

How To Keep Score For Softball Games

A quick introduction to the art of softball scorekeeping

In order to save stats, you must have a scorekeeper keep score for your games. A softball scoresheet can look like Egyptian hieroglyphics at first, but once you learn the notation, keeping score is easy and can be a lot of fun.

Contents

How To Keep Score For Softball Games.....	1
<i>A quick introduction to the art of softball scorekeeping</i>	1
Introduction	1
Basics.....	2
When the Batter Gets On Base	3
When to Credit a Hit	3
Types of hits to credit	4
RBIs.....	6
Base Running.....	6
Stolen Bases (SB).....	6
Wild Pitches and Passed Balls	6
When the Batter Gets Out	7
Types of Outs to Record.....	7
Examples	10
Example 1.....	10
Example 2.....	11
Example 3.....	12
Example 4.....	13
Example 5.....	14
Example 6.....	15

Introduction

The league will provide each team with a special notebook with pre-printed scoring boxes. It is our recommendation that your team only have one score book so all the information for the season is recorded in one central location. They are available at most sports stores, and will help you remember where things go. They also usually have reminders of how to score common events during a game, as well as the player numbering system.

The basic layout of the scoresheet is this:

Batter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Player names are written in the Batter column, in the order that they will be batting. Many sheets have space for multiple batters per row to allow for substitutions. Write one name per row of softball diamonds. The diamonds are used to record what each batter did for his plate appearance for each inning that he or she bats.

The league supplied scoresheets have a box for RBIs (labeled RBI), and boxes to check off balls and strikes. The bottom row of 3 boxes is for balls, and the top row of 2 boxes is for strikes. For U10 and up, every time a ball or strike is called, you should put a mark in the appropriate box. This is called “keeping track of the count”. As players (and umpires) get older and more experienced they will be better at keeping track of their own count, but while they are learning, it’s important that the team scorekeeper act as a backup. RBIs are also important and will be explained more as we go along.

You will want to create a second sheet with the other team’s lineup, so that you can record your team’s fielding and pitching stats, which you get by looking at what you recorded while the other team was batting.

Basics

Each diamond is where you write what each player did while batting for each inning that he or she bats. There is notation for if the batter gets out, and notation for if they get a hit. Also, you will show how the players progress around the bases. Every time a player reaches a base, you draw a line to that base, going around the diamond just as the player is doing in reality. Multiple players may be running the bases, so you may be updating multiple squares at a time. If a player makes it all the way home, then you fill in the diamond to make it easier to count runs scores at the end of the inning.

If there is a substitution in the middle of the game, where one batter takes the place of another, write the new batter’s name in the row underneath the replaced batter’s name. You will also want to draw a vertical line on the scoresheet to indicate where the change occurred. This will make sure you enter the correct stats for the correct batter after the game.

Every time a batter steps up to the plate, you write down everything that happens for both the batter and the players already on base. If players advance to a new base, you update their square on the scoresheet. As for the batter, one of two things can happen: they can either get on base, or they get out. This guide will show you what to write down in either case, and then show some complete innings to show how multiple boxes get updated at once. First, let’s look at the different ways a batter can get on base.

When the Batter Gets On Base

There are lots of different ways a batter can get on base.

