

CRICKET FUNDAMENTALS



1. Batting Fundamentals

Batting really consists of playing one ball at a time. The batsman must learn to gear himself for playing each ball with all the concentration at his command. Concentration can be improved if enough hard work is done to build up a habit of mind. Attitude is vital. If you build yourself up to the right frame of mind there is nothing you cannot do. Character plays a large part in this. Cricket is a game to be enjoyed. Cricket is much more because it is a game that can help shape your life. What you learn on the field will hold good for many things in life too. A Straight bat and a stout heart are bound to take you far. Confidence will come from doing things the right way as matter of habit. To gain that habit, pay attention to the basics. Practising in front of a mirror at home will also be a sort of handy reference.

The grip

Pick up the bat with two hands when the bat lies face down on the ground with the handle facing you. Your hands should be together in the middle of the handle when you wield the bat as if you would a club. Here are two basic rules for you to check whether you are holding the bat right:

1. Place the V (with thumb well stretched out) of your right hand on the splice connecting the handle the bat and pull you hand up close to your left hand on the handle. This two-step process will probably give you the most comfortable grip.
2. The V's of the two hands should be on the same line. the back of the lefthand will face between mid off and extra cover. Remember that the left hand should always be firm. If you strengthen your left hand by constant exercise you will find that you are gripping the bat more firmly and that you have sufficient control of the bat in every straight-bat stroke. The golden rule of cricket is that the longer the full face of the bat is presented to the line of the ball the better the chances of meeting the ball. A strong left hand (for a right hander) is a very side on game.

The stance

A balanced stance is essential. The feet should be equidistant of the batting crease. If you feel more comfortable placing them wider apart fo ahead though if you keep them too far apart it will affect your readiness of movement. The kness should be relaxed and slightly bent. The bat should rest lightly on the ground behind the little toe of the back foot. The top hand should rest gently on the front pad against the inside of the left thigh. Pick up the bat as the ball leaves the bowler's hand. The wieght should be equally placed on both feet at the crease. It is wiser not to move your feet until the

possible length of the ball is judged. The body should face point with the left shoulder pointing at the stumps at the bowler's end. The head should be still with the eyes as level as possible. Be relaxed as the bowler comes in. You will be relaxed if you are comfortable in your stance. Eyes should be level so that they focus on the ball at the same time. See any picture of Sunil Gavaskar at the crease and high. If it is not straight you are likely to drag your bat across the line of the ball. A straight backlift may not come naturally. The harder you practise early in your career the better off you will be keeping the backlift straight. Remember the left hand should take complete charge of the backlift with the elbow bent. A firm grip with the left hand ensures that the bat comes down straight. Remember the backlift is as much a part of your stroke as the follow-through is.

PRINCIPLES

There are two principles of batting which are equally important defence and attack. While defence is not an end in itself, mastery of defence will help you at the right time. The thrill of cricket lies in hitting the ball. To that extent, attack should be the ideal. To be able to attack over a period of time you must also be able to defend the good balls. But do aim to play positively. When everyone is doing that, the game becomes more enjoyable to all.

Footwork and timing

Footwork is a vital part of batting. If batsmen have their feet glued to the ground they cannot play this game in the manner in which it is meant to be played. To play any bowling, spin or pace, footwork is essential. It is footwork that takes you and your bat to the right position play every ball. Sunil Gavaskar, Javed Miandad and Azharuddin are the best models for footwork. They move so easily from their stance on assessing where the ball is going to pitch that they are always that bit extra prepared to play. Gavaskar's back and across movement - the shuffle on the right foot - is to be recommended only when batsmen are facing bowlers of express speed. Otherwise it would be wider to stay still while anticipating and reacting according to the length of the ball. Timing is everything in any ball game. At times a firm push can fetch a boundary while a fullblocked shot may be mistimed to become a catch. Incorrect timing is the cause of many a false shot. Footwork will help your sense of timing must be in you. This is what called ball sense.

Forward and back strokes

These strokes form the basis of all batting. Remember that great batsmen are equally capable of playing forward as they are of playing backfoot will give you that extra time to watch the ball off the pitch while playing forward may give you the real edge in attack. But never believe that all forward play is attack and all the backfoot play is defence. It is possible to attack as well as defend off both front and back foot. Remember defence is a platform for a batsman must dominate the bowling if he and his team are to profit from his presence at the crease.

