



In partnership with



Coaches' Safety Pack



From Playground to Test Arena

Play your part

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Introduction

This pack has been designed to provide coaches with guidance on how to make sure that sessions they plan and deliver are safe and effective for their players.

Providing good practice, assessing risk and ensuring a safe cricket environment are key aspects of coaching, and it is vital that players are provided with a developmental, safe and fun experience.

These guidelines are published by the ECB to promote appropriate best practice, standards and safety, both indoors and outdoors, in practice and in matches at all levels of the game.

It is appreciated that even if the guidelines are followed exhaustively, this will not prevent all injuries. Cricket is an intrinsically dangerous game and the elimination of all risk is not possible. Accidents will always happen. Participants in the game accept the risk individually and/or through their parents if minors. It is believed, however, that by following the guidelines, the risk of serious injury to players and spectators can be significantly reduced.

These guidelines provide information on the following areas:

- Practice facilities
- Indoor nets
- Outdoor nets
- Outfield practice
- Net safety
- Bowling machine guidelines
- Fielding machine guidelines
- Net discipline – including definition of a hard ball
- Games outdoors
- Games indoors
- Injury prevention for fast bowlers.



Keeping everyone safe

Safety is a primary focus for all coaches.

Safety is about careful planning before coaching and monitoring throughout.

- How can you **organise** the players in the task so that they remain safe? Consider: space, positioning, the role they play and layout.
- What **environmental factors** do you need to check to ensure safety? Consider: the playing surface, surrounding area, the weather, indoor or outdoor.
- Is the **equipment** being used safe? Consider: appropriate size, in working order, protective equipment, condition and age of equipment.



Practice facilities

The coach should check and ensure that the area and equipment is safe for the type of activity which is to take place, and that no damage or danger to property or persons is reasonably likely to occur.

Any defects should be remedied before practice commences – holes in netting tied up, foreign objects removed, dangerously greasy areas dried, covered or sawdusted etc. Any dangerous or potentially dangerous objects or circumstances should be brought to the attention of players and officials and steps should be taken to limit the potential danger (eg by covering and preventing access to a particular area, if possible).

The participants must be made aware of which areas and actions are potentially dangerous and the circumstances in which they can move into potentially dangerous areas.

The coach should also be aware of the location of emergency exits, fire-fighting equipment and have access to a first aid kit. It is also important to ensure that there is access to a telephone with an outside line.



Indoor nets

Netting

- Netting should be sound, not allowing balls through, underneath or out of the net.
- Netting should not be too tight making balls rebound dangerously.
- Netting should not billow out into adjacent nets or into areas where others are moving, spectating or walking.
- Netting at batting ends should have canvas blinkers circa 1.8 metres high, and extending from the rear of the net at least c. 3m in front of the popping crease, so as to absorb the ball's energy and prevent visual interference from net to net.
- Netting should extend from the batting end as far as possible, preferably c. 1m past the bowling end if not the length of the building.
- Netting should overlap or otherwise prevent balls from leaving the enclosed area if side netting is drawn from opposite ends.
- Netting or other material should cover any wall behind the bowlers to prevent balls rebounding from it.
- Netting should be wide enough to allow bowlers and batter to practise without undue hindrance (c. 3.66m minimum).
- Netting should be high enough to allow spin bowlers to flight the ball (c. 4m minimum).

Lighting and background

- Lighting should be at least up to the recommended level (minimum average lux 1,000).
- Background should preferably be white (when using a red ball) and lit, and be such that the ball can be easily seen against it.

Surfaces

- Should provide a safe foothold for bowlers and batter.
- Should be smooth, flat and free from holes and wrinkles.
- Preferably the ends of any overlay mats should be taped down.
- Wherever possible, matting should extend a minimum of c. 12m in front of the popping crease at the batter's end, if a full length mat is not used.
- Wherever possible, the bowler's landing, delivery and follow-through areas should have extra cushioning.



