

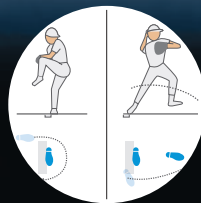
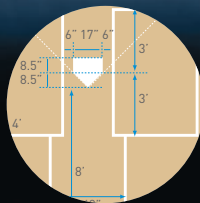
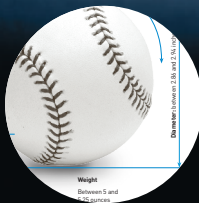
REVISED & UPDATED THIRD EDITION

“Splendidly clear and concise.”—*Boston Globe*

# BASEBALL

## FIELD GUIDE

An In-Depth Illustrated Guide to the  
Complete Rules of Baseball



**LEARN ABOUT:** Every inch of the baseball (from the core to the stitches!)

- All-new rules on interference, obstruction, and avoiding collisions
- The roles of umpire, manager, coach, and spectator • And more!

Dan Formosa & Paul Hamburger

BASEBALL FIELD GUIDE: *An In-Depth Illustrated Guide to the Complete Rules of Baseball*—Third Edition

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## 2 Teams and Leagues

Major League Baseball oversees two leagues — the American League and the National League. This chapter discusses how teams play their many games throughout the regular season, and goes into the Wild Card Games, Division Championships, League Championships, and the World Series.

The leagues abide by an agreement with Major League Baseball called the Major League Constitution. Selected items from that agreement are included in this chapter.

### Teams and Leagues: contents

#### Teams and Leagues: Basics

Major League Baseball consists of two leagues: the American League and the National League. The leagues play under an agreement called the Major League Constitution.

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#### The Regular Season

The regular season lasts six months, beginning late March or early April, and ending early October.

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#### The All-Star Game

A midseason All-Star Game is played between the American League and the National League, with players chosen from each Major League Baseball team.

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#### Postseason Championships

In each league, the teams with the most wins in each of the three divisions advance to the playoffs, along with the winner of a Wild Card Game. Those four teams enter the Division Series, two advance to the League Championships (the "Pennant"), and one team from each league advances to play in the World Series.

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#### Minor League vs. Major League Rules

Several differences exist in the rules for Minor League teams.

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## Teams and Leagues: Basics

**Overview:** Major League Baseball is the organization that controls the two professional baseball leagues in North America — the American League and the National League. The two leagues encompass thirty teams — fifteen in each. Both leagues divide their teams into three divisions: East, Central, and West.

Established in 1876, the National League predates the American League by twenty-four years. At its founding it included eight teams. The American League also consisted of eight teams when it was established in 1900. Major League Baseball brought the two leagues together in 1920.

### The American League

East	Central	West
Baltimore Orioles	Chicago White Sox	Houston Astros
Boston Red Sox	Cleveland Indians	Los Angeles Angels
New York Yankees	Detroit Tigers	Oakland Athletics
Tampa Bay Rays	Kansas City Royals	Seattle Mariners
Toronto Blue Jays	Minnesota Twins	Texas Rangers

### The National League

East	Central	West
Atlanta Braves	Chicago Cubs	Arizona Diamondbacks
Miami Marlins	Cincinnati Reds	Colorado Rockies
New York Mets	Milwaukee Brewers	Los Angeles Dodgers
Philadelphia Phillies	Pittsburgh Pirates	San Diego Padres
Washington Nationals	St. Louis Cardinals	San Francisco Giants

### Basics

## The Major League Constitution

Major League Baseball's agreement with the two leagues is called the Major League Constitution. This agreement covers topics ranging from the number of games played, to minimum salaries for players, to treatment programs and penalties for the use of steroids and other drugs. Many of the items discussed in this chapter come from the Major League Constitution, not the Official Baseball Rules.

