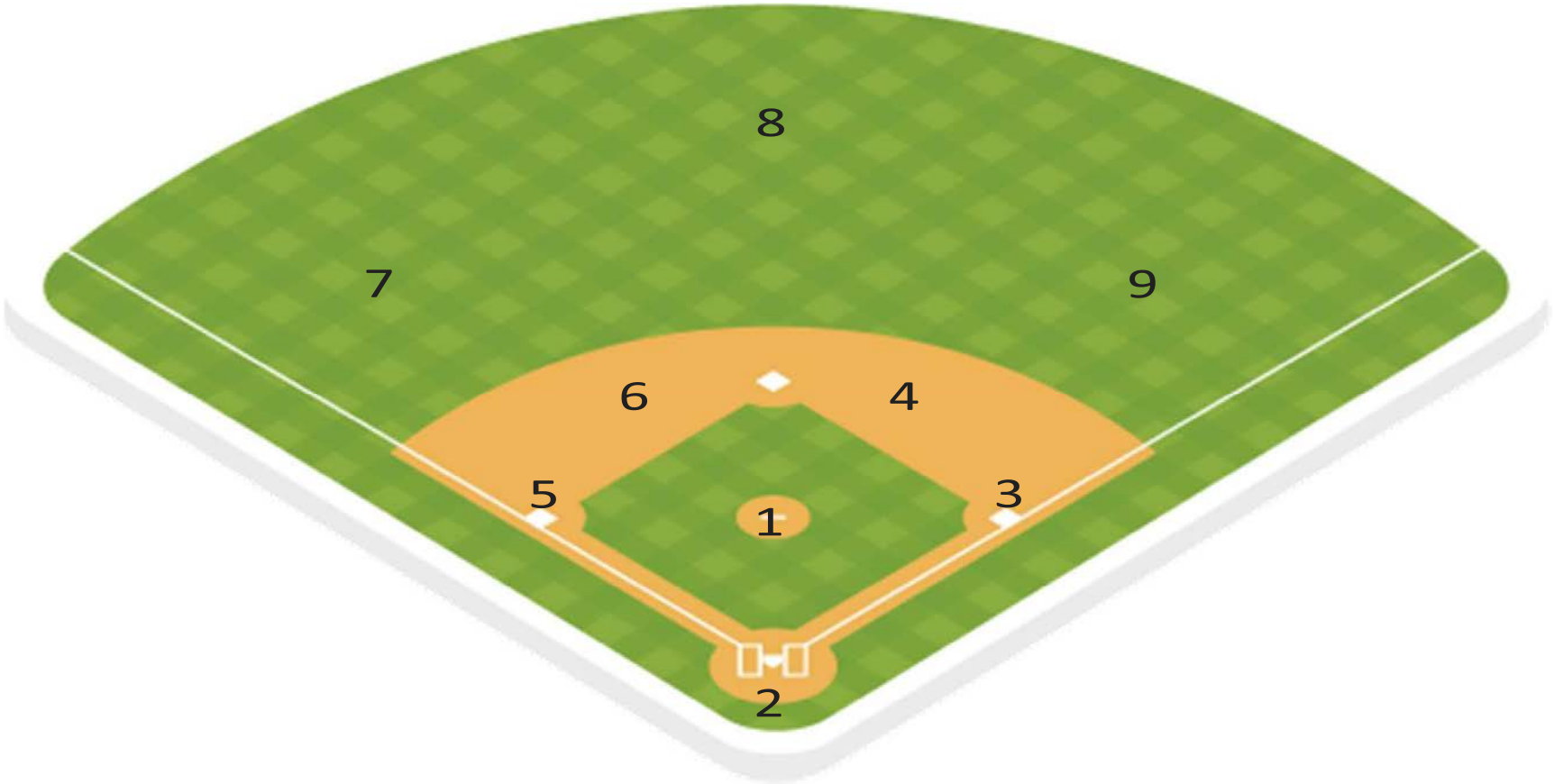
# Baseball Scorekeeping for First Timers

Written for novice scorekeepers



Thanks for keeping score!

This series of pages attempts to make “keeping the book” for a RoadRunner Little League game easy. We’ve tried to be comprehensive while also simplifying the most basic scorekeeping skills and describe them in terms that even our players can understand.

The Scorebook is important. It is the official game record and is used to record every pitch, at bat, and defensive play. The book is used during the game to confirm who is next to bat, how many pitches the pitcher has thrown and where runners were on base before the last play. The book is used after games to calculate player and team statistics.

Here is the good news – Our league doesn’t require that we track everything in Rookies and Minors. This means scorekeeping is much less complicated from the start.

<u>What does being a scorekeeper mean?</u>
Keeping score means that you fill an important role both for your team and the league. Scorebooks provide documentation of all league games, while also confirming pitch counts and player eligibility.

What are the benefits of score keeping?

There are many, but the feeling you will have after learning something new and contributing to your team will be amazing!  You will deepen your understanding of the game and learn something new every week.  You will get support from the coaches and other parents.

Are there any downsides?

Not really.  But to be honest, you will need to really pay attention to the game.  If you're a social butterfly in the stands, then keeping score may not be for you.

# The Scorebook

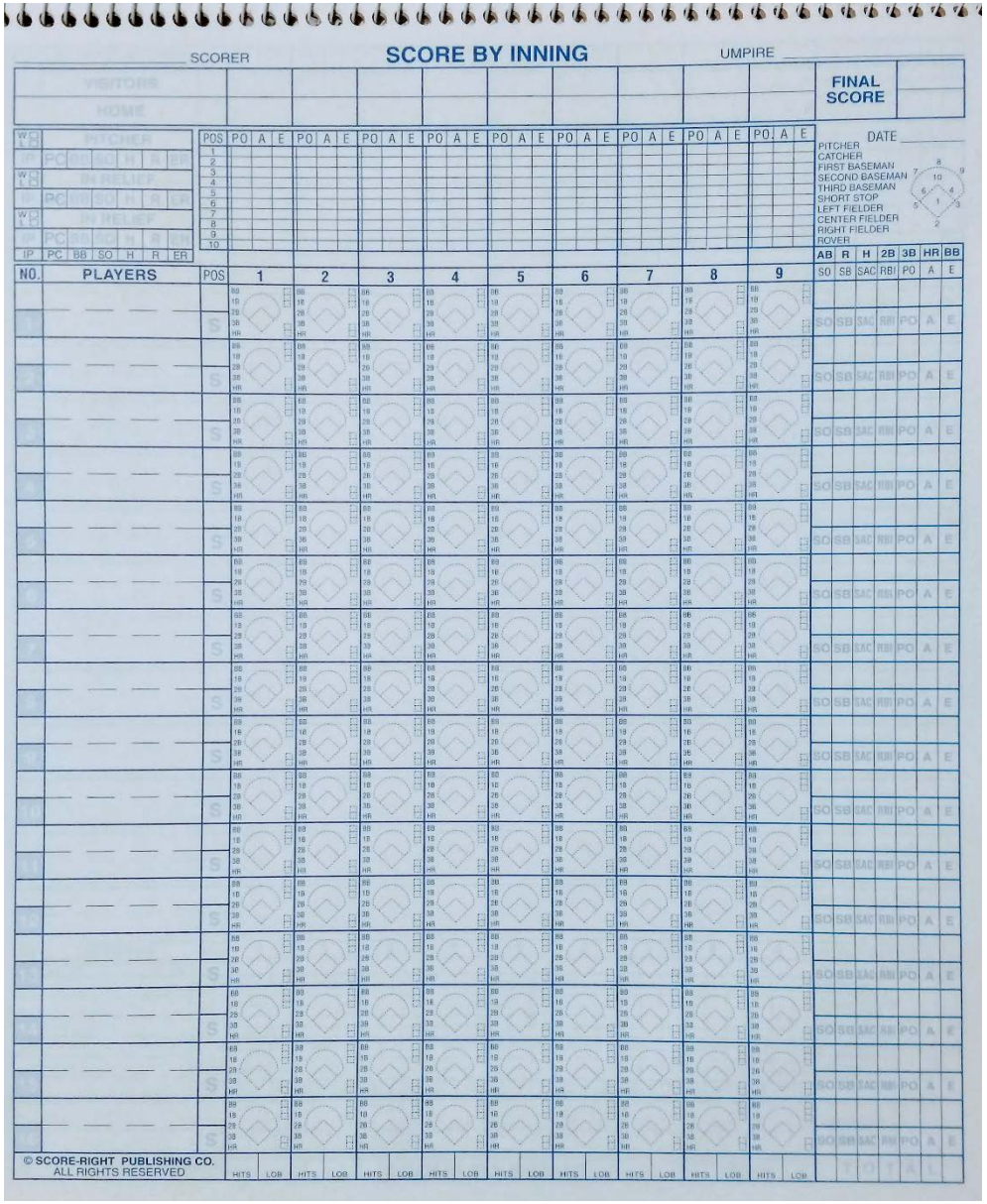
<u>INTRODUCTION:</u>

This is what a page of the scorebook looks like.

There are a lot of abbreviations and spaces to collect every action that occurs on the field during play. It looks like a complicated mess and you're probably saying, "why did I sign up to do this?"

Don't panic. We'll break this down together and you will see that it is actually pretty easy to understand.

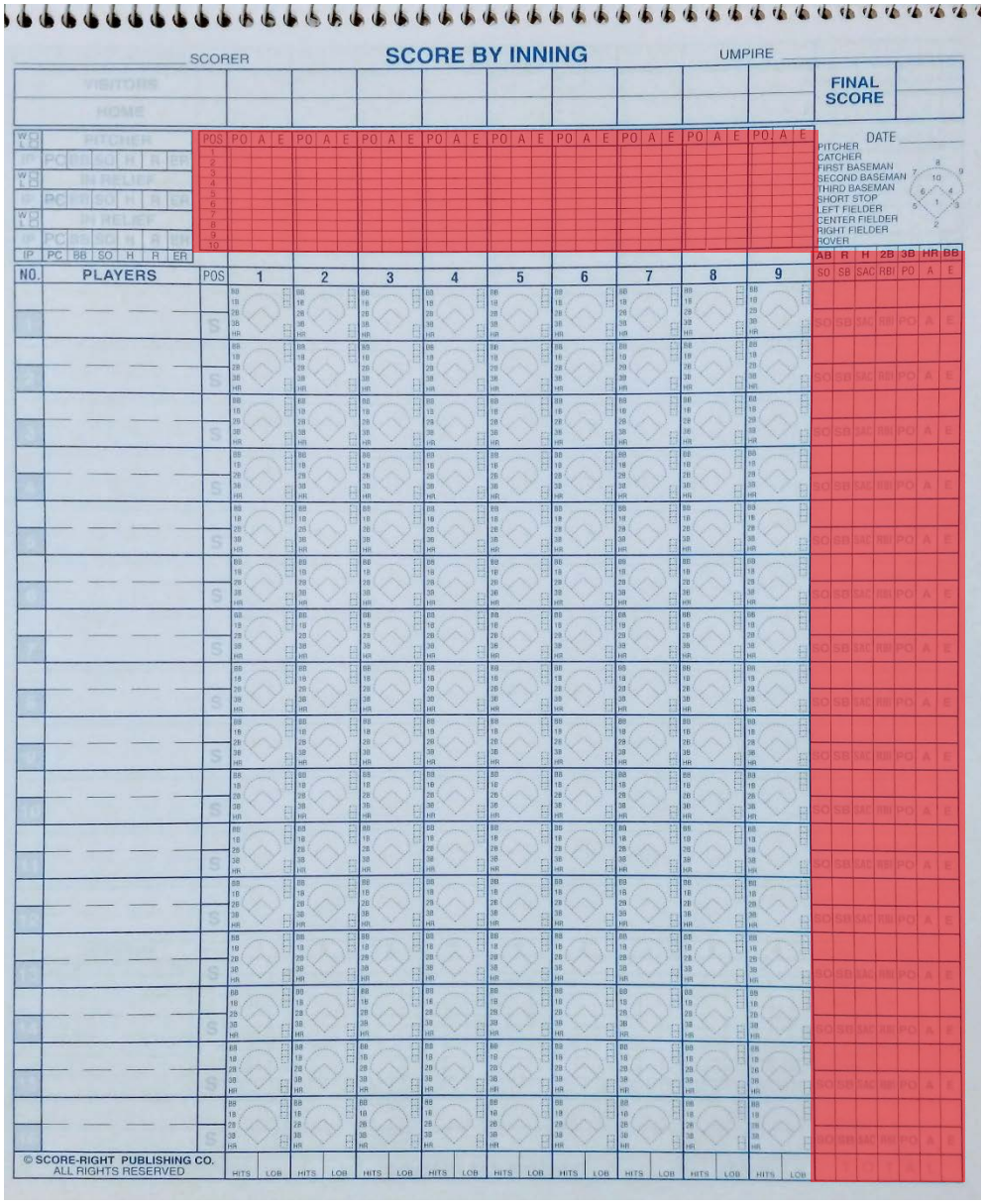
Let's start by understanding how this page is structured.



## Simplify

First, let's identify a whole bunch of stuff we can ignore: all the areas in red.

Why can we ignore some parts? Most of the highlighted parts are pieces of information that can be completed after the game (by someone else).



## Batting Order (Lineup)

Now let's look at the parts we do need to pay attention to and how they're structured.