Outdoor nets

Outdoor nets may sometimes not be totally enclosed to allow bowlers longer run-ups; therefore other aspects have to be considered.

Position

- Nets should be sited so that balls hit out of the net will cause minimal nuisance or danger to other players or members of the public, who should always be directed to watch from a safe area.
- Nets may have to be partially or fully roofed to prevent nuisance or danger to others.
- Nets should preferably be orientated such that neither batters nor bowlers face a setting sun.
- Unsuitable backgrounds against which the ball would be difficult to see should be avoided; or different coloured balls may have to be used, or sightscreens provided.

Surfaces

- Surfaces should be maintained to provide a secure footing for batters and bowlers, whether of natural or non-turf construction.
- Surfaces should, so far as is reasonably practicable, be smooth, flat and free from any defect which would cause a ball to lift, shoot or turn dangerously from the pitching area.
- Whenever possible, non-turf batting surfaces should extend a minimum of 12m in front of the popping crease with the ends securely fixed.

Outfield practice

- When players practise on the outfield they should do so in positions which minimise the risk of injury to fellow cricketers and spectators, and damage to property. For example, if practising boundary hitting before a game.

Equipment

When using equipment such as a Sidearm™ or Katchet™ ensure that you are confident and familiar with its use. You should take the necessary time to develop your competency with the various aids available.

Ensure that the activities are relevant and appropriate for the players involved.





Practising in a net facility

Traditionally, a great deal of cricket has taken place ‘in the nets’ because of the benefits of the high numbers of players that can bat and bowl in relatively safe environments in a relatively controlled way. However, it is important that we challenge this historical culture and start to see nets as one of many training methods that should be considered, depending on the needs of the players.

Nets coaching should only be used when players have the ability and experience to bat/bowl sufficiently well, using hard balls, to allow the net environment to be both productive and developmental for each individual. Players up to, and including, under 13 age group (usually year 8) use a smaller 4¼ oz ball. Before players are ‘ready’ for net coaching, the necessary skill levels should first be developed using other training methods, like group coaching.

The coach should try to ensure ‘continuity’ in the net. The majority of the time should be taken by the cricketers batting and bowling. Instructions should be kept simple and concise. Young cricketers will have difficulty in focusing on more than one explicit instruction during any one session.

The length of each net coaching session should be carefully considered and planned for the following reasons:

Ability levels of the players – Practice must remain purposeful and player-centred wherever possible.

Quality – The emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity.

Fast bowling directives – The directives should be followed as part of the match and practice programme for each player.

Outcome for the session – The coach should have a clear aim and outcome for each net coaching session. For example, ‘Does every player need to bat and does every bowler bowl?’

Type of net to be run – For example, is it a basic session with each player getting a set amount of time to bat before the next player goes in?

Warm-ups and cool-downs – The coach should ensure that players prepare for their session in the nets with an appropriate warm-up and finish the session with a proper cool-down. This is sound practice and helps to ensure that the players get into good habits and have every chance of being physically and mentally ready for this session and future sessions.

Safety

Given the use of hard cricket balls, safety becomes a major consideration, and the coach is responsible for checking:

- Lighting
- Netting (for holes/ length flexibility)
- Surfaces
- Batter's/bowler's equipment including protective equipment (coaches should always ask and not touch to establish if batters are wearing a box)
- Net discipline
- Organisation.

Ideally, each net should have no more than 6–8 participants, comprising:

- 1–2 batters
- 1–2 padding up
- 4–6 bowling.

This ensures that individuals are able to practise purposefully, and no overcrowding means less likelihood of accidents.

All participants must be aware of how to remove a ball from the side netting and must never be allowed to place their head into or near netting. Batters should always return the ball to the bowler by lobbing the ball gently.

Only one ball, the bowler and the batter should be in the main part of the net at any one time. All participants must face the batter when a ball is in play. Bowlers should come out of the net on the opposite side to the next bowler, watching the batter at all times.

