

Off the Wall

A crash course in using a wall as a bat

About Off the wall

This is a quick paced game that captures much of the excitement of baseball. It is simple to play and can accommodate different numbers of players. In many areas where there's an architectural detail on the apartment house wall, the game is called *off the point*.

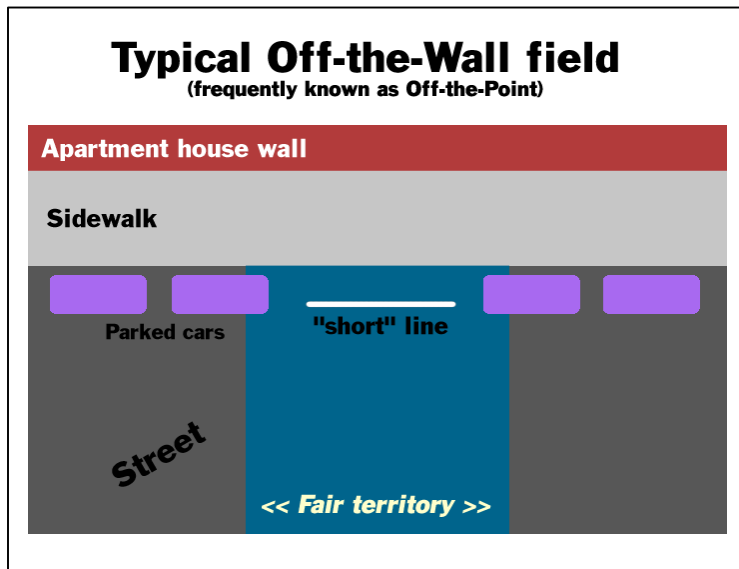
Game Essentials

Players: 1-4 per side

Materials needed:

- Bouncing rubber ball (spaldeen is ideal)
- Street with little traffic or obstruction, or a paved area near a wall

Time to play: 15-25 minutes (depends on innings played)



The Off the Wall field

Off the Wall can be played on a handball court, on the side of the building (often near a fire hydrant due to the lack of parked cars), or anyplace there's a wall facing an open area. The field should be at least 20 feet wide and 60 feet long.

How to play

Choose sides and decide the boundaries of the field (the "short" line and the left/right bounds of fair territory). The more players there are, the more fair territory you should allocate. Decide how many innings you'll play. The basic rules of baseball are used, but there is no baserunning—off the wall uses "imaginary runners."

Fielders take positions beyond the short line. The "batter" throws the ball against the wall. If it's foul, or doesn't clear the "short" line, it's out. If it's caught on the fly, it's an out. Otherwise, it's a hit, and each bounce it takes before being caught counts for a base (one bounce: single, two bounces: double, etc.). As in real baseball, batters take their turns at bat. Players keep track of imaginary runners: for example, if batter #1 gets a single and then batter #2 gets a double, there are "men on 2nd and 3rd" (no allowance is made for the speed of the imaginary runners). You may choose an upper boundary on the wall, above which the batter can't throw in order to clear the short line.

In the variation called "off the point," a hit is a single, double, etc., depending the distance the ball travels rather than the number of bounces it takes. You determine these distances before the game starts. The "short line" is the edge of the sidewalk the hitter stands on. All balls that reach a fielder must be caught cleanly, even those that don't clear the sidewalk. A dropped ball is an error, and an extra base is granted to the hitter (turning a normal out into a basehit!). Since the wall has an actual "point" on it, the ball can travel far if the batter hits it. Sometimes the ball can hit the wall of the apartment house across the street, in which case it's a home run—unless, of course, it's caught cleanly before it hits the ground (or make your own ground rules)!

The last word

Off the Wall is great for as few as 2 kids. For hitters, arm strength is less important than shrewd ball placement, making it a fine choice of games for a mix of "big kids" and "little kids." Keeping track of "imaginary runners" helps introduce players to baseball rules (not to mention abstract thought).

This Streetplay Rule Sheet is available at: <http://www.streetplay.com/rulesheets/offthewall/>