

# BACKYARD BASEBALL

A game for 2 players by Jeff Warrender

It's a perfect day for a game! You've got a ball, Carmen has a couple of mitts, Luis has a bat, Jenny brought some flattened boxes that can serve as bases. You'll have to use some ghost runners, and don't hit the ball into the neighbor's yard! You've got an hour till dinner time, play ball!

## OBJECTIVE

The goal of the game is to have the highest score after three innings of baseball.

## GAME EQUIPMENT

1 board	2 decks of cards
7 pawns (2 blue, 2 red, 3 white)	1 die
5 cubes	1 ball (white disc)

## GAME SETUP

1. The first time you play, make a "dot" with a Sharpie on one of the red pawns and one of the blue pawns.
2. Place the board and whichever version of the "throw table" you prefer on the table.
3. Place a cube on "1" on the inning track, "0" on the outs track, and "dot" on the at-bat track, and on the "V" and "H" spaces of the score track.
4. Decide who will play red and who will play blue. Take the pawns in your color.
5. Randomly decide who will be the "visiting" player and who will be the "home" player. Give the home team the "pitcher" deck and the visiting team the "batter" deck.

## GAME PLAY

The game lasts for three innings. Each inning has two halves, a *top* and a *bottom*. In the top of an inning, the visiting player is the *batting team* and the home team is the *pitching team*; in the bottom half of the inning, these roles are reversed. Each half-inning plays in a similar way, and lasts until the pitching team records three outs.

## **START OF A HALF-INNING**

Each player: take the appropriate deck (batter or pitcher), shuffle it, and draw three cards.  
Pitching player: place one of your pawns on the pitcher's mound: this is the "pitcher pawn"; your other pawn is the "fielder pawn", which you'll position during each play.

## **HALF-INNING SEQUENCE**

The half-inning consists of a series of *plays*. The "at bat" track indicates which of the batting player's pawns is at bat, "dot" or "no dot". There are no differences in how the two pawns bat; this only matters for determining whether ghost runners are needed (see below).

Each play has four steps:

### **1. PLACE THE FIELDER**

Pither: place your fielder pawn on any of the five field spaces (infield left, infield right, left field, center field, or right field).

### **2. PLAY CARDS**

Each player: select one of the cards from your hand and place it face-down on the table. Reveal at the same time, and roll the die.

If the pitch name on the batter's card matches that on the pitcher's card (heater, curve, knuckler or slow ball), the batter has correctly anticipated the pitch. Add one to the die roll.

If the die roll is *less than* the number on the pitcher's card, the result of the play is given by the pitcher's card. Otherwise, it is given by the batter's card.

### **3. RESULT**

Place the ball in the field space indicated by the result of the play.

A play produces an *out* or a *hit*.

- OUT: Advance the out track by 1 space.
- HIT: Advance each runner pawn to the next base (white square), moving counter-clockwise around the diamond. Place the pawn that is "at bat" on first base.
  - Whenever a runner pawn reaches home, increase your score by one.

Specific details follow.

## **PITCHER'S CARD RESULTS**

Strikeout

A strikeout is an *out*.

Grounder

If the fielder pawn is in the same field space as the ball, this is an *out*.

If the fielder pawn is NOT in the same space, this is a *hit*. Move the pitcher pawn to the space.

Pop up/Fly Ball

If the fielder pawn is at most one field space away from the ball (as connected by the dashed lines), this is an *out*.

If the fielder pawn is more than one field space away from the ball, this is a *hit*.

## **BATTER'S CARD RESULTS**

Grounder

This is resolved in the same way as the pitcher's card result, except that, if the fielder pawn is in the same field space as the ball, this is an *out*, but runners advance.

Line drive

If the fielder pawn is in the same outfield space as the ball, this is an *out*, but runners advance.

If the fielder pawn is not in the same outfield space, it is a *hit*.

Home Run

Advance by one on the score track, plus one for each pawn on base. Remove all pawns from the bases.

Bunt

Ignore the die roll. A bunt is an automatic *out*. Advance all pawns to the next base.

## **4. (OPTIONAL) EXTENDING A PLAY**

The batting player may try to extend the play and advance the runner(s) if the following conditions are met:

- The lead runner is a pawn, not a ghost runner
- The play resulted in a hit, OR a fly ball out, OR a batted-ball out (not a strikeout or bunt) when there was no pawn on first base.

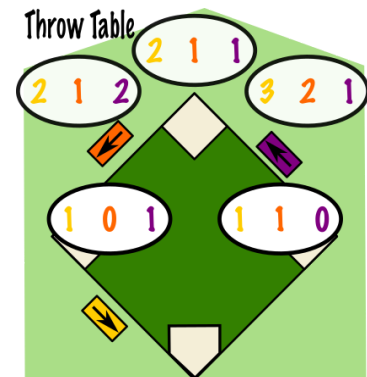
Move the lead pawn onto the “advancing” space between its current base and the base it is trying to reach.