Bowlers should be given an order in which to bowl and should be constantly encouraged. Equal attention should be given to batters and bowlers.

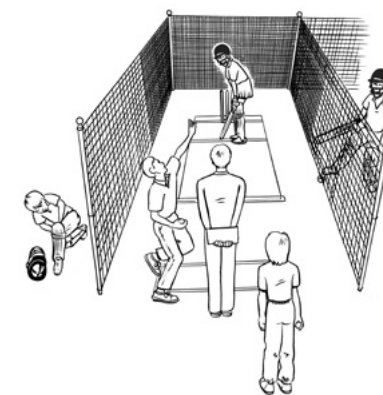
The coach should be mobile, but generally operate 'in line' with the stumps.

Given the restriction on numbers, it may be necessary to set up further practices/drills for those not taking part in the nets (eg a fielding practice cricket circuit).

Net coaching safety

The right way

- Tight nets (with canvas or heavy netting at batter's end)
- No holes
- Batter wearing suitable protective equipment
- Mat taped (across front)
- Crease markings (bowler and batter)
- All participants facing action
- Next door batter retrieving correctly – bat in to net, use foot to retrieve ball
- Coach central (umpiring) position
- Batter padding up in safe area.



Net coaching safety

The wrong way

- Slack netting
- Holes
- Batter unprotected
- Mat crumpled/torn
- No pitch markings
- Balls on pitch
- Previous bowler in danger area
- Shoelaces undone
- Bowler and batter padding up with back to action
- Coach in wrong place – not concentrating.



Bowling machine guidelines

Particular care should be taken when a bowling machine is used in the course of a practice session. The following safety guidelines should be followed.

- The coach who is operating the bowling machine and leading the session should be, as a minimum, UKCC Level 2 qualified.
- The coach will always have overall responsibility for the operation of the bowling machine.
- **All necessary regulations concerning the supply of electricity to bowling machines and manufacturer's recommendations relating to its use must be strictly adhered to.**
- Batters should take the opportunity of observing several deliveries before taking strike.
- During practice, no adjustment to the machine should be made without the batter being informed of the result before receiving another delivery.
- Adjustments to the machine should be made only under the supervision of the coach.
- The feeder should ensure the batter is ready and indicate to him that s/he is about to feed the machine for each delivery.
- Balls should be inspected prior to use and rejected if worn or damaged.
- When practising certain strokes, it may be advisable for the feeder to have some form of physical protection.
- Do not increase the speed above that which the individual batter can play with some degree of certainty.



Fielding machine guidelines

Particular care should be taken when a fielding machine is used in the course of a practice session. The following safety guidelines should be followed:

- The coach who is operating the fielding machine and leading the session should be, as a minimum, UKCC Level 2 qualified.
- The coach will always have overall responsibility for the operation of the fielding machine.
- **All necessary regulations concerning the supply of electricity to fielding machines and manufacturer's recommendations relating to its use must be strictly adhered to.**
- Fielders should take the opportunity of observing several deliveries before using the fielding machine.
- During practice, no adjustment to the machine should be made without the fielder being informed of the changes before using the machine again.
- Adjustments to the machine should be made only under the supervision of the coach.
- The coach should ensure the fielder is ready and indicate to the fielder that s/he is about to feed the machine for each delivery.
- **The coach should continually assess the area in which the practice is taking place and ensure participants, equipment and facilities are safe at all times.**
- Balls should be inspected prior to use and rejected if worn or damaged.
- Balls used and speed of delivery should be appropriate to the skill level of the fielder and ensure that the fielder can catch or stop the ball with some degree of certainty.
- When facing the fielding machine it is recommended that fielders maintain a safe distance and are no closer than the following: u13 age group and below - no nearer than 10m (11 yards); u15 age group and below - no nearer than 7.3m (8 yards); u16-u18 age group - no nearer than 5.5m (6 yards).



Net discipline

The coach should ensure good net discipline and monitor participants continually during the session. Bowlers should bowl only when the batter is ready and they should face the batter at all times.