Forward defence

The forward defensive shot is the basis of all forward play. It is played to the straight ball not far enough up to the bat for drive. The objective is to drop the ball dead in front of the bat. The left shoulder should lead you out and on to the line of the ball. If you lead with the shoulder and head your body weight will follow automatically. Your eyes must always be on the ball. The left foot should take you as must bend just a bit so that there is no gap between bat and pad.

Forward drive

Going forward to drive balls that pitch closer to you is natural extension of the forward defensive shot. Remember that the left shoulder is the key to all shots. Remember that left shoulder is the key to all shots off the front foot, particularly the drives. The wider you intend driving to the offside the more should your shoulder go in the direction of the shot. The left hand must be in total command of all drives. If your left hand is slightly in advance of your right hand it will ensure that the ball stays on the ground as you drive. In defence there will be no follow through. When driving the bat should follow through freely. Are you:

- 1) Leading with your left shoulder?
- 2) Taking Your left foot as far forward as it will go comfortably?
- 3) Bending the left knee?
- 4) Letting the left hand take charge of the shot ?
- 5) Moving the full face of the bat along the line of the ball?
- 6) meeting the ball in front of the left foot ?

Power comes from the acceleration in the swing of the backlift to follow through wrist work and transferring of weight. If you have the basics right there is no reason why you cannot drive the ball hard. Remember to always keep the ball along the ground. Back to defend in backfoot play a batsman must be prepared to use the distance between the popping crease and the stumps. The farther he moves back the more time he gets to play the ball. Remember that the right foot should not only move back but also across as far as possible to the line of the ball. Also that this stroke is as much a part of this side-on game and hence the left hand must be in control all the time.

Back to drive

The principle of driving off the back foot are nearly the same as those of driving off the front foot. The left hand must be supreme and the left shoulder should lead in the direction of the shot. Note how Azharuddin plays these attacking drives off the backfoot and you will realise how profitable it can be to be a firm back foot player. These drives are probably the safest shots in the game. Also observe how Azhar makes use of his height by rising on toes as he attacks the ball. All the ball short of a length are best played off the backfoot. It is as easy to drive a short ball on the stumps off the back foot as it is to learn forward into ball of fuller length to drive. The use of the wrists is also to be recommended for additional power as well as changing the direction of the shots at the moment of contact.

Check List

- 1) Step far enough back and move enough across to get to the line of the ball.
- 2) keep the head and body balanced with the weight more in front
- 3) You must be side on when you play the shot.
- 4) Make the left hand do the guiding work for you

On drive

This shot is treated separately because beginners experience the most difficulty in playing this. The drives into the offside with the head and left shoulder leading the shot are easier to control and are more natural shots. The on drive presents a problem in that the front foot must be got out of the way if the shot is to materialise. Also the body weight should be transferred towards the on side with the right shoulder dropping a bit to ensure that the left leg is moved out to face mid on or wider on the onside. Don't panic if you are unable to get this shot going early in your career. Some experience is

called for before the shot can be played with control. When you do gain the mastery, play the shot as often as you can. There is no greater thrill than playing this shot correctly. Note all the movements when Dillip Vengsarkar, Sanjay Manjekar and Sachin Tendulkar bring off the on drive. They are as near perfection as possible. Let us now take a look at other shots.

Leg glance

Does the leg glance really belong in the section on drives? Probably not but the initial movement, forward or back, is the same as for the straight drive. The forward leg glance is played in front of the pad with the bat angled to steer the ball. Never choose the ball on the middle stump or further to the off when you wish to play this shot. The difference between the drive and the glance is that though the latter is played with a virtual straight bat, at the vital moment the bat is angled with the face of the bat being shut. The great Indian cricket pioneer and batting giant Ranjitsinghji is credited with the invention of this shot. So there is national tradition to follow but please do not play it except when you are hemmed in by much bowling that is directed at a fair length at your legs. The most suitable ball to be glanced off the front foot is the one on good length just outside the line of your front leg. The shorter ball may be glanced by going well on to the back foot. But if it is very short, you are obviously going to play strokes that are better designed to dealing with the short ball. There are many effective shots that are played profitably too, with the horizontal bat. These shots, in the playing of which the right hand dominates, may come more naturally to all players.

