

## On Finding Very Early Baserunning Games in New England

Two of the serious complications of doing research on the origins of base ball are that (1) references to early games rarely describe actual rules of play, and (2) such pastimes go by many different names<sup>1</sup>. It is quite possible that similar games went by different local names across New England.

Here is our current compilation of game names and other search terms, listed in rough order of popularity as reflected in past searches

***[] Game Names Associated with New England<sup>2</sup> : base ball, cricket, cat, round ball, base, wicket, old-cat (variations include one-old-cat, two-old-cat, and so on, depending on number of players), goal, goal ball (sometimes gool ball), run-around/run-round, old-fashioned base ball. bat-and-ball, bass ball, baste ball, batball, long ball, feeder, kit kat, barnball, Massachusetts base ball, o' cat, roundstakes, scrub, soak ball, squares, stoolball, tip cat. *Note:* "rounders" and "town ball" are not commonly found in NE, based on our experience to date.***

***[] Game Names Found in Other US States: bandy wicket, long ball, chermany, cuck ball, long town, round town, town ball, Philadelphia town ball.***

***[] Very Early Names Found in England: cat and dog, club ball, pize ball, rounders, tip-cat, tutball, trap ball (not usually a baserunning game, we think).***

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<sup>1</sup> Because it seemed like fun at the time, Protoball's Glossary section lists over 250 names of (mostly) baserunning games at [https://protoball.org/Glossary\\_of\\_Games](https://protoball.org/Glossary_of_Games). Half of these preceded base ball, and the other half are likely derivative games like softball and wiffleball and kickball.

<sup>2</sup> Those terms following "batball" in the listing below are very rarely found, to date..

28 ***[] Names Found in Other Countries, and conceivably played by US***  
29 ***immigrants: brannboll (Sweden), lapta (Russia), longa meta (Hungary)***  
30 ***longball (Denmark), theque (France), oina (Romania), palant (Poland),***  
31 ***poisoned ball (France), Schlagball (Germany). See also Per Maigaard’s***  
32 ***survey of “battingball games,” reprinted as Appendix 6 of David***  
33 ***Block’s Baseball before We Knew It, pp. 260- 274.***

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35 **Some other search terms that may be worth trying:**

36 ***[] Ballplaying Bans: ban, prohibit, fine, ordinance. Protoball now lists***  
37 ***about 40 early local bans of ballplaying (to preserve souls and***  
38 ***windows, often) in US states by 1840, including 22 found in all six New***  
39 ***England states.***

40 ***[] Some Other Common Locutions: game of ball, ball game, match***  
41 ***game, play at ball, play base, (but note, “prisoner’s base” was a team***  
42 ***form of tag, perhaps similar to today’s Capture the Flag); plugging,***  
43 ***soaking, burning (as ways to retire runners by hitting them with the***  
44 ***ball between safe-haven bases).***

45 ***[] A Very Long List of proven search terms for early childhood ballgames,***  
46 ***compiled at the University of Wisconsin, is found at:***

47 ***<https://dare.wisc.edu/surveys/survey-results/1965-1970/childrens->***  
48 ***[games/ee11/](https://dare.wisc.edu/surveys/survey-results/1965-1970/childrens-).***

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50 **If you have luck with other search terms, or can improve on these**  
51 **search lists, tell us and we’ll adjust this page as we go.**

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