



Baseball, a game that's just like life

Was haben Baseball und Apfelkuchen gemeinsam? Hier eine Klärung dieser Beziehung und ein Rundumschlag in Sachen Baseball-Vokabular in der Alltagssprache. medium US plus

It's October, and on the 24th, it'll be time for the World Series. This is the high point of the season for America's favorite sport — baseball. Unlike soccer's World Cup, this championship is for US teams only, so "World Series" is clearly a misnomer. And that's not the only thing a bit strange about the game.

A German friend once remarked how confusing baseball is. "What's fair about a game," he asked, "in which one team has nine players on the field while the other has only one?" As I thought about this ques-

tion, I began to focus on some of the strange things about baseball. For example, the game is said to be "as American as motherhood and apple pie." Just why either of these is thought to be specifically American is not really clear. Every country I've ever been to has had mothers, and several countries have apple pie. But let's get back to the game.

One player stands at home plate, facing the nine players from the other team, all of whom are spread around the field. The pitcher throws the ball, and the batter tries to hit it with his wooden bat.

If the batter is successful, he runs to first base, trying to get there before the other team catches the ball and throws it to their man standing at first base. If the batter hits the ball out of the stadium or into the stands where the fans are sitting, this is called a home run — and he scores a point. For every runner who crosses home plate, the team scores one point.

A batter might decide he doesn't want to even try to hit the ball. It's a decision he must make very quickly, since the ball is coming at him at a speed of up to 160 kilometers per hour. If he doesn't swing, the umpire must rule whether the pitch was bad (which is called a "ball") or good (a "strike"). If the batter swings and misses the ball, that's also a strike. After three strikes, the batter is "out" and has to leave the field. After three outs, the teams change positions.

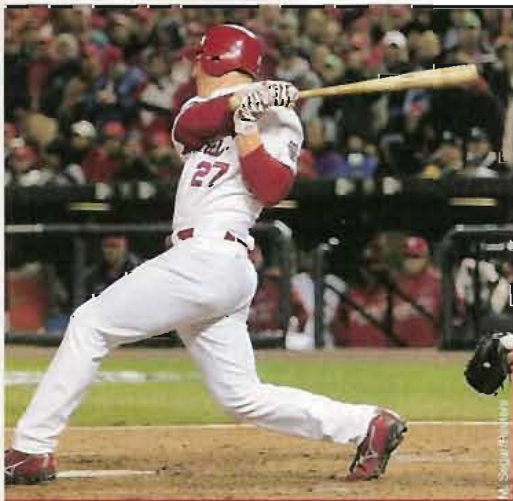
Many baseball terms have made their way into the American language as idioms. If a man can't "get to first base" with a woman, it means she won't let him kiss her, and she's probably not interested in him. Maybe she's playing hard to get because he's been "playing the field" (seeing other women). If he "strikes out," he had better just give up on her.

If you "have two strikes against you," it means that you have done two things wrong and have just one chance left. To be "off base" means to be wrong, while "touching base with someone" means to contact that person, for example to ask for an opinion.

"Going to bat for someone" means that you stick up for him. A number that's "in the ballpark" is one that's fairly close to being exact. If a person with an idea "hits a home run" or "knocks it out of the ballpark," he or she is very successful with it.

The word "hit" also comes from baseball, in the sense of a "hit song" or an idea that is a "big hit." To be "out in left field," however, means that you have completely the wrong idea about something and are nowhere close to being right.

Now I hope you all have at least a ballpark idea of what the game and its language are about. If so, then you're really on the ball. ●



"If a person with an idea 'knocks it out of the ballpark,' he or she is very successful with it"

ballpark [ˈbɔːlpɑːrk] <i>ifml.</i>	hier: ungefähr
bat [bæt]	Schläger
hard to get: play ~ [ˌhɑːd tə ˈɡet]	jmdn. abweisen, um interessanter zu sein
home plate [ˌhoʊm ˈpleɪt]	Schlagmat
misnomer [ˌmɪsˈnoʊmər]	falsche Bezeichnung
on the ball [ˌɒn ðə ˈbɔːl] <i>ifml.</i>	auf Draht, aufmerksam
pitch [pɪtʃ]	Wurf
pitcher [ˈpɪtʃər]	Werfer(in)
rule [ruːl]	entscheiden
score a point [ˌskɔːr ə ˈpɔɪnt]	einen Punkt machen
stands [stændz]	Zuschauertribüne
stick up for sb. [stɪk ˈʌp fɔː]	sich für jmdn. einsetzen
strike [straɪk]	Schlagversuch
umpire [ˈʌmpaɪər]	Schiedsrichter(in)