### The team's roster

Major League Baseball requires that each team maintain an active roster that includes a minimum of twenty-four and a maximum of twenty-five players from opening day through August 31. If that number drops below twenty-four, due to unforeseen events, the team is required to bring that number back up to twenty-four within forty-eight hours.



## The Regular Season

**Overview:** Baseball starts the year with spring training and preseason games. The regular season runs from late March or early April to October. Postseason championship games take place in October: the Wild Card Games, the Division Series, the League Championships (the "Pennant"), and the World Series. The regular season is discussed here.

### 162 games

The "regular season" (also called the championship season) is Major League Baseball's term for the games that lead to the Wild Card Games and the Division Series Championships in October. During the regular season each team plays 162 games. The season lasts from 178 to 183 days — up to half of a year. Opening day typically takes place in early April. The final game of the regular

season takes place in early October, when the postseason playoff games begin.

As an effort to spur interest in baseball worldwide, since 1996 some regular season games have been scheduled to take place outside the United States and Canada. Venues have included Puerto Rico, Mexico, and Japan. When an opening-day game is scheduled as an "international opener,"

in Japan for instance, the opening game may be scheduled earlier in the season — possibly in late March. When this is the case, the 183-day limit may be extended.

### 2,430 games

An incredible number of games take place in the regular season. Each of the thirty Major League teams plays 162 games, not including preseason or postseason games, or the All-Star Game.

## 162 games played by 30 teams = 2,430 games in the regular season

### Games between American League and National League teams

Historically, American and National League teams would not face each other until the World Series championship at the end of the season, when the pennant-winning teams from each of the leagues

vie for the World Series title. That changed in 1997, when games in the regular season were scheduled between teams from the two leagues. Of 162 games scheduled for

each team in the regular season, up to 20 may be interleague games. When an interleague game takes place, the rules of the home team's league will be followed.

### Spring training and preseason games

Baseball activities begin in February and March with the start of spring training. Preseason exhibition games take place throughout March and lead right up to opening day.

## The All-Star Game

**Overview:** The All-Star Game is an exhibition game played in the middle of the regular season. The American League plays the National League, with players chosen from every team.

### The American League vs. The National League

At approximately midseason, sometime in mid-July, Major League Baseball stages the All-Star Game. This is an exhibition game between American League and National League teams composed of players selected by fans. Starting players are selected by vote. At least one player

from each team will be included in the game.

The “fan vote” process, of course, raises the question as to whether the selected players are the best in baseball, or simply the most popular.

### The winning league gets home-field advantage at the World Series

Beginning in 2003, to give the All-Star Game more

purpose, Major League Baseball declared that the winning league will be given home-field advantage in the World Series. That is, of the two teams participating in the World Series, the team whose league won the All-Star Game will have four of the seven World Series games scheduled to take place at their ballpark.

## Postseason Championships

**Overview:** Three postseason playoffs take place prior to the World Series: the Wild Card Games, the Division Series, and the League Championship Series (the “Pennant”).

### Postseason | Wild Card Games

**A single game determines the “Wild Card” team.**

In each league, after choosing the highest-ranking team in each of the three divisions, a fourth and fifth team still have a shot. From the remaining twelve teams, the two with the highest win-loss records participate in a single Wild Card Game. One will advance. Overall this means ten teams enter the playoffs each year, five in each league.

### Postseason | Division Series

#### Three winning teams, and the “Wild Card”

Each Division Series is a best-of-five-game event. It puts a league’s three division-winning teams in competition. A fourth “wild card” team also joins in.

#### Four teams will enter the Division Series

Within each league the four teams pair off to compete in two separate Division Series. The wild card team pairs with the team having the highest win-loss record.

#### Two teams will advance in each league

The two winning teams will advance to play each other for their League Championship.

**Note:** The win-loss percentage is simply the number of games won divided by the total number of games played (the total number of games played is 162 at the end of the regular season). If two teams are tied at the end of the regular season, a 163rd game will be scheduled to break the tie.