Sweep Shot

This shot is invariably played against the spinner. This should be played only to balls pitching outside the line of the leg stump. The ball must be hit along the ground. If you roll your wrists properly at the time of execution of the shot you can keep the ball well down. Remember that the front pad should be between the pitch of the ball and the stumps. If you place your feet wrongly you might find yourself bowled round your legs.

Hitting to leg

The full toss and the long hop, of which much will be seen in junior cricket, can be hit very profitably to leg provided that you follow these tips. It is said that much of junior cricket is won by teams which bowl the least down the legside and which hit most such balls bowled there by the rivals. Check List: 1) Get your head on to the line of the ball and keep looking at it. Don't take your eyes off it. 2) Make sure that your elbows are free from the body so that the arms can go all the way to hit the ball. 3) Hit the ball early and aim to play it square. 4) Don't try to hit too hard if you do you will find your body is off balance and your head would not be still.

Hook and pull

The arguments over which is a hook shot and which is pull shot may be many. But that should not worry you so long as you are able to get the short ball racing through the onside. The shots are also very similar except that the hook is played inevitably off the short ball that rises shoulder high and the pull is played to balls not that short. The pull can be played effectively off the front foot too.

The Pull

The pull is hit hard into the ground. The shot is best played to the short ball that does not rise too high. The back and across movement will position you perfectly. When you size up such a juicy short ball coming up. Remember to roll your wrists before contact so that the ball is kept down.

The Hook

Hooking the short pitched ball is one of the glories of the game. A good hook shot player can make the most of fast, short pitched bowling. The back foot should not only go back but also far enough across to the offside so that the line of the foot is outside the line of flight of the ball. It is extremely important to keep your eyes on the short ball to be able to bring off this shot safely. The shot is dangerous to play on fast wickets as a miss would mean the ball making painful contact with your helmet or face. Do not attempt to play this shot unless you have been in for a reasonable period of time and feel well set to be able to meet the ball confidently. Proper evasive action, bouncer and proper backfoot defence to short ball will equip you better to deal with the threat of the coming at your body. By all means hook but only when you are well prepared to play the shot. Don't be fooled by the false confidence given by the helmet. You must keep your eye focused on the ball all the time. Your wrists must roll over. In short, you must be very good batsman to play this stroke well. Watch Srikanth play the hook and you will know how this shot must be played.

The Cut

A square cut is played to a ball which is short in length on the off side of the wicket. The back foot plays a vital role in the execution of the shot. To cut well, judgement of length, timing and flexibility of wrist are very important. Look at how well Sanjay Manjrekar brings off the shot. Sometimes with both his feet off the ground to pack greater power from the weight of his body. The most important thing to remember is that the bat must come down on the ball from above. The cut is a natural shot to play and a valuable aid to scoring. Practise it regularly at the nets and you find it gives you a good feeling as well as runs when you bring off the shot in the match. The cut can be played both off the front and back foot. But it is a far safer shot when played off the back foot because you can see the short ball for a longer distance and hit is harder. A cut off the front foot. Check list 1) Get the bat up high so that it comes down on the ball 2) Don't jerk your head in any effort to get a lot of power into the shot. 3) Meet the ball at the right time. The best cut shot is the one that uses the pace of the ball to send it on its way to the boundary. 4) Let your right hand control the execution of the shot. Use all your wrist power to guide the ball into the ground.

The late cut

This shot is played to a ball outside the off stump. Playing late means exactly that. Instead of hitting the ball square as it passes the body, it is hit late. This shot can be very useful in limited overs cricket but is not readily recommended at your grade of the game. Unless you are well in and wish to make use of gaps in the field, it is best not to attempt to play the late cut. Approach The thrill on the game lies in attacking the bowling. Don't let the bowler get on top just because you are beaten once or twice outside the off stump. If the ball is there to be hit, it must be hit. The more you practise the better you will feel when playing shots in the match. Be modest when you score runs. Maybe that way you will score more.

