# Baseball Scoring Rules Changes Year by Year before 1950

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**1877 National League Rule Book**

RULE VIII. – SCORING

In order to promote uniformity in scoring championship games, the following instructions, suggestions and definitions are made for the benefit of scores of League clubs, and they are required to make the scores mentioned in Sec. 9**,** Art. XIII, of the League Constitution in accordance therewith.

BATTING.

SECTION 1. The first item in the tabulated score, after the player's name and position, shall be the number of times he has been at bat during the game. Any time or times where the player has been sent to base on called balls shall not be included in this column.

SEC. 2. In the second column should be set down the runs made by each player.

SEC. 3. In the third column should be placed the first-base hits made by each player. A base-hit should be scored in the following cases:

When the ball from the bat strikes the ground between the foul-lines and out of the reach of the fielders.

When a hit is partially or wholly stopped by a fielder in motion, but such player cannot recover himself in time to handle the ball before the striker reaches first base.

When the ball is hit so sharply to an infielder that he cannot handle it in time to put out a man. In case of doubt over this class of hits, score a base hit and exempt fielder from the charge of an error.

When a ball is hit so slowly toward a fielder than he cannot reach it before the batsman is safe.

SEC. 4. In the fourth column should be placed to the credit of each player the total bases made off his hits. The unit, or base, consists in getting from any one base to any other base, without being put out, and the striker is to be credited, not only with the number of bases which he himself makes after a hit, but, in addition, with those safely made by every other player who is on base at the time he runs toward first. It should be understood that a base or bases made off a fielder count toward the score of the player who ran from home base toward first base when the error was made. All the bases made off such error, whether by the striker or by some other player then on base, shall go to the credit of the striker. The striker shall be credited with a base when he is sent to base on called balls, and, in addition, with all the bases made by other players who may be advanced on the play under the rules.

A base or bases shall be given to the runner for a successful steal, whether made on an error of his opponents, or without error.

Bases shall not be given to a striker when any player, other than himself, shall be put out on his strike.

FIELDING.

Sec. 5. The number of opponents put out by each player shall be set down in the fifth column. Where a striker is given out by the umpire for a foul strike or because he struck out of his turn , the put out shall be scored to the catcher.

SEC. 6. The number of times a player assists shall be set down in the sixth column. An assist should be given to each player who handles the ball in a run-out or other play of the kind.

An assist should be given to the pitcher when a batsman fails to hit the ball on the third strike.

An assist should be given to the pitcher in each case where the batsman is declared out for making a foul strike or striking out of turn.

An assist should be given to a player who makes a play in time to put a runner out, even if the player who should complete the play fails, through no fault of the player assisting.

An assist should not be given to a player who muffs the ball, or allows it to bound off his body toward a player who then assists or puts out a player.

And, generally, an assist should be given to each player who handles the ball from the time it leaves the bat until it reaches the player who makes the put-out, or in case of a thrown ball , to each player who throws or handles it cleanly, and in such way that a put out results , or would result if no error were made by the receiver.

SEC. 7. An error should be given for each mis-play, which allows the striker or base -runner to make one or more bases, when perfect play would have insured his being put out. In scoring errors off batted balls, see Sec. 3 of this Article.

**1878**

Rule VIII, Section 4 was greatly shortened to "In the fourth column should be placed to the credit of each player the total bases made off his hits. The unit, or base, consists in getting from any one base to any other base, without being put out." The rest of this sentence, as well as the following sentences and paragraphs were deleted from the section. Included in the deletion was a reference to "a successful steal." It wasn't until 1887 that stolen bases were mentioned again.

Rule VIII, Section 6 deleted this paragraph: An assist should not be given to a player who muffs the ball, or allows it to bound off his body toward a player who then assists or puts out a player.

**1880**

Rule 60(4) added "In the fourth column should be placed to the credit of each player the total bases run during the game. In scoring 'bases run' where a player has reached first base as the result of putting out of another player, such first base shall not be credited to the striker as one of the bases run by him." Total Bases Run was a statistic compiled only in 1880 and was no longer in the 1881 rule book.

**1883**

Class VII, Rule 70(7) added, "An error should be given to the Pitcher when the batsman is given first base on "called balls.'"

