

A glossary of cricket terms

Cricket, more than most sports, is full of expressions and terms designed to bewilder the newcomer (and often even the more seasoned follower).

Arm Ball A ball bowled by a slow bowler which has no spin on it and so does not turn as expected but which stays on a straight line ("goes on with the arm")

The Ashes Series between England and Australia are played for The Ashes

Asking rate - The runs required per over for a team to win - mostly relevant in a one-dayer

Ball Red for first-class and most club cricket, white for one-day matches (and, experimentally, women once used blue balls and men orange ones). It weighs 5½ ounces (5 ounces for women's cricket and 4¾ ounces for junior cricket)

Ball Tampering The illegal action of changing the condition of the ball by artificial means, usually scuffing the surface, picking or lifting the seam of the ball, or applying substances other than sweat or saliva

Bat-Pad A fielding position close to the batsman designed to catch balls which pop up off the bat, often via the batsman's pads

Batter Another word for batsman, first used as long ago as 1773. Also something you fry fish in

Beamer A ball that does not bounce (usually accidentally) and passes the batsman at or about head height. If aimed straight at the batsman by a fast bowler, this is a very dangerous delivery (and generally frowned on)

Bend your back - The term used to signify the extra effort put in by a fast bowler to obtain some assistance from a flat pitch

Belter A pitch which offers little help to bowlers and so heavily favours batsmen

Blob A score of 0 (see duck)

Bodyline (also known as leg theory) A tactic most infamously used by England in 1932-33, although one which had been around for some time before that, in which the bowler aimed at the batsman rather than the wicket with the aim of making him give a catch while attempting to defend himself. The fielding side were packed on the leg side to take catches which resulted. This is now illegal

Bosie An Australian term for a googly, now rarely used. Originated from the inventor of the delivery, BJT Bosanquet

Bouncer A short-pitched ball which passes the batsman at chest or head height

Boundary The perimeter of a cricket field, or the act of the batsman scoring a four or a six (eg "Tendulkar hammered three boundaries")

Box An abdominal protector worn by batsmen and wicketkeepers. It is also an old term for a fielder in the gully region.

Bump Ball A ball which is played off the bat almost instantly into the ground and is caught by a fielder. Often this has the appearance of being a clean catch

Bumper See Bouncer.

Bunny Also known as Rabbit. A member of the side who cannot bat and is selected as a specialist bowler or wicketkeeper, and who almost always bats at No. 11. It can also be used to describe a player who often gets out to one bowler - "Atherton was McGrath's bunny"

Bunsen A term used by commentators to describe a pitch heavily favouring slow bowlers. From Cockney rhyming slang (Bunsen Burner = turner).

Bye A run scored when the batsman does not touch the ball with either his bat or body. First recorded in the 1770s.

Carry your bat an opening batsman who remains not out at the end of a completed innings (ie when all his team-mates are out)

Charge, giving the When a batsman leaves his crease to attack the ball, usually against a slow bowler. By doing this he can convert a good-length ball into a half-volley

Chest-on Used to describe a bowler who delivers the ball with his chest facing the batsman, as opposed to being side on

Chinaman A ball bowled by a left-arm slow bowler that turns into the right-hand batsman, in effect a left-arm legspinner. Named after Puss Achong

Chin music Fast bowlers aiming the ball at the batsman's head. The term originated in the Caribbean

Chucker Another term for a bowler who throws the ball

Closing the face Turning the face of the bat inwards and, in doing so, hitting the ball to the leg side

Corridor of uncertainty A term beloved by commentators which describes an area just outside the batsman's off stump where he is unsure whether he has to leave or play the ball

Cow corner An unconventional fielding position, more commonly found in the lower reaches of the game, on the midwicket/long-on boundary. The term is thought to have originated at Dulwich College where there was the corner of a field containing livestock on that edge of the playing area. Fielders were dispatched to the "cow corner"

Cricket Max A shortened version of the game with unconventional scoring systems pioneered by Martin Crowe in New Zealand in the late 1990s.

