

Rules of Cricket

The Field

A cricket field, or ground, is a roughly elliptical field of flat grass, ranging in size from about 120 to 200 meters (130-220 yards) across, bounded by an obvious fence, rope, or other marker. There is no fixed size or shape for the field, although large deviations from a low-eccentricity ellipse in this size range are discouraged.

The edge of the field is called the boundary.

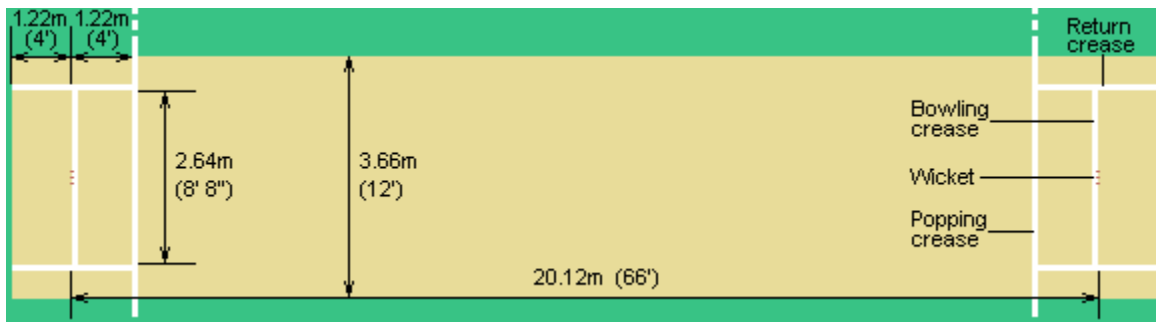
For ease of referring to different parts of the field, it is notionally divided into four quadrants, centered at the striking batsman. As the batsman stands in the batting stance:

- The side of the field in front of him is the off side.
- The side of the field behind him is the leg side or on side.
- The half of the field in front of his wicket is forward of square.
- The half of the field behind his wicket is behind square or backward of square.

Extra Detail: At the ends of the field, in line with the pitch, are often large screens with a uniform color that contrasts with the ball. These sightscreens form a uniform background behind the bowler from the batsman's perspective, making it easier to sight the ball as it is bowled.

The Pitch

The pitch is a carefully prepared rectangle of closely mown and rolled grass over hard packed earth. It is in the center of the field, usually aligned along the long axis of the ellipse. The pitch is marked with white lines, called creases, like this:



The two wickets are placed facing each other, one in the middle of each bowling crease, as shown. The popping creases notionally extend parallel to each other to infinity and are usually marked for several meters beyond the pitch area.

Extra Detail: A properly prepared pitch is very hard - almost like concrete. The aim is to prepare a pitch as flat and regular as possible, so the ball bounces evenly on it. As a

match progresses, the pitch may begin to develop irregularities, including cracking of the surface, unflattens, and crumbling.

The Fielding Positions



The fielding captain instructs his fielders where they should field. There are dozens of differently named fielding positions, not all of which can be filled by the players. The captain selects a combination of fielding positions designed to fit with his tactics.

The fielding positions shown here with a brown dot are the basic named positions. Names in parentheses indicate variations. Any position on the field can be described by combining standard names with various adjectives

- Silly: Very close in to the batsman.
- Short: Closer in towards the batsman.
- Deep: Further out towards the boundary.
- Long: Right near the boundary.
- Forward: Further in front of the batsman's popping crease.
- Backward: Further behind the batsman's popping crease.
- Fine: Closer to the line bisecting off and leg sides.
- Straight: A synonym for fine.
- Wide: Further from the line bisecting off and leg sides.
- Square: Closer to the line of the batsman's popping crease.

The slips, gully, short leg, and "silly" positions are close catching positions, designed almost purely to take catches that the batsman inadvertently hits with his bat. Fielders in these positions stand crouched slightly with bent knees and their hands cupped in front of them ready to take a catch.

Fielders in other positions are more run-saving positions. These fielders will stand upright and usually walk in slowly a few paces as the bowler bowls the ball, to give them a bit of momentum so that they can move to chase and gather the ball quickly if it goes in their direction.

