

Ball park figure?

The expression **ballpark figure** is an American slang term which means an estimate or a “*guesstimate*”. A cost or amount is considered **in the ballpark** if it is within the range expected by the person inquiring. If not, then the figure is **out of the ballpark**.

Imagine you plan for a wedding. The couple will have to gather information on the estimated cost of each aspect of the ceremony, reception and honeymoon before they make their decision and work out the actual budget. In order to stay on the budget set for the wedding, the couple will need ballpark figures for everything so that they can determine what will fit in their budget and what won't.

A ballpark figure is handy whenever the exact amount of a cost or any other requirement is not known yet. For example, if you ask a craftsman for an estimate, he will look at the job to be done and give a ballpark figure of how much the work will cost. Finally, the actual amount on the invoice will be calculated to the penny. The exact amount of labour and materials required is known now, and the statutory taxes will be added. So, the final figure may well differ from the ballpark figure.

Being a very rough calculation a ballpark figure can be a helpful decision making tool. Gathering the facts to arrive at an exact figure is time-consuming, but getting a ballpark estimate is usually quite quick. Based on rough measurements and general estimates, a ballpark figure can help you decide whether a project is worth pursuing or not.