**1885**

Class VII, Rule 70(7) added, "Wild pitches and passed balls shall be charged to the pitcher and catcher respectively, in the error column, and shall also appear in the summary."

**1886**

Class VII, Rule 70(7) added, "Bases stolen by players shall appear to their credit in the summary of the game."

**1887**

Rule 65(3) added to the list of when a base hit should be scored, "When the batsman is awarded a base on balls." This sentence was no longer in the 1888 rules.

Rule 65(4) added Base Running to the scoring rules with, "In the fourth column [of the tabulated score] shall be scored bases stolen, and shall include every base made after first base has been reached by a base runner, except those made by reason of, or with the aid of a 'battery' error, or by batting, 'balks' or by being forced off. In short, shall include all bases made by a 'clean steal,' or through a wild throw of muff of the ball by a fielder who is directly trying to put the base runner out while attempting to steal a base."

Rule 65(7) no longer called for an error charged to the pitcher for a walk with the addition of a clause that wild pitches, bases on called balls, bases on the batsman being struck by a pitched ball, illegal pitched ball, balks, and passed balls would not be included in column for errors.

Rule 66 added a summary to be kept by the scorer for the number of earned runs made by each side; two- and three-base hits made by each player; home runs by each player; double and triple plays made by each side, with the names of the players assisting in the same; men given bases on called balls, by each Pitcher; passed balls by each Catcher; wild pitches by each Pitcher; time of game; name of the Umpire.

**1888**

Rule 65(3) removed "When the batsman is awarded a base on balls" from the list of when a base hit should be scored.

Rule 65(3) added to the list of when a base hit should be scored, "That in all cases where a base runner is retired by being hit by a batted ball, the batsman should be credited with a base hit." The following year (now Rule 68, Section 3) a batted ball hitting the person or clothing of the umpire was also added to when a hit should be scored.

Rule 65(4) was reworded to, "Any attempt to steal a base must go to the credit of the base runner, whether the ball is thrown wild or muffed by the fielder, but any manifest error is to be charged to the fielder, making the same. If the base runner advances another base he shall not be credited with a stolen base, and the fielder allowing the advancement is also to be charged with an error. If a base runner makes a start and a battery error is made, the runner secures the credit of a stolen base, and the battery error is scored against the player making it. Should a base runner overrun a base and then be put out, he should receive the credit for the stolen base."

Rule 65(7) added, "An earned run shall be scored every time the player reaches the home base unaided by errors before chances have been offered to retire the side, but bases on balls, though summarized as errors, shall be credited as factors in earned runs."

By the wording of 65(7), the pitcher is again charged with an error for a walk. The section from 1887 exempting "bases on called balls" from being an error did not have this as an exclusion for an error in 1888.

The summary in Rule 66 added "(8.) The number of men struck out."

**1889**

Rule 68, Section 4, added, "In the fourth column shall be placed Sacrifice Hits, "which shall be credited to the batsman, who when but one man is out advances a runner a base on a fly to the outfield or a ground hit, which results in putting out the batsman, of would so result if handled without error."

Rule 68, Section 7 again exempted bases on balls from being an error, and Rule 68, Section 9, regarding earned runs, removed the clause that bases on balls be credited as factors in earned runs.

**1892**

Rule 68, Section 8 added, "If a Base Runner advances a base on a fly out, or gains two bases on a single base hit, or an infield out, or attempted out, he shall be credited with a stolen base, provided there is a possible chance and a palpable attempt made to retire him." This sentence was removed in 1897.

**1894**

Rule 70, Section 4 restricted sacrifices to only bunts, not other ground balls nor flies to the outfield. In addition, the wording was changed from "when but one man is out" to "when no one is out, or when but one man is out."

**1897**

Rule LXXI, Section 8 added, to the list of events for which a batter is not charged with a time at bat, "a sacrifice hit which was manifestly intentional."

Rule LXXI, Section 8 removed the sentence that had been added in 1892 to credit a stolen base for advances such as on a fly out, gaining two bases on a single, etc.

Rule LXXII, in the summary changed the number of earned runs made "off each side" to "off each pitcher."

The summary also added the condition of the weather and the condition of the playing field to what it must contain. This was dropped after one year.