Coaches should endeavour to group players of similar ability and strength in order that they are equally matched. The make-up and members of the participating group and any medical problems or conditions of individuals should be known. A coach should be aware and take any remedial action or emergency procedures necessary during sessions.

A written record of the circumstances of any injury sustained, action taken and names of witnesses must be kept.

Each participant must know the pre-arranged signal to stop, which would be given when a potentially dangerous situation arises, and must appreciate that s/he must cease the activity as soon as the signal is given.

All players must be aware of the correct methods of retrieving balls from the net. They must also not bowl or be allowed to bowl, if there is a danger of a ball in the net creating a hazardous situation, or when another person is retrieving a

ball from the net. If the next net is in use, balls must not be left where they could be disturbed by action from the adjacent net.

The coach must ensure that in practice the players observe the Laws of Cricket (ie they bowl from the correct position and use a lawful action). To assist this, the bowling, popping and return creases should be clearly marked.

The deliberate and frequent bowling of fast short-pitched deliveries should only be allowed on true pitches or other surfaces under the supervision of an experienced and properly qualified coach. Batters should previously have been instructed on how to play these deliveries by practising with soft (tennis) balls.

Spectators should be directed to watch from designated areas and warned that they do so at their own risk.



Safety measures for helmets in recreational cricket

The ECB has recently announced new helmet safety measures, which are being introduced with a view to reducing the risk of head and facial injuries within the game. The purpose of this brief note is to assist Leagues and Clubs at the recreational level to understand the key elements of these changes and what they mean.

Players over the age of 18

The ECB strongly recommends that all adult recreational cricketers should wear helmets for certain activities, preferably which meet the most recent British Safety Standard (see below). This recommendation applies to batting against all types of bowling, wicketkeepers standing up to the wicket (who may as an alternative wear face protectors) and fielders fielding closer than eight yards from the batsman's middle stump, except behind the wicket on the off side.

Under 18s

The position in relation to u18s currently remains unchanged, and is governed by the 'ECB Guidance on the Wearing of Cricket Helmets by Young Players' (ecb.co.uk/youngplayershelmetguidance).

In essence, batsmen and wicketkeepers standing up to the stumps must wear head protection when playing or practising. That Guidance should be referred to in full for the position in relation to u18s.

British Safety Standard

The latest British Safety Standard is BS7928:2013 (for both adults and juniors). The full list of helmets meeting this standard is available at ecb.co.uk/helmets.

For wicketkeeping face protectors the relevant British Safety Standard is BS7929-2:2009 (again, for both adults and juniors).

The ECB understands that there is currently no specific women's helmet and as a consequence no specific standard for women's cricket helmets. As the size of the standard women's cricket ball is between the standard men and junior balls, it is recommended that women use helmets that have been tested against both the men's and junior sized ball, or at least against the junior size ball (as that could potentially get through the gap above the face guard on a men's helmet).

What do leagues and clubs need to do?

Whilst it is strongly recommended that all adult recreational cricketers wear helmets in the on-field circumstances detailed above, it is not mandatory for them to do so. For the avoidance of doubt, leagues or clubs do not need to go above and beyond the ECB's recommendation by forcing their cricketers to wear helmets.

However, leagues and clubs in recreational cricket should ensure that their cricketers are made aware of the ECB's above recommendation in relation to helmets, including the need to check that any newly purchased helmets meet the latest British Safety Standard. The ECB recommends that leagues and clubs bring the link above - ie ecb.co.uk/helmets - to the attention of their cricketers and encourage all cricketers to carefully consider their own health and safety regarding helmet use.

Leagues and clubs should always ensure that they have adequate public liability insurance.