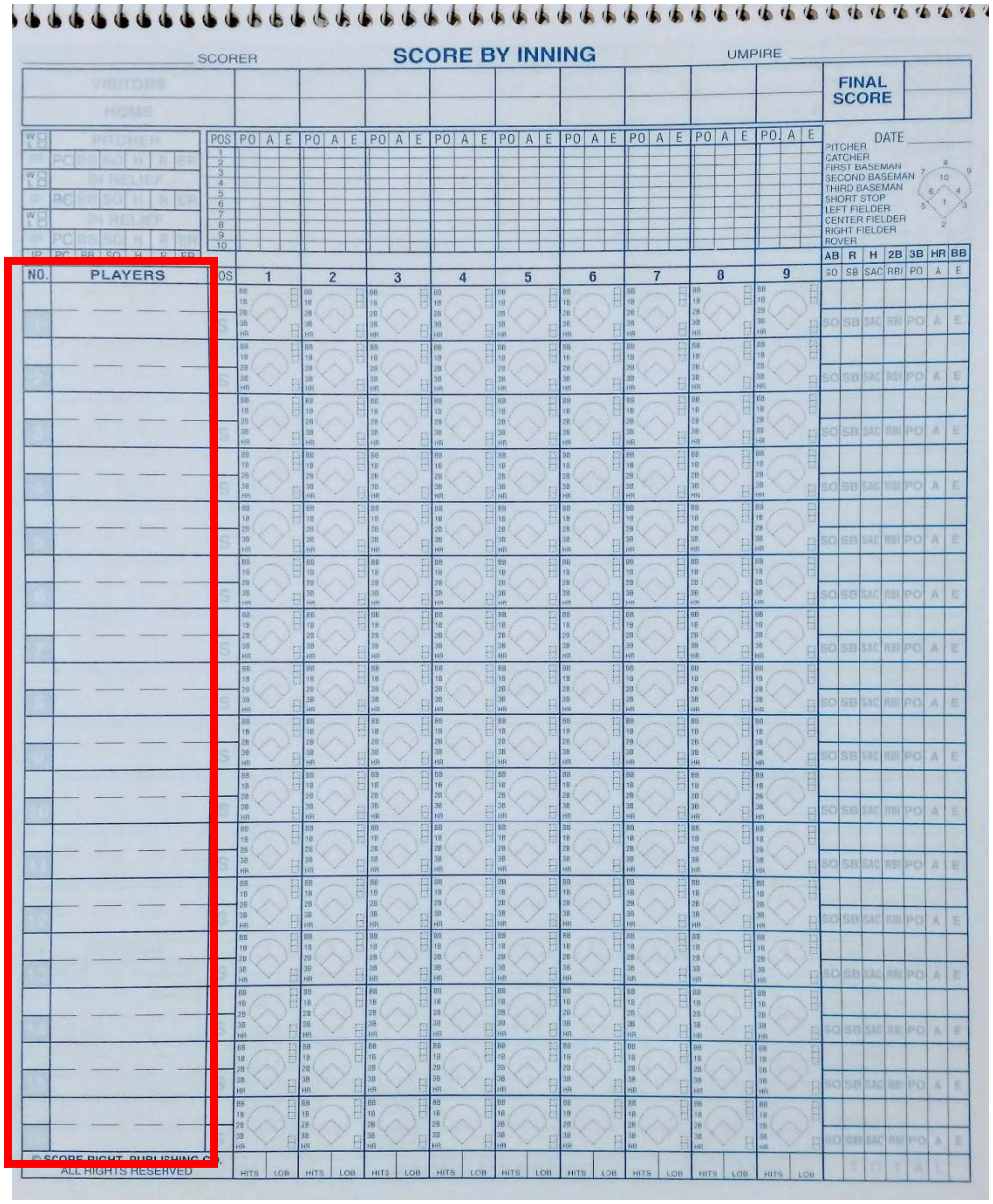
The left-hand column is where the batting order is listed. There is room for 16 players in the batting order, but most RRLL teams will have 13 players or less.

There are two spaces for each position in the batting order. One for the starting player and one for a substitute player.

We can ignore substitutes.

The manager from each team will provide the scorekeeper the batting order.

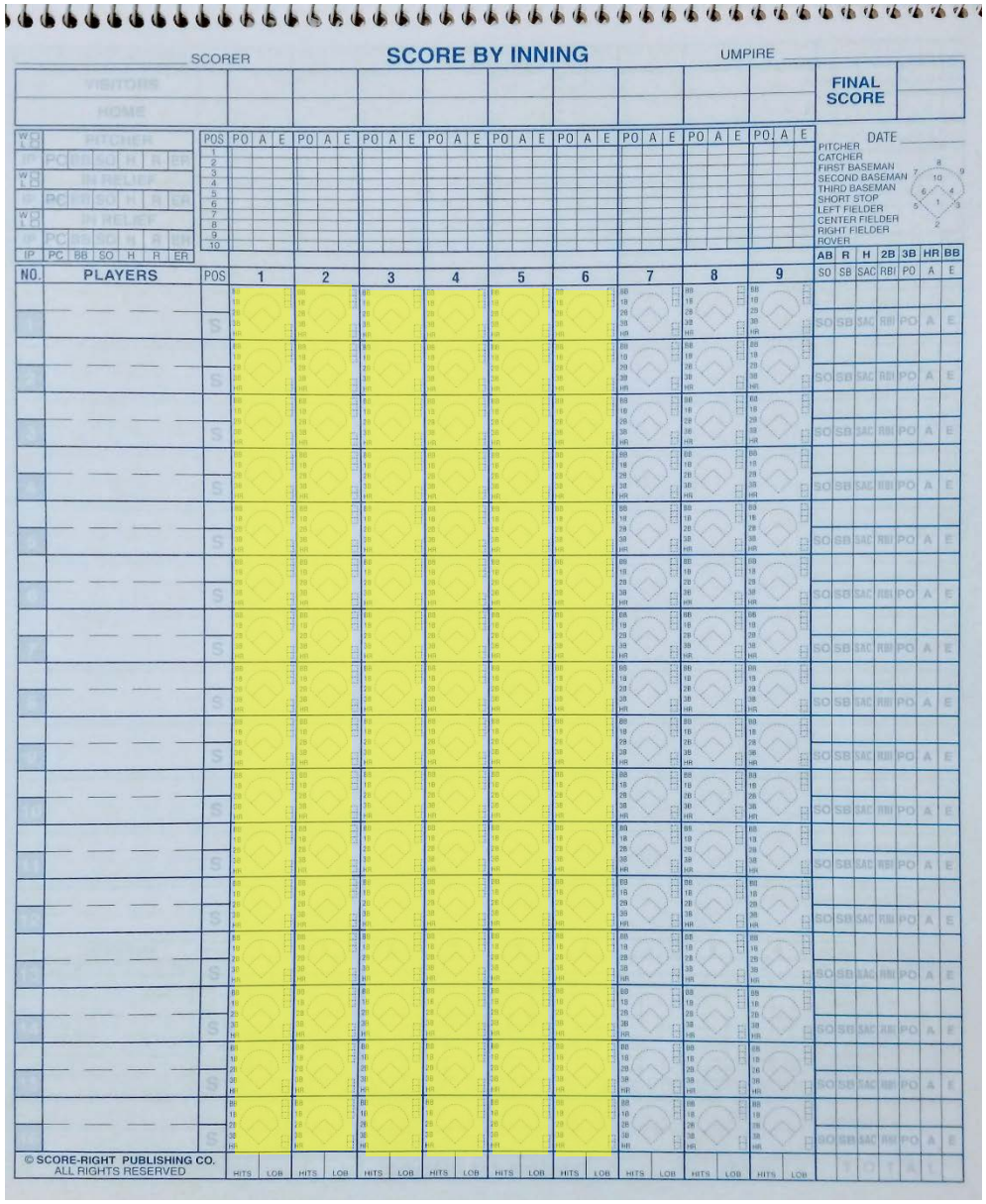
The scorekeeper writes the names of the players, in order, in the spaces provided.



## Inning Columns

There is an individual column for each inning. There are nine innings shown but in Little League we only play 6 innings (7 in the Jr/Sr division).

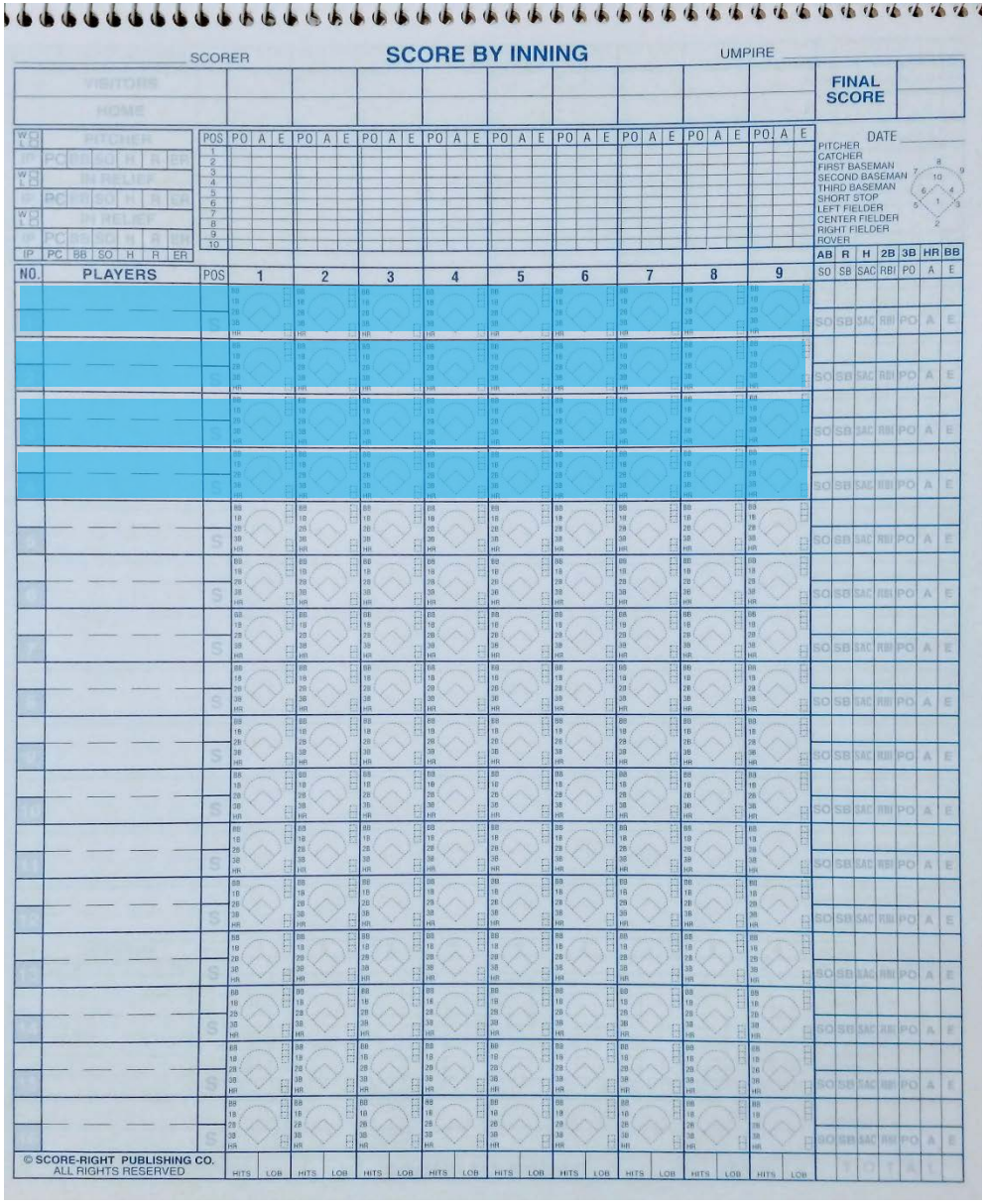
Columns tell the “story of the game.” They tell us who did what and in what order things happened.



## Player Rows

There is an individual row for each player.

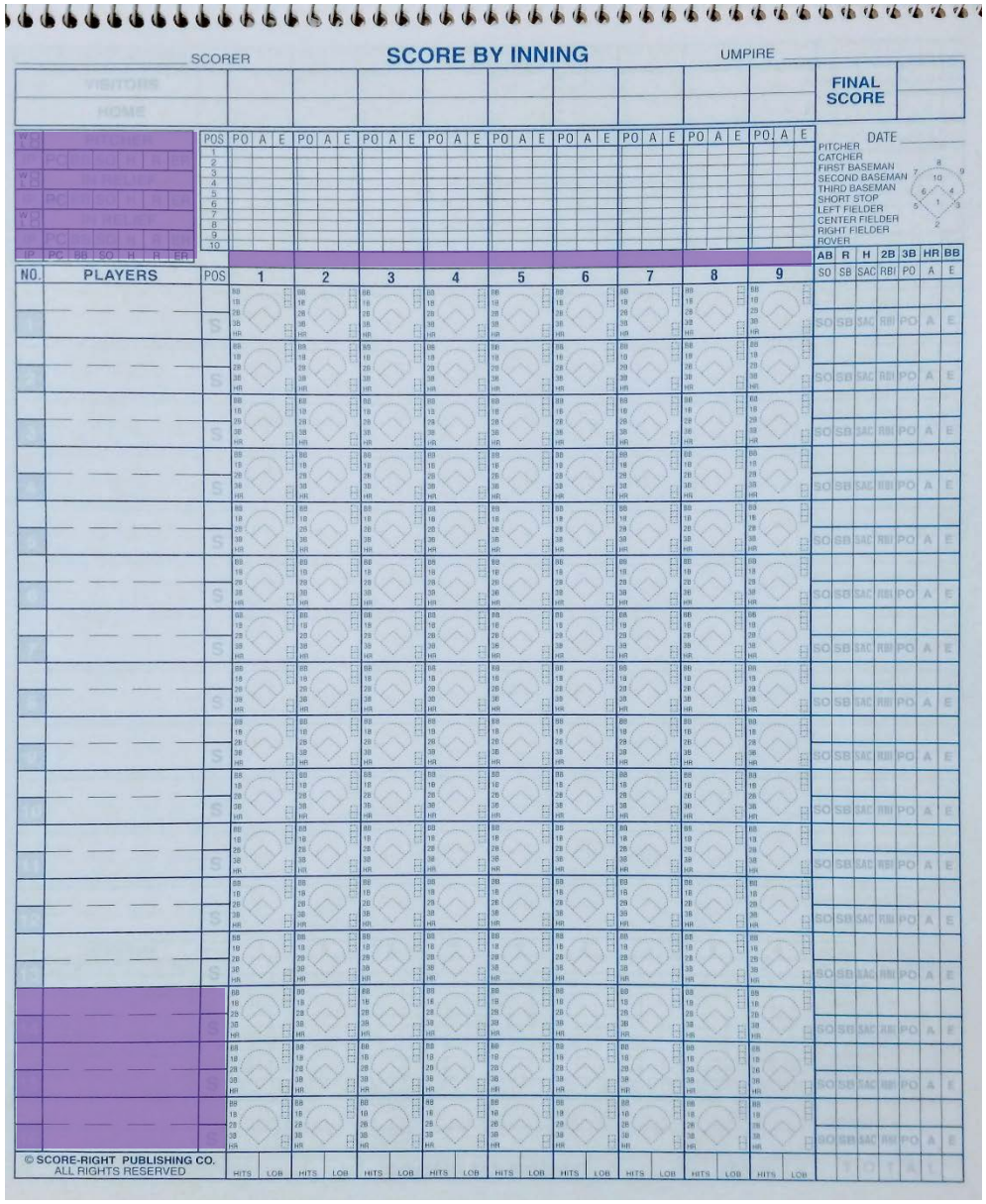
Rows tell the “player’s achievements” during the game. They tell us what a specific player did, how it affected the game, and when they did it.



