Hardball Rules: You Make the Call

The Baseball Rules & Official Scoring Trivia Challenge

A book proposal · Scott Orgera

Overview

The minutiae are what make baseball special, and in that regard it's arguably better than any other sport. The devil is in the details, and it's within them that debates, often heated ones, arise. What's the rule on that? Why was it scored that way? **Hardball Rules: You Make the Call** is a game within the game, settling scores by going to the source.

Official scoring is at the heart of it, with **over a third of the questions**: five chapters drawn entirely from Rule 9, plus scoring questions tucked inside Baserunning & Steals and Extra Innings. It's a job with real consequences, too. An official scorer makes calls that follow players for the rest of their careers.

There are 750+ questions in all, every one drawn from the Official Baseball Rules and the calls that decide ballgames. A ground ball hits a runner in fair territory before it reaches an infielder. Is he out, and does the batter get credit for a hit? In a nine-inning game, the starter leaves with a 3–1 lead after 4⅔ innings, and three relievers make it stand up. Who gets the win? Runner on first, one out, and an infielder lets a fair line drive drop on purpose to set up a double play. Is the batter out, and does it matter whether he touched the ball?

Each answer explains the ruling in plain English and cites the rule behind it, so readers can see how the call was made and check it for themselves. Anyone who thinks we blew the call knows exactly where to look, and nobody has to take the book on faith.

The book is also built to be played. Questions climb four tiers (Rookie, Veteran, All-Star and Hall of Famer) worth 1, 2, 3 and 5 points. Every question has a YOUR CALL box for committing to an answer before turning the page, and every chapter ends with a scorecard with a par score and a rank. One more at the back turns the whole book into one long season, and free printable copies mean you can play it again, or play it with friends.

The game is entirely optional, though. The points, par scores, YOUR CALL boxes and scorecards could all be taken out at the publisher's discretion, and what's left is a traditional trivia book that holds up just fine: the full set of questions and explanations, with every rule citation intact.

The market

This book is for any baseball fan who's ever watched a play and wondered how the umpire would rule it, or how the official scorer would write it up. The scoring chapters also give coaches and scorekeepers a reason to keep it within reach. Then there's the old-timer who's been arguing about the infield fly rule for 40 years and would love to finally prove he was right. And for anyone who never knows what to buy the baseball fan in their life, it makes an easy gift.

It also doubles as a **reference**, the kind of book readers hang on to. The rulebook changes only a few rules at a time, and the book notes the edition every answer was checked against, so it can be brought up to date with each new edition, with any corrections posted online.

Comparable titles

The shelf holds three kinds of books, and each one does part of what this one does.

Rules books meant for reading. *So You Think You Know Baseball? A Fan's Guide to the Official Rules* (Peter E. Meltzer, W. W. Norton, 2013) poses real major league plays as questions, official-scorer decisions included, and is written to be dipped into. Rich Marazzi's classic *The Rules and Lore of Baseball* (Stein and Day, 1980) covers the rules through history and famous disputes. Both are well regarded and show that trade publishers have taken the subject seriously. Hardball Rules adds point values and chapter and season scorecards to its rules questions, and Meltzer's rule numbers predate the rulebook's 2015 renumbering.

Rules quizzes that stop at the umpire's call. The closest predecessor is Wayne Stewart's *You're the Umpire* (Skyhorse, third edition, 2019), which lays out rules situations like fair-or-foul, interference and the infield fly and asks the reader to make the call. A third edition says a rules quiz can find an audience. Its focus is the umpire's call, while Hardball Rules gives official scoring over a third of its questions and five dedicated chapters.

Trivia books about something else entirely. *The Complete Book of Baseball Trivia: Test Your Knowledge with 750 Questions* (Matt Chandler, Callisto, 2026) and the many self-published titles alongside it are history-and-statistics books, built around teams, players, stadiums and records. Their subject is the game's history and its numbers.

