

TECHNIQUE COURSE FOR UMPIRES

INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS GOOD TECHNIQUE?

Good technique is the ability to cope with all aspects of the game. On the field of play knowledge of the Laws, their intentions and interpretations must be applied to ever changing situations. A decision made during the first session of play may not evoke the same emotional response from either the player or umpire as one made late in the day when the match is in the balance. Theoretical knowledge is one thing but being able to make reasoned and consistent decisions from split second actions when under pressure is quite another. There are many aspects which go towards attaining good technique including:

- Preparation; paramount to everything in the pursuit of excellence.
- Working as a Team (when standing with a partner); a collaborative approach.
- Focus and Concentration; self-management.
- Dealing with Captains and Players; man management.
- Self-Assessment; commitment to progress.
- Coping with Pressure; emotional intelligence.
- Earning Respect; consistent, competent and courteous.

This course has been introduced as part of the Training & Development Module to assist umpires in carrying out their duties in a consistent and competent manner. Some of the suggestions as written may not exactly suit each individual umpire, but can be refined to suit your nature and style and should not be rejected outright.

SECTION 1: BEFORE THE MATCH

- Read the playing conditions relevant to your appointment as soon as possible after receiving it. Because the playing conditions may vary from grade to grade or the type of game being played, the better method of doing this is to create a standard set of questions on a master sheet regarding, playing times, bowling restrictions, fielding restrictions, availability of extra time, etc.
- Check and pack gear and have an early night. This is a personal choice, but it is obvious that optimum performance can only be achieved if you arrive at the ground well rested, clear headed and prepared for any challenge the game may provide.

- Leave in plenty of time to allow for contingencies (traffic etc) and arrive at least one hour prior to scheduled start time. The first impression you make will be ‘when’ you arrive and ‘how’ you present yourself.
- Meet partner, establish rapport and together check pitch area and seek out groundsman to see if ground will be handed over. It is unlikely the groundsman will be in attendance all day so ask questions about the prevailing weather conditions and if the ground absorbs water quickly. Also ascertain if there are any other characteristics of the ground that would be helpful later in the day. Is sawdust available for bowlers run ups and batsmen’s stance position? What options are available for using the covers effectively and who will be responsible for laying them? How can the ground best be dried out after a sudden storm? This information could prove vital.
- Make sure the stump holes are moistened to allow easy re-making of the wickets during the day. If at all possible, get the ground staff to make a crease about 15 to 20 metres out to cater for the possibility of having a runner for an injured striker. Check all other markings, set up wickets and agree on which end you will stand.
- Check outfield for any obstructions or hazards, boundaries and local customs.
- If your partner arrives late, it is OK to check out the ground alone but never make any comment to players about your opinion on the condition of the ground – remember this is a decision for the umpires to **“together agree”**. Generally it is best to wait until your colleague arrives. Umpires seen working together before play begins is a positive sign for all concerned.
- Together, meet and speak to Captains before toss, make sure correctly filled out team lists are exchanged and collected. Discuss any matters arising from ground inspection.
- Establish signals to be used with your partner, their time and the co-ordination of your work together – two to go, catch carrying, issue of warnings etc.
- Meet with scorers, they are a part of your team. Note their position, check on how they will acknowledge your signals and check and coordinate timepiece to be used and backup clock.
- Obtain match ball and inform teams you are going onto the field 5 minutes prior to start, wish them well and exhort them to enjoy the game. Walk out together.

SECTION 2: SIGNALS AND CALLS

- Make all necessary signals to the scorers in accordance with the Laws. Signals requiring a call should be delivered in a clear voice to be audible within the square and fielders in the ring. Be an individual with your signals but stick to the basic requirements of the Laws.