The Wicket-Keeper

The wicket-keeper stands behind the striker's wicket, ready to catch the ball if the batsman misses it.

- For a fast bowler, the wicket-keeper stands back 15-20m (50-65 feet) behind the wicket, so that he usually catches the ball on its downward arc after it has bounced on the pitch and passed the batsman. This also gives him time to see small deviations if the batsman hits the ball with the edge of his bat, so he can react in time to catch them.
- For a slow bowler, the wicket-keeper stands right behind the wicket, within arm's length of it. This allows him to catch the ball quickly and hit the wicket with it if the batsman steps outside his popping crease while playing a missed shot, thus stumping the batsman out.

Either way, the wicket-keeper does not stand directly behind the wicket, but slightly to the off side. This allows the wicket-keeper to see past the batsman to the bowler, and places him best to catch most balls, as most commonly balls pass outside the off stump.

The Captain

The captain of a cricket team is responsible for all decisions concerning team strategy and tactics. This includes:

- Calling the coin toss and, if won, deciding which side will bat first.
- Determining the the batting order, and any changes to it during the match.
- Providing tactical advice to batsmen at available opportunities.
- Declaring the innings closed.
- Instructing fielders where they should stand in the field.
- Choosing bowlers for each over.
- Providing tactical advice to bowlers on what sort of balls to bowl.

The captain is also responsible for the discipline of his team, and answerable for any unfair play done by any of them.

Batting Technique

Every time a batsman faces a ball he must decide what shot, if any, to play at it. This decision is usually made in a split second, while the ball is travelling down the pitch towards him from the bowler's hand - although in some cases a shot can be premeditated.

The type of shot played depends on several factors:

- The pace of the ball.
- The line of the ball.
- The length of the ball.
- The age of the ball.
- The state of the pitch, and if it has deteriorated noticeably, producing irregular bounce.
- The known style of bowling used by the bowler, including any variations to that style.
- Whether the batsmen can pick the particular variety of ball being bowled.
- The placement of the fielders.
- The batsman's estimation of his own skill.
- How played in the batsman is - whether he is beginning his innings or has settled into a comfortable batting rhythm.

- The state of the game, and whether it is more appropriate to take risks in an attempt to score quickly, or to defend.
- Instructions from the captain on whether to bat aggressively or defensively.
- The time of day, in terms of how much play is remaining in the current session of play.
- The batting skill of the non-striker and the number of balls remaining in the over.

Usually, the most important goal is to *not get out*. Scoring runs is secondary. This can change if the game is in a situation where runs must be scored at a certain rate to avoid defeat or ensure victory.

Footwork

For a batsman, the primary method of accommodating to the vagaries of any particular ball is footwork. Once the batsman has judged the line and length of the ball, he will shift his weight on to either his front foot or back foot. He usually takes a quick step with the foot first before putting his weight on it, to position himself either further from or closer to his wicket. This step can also be used to move across the pitch, to the off or leg sides, to accommodate the line of the ball.

The goal of this shifting is to position the batsman so that he can either hit the ball comfortably, avoid the ball hitting his body, or allow the ball to pass by without touching it. Once set in position, the batsman should be able to do either of these as the situation demands.

Hitting the Ball

Attempting to hit the ball is called playing a shot or stroke at the ball. There are several different types of shot, designed to accommodate whatever the ball does. They can be classified in different ways:

- Front foot shots are played with the front foot extended down the pitch toward the bowler and the weight on the front foot.
- Back foot shots are played with the back foot pushed back toward the wicket and the weight on the back foot.
- Straight bat shots are played with the bat held vertically.
- Cross bat shots are played with the bat held horizontally.
- Attacking shots are designed to hit the ball through the field and score runs.
- Defensive shots are designed to prevent getting out.

