

Dingers

“The Instructions”

Based on “Toppers” by Kevin Makice.
With improvements by Rocky Scaletta, for playability

How to Play

Dingers is a baseball simulation game you play with your own baseball cards! Build and manage your own team through realistic baseball scenarios!

Quick Start

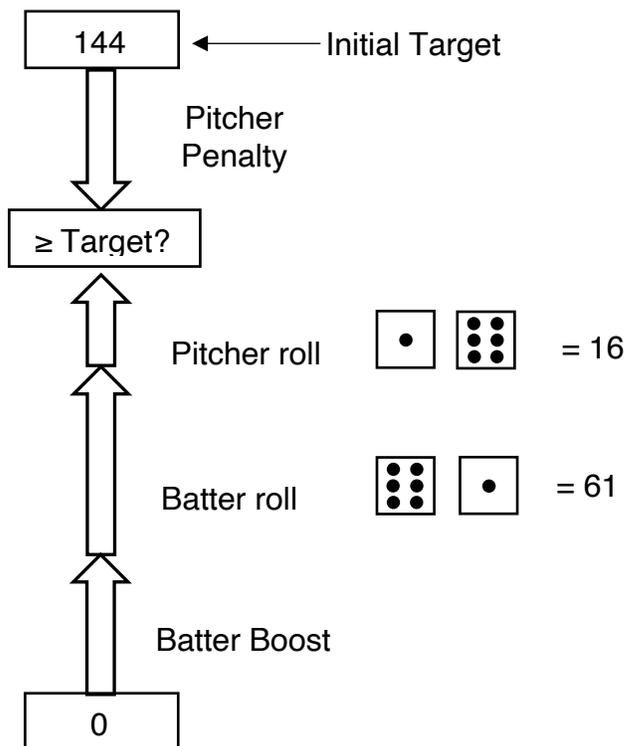
Dingers is played with 1 or 2 “managers.” (That’s you!) Each manager builds a team of 9 hitters and at least 1 pitcher using your favorite baseball cards. There’s lots of fun to be had in fielding your best team, so see below for more details!

For each plate appearance, each manager rolls 2 dice to determine a roll value. Choose one die as the tens digit, and the other die as the ones digit. (The batting team wants a high value, and the pitching team wants a low value.)

The Target is 144 minus the Pitcher Penalty (see below for how to calculate). The Swing Value is the total of the pitching team’s roll, the batting team’s roll, and the Batter Boost. If the Swing Value is greater than or equal to the Target, the batter wins. If not, the pitcher wins.

After determining whether the pitcher or the batter wins, the winning manager rolls one more die to determine the result of the plate appearance. Consult the tables on your scoresheet to find the outcome.

Proceed for nine innings and see who wins. “Don’t forget to sing in the 7th inning!”



Build your team.

*“Your goal shouldn’t be to buy players, your goal should be to buy wins.
And in order to buy wins, you need to buy runs.”*

- Peter Brand, *Moneyball*

Your team has 10-25 players, all represented by baseball cards. Use any baseball cards you can find, as long as they include individual, major-league season statistics on the back. Your team needs at least 9 batters and a pitcher, and you will want several bullpen pitchers and position players on the bench.

Kevin Makice suggests three ways to draft a team: fielding an all-star team from your personal collection of cards, playing with a complete set of cards for a single MLB team, or selecting players from a common pool of 50 cards.

There are many different series and manufactures of baseball cards featuring exciting baseball stars of today. Alternatively, here’s a hint: Starting in the late 1980s, baseball card manufacturers flooded the market with millions (some say billions) of cards. As a result, you can get large numbers of classic baseball cards for not a lot of money, and some of them have never even been opened! Here’s another hint: There’s no need to use that expensive Mickey Mantle rookie card, and in fact it’s better to use a later, less-valuable card for your favorite player. Most players just weren’t that good in their rookie season, and most cards will have statistics for every year, anyway!

On those statistics, you can use years with major league statistics only. (Minors don’t count!) I’d say that Negro League or AAGPBL cards are OK to use, if you can find any cards. “Diamond Kings” and other typical insert cards won’t work because they don’t have statistics on the back, but feel free to use reissues of classic cards or other inexpensive cards.