ECB safety guidance for helmets and young cricketers

In February 2015 the ECB issued updated safety guidance on the wearing of helmets by young players up to the age of 18. In brief, the guidance recommends that:

- helmets with a faceguard or grill must be worn when batting against a hard cricket ball in matches and in practice sessions
- young players should regard a helmet with a faceguard as a normal item of protective equipment when batting, together with pads, gloves and, for boys, an abdominal protector (box)
- young wicketkeepers must wear a helmet with a faceguard, or a wicketkeeper face protector when standing up to the stumps.

With the assistance of schools, cricket clubs and leagues, the wearing of helmets by young players is now standard practice in cricket throughout England and Wales. Helmets are widely available and are covered by an updated British Standard (BS7928:2013). A face protector represents an alternative head protection system for young wicketkeepers. Wicketkeeper face protectors are covered by a new British Standard (BS 7928-2:2009). The ECB strongly recommends that wherever possible junior players use head protectors that have been tested against junior sized cricket balls.

Parental or guardian written consent allowing a young player not to wear a helmet should not be accepted in any form of cricket.

This guidance applies to all players up to the age of 18, both in adult cricket and in all junior cricket played with a hard cricket ball.

The guidance also applies during all practice sessions. Any individual taking responsibility for players should take all reasonable steps to ensure that this guidance is followed at all times.

The ECB asks that the guidance is communicated to the parents or guardians of all young players through clubs and schools, and that young players are not allowed to bat or stand up to the stumps when keeping wicket against a hard ball without wearing appropriate protection.

For more information visit ecb.co.uk/concussion-in-cricket/helmets



Advice on batting equipment

A wide variety of bats are available including plastic 'bat shapes' which are reasonably cheap and perfectly satisfactory for use in skill practices using tennis or soft balls. When cricket balls are used, a willow bat should be used. When selecting bats, the following guidelines should be followed whenever possible:

Bat size: Bats come in a variety of sizes and handle lengths vary. A reasonable indicator of what is correct for an individual is to stand with the bat by their side; the handle should reach the top of the thigh.

Bat weight: The actual weight of a cricket bat is measured in pounds and ounces. A normal adult bat weighs between 2lb 4oz to 3lb 2oz. A well made bat is 'balanced' in such a way that it feels lighter than its real weight when picked up. A child's bat should be lighter than an adult's bat if good technique is to be developed. A good test is to ask players to swing the bat with their top hand only. If they can produce an adequate backswing and straight and cross batted strokes reasonably well, then the bat is light enough.



Pads: Pads should be worn whenever a cricket ball or other hard ball is used. They should be big enough to cover both legs above the knee. If they are too big they may interfere with stroke production or running between the wickets. Each pad should be held in place by at least two, usually three, Velcro straps.

Gloves: Gloves should be worn at **all** times when a cricket or other hard ball is being used. A wide variety are available. For right-handed batters the right-hand glove (bottom hand) should have extra protection on the thumb. Vice-versa for left-handed batters.

Other equipment: When cricket balls or other hard balls are used, the appropriate protective equipment must be worn. N.B. Boys should always wear an abdominal protector (“box”) when a cricket ball or any form of hard ball is used.

Spectacles, if used, should have plastic lenses and be fit securely.

It is also recommended that all players should remove jewellery before taking part in practical sessions.

Good quality footwear which ensures sufficient grip, cushioning and support should be worn – rubber soled or other suitable composition footwear indoors and spiked or dimpled footwear outdoors.



Games outdoors and indoors

Games outdoors

Many of the safety guidelines for outdoor nets and net coaching (for instance those regarding surfaces, equipment and spectators) are equally relevant in the competitive outdoor environment.

Additionally:

- Law 3 states umpires are the sole judges of whether pitches are playable and conditions are fit for play. If no certificated or appointed umpires are present, the coaches, managers or captains will make this decision.
- The playing area should be free of foreign objects (glass, bricks, etc) and noxious materials such as weed killers, fertilisers etc.
- The position of obstructions, fences and hoardings should be noted if likely to be a potential hazard and should be brought to the attention of players.
- All socket holes, eg for pitch security posts or goalposts in the outfield should be properly covered for the duration of the game.
- Law 42.8 concerning fast intimidatory bowling should be strictly enforced.