Where this one sits. This book makes *official scoring* its main event, with over a third of its questions and five chapters drawn wholly from Rule 9. It puts the governing rule beside every answer, so readers can check the book for themselves. It's also laid out to be *played*, with four difficulty tiers, a running score, a par for every chapter and a season scorecard at the back. Rules quizzes already exist, but we haven't found one that combines official scoring at its core, a rule citation on every answer and a scored game.

Format and specifications

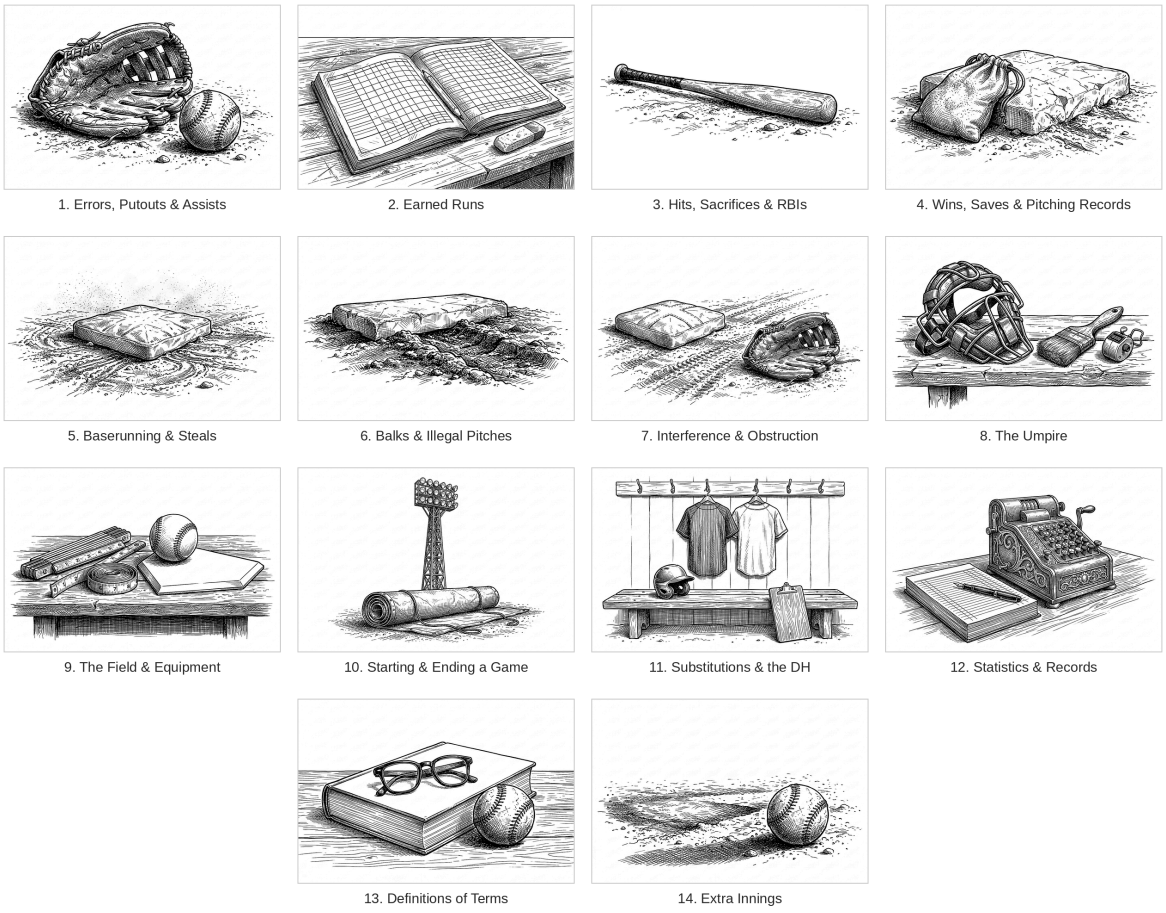
Trim	6 × 9 in
Extent	About 440 pages in the current draft, interior fully laid out at print size
Questions	750+ across 14 chapters, with the final count set in editing
Length	About 90,000 words in the current draft. The extent comes from the explanations and the room to play (answer boxes and scorecards), and length and price are open for discussion with the publisher
Illustration	14 black-and-white chapter openers, AI-generated concepts
Rights	The author holds all rights to the book, including the full question bank. No MLB or club marks and no player likenesses
Game layer	Optional. Points, par, YOUR CALL boxes and scorecards can be removed at the publisher’s discretion, leaving a traditional trivia book. If kept, free printable scorecards make it replayable.