BOWLING Fundamentals

Bowlers win matches. That saying holds good even in the modern age in which the limited-overs game has taken such strong roots. Most boys tend to believe that bowling is hard labour, particularly when they have to bowl long hours at the nets. Since they do not get to bowl long spells in matches, they may get to feeling that the many hours of practice are wasted. No wonder the tendency to concentrate more on batting from a young age seen. It must be made clear to any youngster that it is almost as much fun to bowl as it is to bat. Defeating a batsman by bowling a crafty ball to a planned field placing is as thrilling as getting runs. The battle against the batsmen can be tremendous fun if a bowler works hard enough at his craft. Given some intelligence, much practice, more determination and a will to succeed, anybody can become a good enough bowler. Bowling is an art that demands utmost attention to detail. It can be mastered provided hours of sweat are put into practice. Don't forget that Kapil Dev is as glamorous a figure in Indian cricket as Sunil Gavaskar. He has done as much service to the country in taking wickets as Gavaskar has done in scoring runs. The prime requisite of a bowler, of any type, is that he must be able to command accuracy in line and length. Any such command can be won only by sheer persistence and practice. The basis of a good bowling action is:

1. Correct grip
2. Smooth, comfortable and physically economical run up
3. Fluent follow through Remember that for all types of bowling the ball must be held in the finger and not in the palm.

The runup helps retain balance while building momentum to deliver the ball. The basics of the craft are:

1. Back foot must be parallel to the bowling crease before delivery
2. Eyes must be fixed on the spot where the ball is intended to land
3. The front arm must be straight - reaching for the sky
4. Look at the batsman over your lead shoulder
5. Perfect the unwinding of the body so that the weight is transferred from the back smoothly
6. The bowling arm must complete the semi-circle in one fluent movement
7. The last stride of the runup is a jump off the left foot. The lead arm will start swinging up even as you jump. The turning movement is vital to the whole action.
8. The bowling action must follow a gradual acceleration to the wicket.
9. The lead shoulder must not be opened too early. Otherwise you will bowl open-chested
10. Don't allow the front leg to crumple
11. Follow through smoothly

Fast bowling

Right from boyhood one tends to take 10 to 12 steps before delivering the ball. This is a natural tendency. It is only later that bowlers learn that the ball can be sent spinning down the same length of the pitch. To be a fast bowler is probably the dream of every youth. Lads willing to bowl fast must be encouraged in a country that is so short of pace bowlers. Don't be disheartened if you are not able to knock out ten batsmen the moment you start learning to bowl fast. Pace bowling is very hard work and needs tremendous commitment. Pace bowling may be all about power, strength and aggression. But sheer brute force is not likely to achieve much without the backing of good runup, action and follow through. Rhythm is very vital to this craft. You gain it only by going through the routine day after day. The mere ability to move the ball in the air will not help if there is no accuracy in line and length. Swing will help even the fastest bowler vary his bowling from ball to

ball. mixing of pace will bring in subtle variations. A disguised slower ball is as much of a surprise weapon as a super fast delivery.

Swing

Imran Khan float the interesting theory that it is wrist action which determines the swing of the ball and not the body action. Swing is the most important weapon in the fast bowlers' armoury. There are only a few bowlers of express speed who can also make the ball swing Imran is one of them. The slightly slower men move the ball a lot as Kapil Dev does.

Outswing

The ball running away to slips late in flight is the most dangerous that a batsman can come across early in his innings. To bowl the genuine outswinger, the seam must be pointed towards slip. The first two fingers must be alongside the seam with the thumb supporting the ball from underneath. One side of the ball alone should be polished and this side should be pointing towards the leg side if you are to bowl a good outswinger. The closer you get to the stumps while you bowl the perfect outswinger with the side-on action the more likely it is that the batsman will be forced to play at the ball. In general, Your target with the outswinger should be the middle and off stumps. But if a batsman is showing the tendency to play to leg you should aim at his leg and middle stumps so that he may be induced to hit across the line of the outswinger. Check list 1) Are you bowling straight enough to make the batsman play the ball? 2) Are you bowling up to the bat to force the batsmen to play forward? 3) Don't waste the new ball by pitching beyond of stump Good batsmen will merely let it pass

Inswing

The seam should point to fine leg. The polished side should be on the offside. The first two fingers are on either side of the seam. the inswinger is the best bowled from wide of the crease with the ball angling towards leg stump from off and middle. The higher the arm action is the later will be the swing. You must push the ball out with you fingers when you are releasing it. The idea would be to get the ball to duck in between bat and pad or to catch the inside edge and set up a catch for the close-leg fielders. An inswinging yorker, as bowled by waqar Younus, can be really deadly ball.

