

# Ballpark 10 Commandments

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# 1. Thou shalt respect thy team.

I'm a firm believer in the concept of 'praise in public, criticize in private, although even I will admit that I occasionally get caught up in a moment. Still. The first and foremost commandment is Respect Your Team!! You are there to see baseball with hopefully a large number of others. This is a privilege! Privileges can be lost when they are not earned.

All other commandments stem from this concept. Pay attention to the game. Cheer your team's players – even if you do not particularly like that one guy.

DO NOT BOO YOUR OWN TEAM. Leave that for the fans of the visiting team. If you must comment on the particular failings of a player – and we all have them – there are innumerable blogs, twitter, Facebook or wherever with which to do so.



## 2. Thou shalt respect thy fellow fans.

This is a fundamental principle on which ALL following commandments are based. There are thousands of people here to watch a game and YOU are not the most important person there. Be respectful of the people around you – don't intrude on their space whenever possible – this includes your spilled beer, sunflower and peanut shells or whatever.

You can't help that you are tall but be conscious that it will affect the eye line of people behind you. People will adjust for it but if you keep moving? That requires a LOT of adjustment. Don't have an extended cell phone conversation during the game while in your seat. You can wait for the changeover and take the conversation to the concourse. No, trying to find your buddy on the other side of park and standing and waving during an at bat is not acceptable. Please consider that there is a time for everything.

In addition, playing to the cameras with your signage is a great way to connect with someone at home whether you are at a home game or away! However, if you are attempting to get the attention of said cameras by holding up your giant poster board during game play whether you are standing or sitting, you are asking to get hit in the back of the head with a beer – and that is a criminal waste of a good adult beverage. Be aware of the activity on the field and restrain yourself.

### 3. Thou shalt not leave thy seat with a batter in the box

As a natural correlation to the 2nd Commandment, active game play is the primary focus for those in attendance. This means hitters waiting for a pitch or pitchers serving up a hitter. There are two sides of your own team going on here. If there is active game play going on, WAIT TO MOVE! If your bladder is such that you can't hold it until the change over, the polite thing to do is warn those around you that frequent exits might be necessary because you are infringing on their game experience – apologies are appropriate here.

If your bladder situation is caused by excessive consumption of alcohol, my general reaction is 'life is hard, be a grownup.' If it's not for a potty break, I honestly don't see anything short of medical emergency that requires you to move from that seat you paid for while your team is playing the game. No, getting another beer is NOT a medical emergency.

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### 3. Continued...

All of these activities can WAIT until a vendor comes to you or there is a changeover on the field (or one of those protracted mound discussions). I would also like to point out that the corollary regarding to RETURNING to your seat also applies. You know those people that stop you at the top from walking down the stairs until the current batter finishes. Why didn't you take the hint?!? Some of you have much better seats will have a long walk down to your seats and might not be able to do so in the time the next batter moves from the on deck circle to the batters box. Please be aware of this and consider it in your start time! You might want to simply wait by one of the TV's until the changeover when you will have a greater length of time to move to your seat. If a miscalculation occurs, then kindly lower yourself on the stairs and wait to move your ass down the seats until the batter is finished.

No, apologies are simply not adequate in this situation. You chose to infringe on your neighbors with no good reason and I would not blame them for retaliating by spitting in your beer while you aren't looking – not that they would if they were following the baseball game commandments but should you really expect a consideration from them that you are unwilling to do?



## 4. Thou shalt not do the WAVE!

See PREVIOUS!!!!

Just because YOU are bored at the game does not mean that the majority of others are. They are trying to SEE the game and people randomly standing in front of them does NOT allow for respectful treatment of your fellow fans. If you are worried about being bored, bring a friend and have a quiet conversation. Heck, play a quiet game on your smart phone or something. But please stay in your SEAT and do not deliberately choose to attempt to transfer the focus of the game to YOU. Please realize that the wave is for football. I sure as heck am not paying these ticket prices to see you.

