

## The Ghost Runner Rule

**Overview:** If the score is tied at the conclusion of the ninth inning (or, in the Minor Leagues, at the conclusion of a seven-inning game) a runner will automatically be placed on second base at the start of every extra half-inning.

### An experiment becomes official

First implemented in COVID-era 2020, this controversial rule, unofficially referred to as the "ghost runner rule," is intended to speed up the game. To the delight of some critics, it appeared the rule would become extinct after the 2022 season. Instead MLB made it official in February 2023.

This rule essentially grants each team an automatic double at the start of each extra half-inning.

- The batter scheduled to lead off the extra inning will continue to be the leadoff hitter and will come to bat.
- The player who preceded the leadoff hitter in the batting order will automatically be placed on second base.

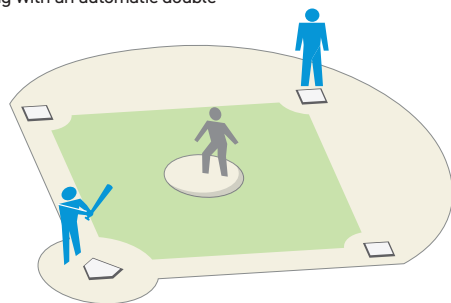
**Exception:** If the player who preceded the leadoff hitter is a pitcher, the player who preceded the pitcher in the batting order may be the player placed on second base.

**Note:** Players who were substituted during the game will not be allowed to return in extra innings.

The plate umpire will verify that the proper player has been placed on second base. If this isn't true he will inform the offensive team's manager to correct the situation.

If an umpire or a manager notices after a play that an improper player was placed on second base, the improper player will be replaced by the proper player. All plays will count and there will be no penalties.

**Example:** Starting with an automatic double



1. A game will go into extra innings if the score is tied at the end of the ninth inning (or at the end of the seventh in a seven-inning game).
2. If player five in the batting order is scheduled to be the next batter, he will be the leadoff hitter in the extra half-inning as scheduled.
3. Player four will automatically be placed as a runner on second base. If player four is a pitcher, player three may be placed on second base instead.

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### Sorry, purists—it's official!

When our fourth edition went to print, the less-than-extremely-popular ghost runner rule looked like it was being dropped for the 2023 season. However, in February 2023, MLB let us know that it's here to stay. (Or at least that's what they're telling us.) So, here it is!

### Extra innings start with an automatic double

In extra innings, this rule automatically places a runner on second base at the start of every half-inning. Why? To help speed up the game.

### Supporters include the MLB Players Association, managers, and team owners

While purists may scoff, the Major League Baseball Players Association, managers, and team owners point to its benefits: shorter games and saving pitchers and players from overexertion. Back in 2022, USA Today quoted Arizona Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo on the ghost runner rule: "I thought it was working really well. I know it's not traditional baseball, but when you're talking about saving arms, and saving guys for the next day, I think it's good."