Cross bat A cross-batted shot is where the batsman holds his bat horizontally when striking the ball. Examples of cross-batted shots include hooks, pulls and cuts

Dead ball A ball from which no runs can be scored or wickets taken. First referred to in 1798

Declaration When the batting side ends their innings before all of their players are out

Dibbly-dobbly bowlers - Bowlers who are of medium pace, and are effective in the one-day scenario in choking the runs. New Zealand had a famous quartet - Rod Latham, Gavin Larsen, Chris Harris and Nathan Astle - during the 1992 World Cup

Dolly An easy catch

Doosra A Hindi/Urdu word which means "second" or "other", the doosra is the offspinner's version of the googly, delivered out of the back of the hand and turning away from the right-hand batsman

Drifter/ Floater - A delivery bowled by an offspinner which curves away from a right-hander, and then carries straight on instead of turning

Duck A score of 0 (also known as blob)

Duckworth Lewis Named after Frank Duckworth and Tony Lewis, two mathematicians who devised a system to help decide one-day cricket matches when rain interrupts play. [Click here for more information.](#)

Economy rate The average number of runs a bowler concedes per over

Extras Runs not scored by batsmen. There are four common extras - byes, leg byes, wides and no-balls. In Australia these are known as sundries

Featherbed A batsmen-friendly pitch with little life for the bowlers. Often found in Antigua

Flipper A variation for the legspinner that appears to be pitching short but the ball skids on quickly and often results in bowled or lbw. It is a delivery that is used sparingly

Full toss A ball that reaches the batsmen without bouncing. Above waist height it becomes a beamer

Gardening - The act of the batsman repairing indentations in the pitch, made by the ball or studs, with his bat. More likely to happen when a ball has just whistled past his nose or scooted by his ankle

Good length - The ideal length that the bowler aims for, getting the batsman in two minds as whether to play forwards or back

Googly - The legspinner's variation that turns into the right-hander and away from the left-hander

Grubber - A ball that hardly bounces - see also shooter

Half volley - A ball that is the perfect length for driving, fuller than a good length but not a full-toss

Handled the ball - If the batsmen deliberately touches the ball with his hands he can be given out. Michael Vaughan fell victim to this in India on 2002-03 tour in Bangalore

Hawk-Eye - A tracking technology which helps to explain the intricacies of the sport, Hawk-Eye can be helpful in judging LBWs. At the moment it is used mainly for arm-chair umpiring, although one day it may be used in an official capacity

Heavy ball - When a delivery is quicker than it looks and hits the bat harder or higher than is expected

Hit the ball twice - If a batsmen deliberately strikes the ball twice to gain runs he can be given out. However, the batsman can knock the ball away from his stumps with the bat

Hit the deck - The bowler's ability to deliver the ball from height and extract extra bounce from the pitch

Hoick - Same as slog, but most used for on-side shots

In-ducker - An inswinging delivery that moves into the batsman very late. Wasim Akram produced deadly versions with the older ball

Inside out, turning the batsman - A batsman aims to leg but the ball goes past the off and he is forced to play the ball open-chested

Inside-out shot - A stroke where the batsman moves towards the leg side and hits a ball around leg stump into the off side

Jaffa - A delivery that is too good for the batsman, and leaves him groping hopelessly at thin air or (as the bowler will hope) dismisses him

King pair - Hardly worth turning up if you get one of these ... out first ball for zero in both innings

Leading edge - When the batsman mis-hits the ball and edges it forward in the opposite direction to which he was attempting to play

Leg-Before Wicket (LBW) - One of the game's more complex rules, but at its simplest ... you cannot be out if the ball pitched *outside* the line of leg stump; you cannot be out if the ball hits you outside the line of off stump unless you are offering no stroke. Aside from that, if it hits you in line, the only decision the umpire has to make is whether the ball is going on to hit the stumps.

Leg-bye - When the ball deflects off the pad and the batsmen run. A shot must be offered to the ball. Leg-byes do not count against the bowler

Leg-break/spin - When the ball pitches and turns from leg to off for a righthander

Leg-cutter - A ball which cuts and moves away from the batsman towards the offside (if he is a righthander)

Leg-side - The area of the pitch behind the batsman's legs

Leg theory See Bodyline

Length Where the ball pitches down the wicket. Lengths can be generally short, full or good

Lifter - A ball that rises unexpectedly

Line - The line of attack the bowler employs when he is bowling

Lollipop - A really easy ball to hit - a 'gift'

Long hop - a ball which pitches short, sits up and 'begs' to be hit

Loop - The flight of the ball

Maiden - An over where no runs that are attributable to the bowler are scored (byes or leg-byes may be scored in this over, though, as these don't count against the bowler)

Manhattan A bar graph of runs scored per over which resembles the Manhattan skyscrapers skyline