Then, batter: place a card from your hand, face-down. Pitcher: (optionally) play a card face-up.

Subtract from the number on the fielder’s card:

- The number of spaces, following the dashed lines, that would be required for one of his/her pawns to reach the ball,
- 
- The number from the “throw table” that corresponds to the ball’s field space (row) and the location of the runner (column), or on the graphical throw table, the number that is the same color as the runner’s location.

Throw Table	Purple	Orange	Yellow
infield left	1	0	1
infield right	0	1	1
left field	2	1	2
center field	1	1	2
right field	1	2	3



If the result is greater than or equal to the number of runner icons on the batter’s card (which is now revealed), the runner is *out*. Otherwise, the runner, and all other runners, advance to the next base. Either way, this ends the play.

### SETTING UP FOR THE NEXT PLAY

Move the “at bat” track to the other batter. Each player: refill your hand to three cards.

If your draw pile is empty, you must play with the cards in your hand until the other player’s draw pile is also out of cards. At that time, each player, shuffle your discard pile and fill your hand to three cards.

### GHOST RUNNERS

If the pawn that is now at-bat is on base, replace that pawn with a ghost runner pawn. If your other pawn is on base, that pawn may switch places with the ghost runner pawn, but you must discard a card to do this (thus, you will only have two cards for the next play).

### END OF HALF INNING

When the out track reaches 3, the half-inning ends immediately (runners do not score and the play may not be extended). Switch decks. Remove all pawns from the base path.

If this was the bottom half of the inning, advance the inning track by 1.

## **GAME END**

When the inning track reaches the “Game End” space, whoever has the higher score is the winner! If players have the same score, it’s a tie!

## **STRATEGY HINTS**

The “heater” cards in the pitcher’s deck send the ball to the *right* side of the field; the “curve” cards send the ball to the *left* side of the field. As the batter, seeing where the fielder pawn is positioned may give some information about where the ball is going.

As the fielder, remember that the fielder pawn can still catch a pop-up or fly ball from one field over. Use this to try to bluff the batter as to which pitch is coming.

## **OPTIONAL VARIATIONS**

### **EVENTS**

The Events variation adds a rule each inning that change the game’s circumstances

### **GAME EQUIPMENT**

Two of the events, “Mom wants to pitch” and “Let Mikey play”, require an additional pawn, distinct in appearance from the other pawns.

### **SETUP**

Shuffle the event deck. Place near the board.

### **GAME PLAY**

At the start of each inning, reveal the top card from the event deck. The rule on this card applies for the current inning.

### **NEW CONCEPT: BOBBLING**

Some events indicate that in a certain situation, the fielding player must “roll to bobble”. Roll the die. If the result is 1-3, this is an *out*. If it is 4-6, the fielder has bobbled the ball. This is a *hit*.

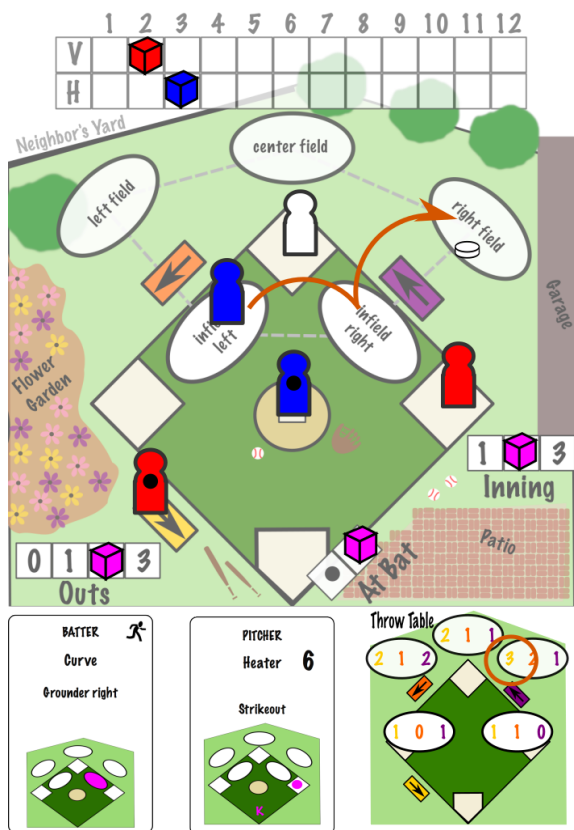
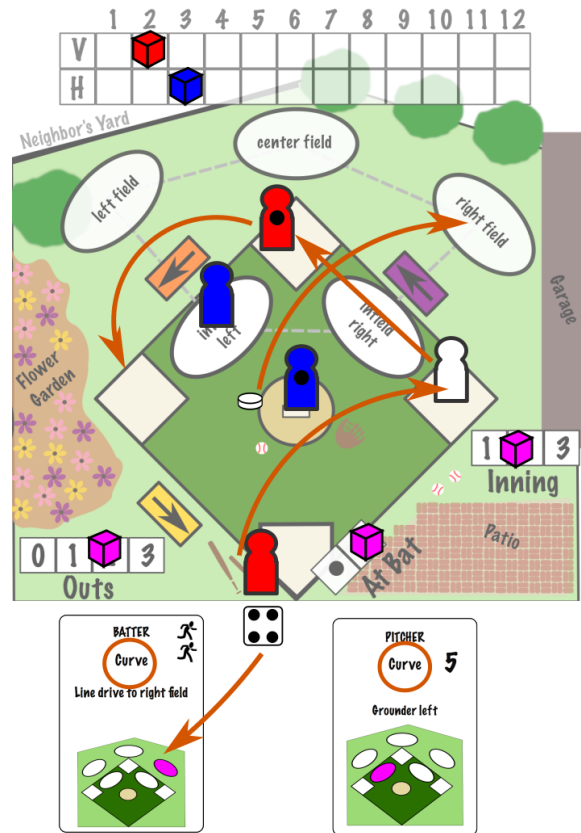
## PLAY EXAMPLE