Games indoors

Many of the safety guidelines for indoor nets and net coaching (for instance those regarding lighting, backgrounds, equipment, surfaces and spectators) are equally relevant in the competitive indoor environment.

Additionally:

- Extra vigilance is necessary to reduce hazards concerning rough wall surfaces, glass, projections and equipment which cannot be moved out of the playing area and may have to be roped off, covered, etc.
- Access and egress to the playing area will need to be restricted to periods when this can be safely executed.
- Indoor specialist cricket balls should be used for games played in indoor competitions. Full size, full weight balls are not suitable for indoor games.
- It is important that young players drink appropriate amounts of water to avoid any possible risks of dehydration during a match or practice session. Coaches, teachers, managers and umpires are encouraged to ensure that regular intervals for drinks are arranged, particularly in matches of more than 20 overs per innings.



ECB Fast bowling directives

The ECB fast bowling directives are designed to raise awareness of the need to nurture and protect our young fast bowlers through their formative years, and have been warmly welcomed by a significant number of coaches and managers. Statistics clearly show that fast bowlers regularly win international matches, and if England is to achieve the vision of becoming the most successful and respected cricket nation, we must make every effort to produce bowlers to reach the goal.

I would like to thank those involved in the development of talented fast bowlers for their observations and constructive feedback regarding the initiative. Most of the concerns surrounded the policing of the regulations and the legal implications. The process of monitoring the directives was always likely to be a challenge, but as coaches we should consider the welfare of the individuals under our supervision – the regulations are designed to minimise the possibility of injury. The more coaches, managers, captains, players, umpires and parents we can enrol in the principles, the more chance we have of successfully implementing the proposals. As regards the legal implications, in an age of increasing litigation, coaches should ensure they are fully insured. Compliance with the directives will reduce any chance of legal action.

The directives will again relate to all competitions under the auspices of the ECB at u19 level and below, as well as at all Premier League matches. It should be emphasised that the age of the player is the key criteria, and not the level of cricket being played. The restrictions will be reviewed annually.

I look forward to your continued support of this initiative, and your contributions to the development of talented young fast bowlers.



Andrew Strauss
Director of England Cricket



Injury prevention for fast bowlers

These directives apply to girls and boys, and any reference to he/his should be interpreted to include she/her.

For the purpose of these directives, a fast bowler should be defined as a bowler to whom a wicketkeeper in the same age group would, in normal circumstances, stand back to take the ball.

All coaches are urged to identify those players with the potential to bowl fast and to ensure they follow the directives in all cricket throughout the season.

There are five main areas to be aware of when assessing injury risk to fast bowlers:

- 1. Overbowling**
- 2. Technique**
- 3. Physical preparation**
- 4. Equipment**
- 5. Over use.**

1. Overbowling

This is an important consideration, especially for young bowlers whose bodies are not fully developed. Recent studies have revealed that overbowling is the most common cause of back injuries in this country. Evidence suggests that much of the damage occurs early in the playing career, and especially during growth spurts, though the effects do not often show themselves until the late teens. The more talented and more physically mature youngsters are generally most at risk, as they tend to play at more than one age group level.

To ensure that young fast bowlers do not place undue stress on their bodies, every attempt must be made to keep the amount of bowling within reasonable limits.

The following directives provide sensible playing and training levels. These figures are based on players bowling in no more than three matches or practice sessions per week for age groups up to and including u15, and four matches or practice sessions per week for age groups up to and including u19.

Players can play in other matches provided they DO NOT BOWL.

Having completed a spell the bowler cannot bowl again, from either end, until the equivalent number of overs to the length of his spell have been bowled from the same end. A bowler can change ends without ending his current spell provided that he bowls the next over that he legally can from the other end.

