

Stickball: A [Streetplay.com](http://www.streetplay.com) Rule Sheet

Stickball

A crash course for the essential urban game

About Stickball

Stickball is a game that turns the landscape of the city street into an asphalt field of dreams for kids who want to play baseball literally in the shadow of home. A mop handle becomes the bat, manhole covers and car tires become bases, and a pink rubber ball (the spaldeen) replaces the hardball so that windows of apartment houses and cars aren't broken in the process.

To learn more about stickball, visit <http://www.streetplay.com/stickball/>

Game Essentials

Players: 2 teams, ideally 3-4 per team

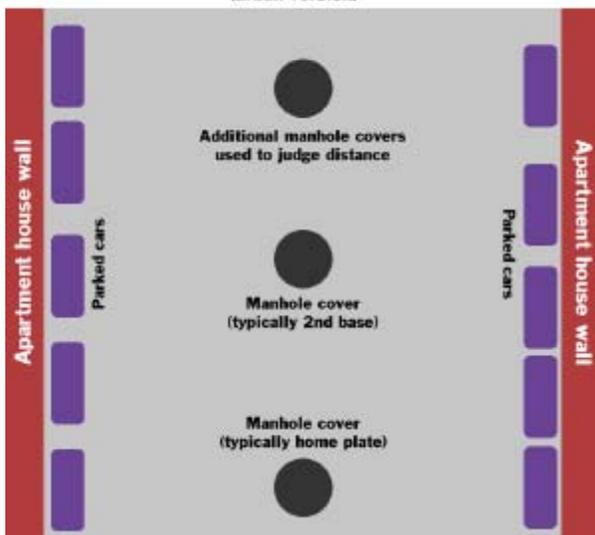
Materials needed:

- Bouncing rubber ball (spaldeen is ideal)
- A stick

Time to play: Anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes, depending on score and innings played

Typical stickball field

(urban version)



The Stickball field

Stickball originated in the street, and is still played there to this day. Typically, a stretch of street between 1-2 city blocks is required, as a batted (or “sticked”) ball can easily travel this distance. Additionally, stickball is often played on empty paved schoolyards.

How to play

The rules of stickball are essentially the same as baseball; we won't document the rules of baseball here because they're complicated; of course, you can make up your own rules and variations as needed.

The major rule distinction of stickball concerns balls and strikes. In stickball, a batter gets only two swings at a ball; fouls count as strikes. Because the stick is much skinnier than a baseball bat, and a rubber ball is smaller than a baseball, counting foul tips can make a game not only hard to officiate (it's hard to tell if a ball has been tipped), but can also make an at-bat extremely long.

There are three essential variations of stickball: self-hit (fungo), slow-pitch, and fast-pitch (f.k.a. wallball).

Fungo stickball

This may be the most commonly played version today. A batter hits the ball himself, either by throwing it in the air and hitting it on the fly, or by letting it bounce once or more before swinging. The reason many batters do this is to give them time to generate a truly Ruthian, “corkscrew” swing. Many let the ball bounce too low or too many times and strike out a lot.

Slow-pitch stickball

Many consider this the purest form of the game. A pitcher throws the ball toward the hitter on one bounce. While balls and strikes aren't called, the batter gets only 2 swings. If a batter doesn't swing, especially at a good pitch, he is typically derided by his opponents and teammates alike. While it may seem easy to hit a bounced ball, it actually is quite difficult, especially if the pitcher is skilled and imparts various spins on the ball to make it bounce in seemingly random ways.

Fast-pitch stickball

This has become popular in New York suburbs and other places where a cement wall is near a large expanse of pavement. A strike zone is painted on the wall behind the batter. Pitchers throw overhand to the batter, and the pitch doesn't bounce—balls and strikes are called as well. The distance a batted ball travels in fast-pitch can be Homeric—in fact, some play by the rule that the distance a ball travels (if not caught by a fielder) determines whether it's a single, double, etc. (i.e., you don't “run it out.”)

The last word

Stickball is the essence of urban games. It clearly illustrates the axiom, “necessity is the mother of invention” through its use of sticks and sewers. But whether you're in the city, suburb, or countryside, it's easy to get kids of all ages together for a game or two.

This Streetplay Rule Sheet is available at: <http://www.streetplay.com/rulesheets/stickball/>