

BATTING - GENERAL GUIDANCE

The grip stance, backswing and related body movements are crucial elements in the success of any stroke. It is, therefore, important that young players establish:

- a grip which allows the hands to work together to deliver both power and control.
- a stance which allows easy, balanced movement and good 'sighting' of the ball.
- appropriate movement patterns of both bat and body for a range of strokes.

N.B. There are examples of successful cricketers whose method appears to differ from the principles illustrated in this section. Careful analysis reveals however, that, in most cases, these differences are more apparent than 'real', and the vast majority adhere to certain common technical principles.

THE GUARD

Batters usually 'take guard' by making a mark which will allow them to position their body in a consistent position in relation to the stumps - this usually means that they can, in the stance, have their head over the middle stump. Batters usually ask for a middle stump, middle and leg stump or leg stump guard.



GRIP

The grip on the bat is crucial. It should be firm and allow the arms to be relaxed through the preparation, but at the same time provide the necessary tension for a controlled impact.

Coaching Points:

1. Fingers and thumbs wrapped around handle.
2. V formed by thumb and forefinger of each hand should be in line, aligned between the outside edge and splice of the bat.
N.B. Correct positioning of the top hand may be achieved by aligning the knuckle of the index finger with the outside edge of the bat.
3. Hands close together in the middle of the handle so they can act as a single pivot point, rather than one hand working against the other.
4. Top hand rests comfortably against inside of front thigh.
5. Back of top hand faces extra-cover.

N.B. For right-handed batter left hand is at top of handle.

An effective method of teaching the grip is to

- stand batters 'side on' to the bowler, with the bat resting against their front thigh (the base of the bat should rest just behind the toes of the foot furthest from the bowler).
- The hand closest to the bowler is then raised towards the bowler and then swung back to grip the upper section of the bat handle.
- The other hand is then swung back towards the stumps and brought back to grip the handle below the 'top hand'. Hands should be close together.



N.B.
On all illustrations the batter is shown without gloves.
If a hard ball is being used full protective equipment, including gloves, pads, abdominal protector (box) and helmets (see safety guidance) should always be worn.



BATTING – GENERAL GUIDANCE

STANCE

The stance position should be **comfortable and relaxed**, allowing **good vision** and providing a starting position for a range of strokes using minimum movement and maximum efficiency.

Coaching Points:

1. The feet should be approximately the length of the batters foot apart positioned either side of, and parallel to, the popping crease.
2. The weight should be evenly distributed on the balls of the feet, with the knees slightly flexed to allow quick movement and weight transfer.
3. The rear knee should not be an impediment to the backswing.
4. A line drawn through the toes and hips should be in line with the stumps at the bowler's end, placing the lower body in a 'side-on' stance.
5. The front shoulder may be slightly 'open', allowing a full, clear 'two-eyed' view of the ball. The eyes should be level and over the toes.

THE STANCE



THE BAT TAP



Note: Many players 'tap' their bat whilst in the stance or 'ready' position. This should not be confused with the backswing, which takes place immediately prior to the downswing and contact.

For some players, a stance position at release involves the bat being already raised. It is particularly important that players who adopt this style dip the front shoulder & raise the bat further during the 'backswing & step' phase.

BACKSWING AND STEP

Once the batter has settled in the stance, completed any pre-delivery sequence and made the initial stroke selection decision, it is vital that the body moves in balance, utilising natural sound mechanics.

- It is important to realise that the appropriate foot movement and backswing occur in UNISON and are NOT INDEPENDENT MOVEMENTS. By moving them together, each moving part is balanced and counterbalanced and the body, therefore remains in balance.
- By stepping forward or back, the batter increases the width of their base of support. This provides greater stability. The 'step' also moves the body weight towards the contact point with the ball – a fundamental of efficient force generation.
- It is important that the FRONT SHOULDER ROLLS SLIGHTLY DOWNWARD as the bat is lifted, so that the line drawn through both shoulder joints is in line with the expected contact point. This sets up the upper body levers to uncoil powerfully and with control in the direction of the target.
- Although the backswing is initiated with the hands, it is not performed with the hands alone. The shoulders, arms and bat pivot back as a unit. An imaginary line drawn up the front arm, along the shoulders, down the back arm to the bottom hand, and then down the bat should resemble a 'Figure 9'. During the backswing, the top hand holds the bat firmly, whilst the last three fingers of the bottom hand come off the handle. The bottom hand is 'cocked' and slightly open with the palm of the hand away from the handle by the time the bat has reached the top of the backswing.
- The bat handle should remain in line with the shoulders for maximum control, force production and stability. Ideally, at the top of the backswing, the bat should point between the wicketkeeper and second slip, with the hands close to the rear hip and the bat handle aligned with and underneath the shoulders.
- It is vital that any head movements during the backswing and step phase are controlled and steady, allowing a clear perception of the ball. If the head and eyes move excessively whilst attempting to track the ball the batter will become unbalanced and experience difficulty in making appropriate shot selection decisions.
- The 'step' (either forward or back) and the appropriate weight transfer should, ideally, be completed BEFORE the downswing commences. This means that a stable 'base' is established, which facilitates greater control and power.