## Pitchers and Catchers

For Minor Divisions and above, it is necessary to document special information for pitchers and catchers.

For now, we'll show you where this will be documented.  We'll go into more detail about this later.



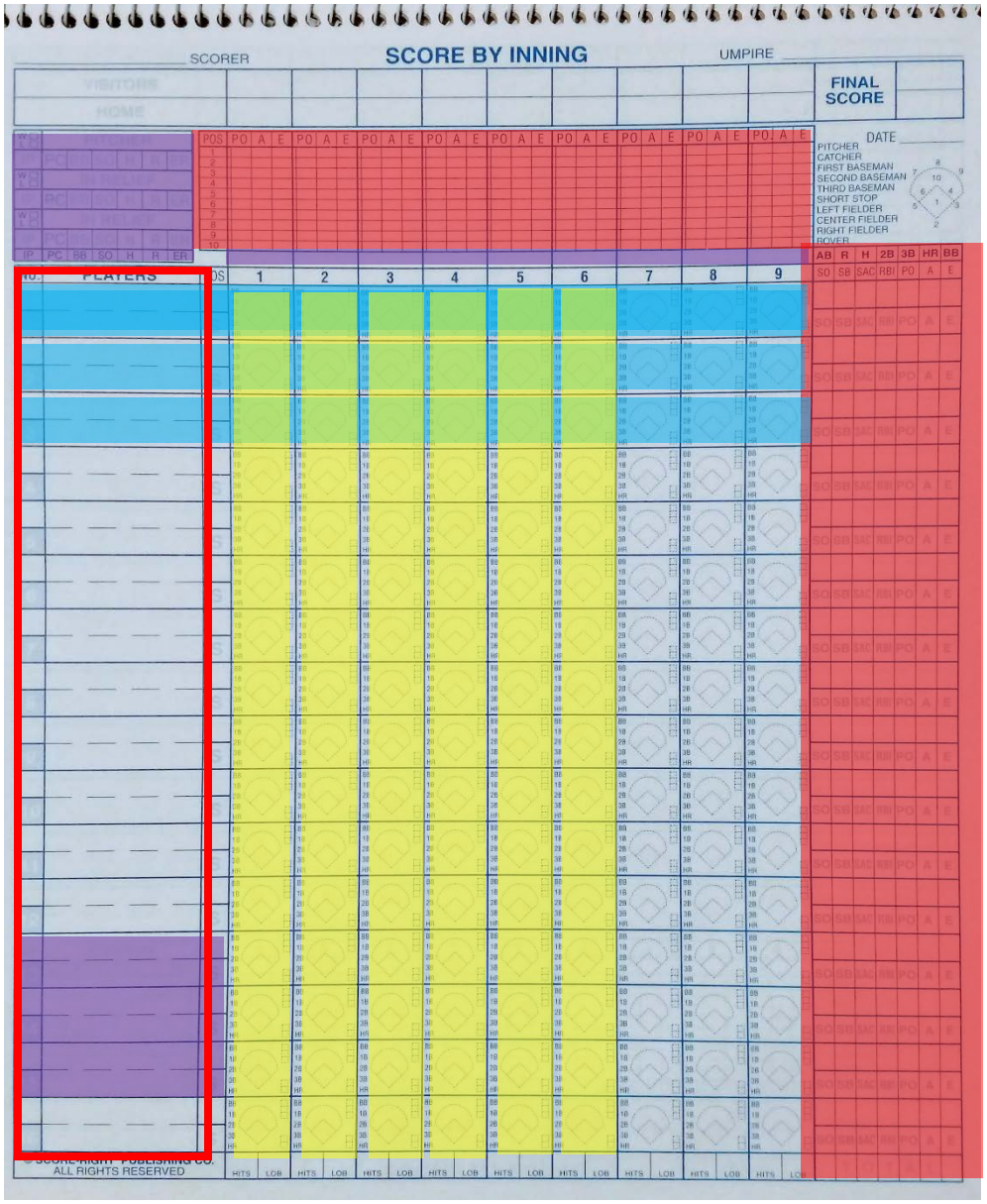
## Recap

So far we've learned:

1) That we can ignore a lot of this page.
2) Where to put player's names in the batting order.
3) What the inning columns are for.
4) What the player rows are for.
5) Where to document pitcher and catcher information

Comment:

Each game will have two pages. One for our team and one for the other team. You will be keeping score for the whole game, not just for one team.



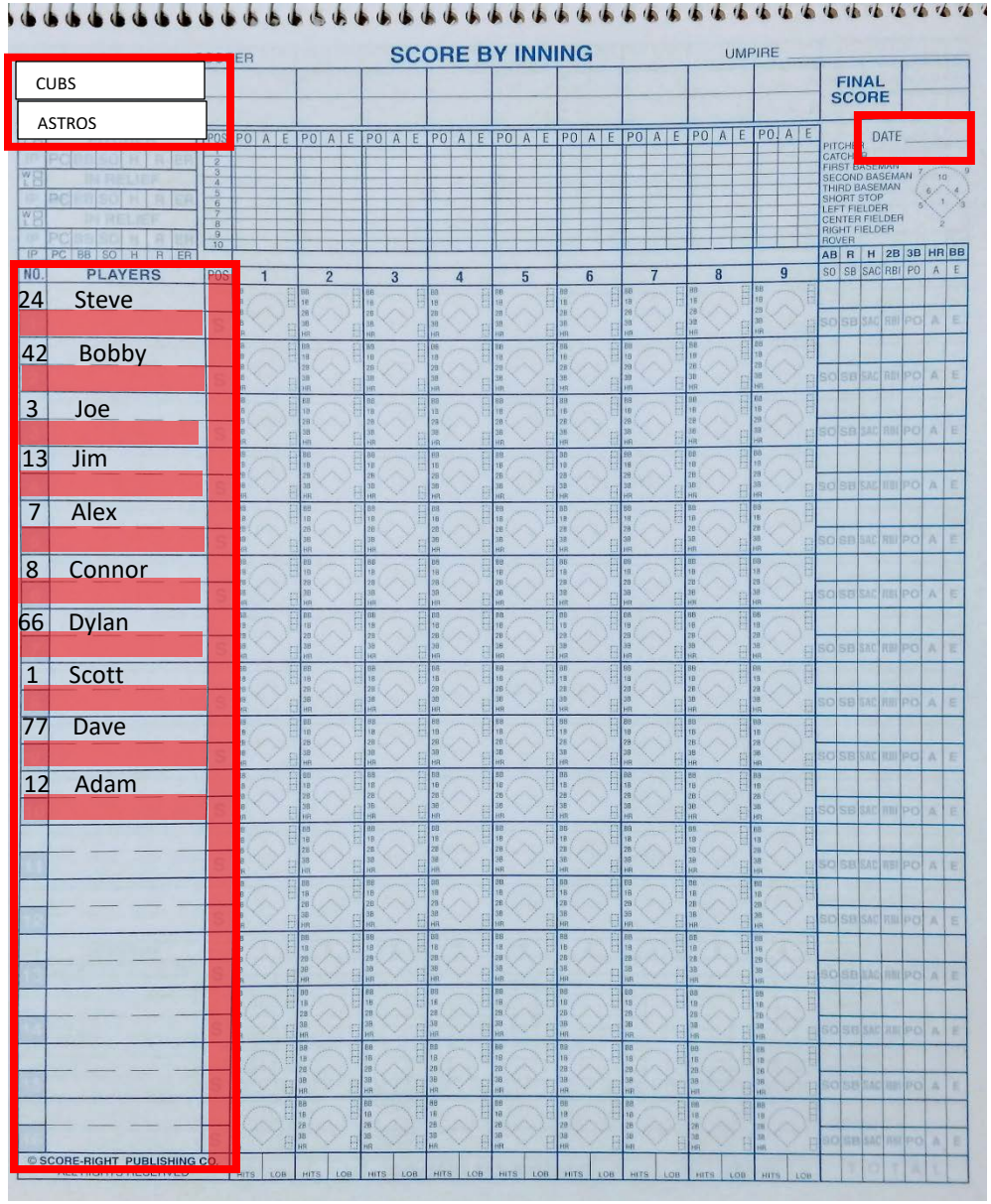
# Game setup

## Batting Order (Lineup)

Start by writing the team name and date at the top of the page. The visiting team will bat first, so their lineup (player number and name) will be written on the page with the spirals at the bottom. The home team bats second, so their lineup will be written on the page with the spirals at the top.

You'll notice there are 2 lines for each player. Remember, we can ignore the substitutes (2nd line). We can also ignore the position for each player (players move so much it's impossible to track during regular season).

After you have entered the batting order for both teams, you are ready for the game to begin.



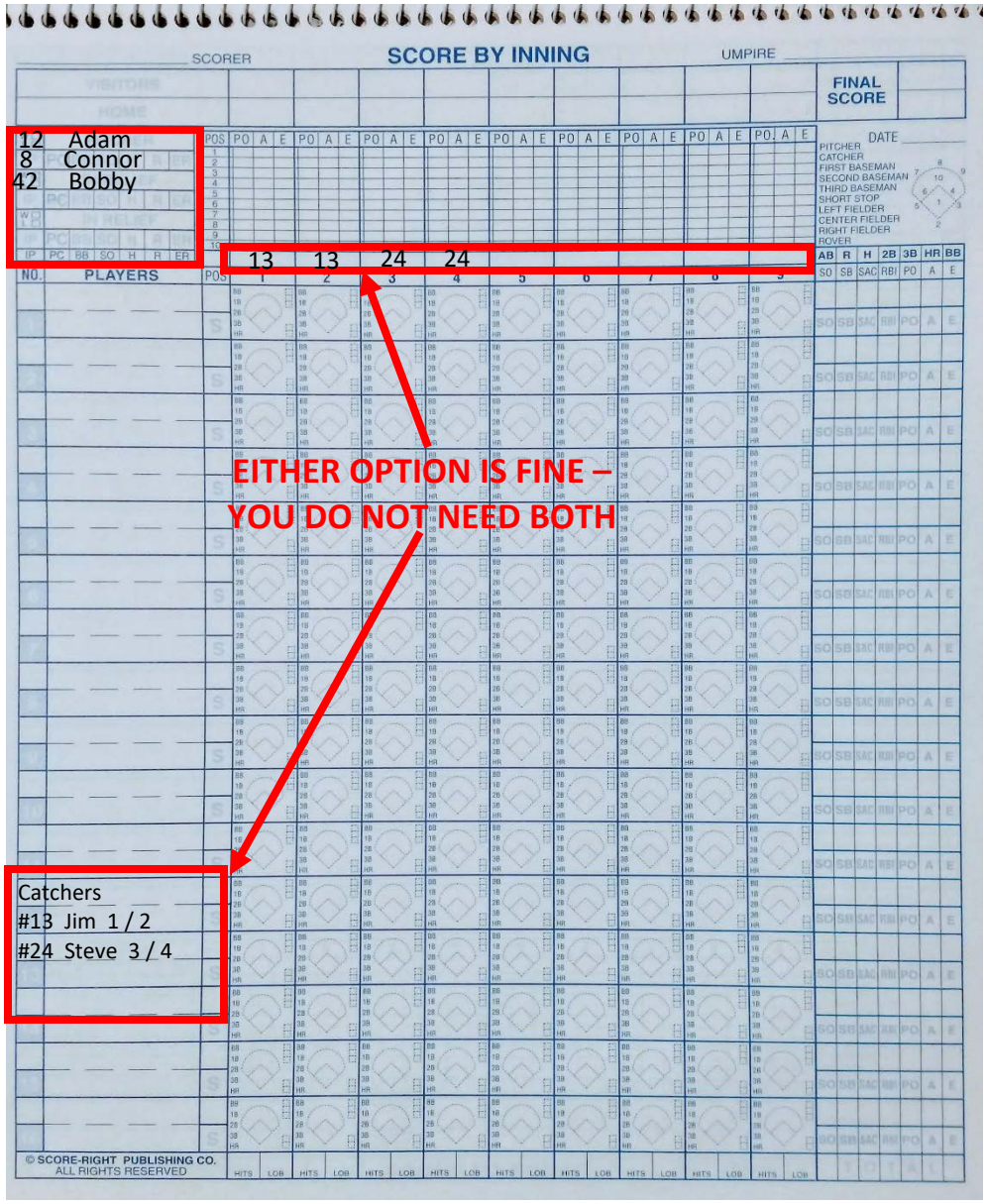
# Pitchers and Catchers

FOR MINORS AND ABOVE: As the teams are preparing for the first inning, you'll need to document who is pitching and who is catching. These are important for pitch counting and player eligibility.

