



The Baseball Cap



**Everybody does it in the USA;
throws a cap on and heads out!
They go camping, shopping, fishing
and walking with it on their heads.
It is called a baseball hat!**

From the boy scouts to the baggy-pants gangsters with their caps tipped sideways, today just about everyone wears the baseball hat for just about anything. That's how much baseball hats are now a part of the American culture. What an invention. They are not only stylish, but functional; they shield one's eyes from the sun. And it is a convenient place to show off a logo, if you have one.

Until 1954 baseball players could pick any kind of hat they wanted, just to keep the sun out of their eyes. And that's pretty much where it all began.

The first baseball hats were made of straw. They were first worn by the New York Knickerbockers on April 24, 1849. But within a few years the team began to wear a cap made of fine merino wool. It featured a crown, with an attached visor or bill. That soon became the prototype for one of the most popular styles of that time and still today.

Such a baseball cap, manufactured by Peck & Snyder and commonly known as "No. 1", was worn by top amateur clubs. The top of the crown displayed a star design, and it cost anywhere from around one to two bucks, depending on the grade of wool. But just pennies would purchase a cap made of lesser quality flannel. Legendary baseball player Albert G. Spalding, founder of the premier baseball manual Spalding's Base Ball Guides (1889-1939), included in his publication ads featuring several of the different baseball cap designs.

Star outfielder Jesse Burkett, in 1895, experimented with baseball hats featuring a transparent, green-tinted bill that both shielded the player from the sun and provided a full range of vision for fly balls, but apparently the idea wasn't a hit. The turn of the century saw new innovations, with uniform caps displaying a team's emblem and the first to do this was the Detroit Tigers (1901-02). Then came the stitched bill, introduced by Spalding in 1903, and after that just about every baseball cap's visor was stitched. And then there was the two-toned bill, made popular by the St. Louis Browns, the first being white and trimmed with brown. Unfortunately that was short-lived, lasting only three seasons. But for three years, from 1912 to 1915, the Washington Nationals began to wear a similar cap with a navy blue bill and white trim.

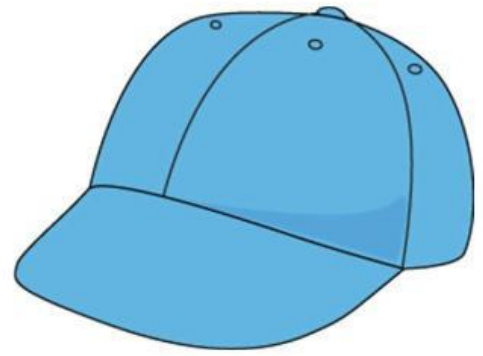
And of course who could forget the "pillbox" cap of 1905. This was a baseball hat that didn't exactly make a splash in the big leagues. But from 1909 to 1914 the Philadelphia Athletics caught on. In fact they enjoyed such a winning streak while they sported it, that they began to credit their luck on the look. Such good fortune included Connie Mack's club winning four American League pennants and three World Series Championships. And it certainly made the style famous. So much that it became the Senior Circuit's centennial anniversary trademark in 1976. National League clubs wore it in celebration of the centennial season, and it continued to be worn into the next decade and up through the championship season of 1979.

1954 saw a new era in baseball hats, when New Era designed and popularized a cap called the '59Fifty'. It became the official cap of Major League Baseball and remains to this day a popular line of baseball hats that basically anyone can purchase.

The coming years saw teams experimenting with trademark designs, some hitting a home run, some not. The pillbox cap design made a comeback with the Pittsburgh Pirates (1976-1986) with minor alterations to the design. "Stargell Stars", which recognized various achievements on the field, were doled out by Willie Stargell "Pop" of the Pittsburgh Pirates. These were stitched to a player's cap either on the bill or between the horizontal stripes. He later then introduced stars bearing an "S" in the middle, but which lasted only a short time.

The Montreal Expos from 1969 until 1991 wore some of the most memorable modern day baseball hats bearing their six-panel red, white, and blue design in keeping with the colors of their logo.

Today it's possible to buy baseball hats representing pretty much any team you want. Fitted baseball hats, youth and college baseball hats are sold at sporting goods stores everywhere, and are still just as functional as they are stylish.



1. Who wears baseball caps?
2. Why are they so popular?
3. What were the first baseball hats made of?
4. The second era of hats were made of another material –what was it?
5. What “new invention” saw day-light in 1901/02?
6. Philadelphia Athletics experienced a winning streak that they credited something. What was it?
7. What is the official Major League Baseball Cap called?
8. Design your own baseball cap. Which logo do you want to be on it?

