

# Home Run Help



by Amy G. Koss  
Illustrations by Caroline Romanet

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Maria wasn't the best hitter on our team. In fact, she was the worst. But Maria loved the game so much and worked so hard that when she came up to bat, we always cheered extra loudly.

Then last week, out of nowhere, Maria's bat connected with the ball perfectly, making a miraculous POP, sending the ball way over the outfield fence. Our whole team went crazy, screaming and hugging and leaping all around the dugout, excited that her hard work had finally paid off.

All Maria had to do was touch the four bases, and she'd have her first home run!

## Amplify Atlas™

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Level W

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But just as Maria rounded first base, she suddenly fell to the ground, holding her ankle. We watched in horror as she tried to get up but couldn't.

It was Maria's big chance, and she'd twisted her ankle!

We knew that according to league rules, no one on our team was allowed to run bases for her. She had to touch all four bases for her home run to count. If she touched only first base, she wouldn't get the home run she deserved. The hit would count only as a single, which seemed terribly unfair.

"I know it stinks," Coach said, "but the rules are the rules."



I could tell that Coach was as heartbroken as we were, but there was nothing she could do.

Then, some girls from the opposing team called out, "Hey, Ref! We've got an idea!"

The referee trotted over to huddle with them and came away nodding her head and laughing. We wondered what they were all so happy about when our teammate was down and out of the game.

Two girls broke free from the other team, ran together to first base, and helped Maria stand up on her one good foot. They put their arms around Maria's waist and hooked her arms around their shoulders. Acting as human crutches, they half-carried Maria to second base and on to third, letting her touch each base with her good foot.





Maria must have been in a ton of pain, but you'd never have known it from the look on her face. Twisted ankle or not, she was grinning from here to next week as she hobbled with her helpers past third base!

By then, everyone from both teams, and every fan in the park was up and cheering! No one even cared who ended up winning the game that day. For those few moments of Maria's glorious home run, we were all winners.



**Level W**

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