## 5. Thou shalt not STOP in the pathway.

This is one of those things that can happen “accidentally” more than anything else. But as you learn to be more aware of others while at the baseball game, hopefully, you will understand why this is such a difficulty. After all, there are fellow fans doing their darnedest to get to their seats before players take the field! Please, do not stop at the top or bottom of a stairwell while you try to figure out (or remember) where you are going. God forbid you would actually stop in the MIDDLE of the stairwell. Understand that the general flow of traffic is much like the streets you drove on to get to the ballpark. Stay to the right and merge gradually if you need to get to the left – which might mean planning ahead a little bit. STOPPING to turn into oncoming traffic where it’s unexpected is a good way to get run into – from both directions. This is just plain DANGEROUS not to mention disrespectful to the other fans you put in harm’s way. Stairwells are a limited and crowded pathway already, so please be kind and move out of the flow of traffic if you have to consult regarding your destination or if you need to wait for someone.

There is a notable exception to this commandment that was previously noted in #3. If you are going to your seat and a batter comes up to bat, it is appropriate to stop and sit or kneel in the stairway. Obviously, other fans who are paying attention will do the same thing as they wait for appropriate travel times. Those who are NOT paying attention probably need the reminder of pausing to wait for you to become aware of their circumstances – just use caution and know your surroundings.



## 6. Thou shalt not scream, “throw it back!”

This is perhaps the dumbest thing you could do at the ballpark – unless you are in Wrigley Field and btw Cubs fans, I have a bone to pick with you. For one, going to the ball park is not an everyday occurrence for all the fans in the park with you. For some fans just being in the ballpark is a special occasion.

And that means that catching ANY homerun ball – even from the opposing team – could be a once in a lifetime experience. Should you choose throw such an achievement back on to the field of play, a) you're really not thinking about how to best use your opportunities and b) you're not being respectful of the players on the field or the security and officials who now have to WAIT for you to be done with your moment of mental failure.

But for the fans that brought their gloves to the game and sat in the outfield, I can guarantee that they weren't hoping for a foul ball. So let's leave the peer pressure routine in Jr. High shall we and allow other fans the personal choice to pass that Homerun ball to the four year old kid they brought with them to the game or whatever their options are and shut your trap.

## 7. Thou shalt leave the beach ball at HOME!

It's all in the name folks. It's a BEACH BALL. So what could be even less respectful of the other fans at the park (breaking #2) than getting so bored, you do the Wave (breaking #4)??? The answer is bringing a beach ball to the game (or horror of all horrors, dozens of them), inflating them and choosing to toss them down onto the unsuspecting attendees in the lower rows.

What on earth went through your mind as you packed the car to go the game? "I don't think getting drunk and screaming obscenities is nearly rude enough so I think I will come supplied with things I can throw at people – maybe I'll even get lucky and it fall on the field and disrupt the game!!!"

Do you hear how ridiculous that sounds? That is what every other fan on the field thinks about you if you fall into this ridiculous fashion trend. It's kind of sad to have to say this but it falls under a common-sense category. If it is something your mother would scold you for doing in the car when you were 8 (or should have), please don't do it at the ball park.

## 8. Thou shalt know thy limits.

Perhaps this would be more clearly understood if it said "thou shalt limit thy drunken misbehavior." However, that in itself seems to be an unrealistic expectation. Once you are already too drunk to know any better, you aren't going to remember any of the commandments unless overwhelming respect for others is a part of your everyday makeup.

So, we're back to KNOW YOUR LIMITS!

Please, if you like them and it's legal for you, feel free to enjoy an adult beverage with whatever ballpark delectable you found on the concourse!!! And boy, are the ballparks really doing it up with the good food these days. Not only that but they are doing a great job with the options of adult beverages too! But pace yourself. No, we don't want to see you jump in front of the guy four seats over from you who just showed up on the jumbotron camera. No, we don't want to hear slurred opinions shouted at the umpire an inning and a half after the play. And Good GOD NO, we don't want to see your naked ass streaking across the Outfield. Do security a favor and don't torture them with the painful sprint and the even more painful thought about where to safely grab you in an attempt to curb your misplaced enthusiasm. That goes for all you guys too. \*wink\*



## 9. Thou shalt dress appropriately.

Guys, I think we can almost leave you out of this one entirely. For all your stereotypical lack of fashion sense in more unfamiliar occasions, as a general rule, you all seem to know how to dress to attend a baseball game. Frequently, your date or companion is another story.