Pitcher's names and numbers will be documented in the top left, above the lineup. You'll notice a second line with a lot of abbreviations under each pitcher. These are not important for beginning scorekeepers, and you can use this line for new pitchers throughout the game

Catchers should be documented by inning, and can be listed either at the bottom of the lineup or just above the inning number. The player's jersey number and what innings they caught is all that's needed.

NOTE: You'll document the pitcher and catcher from the Home Team on the Visitor's sheet, and vice versa. This is done this way so you can see who pitched to which batters.



## The Sequence of the Game

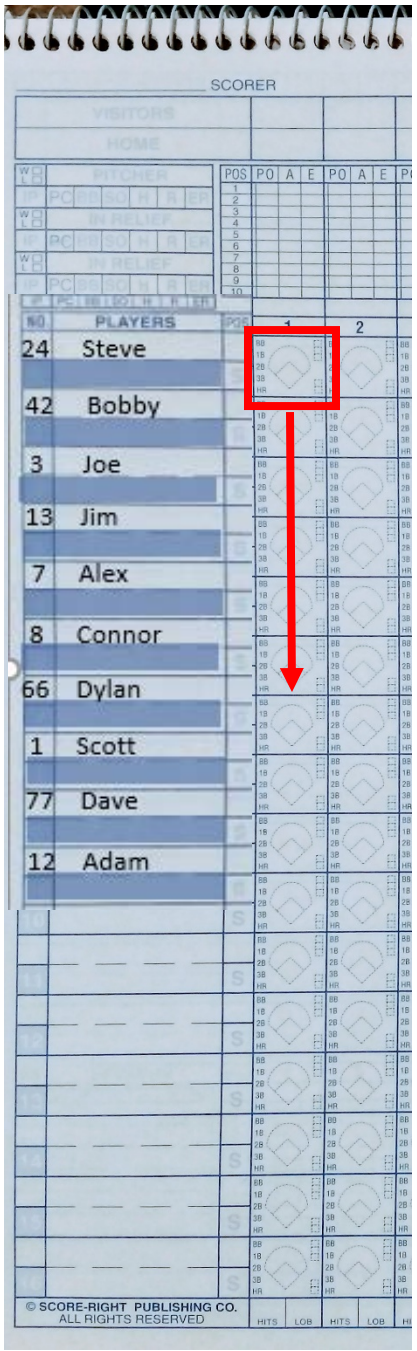
The game sequence flows down the inning column

Every time a new batter begins a new at bat, you use a new box. We'll describe the box later.

Since players bat in order, you just move to the next box in the order. The first batter in the first inning gets the first box (highlighted by a red square). Each subsequent batter gets a new square as you work down the 1st inning column.

Remember, the box captures what the batter did and when he did it. So the box you use is determined by who is batting and what inning it is.

Since players bat in order, you just move to the next box in the order.



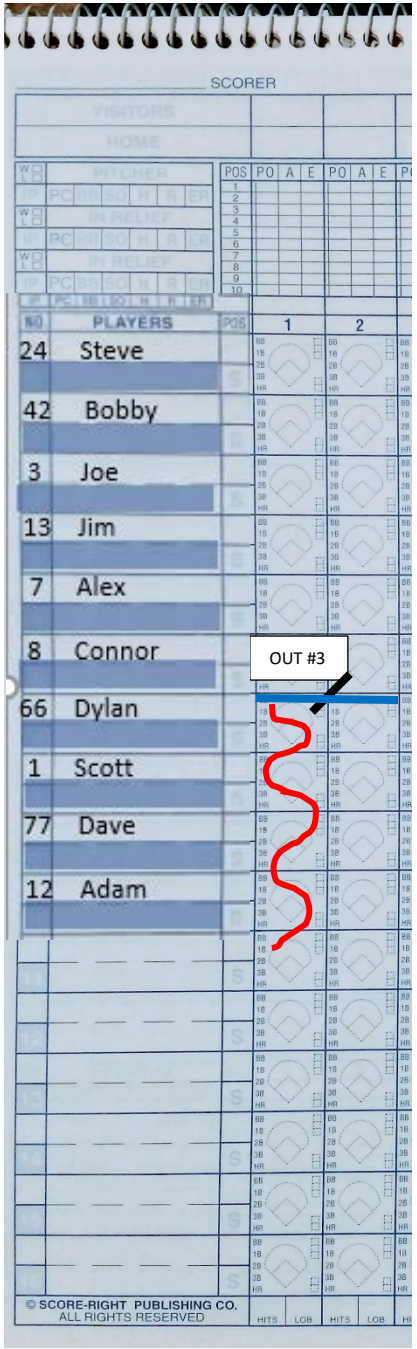
## End of a Half-inning

When a player makes the third out the other team comes to bat.

Let's say that #8, Connor, got the 3rd out. After you finish noting what occurred in his box, you then make a mark to indicate that he made the last out (see example).

Some scorekeepers will add a squiggly line to remind themselves that the remaining players did not bat in the inning. Some will use a diagonal line to help find the lead-off batter for the next inning, while others will use a heavy horizontal line (see examples). As long as your marks help you move to the next inning and are consistent, you're fine.

Remember that you created a page for the other team too. At this point, you turn to the other team's page and continue scoring the other team's at bats according the their lineup.

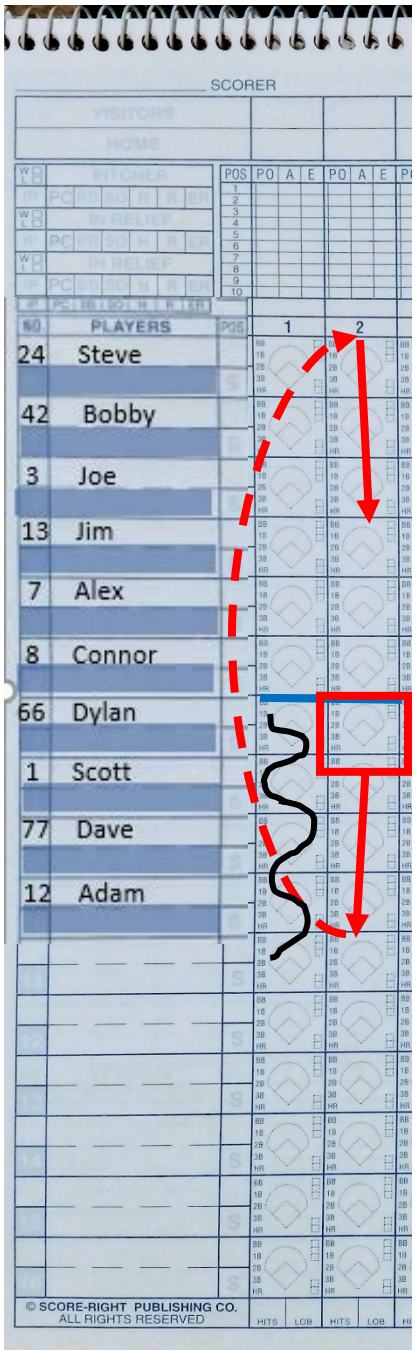


## New Inning

When a player makes the third out the other team comes to bat. Remember that the 6th batter got the 3rd out in the first inning. This means that the 7th batter will bat first (lead off) in the second inning (see the red square).

Just remember to match the lead off batter to the proper inning to determine what box to start in. If you get to the bottom of the line-up, go back up to the top in the same inning and keep going.

At RRLL, all players bat in a continuous lineup. The inning continues until 3 outs are made or 5 runs are scored (with the exception of Majors, where there is no 5-run rule).



## Recap

We've covered lineups and game sequence.

So far we've learned:

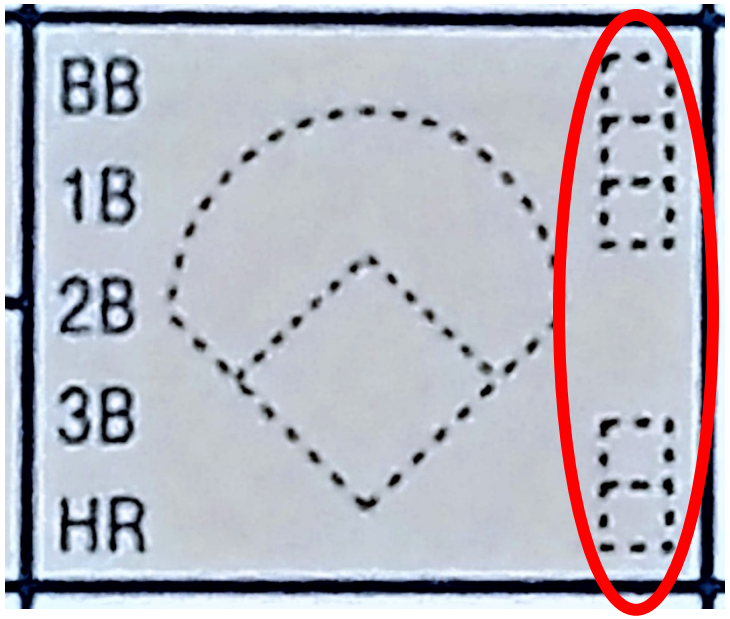
1) The lineup is the same thing as the batting order.
2) Where to begin scoring and how the scoring sequence flows.
3) How a half-inning ends.
4) How to begin a new inning in the right place.

## The Box

The box is where all the game detail is captured.  It's a tiny piece of real estate that requires scorekeepers to make quick and accurate notes about the game.  The notes scorekeepers need to make are both logical and require some baseball shorthand.  Let's start by looking at the box more closely.

## Box Anatomy

There are several things already in the box.  Let's understand what each thing is and what scorekeepers need to do.




**What is it (see red circle)?**

It's a way to keep track of the pitches to the batter. There are three squares for balls and two squares for strikes.

**What do you do?**

Add a mark in each box according to whether a pitch was a ball or strike.

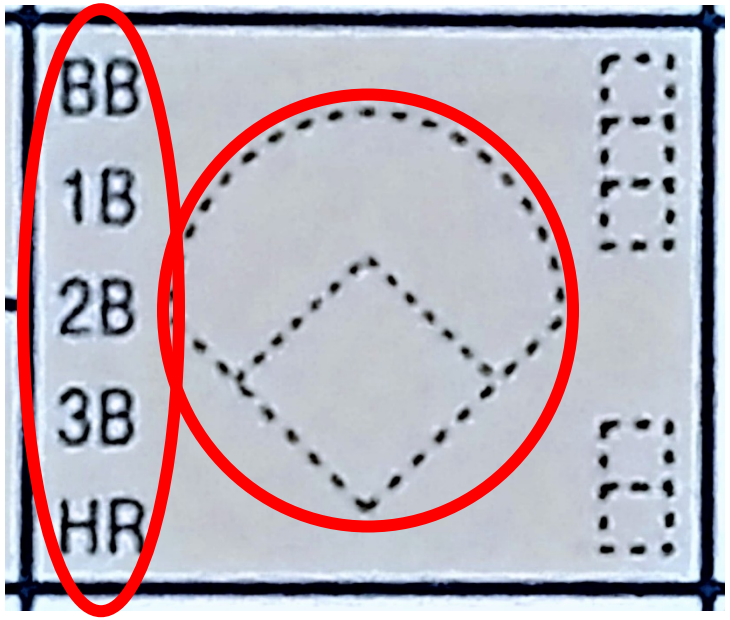
In the Rookie division, you do not need to mark balls since we are a machine pitch league.

**What is it (see red circles)?**

1) Type of hit; walk (BB), single, double , triple, or home run.

2) A baseball diamond with 4 bases and the outfield.

We will review this in a little bit when we discuss how to record a play.

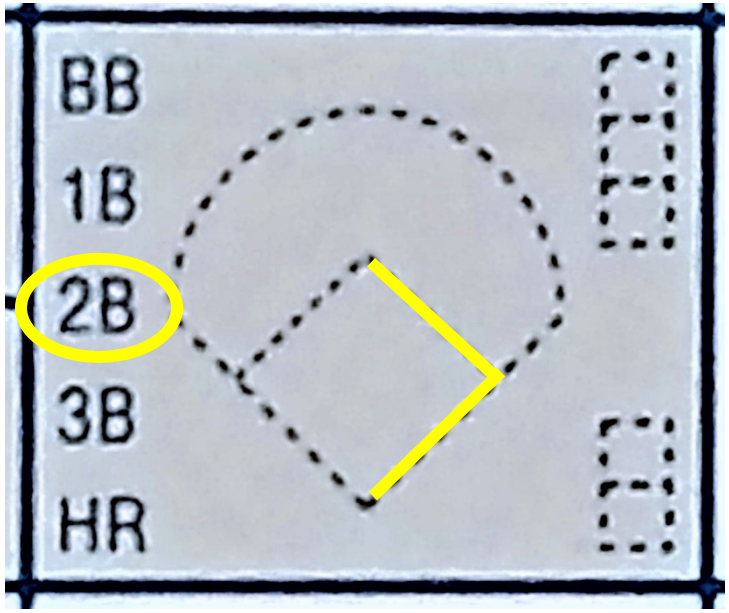



**What do you do?**

Step 1 - Circle the one that corresponds to the type of hit the batter got.

Step 2 – Connect the bases that the batter touched on his hit.