BATTING – GENERAL GUIDANCE

TEACHING THE BACKSWING AND STEP: A 7-stage guide

The backswing has traditionally been taught independently of the body movement towards the line of the ball. Given the importance of the relationship between the backswing and step it is important that young players progress quickly from developing the appropriate bat, arm and upper body movements associated with the backswing to linking them with the 'step' (either forward or back).

The following teaching sequence is recommended for teaching the backswing and step.

1. Introduction
2. Demonstrate or provide appropriate technical model of STANCE and BAT TAP.
 - Bat lifted up and back, using wrists and arms only.
Tap rhythmically behind back toe
 - Top hand in control
 - Hands remain close to body, bat handle in line with the shoulders
 - Bat points between the wicketkeeper and second slip.
 - Head very still, eyes level.
3. Group practice, in pairs, reciprocal teaching and feedback.
4. Demonstrate or provide appropriate technical model of BACKSWING
 - Front shoulder rolls down as bat is lifted.
 - Shoulders, arms and bat pivot backwards 'Figure 9'.
 - Bat and hands remain in line with the shoulders.
 - Hands stay close to the back hip.
5. Group practice in pairs, reciprocal teaching and feedback.
6. Demonstrate or provide appropriate technical model of BACKSWING and STEP (forward).
 - Co-ordination of backswing and step.
 - Comfortable stride
 - Head moves smoothly and remains steady and level.
 - Weight transferred to front leg, body posture forward.
7. Link to appropriate FORWARD STROKE AND GROUP COACH

THE STANCE



THE BAT TAP



Note: Because it is initially important that young players learn to play both forward and back, based on their decision making processes, the teaching of the backswing and step (forward) should take place either shortly before or shortly after the backswing and step (back).

ADVICE ON BATTING EQUIPMENT

BATS

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:

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 beside them. 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 buckles or 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.