If play is interrupted, for any reason, for less than 40 minutes, any spell in progress at the time of the interruption can be continued after the interruption up to the maximum number of overs per spell for the appropriate age group. If the spell is not continued after the interruption the bowler cannot bowl again, from either end, until the equivalent number of overs to the length of his spell before the interruption have been bowled from the same end. If the interruption is of 40 minutes or more, whether scheduled or not, the bowler can start a new spell immediately.

Once a bowler covered by these directives has bowled in a match he cannot exceed the maximum number of overs per day for his age group, even if he subsequently bowls spin. He can exceed the maximum overs per spell if bowling spin, but cannot then revert to bowling fast until an equivalent number of overs to the length of his spell have been bowled from the same end. If he bowls spin without exceeding the maximum number of overs in a spell, the maximum will apply as soon as he reverts to bowling fast.

Directives for matches

Age	Max overs per spell	Max overs per match
Up to 13	5 overs	10 overs
u14, u15	6 overs	12 overs
u16, u17	7 overs	18 overs
u18, u19	7 overs	18 overs

Directives for practice sessions

Age	Max overs per week*
Up to 13	20-30 overs
u14, u15	20-30 overs
u16, u17	20-30 overs
u18, u19	20-30 overs

*The number of overs in a week is dependent on the previous workloads. A gradual progression and then operation within the 20-30 overs should allow safe and consistent loading during development.

Nets

Outdoor

The emphasis on all nets should be quality rather than quantity. These directives will encourage young fast bowlers to focus their efforts on shorter, more intensive spells. Consequently, young fast bowlers should be made aware of the importance of warming up and cooling down as part of their preparation.

Indoor

In the period between the end of the cricket season and Christmas, indoor practice for fast bowlers should be kept to an **absolute minimum**.

The following highlights the risk of playing/practising on hard surfaces such as solid concrete and shows how these forces can be reduced by using appropriate mats or indeed by practising on grass. Concrete offers 0% force absorption, whereas surfaces such as grass can offer up to 75%. The 34% offered by natural turf was measured at Trent Bridge on a rock hard Test match pitch. These figures have major implications for limiting indoor work in the winter, particularly for seamers, and for ensuring that length and intensity of sessions are considered when working on the harder surfaces.

Force absorption and surfaces

Concrete	0% force reduction
Uniturf on concrete	7% force reduction
Uniturf + mat	15% force reduction
Uniturf + two mats	31% force reduction
Synthetic + underlay	49% force reduction

2. Technique

Skill is not simply about how a player looks in comparison to any 'technical model'. True skill is the actual execution of dynamic, adaptable and flexible movements in game situations. The core principles for bowling provide the simple foundations required for developing and enhancing existing skill.

Bowling

Pace, seam, swing or spin

- Rhythmical, balanced and aligned approach to crease.
- Head in optimal position for you (player) to enable focus on target area (adaptable) throughout action.
- Jump and gather towards target.
- Strong, tall and aligned (hips and shoulders) at back foot contact (throughout action to release).
- Increase energy towards target throughout delivery.
- Maximum energy from the action transferred to ball at point of release (to enhance pace, seam, swing or spin).
- Energy continues towards target through to full completion of action and follow-through.

3. Physical preparation

A well structured, cricket-specific training programme is essential to develop and maintain the strength, endurance and flexibility required for fast bowling. It is one of the most injury liable non-contact activities in sport and the need for the fast bowlers to be among the fittest and best prepared players in the team cannot be overemphasised. Bowlers should warm up thoroughly before bowling and training, and should cool down afterwards. A good warm-up helps to encourage a more professional approach, helps team spirit and can actually improve performance. It also helps to reduce the chance of an injury occurring.

4. Equipment

The use of absorbent footwear (basketball boots/shoes or runners for indoor nets) and the use of absorbent floor surfaces all help to reduce the risk of injury due to excessive forces.