**1898**
Rule 79, Section 7 added, "No error shall be scored against an infielder who attempts to complete a double play, unless the throw is so wild that an additional base is gained."

**1904**
Rule 85, Section 7 added a clause (in italics) to the sentence, "An assist should be given to each player who handles the ball in aiding in a run out or any other play of the kind, *except the one who completes it."* The additional clause precludes a fielder from getting an assist along with a putout.

**1907**
Rule 82 added "or interference by the catcher" to the exemptions from a batter being charged with a Time at Bat.

**1908**
Rule 85, *Sacrifice Hits,* Section 5(a) added, "A sacrifice hit shall also be credited to a batsman who, when no one is out or when but one man is out, hits a fly ball that is caught but results in a run being scored." No "Time at Bat" was charged the batter for this per Rule 82, that an at bat is not charged for a sacrifice hit.

**1909**
Rule 85, Section 5, *Sacrifice Hits,* added to the 1909 rule about a sacrifice hit being awarded for a fly ball that scores a run after it is caught, "or would [result in a run] in the judgment of the scorer so result if caught."

Rule 85, Section 7 added this definition: A double play shall mean any two continuous put-outs that take place between batters between the time the ball leaves the pitcher's hands until it is returned to him again standing in the pitcher's box.

Rule 85, Section 8, *Errors,* regarding an error being given in the sixth column, added, "But a base on balls, a base awarded to a batsman by being struck by a pitched ball, an illegal pitch, a balk, a passed ball or wild pitch, unless such wild pitch or passed ball be on the third strike and allow the batter to reach first base, shall not be included in the sixth column. In case of a wild pitch or a passed ball allowing the batter to reach first base, the pitcher or the catcher, as the case may be, shall be charged with an error."

Also added to this section was, "In event of a fielder dropping a fly ball but recovering the ball in time to force a batter at another base, he shall be exempted from an error, the play being scored as a 'force out.'"

Rule 85, Section 10, *Definition of Wild Pitch and Passed Ball:*

"A wild pitch is a legally delivered ball, so high, low, or wide of the plate that the catcher cannot or does not stop and control it with ordinary effort, and as a result the batsman, who becomes a base runner on such a pitched ball, reaches first base or a base runner advances.

"A passed ball is a legally delivered ball that the catcher should hold or control with ordinary effort, but his failure to do so enables the batsman, who becomes a base runner on such pitched ball, to reach first base or a base runner to advance."

Note that – in addition to an existing runner advancing – the rule mandates that a wild pitch or passed ball be charged, in addition to an error for the pitcher or catcher, respectively, if such a pitch enables the batsman to reach first base.

Rule 85, Section 9, *Stolen Bases,* added, "In event of a double steal being attempted from based one and two to two and three, where either is thrown out, the other shall not be credited with a stolen base.

"In event of a base runner being touched out after sliding over a base, he shall not be regarded as having stolen the base in question.

"In event of a base runner making his start to steal a base prior to a battery error, he shall be credited with a stolen base.

"In event of a palpable muff of a ball thrown by the catcher, when the base runner is clearly blocked, the infielder making the muff shall be charged with an error and the base runner shall not be credited with a stolen base."

**1910**

Rule 85, Section 7 was modified so that a player could receive an assist in addition to a put out on a play with the addition of the clause indicated in italics: An assist should be given to each player who handles the ball in aiding in a run-out or any other play of the kind, *even though he completes the play by making the put-out.* Previously, the rule excluded the player completing the play (with a put out) from receiving an assist.

Rule 85, Section 8, *Errors,* no longer includes the provision that a pitcher or catcher be charged with an error for allowing a batter to reach first base on a wild pitch or passed ball.

Rule 85, Section 9, *Stolen Bases,* added a triple steal to a double steal regarding runners not being credited with a stolen base if another runner is thrown out: In event of a double or triple steal being attempted, where either runner is thrown out, the other or others shall not be credited with a stolen base."

**1912**

Earned runs were compiled in the official pitching records of the National League in 1912 and the American League in 1913 although they did not appear in the rule book until 1917.

**1911**

Page 362 of the 1911 *Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide* had the following:

NEW SCORING RULE.