Front Foot Shots

Moving on to the front foot is generally done when the length of the ball is such that it pitches relatively close to the batsman's crease - from about 0.5 to 3 meters from the crease. Moving forward brings the batsman's front foot near the point where the ball will

bounce, so that he can hit it on the half volley, as it rises from the pitch. This gives the ball little chance to deviate from its line, so makes it easier to hit the ball cleanly.

- **Front foot defensive**. This is played by moving the front foot forward down the pitch, placing the foot just inside the line of the ball. The back foot generally remains still and the front knee bends as the front foot takes the batsman's weight. The bat is brought down vertically, parallel to the front shin, and right next to it, in the line of the ball. The aim is not to swing the bat, but to place it as an obstacle to block the ball. The bat should be angled downwards so the ball bounces off it and drops straight down to the pitch, rather than bouncing up into the air where it might be caught. The hands grip the bat loosely to further absorb the impact of the ball and prevent it from bouncing in the air, a technique known as soft hands. The toe of the bat should be on or close to the pitch, because the ball will generally be low in its trajectory when it hits the bat. The front foot defensive is also known as a block.

The front foot defensive is designed to prevent the ball from hitting the wicket and getting the batsman out bowled. The front leg is positioned right next to the bat so there is no appreciable gap between them. This is to prevent the ball deviating inwards and slipping between the bat and pad. There is some danger in this shot if the ball deviates from its line significantly. If the ball deviates inwards enough to miss the bat and strike the pad, the batsman could potentially be out LBW. If the ball deviates outwards enough to hit the edge of the bat it could fly behind the batsman to the wicket-keeper or slips fielders for a catch.

- **Drive**. This is played with the same footwork as a front foot defensive, but the bat is swung at the ball in a vertical arc, rather than being placed stationary in the path of the ball. The aim is to hit the ball into the field, avoiding any infielders, and score runs. The bat should be angled downwards so the ball is hit down into the ground and then bounces and rolls along the field, rather than being hit into the air where a fielder might catch it.

The drive defends the wicket in the same way as a front foot defensive, but is designed to score runs. A drive is riskier than a front foot defensive, because swinging the bat gives a chance of mistiming the hit. If the shot is mistimed, the batsman could miss the ball completely, hit the ball into the air where a fielder may catch it, or inside edge the ball on to the wicket. As well as these, deviation of the ball from its line could result in an LBW or an inside or outside edge flying to the wicket-keeper or slips fielders for a catch.

There are a few types of drive, named for the directions in which the ball is hit:

- **On Drive** is hit in the direction of mid on.
- **Off Drive** is hit in the direction of mid off.
- **Cover Drive** is hit in the direction of cover.
- **Square Drive** is hit square of the wicket, in the direction of point.

Generally, the batsman will try to hit through the line of the ball. If the ball is travelling in to his body or down the leg side, he will most likely on drive. If the ball is travelling straight and he is well positioned, he will off drive. If the ball's line is significantly outside off stump or is moving away from the batsman, he will cover or square drive. Off and cover drives are the most common.

- **Lofted Drive**. This is a drive in which the bat is not angled downwards but upwards, to deliberately hit the ball in the air. The batsman attempts to hit the ball so it will fall safely between fielders and not be caught. This shot can be used to hit over a ring of infielders and into an empty outfield. It can also be used with a lot of power to hit the ball over the boundary and score 6 runs.
- **Sweep**. This is a shot played to a slow ball pitching around the line of leg stump. The front foot is moved down the pitch so far that the batsman ends up kneeling on the knee of his back foot. The front shin is kept vertical, and directly in line with the path of the ball, but the front knee is bent to allow the kneeling pose. The batsman leans forward over his front knee and swings the bat horizontally in an arc from off to leg side. The aim is to hit the ball just as it bounces off the pitch and send it along the ground square or behind square on the leg side.

The sweep is used to spin bowlers when they pitch the ball on the leg side. The horizontal arc of the bat can account for any sideways deviation of the ball, but the sweep can be risky if the height of the ball's bounce varies. If the ball bounces more than expected, it can catch the **top edge** of the bat and fly in the air. If the shot is mistimed or the ball bounces unexpectedly high or low, the ball can miss the bat and hit the pad, potentially for an **LBW**. The sweep is not used to fast bowlers, as it would be hard to hit the ball and physically dangerous for the batsman, whose body is directly in line with its trajectory.