**For example:**
John hit a double.



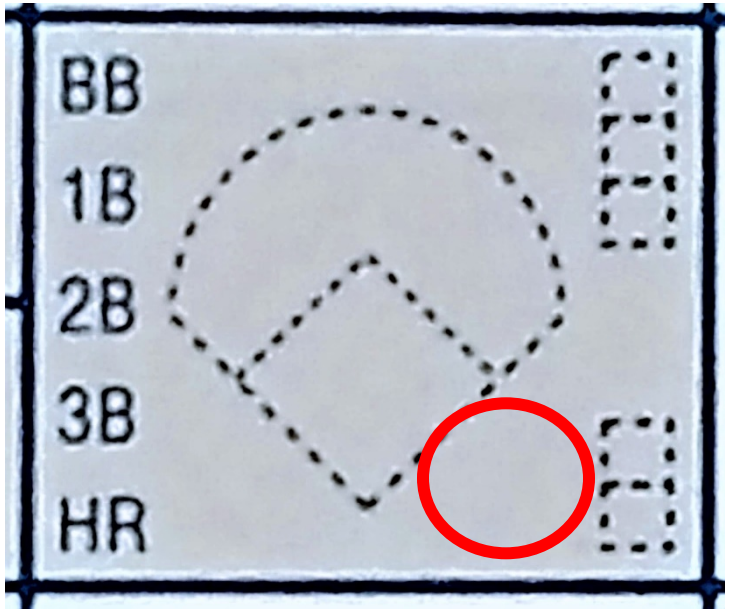

**What do you do?**

Step 1 - Circle the “2B”

Step 2 – Draw a line that connects home-to-1st-to-2nd.

**What is it?**

The books RRLL uses don't have a dedicated spot for an out, but this is documented in the area marked by the red circle.

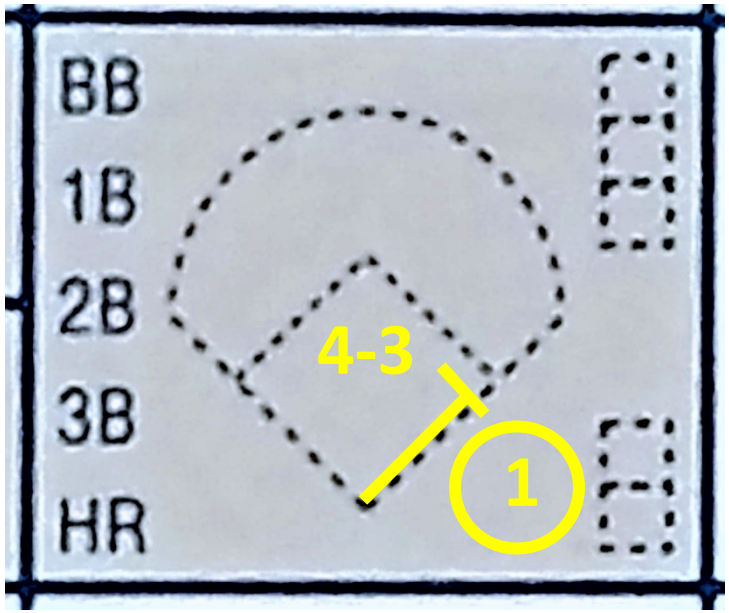



**What do you do?**

1) Write in a number 1, 2, or 3 corresponding to the out made; first, second, or third out, and circle it.
2) Record the play that resulted in an out.

**For example**

Marcus is at bat with no outs. Marcus hits a ground ball to the second baseman. The second baseman caught the ball and threw to the first baseman to force Marcus out at first base. 1 out.




**What do you do?**

Step 1 – Write a number 1 in the lower right hand corner of the box and circle it.

Step 2 – Draw a line from home plate part way to 1st base, with a line crossing it. This shows the base the player did not reach.

Step 3 – Record the play ("4 – 3").

We'll describe this in a little bit.

## Recap

We've covered the anatomy of the box.

So far we've learned:

1) We can ignore balls in the Rookie division.
2) How to record a hit.
3) How to keep track of outs.

We have not covered:

1) How to record a play.

So far, we have covered the basics about the score sheet and how it works, the lineup and game sequence and the basic anatomy of the box.

Let's move to our last topic about how to record a play.

## Record a Play

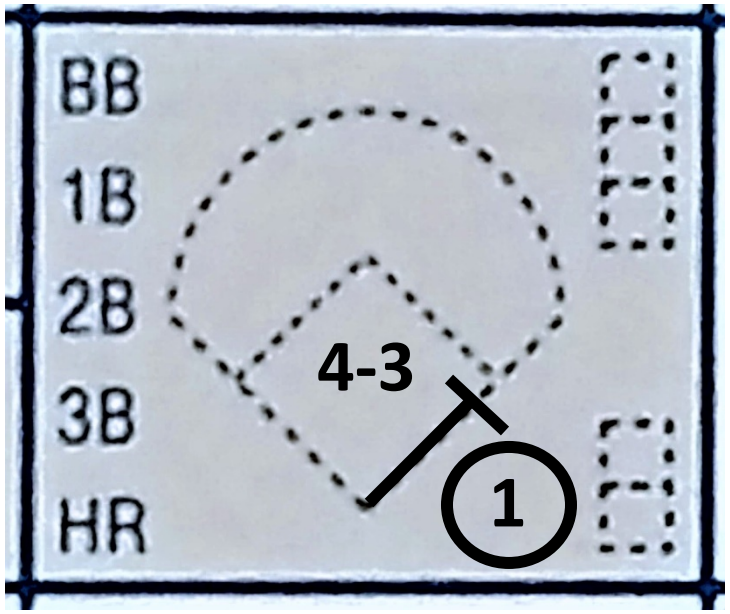
If there is a tricky part to score keeping, it's how to record a play.

If you recall, the last example described a play where Marcus was at bat with no outs and hit a ground ball to the second baseman. The second baseman caught the ball and threw to the first baseman to force Marcus out at first base.

You'll see the notation of the play in the box as "4 – 3" with out number 1 recorded.

How in the world did we come up with that?

Let's find out. It's actually not that difficult.



## How Parents See the Field

As parents we tend to see the field according to the names of the players.

Imagine Marcus' hit one more time. He hit the ball to Chris. Chris caught it and threw it to Jackson who touched first base and forced Marcus out.

In shorthand, we could write "Chris-to-Jackson, for 1 out."

How could we possibly write all that inside the teeny tiny box?

We can't. There just isn't enough space.

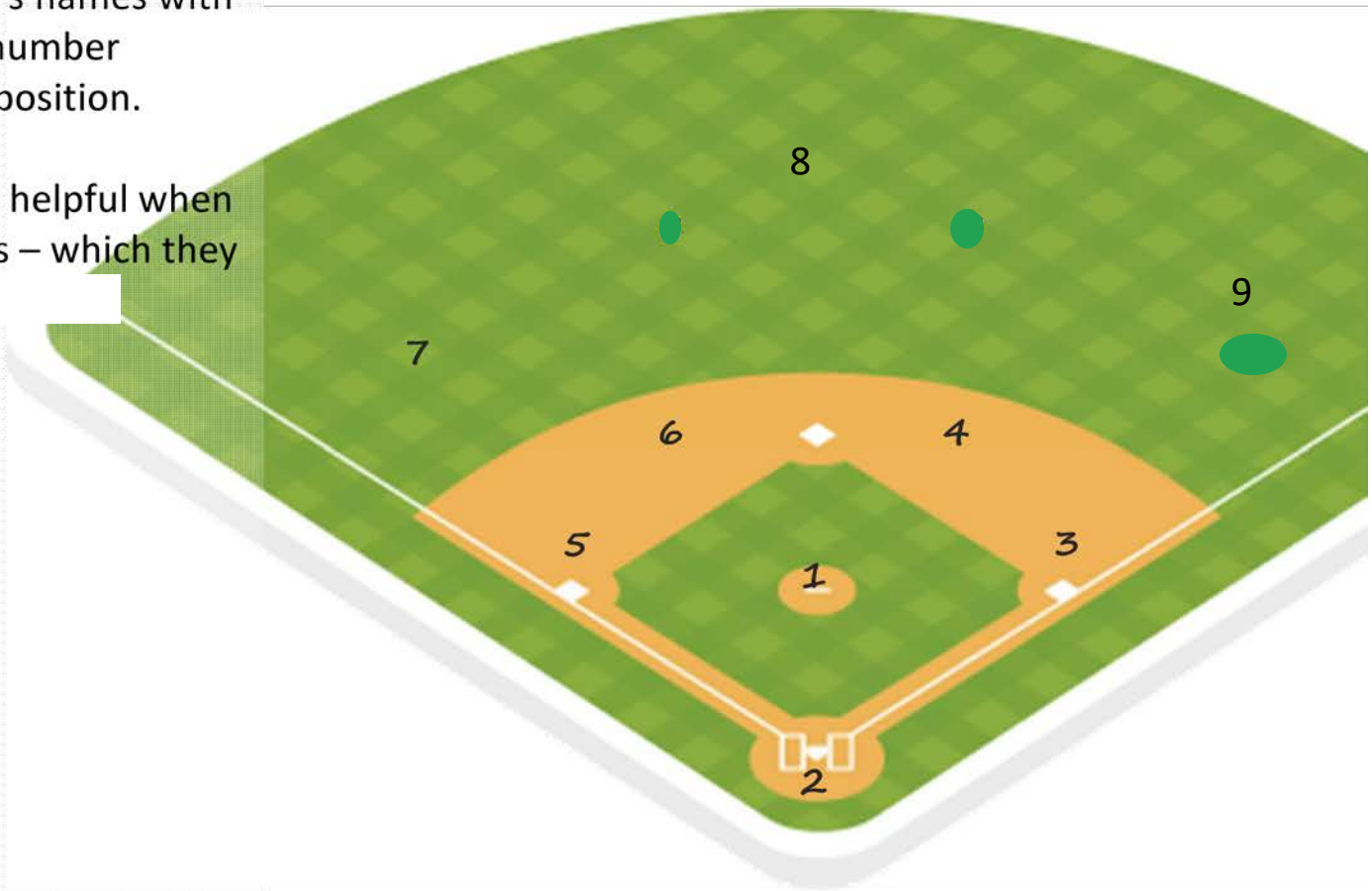
Let's look at how scorekeepers do it.

## How Scorekeepers See the Field

Scorekeepers simplify the view of the field by replacing player's names with a unique number. The number represents the player's position.

This convention is really helpful when players change positions – which they do almost every inning

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

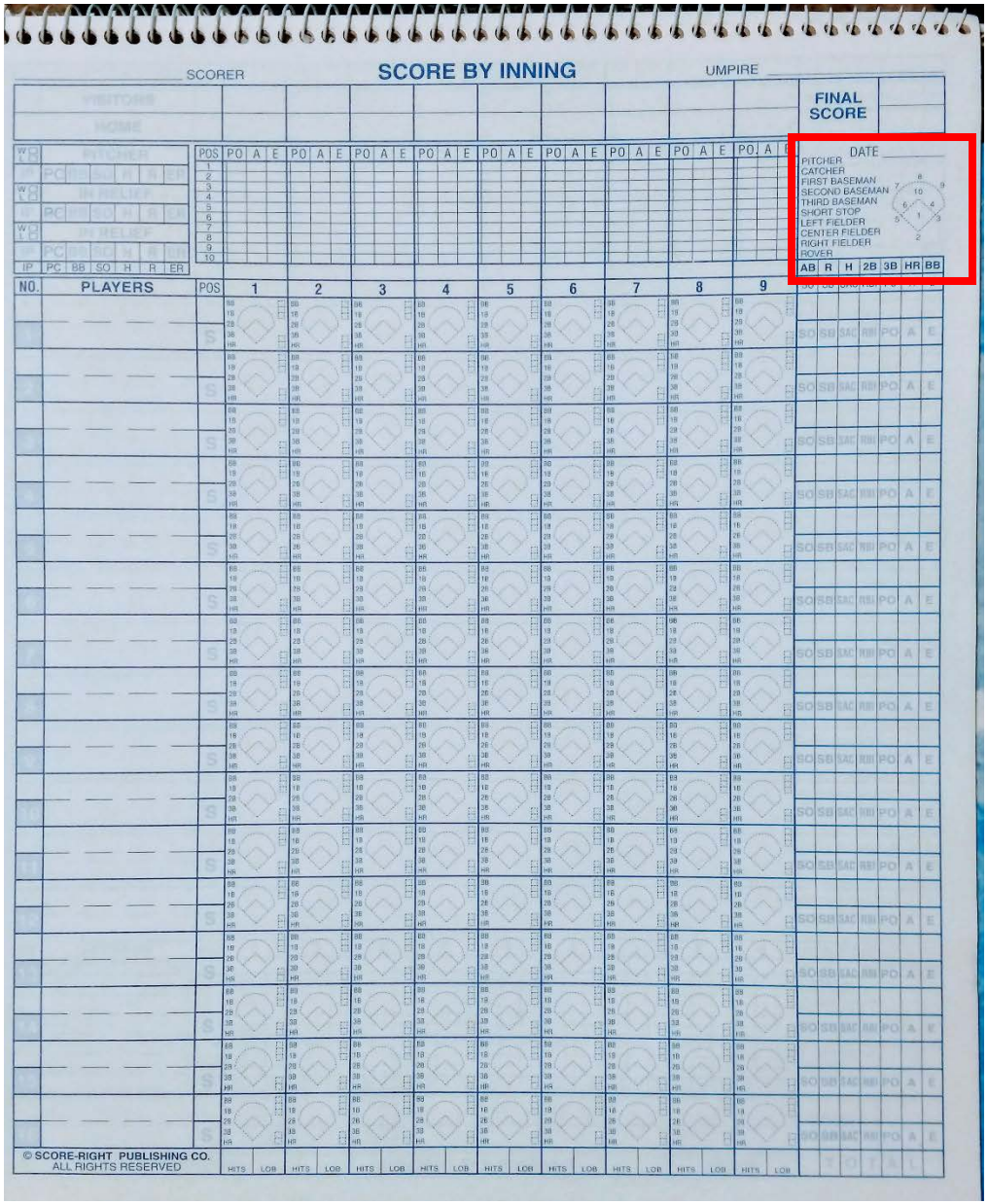



These numeric representations are always the same and do not change.

## No Need to Memorize

Each page in the scorebook has a helpful reminder of the numbers assigned to each position.

NOTE: Softball has 10 players on the field, which is why you see 10 fielding positions on the reminder. You will not use this 10th position.