**Division Series:** The selection process is the same for the American and the National leagues. Using the National League as an example, here are the win-loss standings for the leading teams in each of the three geographic divisions at the end of the regular season. All three will participate. Of the remaining twelve teams, the two with the highest win-loss records hold a single Wild Card Game. That game will determine the fourth team to enter the Division Series.

National League		Wins	Losses	Win-Loss Percentage
<b>Highest ranking teams, one chosen from each division</b>				
<b>East</b>	New York Mets	90	72	.556
<b>Central</b>	St. Louis Cardinals	100	62	.617
<b>West</b>	Los Angeles Dodgers	92	70	.568
<b>A fourth and fifth team participate in a Wild Card Game</b>				
	Pittsburgh Pirates	98	64	.605
	Chicago Cubs	97	65	.599

**Example:** The New York Mets, St. Louis Cardinals, and Los Angeles Dodgers ended the regular season with the best records in their divisions, so they will play in the Division Series. Of the remaining twelve teams, the Pittsburgh Pirates and Chicago Cubs have the highest win-loss records. Pittsburgh, with the higher win-loss percentage, will host the Wild Card Game. That winner will advance.

### Home-field advantage

Since the Division Series is a best-of-five-game set, the series ends as soon as one team wins three games. Three of

the five games will be scheduled to take place at the home of the team with the highest win-loss percentage, giving that team the home-field advantage. Games one,

two, and five will be played at their stadium. If the series goes to five games, they will have the advantage of playing three of the games in their own ballpark.

### Postseason | League Championship Series (Pennant)

Each league next holds a League Championship Series (the “Pennant”), to be played by the two winning teams from the Division Series. This is a best-of-seven-game

series. In scheduling the games, the home-field advantage will be given to the team that had the highest win-loss percentage in the regular season. That team will be

scheduled to host games one, two, six, and seven.

In each League Championship Series, the first team to win four games will win the pennant.

### Postseason | The World Series

The World Series places the winners of the American League Championship Series and the National League Championship Series in competition. It’s a best-of-seven-game series — winning four games takes the title.

The home-field advantage for the World Series goes to the team whose league won the All-Star Game. That team will host games one, two, six, and seven.

In addition to the notoriety of becoming World Series champions, the winning team receives a World Series trophy (called the “Commissioner’s Trophy”) and its players receive World Series rings.



## Postseason | Steps to the World Series: Example

### The Regular Season

#### Best of 162 games

In the regular season, each team plays 162 games, vying for a place in their league's Division Series.

### The Wild Card Games

#### One-game playoff

Within each league, the team with the highest win-loss percentage in each of the three divisions will advance. Of the remaining twelve teams, the two with the highest win-loss percentages will compete

in a Wild Card Game to become the fourth team.

### The Division Series

#### Best of five games

Within each league, the four teams will pair off, creating two different Division Series. A team needs to win three out of five games.

