

From Baseball to Cricket

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How Cricket is Played

The next two sections help explain a bit about about cricket and about baseball. The latter, the great American pastime, is one of the strangest games, with complex rules, strange rituals, and a mania for statistics that is often not found in any other sports. The former, a contender for great world pastime after football (i.e., soccer), is even more so!

Rather than three bases plus home plate as in baseball, cricket has two **wickets**—or rather the area around the wicket where the batsman is safe is called the *crease*. The **wicket** itself consists of three *stumps* sticking out of the ground, with two little dowels called *bails* perched atop them on grooves like the humps on a long, thin **m**.

The strip between the wickets is also called the **wicket**, though it is supposed to be called the *pitch*, and the whole surrounding playing area is called the *pitch*, though it is supposed to be called the *field*. The area is oval and bounded not by walls and foul lines as in baseball, but by a rope. Cricket has 360 degrees of “fair territory”—often the most effective batting strokes are flicked or blasted behind past the catcher, who is called the **wicketkeeper**.

There must be two batsmen on the field at any time, so the eleven-person side has only ten outs, which of course are called **wickets**. The batsmen score *runs* by exchanging places safely. The wicket acts as a strike zone for the *bowler*, who releases the ball from the other side of the wicket, and if the ball strikes the stumps so that a bail falls to the ground, it’s a **wicket** and the batsman is out.

A batsman can also be out by being **caught** like in baseball, or **run out** which means not getting to the crease before a fielder tags or knocks the bails off with the ball, or **stumped** which means being run out without running, or several other ways such as blocking an on-target bowled ball with the body. This last, called **leg-before-wicket**, seems to us a harder umpiring call than any in baseball, and more portentous because outs are scarce while runs are plenty.

A ball hit over the rope on the fly, the analogue of a home run in baseball, scores 6 runs. A ball that bounces over the rope is an automatic 4 runs. On other batted balls that aren’t caught, the batsmen can elect to try for any number of runs, including 5. Or they can decide not to run at all—in cricket there is no “force.” A bowler delivers six balls at a time from

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one wicket to the other, called an *over*, and then another bowler bowls the next over from the other side. An over with no runs scored is called a *maiden over*.

In Test Matches a typical innings (a singular noun) lasts about 120 overs in four sessions and produces 300 or so runs. The team with the highest run total over two innings wins. There is also One-Day Cricket, with one innings for each team and various special rules. The Cricket World Cup is held every 3 years for the one-day game only. India won the 2011 cup with a thrilling comeback after their innings started with a first-ball out (called a *golden duck*) from their leading batsman and a poor score of 18 by their long-time national sports hero, Sachin Tendulkar.

Morphing Baseball Into Cricket

Here's how to define a continuous topological transform from baseball into cricket. Those already familiar with cricket can apply the inverse transform to learn about baseball.

1. Move the batter to the middle of the field—more like one focus of a nearly-circular oval with the hurler at the other focus—thus giving 360 degrees of “fair territory,” which is surrounded by a rope rather than foul lines and walls.
2. Instead of three bases and home plate in a diamond shape, have only two bases, with the other base being where the hurler is, and have another runner always on that base.
3. Advancing to the other base scores a run (though both runners must do so safely), while a batted ball bouncing over the rope (like a ground-rule double) scores 4 runs, and a home run scores 6.
4. The innings have 10 outs rather than 3 outs each, and one of the 11 rather than 9 *batsmen* in the lineup is always left *not out*. But each side has only 1 (in one-day matches) or 2 (in multi-day matches) innings apiece.
5. In place of a strike zone or plate or base, have three *stumps* connected at the top by *bails* whose dislodgment can make you out. In cricket you can be out on what in baseball would be just the first of three strikes.
6. A hurled ball may bounce one or more times before it gets to the batsman and still be legal—indeed exactly one bounce, called **pitching**, is the objective of the pitcher, who is called a **bowler**.
7. On a batted ball the runners need not run—in cricket there is no “force”—but when they do they must carry their bats, and touching the bat into an area around the stumps called the *crease* takes the place of having a foot on a base.
8. The bowler may deliver from a running rather than standstill position, but must do so with a stiff arm, and must release the ball while still in the crease area of the opposite stumps. After six legal deliveries, called an *over*, another bowler must work from the opposite end.
9. A hit-by-pitch is an out if the umpire judges the ball was going to be a strike. For more on this delicate rule called *leg-before-wicket* and other info, start from here.