"At the National League meeting, held at New York Feb. 14, the Sporting Writer's Association received a report on the scoring of a play that has caused many disputes, and a rule that many score differently. In order to have the scoring of the play scored properly, the Committee on Scoring Rules, Messrs. Ryder, Edwards and Sanborn, have adopted the following:

"'A hit shall be given any batter who when he placed a bunt hit in order to advance a base runner, when no one is out or when one man is out and a play is made at any base in order to put out a base runner and the play fails, the batter shall be credited with a hit.'

"This is a new ruling on the old play that when a batter intentionally placed a bunt in order to advance the runner and the play failed, it was termed a 'fielder's choice,' and instead of getting credit with a sacrifice hit the batter was charged with a time at bat, when if he had been retired at first he would have been given credit with a sacrifice hit. In the first case he even did more than he had intended, for he as well as the man he had tried to advance were both safe. The committee has decided to give a batter a base hit on every play of this kind. – [Editor]."

The rule book did not reflect the new ruling until the addition of Rule 85, Section 4 in 1914.

**1914**

Rule 85, Section 4, *The Scoring of Base Hits,* added, "When a fielder after handling a batted ball, elects to try to retire a base-runner instead of the batter, the play is known as a 'fielder's choice.' In case the runner is retired, or would be retired but for an error, the batter shall be charged with a time at bat, but no hit. If the runner is not retired, and no error is made, the batter shall be charged with a time at bat, but no hit, provided he swung at the ball, and shall be credited with a sacrifice hit, provided he bunted the ball; if, however, in the judgment of the scorer the batter could not have been retired at first base by perfect fielding, he shall be credited with a base hit."

Rule 85, Section 7 calls for only one assist for a player handling the ball "in aiding in a run-out or any other play of this kind, even though he completes the play by making the put-out." [A fielder may get an assist and a put out for an out but, even if he handles and throws the ball more than once, he cannot get more than one assist on an out.]

Rule 85, Section 8 added the phrase "or prolongs the life of the base-runner" to the manner in which a fielder can be charged with an error for a misplay. Also in Section 8, the sentence indicated in italics was added regarding potential double plays: An error shall not be scored against the catcher or an infielder who attempts to complete a double play, unless the throw be so wild that an additional base be gained. *This, however, does not exempt from an error a player who drops a thrown ball when by holding it he would have completed a double play.*

Rule 85, Section 9, *Stolen Bases* added the italicized clause to the end of this sentence: "In the event of a base-runner making his start to steal a base prior to a battery error, he shall be credited with a stolen base *and the batter error shall also be charged.*

Earned runs were compiled in the official pitching records of the National League in 1912 and the American League in 1913 although they did not appear in the rule book until 1917.

**1917**

Rule 85, Section 11, *Definition of Earned Run Off Pitcher* was added (although the National League had compiled them starting in 1912 and the American League in 1913):

A run earned off the pitcher shall be scored every time a player reaches home base by the aid of safe hits, sacrifice hits, stolen bases, bases on balls, hit batsman, wild pitches and balks, before fielding chances have been offered to retire the side.

The pitcher shall be given the benefit of doubt whenever fielding errors are made and in determining the base to which a runner should have been held with perfect support on part of fielders. A fielding error made by the pitcher shall be considered the same as any other fielding error. No run can be earned that scores as result of batsman having reached first base on a fielding error or passed ball; nor can any run be earned after the fielding side has failed to accept chances offered to retire the side.

To determine the pitcher's percentage for the season, the total number of innings he has pitched; then multiplied by nine, to find his average effectiveness for a complete game. The number of runs earned off his pitching shall be divided by the total number of innings he has pitched; then multiplied by nine, to find his average effectiveness for a complete game.

**1920**

Beginning in 1920 the rules in the *Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide* contain explanatory notes in the margins and/or in smaller type by the editor, John B. Foster. The explanatory notes continued in the annual guides, including those by other publishers, through 1949.

Though not found in the rule book, the 1920 *Reach Official Base Ball Guide* (pages 387-388) included a report of the meeting of the Joint Rules Committee of February 9, 1920 and listed changes in scoring rules. Among them were, "Keep protested games in the fielding, batting and pitching records."

