

Kids' Activity Guide

It's our big day—
just us two.
We have our gloves,
and mine's brand new.

Ballpark is a story about a boy and his grandfather going to their first big-league baseball game together. The boy and his grandfather take in the sights and sounds of the ballpark. Meyer and Whitt capture every element of a baseball game, from the crack of fly balls to the joy of the crowd as they eat snacks and cheer for their team. Baseball is a staple of American culture and there is nothing quite like a grandparent and their grandkid going to their first big game! With playful use of rhyme your child will love reading about a trip to the ballpark.

Pre-reading Questions

1. What is baseball?
2. What is a flag?
3. What does the American flag look like?
4. Do you play any sports?
5. What is stretching? Have you ever stretched?
6. Can you run in place?
7. What snacks do people eat at a baseball game?
8. What is a rhyme?
9. What is family? Who is a part of your family?

The questions above will set the stage for reading *Ballpark* and introduce your child to some of the concepts in the book.

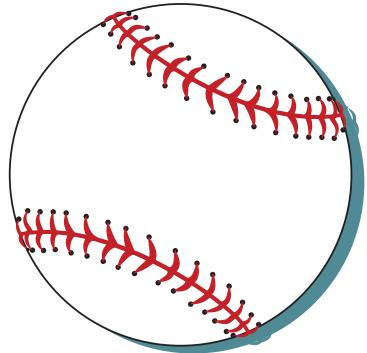
Dough Baseball Activity:

Your child will create their own three-dimensional baseball with homemade dough.

Dough Materials (per batch/color):

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ½ cup salt
- 2 tablespoons cream of tartar
- 1½ cups boiling water
- A few drops of red food coloring
- 1 mixing bowl
- 1 large spoon
- 1 measuring cup

Follow the directions below to make two batches of dough; the white dough will use no food coloring and the red will. If you want to make a non traditional baseball, feel free to make the dough any color you would like.



Recipe Directions:

1. Have your child measure out and mix the flour, salt, cream of tartar, and oil in the bowl. For younger children, mark and label whole numbers and halves on your measuring cup.
2. You will add the boiling water.
3. Stir continuously until the dough becomes sticky.
4. Let your child add the red food coloring (a few drops).
5. Allow the dough to cool (three to four minutes).
6. Remove the dough from the bowl, and knead it for a couple of minutes until it is no longer sticky, adding flour if necessary.
7. Store dough in a plastic container or plastic zip-topped bag.

After making your dough and letting it cool, help your child form the white dough into a sphere. Help your child make two long red strips and press them gently into the white sphere parallel to each other. Then make several small red strips and push them across the long ones to make laces. Place the baseball in a safe warm location and let it harden overnight.

American Flag Craft:

Materials:

7 popsicle sticks
Glue or paste stick
Scissors
Red paint and white paint
2 paintbrushes
1 piece of blue construction paper
Star stickers

Instructions:

1. Paint three popsicle sticks red and two white (only paint one side).
2. Let the sticks dry with the paint-side up.
3. After they have dried, set the sticks next to each other, alternating red and white.
4. Glue another popsicle stick diagonally across the backs of both the red and white sticks to keep them together.
5. Cut out a small rectangle from the blue construction paper and glue it to the upper-left corner of the flag.
6. Stick star stickers on top of the blue rectangle.
7. Glue the final popsicle stick to the bottom-left corner of the flag to create a handle/flagpole.



Ballpark Stretching Game:

In *Ballpark* the players get ready to play by stretching and running. This is a game that will teach your child a fun and easy way to stretch. Your child will use their imagination in this game to stretch his or her body and have a great time.

Instructions:

You will explain to your child that you are running around the ballpark, as you both start jogging in place. During the jog you will give them a variety of commands that they will react to.

- **Touch the base** – reach down and touch the ground.
- **Swing the bat** – swing their arms like they are swinging a bat.
- **Catch the fly ball** - they will reach both arms into the air and stretch out or jump for a fly ball.
- **Catch the ball to the left and to the right** – they will reach both arms to the right or left.
- **Throw a pitch** – they will mimic throwing a ball.
- **Be a catcher** – they will squat down like a catcher.

