CHANGES TO THE LAWS OF CRICKET

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LORD'S

There are 73 changes to the Laws of Cricket for the 4th edition of the 2017 Code of Laws, which will come into effect on 1 October 2026.
Those changes are detailed, in full, in the accompanying document 'Changes to the Laws of Cricket for 2026 edition'. This document summarizes each of those changes.
All gendered language (he/she, him/her etc) has been removed from the Laws in this edition. Those changes are not included in this document.

1. Law 1.2 - minor addition to formalise something that would always have been considered best practice.

2. Law 2.4 (see pitched/pitching at end of this document).

3. Law 2.7.4 - change in wording to add clarity, and equity between batting and fielding sides.

4. Law 2.13.2.2 - New Law. Up until now, there was no guidance as to what the umpires should do if both sides commit offences that require opposite actions (ie if the batting side commit an offence where the Law says the ball should count as one in the over, and the same delivery the bowling side commit an offence where the Law says the ball should not count, should it count or not?). This new Law clarifies that both offences are punished, and where they contradict, you go with the one that happened first.

5. Law 4.1 - a significant change to the size and weight of the cricket ball. We have re-named the balls from Men's, Women's and Junior to Size 1, Size 2, and Size 3. All three of these specifications are now in the same Law, Law 4.1 (rather than the 'standard' ball being in 4.1 and the 'lesser' balls being in 4.6). We have also tightened the margins for the Size 2 and Size 3 balls - these used to have a far wider range of size and weight than a Size 1, despite being smaller. These are now all a uniform margin.

6. Law 4.4 - a clarification that if a multi-day game is shortened so that there is only one day of play, you can still take the New ball.

7. Law 4.6 - The Size 2 and Size 3 balls are now included alongside Size 1, so have been taken out of Law 4.6.

8. Law 5.8 - Type D bats, which may be laminated, are now permitted for open age cricket, rather than just junior cricket. The level at which a Type D bat can be used will be set by the national governing body of that country.
Law 5.8 has also been rationalised to give a clearer guide to what exactly Type A, B, C and D bats entail.

9. Law 8.1 (see pitched/pitching at end of document).

10. Law 9.2 - a new wording that permits mechanical blowers (and any other suitable equipment) to clear debris from the pitch, rather than just sweeping. This brings the Laws in line with common practice around the world.

11. Law 10.2 - A minor change of wording with no change in outcome.

12. Law 12.2 - A change clarifying that the umpires should call Time at the start of an interruption, which is how the Law has always been interpreted.

13. Law 12.3 - Umpires no longer need to remove the bails at the start of a drinks interval - bringing the Laws into line with common practice.

14. Law 12.5.2 - A significant change that will impact multi-day cricket. It was felt unfair that, if a fielding side take a wicket in the final over of the day, the batting side do not have to send out a new batter. This doesn't save time (which is the case at lunch and tea) as the remaining balls need to be made up the next day, and it takes the drama out of the game, while letting the incoming batter off the hook - the conditions are often more favourable to bowling. The new change means that the final over of the day will be bowled fully, even if a wicket falls during it (assuming conditions remain fit).

15. Law 15.1 and 15.2 - A side will no longer be permitted to declare, or forfeit, the final innings of the match. This is only ever used for contrived results, and is not felt to be good for the game.

16. Law 16.3.2 - a minor correction - although the next Law requires Play to be called, the umpires were never actually told to call Time.

17. Law 17.5.2 - a minor correction to wording.

18. Law 18.5.1 - A clarification of short running - this is new, but has already been adopted by ICC for their Playing Conditions. It formalises the idea that batters can choose to turn back, and abandon a run, even if they have crossed - deliberate short running must be an attempt to deceive the umpires.

19. Law 18.5.2 - A new Law, but already adopted by ICC for their Playing Conditions - where batters deliberately run short, along with all the penalties already in place, the fielding side will also get to determine which of the batters takes strike. Deliberate short running is usually an attempt to manufacture a certain batter being on strike, and this further reduces the chances of gaining such an advantage.

20. Law 18.11.1 - see Law 37.5.2.

21. Law 18.13 - There are now three places in the Laws where players on the field can decide who faces the next ball; two of these are new in this edition. These are collected in one place in Law 18.13.

22. Law 19.5.2 - A new Law on boundary catching, already adopted by ICC for their Playing Conditions. ICC approached MCC because they wanted to get rid of 'bunny hop' catching. This limits the fielder to jumping from outside the boundary only once. Full education piece available separately.

23. Law 19.8 - the most significant overhaul of overthrows in some time. For the first time the Laws define an overthrow, and bring the Laws into line with conventional thinking on the difference between an overthrow and a misfield. Simply, an overthrow is an attempt to direct the ball towards the stumps to stop run-scoring or attempt a Run out. A misfield - whether an attempt to stop the ball or pass it to another fielder close to the boundary - should not be treated as an overthrow.