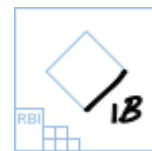
When to Credit a Hit

1. When a batter advances safely to any base on a fair ball which settles on the ground or touches a fence before being touched by a fielder, or which clears a fence even if touched by a fielder,
2. When a batter advances safely to any base on a fair ball hit with such force, or so slowly, that more than a routine play is required to put out the batter or runner,
 - a) do not anticipate that an off-balance throw would have retired a runner; this is a hit, even if the throw is wild,
 - b) when a grounder is fielded and no throw is made, credit a base hit unless no throw is made because of checking or holding another runner,
 - c) if a slow or hard hit ball is deflected and thus eliminates a routine play for another fielder, credit a base hit,
 - d) if a play is made on a lead runner unsuccessfully and the batter would have been safe had the play been made on her, credit a hit (even on an attempted sacrifice bunt or slap hit, or running slap),
 - e) if a runner interferes with a batted ball, but the batter would have been safe without the interference, credit a hit,
 - f) if the ball is not touched because of confusion as to whom should have fielded it, or because a fly ball was misjudged and the fielder could not recover in time to gain good position, credit a hit,
3. When a batter advances safely to any base on a fair ball which takes an unnatural bounce (short hop) so it cannot be handled with ordinary effort, or which bounces off the pitching rubber or a base before being touched by a fielder and at an angle so that it cannot be handled with ordinary effort,
4. When a batter advances safely to any base on a ball which reaches the outfield untouched by the infield unless the ball should have been handled by the infielder with ordinary effort (e.g., ball between legs),
5. When a batter advances safely on any fair ball which might even have touched a fielder but was windblown, lost in the sun or lights, or which falls to the ground because the fielder slips on either the field or an object on the field (mask, base, rubber, sprinkler, etc.),
6. On a fair line drive hit to the outfield which drops to the ground, where the outfielder is attempting the catch on the run, not in a set position; or any fair fly ball hit to the outfield which drops to the ground, where the outfielder either had to cover a considerable distance or make the catch while running at a high rate of speed (credit a hit even if the ball is touched),
7. On any fair ball not touched by a fielder that becomes "dead" because of touching the person or clothing of an umpire,
8. When no one covers the base or a fielder is late in covering the base (use three feet as guideline to whether or not she got there), and
9. When a fair batted ball strikes a cap or glove thrown at it.

Types of hits to credit

Single (1B)

The most basic hit is where the batter runs safely to first. There were no errors on the play, and no attempts to get another runner out. We note this with 1B, and we draw a line from home to first base on the diamond.



Double (2B)

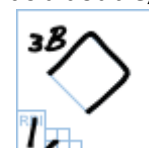
If the batter makes it to second without any errors or attempts to get another runner out, it's a double, and we write 2B. A line is drawn from home to first, and then to second to show his progress. We write 2B on the second base line so that we know it was double in case we have trouble reading our handwriting later.



Triple (3B)

If the batter makes it to second without any errors or attempts to get another runner out, it's a double, and we write 2B. A line is drawn from home to first, then to second, and finally to third to show his progress.

In this example, someone else was on base and scored while the batter was running the bases, so the batter gets 1 RBI for his hit. If you don't know when to score RBIs, we'll talk about them further down.



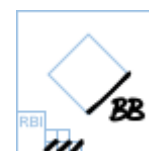
Home Run (HR)

If the batter makes it all the way home on his hit, then it's a home run, and we write HR on the third base line. There's always at least one RBI on a home run (the batter gets credit for himself). There's also always a run scored.



Base on Balls or Walk (BB)

If the pitcher pitches 4 (3 in some leagues) balls, then the batter gets to go to first base automatically. This is called a walk, and we record it as a BB (Base on Balls). We still draw the line from home to first to show his progress. If the bases are loaded, then someone scores on the walk, and the batter gets an RBI.



Fielder's Choice (FC)

These can be tricky to score. When a fielder's choice happens, we record it as FC, and draw a line from home to first as usual. A fielder's choice happens when the fielders choose to attempt to get another runner on base out instead of the batter.

For example, say there's a runner on first and the batter hits a grounder to the shortstop. The shortstop can either throw to first base to try to get the batter out (which would be a 6-3 out for the batter) or he can throw to second base to get the runner running from first base. If he does this, and the batter makes it safely to first base, then it is a fielder's choice.



These can be judgment calls. If the batter would have beat the throw to first, and so the shortstop threw to second to make sure he got an out, then it can be scored as a single, since the batter was never in danger of being out. As a scorer, you get to decide if the batter was ever in danger of being thrown out. If he was, then it is a FC.

Also remember, that when throwing to second, the second baseman may drop the throw, allowing the runner to be safe. Even though there were no outs, it is still a fielder's choice for the batter since the shortstop *chose* not to throw him out.

The out gets recorded in the baserunner's box, not the batter's.