Mankad - A term popular mainly in indoor cricket - but also fairly popular in Australia for outdoor cricket. Mankad is when the bowler brings his arm round and, instead of releasing the ball, runs out the non-striker by whipping off the bails. This type of dismissal is rare - and usually a warning is given to the batsman beforehand. Named after Vinoo Mankad, who twice dismissed the Australian Bill Brown this way

MCC - The Marylebone Cricket Club, the spiritual home of cricket at Lord's in St Johns Wood in London. For the greater period of cricket's formal history, the MCC which was founded in 1787, was the autocratic arbiter in cricket matters. No law could be changed without its approval. And while the administration of the game world-wide has moved to the International Cricket

Council, and to the England and Wales Cricket Board in Britain, the MCC is still regarded as the ultimate defender of the laws of the game, a type of Privy Council of cricket. For many years, English touring teams were known officially as the MCC but as the 'great' has ebbed away from Britain and its colonies, so the influence of the MCC has diminished. Also the initials of the Melbourne Cricket Club in Victoria.

Middle - To hit the ball from the meat of the bat, "to middle it" is to connect really well. Middle is also the centre of the field, where the bulk of the action takes place

Military Medium - A slightly derogative term for a bowler who has no real pace

Minefield - A difficult batting track. The pitch is in such a state of disrepair that it is almost impossible to play "proper" shots as the ball is popping up everywhere

Nelson - The English superstition that 111 and its multiples are unlucky. The sticks resemble 111, and is loosely connected with Lord Nelson's physical attributes. Double Nelson is 222

Nervous nineties - The psychological pressure on the batsman knowing he is approaching a century

New ball - Can usually be taken every 80 overs. The advantage is to quick bowlers who have a shiny and bouncy ball, but conversely it can result in an increase in scoring rate as the ball comes off the bat faster

Nick - A faint edge off the bat

Nightwatchman A non-batsman promoted up the order towards the end of a day's play with the idea of shielding a recognised batsman in the final overs

No-ball - An illegitimate delivery, usually when the bowler has overstepped on the front crease

Nurdle - The batsman nudging the ball around and into gaps

Obstruction - When the batsman wilfully blocks or distracts a fielder to prevent a catch being made or a run-out being effected

Occupy the crease - When a batsman stays at the wicket but scores slowly, often with the intention of playing out for a draw

Off-break/spin - A ball turning into the right hander- from off to leg (from left to right)

Off-cutter - An offbreak delivered at speed

Off the mark When the batsman scores his first run

Off-side The side of the pitch which is to batsman's right (if right-handed), or left (if left-handed)

On-side The same as the leg-side

On the up - Making contact with the ball before it reaches the top of the bounce - hitting it on the rise. Viv Richards was a prominent exponent

Out - There are ten possible ways of being out: bowled, caught, hit wicket, lbw, stumped, timed out, handled the ball, obstruction, hit the ball twice, and run out. To be out "retired out" is gaining in currency and popularity and counts as a dismissal, unlike "retired hurt"

Outside edge - When the ball hits the edge of the bat which is furthest away from his body

Outswing - When the ball swings away from the batsman and towards the slips

Paddle - A sweep shot

Pair - When a batsman gets a duck in both innings

Pinch-hitters - Lower-order batsmen promoted in the line-up to try and hit up a few quick runs. Used mostly when a team is chasing a huge total in a one-dayer - the thinking being that a few quick runs will reduce the asking rate; and if the pinch-hitter gets out, the specialist batsmen are still around

Pitch - The bounce of the ball - "it pitches on a good length". Also, the cut strip in the centre of the field of play

Play on - When a batsman hits the ball but it goes on to hit the stumps and he is bowled

Plumb - When the batsman is clearly LBW, even at full speed, he is said to be plumb in front.

Powerplay This was introduced by the ICC in 2005 to try to spruce up the middle overs of one-day internationals by enforcing the bowling side to take three blocks of overs in which they have to have extra fielders within the 30-yard circle. The first Powerplay is mandatory through the first ten overs of the innings, the second and third ones, of five overs each, can be taken at any other time. In rain-reduced matches the duration of the second and third Powerplays is reduced in proportion to the overall reduction.

Pudding - A slow, stodgy pitch which will be difficult to score quickly on

Pull - a back-foot leg-side shot, distinct from the hook because the pull is played to a ball that hasn't risen as high.

