

Amateur Umpire Help Guide

Umpiring

Cricket as we all know is a wonderfully complex game. Anyone who has sat down with a copy of the Laws of cricket will know only too well how complex it really is and how little of the law they thought they actually knew! So, as a lot of club members are required to umpire and score the games they play in, I hope that you find the following article useful in learning some of the more common mistakes that player umpires at our level make. Please do spend some time reading this, so that you can avoid finding yourself embroiled in an incident in the summer because you weren't sure of the laws! Although, please also make yourself aware of the Junior league's own playing conditions as they do differ enormously from league to league and sometimes even between league and cup.

A Fielder may leave the field of play at any time but must inform the umpire of his reason for doing so. Naturally they have to gain your permission to come back on, so although they can return to the field at any time during the over, if they've snuck on without asking permission and field a live ball...then the ball is automatically dead, the ball doesn't count in the over and a 5 run penalty is awarded to the batting side on top of any runs completed or crossed on before the illegal fielding took place.

An injured batsman with a runner is a nightmare for all umpires, so when he's not on strike have him stood next to square-leg so that he's out of the game. Unless he's then foolish enough to handle the ball or obstruct the field, he can't be out in any other way through his own actions. Only his runner can run him out. However when the injured batsman is on strike if he then chooses to go for a run himself and the Keeper's stumps are broken, then the injured batsman will be out irrespective of where everybody else has got to!

The crease is the inside edge of all of the white lines that are marked out. Therefore in a run out or stumping decision, the batsman needs to have got behind the line. Being on it means that you're out.

The sightscreen is always considered outside the boundary, ideally the boundary needs to be marked in such a way that the sightscreen can be moved to accommodate over and round the wickets.

A fair catch is taken when the fielder has complete control over both the ball and his movements at the same time. Therefore if he catches the ball, realises that his momentum will take him over the boundary and throws the ball back up in the air before crossing the rope. He is then able to fully return back onto the field to catch the ball when it comes back down again and this is a fair catch.

The moment the fielder throws the ball is important when an overthrow goes to the boundary. If the batsmen hadn't crossed when the ball was thrown as they ran for a single, it is only a boundary 4, if the runners had crossed when the ball is thrown and it subsequently goes to the boundary then 5 runs are scored. If the batsmen end up running 3 before the ball goes over the rope then it's all academic as the moment of the ball being thrown is all that concerns the umpire

You can't be out caught if the ball drops off your bat and sticks in the top of your pad at the knee. You don't need to hop around trying to dislodge it! Similarly if that glorious pull shot that you've played gets struck in the grille of the fielder at short square-leg, the ball is dead automatically. Logically it follows, that if the ball hits the keeper or fielder's helmet and balloons up in the air off their head then you can't be caught, although on these occasions the ball is still live and the batsmen can therefore run.

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The bowler can land his front foot behind the popping crease and then slide it forward beyond the crease. That is a perfectly fair delivery. However his back foot can't touch any part of the return crease

A no-ball that is so erratic that it goes straight to the boundary behind the keeper without the batsman touching it, is recorded as 5 no balls, even though the umpire will signal no-ball, byes and boundary. The byes signal is just to confirm that nobody has hit the ball.

To score a leg-bye the batsman has to make a genuine attempt to hit the ball or to take action to avoid being hit by it. If he just thrusts his pad at the ball and sets off for a run, the umpire will call and signal dead ball after the first run and return the batsman to their original ends and disallow that run.

The fielding side can appeal for a dismissal even though over has been called. They have until the next bowler begins his run-up for their appeal to be heard

In a run out where both batsmen end up at the same end, the batsmen don't get to choose which of them is out as you often see! The umpire has to decide who was the last batsman to make good his ground at that end when the wicket was broken and then he is out. So, if one of the batsmen doesn't leave his crease at all then he can't be out.

Since the days of bodyline, you are not able to field with more than two fielders behind square on the leg side. This actually means behind the popping crease and not the bowling crease as commonly believed. It also means that if a fielder has only one leg over the popping crease whilst two fielders are already behind square on the leg side, then this has to be called no-ball by the striker's end umpire. You also need to ensure when you're standing at this end that the keeper remains entirely behind the stumps until the ball has either hit the bat or person of the striker or until the striker sets off to run, again you would need to call no-ball if the keeper does get his gloves in front of the stumps before the batsman plays at the ball.

A slightly controversial one, the subject of beamers. The law dictates that umpires shall take all beamers seriously and there is no such thing as "one that slipped". As we all know a slow delivery that is head high or any other delivery that is waist high or above is automatically called no-ball by the bowler's end umpire. Your actions don't end there however! It will make you unpopular, but you don't have any option but to then caution the bowler for his actions and inform your colleague and the captains what you have done. If he then bowls a second beamer he gets a final warning and a third instance means that you have to take him off immediately and permanently for the rest of the innings. However if you consider that the beamer was absolutely deliberate and the intention was to injure the batsman, then you must remove him from bowling immediately without any warnings.

The reason for the sternness of this law is simply to avoid the situation where you have let a beamer go, thinking that it just slipped, only to find the fourth beamer that he then bowls seriously injures the batsman, when by which stage he should have already been barred from bowling! The liability for the batsman's injuries could fall on your shoulders for not having implemented the law! And whilst we're talking liabilities, please do make sure that you have read the ECB directives on the protection of young players in the game. Fast bowlers can only bowl a certain length of spell at certain ages and batsmen and fielders are required to wear helmets in certain circumstances. Again if a colt has injured himself because you as umpire have failed to apply the law, then the liability for his injuries could lie with you!

I hope that the above helps you in some of the greyer areas of the game. Although some of these incidents happen very rarely, it is definitely worth knowing the law so that the players have the confidence that you end up doing the right thing.