Dear Alice,

Some of the girls at my school talk about how their boyfriends got to first, second, or third base with them. I feel kind of left out because I don't know exactly what they are. Could you tell me what the bases are for girls and guys? I'd really appreciate it.

— Wondering

Answer

Dear Wondering,

Batter up! Whether you're hitting a home run or striking out, it helps to have the low down on the latest sexual terminology — not just because others are talking about it, but it may be helpful when communicating with potential partner(s). While there's no "official" definition of what the bases represent, there seems to be a general understanding of each base:

- First base = kissing, including open-mouth (or French) kissing
- Second base = petting above the waist, including touching, feeling, and fondling the chest, breasts, and nipples
- Third base = petting or orally stimulating below the waist, including touching, feeling, and fondling the vagina, clitoris, penis, or testicles
- Home base = sexual intercourse

Remember, Wondering, these can vary among different people, so don't be embarrassed to ask your friends exactly what they mean when they talk about the different bases — you may find that you aren't the only one who needs some clarification on both the bases and the definition of sex [2]. It's great that you want to be informed and asking is the best way to find out. Speaking of sexual activity in terms of bases, sometimes doing so can make the interaction with your partner(s) seem more goal-oriented (i.e., to “hit that home run”, or “get to home base”). Keep in mind that sexual activity doesn't just have to be about how far you can get with someone. Often, the most pleasurable sexual activity occurs when both or all partners are focused on the experience — rather than an end goal.
Another crucial piece to rounding any of the bases is making sure that you and your partner(s) have mutually consented. Asking for consent before, during, and after any sexual activity can help ensure you've expressed what you want, you know what your partner wants, and that consent has been given.

Lastly, if any of your fans are planning to run the bases, you may want to make sure you've got all your gear. For information about contraception and safer sex, search through the Go Ask Alice! Sexual & Reproductive Health archives.

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