Sharpen your pencil

“You can’t tell the players without a scorecard!”

- Traditional

Get a new scorecard for your team. Fill in vital information like the name of your team, the date, time, temperature, and the name of the official scorekeeper. The official scorekeeper may be one of the managers, and each manager can keep his or her own score.

Set your lineup

“You can’t think and hit the ball at the same time.”

- Yogi Berra, New York Yankees

Select a batting order for your 9 batters. You need a card for each position (C, 1B, 2B, 3B, SS, three OFs, and DH). A player listed as a utility infielder (IF) can play any of the infield positions (1B, 2B, 3B, or SS). Any position player can serve as DH, but a player listed as a DH can only be the DH. *That’s the problem with the DH!*

For a simplified game, make up your batting order out of 9 position players without regard for their positions.

Fill in your scorecard with each player's name, position, Batter Boost, and Runners in Scoring Position (RISP) Bonus. The Batter Boost is 100 times the player's batting average for a particular season, rounded down (i.e., the first two digits of the average). The RISP bonus is that player's number of Runs Batted In (RBI) for that same season, divided by 10, and rounded down. For example, a player who batted .271 with 84 RBI would have a batter boost of 27 and a RISP bonus of 8.

Pick the Starting Pitcher

*"Anybody who's ever had the privilege of seeing me play knows that
I am the greatest pitcher in the world."*

- Dizzy Dean, St. Louis Cardinals

When it's your team's turn to pitch, designate a starting pitcher. The other manager will write down the pitcher's name, Pitcher Penalty, Target, and Endurance (Max) in his or her scorecard. Pitcher Penalty is ten times the pitcher's Earned Run Average (ERA) from a particular season, rounded up to the nearest integer. For example, an ERA of 3.18 becomes a pitcher penalty of 32. The Target is simply 144 minus the Pitcher Penalty. So, for the same example, the Target is 112. Endurance is the number of Innings Pitched (IP) multiplied by three and divided by the number of games played (G), rounded down. (Disregard partial innings pitched.) For example, a pitcher with 252 IP over 34 G would have $(252 * 3) / 34 = 22$. As described below, Endurance is the number of batters a pitcher may face before a relief pitcher must be brought in.

Play the Game

"I never had a job. I just always played baseball."

- Satchel Paige, Kansas City Monarchs

Play progresses generally according to the rules of baseball. Dingers focuses on the core individual matchup of baseball: pitcher against batter. For each batter, the manager for each team rolls two dice (four dice total). Each manager determines his or her roll value by using one die as the tens digit and the other die as the ones digit. The manager for the batting team will want to pick a larger number, and the manager for the pitching team will want to pick a smaller number. For example, if the batting team rolls a one and a six, the manager will select 61 (and not 16). If the pitching team rolls a three and a four, the manager will select 34 (and not 43).

Add the value for each team to determine the roll value. Add the Batter Boost to the roll value to determine the Swing Value. If there are any runners in scoring position (RISP) (i.e., on second or third base), increase the Swing Value by the RISP bonus for the current batter. If the Swing Value is greater than or equal to the Target for the current pitcher, the batter wins the showdown. If the Swing Value is less than the Target, the pitcher wins the showdown.

In the illustrative example, the roll value is 95. The batter boost is 27, so the swing value is 122. The batter wins, even without adding in the RISP bonus.

If the batter wins, the batter becomes a baserunner and the manager for the batting team rolls another die to determine the outcome of the play. Find the outcome in Table 1, below.

No.	Outcome	Note
1	Walk (BB)	Runners advance one base if forced
2	Single (1B)	All baserunners advance 1 base
3	Single (1B)	All baserunners advance 1 base
4	Single (1B)	All baserunners advance 1 base
5	Double (2B)	All baserunners advance 2 bases
6	Home Run (HR)	All baserunners score

Table 1. Batter wins!

If, instead, the pitcher wins the showdown, the manager for the pitching team rolls another die to determine the outcome of the play. Find the outcome in Table 2, below.