The Leg Cutter

The leg cutter is very much allied to the inswinger. By pulling the finger across the seam at the moment of the delivery some leg spin is imparted to the ball. Hence it runs away from the bat on pitching. Remember to pull releasing the ball. It is advisable to concentrate on swinging the ball one way to a set field rather than trying to mix both swings. Master one swing first. Once you have established mastery over one types of swing you can experiment with the other too but the line is very important if you are going to try this in a match.

Approach

Fast bowlers should use a lot of intelligence besides hard physical effort. Change of pace is invaluable. A bouncer followed by a yorker can be weapon. Sometimes, even a legbreak or offbreak bowled deliberately with the new ball may prove a surprise. If you are a fast bowler, learn to think like one. Concern yourself with bowling fast first and then seek to establish the controls like variations of length to test the batsmen. the medium pacer's accuracy is quite different from the pace

like fire of the fast bowler. if you are fast, bowl fast. As a bowler, learn to stay on the offensive. To begin with, the initiative is with the bowler. Don't give it away easily

Spin bowling

For slow bowlers the power of spin is the basis of the basis of their craft. It may take many years to mature as a spinner but only work is likely to bring success. If a fingers and wrist must impart the spin. This will come only with practice. Off spin may prove easier to bowl because it is more closely allied to the first principle of running in several places to deliver the ball which is what comes naturally to all. Leg spin is far more difficult to master, though because of its rarity you may find wickets easier to get.

Leg spin

A proper pivot of the body is very essential if leg spin is to be imparted. The ball is gripped in the first three fingers and spun off the knuckles of the index and third fingers. The third finger is the key to spin. The wrist should be bent forward until the moment of release. As the ball is released the third finger flicks outward towards the batsmen and the thumb downwards away from him. the wrist flips forward. Put yourself through the motion while in front of a mirror and you will get an idea of what is being said here Top spin is imparted by the forward flip of the wrist beginning a little earlier so that the spin imparted is directly down the line of flight and not towards the slips. The googly is bowled by the wrist turning over even earlier. the back of the wrist faces the batsmen as the ball comes out. This is called back of the hand spin. This may not come easily. There is absolutely no substitute for practice. The coaches would do well to advise their budding leg spinners to first learn to spin the ball and then try to attain some control over length.

Off spin

The first two fingers assume greater importance off spin whereas it is the leg spinner's third finger which does most of the work. The stock ball may be off spin but the off spinner must have the arm ball, the floater and the drifter and even the slow medium away swinger if he is to dedicate terms to the batsman. The higher the action the more the bite and higher the bounce off the wicket. Class batsmen concede that it is bounce from a spinner which cause more problems than the spin itself. The sideways turn of the body should be exaggerated and the unwinding must be delayed a bit so that the ball delivered with the maximum drag across the body.

Left hand bowling

The principles of bowling spin with the left hand are the same as that of the off spinner except that everything is in reverse. the same techniques apply to left arm spinners though their natural swing or swerve is into the right hander and their natural turn is away from the right hander. Bowling round the wicket has several advantages for the left arm spinner, especially when he bowls with a slight shine still on the ball. The ball tends to come into the batsman in the air and breaks away from him as it spins. Another weapon in the left arm spinners armoury is the arm ball which comes in with the arm and then goes straight on after pitching. He can get leg before victims easily with such a ball. The slight inswing to the right hander does the trick. The left arm spinner is a valuable member of the side because he can expect to be more economical than even the right arm off spinner. The chairman is a legbreak as bowled by the left arm spinner. It may be really worthwhile to view tapes of Bedi's bowling to find out the nuances of this craft.

Approach

All the spin in the world may be useless if it is not backed up by variations of flight. To be able to properly flight the ball, the spinner must bowl slow enough to set batsmen a problem in gauging where the ball is going to come down. By bowling all the ball to a standard arc the spinner will become so predictable that batsmen will counter-attack rather easily. Variations of flight and pace will come only with experience. Don't panic if at an early age any experiment sends the ball as full toss or a long hop to the batsman. Strength of fingers is vital to bowling spin. Learn all possible exercises from your coach so that you can toughen your fingers early and make them extract spin out of the ball. There is strength to be had for fingers in squeezing a rubber ball constantly. You must bowl a length on true pitches and await an error from the batsman. Too many experiments on a good pitch may make you so expensive that the captain will switch back to medium pace for containment. You must wear down the batsman by accuracy even as you probe his weakness by varying your trajectory. There is absolutely no short cut to successful spin bowling. It will come only with practice and experience. Learn to use the width of the crease in varying the line. Modern cricket is loaded against the spinners. The batsmen use such heavy bats today that they can club you out of the game. Patience is the mother of all virtues. You must have it in large quantities to be successful as a spinner. But then spin bowling is such an enjoyable craft which does not take too much out of your body.

