



CHANGES TO THE LAW CONCERNING CRICKET BATS A GUIDE FOR RETAILERS

Why does cricket need a new Law for bats?

The Marylebone Cricket Club (M.C.C.), as Guardian of the Laws of Cricket, has a duty to maintain the traditional balance between the bat and the ball. In recent years, it has been evident that the bat is starting to dominate. Furthermore, with the developments in technology and materials, a few cricket bats have appeared on the market with potential performance enhancing properties. M.C.C. believes that, if the cricket bat becomes too powerful, it will be detrimental to the sport.

Consequently, in May 2008, the M.C.C. membership approved the introduction of a new version of Law 6, together with a newly created Appendix E. The Law, which lays down details about the bat, was written following extended discussions with many bat manufacturers, willow growers and the I.C.C.

The new Law comes into effect on 1st October 2008.

What is the new law?

The new Law 6 is far more prescriptive than the previous version. Its purpose is to maintain the traditional construction and performance of cricket bats and to restrict the introduction of potentially performance enhancing materials. For the first time in Law, the handle is defined, the volume of the handle's constituent parts has been controlled and the thickness of protective coverings has been limited. However, bats made in the "traditional" way should not be affected by the new Law.

One important aspect of the new Law 6 is the grading of cricket bats. This grading system defines the differences between pure top-quality bats at Grade A and the lower level entry bats at Grade C. The decision about which grades of bat are to be used at different levels of cricket is to be made by the National Governing Bodies.

Bats which do not conform to any of Grades A, B or C are regarded as below Grade C. They may be used only by special regulation or in special forms of the game played outside the Laws.

All grades of bat will be permitted in almost all amateur cricket although there maybe some limitations at the highest levels-Minor Counties and possibly Premier Leagues. In professional cricket, only Grade A bats may be used.

A full version of the new Law 6 can be obtained from the M.C.C. Laws department on +44 207 616 8751 or online at <http://www.lords.org/laws-and-spirit/>

What is the grading system?

The grading system was brought in at the request of the manufacturers. It is designed principally to keep the highest quality bats (Grade A) as pure as possible whilst allowing manufacturers to incorporate into lower grades (B and C) extra protective features to offset the use of less good materials for lower priced bats. It is not permitted to include potentially performance enhancing materials in any bat. Every effort was made to write a Law for one type of bat but it was simply not possible.

Toe and side inserts are permitted for Grades B and C, but not for Grade A. This decision was taken in consultation with the manufacturers. The intention is to reduce the chance of bats in lower grades breaking. This is important, since Grade B bats are likely to be used throughout most amateur. M.C.C. was anxious that they should be as serviceable as possible.

Grade C bats may be fully wrapped in cloth to mask poorer quality willow. Many junior and lower quality bats use such cloth and it is a vital way of keeping the costs of bats reasonable.

The Grades are not necessarily reflective of the willow quality although it is expected that manufacturers will use the better willow in Grade A bats.

The following table provides a guide of how the Grades differ: Table to show the various characteristics of Grade A, B and C bats.

Bat Characteristic	Grade A	Grade B	Grade C
10% or less materials other than cane, wood and twine in the handle	✓	✓	✓
More than 10% but not more than 20% materials other than cane, wood and twine in the handle	✗	✗	✓
More than 20% materials other than cane, wood and twine in the handle	✗	✗	✗
Anti-Scuff fitted (must not cause unacceptable damage to the ball)	✓	✓	✓
Blade covered with cloth	✗	✗	✓
Use of non-solid material (e.g. varnish) to improve resistance to moisture and mask natural blemishes.	✓	✓	✓
Toe insert	✗	✓	✓
Side inserts	✗	✓	✓

How do I know which bat is which grade?

M.C.C. has consulted with cricket bat manufacturers to establish a self-certification process for the grading of bats. The onus will be on them to grade each bat accordingly.

This will mean that, from 1st October 2008, every cricket bat distributed to retail outlets should bear a sticker or brand denoting the bat's Grade. This proof of Grade will be applied by the manufacturer.

A retailer who has any doubt over the legality of a bat is strongly advised to contact the Laws department at M.C.C. on +44 20 7616 8751.

What if I have a stock of bats which are not graded?

M.C.C. appreciates that retailers will have a stock of ungraded bats and acknowledges that there will be a phase-out period involved with the establishment of the new Law. It is inevitable that some ungraded bats will be sold after the 1st of October 2008. The key point is that all bats you receive after the 1st October 2008 should be graded according to the Laws of cricket.

Can I grade the bats myself?

It is understood that retailers may wish to have all their bats graded to show that they conform to the new Law. They may ask manufacturers for stickers or brands and themselves apply these to their legal bats. Retailers must, however, follow the manufacturers' guidelines strictly to ensure that bats are correctly graded.

What if some of the bats I have in stock now will be illegal under the new Law?

These may be sold up until 30 April 2009. It should be made clear to the purchaser that they do not conform to the new Law but there is a special dispensation allowing them to be used till the end of their natural lives. This dispensation also applies to any bat, previously purchased, which a customer might try to return as not conforming to the new Law.

The new Law does not mean that all bats previously purchased or still in stock are illegal. In fact, the great majority of bats currently on the market are legal and will remain legal when the new Law comes into force in October 2008.

What about Junior bats?

The new Law applies to bats of all sizes. An exception for bats of size 6 or less refers only to the length of the handle.

What if I have other questions?

All questions can be directed to the Laws department at M.C.C. Please e-mail laws@mcc.org.uk or telephone +44 20 7616 8751.