No.	Outcome	Note
1	Fielder's Choice (FC) / Error (E)	If runners are on base, lead runner is out and batter reaches on FC. If no runners on base, batter reaches on E.
2	Strikeout (K)	
3	Flyout (FO)	Runner on third base with less than two outs scores on a sacrifice fly (SAC). Runners on first and second hold.
4	Ground out (GO)	Runners on first and second with less than two outs may advance one base. Runner holds at third.
5	Strikeout looking (X)	Batter is heartily derided
6	Double play (DP)	Batter and lead runner are out

Table 2. Pitcher wins!

Record the outcome of the play in your scorebook and continue according to the rules of baseball. At the end of 9 innings, the team with the most runs wins!

As Kevin Makice reminded us, "Remember to sing in the 7th inning."

Substitutions

"Being known as a pinch hitter adds five years to your age."

- Terry Crowley, Baltimore Orioles

Pitchers and batters may be substituted at any time, but a player substituted for cannot return to the game. Additionally, a relief pitcher must face at least one batter before being removed from the game.¹

¹ Note that as of the 2020 season, the major leagues now require a relief pitcher to face 3 batters or complete the half-inning before being removed. I think this is a weird rule, and if they wanted to reduce the amount of pitcher substitutions, they should just reduce roster size (maybe using an active roster/taxi squad setup).

After a pitcher has reached his or her Max Endurance, the manager for the pitching team must send in a relief pitcher. Write down the new pitcher's information on the appropriate scorecard and adjust the hit bar as appropriate.

It is up to the batting team's manager to notice when the pitcher has reached his or her Max. There is no penalty for failing to notice that a pitcher has reached his or her Max, but when notified the pitching team's manager must pull the pitcher. If the pitching team is out of relief pitchers, the current pitcher may stay in the game, but with ERA increased by 2.0 (increasing the pitcher penalty by 20).

Injuries

"Over 162 games and even tough guys get strains... Sore arms... Muscle pulls..."

- Lou Brown, Manager, Cleveland Indians

Unfortunately, injuries are a part of life in the big leagues, so they are also a part of life in Dingers. If at any time the managers roll four sixes (132), the pitcher has a game-ending injury, and if the managers roll four ones (22), the batter has a game-ending injury. The injured player must be removed immediately for a substitute and cannot re-enter the game. The managers roll again to continue the plate appearance.

High-Leverage Situations

"I love funk. The funk is good. Whenever you get funk in the bullpen, I like that."

- Joe Maddon, Manager, Chicago Cubs

A high-leverage situation occurs in any inning in which one or more runners are in scoring position. Ordinarily, in high-leverage situations the batter receives the benefit of the RISP Bonus. To break up a high-leverage situation (i.e., put out a fire), the pitching team's manager can send in a "fireman" (that is, a relief pitcher) before the current pitcher has reached his Max Endurance. Sending in the relief pitcher eliminates the RISP Bonus until there are no more runners in scoring position or the half-inning ends (whichever comes first).

For example, the batting team loads the bases with two outs. The starting pitcher has faced 20 batters and has a Max of 22. The starting pitcher is pulled for a reliever, and the next batter goes to bat without the RISP Bonus.

Pinch hitting can manufacture a high-leverage situation. A pinch hitter receives the benefit of the RISP Bonus for a single plate appearance, even if no runners are on base. Additionally, a pinch hitter gets the RISP Bonus back when facing a fireman in a high-leverage situation. Remember, a relief pitcher must face at least one batter, meaning that you can't send in a second reliever to counter the pinch hitter.

Let's go back to the previous example. The bases are loaded with two outs, and a relief pitcher has just come in to take away the RISP Bonus. The batting team can pinch-hit for the current batter, which restores the RISP Bonus. The relief pitcher has to pitch to the current batter and can't be pulled for a new pitcher.

Let's continue the example. Let's say the pinch-hitter makes a single and one runner scores. The bases are still loaded, but the RISP Bonus goes away for the next hitter, because it remains a high-leverage situation. The next hitter strikes out. The reliever can stay in the game, but the RISP Bonus will be used as normal for the next inning.

A pinch hitter may be any position player, but the lineup must be adjusted the next inning to restore the correct positions. For example, if an outfielder (OF) pinch hits for the shortstop (SS), then in the next inning another shortstop must be reinserted in the lineup. In that example, the manager could replace the pinch-hitting OF with another SS, or one of the original OFs could be replaced with a new SS. The pinch hitter RISP bonus only applies to the inning in which a substitution is made.

