

ICC T20 INTERNATIONAL CRICKET: MATCH STRUCTURE AND PLAYING CONDITIONS

1. MATCH FORMAT OVERVIEW

A Twenty20 International (T20I) match consists of two innings. Each team bats for a maximum of 20 overs per innings. Each over consists of six legal deliveries bowled by a single bowler. The team scoring the most runs at the end of both innings wins the match. If both teams score the same number of runs, the match is declared a tie and may proceed to a Super Over to determine a winner.

A minimum of 5 overs per side must be bowled for the match to constitute a valid result. In knockout matches of major ICC tournaments, this requirement may increase to 10 overs per side.

2. TEAM COMPOSITION

Each team may nominate a playing XI (11 players) from their squad for each match. The squad size for ICC T20 World Cup events is typically 15 players. The playing XI must include at least one designated wicketkeeper. Teams must submit their final XI to the match referee before the toss.

3. THE TOSS

Before the match begins, the two captains participate in a coin toss. The captain who wins the toss chooses whether their team will bat first or field first. The toss takes place 30 minutes before the scheduled start of play, and both captains must have submitted their team sheets to the match referee before the toss.

4. INNINGS STRUCTURE AND POWERPLAY

Each innings is divided into phases based on fielding restrictions:

Powerplay (Overs 1-6): During the mandatory powerplay, only two fielders are allowed outside the 30-yard circle. The remaining nine players, including the bowler and wicketkeeper, must stay within the inner circle. This phase encourages aggressive batting at the start of the innings by limiting the fielding team's boundary protection.

Middle Overs (Overs 7-20): From the seventh over onwards, a maximum of five fielders are permitted outside the 30-yard circle. This allows the bowling side to set more defensive and spread-out fields to protect boundaries, especially during the death overs.

In shortened matches (effective July 2025), the Powerplay is now calculated to the nearest ball rather than the nearest over. This ensures the Powerplay duration stays proportional to roughly 30 percent of the total overs, preventing situations where rounding to the nearest over gave a disproportionate number of overs under field restrictions.

5. FIELDING RESTRICTIONS

In addition to the powerplay-specific limits, general fielding restrictions apply throughout the innings:

- No more than 5 fielders may be positioned on the leg side of the pitch at any time.

- A maximum of 2 fielders are allowed behind square on the leg side.
- Fielders (other than the wicketkeeper) may not move significantly from their position until the bowler releases the ball.

6. OVER RATE REQUIREMENTS

The fielding team is required to maintain a minimum over rate of 14.11 overs per hour in T20 International matches. The fielding side must be in position to bowl the first ball of the final over of the innings by the scheduled or rescheduled time for the end of the innings.

Stop Clock Rule: Effective from the 2024 T20 World Cup, the stop clock rule became a permanent fixture in T20Is. The fielding side must start bowling a new over within 60 seconds of the completion of the previous over. This rule was introduced to reduce time-wasting and keep the game moving at an appropriate pace.

7. SLOW OVER RATE PENALTY

If the fielding team fails to bowl their 20 overs within the allotted time (approximately 85 minutes in ICC events), an in-match penalty is applied. For every over not completed within the scheduled time, the fielding team must bring one additional fielder inside the 30-yard circle for the remaining overs of the innings. This is a significant disadvantage, particularly in the death overs when boundary protection is critical.

For example, if the fielding side is one over behind at the 18th over mark, they would only be allowed four fielders outside the circle (instead of five) for the remaining overs.

8. PITCH AND GROUND REQUIREMENTS

The pitch is a rectangular area of the ground measuring 22 yards (20.12 meters) in length and 10 feet (3.05 meters) in width. It is bounded at either end by the bowling creases and on either side by imaginary lines one and a half meters from the middle stumps. All T20I matches must be played on natural turf pitches.

The playing area is typically an oval-shaped field enclosed by a boundary rope or fence. The boundary line itself is defined by a rope or painted line, and the minimum distance from the pitch to the boundary must comply with ICC standards for international cricket.

9. BALL REGULATIONS

The Home Board provides white cricket balls of an approved standard for T20I cricket. The brand of ball must be communicated to the visiting board at least 30 days before the match. At the start of each innings, the fielding captain or their nominee selects a ball from a box containing at least 6 new balls, supervised by the fourth umpire. Only one new ball is used per innings (unlike Test cricket where a new ball becomes available after 80 overs).

Only Type A bats, which conform to standard size and thickness regulations, may be used in T20I matches.

10. MATCH OFFICIALS

The ICC appoints all match officials for T20 Internationals. A standard match official team consists of:

- Two on-field umpires
- One third umpire (TV umpire)

- One fourth umpire
- One match referee

Umpires for T20Is are selected from the ICC Elite Panel or the ICC International Panel of Umpires. Importantly, match officials must not be from the same country as either of the participating teams to ensure neutrality.

11. OPTIONAL DRINKS INTERVAL

The updated T20I playing conditions provide for an optional drinks interval midway through each innings. This interval is at the discretion of the umpires and is typically allowed in hot weather conditions. The drinks break should not exceed 2 minutes and 30 seconds.