- **Reverse Sweep**. The reverse sweep is an unusual shot, seen rarely. It is essentially like a sweep, but the batsman turns his bat over in his hands and swings it in an arc from the leg to the off side. This hits the ball square or behind square on the off side. The reverse sweep can be played to balls pitching more to the off side than a regular sweep, but the time necessary to adjust the grip on the bat and backswing the bat on the leg side before the actual swing means that it can only be played to very slow bowling or by premeditating the shot and going into the motions before the ball is released.

Back Foot Shots

Moving on to the back foot is generally done when the **length** of the ball is such that it **pitches** far from the batsman's crease - more than about 4 meters from the crease - or very close to the crease - within about 1 meter. In the former case, moving back allows the batsman to play the ball after it has risen to waist height or above and gives him time to watch the ball for any deviation after it bounces. In the latter case, moving back positions the batsman so he can hit the ball on the **half volley**.

Note that there is a gap between the pitching distances suitable for front foot and back foot shots, from about 3 to 4 meters from the batsman's crease. This length makes it difficult for the batsman to commit effectively to either foot, since stepping forward would not produce a close half volley, while stepping back does not allow the ball to rise far enough to be played comfortably either. This is the sort of length that a bowler will often aim at producing, and is called a good length (from the bowler's perspective).

- **Back foot defensive.** This is played by shifting the weight on to the back foot and holding the bat vertically in the path of the ball. Like the front foot defensive, the bat is angled downwards so the ball drops quickly to the pitch, but unlike it the toe of the bat is held well off the pitch, since the ball is bouncing higher by the time it hits the bat. This technique can handle the ball bouncing up as high as the waist or midriff.

The back foot defensive is designed to defend the ball away from hitting the top of the wicket. If the ball is bouncing higher than the batsman's waist, ideally he would simply let it go since it would be too high to hit the wicket, but he may be committed to playing the shot by the time he recognizes it is bouncing too high. In such cases, the batsman can have difficulty positioning his hands and bat high enough, and can be hit on the gloves, possibly deflecting the ball in the air for a fielder to catch. If the ball deviates sideways it can also catch the outside edge for a catch to the wicket-keeper or slips.

- **Cut.** This is an aggressive attacking shot played at a ball pitched on a line outside the off stump. The batsman steps back and either towards or away from the line of the ball, the goal being to place about a meter of space between his body and the ball as it passes him. The bat is swung in a horizontal arc, connecting with the ball just after it has passed the batsman's body, hitting it square or behind square on the off side. As the bat hits the ball, the batsman rolls his wrists to make the blade of the bat angle downwards, so the ball is hit down into the ground, preventing it being caught by a fielder.

The cut is designed to hit the ball hard past the infielders fielding in the point and gully regions, and into the outfield or to the boundary for runs. Risks in playing the cut include: getting a top edge if the ball bounces higher than expected, making the ball fly high in the air for a possible catch; getting a bottom edge and playing the ball on to the wicket; or not rolling the wrists to direct the ball downward so that it flies through the air, presenting a catch to point or gully.

If the batsman is skilled enough, he can play a cut shot with the ball well past his body. This makes the trajectory of the hit ball finer, and can be used to place the ball between the gully and any slips fielders. This is called a late cut. A cut can also be played on the front foot if the ball pitches short.

- **Pull.** This is another attacking shot, this time played at a ball pitched on the line of the stumps or the batsman's body. The batsman steps back swings the bat in a

horizontal arc, hitting the ball in front of this body as the bat swings to the leg side, "pulling" the ball around to the leg side. A pull can send the ball in almost any direction on the leg side, though most often to the [midwicket](#) or [square leg](#) regions. As with the cut, the batsman rolls his wrist as he hits the ball, to angle the bat blade downwards and make the ball fly down into the ground to avoid being caught.