Closers

"I get the ball, I throw the ball, and then I take a shower."
- Mariano Rivera, New York Yankees

We've talked about "firemen," now let's talk about "closers." A closer is a relief pitcher put into the game to collect saves, typically in the last inning when the team is ahead. When you think about a closer, you typically think about a hard-throwing monster who can bring the high heat, the stinky cheese, you know, really fireball it in there!

In Dingers, you can bring in a new pitcher to start the 9th inning (or any subsequent extra inning) as a closer. When you bring in a closer, the pitcher penalty is reduced by pitchers' number of saves for the season used to calculate the Pitcher Penalty. A pitcher with a lot of saves could potentially reduce the Pitcher Penalty down to zero (it cannot be negative). The closer effect only lasts for one inning (although most pitchers with a lot of saves will have a very low limit anyway)!

For example, in 1985, a pitcher had an ERA of 3.04, which results in a Pitcher Penalty of 30. In that same year, the pitcher had 33 saves. When brought in as a closer, that pitcher would have an effective Pitcher Penalty of zero, for a Limit of 144. However, that same pitcher logged 97 innings pitched over 65 games, so would have a Max of only 5 batters.

Trades

"No one knows this yet, but one of us has just been traded to Kansas City."
- Casey Stengel, Manager, New York Mets

One way to build your team is to trade your cards with your friends. They're called trading cards, after all! And don't limit yourself to trading cards—try to be creative, just like in the big leagues (and especially like in the independent leagues)! For example, in 1996, pitcher Kerry Ligenberg was traded to the Atlanta Braves for twelve cases of baseballs and two cases of bats. Even that was a pretty normal trade, all things considered. Consider that in 1931, struggling shortstop Johnny Jones was traded to the independent Charlotte Hornets for a 25-pound turkey!

These Rules are Meant to be Broken

I mean that's just part of baseball

These rules have been tested and provide a fun, balanced game that approaches the scoring and tactics of real baseball. However, don't be discouraged from changing the rules around as you or your friends see fit!

For example, consider changing the number of innings to shorten each game. Little League often plays six-inning games, and the minor leagues have been experimenting with seven-inning games for doubleheaders. If you want a longer experience, play a five- or seven-game series with the same teams. Each game in a series should have a different starting pitcher! As suggested above, you can relax the requirements on positions in order to speed up team selection. If you want to adjust the balance of scoring and defense, the easiest factor is to change the Initial Limit from 144. A lower number means more scoring!

And if you get caught breaking the rules, well that's up to you and your friends to decide as well. Maybe one of your players (cards) gets ejected or suspended for a few games? Maybe the manager (that's you) has to pay a fine in Skittles®? Just please don't get any pine tar on your baseball cards!

Appendix: Simplified Swing Calculations

The default rules above provide a precise, tested calibration of offense and defense. However, they involve a lot of addition, so you'll probably need a calculator to hammer out rolls quickly. In order to simplify the math, consider using the roll table shown in Table 3, below.

To use Table 3, first find the column with a value less than or equal to the current pitcher's ERA. Next, find the row with a value less than or equal to the current batter's batting average. Now, roll four dice (two for each manager) and add up the values as described above. If the roll value is greater than or equal to the roll value shown in the table, then the batter wins. If not, the pitcher wins. Roll a fifth die to determine the outcome of the plate appearance as above. Have fun!

	1.00	1.25	1.50	1.75	2.00	2.25	2.50	2.75	3.00	3.25	3.50	3.75	4.00
0.400	94	91	89	86	84	81	79	76	74	71	69	66	64
0.375	96	93	91	88	86	83	81	78	76	73	71	68	66
0.350	99	96	94	91	89	86	84	81	79	76	74	71	69
0.325	101	98	96	93	91	88	86	83	81	78	76	73	71
0.300	104	101	99	96	94	91	89	86	84	81	79	76	74
0.270	107	104	102	99	97	94	92	89	87	84	82	79	77
0.250	109	106	104	101	99	96	94	91	89	86	84	81	79
0.225	111	108	106	103	101	98	96	93	91	88	86	83	81
0.200	114	111	109	106	104	101	99	96	94	91	89	86	84

Table 3. Alternate Roll table.