Girls, please understand that according to #2, other fans are there to see the GAME not you. We appreciate it if you add to the general atmosphere rather than detract from it BUT it is not appropriate at any time for you to DISTRACT from it.

First, if the heels are so high that you walk carefully when crossing the parking lot, you are going to look ridiculous attempting to make your way down the stairs going to your row and we aren't going to even talk about the damage those spikes will do to the toes you will accidentally step on as you move in front of people to get to your seat. Please, choose footwear that is appropriate to the terrain and hopefully the rest of your outfit.

Second, I'm going to say this politely, STADIUM SEATING! That means that there are people above you looking down and people below you looking up. If your neckline is so low we can see your navel, don't wear it to the ballpark. If your skirt is so short that you can't bend over without showing cheek dimples, don't wear it to the ballpark. The guy in the row in front of you may be thrilled with the free panty show (I hope) you provide when he turns to look for a vendor but his wife doesn't. Besides, we're really doing you a favor with this warning: we're talking plastic ballpark seats and sweat – it would be nice if you didn't leave all the skin on the back of your legs behind when you get up to leave.

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## 9. Continued...

Thirdly, clothing that fits is preferable. There was one entire season where KL and I dealt with another season ticket holder in the row in front of us who could not find a way to make her shirt and jeans come together when she was standing up much less when she sat down. And the underwear joke above was more serious than you want to know – she never wore any. That season involved more butt crack than a plumbers' convention.

Lastly, just as a general commentary on life at the ballpark, I personally will never appear in team wear that is not in team colors. However, I do not necessarily fault those who want to wear the cute little team t-shirt in pink – as long as it follows the above directions! If you are making the effort to dress in team wear, whatever the color, for your trip to the ballpark, I commend the effort.

Guys, if the girl you are with is breaking this commandment, you really need to consider if the situation is due to lack of baseball knowledge or lack of ballpark experience. In which case, you should assist in her education. If it is simply a matter of she wants to advertise the goods to everyone else at the park in addition to you, perhaps she's not quite the girl to take to a game.



# 10. Thou shalt teach thy children the Commandments.

This final commandment is near and dear to my heart. I didn't discover baseball when I was a child so I had to learn all the commandments the hard way. It may seem counter-intuitive to include children in a discussion of societal rules and structure but the earlier they are exposed to how to work well with their neighbors the more natural it will be for them to respect others. These lessons will carry on into their interactions at school, during other sporting events and at home with the family. How can you argue with that?!

Please, bring kids to the game! Let them enjoy baseball! Let them enjoy the ballpark!

But understand that your unruly four year old kicking the seat in front of them (mine) or fighting with his six year old sister and knocking their soda onto the ground and into the row in front of them (mine) or just in general demanding constant attention, food, potty breaks, and distraction breaks the fundamental concept of respecting the other fans at the game (commandment #2). I have taken more kids to games than I can literally count – I have a huge family and believe it's a fundamental joy I can provide. So I know what I'm talking about when I say it isn't just expected that kids should be allowed to do whatever because they're kids and others should be expected to deal with it. B as in B and S as in S. If you cannot control the kids you are bringing, take them away. It's your responsibility. You're the adult – supposedly.

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## 10. Continued...

**But put in that effort! Start early! TEACH THEM!**

There is nothing more emotive than a kid at a game who gets his/her first foul ball or learning about rally caps or catching that contagious enthusiasm from 35,000 people all screaming at a fantastic game of baseball. I have experienced those exact things with various youngsters and I'll remember those occasions for the rest of my life – and they have brought new fans to the game each time. This is a gift you can give the children in your life.

But again, it's a privilege – and you BOTH have to earn it.