FIELDING

To field a ball and to catch it are the most natural human activities. To throw it is natural too. The whole sphere of fielding activity is most enjoyable. A team's efficiency is often reflected in its fielding. All eleven can contribute directly on the field, a catch well taken, a stinging shot stopped on the square and a run out effected with a fine throw can well turn a match around. Above all, fielding is fun. Modern cricket, with the accent on limited overs cricket, demands fielding standards of the highest order. If you are not a good fielder you may not even fit into the scheme of one day things. Take heart in the fact that almost anyone has the inbuilt capacity to improve his fielding. Take Azharuddin as your idol. See how easily he gets to the ball and whips his throw into the 'Keeper' See how confident men like Kapil Dev and Azharuddin are when they are about to catch batsmen off huge skiers.

Fundamentals

- 1) Keep your eyes on the ball all times - whether you are fielding a ball on the ground or you are catching it.
- 2) Move swiftly behind the line of the ball and as far as possible towards it even as it is coming to you
- 3) Make sure that your body gets in behind the line of the ball as second line of defence to your hands
- 4) Whenever any fielder throws the ball to the keeper or to the bowler's end, It is the duty of fielders in suitable positions to provide a backup
- 5) if you are not in a close catching position, You must walk in with bowler when he is running in to bowl
- 6) Try to let your hand give with the ball. Don't grab the ball. If you do, you will find it will spill out almost as often as it stays in the palm. Bend both hips knees so that your head is down when you are about to field the ball
- 7) Get quickly into a side-on position so that you throw the ball to either end for a run out or return it to the keeper when you are sure the batsmen are not going to attempt a run
- 8) Your backfoot should be side-on to the ball

- 9) As far as possible, throw the ball on the full to the keeper or bowler
- 10) Hitting the stumps to effect a run out may be thrilling but this should be attempted only when there is no time for the keeper or the bowler to reach the wicket. If you hit the stumps when it is futile to do so you may give away overthrows or even see the ball deflect off the stumps for more runs.
- 11) When you take a catch, keep the ball for a few seconds to show that you are in control. Don't throw it prematurely in the air to celebrate the catch, you might spoil the act by losing your grip on the ball
- 12) The stance is important for close-in fielders. The body should be balanced and ready to take off in any direction. Stay down until the ball has been well sighted and you are moving to take catch. Keep your head still and watch the ball or when at first slip or when 'keeping, watch the outer edge of the bat.

Practice methods

A good coach can organise various practice sessions and also make them as interesting as possible. A coach must impart the importance of enthusiastic approach to fielding. A roller offers an ideal angled surface to send the ball in surprising trajectories at fielders. But there is nothing like a batsman in front of a slips cordon edging full pitches to the catchers. This is the best possible simulation. Don't let cricketers laze at the nets after batting or bowling. Keep them occupied with interesting fieldings Practice.

Wicket-Keeping

The wicket-keepers is one of the key members of the team. A good keeper can inspire confidence in his team. Particularly in the bowlers. The wicket-keepers needs more mental stamina than even the fastest of bowlers. He must be ready to keep the whole if necessary

Fundamentals

- 1) The weight of the body should be evenly balanced on the heels.
- 2) The feet should be apart an approximate distance of a foot and half from each other.
- 3) Crouching should be comfortable with the head down and the whole stance relaxed.
- 4) the fingers should be pointing downwards or upwards in collecting high balls or, sometimes even sideways but they should never point at the ball.
- 5) Concentration should be total on every ball bowled because each one is a potential wicket taker.
- 6) A good wicket-keeper should be fully aware of his position in relation to the stumps. He should watch the ball and not what the batsman is doing.
- 7) Never grab the ball. Let your hands give with the ball. The hands must give a few inches so that the ball has less chance of leaping out of the gloves.
- 8) Rise along with the ball, not too early .