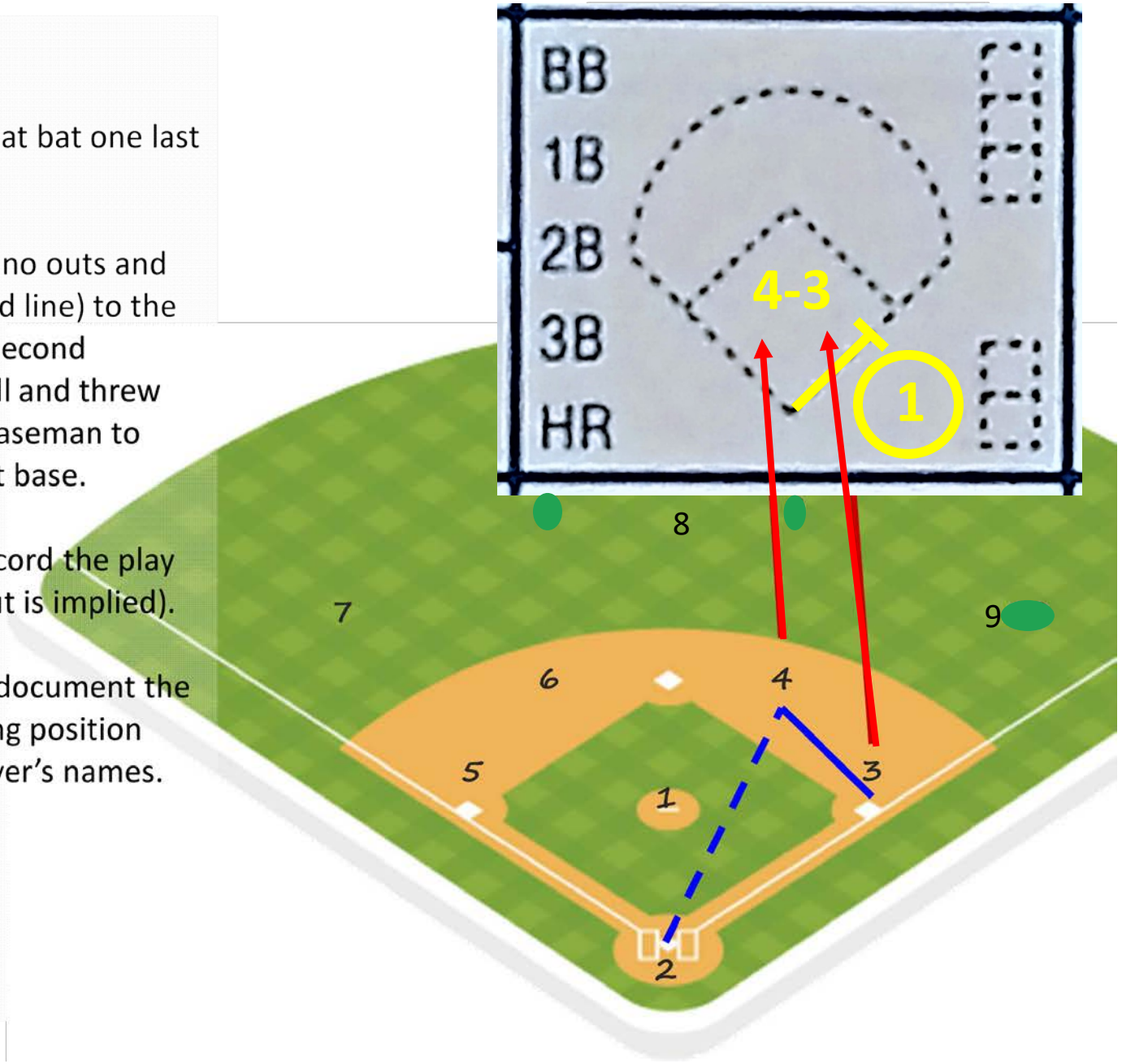
## Summary

To summarize Marcus's at bat one last time.

Marcus was at bat with no outs and hit a ground ball (dashed line) to the second baseman. The second baseman caught the ball and threw (solid line) to the first baseman to force Marcus out at first base.

The scorekeeper will record the play as a 4 – 3 putout (putout is implied).

Basically, scorekeepers document the play as it happened using position numbers instead of player's names.



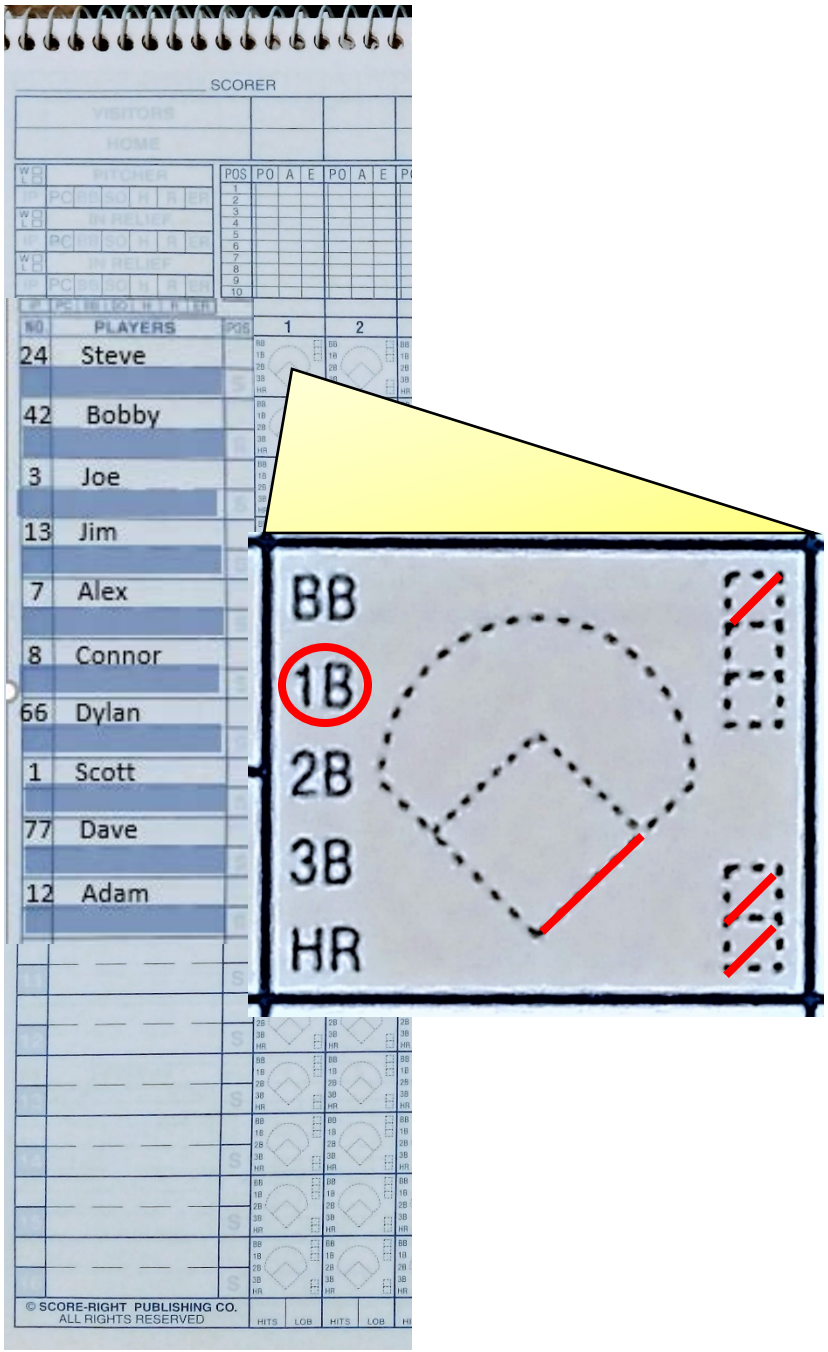
## Recording Sequential Plays

Let's walk through a half-inning to illustrate how scorekeeping works during a game.

Steve (#24) bats first. He takes a ball, two strikes, then hits a single.

Record the ball and strikes with a line through the box.

Then record his single, and draw the line showing he is on first base.

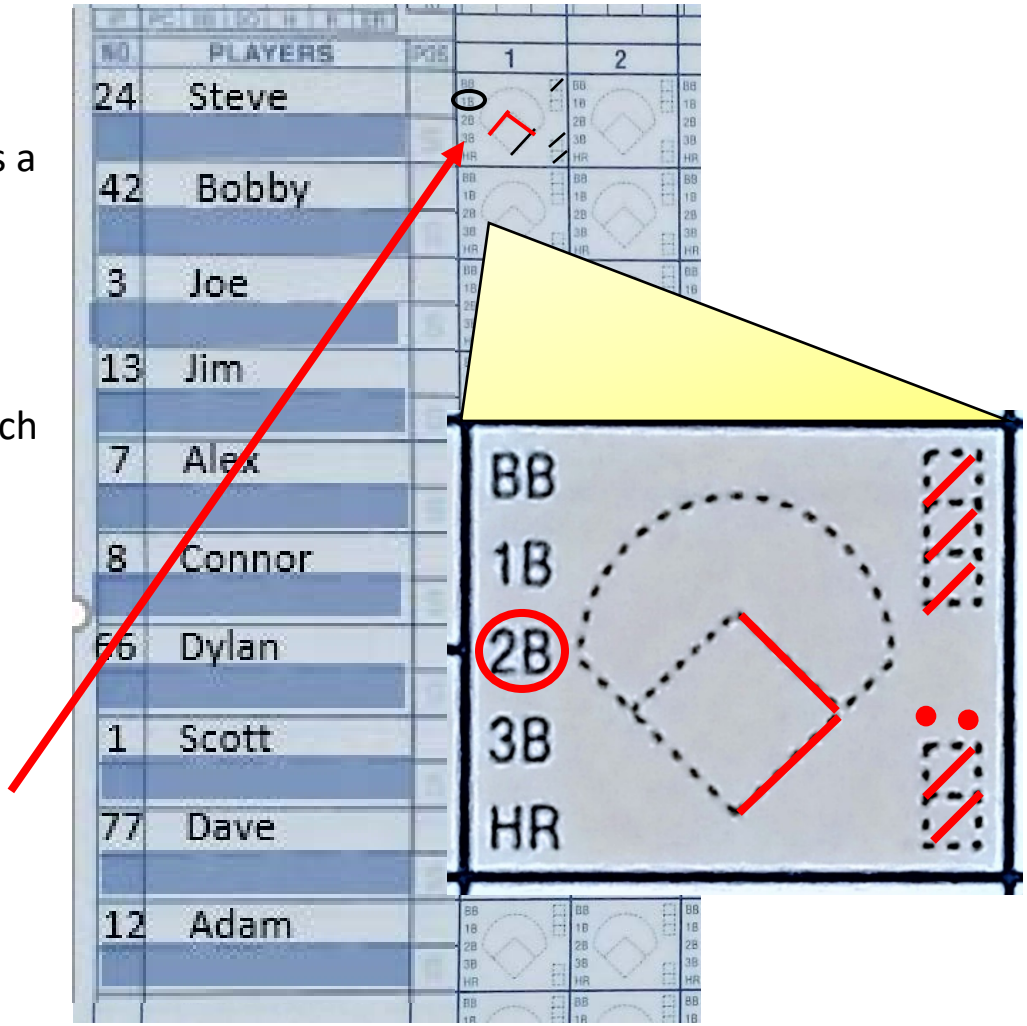


Bobby (#42) is up next. He's got a great at-bat, with three balls, two strikes, two foul-offs, and finally hits a double.

Record the balls, strikes, and foul-offs. You'll notice there isn't room for the additional foul balls, but we still need to document them to keep an accurate pitch count. Mark these with dots, above the strikes.

Then record his double, and draw the line showing Bobby is at second base.

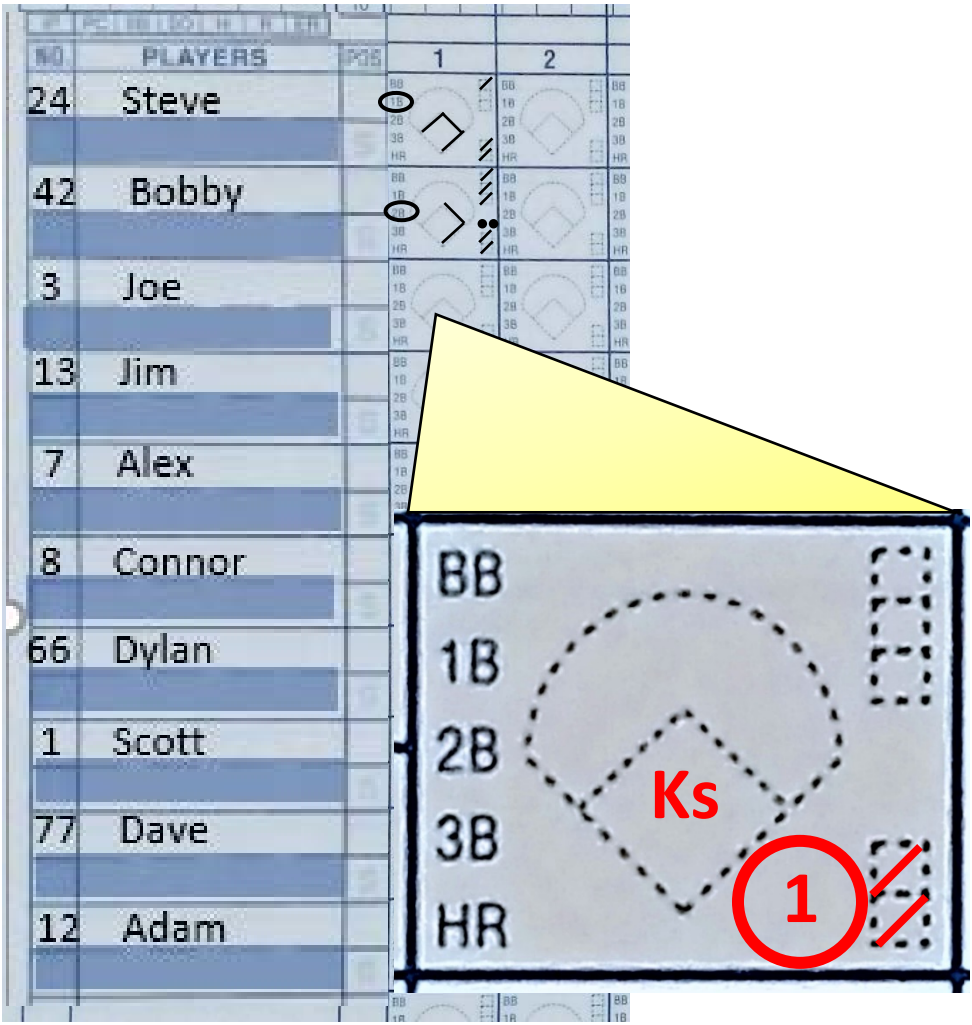
Bobby's hit advanced Steve along the bases as well, and you document that by drawing a line in Steve's box showing Steve on third base (see red lines in Steve's box).