Rabbit See Bunny

Return Crease Parallel white lines pointing down the pitch, either side of the stumps. A bowler's back foot must land inside this area or else a no-ball will be called.

Retire To postpone or end one's innings, either voluntarily through boredom when you're simply too good for the opposition, or involuntarily and in agony, when a nasty fast bowler has taken his pound of flesh

Reverse Sweep The epitome of the type of shot you will not find in the MCC coaching manual. This stroke is played by dropping to one knee and reversing one's hands, so that you can swing the ball from leg to off, rather than the more natural off to leg. It is a handy stroke for beating conventional fields in a one-day game, but it has its drawbacks as well - just ask Mike Gatting

Reverse Swing When the ball is 50 overs old and the pitch is as flat as a pancake, this phenomenon is often a bowling side's saving grace. First mastered by the Pakistani quicks of the 1980s and 1990s, it involves sideways movement of the ball through the air that is contrary to your average everyday laws of physics. If it sounds like rocket science, that is because it is

Rip Big turn for a spin bowler, especially a legspinner, who can use the whole action of the wrist to impart maximum revolutions on the ball. Shane Warne, consequently, bowls a lot of "rippers"

Ring Field A standard fielding arrangement, with men positioned in a circle all around the bat saving the single

Rock Colloquial term for cricket ball

Roll To flatten the playing surface with a heavy rolling device. At the end of an innings, the side about to start their innings will be offered the choice of a heavy or light roller

Roller A heavy rolling device designed to flatten the surface of the pitch

Rope Used to mark the perimeter of the field. If the ball crosses or hits the rope, a boundary will be signalled

Rough The area of a pitch that is scuffed up and loosened by the action of a bowler running through in his follow-through. Usually, this will be situated a foot or so outside leg stump, and consequently it becomes a tasty target for spin bowlers, who can exploit the extra turn to make life a misery for the batsmen

Run-chase Generally the fourth innings of a first-class or Test match, and the latter stages of a one-day game, when the match situation has been reduced to a set figure for victory, in a set time or maximum number of overs

Run-rate Of particular importance in a one-day game, this is the average number of runs scored per over, and is used as a guide to a team's progress (see Duckworth Lewis)

Run-up The preparatory strides taken by a bowler as they steady themselves for delivery. Also the area in which they perform said action

Runner A player who is called upon by a batsman who might otherwise need to retire hurt. He is required to wear the same padding and stands at square leg or the non-striker's end to perform the duty of running between the wickets. Often the cause of endless confusion and inevitable run-outs

Sandshoe crusher Colloquial term for Yorker, a full-pitched delivery that is aimed at the batsman's toes and usually hits them as well

Seam The ridge of stitching that holds the two halves of a ball together, and causes deviation off the pitch when the ball lands. Seam bowlers, as opposed to swing bowlers, rely on movement off the pitch, rather than through the air

Shoulder arms The description of when a batsman decides that rather than risk being dismissed from a ball he lifts the bat high above his shoulder to attempt to keep his bat and hands out of harm's way.

Shirtfront A flat, lifeless, soul-destroying wicket that is beloved of batsmen the world over, and loathed by bowlers of all varieties. For a prime example, see the Antigua Recreation Ground

Shooter See grubber

Side on

Sitter The easiest, most innocuous and undroppable catch that a fielder can ever receive. To drop one of these is to invite a whole world of pain from the crowd and constant embarrassment from the giant replay screen (see dolly).

Sledging Not the act of travelling downhill at speed on a toboggan, but the act of verbally abusing or unsettling a batsman, in an attempt to make him lose concentration and give his wicket away. Often offensive, occasionally amusing, always a topic of conversation

Slog - Used to describe a shot which is not in the coaching book

Slogger - Exponent of the slog

Slog-sweep - A heave to the leg side, played like the sweep, but a lofted shot

Slower ball Like naff plastic wristbands, these are the must-have accessory of the modern international bowler. The idea is to deliver a pace of significantly reduced pace, while at the same time turning your arm over at the same speed so as to deceive the batsman. This change of pace can be achieved by a change of grip, or a late tweak of the wrist. The best exponents - Courtney Walsh, Chris Cairns - are lethal. The worst - no names mentioned - tend to be smacked clean over cow corner for six

Standing back/standing up Where a wicketkeeper positions himself for a particular bowler. He stands back for fast bowlers, and stands up for spinners

Stock ball A bowler's regular delivery, minimum risk, little chance of runs or wickets. To get away with a slower ball, they need a stock ball to lull the batsman into a false sense of security

Stonewall To protect one's wicket at all costs, putting defence above all other virtues. See Jacques Kallis. Also a gay pride organisation

Strike rate The number of runs a batsman scores per 100 balls; the number of deliveries a bowler needs to take his wickets

Sundries Australian word for extras

Supersub A short-lived experiment in 2005 by the ICC to try to spruce up one-day internationals. It allowed teams to replace one player during a game, but the reality was it heavily favoured the side batting first and was quickly dropped.