Stance

The stance should be comfortable. A good coach can demonstrate the basic principles of wicket keeping and also the movement of the feet. Remember that there are no halfway positions: either the 'Keeper stands up or stands back. Syed kirmani is the ideal 'keeper to watch in action Note the movement of his feet especially when he goes down the legside to take. Footwork is a essential to keeping as it is to batting. By moving his feet the 'keeper gets right behind the line of the ball. A good 'keeper' is also the best adviser to the captain on what his bowlers are doing and what are the possible weaknesses of the batsmen.

Equipment

The wicket-keeping pads should be light and short Flexibility is everything. Gloves are extremely important. The face of the gloves should be in good condition and must not be allowed to become too smooth. Wornout gloves should never be used because this may hurt the finger. Inner gloves of soft leather provide extra support.

RUNNING BETWEEN THE WICKETS

Call out often after every ball. Say 'yes' and 'no' decisively, 'Wait' is also a good call as it will put your partner on the alert for a possible run that may not be there to begin with but may materialise if there is a misfield back up immediately after the ball leaves the bowler's hand. Run the first run as though it is the winning run. Remember that over 25 percent of all runs scored come in singles. Slide your bat from a few yards in front of the crease you are running to. Keep off the pitch. Note the position of all fielders particularly the good ones. You must also know soon who are left handed throwers in the side. Keep your eyes on the ball while turning for the second or third run. Change your bat hand if necessary to keep yourself in sight of what is happening. Keep out of the way of your partner while running between wickets. The correct order of doing things in running more than a single is run, turn and call. Don't waste time by slowing down in front of the crease you have to reach. The coach should stress to his pupils the importance of running which is best demonstrated by getting them to pad up and run the length of the pitch in pairs after calling. Remember the golden rule that no run is worth so much that you can risk losing a wicket. The only exception may be in the slog overs of limited-overs cricket.

EQUIPMENT

Bat

For a young boy to learn the art of batting, the choice of a bat, of suitable size and weight, is of utmost importance. It is best for the young batsmen to use a bat which feels light rather than one which feels heavy. There is little benefit to be had from using a heavy bat too early, especially when one is just beginning. Don't get taken in by the talk of heavy bats in modern cricket. You can use it but only when you are sufficiently strong to be able to handle it.

Pads

Careful instruction should be given by the coach the importance of selecting batting pads that will be suitable for young players. Pads should provide adequate protection from injury, fit comfortably on the legs, should not be cumbersome or too heavy and must not impede or restrict quick and easy movement.

Players appearance

Players should always be neatly and correctly dressed. All boots should be clean and properly sprung, either with spikes on the soles and heels or with spikes in the soles and heels or with spikes in the soles and hardened ribbed rubber on the heels. Bad springing may easily be the cause of a spilled catch or a run out. A bowler will not be able to get a good foothold on a hard or wet surface. No player should be wearing a wrist watch or ring on the field. Nor should one carry a cap in a pocket. A protector should be worn at all times by the batsmen and the wicket-keeper and the fielders right near the bat. Comfortable well fitting socks should be worn. In the case of fast bowlers, it is quite often good policy to wear two pairs of socks. It is recommended that batsmen and keeper

wear only short socks. Not only so they give a smarter appearance but are also more comfortable. Fold the trousers in front of the legs and strap the pads tight to them. Batting gloves should be worn at all times in all grades on the game. This gives the player protection as well as comfort in gripping the bat. Bad equipment, or lack of equipment in a match or the nets can often be very damaging to a player's confidence. Often players who are hurt in the nets would have been spared the agony had they been wearing proper equipment can also lead a player into gaining the bad habit of not getting behind the line of the ball. No bowler can do justice to himself and his team if his boots are ill-fitting, if his toes are being pinched, if the sprigs are piercing the material and keep getting at his feet, if blisters are being caused by chafing and if toenails are being compressed. A proper grip of the ground is also vital. Pay a lot of attention when you are buying your first pair of cricket boots. Boots must be laced tight to give support to the ankles. Blisters must be avoided. An additional inner sole is often helpful. A little vaseline applied between the toes may help avoid friction and stop the blisters. Aids to foot comfort are not sufficient in themselves. Boots must fit well. A helmet may become necessary at a later stage when young batsmen come across bowlers who are really pacy. It would be much better to learn to play the game without them. It is not too difficult to adjust to the helmet once you go up the ladder and you need the protection of this modern headgear.