- Always request a signal from the scorers to ensure their readiness prior to the start or re-start of play.
- Ensure you work as a team in all signaling procedures. Confer at the end of an over if there is a possibility that something could have been misunderstood.
- Call “play”, “time” and “over” clearly when appropriate. Note that ‘time’ and ‘play’ should be called for all drinks intervals.
- Start and finish a boundary four signal across the chest to avoid any misunderstanding with the No-Ball signal.
- Deliver combination calls in the sequence they occur – i.e. No Ball, Byes or Leg Byes, Boundary, Penalty Runs.
- Deliver relevant signals side on to scorers – i.e. Leg Byes.
- Some signals require the call and signal to be made while the ball is in play – i.e. No Ball, Wide signals and calls are made in the first instance for the players only. **Bowler’s end umpire** repeats the signal to the scorers when the ball becomes dead. **Never signal to scorers while the ball is in play.**
- Do not allow the game to proceed until all signals are acknowledged by the scorers.
- Once established, signals to your partner must be continued for the duration of the match. Ensure clear understanding on what is required. Point of fact; did the ball carry? Did the Batsmen cross? Was the wicket broken correctly?

SECTION 3: DECISION MAKING

- All decision making must be unhurried. The impression must be given to the players that each decision has been objectively considered on the facts known to the umpire.
- It is important to note that decision making occurs every ball, not just when an appeal is made. Consistent decision making is essential to the effective conduct of the game.
- *LBW, caught behind, bat/pad catches:* Consider your decision from where you are standing. Do not move away from the stumps before giving your decision, this can give the impression that you are unsure and have not given the decision due thought. Wait a moment or two for the appeal to finish and make eye contact with the batsman if you give him out. If he turns his back, make sure you hold your hand up until he looks at you. Some difficulty can occur should the batsman decide to run before you have answered the appeal. If you are going to uphold the appeal, there is no need to move from your position, but if your decision is not-out, you will need to move quickly to achieve an appropriate position the

continuing play demands. Always be confident and certain when giving decisions. A brief nod or shake of the head can demonstrate confidence provided it is simultaneous with your 'out' signal or saying 'not out'.

- *Wides:* Adopt a consistent approach throughout the match. Ideally you should discuss your views with your colleague before the match in a two day game. Importantly, what constitutes a wide will be determined in the playing conditions for your match, otherwise, the Laws of Cricket must prevail. It can be a good idea to remind captains at the toss, how you will be adjudicating on wides in the game.
- *Foot fault No Balls:* Keep your head **completely still** and only move your eyes. Focus on the striker as the bowler runs in to establish your eyes correct depth perception in readiness to determine what happens when the ball arrives there. As the bowler is about to land in his delivery stride, flick the eyes down to check the foot's legality and immediately back up to observe the flight of the ball. Having a hard focus on the popping crease as you wait for the bowler to arrive, will result in insufficient time for your eyes to hard focus on the striker before the ball arrives there. Establish a consistent routine and maintain it.
- *Runs, Leg Byes or Byes:* Invoke established signals from square leg with your partner as part of your routine and use them every ball, but remember, at all times, take responsibility for your decision. If you receive a signal that is in conflict with your opinion, always go with your own view. Such signals should never be demonstrative and in the event of an appeal, it is better not to maintain the signal.
- *Short Run or Boundary:* When necessary, stand side on to watch both the ball and the running batsmen with quick glances either way; **never** turn your back on the batsmen or the ball. If the ball is close to the boundary and a batsman is about to touch down for a run, watching for the boundary takes precedence, as does a catch. However, this situation will occur rarely if your routine is to only follow the ball (go to the same side) if it goes behind square and to the opposite side when the ball travels in front of square (see recommendation in Section 5: Positioning, fourth dot point).

SECTION 4:

ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM BOWLERS OR CAPTAINS ON DECISIONS

Umpires should not offer explanations for decisions and should never enter into a discussion with a dissenting player. It is acceptable to answer a reasonably asked question provided you do not get into a protracted discussion. The captain is within his rights to seek a clarification on some decisions or aspects of the Laws. The modern game is increasingly demanding on umpires and there is an expectation to give some explanation, but **only** on request.

It is important that you be seen as a good listener and have a genuine concern for the Laws and their application. This type of interaction and communication between umpires and players can only be good in fostering acceptance and respect. Sometimes,

a query such as, “what was wrong with that one?” should be answered simply, “*pitched out side leg*” or “*hit outside the line*” or “*missing off*”; if you are confident, this type of answer can alleviate further animosity and indeed further futile appeals. A different degree of detail can be used as you build up a rapport with captains and players. This takes time and experience to fully develop. Always answer with an even voice, be unhurried and show complete confidence. **Never** volunteer information or try to justify a decision if you are not asked. Remember there is a huge difference between answering a simple query and justifying your every decision.