In cases where poor equipment is used, sessions should be reduced in length and intensity accordingly. Impact forces of up to eight times body weight can be experienced during the delivery stride. Without the appropriate footwear, these forces must be absorbed by the feet, ankles, knees and lower back of the bowler. It is therefore essential that bowlers minimise these effects by absorbing them with the use of efficient, well-fitting, cushioned boots or shoes and, if required, absorbent insoles.

5. Over use

Irrespective of the other risk factors, the vast majority of the players who break down with back problems have all been seriously overbowed in the period immediately before the injury showed itself (and probably for years prior to that).

For this reason, long-term adherence to the fast bowling directives is essential. Even with the best technique in the world (of which there are very few), and a perfect, strong and flexible physique (also a commodity that is rare), players could not withstand the levels of demands that would be placed on them by their schools, clubs, school associations, county boards and other representative bodies. Captains, team managers, coaches and indeed the players themselves should take responsibility for their playing and training loads and ensure that the programme fits within the directives. The year starting date of midnight on the previous 31st August is assumed throughout these directives.

ECB guidelines for junior players in open age cricket

The ECB has issued guidance covering the selection and participation of young players in open age group cricket. This is to help clubs decide when to select young players in open age group cricket and how best to help their cricketing development when they play within open age groups. The guidance applies to boys and girls. The ECB keeps these guidelines under review and, following feedback from clubs and leagues, has revised these guidelines from the 2014 season. The ECB will continue to monitor the impact of these guidelines and you are invited to feedback your thoughts and comments in writing to the ECB Non-First Class Cricket Department.

The guidance is as follows:

General

- Making the step up from junior to open age group cricket is a significant event in any player's cricket experience. Ensure the player's safety, personal development needs and overall cricket experience are considered.
- Clubs, squad coaches and managers must take into account the requirements on age detailed in this guidance.
- Each case is to be determined on an individual basis, depending on the player's ability and stage of cognitive and emotional maturity to take part at this level. However, the minimum age guidance provided below must be adhered to.
- Juniors should be involved in all aspects of the game wherever possible, ie socialising, team talks, practice, decision making and so on, so they feel part of the team.
- Children will often feel more comfortable and able to perform if they have a family member or friend also playing in the side.
- Remember, children's early experiences will remain with them always and will often determine whether they want to remain playing the game or give up and do something else.
- Provide an opportunity for players to show their talents in an appropriate way. Children who are just used as fielders will not fully experience the game.
- Be supportive, at all times, for all forms of effort even when children are not successful. Try and put them in situations where they will experience some success (however small) and ensure plenty of praise and encouragement.
- The captain should inform the umpires of under 18s in the side.



Restrictions

ECB Helmets, Fast Bowling Directives and Fielding Regulations should always be adhered to for junior players in open age group cricket.

Minimum age

Players who are selected in a county u12 squad in spring for a summer squad or in another squad deemed by ECB Performance Managers to be of a standard above 'district level' for that season are eligible to play open age cricket.

This is providing they are at least 11 years old, are in School Year 7 on 1st September in the year preceding the season, and have written parental consent to play. In allowing these players to play in open age cricket it is essential clubs and coaches recognise the 'duty of care' obligations they have towards these young players.

This means boys and girls who are county squad and area squad players are able to play open age group cricket if they are in an u12 age group and are a minimum of 11 years old on 1st September of the year preceding the season.

District and club players who are not in a county or area squad must wait until they reach the u13 age group, be in Year 8 and be 12 years old on 1st September of the preceding year before being able to play in any open age group cricket. As before written parental consent is required for these players.

The duty of care should be interpreted in two ways:

- Not to place a young player in a position that involves an unreasonable risk to that young player, taking account of the circumstances of the match and the relative skills of the player.
- Not to create a situation that places members of the opposing side in a position whereby they cannot play cricket as they would normally do against adult players.

In addition, the guidelines note the need for clubs and leagues to recognise the positive experience young players should have in open age cricket. Clubs should provide an opportunity for players to show their talents in an appropriate way. Children who are just used as fielders will not fully experience the game.





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