



Coaches' Safety Pack



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Net Coaching

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 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 Coaching
- Bowling Machine Guidelines
- Fielding Machine Guidelines
- Net Discipline
- Definition of a Hard Ball
- Advice on Batting Equipment
- Games Outdoors
- Games Indoors
- ECB Fast Bowling Directives
- Injury Prevention for Fast Bowlers
- Junior Cricketers Playing in Adult Matches
- Fielding Regulations

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 taken to limit the potential danger e.g. 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 important to ensure that there is access to a telephone with an outside line available.



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 c.1.8 metres high, and extending from the rear of the net at least c. 3 metres 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. 1 metre 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 the rebounding from it.
- Netting should be wide enough to allow bowlers and batter to practice without undue hindrance (c. 3.66 metres minimum).
- Netting should be high enough to allow spin bowlers to flight the ball (c. 4 metres 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 foot hold 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. 12 metres 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.
- Preferably nets should 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

- Should be maintained to provide a secure footing for batters and bowlers, whether of natural or non-turf construction.
- 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 12 metres in front of the popping crease with the ends securely fixed.

Outfield Practice

- When players practice on the outfield they should do so in positions which minimise the risk of injury to fellow cricketers and spectators and damage to property.

Net Coaching

Traditionally a great deal of cricket 'training' 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 'Net Coaching' as one of many training options that should be considered depending on the needs of the players.



Net 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 4¾ oz ball. Before players are 'ready' for Net Coaching, the necessary skills 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. Technical points should be made concisely. Young cricketers will have difficulty in focusing on more than one technical point 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?', 'How many balls can each 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.

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:

- 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 in to 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.



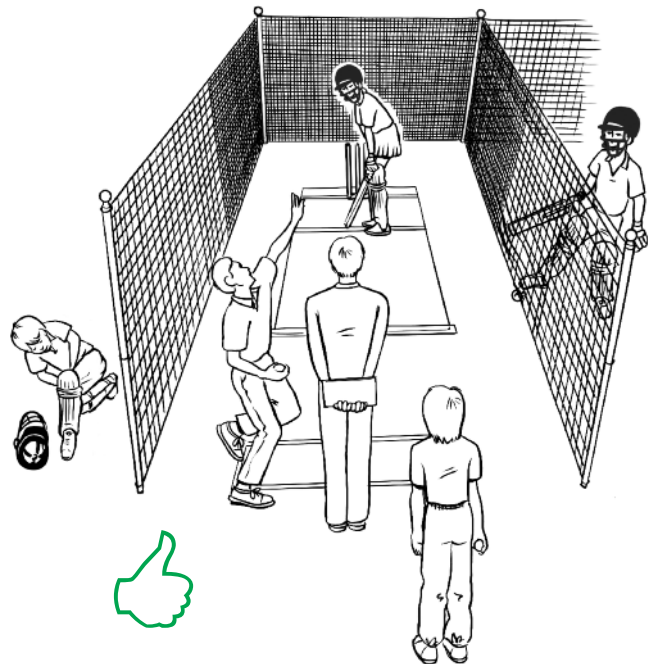
Bowlers should be given an order in which to bowl and should be constantly encouraged. Equal attention should be given to batters and bowlers.

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, for example fielding practice cricket circuit.