The main objectives while dealing with any situation that arises is to maintain focus, concentration and a calm demeanor.

SECTION 5: POSITIONING

Bowlers end umpire

- Stand in line with middle stump so that you have a clear view of the popping crease. Work with the bowler if he requests you to be further back or closer than you normally feel comfortable, but don't let him put you where your view of proceedings is compromised. You will find a position and learn to feel comfortable in it.
- Always approach the bowler to take his cap or sweater. This saves time and helps with your relationship with the bowler. However, if the two officials are practicing a ‘pitch handover’ routine, it is not appropriate to deviate too far from your pathway from square leg to the pitch if it results in compromising your partner's ability to get out to square without holding up play.
- Watch the bowler return to his mark and as he turns, face the striker and switch on to full concentration. Take up your preferred position and do not leave it until the ball has been delivered and played into the field.
- When the ball is hit into the field or there is any chance of a run out at the bowlers end, move to the opposite side the ball has gone in order to keep the whole of the game in front of you (only if the ball travels behind square can you achieve almost the same outcome by going to the same side). The fastest way to move out from your position is to lean toward the direction you want to go and to lead with the opposite leg, i.e., take the first step with your left leg if you are heading to your right. This may feel awkward when first attempted, but with practice, will prove invaluable when speed is required.
- An important variation on the above is when an injured striker is batting. Place the runner at square leg and the striker's end umpire at point and **always** move to the same side as your partner. This is the only way you can be sure to have all three members of the batting team in front of you, essential for answering an appeal for a run out.

- Be ready and willing to work with the bowler if he wishes to know where his front foot is landing. Establish a consistent approach to advising bowlers in this way and do it for both teams. Be proactive if he is gradually creeping on the line. Rapport with the bowlers is a vital ingredient in an umpire's ability to effectively handle a match. If the bowler indicates he doesn't want such information, cease to provide it.
- Give guard to a new batsman from over the stumps; subsequent requests from the batsman can be given from where you are standing, but that is matter of personal choice. Know the terminology, one leg (leg stump), two legs (middle and leg - half way between middle & leg). If the batsman shows you the full face of the bat and asks for "two please" he effectively wants two legs and the bat should cover both the middle and leg stump. You will rarely be asked for "middle to leg" (covering leg stump from the top of middle) or "leg to leg" (covering leg stump from the top of leg stump at your end). Always repeat back to the batsman what he said to you – i.e. "That's middle stump there". If these terms are unfamiliar to you, discuss the subject with your partner prior to the match commencing.

Square leg or strikers end umpire

- Stand no more than 20 metres deep, closer for a slow bowler or when no fielders are located near you, but always be aware of the batsman's ability to hook or pull the ball and be mindful of your own safety. Move further back if asked by a fielder but try never to be more than 25 metres away. Stand with one leg either side of the line and your eyes in a direct line with the popping crease.

It is necessary to observe the bowler's arm in his delivery to ascertain its legality and useful pick up where the ball pitches. Always watch for hit wicket or stumping before following the ball into the outfield.

- Watch for bump balls, catches carrying and batsmen crossing. Signal to partner if required.
- Cross to off side if sun or glare make conditions unsatisfactory. Always inform the captain, batsmen and your partner. When crossing for left/right handed batsmen, anticipate the need to change and begin walking in before the ball is dead if you can do so without interfering with play. This will allow you to be in position without having to run before the bowler commences the next delivery.
- Be watchful of fieldsmen behind you and always check for possible leg side infringement (more than two behind). If there is a deep fielder very square behind you, move over to point. Always be aware of fielding restrictions in limited over matches.
- Stand side on to the stumps to watch both the ball and the running batsmen. Only turn back to face the pitch when the ball has been returned past you. This will eliminate any chance of being hit by the ball if you take your eyes off it. Do not crouch down to allow a ball to be returned over your head.

- If a runner has been permitted, when the injured batsman is not on strike, place him behind you at square leg unless he may possibly obstruct a fielder. Remember, he has no bearing on the game unless he brings himself into it by breaching Law 37 – Obstructing the Field.

