

Five Ways that a Baseball Game Can Go On Forever

1. The game is a tie at the end of nine innings so it goes into extra innings, but nobody scores. Or, even odder, whenever the visiting team scores x runs in the top of the inning, the home team scores x in the bottom of the inning. If the game goes on too long then the umpire can suspend it, but the game will be completed later unless (1) the game does not affect the championship, and (2) the two teams do not have a scheduled game. This is very rare.
 - (a) Most innings in a minor league game: In 1981 the Pawtucket Red Sox and the Rochester Red Wings (Baltimore Orioles farm team) played a game that lasted 33 innings. Pawtucket won 3-2. The game took 8 hours and 25 minutes.
 - (b) Most innings in a major league game: In 1920 the Boston Braves and the Brooklyn Robins played a game that lasts 26 innings but was then called a tie by the umpire. There were no lights in stadiums and the field got to dark. The game took only 3 hours, 50 minutes (play was faster then).
2. The batter has two strikes on him and he keeps on hitting foul balls. In 2018 Brandon Belt fouled off 16 pitches which is the current record. Should there be a rule to stop this from going on to long? The problem is that if the rule is: *if on a 2-strike count the batter fouls the ball off X times then . . .* It is not clear what should happen: should the pitcher or batter be rewarded?
3. The pitcher keeps throwing to first base to hold the runner. Bill James points out that when baseball was first invented they knew to make sure that the pitcher-batter interaction should not go on that long, so they had the 4-balls, 3-strikes rules (they didn't think foul balls would be a serious problem). Had they thought the pitcher would throw to first base too many times, they would have put a limit on it.
4. A team just keeps getting hits and no outs in an inning. On May 8, 2004 the Detroit Tigers played the Texas Rangers. In the top of the fifth inning the Tigers faced 54 pitches and scored 8 runs. In the bottom of the fifth inning the Rangers faced 56 pitches and scored 10 runs. The entire inning lasted 1 hour and 8 minutes, which may be a record. (The Rangers won in the 10th inning 16-15.)
5. There is a runner on first and he runs towards second. The second baseman gets the ball and is set to tag the runner, so the runner runs back to first. The second baseman throws to the first baseman. Etc. This could go on forever but I doubt its ever gone on more than 30 seconds.