Rule 85, *The Scoring Rules,* Section 3A added, "If, in the last half of the final inning, with the winning run on base, the batsman drives home that run, credit shall be given him for as many bases on his hit as the runner advances; except, however, in the case of the batsman driving a fair ball out of the playing field, he shall receive credit for a home run." Over-the-fence home runs were no longer not counted as home runs because a game-ending run was on base.

Rule 85, Section 5, *Sacrifice Hits,* added that "no distinction shall be made in the Summary as between bunted or fly-ball sacrifices."

Rule 85, Section 8, *Errors,* added the following:

An error shall be charged to the catcher if he drop a third strike, allowing the runner to reach first base; except this rule is not to apply in case of a wild pitch. (Note added by the editor: At last it has been ordered in black and white that a muffed third strike is an error.)

An error shall be charged to the first baseman if, on receiving a throw in ample time to retire the batsman, he fail to touch first base. (Note added by the editor: Here is another instance where an error, that always was an error, now officially goes on record as one.)

Rule 85, Section 9, *Stolen Bases,* introduced defensive indifference instead of a stolen base: No stolen base shall be credited to a runner who is allowed to advance without any effort being made to stop him.

Rule 86, *The Summary,* Section 8, added, "The Summary shall contain . . . The number of runs batted in by each batsman." [Even before runs batted in (RBIs) were dictated as a summary item, historian/statistician Ernest T. Lanigan had been tracking RBIs and reporting them in the annual baseball guides, although 1920 is regarded as the year when RBIs became an official statistic.]

Rule 86 added *How to Determine Percentages of Club Standing and Individual Player Averages* for a team's winning percentage and for a player's batting average and fielding average. The rule stated, "In all cases where the remaining fraction is one-half or over, a point is added to the average.

**1926**

Rule 85, Section 5 allowed a sacrifice fly to be credited for any advancement by a baserunner, not just a runner who scores, with, "A sacrifice hit shall also be credited to a batsman who, when no one is out or when but results in a base-runner advancing on the catch, or would in the judgment of the scorer so result if caught; but no distinction shall be made in the summary as between bunted or fly-ball sacrifices.

Rule 85, Section 8 added and/or changed these paragraphs:

"The catcher shall be charged with a passed ball when a base-runner is enabled to advance by the catcher's failure to hold or control a legally delivered ball that should have been held or controlled with ordinary effort." [The previous rule had included that the catcher be charged with a passed ball for a batter reaching base on a third strike (when it was judged to be the fault of the catcher rather than the pitcher) as well as an error. The change removed a passed ball charged to the catcher for such a misplay.]

"An error shall be charged to the pitcher if he make [*sic*] a wild pitch for the third strike and the batsman reach first base and in such case the pitcher shall not have credit for a strike-out." [A pitcher continued to be charged with a wild pitch and an error if such a wild pitch resulted in a batter reaching first after a strike out; previously the pitcher was still credited with a strike out.]

"An error shall be charged to the catcher if he drop [*sic*] a third strike, allowing the runner to reach first base, *but the pitcher shall receive credit for the strikeout.* This rule is not to apply in case of a wild pitch." [The italicized portion was added to the rule. This apparently is to emphasize that the pitcher is credited with a strikeout if the missed third strike is deemed to be the fault of the catcher. The paragraph above deals with the pitcher not being credited with a strikeout on a missed third strike, resulting in the batter reaching first, if it was because of a wild pitch.]

**1931**
Sacrifices on fly balls were eliminated as the rule (now Rule 70, Section 6) no longer mentions fly balls. It was back for one year, 1939, before reinstated again in 1954.

Rule 70, Section 8 on assists had some rewriting and additions. Previously, the rules called for an assist "to a player who makes a play in time to put a runner out, even if the player who could complete the play fails, through no fault of the assisting player." In 1931, the passage was rewritten as, "Credit an assist to each player who handles and throws the ball in such a way that a put-out would have resulted except for the error of a team mate."

Rule 70, Section 8 added, "Do not credit an assist to a fielder who makes a bad throw, even when a runner trying to advance on it is subsequently retired. A play that follows an error is a new play and the player making an error is not entitled to an assist unless he takes part in the new play."

