



# BASEBALL

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Baseball is one of America's oldest and most popular sports. Baseball was developed in the United States during the early 1800s among children and amateur players. Today, millions of people go to ballparks each year to watch professional baseball and it is enjoyed by millions more on television and radio. Baseball is called America's National Pastime because of its tradition and popularity, but it is played in many other parts of the world too.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Baseball is a competitive game played between two teams of nine players each. To play baseball you need a bat (usually made of wood or metal) and a hard ball. Each team takes it in turn at bat, while the other team is in the field. The player called the pitcher throws the ball towards the batter, who tries to hit it. Players score points, called runs, by hitting the ball and running around the four bases in the baseball field before a fielder puts them out. Batters and runners can be put out in different ways.

The game is divided into nine sections. These are called innings. An inning is divided into two halves, the top and the bottom. During the top of an inning, one team is at bat while the other is in the field. After the team at bat has three outs the two teams change places, and the bottom of an inning begins. If the game is tied after nine innings, the teams continue to play until one has scored more runs at the end of an extra inning.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Nobody knows exactly when the game of baseball started, but baseball today probably came from two British games; cricket and rounders. Both games were played with a bat and ball and involved running before a player put you out. By the 1900s, baseball had become very popular in the United States, and teams around America had organized themselves into Leagues. Today there are two important Leagues, the National League and the American League. At the end of every season the leader of each League plays the other during the World Series.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Professional baseball has a players' Association. The Association defends the rights of baseball players and lobbies for better salaries and benefits. Occasionally baseball players go on strike. When this happens there is no baseball!

Like other major sports that attract millions and make lots of money, baseball has had its share of scandals. Baseball's greatest scandal followed the 1919 World Series, in which the Cincinnati Reds defeated the Chicago White Sox. Afterwards it was discovered that seven Chicago players had intentionally lost the series in exchange for bribes from professional gamblers. This scandal severely damaged baseball's public image.

Baseball has also been criticized recently for the names of certain teams. The Cincinnati Reds, the Cleveland Indians and the Atlanta Braves are all based on names for Native Americans that many find offensive.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

There are some baseball players that almost all Americans recognize. Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Christy Mathewson and Joe DiMaggio are all household names. Jackie Robinson also made baseball history. He was the first black player to play in the major leagues in 1947.

More recent well-known baseball figures have been Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, Carl Ripken Jr and Barry Bonds. Famous players in baseball are honored in the Baseball Hall of Fame, which is in Cooperstown, New York.

6. \_\_\_\_\_

There are many common idiomatic expressions in American English that come from baseball. Here are a few. Can you guess what they mean?

"You'd better cover your bases"

"You're batting a thousand!"

"He's out in left field"

"Let's touch base on that"

"She threw me a real curve ball with that question!"





## Activities

1. Read the article quickly. Write a suitable title for each paragraph.
2. Work with a partner. Read the article and describe the significance of each of the following:
  - the bat
  - a run
  - an inning
  - rounders
  - The World Series
  - The 1919 World Series
  - The Atlanta Braves
  - Jackie Robinson
  - Cooperstown
3. Look at the baseball slang in the last section of the article. Match the expressions with the following situations:
  - a) He's a bit strange, he doesn't know what is going on.
  - b) I was completely unprepared for it.
  - c) You haven't made one mistake.
  - d) It would be a good idea for you to prepare for all possibilities.
  - e) We should meet to talk about that again.
4. Does your country have a national game? Prepare a short presentation and answer the following questions:
  - What is it?
  - How is it played?
  - Where and when did it originate?
  - Are there any household names or big scandals associated with this game?
5. Play ball! Learn some more about baseball with this game. Work with a group. Read the rules and play the game. Your teacher has the answers.  
(on separate sheet)