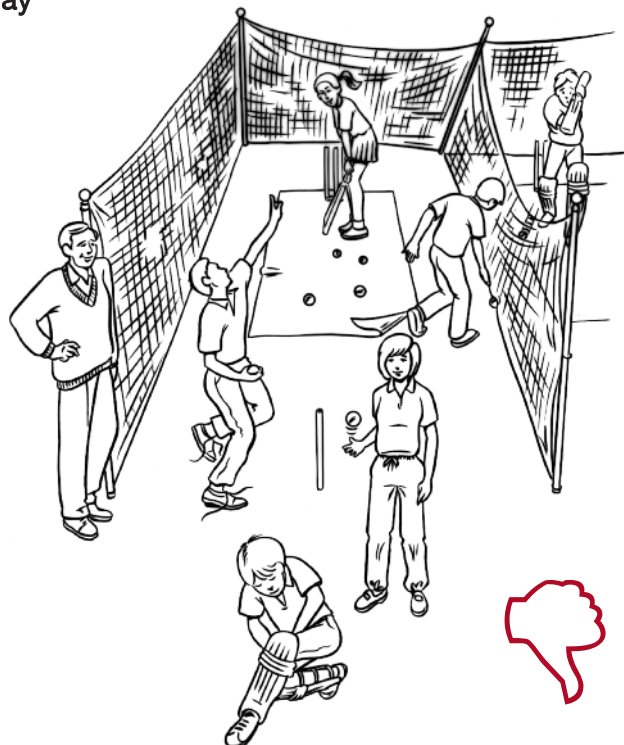
NET COACHING SAFETY - The Right Way

- 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 - no protection
- Mat crumpled / torn
- No pitch markings
- Balls on pitch
- Previous bowler in danger area
- Shoe laces 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 minimum UKCC2 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 manufacturers recommendations 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 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 minimum UKCC2 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 & all manufacturer's recommendations relating to its use must be strictly adhered to.
- Fielders should have 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 that the fielder is ready and indicate to the fielder that he /she is about to feed the machine for each ball.
- **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 & 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 he/she must cease the activity immediately 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 i.e. 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 properly qualified coach. Batter should previously have been instructed in 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.

Helmets and Face Protectors

It is recommended that a helmet with a faceguard or grill is worn by young players when batting and when standing up to the stumps when keeping wicket against a hard ball in practice and in matches.

Young wicket keepers can use a face protector which represents an alternative face protection system.

A young player should not be allowed to bat against a hard ball without a helmet with a faceguard or grill.

When keeping wicket a young player should not be allowed to stand up close to the stumps (closer than 5 metres) without a helmet with a faceguard or grill or a face protector.



Coaches, teachers, managers and other responsible adults should always ensure that young players wear helmets in these situations.

All players should regard a helmet with a faceguard as a normal item of protective equipment when batting against a hard ball, together with pads, gloves, and (for boys) an abdominal protector (box). A thigh guard is also strongly recommended. 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 a British Standard (BS7928: 1988).



A face protector represents an alternative head protection system for young wicket keepers.

Face protectors are a relatively new innovation. At the time of publication of this Safety Guide, ECB is working towards achieving a British Standard in relation to all face protection technology for juniors. In the meantime The NZ and Australian cricket helmet standard AS/NZS 4499 is the closest standard for the faceguard/ faceprotector. The standard has three parts to it - (4499.1) the helmet (4499.2) the temple pieces and (4499.3) the grill. The nature of the product is such that the only relevant part of that standard is part 3 and not all the parts of the test apply because the face does not attach to a helmet.



In addition any young player in the under 16 to under 18 age groups, who has not reached the age of 18, must wear a helmet and for boys an abdominal protector (box) when fielding within 5.5 meters (6 yards) of the bat, except behind the wicket on the off side. Players should wear appropriate protective equipment whenever they are fielding in a position where they feel at risk.

These fielding regulations are applicable to all cricket in England and Wales. Age groups are based on the age of the player at midnight on 31st August in the year preceding the current season.

Definition of a Hard Ball

The guidance applies whenever a hard cricket ball is used. This includes the hard balls used in some forms of indoor cricket and the red and white coaching balls. The guidance also applies to net practice sessions with a hard ball. Coaches, managers and teachers will know whether the ball in use is "hard", and if they are in doubt they should insist that helmets are worn.

It is not intended that the guidance should apply when Kwik cricket balls, tennis balls, windballs and similar softer balls are being used. In addition the balls that are used in Inter cricket, which are rubberised with a seam, or similar balls from other manufacturers, do not require the wearing of helmets.

Where British Standards have been laid down it is in the best interest of players to ensure that their equipment conforms with those standards. (The British Standard for cricket helmets is BS7928: 1998) In addition, helmets sold in the UK should carry a CE mark.