Safe on Error (E#)

If a fielder commits an error that allows the batter to make it safely on base, then you draw the path appropriate for where the batter ended up, and write E along with the position number for who committed the error.



In this case, the batter reached first base because of an error committed by the shortstop. We don't know what the error was; he may have let an easy ball go by him, or he may have made a bad throw to first base. In any case, the scorer decided that it was the shortstop's error that allowed the batter to reach base safely.

This is another area where you, as the scorer, have to make a judgment call. Most errors are dropped balls and bad throws, but not every dropped ball or bad throw is an error. If the fielder ran a mile to get close to the ball and it bounces out of his glove, it is not an error, since the fielder had to make a lot of effort to attempt the play. If a ground ball gets by the shortstop, it is an error if the ball is moving slowly, but if it the ball has been hit hard, then the shortstop should not be expected to be able to make the play.

If the shortstop fields the ball cleanly, but the first baseman doesn't catch the throw, then it is an error. But whose? If it was wild throw over the first baseman's head, or down in the dirt, then the error is charged to the shortstop for making a bad throw. If, however, it is a good throw, then the error would be charged to the first baseman for dropping the ball.

Hit by Pitch (HBP)

Hit by pitch is a situation in which a batter or her clothing or equipment (other than her bat) is struck directly by a pitch from the pitcher. A hit batsman is awarded first base, provided that (in the plate umpire's judgment) she made an honest effort to avoid the pitch, although failure to do so is rarely called by an umpire. Being hit by a pitch is often caused by a batter standing too close to, or "crowding", home plate.

Dropped Third Strike (K_{WP} or K_{PB})

Dropped third strike occurs when the catcher fails to cleanly catch a pitch (PB) for the third strike. A pitch is considered uncaught if the ball touches the ground before being caught (a bouncing ball), or if the ball is dropped after being grasped. It can also occur when a pitcher throws a wild pitch (WP) but the batter swings anyway with the intention of "stealing" first base.

On an uncaught third strike with no runner on first base or with two outs, the batter immediately becomes a runner. The strike is called, but the umpire does not call the batter out. The umpire may also actively signal that there is "no catch" of the pitch. The batter may then attempt to reach first base and must be tagged or forced out. With two outs and the bases loaded, the catcher who fails to catch the third strike may, upon picking up the ball, step on home plate for a force-out or make a throw to any other base in an effort to force out a runner.

The purpose of the "no runner on first base or two outs" qualification is to prevent the catcher from deliberately dropping a third strike pitch and then initiating an unfair double or triple play with possible force plays at second base, third base, or home plate, in addition to putting the batter out at first base. The logic of the situation is similar to that which led to the infield fly rule.

Regardless of the outcome of an uncaught third strike, the pitcher is statistically credited with a strikeout. Because of the uncaught third strike rule, it is possible for a pitcher to register more than three strikeouts in an inning

Sacrifice Bunt (SacB)

With less than two outs, if a batter advances one or more runners by bunting (including slap bunting) and is called out at first base or would have been called out had no error occurred.

Sacrifice Fly (SF)

With less than two outs, a batter hits a fly ball or line drive which scores a runner regardless of where the ball is caught as long as it is in play.

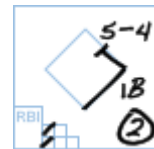
RBIs

RBI stands for Run Batted In. They are earned by the batter when a runner scores as a result of their at bat. If they hit a single and someone else scores, the batter gets an RBI. If the bases are loaded and the batter gets walked, it's an RBI for the batter. Of course, nothing is that simple and there are a few exceptions. It is **NOT** an RBI if any of the following happens:

- a) A fielder commits an error that allows a runner to score.
- b) The batter grounds into a double play.

Base Running

After the batter reaches base, you update his progress around the bases as other batters hit. If he reaches home, you color in the diamond to make it easy to count scored runs later. If a runner gets out running from one base to another, draw a line on the diamond halfway toward the base he was running to, and cap the line off to show that he didn't make it all the way. Write down the fielding positions of who made the out, and then record the out in the lower left corner.