Swing A ball that curves through the air, as opposed to off the seam. See also, reverse swing

Tailender Players who come in towards the end of an innings, generally Nos. 8, 9, 10 and 11, who are not noted for their batting prowess (although ideally they can bowl a bit by way of compensation)

Teapot (or double-teapot) A gesticulation beloved of fast bowlers, particularly the grumpier sort, such as Glenn McGrath and Angus Fraser. Involves having both hands on hips at the same time, usually in reaction to a dropped catch, edged boundary or general misfield

Throwing To deliver the ball with an arm that flexes at the elbow at point of delivery, thereby enabling extra spin to be imparted for a slow bowler, or extra pace for a quick bowler. A topic of endless debate

Ton A century (100 runs by a single batsman in one innings)

Tonk To give the ball a good wallop, onomatopoeically named after the sound a good hit makes. See also twat, biff, thwack, belt, spank and leather

Track The pitch

Trundler Slow, laborious type of bowler who thinks he's quick, once was quick, or is simply old, fat and unfit and needs to be put out to pasture. See military medium

Twelfth man A substitute fielder (and drinks waiter) for the chosen eleven. If called upon to play, he is permitted to field wherever he is needed, but can neither bat nor bowl

Two-paced A wicket that is beginning to break up, usually after three or four days of a Test match, and so produces some deliveries that leap off a length, and others that sneak through at shin-height

Uncovered pitches Pitches that were left open to the elements for the duration of a match, and so developed a variety of characteristics. The failings of a generation of English batsmen were attributed to the decision, in the 1970s, to bring on the covers at the slightest hint of rain

V - in the The arc between mid-off and mid-on in which batsmen who play straight (in accordance with the MCC Coaching Manual) tend to score the majority of their runs. Modern aggressive players, such as Virender Sehwag, tend to prefer the V between point and third man

Wagon-wheel A circular graph or line-drawing depicting the region in which a batsman has scored his runs

Walk (To) The improbable act of a batsman giving himself out, without waiting for an umpire's decision. Adam Gilchrist, famously, did this against Sri Lanka in the semi-final of the 2003 World Cup. Mike Atherton, equally famously, did not at Trent Bridge in 1998, en route to a matchwinning 98 not out against South Africa

Wicket One of those ubiquitous words that is central to the game of cricket. The word can be used to describe the 22 yards between the stumps, the stumps collectively (bails included), the act of hitting these stumps and so dismissing the batsman, and perversely, the act of not being out (Gayle and Sarwan added 257 for the second wicket). Plus any other use you care to think of

Wide A delivery that pitches too far away from the batsman and so proves impossible to score off. The umpire will single this by stretching his arms out horizontally, an extra will be added to the total and the ball will be bowled again

Wrist spin The version of spin bowling in which the revolutions on the ball are imparted via a flick of the wrist, rather than a tweak of the fingers. As a general rule, a right-arm wristspinner's action turns the ball from leg to off (legspin) while a left-arterner turns it from off to leg (see chinaman)

Wrong 'un Australian term for a googly - a legspinner's delivery that turns in the opposite direction, ie from off to leg

Yips A mental affliction that affects many sportsmen, particularly golfers and spin bowlers. It is a mindblock that can cause a player to forget the basics of his game, and in the most serious cases can force that player into early retirement

Yorker A full-pitched delivery that is aimed at the batsman's toes and/or the base of the stumps. If the ball is swinging, these can be the most lethal delivery in the game, as perfected by Waqar Younis in his pomp

Zooter A spin bowling variation, first devised by Shane Warne. This is a delivery that snakes out of the hand with little or no spin imparted, and so deceives through its very ordinariness. Some question whether the delivery has ever existed, for it could be another of Warne's mindgames to keep his opponents on their toes