During the first half of an inning, players of one team take turns at bat and try to score runs, while the other team plays in the field and tries to keep the batting team from scoring. In the second half of the inning, the teams change places.

The game takes place outdoors on a diamond-shaped field, with the four corners marked by home plate, first base, second base, and third base. Foul lines extend at 45-degree angles from home plate; the area within those lines is fair territory, or the main field of play. The area enclosed by the bases is called the infield, while the area beyond the bases bordered by the foul lines, and usually a fence, is the outfield.

When a team is playing defense, three of its players are in the outfield, four are in the infield, the pitcher throws the ball from a mound in the center of the infield, and the catcher squats behind home plate to catch any balls that the other team’s batter does not hit.

Each player of the team at bat waits his turn to try to hit the ball. When his turn comes, the batter stands at home plate and attempts to hit the ball out of reach of the defensive players in the field. As soon as he hits the ball, he drops his bat and begins to run around the bases. If he reaches first base safely, he is said to have hit a single. If he reaches second base, he has hit a double, and if third base, a triple. A ball hit over the fence in fair territory is a home run, and the batter and any other players ahead of him on the bases all score runs.

If the ball is caught in the air or can be thrown to a base before the batter reaches it, he is out. The batter also can strike out if he swings at and misses three pitches or if he fails to swing at three pitches that the umpire decides were in the strike zone between the batter’s armpits and knees. When the batting team has three outs, its turn at bat is over, and it goes to the field for the second half of the inning.

Explain that since baseball is one of the most popular sports in the United States, baseball-related terms are often used in everyday English. Next, distribute the cards that you prepared so that half of your students have an expression and its original meaning while the other half have its extended meaning. Then, have them move around the classroom to find the right match. Once they find the match, have them first look at both original and

extended meanings and then make up one sentence using the baseball expression. Finally, ask each pair of students to introduce and explain their baseball expression and sentence to the entire class.