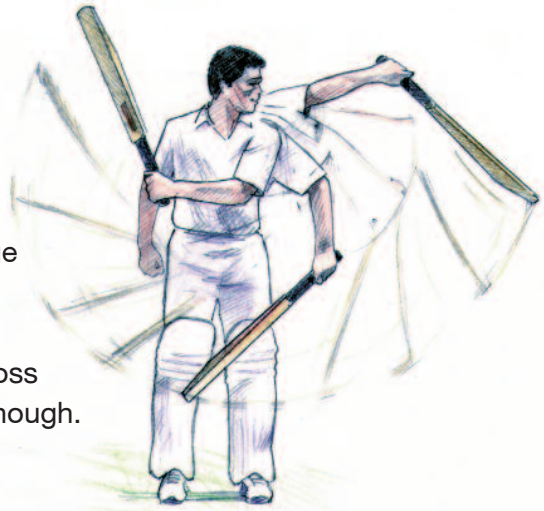


Advice on Batting Equipment

A wide variety of bats are available including plastic 'bat shapes' which are reasonably cheap & 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:

1. 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.

2. Bat Weight: The actual weight of a cricket bat is measured in pounds and ounces. A normal adult bat weighs between 2lbs 4ozs and 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 2, usually, 3 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 fit securely.

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

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

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, e.g. for pitch security posts or goal posts 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 twenty 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 Under 19 level and below as well as 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.

HUGH MORRIS
Managing 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 wicket keeper 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 four main areas to be aware of when assessing injury risk to fast bowlers:

1. Overbowling
2. Technique
3. Physical Preparation
4. Equipment

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 suggest 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 3 matches or practice session per week for age groups up to and including U15, and 4 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.

DIRECTIVES FOR MATCHES:

Age	Max overs per spell	Max overs per day
Up to 13	5 overs per spell	10 overs per day
U14, U15	6 overs per spell	12 overs per day
U16, U17	7 overs per spell	18 overs per day
U18, U19	7 overs per spell	18 overs per day

DIRECTIVES FOR PRACTICE SESSIONS:

Age	Max overs per session	Max overs per week
Up to 13	30 balls per session	2 sessions per week
U14, U15	36 balls per session	2 sessions per week
U16, U17	36 balls per session	3 sessions per week
U18, U19	42 balls per session	3 sessions per week

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 this does not happen his spell is deemed to be concluded. 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.

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 warming down as part of their preparation.

Indoor:

In the period between the end of the cricket season and Christmas, indoor practise 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 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.

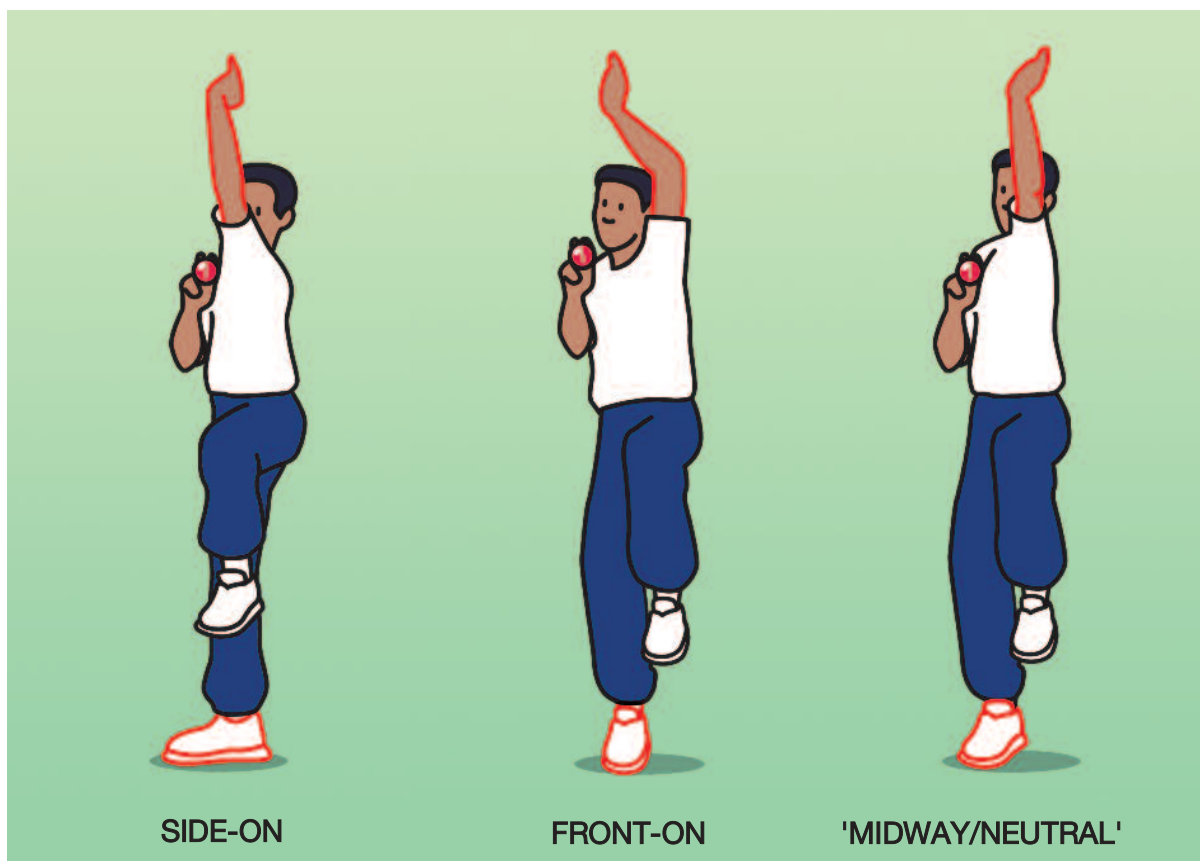
Force Absorption and Surfaces:	
Concrete:	0% force reduction
Uniturf on concrete:	7% force reduction
Uniturf + mat:	15% force reduction
Uniturf + 2 mats:	31% force reduction
Natural turf:	34% force reduction
Synthetic + underlay:	49% force reduction