### The League Championship

#### Best of seven games

Also known as "the Pennant," the two winning

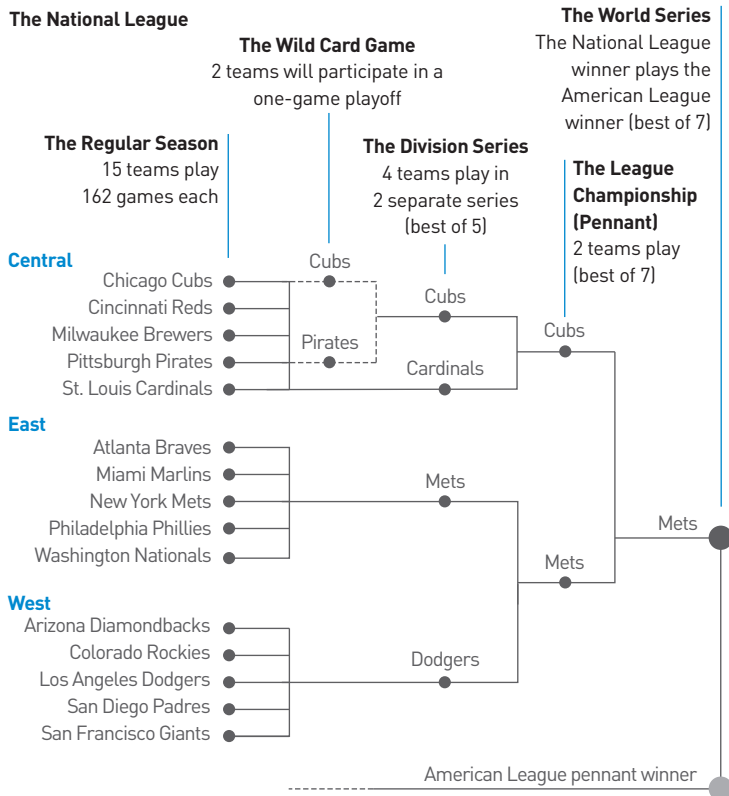
teams from the Division Series will play each other. A team needs to win four out of seven games.

### The World Series

#### Best of seven games

The team that wins the National League pennant will play the American League's pennant winner in the World Series. Four out of seven World Series games must be won to become the World Series champions.

**Example:** This diagram shows steps to the World Series, using the National League as an example. The American League's process is identical.



## Minor League vs. Major League Rules

**Overview:** MLB's Official Baseball Rules identify several differences between rules used in the Minor Leagues and the Major Leagues.

### 1. Helmets must have double earflaps:

Minor League players are required to use helmets protecting both ears. Major League players may use single earflap helmets, protecting only the ear that faces the pitcher.

### 2. Doubleheader games may be seven innings:

In the Minor Leagues each game of a doubleheader may be limited to seven innings. Rules that typically apply to the ninth inning will apply to the seventh inning. For example, because the seventh inning is now the last scheduled inning of the game, the game will end at the conclusion of the first half of the seventh inning when the home team (who always bats after the visiting team) is in the lead, or as soon as the home team pulls ahead in that inning.

### 3. Rules regarding suspended and terminated games:

If a Minor League game is suspended due to weather or other factors, and played on another day prior to another game, the regularly scheduled game that day will be seven innings. (See page 201 for more information.)

### 4. Penalties for ball tampering:

In the Minor Leagues the pitcher's penalty for pitching with a tampered ball, or having a foreign substance in his possession, is ejection and a specified ten-game suspension. In the Major Leagues the penalty is also ejection, but the length of suspension is up to the commissioner.

### 5. Leaving the batter's box:

In the Minor Leagues a batter must keep one foot in the box during his entire time at bat. He may only leave the box when:

- he swings at a pitch
- a pitch forces him out
- the other team calls "time"
- a play is made on a runner
- he fakes a bunt
- a wild pitch or passed ball takes place
- the pitcher, in possession of the ball, leaves the mound
- the catcher exits the catcher's box to give signals

### 6. Requirements for the individual pitching championship:

At the end of the season each league names an individual pitching champion, the pitcher with the best earned run average (ERA).

Major League rules require the selected pitcher to have pitched the number of innings equal to or greater than the total number of games played in the season (162 innings or more). Minor League rules require their pitchers to have pitched innings equal to only 80 percent of the number of games (.80 x 144 games in a Minor League season = 115 innings or more).

### 7. Requirements for individual batting, slugging, and on-base percentage championships:

Players must appear in a minimum specified number of plate appearances to qualify for these individual championships. In the Major Leagues that number is 3.1 times the number of games in the regular season. In the Minor Leagues it's 2.7 times the number of games in the regular season.

**Note:** The Minor Leagues are also known as the National Association, the term used in the Official Baseball Rules. To avoid any confusion between the terms National Association and National League, we are using the term Minor Leagues in our discussions of the rules.