Next up is Joe (#3). He strikes out swinging in 3 pitches.

Document the strikes, then the strike out as a “Ks.”
Had Joe NOT swung, it would have just been a “K.”

Note: you can also document a strike out swinging with a backwards “K.”



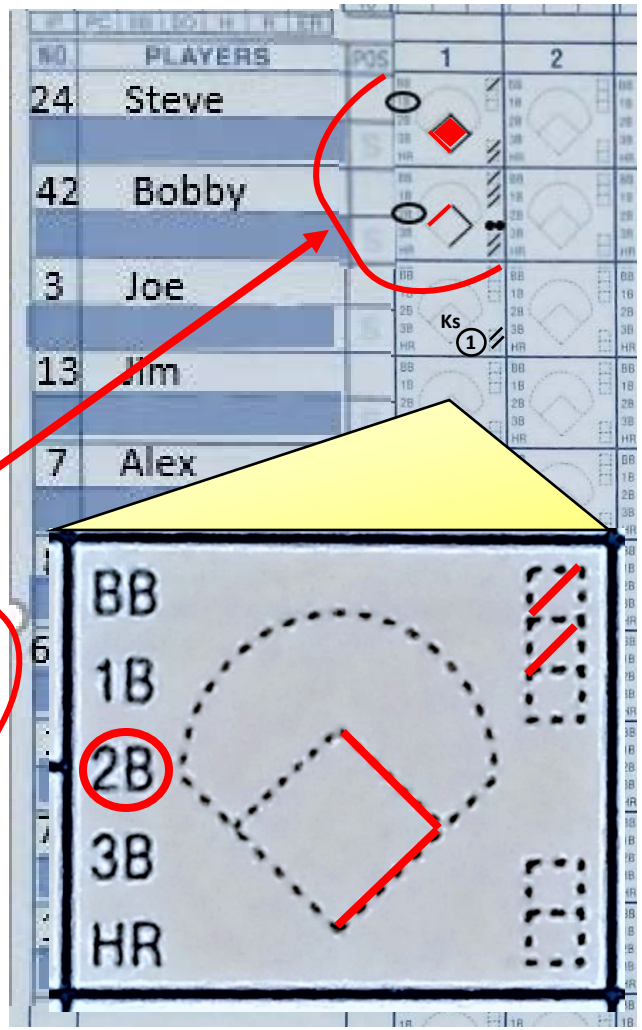
Jim (#13) is up next.  He takes 2 balls and hits a double.

Steve scores off the hit, and Bobby moves to 3rd base.

Document Jim's balls and the double, including drawing the line showing Jim is at 2nd base.

Then, moving up the column, advance Bobby to 3rd.

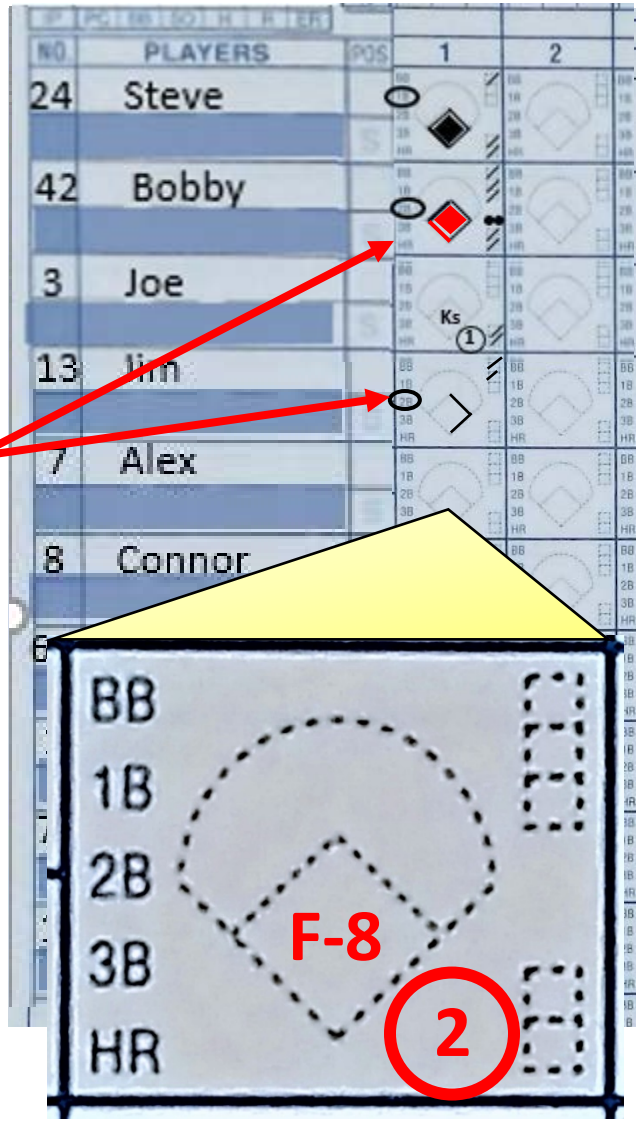
Moving up the column again, advance Steve to home and color in the diamond.  This makes it easy to tally the runs at the end of the inning.



Next to bat is Alex (#7). He hits on the first pitch, but the ball is caught by the center fielder. This is called a Fly Out, and is documented as an F-8 for the 2nd out.

The ball was hit deep enough that Bobby is able to score, but Jim stays put at 2nd.

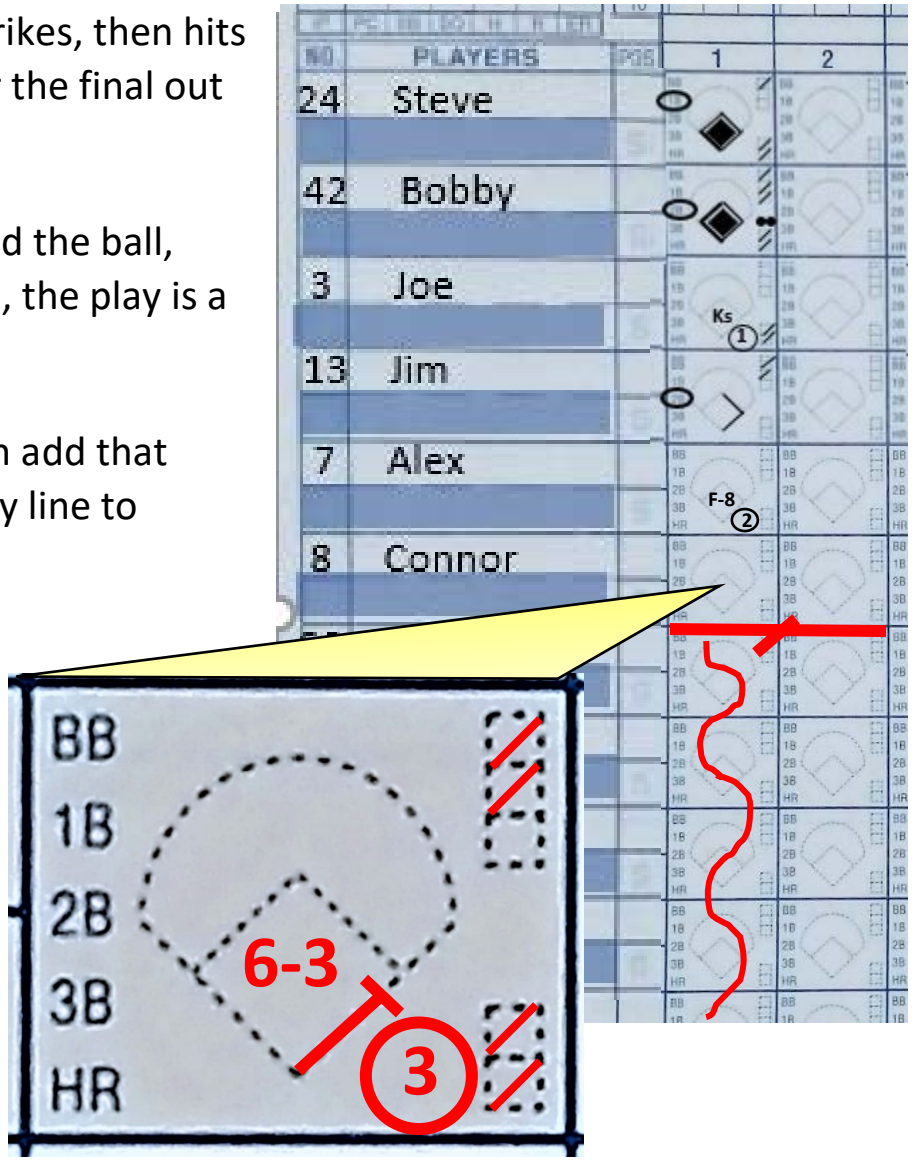
Draw the line showing Bobby came in, and fill in his diamond. Nothing happens to Jim's box, because he didn't move.



Batting next is Connor (#8). He takes 2 balls and 2 strikes, then hits a ground ball to the shortstop who throws to first for the final out of the inning.

Outs like this are documented by showing who fielded the ball, then where it was thrown to get the out. In this case, the play is a 6-3 (shortstop to 1st base).

Because this is the third out in the half-inning, we can add that diagonal mark **OR** heavy horizontal line and a squiggly line to remind us the first inning is complete.



## Pitch counts

You may recall that we've mentioned a pitch count. A pitch count is exactly that – keeping track of how many pitches were thrown by each pitcher during a game.

You'll have a pitch counter in the scorebox with you. At the end of every inning, or when a pitcher is removed from the pitching mound, you and the pitch counter will need to confirm you have the same number of pitches.

The pitch counter's sheet looks like this:

RoadRunner Little League Pitch Count - MINORS

HOME TEAM: Date: Time:

| Player Name | Jersey | League Age | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| | | | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 |
| | | | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 |
| | | | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 | 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 | 105 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

They've been placing a tally mark in a box every time a pitch is thrown. The last box with a tally mark indicates the total number of pitches thrown by that pitcher so far in the game.

Obviously, you've had a lot to write down, so you certainly haven't kept a running tally of pitches.  Or have you?

You've been keeping track by documenting the strikes, balls, and plays.  You can count pitches in the scorebook by counting all your marks so far.

Batter #1 took 4 pitches: one ball, 2 strikes, and the hit.

Batter #2 took 8 pitches: 3 balls, 2 strikes, 2 foul-offs, and the hit.

Batter #3 took 3 pitches: 2 strikes and the strike-out.

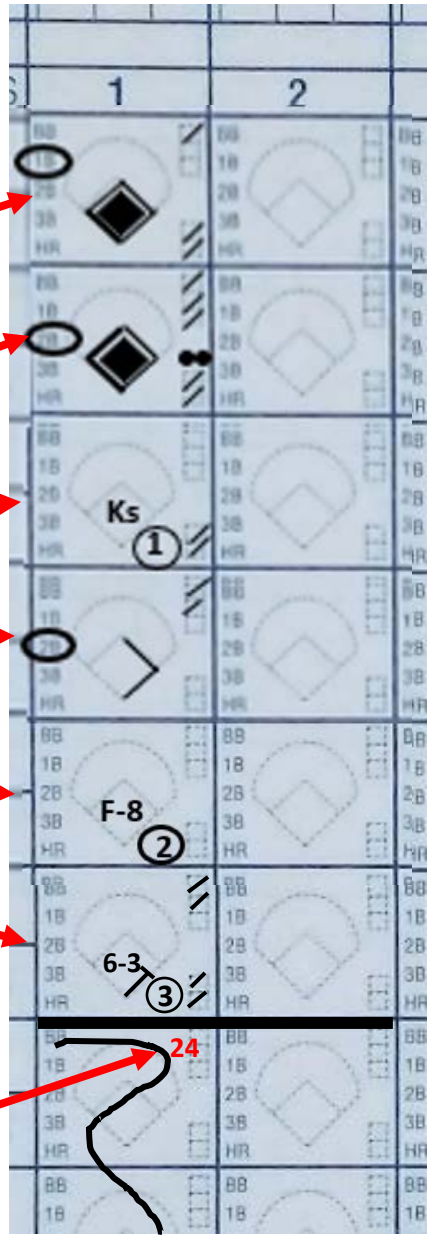
Batter #4 also took 3 pitches: 2 balls and the hit.

Batter #5 took 1 pitch: the fly out.

Batter #6 took 5 pitches: 2 balls, 2 strikes, and the ground out.