The pull is designed to penetrate the infield on the leg side and score runs. It can be an effective counter to medium-to-short pitched bowling directed at the stumps or body, as it deals with balls bouncing to waist or torso height. Risks are the same as for a cut: getting a [top edge](#) if the ball bounces higher than expected, making the ball fly high in the air for a possible catch; getting a [bottom edge](#) and [playing the ball on](#) to the wicket; or not rolling the wrists to direct the ball downward so that it flies through the air, presenting a catch to midwicket or square leg. Additionally, if the bat misses the ball the batsman can be struck on the body.

- **[Hook](#)**. This is a very aggressive shot, played at balls pitched short on the line of the body, that bounce to around head height. The batsman steps back and brings his head just to the off side of the line of the ball. He swings the bat through a diagonal arc, up in front of his body, hitting the ball as it passes his head. This hits the ball high into the air over square leg or behind square on the leg side. A well-executed hook will hit the ball over the boundary for six runs. If the batsman does not have enough power, he may be able to direct the ball to land away from outfielders.

The hook is designed to deal with aggressive bowling aimed at the batsman's head, and counter-attack by scoring runs. It is also a risky shot, because any mistiming of the shot can cause the ball to fly into the air for a catch. It can also be physically dangerous, because if the ball is missed or catches the edge of the bat it can hit the batsman's head. The hook is usually only played by skilful batsmen, and then rarely.

- **[Leg Glance](#)**. This is a subtle scoring shot dealing with balls pitched on the line of the batsman's legs or slightly to the leg side. The batsman leans his weight on to the back foot, perhaps shuffling sideways to improve the relative line of the ball. He holds the bat vertically and connects with the ball in front of his pads, with the bat angled back to the leg side. Any swing of the bat is minimal. The ball is deflected fine down the leg side behind the batsman.

The leg glance is designed to score runs from balls pitched at the legs or down the leg side of the batsman. It is more commonly played to balls pitched further up than other back foot shots, so the ball is lower when hit - around knee height or even lower, rather than waist height. It is a relatively safe shot, the main risks being edging the ball fine enough for the wicket-keeper to catch it, flicking it to the (rarely occupied) leg slip or leg gully positions, or missing the ball and having

it hit the pads. The pads being hit is usually not a problem because the ball is going down the leg side anyway and cannot result in a successful LBW.

It is also possible to play the cut, pull, hook, and leg glance from the front foot if the batsman judges the length of the ball properly and can step forward to produce the appropriate height as the ball reaches his body. They are more commonly played from the back foot, though.

Yorkers and Full Tosses

There are two length categories we have not yet dealt with.

- A **Yorker** is a ball pitched on or near the batsman's crease. This is one of the most dangerous balls in the game if pitched on the line of the stumps. The batsman has two options:
 - Step on to the front foot and attempt to hit the ball just before it hits the pitch. This requires good timing and can be dangerous if the ball dips under the toe of the bat as it is swung.
 - Step on the back foot and bring the bat down quickly for a back foot defensive shot. The bat needs to travel rapidly from the normal backswing because it has to travel further than a normal back foot defensive, to block the ball right on the pitch. If the ball hits the pitch and bat together, it can squeeze through the gap under the bat unless the bat is held forcefully on the pitch.

In either case, if the ball gets under the bat and is on the line of the wicket, the batsman will probably be bowled. A good Yorker cannot effectively be hit for runs. The best the batsman can hope to do is defend and keep it away from his wicket.

A Yorker aimed at the batsman's feet (a **sandshoe crusher**) is particularly difficult to play, as the batsman will also be trying to get his feet out of the way as he blocks the ball. This can cause all sorts of problems, from being out bowled or LBW to falling over or breaking toes.

A **full toss** is a ball which does not bounce on the pitch before reaching the batsman. Full tosses are generally easy to hit, and batsman relish the thought of being bowled one. The standard response is to step on to the front foot, swing the bat through the line of the ball, and crash it through the field in precisely the direction the batsman desires. Full tosses are frequently hit to or over the boundary for 4 or 6. Bowlers try not to bowl full tosses, but occasionally they misjudge the length of an attempted Yorker, or their fingers slip as they release the ball.