2. TECHNIQUE

It is crucial that bowlers are encouraged to adopt a safe action early in their development. Bowlers should either have a SIDE-ON, a FRONT-ON or a 'MIDWAY/NEUTRAL' action, but SHOULD NEVER MIX THE ACTIONS.

The mixed actions (of which there are two main types) are a major cause of back injuries, because they cause an unnecessary spinal twist. Excessive hyperextension of the back during the delivery stride is also a contributing factor.

SIDE-ON, CHEST ON and 'MIDWAY/NEUTRAL' are OK



“KEEP THE HIPS AND SHOULDERS IN LINE AND YOU’LL BE FINE”

IF THE HIPS AND SHOULDERS ARE NOT IN LINE

SEEK ADVICE FROM A MORE QUALIFIED COACH



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-labile non-contact activities in sport and the need for the fast bowlers to be amongst the fittest and best prepared players in the team cannot be over emphasised. Bowlers should WARM UP and STRETCH thoroughly before bowling and training, and should WARM DOWN and STRETCH 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 8 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 overbowled 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 representatives bodies. Captains, team managers, coaches and indeed the players themselves should take responsibility for their playing and training loads and ensure that the programme fit 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 ECB keeps these guidelines under review and, following feedback from clubs and leagues, has revised these guidelines for the 2012 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 NonFirst Class Cricket Department.

The guidance is as follows:

- 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
- There is no definitive age at which a player should be introduced to open age group cricket, but 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. That said clubs, squad coaches and managers must take into account the requirements on age detailed in the last bullet of this guidance
- ECB Fast Bowling Directives and Fielding Regulations should always be adhered to for junior players in open age group cricket
- 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
- Try and involve them in all aspects of the game wherever possible i.e. 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
- 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 squads 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.

Fielding Regulations

For reference, the ECB Fielding Regulations are as follows:

- No young player in the Under 15 age group or younger shall be allowed to field closer than 8 yards (7.3 metres) from the middle stump, except behind the wicket on the off side, until the batsman has played at the ball.
- For players in the Under 13 age group and below the distance is 11 yards (10 metres).
- These minimum distances apply even if the player is wearing a helmet.
- Should a young player in these age groups come within the restricted distance the umpire must stop the game immediately and instruct the fielder to move back.
- In addition any young player in the Under 16 to Under 18 age groups, who has not reached the age of 18, must wear a helmet and, for boys, an abdominal protector (box) when fielding within 6 yards (5.5 metres) of the bat, except behind the wicket on the off side. Players should wear appropriate protective equipment whenever they are fielding in a position where they feel at risk.
- These fielding regulations are applicable to all cricket in England and Wales.