Jog in place and give commands for three to six minutes. You can also let your child give the commands once they have played a few times. This game is more fun with additional players so include the whole family!

Caramel Popcorn Snack:

One of the best memories people have of the ballpark is of the food they've eaten. From hot dogs to peanuts, there are many snacks to choose from. For over a hundred years baseball fans have been eating boxes of caramel popcorn at the ballpark. With this easy recipe you and your child can make and enjoy it at home!

Ingredients:

4 quarts of popped popcorn
1 cup dry-roasted peanuts or pecans
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup light corn syrup
1 cup brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
Microwave safe mixing bowl
Brown paper bag

Directions:

1. Place the popcorn and nuts in a brown paper bag, and then set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, mix together the brown sugar, butter, salt, and corn syrup.
3. Microwave the bowl on high for two minutes, then stir and microwave for two more minutes.
4. Stir in baking soda then pour into the paper bag.
5. Carefully shake the paper bag and then close bag and microwave on high for one and a half minutes. Carefully shake bag again and then microwave for one and a half minutes more.
6. Pour out on sheet pan to cool.

Rhyming Activity:

Ballpark is written using rhymes. This activity will allow your child to learn about and practice using rhyming words. Practice working on rhyming with your child by using the chart on page 4, and allow them to name words that rhyme with words from *Ballpark*. Work with your child to fill in the chart below with words that rhyme with the last word. After filling out the chart, help them make sentences that rhyme.

Line from Ballpark:	Words that rhyme with...
It's our big day— just us two .	two: Ex: flew, blue, you , new, goo, chew, zoo, dew, boo
Complete the Rhyme:	Ex: The sun is shining for me and you .
There's the ballpark, big and wide .	wide:
Complete the Rhyme:	
There's the field! Men stretch and run .	run:
Complete the Rhyme:	
We see the flag. It waves up high .	high:
Complete the Rhyme:	
The teams are ready for the call .	call:
Complete the Rhyme:	
The ball sails through the air .	air:
Complete the Rhyme:	
A runner steals. He slides in low .	low:
Complete the Rhyme:	
The crowd stands up. The players rest .	rest:
Complete the Rhyme:	
The game is over. Our team won !	won:
Complete the Rhyme:	
A swing, then smack— A high fly ball .	ball:
Complete the Rhyme:	