The manuscript is complete in draft form, and the interior is already laid out: a print-resolution PDF of the current draft (about 440 pages) exists today, along with a paperback cover wrap sized to fit it. The page count, question total and artwork are all subject to change in editing.

Illustration

Every chapter opens with a black-and-white illustration made for this book. All fourteen were created with generative AI tools as concepts, and any of them can be changed or replaced to fit the publisher’s art and rights requirements.

The art is there to set a mood, with baseball gear and field details. None of it depicts a play, since a picture that explains a ruling can get it wrong, and that’s a risk a book built on accuracy can do without. None of it carries a club mark or a player likeness, either.



All fourteen chapter openers

Each one sits above its chapter title, and the sample chapters show how they look on the page.

Table of contents

Fourteen chapters in all. The first thirteen follow the rulebook’s own topics, with the questions in each climbing the difficulty ladder before the chapter closes with a scorecard. The fourteenth, Extra Innings, saves the toughest calls for last, all of them at the top tier.

1. Errors, Putouts & Assists — about 70 questions **[Official scoring]**

> The word “error” sounds simple until you have to score one. Most of us know one when we see it, or at least we think we do. Under Rule 9.12, though, an error has little to do with how ugly a play looked. It comes down mostly to two questions. Could ordinary effort have made the play, and did the misplay let a batter or runner stay alive or move up? Fumble the ball and still get your man, and as long as nobody else takes an extra base on the bobble, it isn’t an error.

2. Earned Runs — about 45 questions **[Official scoring]**

> The earned run may be the only statistic in baseball that asks you to replay an inning that never happened. Take away the errors and passed balls (catcher’s interference is the one exception that doesn’t simply vanish), rebuild the frame and count only the runs that would have crossed the plate anyway. Think of it as bookkeeping with a healthy dose of alternate history, and it’s usually where the arguments start.

3. Hits, Sacrifices & RBIs — about 65 questions **[Official scoring]**

> Here’s where hits, sacrifices and RBIs get sorted out. A hit takes more than “the fielder didn’t get him,” and Rule 9.05(a) spells out exactly when reaching base counts as one, with 9.05(b) covering when it doesn’t. From there it’s on to runs batted in (Rule 9.04) and sacrifices (9.08). A sacrifice bunt or fly isn’t charged as a time at bat, although a bunt can lose that status, for instance when the scorer judges the batter was bunting purely for a hit.

4. Wins, Saves & Pitching Records — about 40 questions **[Official scoring]**

> The win, it turns out, is decided mostly by rule and only now and then by merit. A starter who gets knocked around can still walk away with one, while the best pitcher on the mound that day can go home without the W. The scorer’s judgment enters the picture only where the rule calls for it, such as when a starter in a nine-inning game leaves with a lead before he’s gone five innings and two or more relievers hold it, so somebody has to pick the most effective one. Rule 9.17 covers the win and loss and 9.19 the save, with the wild pitch, passed ball, walk and strikeout rounding out the chapter.

5. Baserunning & Steals — about 90 questions

> A runner doesn’t always earn the base he’s standing on, and he isn’t necessarily to blame when he’s called out. This chapter covers awarded bases, the runner’s duty to touch and return, whether a run counts when the third out is made, and the fine line between a stolen base and defensive indifference.