Not Hitting the Ball

If the ball is not pitched on the line of the stumps, or is pitched short enough to bounce over them, often the safest tactic is not to hit it at all or, in some cases, to actively evade it.

- If the ball is close to the wicket, it is up to the batsman's judgment whether or not he thinks it will hit the wicket. Understandably, batsmen tend to err on the side of caution, and play at balls that will pass close to the wicket.
- If the ball is very wide to off or leg, or over head height, the batsman's job is easy. He can simply stand still as the ball passes. If the ball is far enough away, the umpire may even call it a wide.
- If the ball is outside off stump, the batsman can keep his bat at the top of his backswing and watch the ball go past to the wicket-keeper.
- If the ball is pitched short and aimed at the batsman's body at shoulder height or above, the batsman can bend or crouch to duck under it.
- If the ball is pitched short and aimed at the batsman from waist to shoulder height, more movement is needed to avoid being hit. The batsman may step backwards (to the leg side) to get inside the line and allow it to pass to his off side. (The other option here is a back foot defensive, using the bat to shield the body.) Balls aimed at this region can be difficult to either avoid or defend with the bat.

Not hitting the ball is a defensive tactic however, and if the batsman prefers to attack he can still attempt to hit the ball. This is where the full range of attacking shots comes into play: the cut, drive, leg glance, pull, and hook. These can be used to hit the ball through the infield and score runs. The danger in playing an attacking shot rather than letting the ball go is the risks associated with that shot - most often the chance of being caught by a fielder.

Bowling Styles

There are two distinct styles of bowling: fast and spin. Individual bowlers generally specialize in one style or the other. Occasionally a player may be adept enough at both styles to be able to switch between them, but this is rare.

The Bowling Action

All bowling styles conform to the same general action of the limbs, dictated by the rules governing no balls. The most important rule is the one which specifies that the bowler must not straighten his arm at the elbow during the bowling action. This means that *throwing* the ball (as a baseball pitcher does) by holding the arm back, bent at shoulder and elbow, and extending both joints to propel the ball forwards, is illegal.

In order to propel the ball forwards without straightening the elbow, the bowler holds his elbow fully extended while rotating his entire arm at the shoulder, in a vertical arc, beginning near the waist, rising behind the body to a peak above the head, and following-through down in front of the body. The bowler releases the ball near the top of the arc, so it flies forwards down the pitch towards the batsman.

The sequence of events in the bowling action is generally as follows:

- The bowler begins running up to the pitch from a measured distance behind the non-striker's wicket. Each bowler sets his run-up distance by personal preference. It varies from 30 or more meters for fast bowlers to four or five steps for slow bowlers.
- In the last stride before reaching the pitch, the bowler's feet both leave the ground and he tenses into the pre-delivery pose.
- The bowler's dominant foot lands on the pitch, near the non-striker's bowling crease. At this point the bowler's body is rotated so that the dominant side is trailing, with the bowling arm held down behind the body, elbow straight, with the hand near the waist. His other arm is held high in front of the body, to counterbalance.
- The bowler's leading foot lands on (or near) the popping crease. He brings his leading arm down while lifting his dominant arm up in an arc behind his body.
- With both feet planted on the pitch, the bowler swivels his body around to bring his dominant shoulder forward, while his arm reaches the top of its arc above his head. His other arm reaches the bottom of its counterbalancing swing. The bowler's upper torso also flexes forwards to provide additional momentum to the ball.
- The bowler releases the ball from his dominant hand near the top of its arc.
- The bowler follows-through with a few more steps down the pitch, veering to the side to avoid running on the danger area.

Fast Bowling

Fast (or *pace*) bowlers attempt to use the speed of the ball to deceive the batsman into playing a poor shot and get him out. Fast bowlers generally hold the ball with the seam vertical, aligned down the pitch, and deliver it so that the ball rotates to keep the seam upright as it travels through the air. Bowlers who use a fast bowling style but bowl the ball more slowly are called [medium pace](#) bowlers - these are often players included in a team primarily for their batting.

