

## Prompt: "Something you miss from home"

Something I miss from home is watching cricket with friends, especially Test cricket.

The story I'd like to do is on whether Test cricket has gotten more interesting in recent years. Is this current period of Test cricket the most exciting that the longest format of the game has been in its 147-year history?

The article is especially relevant and timely because of an ongoing debate around the future of Test cricket, and whether cricket boards around the world are shifting their priorities away from Tests.

For example, recently, England Test captain Ben Stokes said [Test cricket must become more exciting to survive](#). However, fans of Test cricket say that Test matches now seem to be having more results (wins/losses) than a decade or two earlier - but does the data corroborate that sentiment?

## Methodology:

For any given period, we will measure how interesting or exciting Test cricket was during that time by assessing two factors -

1. Are there more matches that are yielding results (win/loss/tie) than draws?
2. Are the matches being won in a more closely-fought manner (smaller victory margins)?

If Test matches in recent years have yielded more results and are being won in a more closely-fought manner, then we can say that Test cricket matches have gotten more interesting.

## Datasets:

To find the answers to the two questions mentioned above, I will need datasets that provide the following details -

1. The **outcome** of each Test match ever played - was it a win, loss, tie, draw or no result?
2. For all Test matches which had a decisive result (win/loss), the **margin of victory**. Further, the margin of victory could appear in three forms -
  - Team batting in the fourth innings won by \_\_\_\_ number of runs
  - Team bowling in the fourth innings won by \_\_\_\_ number of wickets

- Team bowling in the third innings won by an innings and \_\_\_\_ number of runs

Here's how I will obtain the datasets.

I will obtain the results of each Test match ever played (there are over 2500 of them now) by the following method.

**Step 1:** I will visit the following page on the leading cricket website ESPNcricinfo using a scraper. The page lists each year in which Test matches have been played.

*List of Test match results by year:*

<https://www.espncricinfo.com/records/list-of-match-results-by-year-307847>

ESPN

cricinfo

Live Scores

Series

Teams

News

Features

Records

Home

2023

Ask Cricinfo

Statsguru

World Cup

World

## Records for Test Matches

1870s

1877

1879

1880s

1880

1881

1882

1883

1884

1885

1886

1887

1888

1889

1890s

1890

1892

1893

1894

1895

1896

1897

1898

1899

1900s

1901

1902

1903

1904

1905

1906

1907

1908

1909

1910s

1910

1911

1912

1913

1914

**Step 2:** I will then use the scraper to visit each of the years linked on the page. The pages for each year will have details of every Test played in that year including:

- whether there was a winner, or the match was tied, or drawn, or there was no result
- if there was a winner, what the margin of victory was

For example, here's a snippet of the page listing all Test matches played in 2023.

## Records in 2023 in Test matches

Match results						
Team 1	Team 2	Winner	Margin	Ground	Match Date	Scorecard
South Africa	India	South Africa	inns & 32 runs	<a href="#">Centurion</a>	Dec 26-28, 2023	<a href="#">Test # 2520</a>
Australia	Pakistan	Australia	79 runs	<a href="#">Melbourne</a>	Dec 26-29, 2023	<a href="#">Test # 2519</a>
Australia	Pakistan	Australia	360 runs	<a href="#">Perth</a>	Dec 14-17, 2023	<a href="#">Test # 2518</a>
Bangladesh	New Zealand	New Zealand	4 wickets	<a href="#">Mirpur</a>	Dec 6-9, 2023	<a href="#">Test # 2517</a>
Bangladesh	New Zealand	Bangladesh	150 runs	<a href="#">Sylhet</a>	Nov 28-Dec 2, 2023	<a href="#">Test # 2516</a>
England	Australia	England	49 runs	<a href="#">The Oval</a>	Jul 27-31, 2023	<a href="#">Test # 2515</a>
Sri Lanka	Pakistan	Pakistan	inns & 222 runs	<a href="#">Colombo (SSC)</a>	Jul 24-27, 2023	<a href="#">Test # 2514</a>
West Indies	India	drawn	-	<a href="#">Port of Spain</a>	Jul 20-24, 2023	<a href="#">Test # 2513</a>

## Evaluation metric:

I will evaluate the outcomes of Test matches according to the following rubric. My article will explain why I have designed the outcome-score rubric in this manner.

Score	Outcome
10	Tied test
9	Win by less than 25 runs, or by 1 wicket
8	Win by 25 to 49 runs, or by 2 wickets
7	Win by 50 to 99 runs, or by 3 to 4 wickets
6	Win by 100 to 149 runs, or by 5 to 6 wickets
5	Win by 150 to 199 runs, or by 7 to 8 wickets
4	Win by 200 runs or more, or by 9 to 10 wickets
3	Win by an innings
2	Draw
1	No result

## How I envision the final product:

The final story will show readers whether Test cricket has gotten more interesting in recent years or not. It will provide a data-driven framework to assess how exciting the longest format of the game has been in different periods since its inception.

#### **Where my aspirations might not work out:**

I would like to include another category in the score-outcome rubric - **exciting drawn matches**. This category would feature draws that were very close - 2 wickets or less to victory, or less than 50 runs to victory.) I would then give these exciting draws 2 points, all other draws 1 point and no results would get 0 points.

However, to do this, I would have to scrape the individual page for each Test, then devise a more complex section of code, with multiple conditions, that checks how far each team was from victory.

Since this would be a considerably more ambitious and complicated project, for only a small change in the rubric, I do not think I will be able to complete the same within the timeline of this story.

However, if I do manage to get the time to do so over the course of the week, I will definitely include exciting draws as a separate category in the rubric.

Additionally, I will look to **speak to multiple cricket experts**, including commentators, cricket writers and former cricketers, and seek their reactions on the results of my analysis. Depending on the time available, I might get fewer responses than I hope for.