6. Balks & Illegal Pitches — about 50 questions

> The balk exists to keep a pitcher from deceiving a runner who's entitled to a fair start. Rule 6.02(a) lists 13 ways to commit one, but most balk arguments boil down to three verbs. Did the pitcher stop, start or step?

7. Interference & Obstruction — about 45 questions

> The rulebook keeps interference and obstruction strictly apart, each with its own meaning and its own penalties. Interference is usually the offense getting in a fielder's way, though a catcher who gets in the batter's way is guilty of it too. Obstruction is a fielder, without the ball and not in the act of fielding it, getting in a runner's way. As we'll see, the penalties usually cut in opposite directions. Batting out of turn and doctored bats show up here too.

8. The Umpire — about 45 questions

> Rule 8.01(c) lets umpires rule on any point the rulebook doesn't specifically cover, and Rule 8.02(a) makes their judgment calls final. This chapter sorts out who gets to decide what, along with the point at which it's too late to appeal.

9. The Field & Equipment — about 65 questions

> The rulebook spells out the distance from the pitcher's plate to home, the size of the batter's box, what makes a bat legal and how big a glove is allowed to be.

10. Starting & Ending a Game — about 55 questions

> When is a game officially a game? This chapter covers putting the ball in play, what makes a regulation or called game, suspensions and forfeits, and the conduct rules that can send a player to the showers early.

11. Substitutions & the DH — about 40 questions

> Who may replace whom, and when is it too late for the skipper to reconsider? Rule 5.10 governs substitutions and pitching changes, including the requirement that a pitcher face at least three batters or finish the half-inning. Rule 5.11 handles the designated hitter, including the choices a manager faces when the starting pitcher is also the DH.

12. Statistics & Records — about 40 questions **[Official scoring]**

> Call it the record-keeping: what the box score must contain, how the official statistician compiles a season's numbers, and how many plate appearances or innings it takes to qualify for a batting or ERA title.

13. Definitions of Terms — about 50 questions

> A lot of rules disputes come down to a single word. What counts as a catch, a foul tip, a force play or an infield fly? Agreeing on those definitions gives everyone a clearer place to start.

14. Extra Innings: The Toughest Calls — about 60 questions

> The toughest questions in the book live here, the ones that bring several rules into the same play or make you rebuild an inning before you can score it. They're the situations that send seasoned scorers scrambling for their rulebooks. Every question is worth five points.

Front matter: Foreword, Introduction, How to Play. **Back matter:** Season Scorecard, Glossary, Index of Rules Cited, and Achievements (milestones to check off, such as a perfect chapter).

Sample chapters

Two complete chapters accompany this proposal in a separate file, **`hardball-rules-sample-chapters.pdf`** (66 pages). They are reproduced exactly as typeset, along with the Contents and How to Play pages, so the format reads as intended:

- **Chapter 1 — Errors, Putouts & Assists**. The flagship scoring chapter and the book's opening argument, which is that an "error" is a narrow finding under Rule 9.12 and has little to do with how a play looked.
- **Chapter 7 — Interference & Obstruction**. The other end of the book's range: two terms the rulebook keeps strictly apart, with very different penalties.

Read them in your browser, no download needed: hardball.scottorgera.com/hardball-rules/read

Foreword

Howie Karpin, the senior Major League Baseball official scorer in New York, has agreed to write the foreword.

Karpin has scored games for both the Yankees and the Mets for over 25 years. A 45-year sports media veteran, he's been an on-air update anchor at SiriusXM Sports since 2008, following stints at WFAN, WCBS, CBS Radio Sports and ABC Sports Radio. He's the author or co-author of 14 books, among them *New York Yankees Firsts*, *Yankees Essential*, *162-0: Imagine a Mets Perfect Season*, *New York Rangers by the Numbers* and *976-1313: How Sports Phone Launched Careers and Broke New Ground*, written with Scott Orgera.

