

Types of Stats and Where to Find Them

The most common stat is the **counting stat**. It is so common, in fact, that most sports couldn't exist without them. 762 home runs. 894 goals. 100 points. These are all examples of counting stats.

A counting stat is what it sounds like. It's the amount of times a thing has occurred. To record a counting stat, just keep track of how many times a thing has happened.

Abby Wambach scored 184 goals for the United States Women's National Team in her *career*. That's a record! And a counting stat. Every time she scored a goal, one was added to her total career stats. Old Hoss Radbourn won 59 games in *one season* in 1884. That's a record! And a counting stat. Even in the 1880s, they kept track of stats. Every time he won a game that year, a win was added to his total season count. On March 2, 1962, Wilt Chamberlain scored 100 points in *one game*. That's a record! And, you guessed it, a counting stat. Counting stats can be a very useful tool in explaining and understanding what happens in a sport. But they don't explain everything.

A second kind of stat is a **rate stat**. These stats are usually averages or percentages, and can help give context to a counting stat or compare players or teams.

Michael Jordan scored 32,292 points over his career in 1,072 games. Those are two different counting stats. To calculate his points per game average, just divide. Now you have a rate stat. An **average** is a helpful stat to help make large numbers easier to compare

$$32,292 \text{ points} \div 1,072 \text{ games} = 30.1 \text{ points per game}$$

You can use that number to compare Michael Jordan to other players, even Michael Jordan. In the 1986-87 season, Michael Jordan scored 3,041 points in 82 games. That year his average was:

$$3041 \text{ points} \div 82 \text{ games} = 37.1 \text{ points per game}$$

Now we are comparing like numbers, and can

In baseball, batting average is calculated by dividing the number of hits \div at-bats. In soccer and hockey and many other sports, goals per game is calculated by dividing the number of goals by the number of games.