24. Law 20.1.1.1 - a new definition of 'finally settled'. This is quite a big change in Law, but not one that most players will notice. The ball no longer has to be in the bowler or wicket-keeper's hands to be finally settled. It can be in the hands of any fielder, or stationary on the ground. This allows umpires more leeway to make reasonable decisions on when the ball is Dead, even if one fielder, or one batter, is still attempting to play on.

25. Law 20.4.2 - a minor correction to add in a missing clause from a list.

26. Law 20.4.2.4 - a minor correction, to clarify that Dead ball should not be called if, for example, the wicket-keeper knocks a bail off at the striker's end before the ball has reached the striker.

27. Law 20.4.2.10 - a small rewording to bring into Law something that has been common in practice. If a ball is dropped by the bowler before delivery, it is Dead ball. If it stays in the hand, it is also Dead ball. But if it comes out of the hand and flies, say, backwards, it has clearly not been delivered, but is not really dropped. This new wording allows for an umpire to determine that the ball has not been 'delivered' and call Dead ball. Full guidance of when the umpire should determine that a ball is not delivered, and when it is just a bad delivery, will be given in Tom Smith's.

28. Law 20.4.2.13 - a minor correction.

29. Law 21.6 - If an umpire calls No ball under this Law, precisely because it is likely to distract the batter, it was felt that the No ball should not be revoked if the batter pulls out of the delivery because they were distracted.

30. Law 21.7 (see pitched/pitching at end of document).

31. Law 21.9 - this is a new Law, stemming from an example sent in to MCC where a bowler bowled a very high, looping delivery, and then grabbed it before the batter had the chance to play it. It was determined that this should be considered a deliberate attempt to obstruct the batter, rather than just a No ball for a fielder intercepting the delivery. See also Law 41.4.

32. Law 21.12 - a clarification that, if the ball was Dead before the ball was bowled, a call of No ball should be revoked. If Dead ball is called because a batter backs away, the call of No ball should only stand if the No ball was for the bowler breaking the wicket at the bowler's end.

33. Law 22.1.3 - A significant change in Law, but one that will impact very little cricket. A bouncer over head height will now be a Wide in Law, not a No ball. This brings it in line with almost all professional cricket.

34. Law 23.3 - a minor change in wording.

35. Law 24.2.1 - A new Law, ensuring that fielders must be inside the field of play at the moment the ball is released. As well as enshrining the simple idea that play takes place within the boundary, this closes a loophole that a fielder could be behind square on the leg side, but not within the boundary, and technically not count as one of the two behind square.

36. Law 24.2.8 - a clarification on penalty time served during a suspension.

37. Law 25.6.5 - a clarification of the rare situation where the winning runs are scored by a runner completing their runs while the striker remains out of their ground. This clarifies that, if the runner and the non-striker have completed the runs required to win the game, the game is over and the striker's position no longer relevant.

38. Law 25.6.6 - one of several minor changes to the order of actions an umpire should take.

39. Law 25.7.2 - rewording of language around disallowing runs AND one of several minor changes to the order of actions an umpire should take.

40. Law 25.8 - clarification of the limitation on a striker's right to play the ball. Makes clear that a striker must be on the pitch throughout the bowler's run-up.

41. Law 26.4.1 - a minor re-formatting correction.

42. Law 27.3.1 - a small, but material change - a wicket-keeper will no longer be punished for having their gloves in front of the stumps when the bowler runs up. It is only after the ball is released that the wicket-keeper must be wholly behind. This brings the wording in line with a fielder's position.

43. Law 27.4.1.1 - a small change, removing an unnecessary qualification - any movement that brought a keeper within reach of the wicket would be significant, not just in relation to a slower ball.

44. Law 27.5 - a clarification. If a wicket-keeper interferes with a striker's second strike, the striker has already had the chance to play the ball, and cannot score off that delivery. While they should not be able to be dismissed, they also should not have the delivery re-bowled.

45. Law 28.2.1 - a reworking of the Law so that a discarded object need not have actually been discarded while the ball is in play to be illegal fielding.

46. Law 31.7 - A clarification, coupled with a clearer wording. A batter should only be protected from a misapprehension if it is a reasonable misapprehension. Walking off because you have been bowled, not having noticed it was a No ball, is a reasonable misapprehension - a batter should be protected from being subsequently Run out. But a batter who nicks the ball to the wicket-keeper and walks off without waiting to see if the ball is actually caught, cannot be protected if the keeper, having dropped the catch, then throws down the stumps.