Official scoring is the book's biggest subject, so it's only fitting that the foreword comes from the man who keeps the official record in the sport's largest market, where his decisions become the statistics.

Accuracy

A rules book that blows a call isn't worth much, so accuracy comes first here.

Every question, including those from the original app bank, is checked against the 2026 Official Baseball Rules and carries its governing rule reference. Over a fifth of the questions come from the Hardball Rules trivia app, where they were written and vetted by working official scorers. The rest were drawn up for the book from the rulebook text and held to the same rule-by-rule check. **Within 90 days of signing with a publisher, the entire bank will be reviewed by major and minor league official scorers, with an umpire reviewing the playing-rules chapters.** Facts are dated and the rulebook edition is recorded, so the book can be updated as the rules are amended.

About the author

Scott Orgera is a sportswriter and statistician with over three decades of experience under his belt. He has covered thousands of Major League Baseball and NFL games during that time, and his reporting has extended to Division I college sports, professional soccer, the NBA and the NHL. His bylines include the Associated Press, Baseball America, Baseball Prospectus, FanGraphs, Forbes, Sports Illustrated and The Hardball Times, among others, and he has contributed to several editions of Baseball Prospectus's bestselling annuals as an associate editor, proofreader and writer.

Formerly a highly rated reporter for STATS for 25 seasons and an MLB.com datacaster, Scott has spent much of his career doing exactly what this book asks of its readers: watching a play and deciding, in real time and for the record, what just happened. He's a member of the Baseball Writers' Association of America and manages social media for its New York chapter. He co-wrote *976-1313: How Sports Phone Launched Careers and Broke New Ground* with Howie Karpin and graduated summa cum laude in Analytics from Purdue University.

Beyond sports, he has written more than 1,500 computing and technology articles for Lifewire (formerly About.com), co-written the children's book *Mikey and the Magic Medicine*, and spent over a quarter-century in software development, quality assurance and technical writing for multiple Fortune 100 companies. He also co-created the Hardball Rules trivia app.

Platform and promotion

The author spends his working life where this book's readers are: in the press box, among the broadcasters and official scorers, and in the ongoing conversation about how the game is scored.

- **The press box.** Over three decades covering Major League Baseball in New York have given the author working relationships with the writers, broadcasters and official scorers who cover the game every day, and who argue about these very rulings for a living.
- **The radio.** Howie Karpin, who's writing the foreword, has been an update anchor on SiriusXM Sports since 2008.
- **The BBWAA.** The author manages social media for the New York chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association of America.
- **Advance praise.** The author has longtime connections with current and former major league players, and plans to secure a cover blurb from a well-known name in the game.
- **Ready-made social posts.** Every cited ruling in the book doubles as a "You make the call" post, each one pointing back to the book.
- **Every kind of fan.** The book is written for anyone who's ever wondered why a play was called or scored the way it was. The author also plans to reach coaches, umpires, beer-league managers and scorekeeping parents through the leagues, clinics and scorekeeping groups they already belong to.

The companion app

The Hardball Rules trivia app, which the author co-created, is offline while it's being rebuilt, with plans to relaunch alongside the book. The two are designed to point readers toward each other, but **the book doesn't need the app**, and anyone who picks it up gets the full experience without ever downloading a thing.

Status

The manuscript is complete in draft form: 750+ questions, each one rule-cited and checked against the 2026 Official Baseball Rules, laid out across roughly 440 pages with artwork opening every chapter, along with a full cover wrap and printable scorecards. Question and page counts will shift in editing. Three steps remain before publication: the review of the full bank by official scorers and an umpire (within 90 days of signing), the foreword and an editorial pass, and the manuscript stays open to the publisher's editing, design and production process. Delivery dates for the corrected manuscript and the foreword will be agreed with the publisher.

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