

Cricket is a [bat-and-ball game](#) played between two [teams](#) of eleven players on a [field](#), at the centre of which is a 22-yard (20-metre; 66-foot) [pitch](#) with a [wicket](#) at each end, each comprising two [bails](#) (small sticks) balanced on three [stumps](#). Two players from the [batting](#) team, the striker and nonstriker, stand in front of either wicket holding [bats](#), while one player from the [fielding](#) team, the bowler, [bowls](#) the [ball](#) toward the striker's wicket from the opposite end of the pitch. The striker's goal is to hit the bowled ball with the bat and then switch places with the [nonstriker](#), with the batting team scoring one [run](#) for each of these exchanges. Runs are also scored when the ball reaches the [boundary](#) of the field or when the ball is bowled [illegally](#).

The fielding team aims to prevent runs by [dismissing](#) batters (so they are "out"). Dismissal can occur in various ways, including being [bowled](#) (when the ball hits the striker's wicket and dislodges the bails), and by the fielding side either [catching](#) the ball after it is hit by the bat but before it hits the ground, or hitting a wicket with the ball [before](#) a batter can cross the [crease line](#) in front of the wicket. When ten batters have been dismissed, the [innings](#) (playing phase) ends and the teams swap roles. [Forms of cricket](#) range from traditional [Test matches](#) played over five days to the newer [Twenty20](#) format (also known as *T20*), in which each team bats for a single innings of 20 [overs](#) (each "over" being a set of 6 fair opportunities for the batting team to score) and the game generally lasts three to four hours.

Traditionally, cricketers play in all-white [kit](#), but in [limited overs cricket](#), they wear club or team colours. In addition to the basic kit, some players wear protective gear to prevent injury caused by the ball, which is a hard, solid spheroid made of compressed [leather](#) with a slightly raised sewn seam enclosing a [cork](#) core layered with tightly wound string.

The earliest known definite reference to cricket is to it being played in [South East England](#) in the mid-16th century. It spread globally with the expansion of the [British Empire](#), with the first international matches in the second half of the 19th century. The game's governing body is the [International Cricket Council](#) (ICC), which has over 100 members, twelve of which are [full members](#) who play Test matches. The game's rules, the [Laws of Cricket](#), are maintained by [Marylebone Cricket Club](#) (MCC) in [London](#). The sport is followed primarily in [South Asia](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), the [United Kingdom](#), [Southern Africa](#), and the [West Indies](#).

While traditionally, cricket has largely been played by men, [Women's cricket](#) has experienced large growth in the 21st century.

The most successful side playing [international cricket](#) is [Australia](#), which has won eight [One Day International](#) trophies, including six [World Cups](#), more than any other country, and has been the [top-rated Test side](#) more than any other country.

History

Main article: [History of cricket](#)

Origins

Main article: [History of cricket to 1725](#)

A medieval "club ball" game involving an underarm bowl towards a batter. Ball catchers are shown positioning themselves to catch a ball. Detail from the [Canticles of Holy Mary](#), 13th century.

Cricket is one of many games in the "club ball" sphere that involve hitting a ball with a hand-held implement. Others include [baseball](#) (which shares many [similarities](#) with cricket, both belonging in the more specific [bat-and-ball games](#) category), [golf](#), [hockey](#), [tennis](#), [squash](#), [badminton](#) and [table tennis](#). In cricket's case, a key difference is the existence of a solid target structure, the wicket (originally, it is thought, a "[wicket gate](#)" through which sheep were herded), that the batter must defend. The cricket historian [Harry Altham](#) identified three "groups" of "club ball" games: the "hockey group", in which the ball is driven to and from between two targets (the goals); the "golf group", in which the ball is driven towards an undefended target (the hole); and the "cricket group", in which "the ball is aimed at a mark (the wicket) and driven away from it".^[9]

It is generally believed that cricket originated as a [children's game](#) in the south-eastern counties of England, sometime during the [medieval period](#). Although there are claims for prior dates, the earliest definite reference to cricket being played comes from evidence given at a court case in [Guildford](#) in January 1597 ([Old Style](#), equating to

January 1598 in the modern calendar). The case concerned ownership of a certain plot of land, and the court heard the testimony of a 59-year-old [coroner, John Derrick](#), who gave witness that:^{[10][11][12]}

Being a scholler in the [ffree schoole of Guldeford](#) hee and diverse of his fellows did runne and play there at creckett and other plaies.

Given Derrick's age, it was about half a century earlier when he was at school, and so it is certain that cricket was being played c. 1550 by boys in [Surrey](#).^[12] The view that it was originally a children's game is reinforced by [Randle Cotgrave](#)'s 1611 English-[French](#) dictionary in which he defined the noun "*crosse*" as "the crooked staff wherewith boys play at cricket", and the verb form "*crosser*" as "to play at cricket".^{[13][14]}

One possible source for the sport's name is the [Old English](#) word "*cryce*" (or "*cricc*") meaning a crutch or staff. In [Samuel Johnson](#)'s *Dictionary*, he derived cricket from "*cryce*, Saxon, a stick".^[10] In [Old French](#), the word "*criquet*" seems to have meant a kind of club or stick.^[15] Given the strong medieval trade connections between south-east England and the [County of Flanders](#) when the latter belonged to the [Duchy of Burgundy](#), the name may have been derived from the [Middle Dutch](#) (in use in Flanders at the time) "*krick*"(-e), meaning a stick (crook).^[15] Another possible source is the Middle Dutch word "*krickstoel*", meaning a long low stool used for kneeling in church that resembled the long low [wicket](#) with two [stumps](#) used in early cricket.^[16] According to Heiner Gillmeister, a European language expert of [Bonn University](#), "cricket" derives from the Middle Dutch phrase for hockey, "*met de (krik ket)sen*" ("with the stick chase").^[17] Gillmeister has suggested that not only the name but also the sport itself may be of Flemish origin.^[17]