In this example, the batter hit a single to first base and stopped. When a different batter was up, he tried to run to second, but the third baseman threw to second base to get him out. This is recorded as a 5-4, and we write down the "out" number in the lower left corner.



This box shows a batter who ended up making it home after hitting a double. First, we record the 2B for his double. Two other runners on base scored, so he earned two RBIs for the hit. When the next batter hit the ball, the third baseman tried to get this batter out, but committed an error, so we write E5 along the base path to record the error. The following batter knocked this batter in, scoring a run (the colored diamond) and earning an RBI for whoever was batting when he ran in.

It is important to record errors that happen when trying to get baserunners out, since that will be reflected in that fielder's fielding stats.

Stolen Bases (SB)

Credit a stolen base to a runner who advances a base unaided by a safe hit, putout, error, force out, fielder's choice, illegal pitch, base on balls, hit batter, wild pitch, passed ball, interference or obstruction.

Wild Pitches and Passed Balls

A wild pitch is charged to the pitcher when the pitcher throws so high, wide or low that the catcher cannot handle the ball with ordinary effort and at least one runner advances.

- a) Any pitch in the dirt which advances a runner is deemed wild.
- b) Only one wild pitch is scored regardless of the number of runners who advance or the number of bases advanced.
- c) A third strike that is not handled by the catcher because it was wild, where the batter makes first base safely, is charged to the pitcher as a strikeout and also as a wild pitch (KWP).
- d) No wild pitch is scored if a runner was stealing on the release of the wild pitch and only one base is advanced.

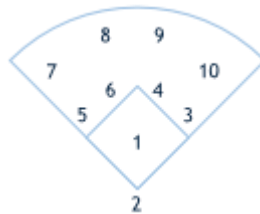
A passed ball is charged to the catcher when she fails to catch a pitch which could have been caught with ordinary effort and at least one baserunner advances.

- a) A bobbled pitch (not dropped) where a runner advances is scored as a stolen base, not a passed ball, even if the runner decides to advance after seeing the bobble.
- b) Only one passed ball is charged regardless of the number of runners who advance or the number of bases advanced.
- c) A third strike that is not handled by the catcher and which should have been with ordinary effort, and the batter reaches first base safely, is charged to the catcher as a passed ball and the pitcher as a strikeout (KPB).
- d) No passed ball is scored if a runner was stealing on the release of the pitch that got away and only one base is earned.

When the Batter Gets Out

To record outs, you write down which position made the out. To keep things simple, each position is numbered from 1 to 9:

- 1. Pitcher
- 2. Catcher
- 3. First Base
- 4. Second Base
- 5. Third Base
- 6. Shortstop
- 7. Left Field
- 8. Center Field
- 9. Right Field



This list corresponds to the picture on the right.

Whenever an out is made, you write down the position number for everyone who touched the ball to generate the out. For example, if a ground ball is hit to shortstop, and he throws to first base to force the batter out, then you would write down “6-3” in the square for the batter, since the shortstop is number 6, and the first baseman is number 3. It is important to remember that the number corresponds to the player, not the position. If the shortstop ran into the outfield to catch a ball, you would still write down 6 (for shortstop), not 7 (for the left field).

Types of Outs to Record

Strike Out (K)

If a batter strikes out, either by swinging, or a called 3rd strike, you write a letter K in the batter’s box. If you would like to keep even more detailed information, you can write K_c when the batter is out on a “called” third strike (the batter didn’t swing and the umpire “called” the third strike) or K_s when the batter swings and misses for their third strike.



Ground Out

Another way the batter can be out is if the ball is hit on the ground to someone and they throw to someone else to make the out.

In this case, the ball was hit to the shortstop, and he threw the ball to first baseman in time to get the batter out. Since it was the second out of the inning, we wrote 2 in the lower left corner of the box and circled it.



Fly Out (F#)

If the ball is caught in the air before it hits the ground, then the batter is automatically out. To record this play, you write the letter F followed by the position number of the player who caught it.

In this example, the center fielder caught the ball (position 8), and since it was the second out, we wrote a 2 in the lower left corner and circled it.