Rule 70, Section 9 no longer included an error to a pitcher for a wild pitch that allowed a batter to reach base after a third strike. In addition, the pitcher would be credited with a strike out on such a play.

Rule 70, Section 10(a) added, "Do not give a stolen base to a runner who has started to steal and the pitcher balks."

Rule 70, Section 11 added, "Any pitched ball that strikes the ground before reaching the home plate and passes the catcher, allowing runners to advance, shall be scored as a wild pitch."

Rule 70, Section 13 added the definition of runs batted in as "runs scored on safe hits (including home runs), sacrifice hits, outfield put-outs, and when the run is forced over by reason of batsman becoming a base-runner. With less than two out, if an error is made on a play on which a runner from third would ordinarily score, credit the batsman with a Run Batted In. [Although RBIs were first noted in 1920 to be placed in the summary, the 1931 rules were the first to have a definition.]

**1939**
Rule 70, Section 5 added this paragraph on the scoring of base hits: In event of a batsman oversliding second or third bases and being tagged by the opposing fielder when said batsman is attempting to stretch a single into a two-base hit or a two-base hit into a three-base hit, the play should be scored the same as when a base-runner attempts to steal, overslides the base and is tagged out. In other words, the batsman oversliding second base and is tagged out shall be credited only with a single, while one who overslides third and is tagged out shall be credited only with a two-base hit.

Rule 70, Section 6 added this paragraph for sacrifice hits: A sacrifice hit shall be credited to the batsman who, when no one is out or when but one man is out, hits a fly ball that is caught but which results in a base-runner scoring, or would have scored a runner if said fly ball had not been dropped for an error, in the judgment of the scorer; but no distinction shall be made in the Summary as between bunted or fly ball sacrifices. [The reinstatement of the sacrifice fly lasted only one year.]

Rule 70, Section 12, regarding earned runs, clarified an earned run is charged when reaches home base by the aid of, among other things, a wild pitch. The additional wording was "even though the wild pitch be a third strike."

Rule 79, Section 13 added this paragraph to the definition of runs batted in: The batsman shall not be credited with driving in a run when a runner scores as he hits into a force infield double play or a double play in which the first baseman picks up a fair hit ground ball, touches first base and then throws to second retiring the runner who had been on first, said runner not being forced, has to be tagged out.

**1940**

Rule 70, Section 5 – An exception covering runners hit by infield flies has been added (added material in italics): In all cases where a base-runner is retired by being hit by a batted ball, unless batted by himself, the batsman should be credited with a base hit, *except if the runner is hit by an infield fly.*

Rule 70, Section 6, following the description of a sacrifice hit that specifies a bunt, had this line: EXPLANATION – Eliminates sacrifice hit on a fly ball.

Rule 70, Section 12 – Although the list of changes in the front of the rule book notes an addition that "scorekeepers are instructed in the methods to be followed for determining the winning and losing pitchers where there is more than one used in a game," the rule book and Section 12 – Definition of Run Earned Off Pitcher – does not address winning and losing pitchers.

The addition in the first paragraph of Rule 70, Section 12: *The preceding pitcher, and not a relieving pitcher, shall be charged with runs scored by any runners on base when such relief pitcher entered the game. The relieving pitcher shall not be charged with his first batsman reaching first base if such batsman had any advantage because of poor pitching by the preceding pitcher. With the count two or three balls and one or no strikes, or three balls and two strikes, charge preceding pitcher if batsman reaches first base, but credit relieving pitcher if batsman retired. With count one or two balls and two strikes, charge relieving pitcher if batsman reaches first base and credit him if batsman is retired.* [In 1952, 10.15(g) specified a base on balls only for charging an outgoing pitcher (based on the count at the time of substitution) for the completion of a plate appearance.]

Wins and losses for a pitcher are also mentioned in one of the playing rules – Rule 24, Section 11 – regarding a regulation game that was forfeited with the addition of a clause that, although all individual and team records are incorporated into a regulation game that has been forfeited, "no pitcher will be credited with a win or charged with the loss in the game." (In 1963 the rule was changed to assign a win and loss to a pitcher in regulation games that had been forfeited if the team winning by forfeit had been ahead at the time of the forfeit.) The scoring rules did not define winning and losing pitchers in a game until 1950.