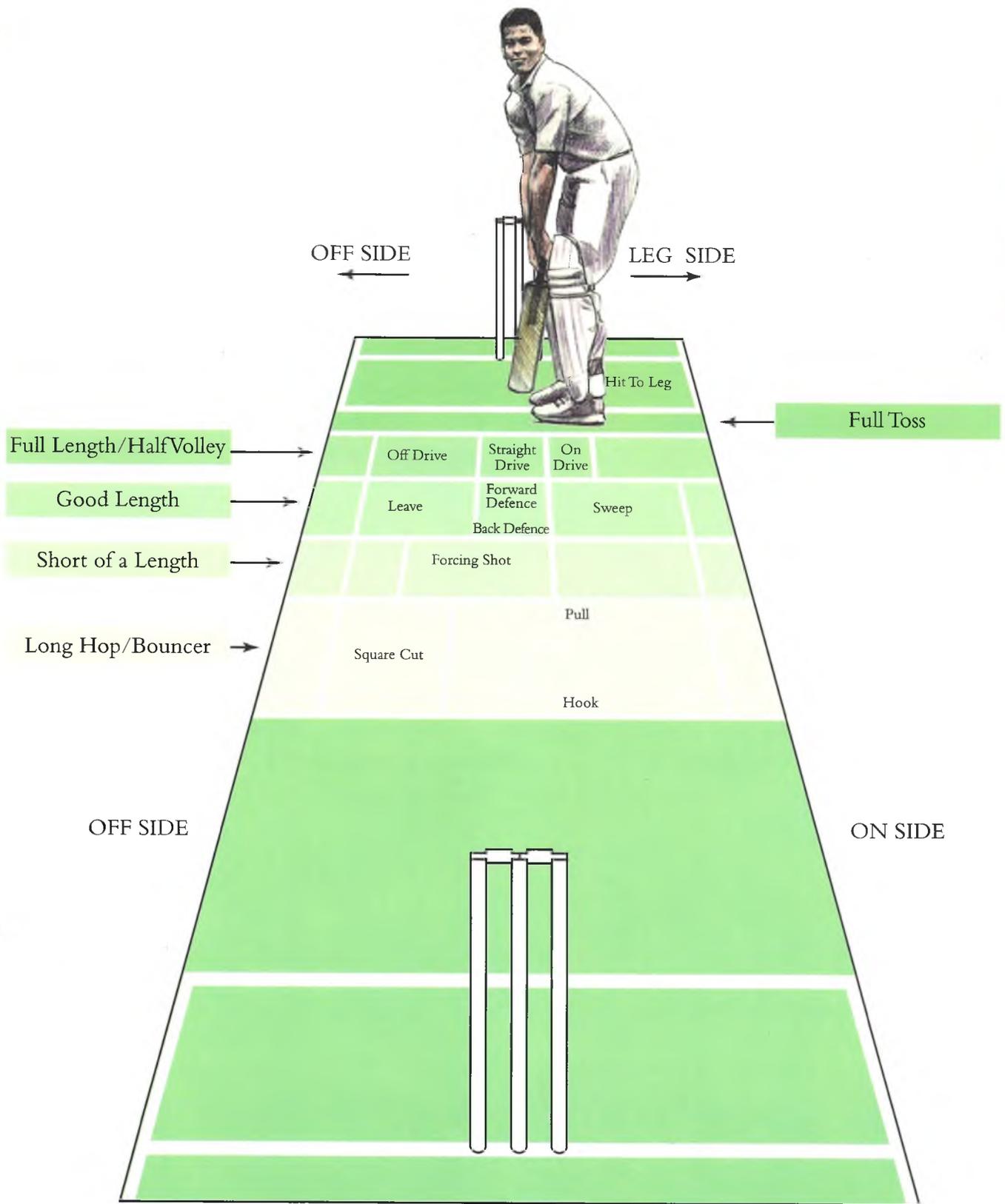


OTHER EQUIPMENT

When cricket or other hard balls are used the appropriate protective equipment **must** be worn. **N.B.** Boys should always wear a box when a cricket ball or any form of hard ball is used. Safety guidance regarding the use of helmets is available in the Safety Guidance section of this manual.



BATTING STROKE SELECTION



This diagram is intended to act as a guide to batting stroke selection. Actual lengths and lines are dependent on variables such as:

- pace;
- bounce;
- movement;
- surface;
- batter's method.

BATTING - GROUP COACHING

NB The following sequence assumes that the coach has had sufficient time prior to the session to make all appropriate chalk markings.

COACH:

1. Introduces the stroke to be practised and describes/illustrates the type of ball to which it is played.
2. Demonstrates or provides an appropriate technical model (without a ball).
3. Nominates groups and duties within groups (including all left hand batsmen into one group).
4. Either demonstrates or provides an appropriate technical model in one of the nominated practice areas, highlighting
 - The step and backswing
 - The target area for the ball.

NB The ball should only be 'served' when the batter says or indicates that he/she is 'ready'.

5. Supervises the setting up of other groups, emphasising **SAFETY** issues, including an agreed and understood 'stop' signal.
6. Practice commences after stages 1 - 5, all completed (ideally in no longer than 5 minutes). The coach moves from group/individual to group/individual providing encouragement and feedback.
7. After an appropriate time, stops activity, brings group all to a safe position where they can all see, provides further feedback, reinforces coaching points & provides more (the amount of which depends on the ability & maturity of the group).
As in 4, a demonstration or appropriate technical model should be provided to support technical information at each stage.
8. Groups return to practice areas and continue to practice.
9. Stages 6 and 7 repeated as time permits.
10. Concludes session with a 'target game'.

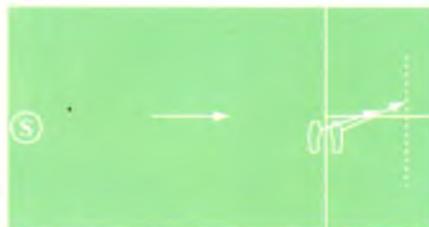
RECOMMENDED CHALK MARKINGS FOR GROUP COACHING - BATTING

The markings are for a right-handed batter. Arrows from batter's feet indicate direction of movement. Dotted lines indicate use of the depth of crease. The server (thrower) is indicated by (S). Distances of fielder and server are dictated by the principles of safe practice, as illustrated in the Batting Skills Activities section.

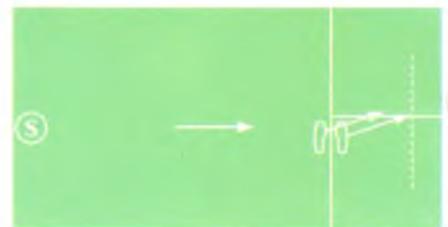
PULL



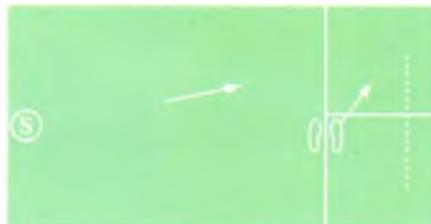
FORCING SHOT



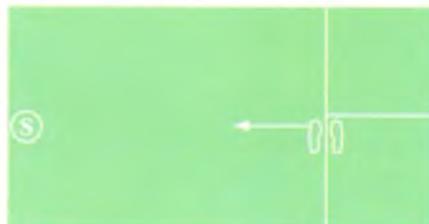
BACK DEFENCE



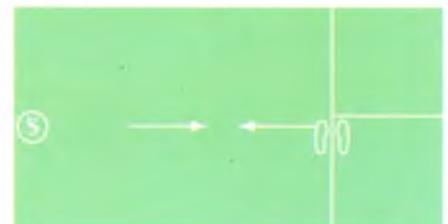
SQUARE CUT



FULL-PITCH TO LEG



FORWARD DEFENCE



DRIVES



The server drops the ball a comfortable stride from the batter's stance position on the appropriate directional arrow.

N.B. For on drive the directional arrow is both shorter and straighter.