Line Out (L#)

A line drive is a ball hit sharply in a straight line roughly parallel to the ground. If this ball is caught by a fielder before it hits the ground it is a line out. To record this play, you write the letter L followed by the position number of the player who caught it.

Sacrifice Fly (SF)

After a fly ball is caught, other runners have the option of running to the next base. If a runner scores after the fly ball is caught, then it is called a *sacrifice fly*, and you write down SF instead of F, along with the position number of the person who caught it.

In this case, the batter hit a ball that was caught by the right center fielder, and after the ball was caught, a runner scored, so we gave the batter a sacrifice fly. It was the second out.



Unassisted Out (U)

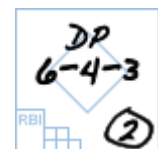
Sometimes the batter will hit the ball to someone on the ground, and they will get the batter out without throwing the ball to anyone. This called an unassisted out, and is recorded as the position number for who made the out followed by the letter U.

In this case, the batter hit the ball to first baseman, who either tagged the batter out, or beat the runner to tag first base. In any case the ball was not touched by anyone else, so it is an unassisted out. It was the first out.



Double Play (DP)

If two people get out on the same play, it is called a double play. If this happens, you write DP, along with the position numbers for everyone involved in the play. Note that a double play can only happen when there are 0 or 1 outs. The inning ends as soon as the 3rd out is made.



In this case, the batter hit a grounder to the shortstop, who threw the ball to the second baseman to get the person running from first to second out. After this, the second baseman threw the ball to first base

to get the batter out for the second out. We write down DP for the double play, and 6-4-3 for all the people involved in the play. We would also write DP down in the box of the player running from first to second to show that the player was out as a result of the double play.

Triple Play (TP)

Similar to a double play, if there are no outs in the inning, 3 people can be put out in the same play. If this happens, write TP in the box for the batter, and the position numbers for everyone involved in making the out.



In this case, the batter hit a line drive to the second baseman, who caught it in the air for the first out. The runners on first and second base were not expecting the catch, and started running as soon as the ball was hit. The second baseman threw to the shortstop to get the runner at second base out. He then threw to first base to get the runner who should have stayed at first out. We write F4-6-3.

Since this was the third out, we write a 3 in the lower left corner, and we also draw a thick diagonal line so that next inning we remember to move over a column.

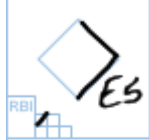
Examples

Here are some example innings to show how scoring works over multiple batters.

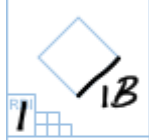
Example 1



The first batter hit a single (1B) to make it on base. We draw a line from home to first, and write 1B.



The next batter hit the ball to third base, but the third baseman committed an error, allowing the batter to safely reach first base. We draw a line from home to first and write E5. The batter on first moves to second base, so we draw a line in his box from first to second.



The next batter hits a single, so we draw a line from first to second and again write 1B in his box. The first batter is able to run home on this hit, so we draw a line from second to home in his box and color it in. The batter gets an RBI for this. The second batter was able to run to second.



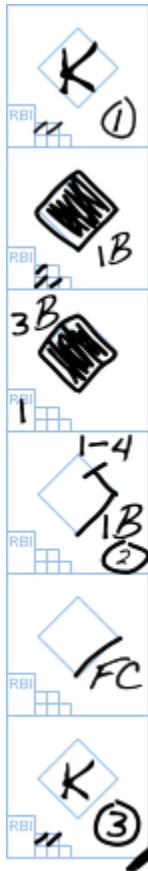
The next two batters strike out, so we write K in their boxes, and write down the number of outs. No one can move on a strikeout, so nothing changes in the other batters' boxes.



The last batter hits a fly ball to right center, where it is caught (F9). We write 3 for the third out and scribble a line in the corner to indicate that the inning is over.



Example 2



The first batter strikes out. We write K and 1 for the number of outs now.

The next batter hits a single, so we write 1B, and draw a line to first base.

The third batter hits a triple. We draw a line around the bases to 3rd base, and write 3rd base in the upper left corner. This hit scores the second batter, so we write 1 RBI for the current batter, and draw the second batter going around the bases to home and color in his diamond.