BOTH UMPIRES

- Watch the crease, not the bat or the stumps in the case of a close run out. Your peripheral vision will show you the wicket being broken and the position of the bat in relation to the crease. In the case of the quick single and a direct hit, again focus on the crease. You will hear the wicket being struck. If in any doubt about the wicket being put down fairly, you must consult with your colleague.
- When the strikers end wicket needs remaking, always check the alignment with your partner prior to moving back into position. If the bowler's end wicket is remade during an over, wait until the end of the over and ask your colleague to check it when he walks into position before moving out to square leg.
- Keep a note book for all necessary information like, players leaving the field, batsmen on strike and who bowled the last over before an interval and the multitude of penalty runs and unfair play situations. Always note runs scored off overthrows, short runs etc. so you can check with the scorers at the next interval to ensure the correct entry has been made in the score book. Also record any information you may want to consider in your post-match self-reflection.

SECTION 6: CONFLICT SITUATIONS

The handling of conflict situations requires special personnel management skills. Animosity on the field will most often arise from one of two sources – player versus player or player versus umpire.

In the player versus player situation it is very often wise to allow the players to have their say so that both know how they feel about each other. By jumping in too quickly, the umpire will only incur the wrath of both players. They will be intent on having their say anyway – but the umpire in control will allow it for a short time only and then step in. Words like *“you've made your feelings clear now let's get on with the game”*, is an example of one way communication that doesn't invite discussion.

Some umpires have a dislike for getting involved whilst others may step in too quickly. If either of these paths are chosen, the umpire will quickly lose the respect of the players. A few important matters need to be considered. These include:

- **Never react too quickly.** A disappointed bowler needs a little time to cool down. If the incident occurs during an over, consider waiting until the over is completed before saying anything. An astute captain will realise his bowlers cannot perform to their optimum if they are rattled and will quite often speak to the player. If this happens, wait to see if it produces the desired effect. If not you should have a quiet word, using the players name if possible, saying something like *“come on John, don't let things get too heated out here”*.

This is a non-threatening way of defusing a potential problem further into the match. If the bowler shows no interest in improving his behaviour, involve the captain immediately and request him to take action.

When talking to players, avoid the use of nicknames and terms such as, 'mate'. Think before you speak and always know what you wish to say.

- **Player vs Umpire.** Often the fielding team will feel aggrieved over a decision. To show that the umpire is in control and of good temperament he should stand by his decision and reject any feeling of guilt. You may need to show you are in control by saying "*It's obvious we disagree on what has happened but the decision has been made so let's get on with the game*". If an error has been made, umpires must never try to even up as two mistakes over the one incident leads to a loss of respect.
- **Player Conduct Reports.** In the first instance, ask the captain to control his players in accordance with The Spirit of Cricket. Should you need to speak to a player, never walk towards him in an aggressive manner or point fingers in an animated way. Always involve the captain and your fellow umpire so that all concerned will know what was said. Any reports emanating must be made together with your colleague even if you have not heard what was said. You will know by the reaction of the player that there was a problem and your input into the report will be crucial when a hearing takes place.

SECTION 7: LET THEM PLAY THE GAME

Using the Laws With Commonsense

One of the best things an umpire can do to avoid conflict situations is to let them play the game. Umpires shouldn't be looking for minor technical violations or any other circumstances just to show people they know the Laws of Cricket backwards. However, umpires must ensure they understand what the current version of the Laws of Cricket and any relevant playing conditions require from the umpire.

Such situations may involve penalty runs for breaches like damaging the pitch or time wasting. Your proven techniques for dealing with such instances should not be discarded, as successful man management skills that can avert conflict situations are valuable. However, the strengthening of the Fair and Unfair Play Laws (42) and awarding of penalty runs must, like all Laws, be interpreted and applied consistently.

For instance, the case of a batsman running on the pitch may not be considered as intentional the first time it occurs, but the Law doesn't mention intentional damage, only avoidable and unnecessary. "*A player will be deemed to be causing avoidable damage if either umpire considers that his presence on the pitch is without reasonable cause*". The spirit and intent of this Law is not to penalise an accidental or unintentional incident caused by a batsman or bowler changing direction to avoid injury/collision, but it does seek to preserve the best playing surface possible!