47. Law 32.1.2 - A material change, unlikely to happen very often. If the striker hits the ball straight, it rebounds off the stumps at the bowler's end, and rebounds to the striker's wicket, it will no longer be out Bowled. This is clearly what the game expects, even if it is rare!

48. Law 33.2.2 - a clarification of what has always been our interpretation - where there are two strikes of the ball, for a catch to be taken the ball cannot make contact with the ground in between the two strikes.

49. Law 34.3 - the same principle as Law 25.8, but applying to the fielder rather than the wicket-keeper. If the striker is defending their wicket with a second strike and a fielder intervenes, it should be Dead ball, but the ball should not be re-bowled.

50. Law 34.4 - a minor re-wording.

51. Law 35.1.1 - a change in Law that codifies an interpretation long held, that "receiving the ball" lasts until the batter has gained control of their balance after playing the ball.

52. Law 35.2 - a clarification that contact by a detached piece of equipment, or significant contact of the person, with any other person or object, prevents a subsequent Hit Wicket dismissal. So if the batter accidentally lets go of the bat, and it hits the wicket, the batter will be out Hit wicket. However, if the bat hits the wicket-keeper and then the wicket, it will be Not out.

53. Law 36 (see pitched/pitching at end of document).

54. Law 37.1.3 - A new Law that clarifies an old interpretation - a batter who drops or throws their bat to hit the ball or avoid being dismissed is liable to be given out Obstructing the field.

55. Law 37.5.2 - As with deliberate short running (above) if a batter is out Obstructing the field, the captain of the fielding side will get to decide whether the new batter, or the remaining not dismissed batter, is on strike. Obstruction is often with the intention of getting a particular batter on striker, and this further disincentivises that.

56. Law 38.3 - A rewording of a controversial Law, which doesn't change any meaning but does attempt to make it clearer than ever

57. Law 38.5 - one of several minor changes to the order of actions an umpire should take.

58. Law 41.4 - See Law 21.9. A fielder who obstructs a batter who is receiving or preparing to receive a delivery will be punished in the same way as one who distracts, or attempts to distract a batter.

59. Law 41.6 and Law 41.7 (see pitched/pitching at end of document). Also note that where a bowler has bowled a deliberate beamer, they will now be suspended from bowling for the whole of the rest of the match, not just that innings.

60. Law 41.8 - One of a few instances in this edition where penalties for deliberate unfair play will be applied to the whole match, not just an innings.

61. Law 41.16 - one of several minor changes to the order of actions an umpire should take.

62. Law 41.17.2 - a couple of slight changes to the Law on Penalty runs at the end of the match. Firstly, if a side offends after a result has been reached but before the umpires leave the field, Penalty runs can be awarded. So, for example, if a batter were to celebrate the winning hit from the last ball of the match by punching the bowler in the face, they would subsequently lose the match.
There is also clarification that if Penalty runs after a result has been reached undo that

result, play should continue if possible, and that umpires should award Penalty runs, if there are multiple offences, in the order the actions took place.

63. Law 41.17.5 - a new Law, which puts into Law 41.17 (the Law governing Penalty runs) some text that is in all awards of Penalty runs, for extra clarity.

64. Law 41.17.6 - a new Law, clarifying that if the umpires spot the use of illegal equipment, where possible they must prevent its further use and in all circumstances they must report it. This is to avoid a player or team repeatedly using illegal equipment.

65. Law 42.3.1 - a clarification that an inappropriate throw does not need to be right at an opposition player, throwing the ball near them can be inappropriate too.

66. Law 42.4.2.3.3 - clarification of Penalty time for suspended players.

67. Appendix A2.7 and A2.8 - definitions of what it means to hold the ball and have complete control over it. This is relevant to fielders breaking the wicket with ball in hand.

68. Appendix A.6.6 - a definition of crossing

69. Appendix A9.4 and A9.5 - Codifying what is meant by the front and back foot.

70. Appendix A9.6 - The codifying of a definition that has long been our interpretation.

71. Appendix A10.2 (see pitched/pitching at end of document).

72. Appendix A.12.3 - a minor change to the definition of hand - the wicket-keeper's glove is no longer relevant given the changes to A.2.7.

73. Appendix B.7 - along with Law 5.8, an updated Law on laminated bats.

Pitched/pitching - in attempting to make these Laws more easily understandable, particularly for those for whom English is not their first language, we have removed the word 'pitch' where it means anything other than 'the 22 yards between the stumps'. There were two other meanings of "pitch" in the Laws: Pitches/pitched to mean where the ball lands, and 'pitch the stumps' to mean place them in the ground.
The word 'pitching' in relation to the ball hitting the ground, is replaced by 'landing' or 'first landing' to mean the first time the ball hits the ground, or 'bouncing' to mean any contact between the ball and the ground.