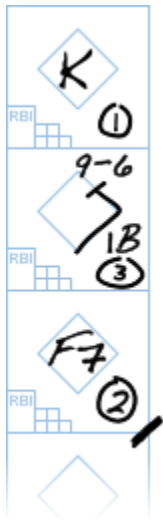
Batter 4 hits a single.

Batter 5 hits a grounder to the pitcher, who throws the ball to the second baseman to get batter 4 out.

Batter 5 (the current batter) gets a fielder's choice, since the batter chose to get someone else instead. To show the out we draw a line halfway between first and second in batter 4's box, with 1-4 written to show how the play was made. We put the 2nd out in batter 4's box, since he was the one put out.

The last batter strikes out to end the inning.

Example 3

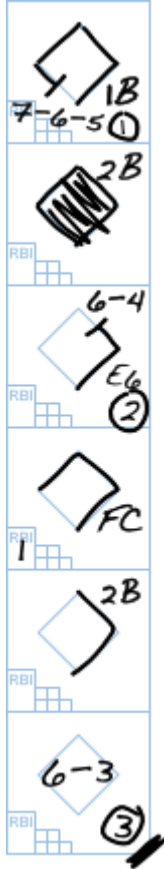


The first batter strikes out. We write K and 1 for the number of outs.

The second batter hits a single.

Batter 3 hits a fly ball to left field, where it is caught for the second out. Batter 2 tried to tag up and run to second base but was tagged out by the shortstop (9-6) for the third and final out.

Example 4



The first batter hits a single. We draw a line from home to first.

The second batter hits a double to left field. The first batter makes it to third, and tries to run all the way home, but is tagged out by the third baseman. The throw came from left field to the shortstop, who then threw to the third baseman for the out. We write everyone involved in the play in batter 1's box: 7-6-5. Batter 2 still gets a double, because batter 1 only got out trying to gain an extra base. Batter 2 safely hit a double and was not in danger of being thrown out.

Batter 3 gets on base because of an error committed by the shortstop.

Batter 4 hits a ball to the shortstop, who throws to the second baseman to get batter 3 out for the second out. Batter 4 gets a fielder's choice, and we draw the out in batter 3's box. Meanwhile, batter 2 has run all the way home, giving batter 4 an RBI. Fielder's Choices still give RBIs.

Batter 5 hits a double, and batter 6 grounds to shortstop to end the inning.

Example 5



The first batter strikes out for the first out.

The second batter hits a single.

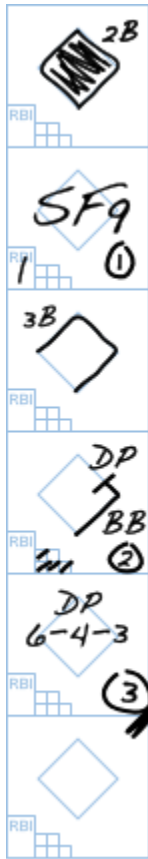
The third batter strikes out for the second out.

Batter 4 gets on base because of an error committed by the second baseman. Batter 2 advances to second base.

Batter 5 gets on base because of an error committed by the third baseman. Batter 4 advances to second base, and Batter 2 makes it to third base.

With the bases loaded, Batter 6 hits a home run. Everyone scores, and Batter 6 gets 4 RBIs, since 4 people scored on his at bat (himself and batters 2, 4, and 5). The end of the inning is not shown.

Example 6



The first batter hits a double.

The second batter hits a fly ball to the right center fielder, who catches the ball for the first out. The first batter is able to tag up after the ball is caught and run all the way home. This gives the second batter a sacrifice fly (since someone scored on his fly out), and an RBI.

The third batter hits a triple.

The fourth batter takes a walk to make it to first base. We write BB.

The fifth batter hits a ground ball to the shortstop, who throws to the second baseman to get Batter 4 out, who then throws to first base to get Batter 5 out. We write the play in Batter 5's box: 6-4-3, along with DP to indicate the double play. We also write DP in Batter 4's box to show that he was out as a result of a double play