Use common sense when applying the Laws. One of the worst tags an umpire can get is that of being a "Law Book" umpire.

Be Complimentary

Good umpires know how to interact with players and there are many opportunities to do this during the course of an afternoon. If the wicket keeper removes the bails and then immediately replaces them, say thank you. Your colleague at the bowlers end will indicate if the wicket is correctly aligned or not.

If you have cause to speak to the captain about player behavior, always finish your request with “please”. After he has spoken to the player, always say “thank you”. Remember, you are not trying to be their best friend, just showing simple courtesy. Whether this courtesy is returned or not is irrelevant and should not affect your future endeavours.

SECTION 8: GROUND WEATHER AND LIGHT

Should rain interrupt play, do not involve the captains, use the Laws and playing conditions to get as much play as possible. The following guidelines may be helpful:

Ball or Grass Wet and Slippery – there should be no delay in starting or suspension of play just because the ball or grass is wet and slippery. It’s good practice to carry a small towel.

Reasonable Footholds – if the bowlers have reasonable footholds, the fielders (within 30 metres) have the power of free movement and the batsmen can play their strokes and run between wickets, then there should be no suspension or delay in restarting the match. Similarly, small areas of surface water in the outfield should not hold up play.

Bowlers Run Ups – notwithstanding that the bowlers footholds in his delivery stride may be acceptable, the area of the bowlers run up to a distance of 10 to 15 metres from the stumps should be dry enough to run on without slipping or sliding. Ensure sawdust is available.

Wet Pitch – particular care and attention must be paid to the pitch area. If the whole pitch is damp there is a possibility that play could take place providing the factors above are taken into account and in all likelihood, the pitch will play consistently. If however there is a mixture of very wet and dry patches the umpires should take extra care not to start play when there could be an obvious and foreseeable risk to the safety of any player or umpire. See Law 3.8 & 3.9. Under these circumstances, umpires must be fully aware of their duty of care to the participants.

Showery Conditions – umpires must be willing to persevere through showery conditions. If there is a possibility of the shower passing over, umpires should endeavor to play on even though it might get heavy for a minute or so. Obviously the onset of a thunderstorm or heavy rain will see an immediate cessation of play and it may be the best option to try and get the pitch covered quickly so that play may resume at a later stage.

With regard to a restart of play in very light rain after an interval – umpires should consider whether in the same conditions they would have suspended play. If not, they should make every effort to commence after the interval in the same conditions.

No play should occur while lightening is present. Refer to your competition playing conditions to determine required procedure.

Bad Light – Light conditions can be governed by background, trees, buildings, sightscreens etc, and can also vary quite radically from one end of the pitch to the other. Conditions that may have been satisfactory when a slow bowler is on need not necessarily be considered satisfactory when a fast bowler is operating. It is impossible to lay down a general standard but to err on the side of caution is the better alternative. Law 3.9 requires careful study and the umpires have been given a duty of care to protect the players.

In evaluating the conditions of ground, weather or light, the state of the game is irrelevant in arriving at a decision.

SECTION 8: AFTER THE MATCH

- Agree with the scorers as to the correctness of the scores and sign the books. Laws 3.15 and 4.2 require the umpires and scorers to work together during the match but it is up to the umpires to ensure the scores are correct. It is essential that umpires establish an understanding and good communications with the scorers in all matches.
- Review the match in detail with your partner and if both of you agree, ask for opinions on areas they think you could improve on.
- Get to know the players over a drink or two **'if invited'**. This can be helpful in knowing the characteristics of players you may be dealing with again during the season, but only if you can refrain from long-winded discussions about decisions. Many an excellent decision has been spoilt due to a mediocre or poor explanation. Do not discuss your colleagues' performance in his absence – at all times stay loyal to the third team no matter what you really think. Do not stay too long as judgement and inhibitions tend to diminish as the evening grows older.
- Finally, remember that every ball of every match you umpire is of great importance to the players and, every match provides you with the opportunity to measure your own progress towards being a competent and ever improving official.