Fast bowling is generally considered to be when the ball is bowled at speeds in the range 130-150+ km/h. Medium pace bowling is in the range 110-130 km/h.

Fast bowlers use a variety of techniques to make the flight of the ball less predictable for the batsman: swing, seam, and cut.

Swing

By aligning the seam of the ball to point slightly to the left or right, a fast bowler can make the ball curve in flight. This is called [swing](#). Swing is assisted by the asymmetrical wear and polishing of the ball. Generally, if the seam is upright, the ball will tend to swing towards the rougher side. If the ball swings away from a right-handed batsman (i.e.

to the left from the bowler's viewpoint) it is an out swinger. If the ball swings towards a right-handed batsman (i.e. to the right from the bowler's viewpoint) it is an in swinger.

Balls tends to swing more when newer, when the difference in the wear of the sides is less. Humid weather conditions also assist swing. Swing bowlers generally achieve more swing when bowling the ball more slowly, rather than at top speed.

When a ball is about 50 overs old, the difference in the aerodynamics of the polished and rough sides changes, so that the ball now tends to swing towards the polished side. This is reverse swing. Reverse swing behaves very differently to normal swing. It increases as the ball gets older, occurs more in hot, dry weather, and works on balls bowled at top speed. Reverse swing tends to occur late in the ball's flight, and be stronger than swing caused by the alignment of the seam. This means a ball can be bowled to swing slightly one way (from the seam alignment) and then as it nears the batsman swing dramatically in the opposite direction. As can be imagined, this makes the ball very difficult to hit.

Seam

Because the seam of a cricket ball is raised slightly, it can cause the ball to deviate sideways when it bounces on the pitch. To achieve this, the bowler must deliver the ball with the seam held vertically, and rotating about a horizontal axis to keep the seam vertical. If the ball lands on the seam, it can bounce either to the left or right, somewhat unpredictably. Seam does not cause a great amount of deviation, but combined with swing it can be dangerous.



Inswinger. Outswinger.
From batsman's viewpoint.
Note difference in shine on the ball.

Cut

Instead of keeping the seam upright when bowling the ball, a fast bowler may spin the ball sideways in his hand as he releases it, by dragging his fingers down either the left or right side. This spin causes the ball to deviate sideways when it bounces on the pitch, which is called cut.

If the ball cuts away from a right-handed batsman (i.e. from the leg side) it is a leg cutter. If the ball cuts towards a right-handed batsman (i.e. from the off side) it is an off cutter.

Spinning the ball to produce cut causes the bowler to bowl the ball slower than usual. Some fast bowlers use cut as a means of deliberately bowling a slow ball, more to deceive the batsman with the change of pace than the actual cut produced. Such a slower ball can be as slow as 100 km/h.

Spin Bowling

Spin bowlers bowl the ball much more slowly than fast bowlers, and attempt to spin the ball so that it changes direction when it bounces on the pitch. They aim to deceive batsmen by varying the amount and direction of the spin, thus making the bounce less predictable.

Spin bowlers bowl the ball at speeds anywhere from 70-95 km/h. Skilful spin bowlers will vary their pace considerably from ball to ball, sometimes spanning this entire range.

Spin bowling comes in two very distinct styles: off spin and leg spin. A spin bowler specializes in one of these two styles.

Off Spin

Off spin bowlers are right handed bowlers who spin the ball so that, to a right-handed batsman, it spins from the off side to the leg side when it bounces. i.e. it spins in towards the batsman.

The bowler holds the ball so it will be released with the seam vertical but perpendicular to the length of the pitch. His first two fingers rotate around the ball so it spins clockwise from the bowler's viewpoint as it travels down the pitch. When the ball bounces, the spin causes it to deviate to the right (from the bowler's viewpoint).



Off break grip and finger rotation from batsman's viewpoint.

Off break finger action from behind bowler's arm.



Off break. Doosra. Both from batsman's viewpoint.

