**Rules of the game**

One player on each team acts as captain. There are two umpires—one standing behind the bowler’s wicket, the other at the position called square leg about 15 yards from the batsman’s popping crease (see the [figure](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/3617/Location-of-wickets-and-principal-playing-positions-on-cricket-field))—to control the game according to the laws; two scorers record its progress. The object of the game is for one side to score more runs than the other.

At the start of a match, the captain who wins the toss of a coin decides whether his own or the other side shall take first innings—i.e., proceed successively as batsmen, the first two as a pair together, to the wicket and try to make as many runs as possible against the bowling and fielding of their opponents. There are three methods by which an innings is completed: (1) when 10 batsmen have been dismissed (the remaining batsman, having no partner, is declared “not out”); (2) when the captain of the batting side declares his innings closed before all 10 men are out (a captain may decide to declare if his team has a large lead in runs and he fears that the innings will continue so long that the opposing team will not have time to get in their full innings and the game will therefore be a draw); or (3) in a match of one innings a side, when the allotted number of overs expires. Results are recorded by the margin of runs or, if the side batting last passes the other side’s total before all their batsmen have been dismissed, by the number of their wickets (i.e., batsmen still to be dismissed) outstanding.

Matches are decided either by the number of runs scored in one innings each (usually for one-day matches) or on the aggregate of runs made by each side in two innings. Test matches last five days (30 playing hours), other first-class matches from three to four days, and the bulk of club, school, and village matches one day.

The nonbatting side takes up positions in the field. One man is the [bowler](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/76231/bowling) (similar to the pitcher in baseball), another is the [wicketkeeper](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/643128/wicketkeeper) (similar to the catcher), and the remaining nine are positioned as the captain or the bowler directs (see the [figure](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/3617/Location-of-wickets-and-principal-playing-positions-on-cricket-field)). The first batsman (the striker) guards his wicket by standing with at least one foot behind the popping crease. His partner (the nonstriker) waits behind the popping crease at the bowler’s end. The bowler tries to hit the batsman’s wicket or to[dismiss](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/142911/cricket/214754/Methods-of-dismissal) him in other ways.

**RUNS**

The batsman tries to keep the bowler from hitting the wicket, while also trying to hit the ball sufficiently hard to score a run, i.e., enable him to run to the other end of the pitch before any fieldsman can pick up the ball and throw it to either wicket to knock off the bails. If the wicket is broken, either by a thrown ball or by the wicketkeeper or bowler with ball in hand, before either batsman is in his ground, the batsman is dismissed. The striker does not have to run after he has hit the ball, nor does it count in any way if he misses the ball or if his body is struck by it. But if he gets a good hit and thinks he can score a run, he races for the opposite wicket and his partner runs toward him. When each has made good his ground by touching his bat beyond the popping crease at the opposite end, one run is recorded to the striker; if there is time, each will run back for a second or more runs, crossing again. If an even number of runs is scored, the striker will receive the next ball; if an odd number, then the nonstriker will be at the wicket opposite the bowler and will face the next ball. Any runs thus made count to the batsman, otherwise they are extras. When a ball from a hit or any of the extras mentioned below goes as far as the boundary, the runners stop and four runs are scored. If the batsman hits the ball [full pitch](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/221848/full-pitch) over the boundary (on the fly), he scores six runs.

**EXTRAS**

Only runs scored from the bat count to the batsman, but to the side’s score may be added the following extras: (1) byes (when a ball from the bowler passes the wicket without being touched by the bat and the batsmen are able to make good a run); (2) leg byes (when in similar circumstances the ball has touched any part of the batsman’s body except his hand); (3) wides (when a ball passes out of reach of the striker); (4) no balls (improperly bowled balls; for a fair delivery the ball must be bowled, not thrown, the arm neither bent nor jerked, and in the delivery stride some part of the bowler’s front foot must be behind or covering the popping crease), off which a batsman cannot be out (except as noted under [Methods of dismissal](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/142911/cricket/214754/Methods-of-dismissal) below) and which, apprised in time by the umpire’s cry of “no ball,” he may try to hit.

**OVERS**

When a bowler has bowled six balls (occasionally, eight balls), not counting wides and no balls, he has completed an over. The batsmen remain where they are and a new over is begun by a different bowler at the opposite wicket, with a corresponding adjustment of the positions of the players in the field. If a bowler delivers a complete over without a run being scored from the bat (even though the opponents may have scored extras by means of byes or leg byes), he has achieved a [maiden over](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/358427/maiden-over). In one-day cricket, no bowler is allowed to bowl more than 10 overs in a 50-over match.