

Stoolball Umpires' guide

This guide helps everyone from beginners to experienced umpires understand the rules in the same way. You should read the rules for stoolball too.

Before the match

1. Check that you have an up to date copy of the Rules. Take it with you, you may need to refer to it if in doubt.
2. Ensure you have a reliable method of counting the balls bowled.

Before the start of the game

With the other umpire:

1. Check that the pitch is marked correctly, i.e. creases, returns, no ball lines, measurements.
2. Establish the number of overs to be played depending on conditions.
3. Look out for unsuitable footwear, ie: spikes or studs. Footwear designed specifically to provide extra grip on grass is considered unsuitable as it could give the wearer an unfair advantage.

At the start of an innings

The umpire at the non-striker's end (the bowler's umpire) ensures that:

1. All the fielders are in position and the batsmen are ready.
2. The scorers are sitting together.
3. The square leg umpire is ready.

He then signals to the scorers, who will acknowledge that they are ready and calls 'First over - play'.

The bowler's umpire

Should stand level or slightly in front of the bowler's wicket, with a clear view of the bowling crease and the batting wicket. This umpire controls the game and makes all the decisions, apart from:

1. Run out at the batting end.
2. Short run at the batting end.
3. When in doubt, in which case he may consult the square leg umpire. If no decision can be reached play continues.

He should ensure that players are ready for each ball bowled and that his signals are acknowledged by the scorers. He should make a batsman aware that he/she is standing in front of his/her wicket and may be given out 'bowled' if he/she obstructs that wicket.

He should be aware of the scorers, in case they have difficulties and ensure that the score has been agreed before the start of the second innings.

Summary of bowler's umpire's duties during the game

1. Watch bowler's run-up with regard to bowling limits - no ball if necessary.
2. Give extras - wides, no balls, byes. Wides and no balls must be clearly called.
3. Maintain contact with the scorers using the appropriate signals.
4. Give decisions regarding dismissals when appealed to.

5. Give decisions regarding run outs and short runs at his end, taking into account whether the batsman has been obstructed.

After the eighth legitimate ball of the over has been bowled and the ball is back in the bowler's hand, the umpire calls 'over' and the roles are then reversed from the other end of the wicket.

When all the players are ready, the umpire calls the number of the over and 'play'.

After a dismissal or stoppage for any reason, the same procedure applies as for the start of an over and the umpire will also call the number of balls remaining in that over, eg: 'tenth over, four balls to come, play'.

The square leg umpire

1. Stands no more than 10 - 15 metres either side with a clear view of the batting wicket. Assist the bowler's umpire with decisions regarding no balls and wides. He should signal discreetly when asked.

2. Keeps count of the number of balls bowled, in case of error or doubt.

3. Judges run outs and short runs at his end, taking obstruction into account.

4. Watches to see whether batsmen cross.

Should a square leg umpire be unhappy with decisions made by the bowler's umpire he should discuss this with him between overs.

Rule 5 - Bowling

'Jerk' - the bowling action must be a continuous forward movement of the arm.

Both feet must be behind the crease, even if they are in the air when the ball is bowled.

The bowler must not deviate from a straight line, whether from behind or between wickets, ie: he/she must not run outside the limits of the creases.

Unfair bowling

This is interpreted as persistently bowling in an area which prevents the batsman from playing a stroke, eg:

1. On or just above the no ball line.

2. At or behind the batsman's body (see also Rule 11 - wide ball).

The umpire should take into account:

1. The age and ability of the batsman.

2. The batsman's stance at the wicket.

3. the speed of the ball being bowled.

Dangerous bowling

This is interpreted as that likely to cause injury to the batsman. The same factors should be taken into account as for unfair bowling, eg: the batsman may be standing directly in front of his/her wicket.

The umpire's action for both unfair and dangerous bowling

The umpire may call 'dead ball' to suspend play and warn the bowler. The ball should be re-bowled to give eight fair balls in that over. A bowler may be suspended from bowling for the remainder of the innings after a warning. The bowler's captain should be warned of this possibility. (Note: There is at present no provision in NSA rules for giving a 'no ball' in this situation).

Rule 6 - Batsman's Innings

Runners - A runner should stand approx three metres square to the batting wicket. He/she must not interfere with play. Any decision made to run, resulting in the runner leaving the wicket and being run out is 'out', even if the batsman did not call the run. When the runner is at the bowler's end the injured batsman stands in the same place as the runner, square to the wicket.

Rule 9 - Dead Ball - Suspension of Play

Unfair play is defined as:

1. Unfair or dangerous bowling - the umpire may call a 'dead ball' in order to speak to the bowler or his captain, or to attend to an injured batsman.
2. Deliberate or accidental deflection of the ball by a batsman either at the wicket or when running.

Note: 'Dead ball' does not mean that another ball is automatically allowed to replace it, it simply means that play is suspended. Another ball may be bowled at the umpire's discretion, but neither team should gain an advantage by this.

Rule 11 - Wide Ball

This is generally interpreted as a ball that is out of the batsman's reach, when he/she is standing in a normal batting position at the wicket. A batsman should not have to be at full stretch to hit the ball.

Rule 13 - The Batsman is Out

Bowled - The rule, regarding the batsman's person obstructing the wicket, applies if the ball is hit by the bat (or hand holding the bat) and would have been played on to the wicket had it not been obstructed by the batsman's body. 'The hand holding the bat' means the hand up to the wrist.

Caught - A batsman may be caught off an obstruction that is part of the field of play, eg: the umpire, a wicket, another fielder or batsman, but not off a tree.

Note: This rule may vary in some leagues in that catches must be held cleanly in the hand without assistance of the fielder's body or clothing and may only hit another fielder's hand before being caught. Umpires should be aware of the possibility of these different interpretations.

Run Out - A batsman may also be run out if he/she fails to touch the wicket after completing a run. If one batsman runs and the other remains at his/her wicket the running batsman may only be run out at the wicket he/she has run from. If both batsmen have left their wickets, but have not crossed either may be run out at the wicket he/she has run from. Once the players cross, either may be run out at the wicket they are running to.

If the ball is hit on to the opposite wicket by the batsman, a run out may only occur if the ball is touched by a fielder en route and the batsman at that end is out of his ground on the point of contact.

Note: The umpire must be in a position to see the face of the wicket clearly at all times - he should never stand behind the wicket.

Other dismissals - A batsman may be given out if he/she deliberately impedes a fielder who may otherwise have caught or run him/her out. This is solely the umpires decision, an appeal is not necessary. A batsman may also be given out if he/she deliberately hits the ball twice.

Abandoning a Game

This should be a joint decision of the umpires and may occur if:

1. Bad weather makes play impossible or dangerous.
2. Persistent dissent by either or both teams prevents fair play.
3. A player is badly injured.

Impartiality

Umpires must be impartial at all times and should not give advice to either team. However, they can tell a player how many balls remain in an over.