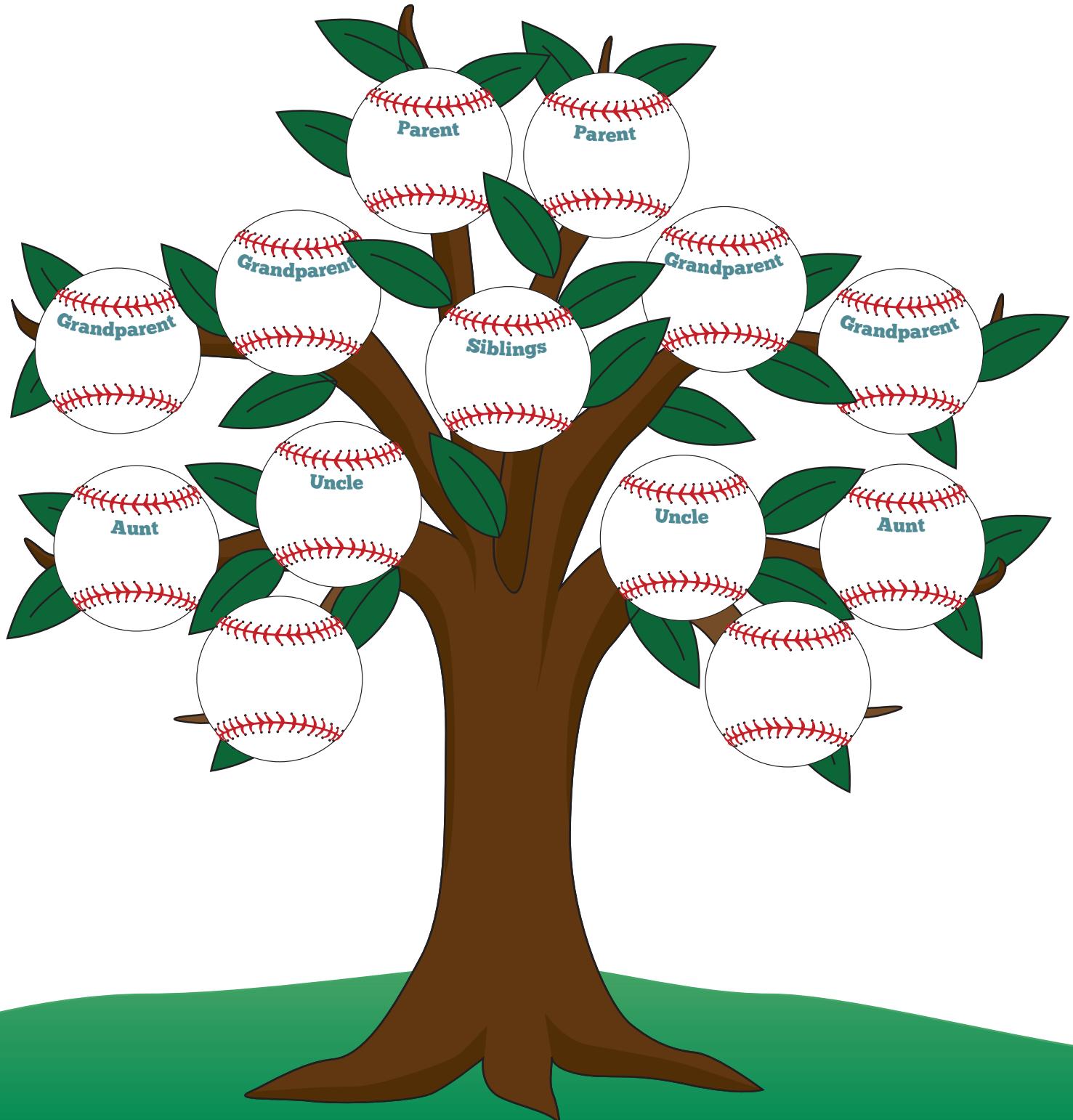
Ballpark Vocabulary Activity:

As a post-reading activity, define and discuss the following vocabulary words with your child. After you talk about each word, ask your child to draw a picture that includes several of the words.

1. **Baseball** – a game played between two teams of nine players, each using bats and balls. It is played on a field with four bases that mark the course a runner must run around in order to score. *Baseball* also refers to the type of ball used in the game of baseball.
2. **Flag** – a piece of cloth with a design that is used as a symbol for a country, state, or an organization.
3. **Snack** – a small meal that is intended to be shared.
4. **Rhyme** – one of two or more words having a similarity in sound.
5. **Family** – a social group of closely related people who usually share ancestry.
6. **Strike** – when the pitcher throws the ball to the batter, and the batter misses.
7. **Stretch** – to extend body parts to their fullest.
8. **Team** – a group of people working in coordination on one side of a contest or game.
9. **Recipe** – instructions for preparing a food dish.
10. **Glove** – a padded leather hand covering with a deep pocket, used in baseball.

Baseball Family Tree

Ballpark is about a boy and his grandfather going to their first ball game together. Family trees are an excellent way to visualize family dynamics and relationships. You and your child will examine your family by filling out a *Ballpark*-inspired family tree below. Use the blank baseballs, or create your own, to add additional family members to your family tree.