**For this inning, the pitch count total is 24.**

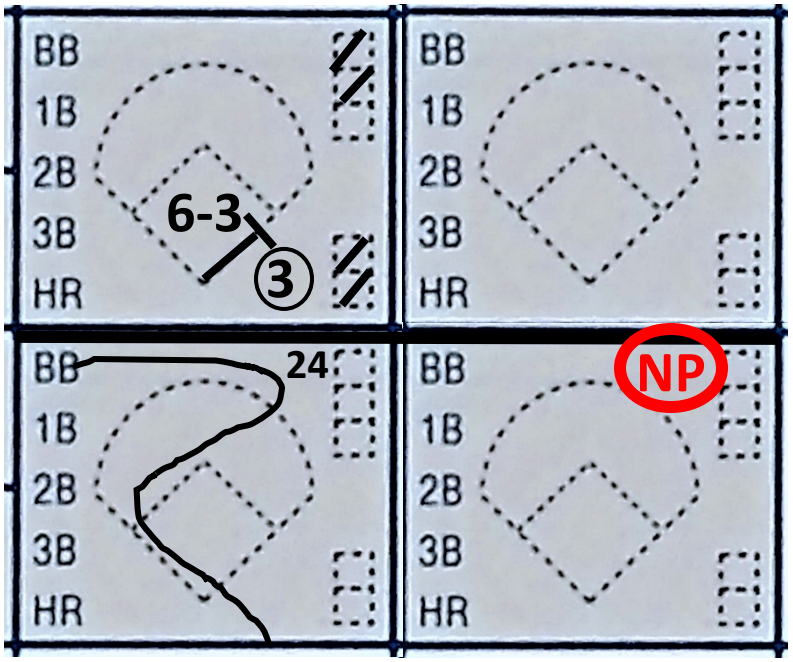
It helps to write the pitch count just under the box of the last batter for an inning; this way, if the same pitcher continues to the next inning, you don't have to re-count this inning's pitches.



When a pitcher is moved to another position, a new pitcher will come in to continue the game. You'll document this with "NP" (for new pitcher) in the box for the first batter the new pitcher faces.

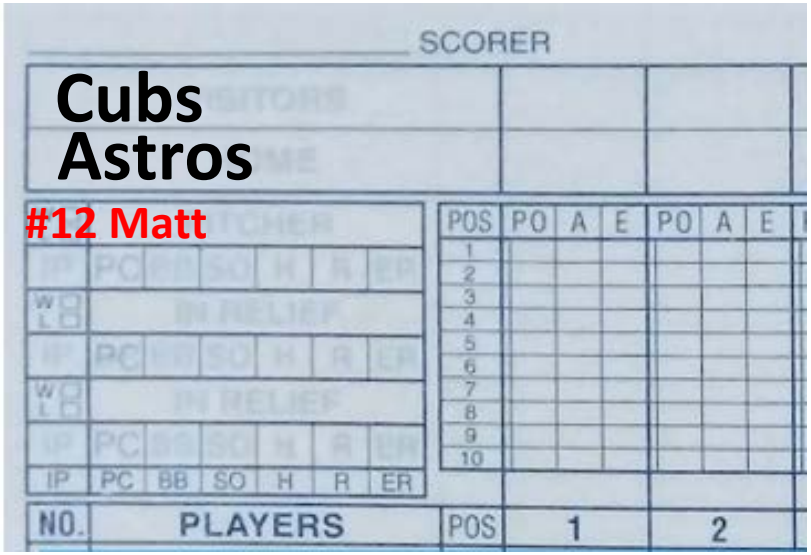
This most commonly happens between innings, because many RRLL coaches are trying to give as many players the chance to pitch as possible.

Occasionally a coach will change pitchers between innings; the only difference in how you document the change is that it won't be immediately under the thick line you drew to help remember where to start the next inning.



Next, you'll need to document the final pitch count for the pitcher that left the mound, and the name of the pitcher coming in to continue the game. We've touched on this before, but let's go into a little more detail now.

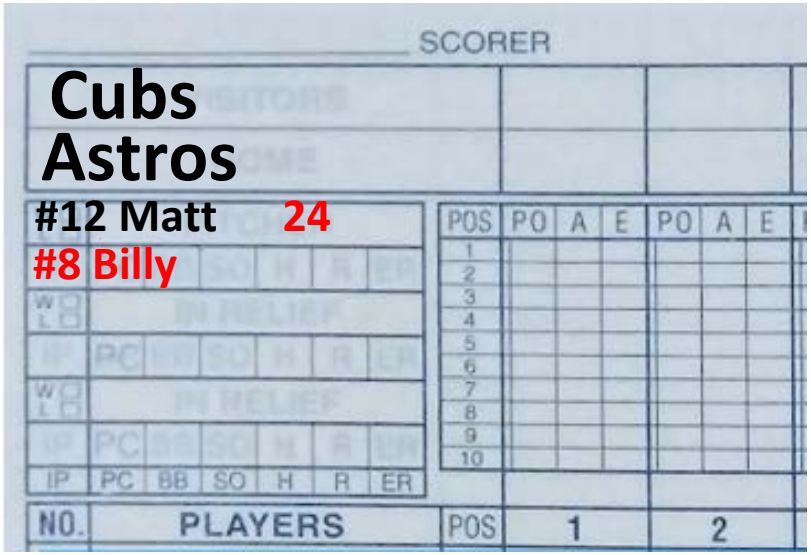
Matt started the game pitching, so you'll put Matt's number and name in the first line for pitchers at the beginning of the game.




Matt pitched for the 1st inning, and Billy came in to pitch for the 2nd inning.

You'll recall that there were 24 pitches thrown for the first inning (you can confirm this at the bottom of the inning). Once Billy starts warming up, write 24 next to Matt's name, and write in Billy's name and number on the next line.

Continue this pattern for future pitching changes.



Every other line here has abbreviations that are only used by more experienced scorekeepers, or by the coaches. It is not necessary for you to document any of these, so it is easier as you're learning to scorekeep to simply use these second lines for additional pitchers (especially given that many games will have 4 – 6 pitchers per team).

## Catchers

Catchers also need special documentation, but it's not as detailed.

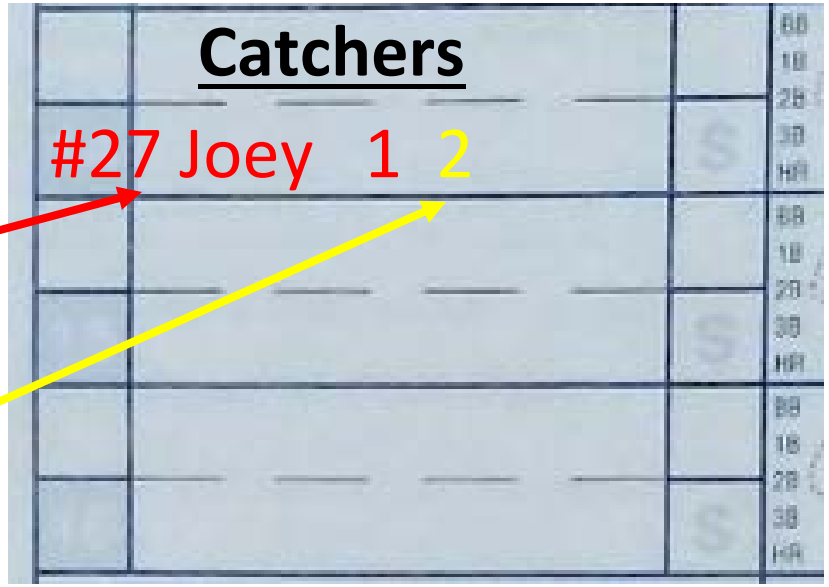
Catchers have some special rules regarding how many innings they can catch during a game, and whether they can pitch in the same game. Notice that this is innings, not pitches.

There are two ways to document catcher innings. We'll go through both.

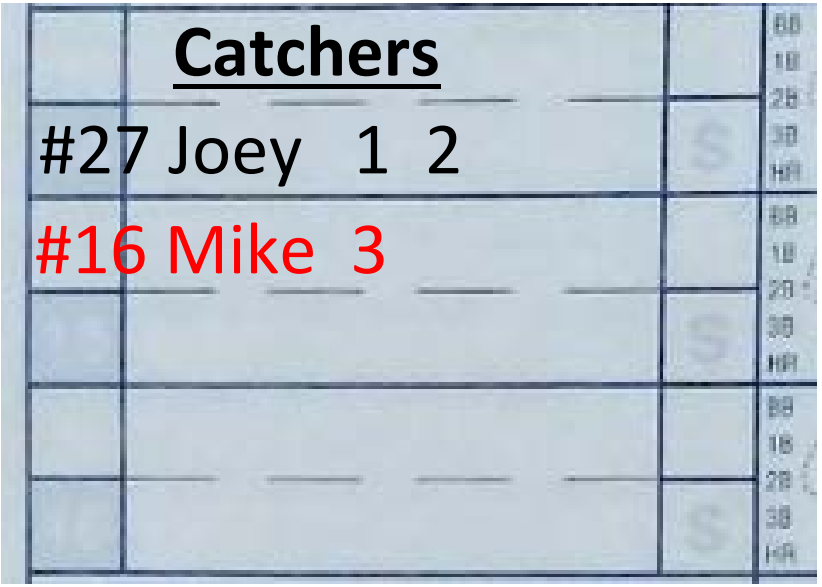
OPTION 1: Bottom of the lineup.

At the beginning of the game, Joey is catching. You'll document his number, his name, and put a "1" next to his name.

Joey continues to catch into the 2nd inning. Now, you'll add a "2" to Joey's catching line.



For the 3rd inning, Mike is catching. You'll add a line for Mike, with his number and name, and put a "3" next to his name.



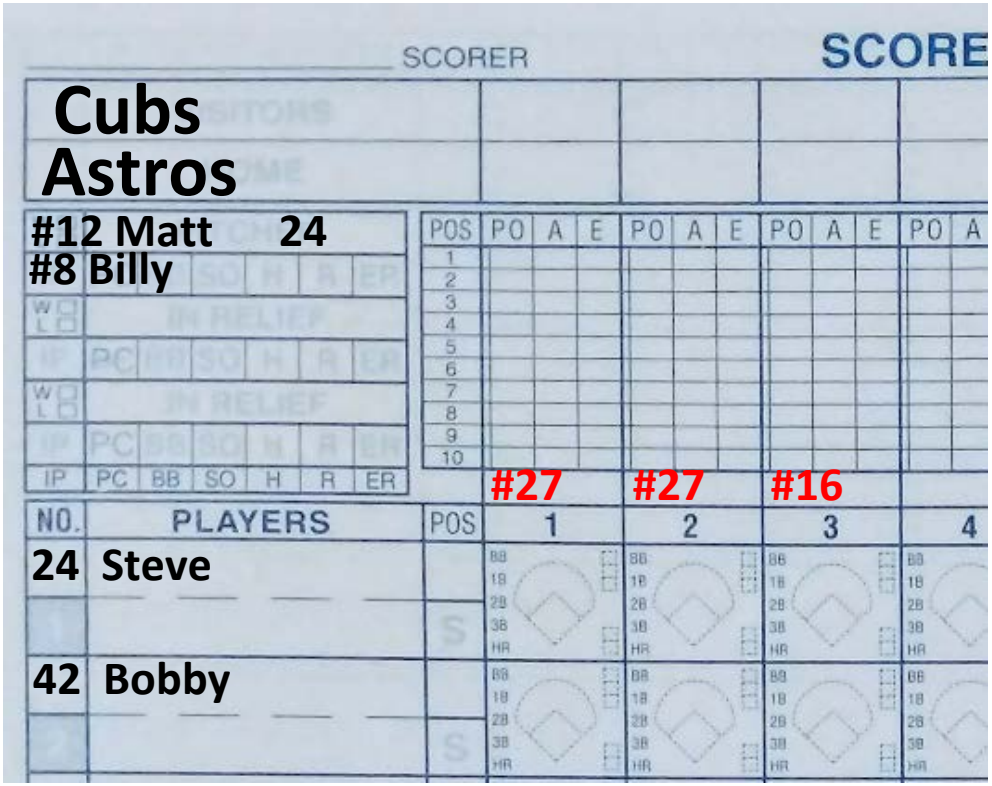

You'll continue that same pattern for any additional catchers.

Should a catcher return to catching later in the game, simply add that inning number to their line. Catchers can move into and out of the position, but pitchers cannot. Should two catchers play in one inning, both will have that inning number on their line.

OPTION 2: Above the inning markers.

Using this option, you'll document the jersey number of the catcher just above the inning markers.

As above, Joey caught for the 1st and 2nd innings, and Mike caught for the 3rd. Here's what that would look like.



Congratulations!

You made it all the way through! By now you should have a good sense of how this scorekeeping thing works.

We're hopeful this information has given you enough information and you feel confident to score a game.

Here are a few final notes, reminders, and tips:

- Try your best.
- Learn something every time you score!
- Mistakes are inevitable. That's why we use pencil!!
- Some scorekeepers prefer to add color to their book. If you want to try it, the most common color uses are:
  - RED for outs
  - Any other color to color in runs and to make your squiggly lines
- You are NOT expected to know all the rules of baseball.
- The umpire is a priceless resource. If you're not sure what happened, ASK!
- You are equally important to the umpire. They'll often ask you what the count on a batter is, what the pitch count is, etc.

- Always remember that the scorekeeper's job is documentation. Should something happen during the game that doesn't get caught (batting out of order, incorrect call, etc.) by a manager or coach, the scorekeeper simply documents what happened. The scorekeeper should NEVER call a manager or coach's attention to a discrepancy.
- Common abbreviations (not all of which have been fully reviewed above):
  - Ways to get on base:
    - BB (walk)
    - 1B (single)
    - 2B (double)
    - 3B (triple)
    - HR (home run)
    - HBP (hit by pitch)
  - Ways to get out at the plate:
    - K (strike out looking)
    - Ks (strike out swinging)
  - Ways to get out on the baseline:
    - # - # (play on the ball)
    - CS (caught stealing)
    - RI (runner interference)
    - DP (double play)
  - Ways to advance on the baseline:
    - SB (stolen base)
    - OT (overthrow)
    - For more advanced scorekeepers:
      - E-# (error)
      - PB (passed ball)
      - WP (wild pitch)