Riley (Red) is the batter and Bella (Blue) is the fielder. Bella places her fielder in "infield left".

Both players select one card, then reveal.

Bella rolls the die, a 4. Because Riley's card matches Bella's pitch (curve), the die roll is increased by 1, to 5. The result is equal or greater than Bella's pitch card (5), so Riley's card gives the result: a line drive to right field. This is a *hit*.

Bella moves the ball to right field, and Riley advances her two pawns (counter-clockwise) on the base path and adds a pawn to first base.



Next Riley elects to extend the play, sending the lead runner ("dot") home. She plays a card face-down.

Bella plays a "6" card, then must move her fielder two spaces to reach the ball, reducing the 6 to a 4.

She then consults the throw table; throwing from right field to the yellow box subtracts another 3 from her card, leaving her with 1.

Riley reveals her card, which has 1 runner icon. Riley does not have more runner icons than Bella's result of 1, and thus Riley's runner is out!

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Playtesters included:* Jeff Black, Josh Black, Tracy Black, Kevin Warrender

*Dedication:* This game is dedicated to the memory of my father, Robin Warrender, and to my brother Kevin and my cousins Scott and Emily, with whom I shared a lot of games of backyard baseball in our childhood!

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# BASEBALL BASICS

In a game of baseball, in each inning, each team has a chance to bat and try to score points, or *runs*. The teams switch roles after the batting team has made three *outs*.

## THE FIELD

The field is defined by four *bases*, at the corners of the diamond. The bottommost corner is “home base” or *home plate*, and then going around counter-clockwise, *first*, *second*, and *third* base. The batter stands at home plate while trying to hit the ball, and so the field is described from the batter’s perspective (left, right). The area within the diamond defined by the bases is the *infield*, and the area beyond the bases is the *outfield*.

## PLAYS

Players on the batting team take turns batting. The pitcher throws the ball, and the batter attempts to hit it. If the batter fails to hit the ball after three attempts, this is a *strikeout*.

But if the batter hits the ball, if a fielder catches it without the ball touching the ground, this is an out. If the ball was hit on the ground, the batter runs to first base. If a player on the fielding team touches first base, while holding the ball, before the runner gets there, this is an out, otherwise the runner is *safe* and stays on first base.

If the runner reaches first base safely, he/she can try to keep going. At that point, to make an out, the fielding team must tag the runner by a fielding player touching the runner with the ball.

When the runner stops on a base, the next play begins with a new batter.

If there is a runner on first base when the batter hits the ball, this creates a *force play*, the runner *must* run, and the fielding team may record an out by touching *either* first or second base with the ball (and if they touch both, this is a “double play” and counts as two outs). If the runner

is not forced to advance, they may nevertheless attempt to do so, and the fielder must tag the runner with the ball.

If the ball is hit in the air, the runner may attempt to advance to the next base *after* the ball is caught.

When a runner progresses safely from first to second to third and then to home (whether on a single play or on several plays), this is a run, and adds one to that team's score. A *home run* or *homer* is a special play where the batter reaches home on the same play in which he/she batted. Usually this is because the batter hits the ball beyond the fence at the back edge of the outfield.

## **PITCHES**

Depending on how a baseball is thrown, different pitches can be produced. A fastball or *heater* is a pitch where the pitcher throws the ball at maximum velocity. If instead the ball is thrown with a lateral spin, it will move to the left or right during flight, and this is a *curve ball*. And if the ball is held with the knuckles and released precisely, it will not spin at all, which will cause it to wobble around in an unpredictable way during flight; this is a *knuckleball*.

You don't need to know all of this to play Backyard Baseball, but hopefully understanding this explains why some of the rules are the way that they are!