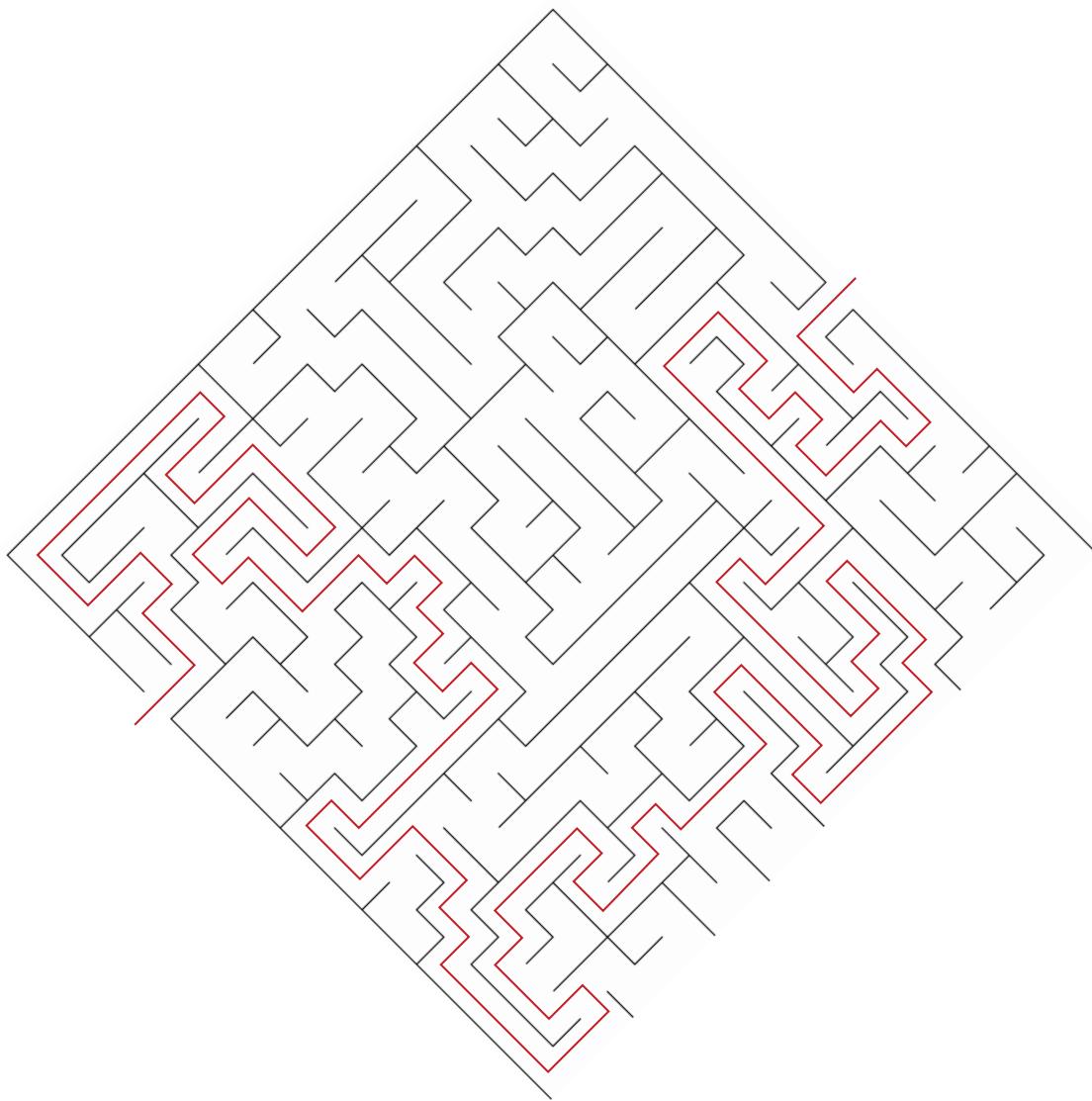
Ballpark Maze

Help the baseball find its way into the glove.



Ballpark Activity Answer Key

Maze Key



This guide was created by Chris Valcarcel, Educational Consultant, and Jennifer Messinger, Graphic Designer

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