Off spinners bowl a few different types of ball:

- Off Break: The basic off spin delivery, which spins from off to leg.
- Arm Ball: The bowler holds the ball the same way, but doesn't rotate the fingers on release. The ball has no spin and travels straight when it bounces.
- Doosra: A relatively new type of ball, developed only a few years ago by Pakistani bowler Saqlain Mushtaq. The bowler delivers the ball with the same finger action, but the back of the hand turned towards the batsman. This gives the ball spin in the opposite direction, causing it to spin from leg to off.

Most batsmen have difficulty picking the different types of spin as the ball approaches them. Experienced batsmen can sometimes pick what type of delivery is being bowled by carefully watching the bowler's hand position. Batsmen with good reflexes can also sometimes "read the ball" as it bounces, reacting quickly to move their bat in response to the spin. Less experienced or talented batsmen can be deceived and find facing a spin bowler very tricky.

A left-handed bowler who uses the off spin action naturally bowls the ball so it spins in the opposite direction to a right-handed off spinner. Such a bowler is not called an off spinner, but a left-arm orthodox spinner. The off spin action itself is often called finger spin, since most of the spin is imparted by the fingers. Both off-spinners and left-arm orthodox spinners are finger spinners.

Leg Spin

Leg spin bowlers are right handed bowlers who spin the ball so that, to a right-handed batsman, it spins from the leg side to the off side when it bounces. i.e. it spins away from the batsman.

The bowler holds the ball similarly to an off spinner, but when releasing it rotates the fingers and wrist around the ball anticlockwise. The third finger does most of the work and the ball leaves the hand out the back of the wrist, away from the thumb. When the ball bounces, the spin causes it to deviate to the left (from the bowler's viewpoint).



Leg break grip and finger rotation from batsman's viewpoint.

Leg break finger and wrist action from behind bowler's arm.



Googly from behind bowler's arm.

Leg spinners bowl a few different types of ball:

- Leg Break: The basic leg spin delivery, which spins from leg to off.
- Googly: The bowler holds the ball the same way, but turns his hand around so the back of the hand faces the batsman at release. The same spinning action causes

- the ball to rotate in the opposite direction to a leg break, meaning it spins from off to leg.
- **Top Spinner:** This is essentially midway between a leg break and a googly, with the thumb held towards the batsman on release. The ball spins forwards as it travels. When it bounces, it goes straight on, but bounces higher than normal.
 - **Flipper:** This is bowled with the hand in roughly the same position as a top spinner, but the ball is released by squeezing it out between thumb and forefinger, rather than rolling it over the back of the wrist. This gives the ball backward spin. When it bounces, it skids on the pitch, staying lower and shooting forwards faster than other types of delivery.
 - **Zooter:** This is a ball with almost no spin on it, that basically does nothing special when it bounces. Given the impressive arsenal of other deliveries a leg spinner can produce; this can be a devastating ball to a batsman expecting the ball to spin or bounce differently.

As with an off spinner, batsmen can sometimes pick what type of delivery is being bowled by watching the bowler's hand position as he releases the ball, or they may read the ball as it bounces and spins. Off spinners are, however, generally easier for a right-handed batsman to play, since the ball is usually turning in towards them. The leg spinner's standard ball spins away, and is much more likely to catch the outside edge of the bat and produce a catch for the wicket-keeper or a slip fielder. The googly is a dangerous variation ball, since if the batsman does not pick it, he will play with his bat outside the line of the ball, and the ball can travel between bat and pad to hit the wicket, or can hit the pads for an LBW.

A left-handed bowler who uses the leg spin action naturally bowls the ball so it spins in the opposite direction to a right-handed leg spinner. Such a bowler is not called a leg spinner, but a **left-arm unorthodox spinner**. Such spinners are also sometimes colloquially called **Chinamen**, since the first notable practitioner was of a Chinese background. The leg spin action itself is often called **wrist spin**, since most of the spin is imparted by the wrist. Both leg spinners and left-arm unorthodox spinners are wrist spinners.