

# CHOOSING CRICKETING



## EQUIPMENT:

### GLOVES, PADS, GROIN GUARD (box), THIGH PAD:

- These items mostly come in 3 standard sizes. Youth, Boys, Men  
Different brands and models do however differ in size and fit, and it is always best to be a “walk-in” buyer where you/your child can fit the equipment.

Do not buy equipment too big and with the attitude of “They will grow into it”. Equipment that does not fit properly (too big and too small) will be uncomfortable, and will have a negative impact on comfort, and therefore on technique and confidence of the player – your child.

Examples:

### GLOVES:





Things to look out for: Gloves need to give proper protection. Look for gloves with thick enough padding and soft palm inners.

Sausage style gloves vs Split Finger Gloves:

Split Finger gloves are more comfortable and offer more finger movement than Sausage style gloves. They usually carry slightly more padding than Sausage style gloves, but are more expensive.

### **PADS:**

Choose pads that are light, comfortable and FIT WELL. Pads that are loose will hamper a batsman immensely, and will impede free movement and running between the wickets. For juniors (primary school) you do not need a lot of protection (padding thickness) as the balls are still light and the bowlers on average not that quick. Choose a light, comfortable pad that fits well. A batsman must have no difficulty on running with pads on – that is they major thing to look for when buying pads. Be careful of pads that are stiff and too long.

Choose a pad that has good straps, thick straps. Thin straps will cut into the batsman's legs and will be uncomfortable.

High Density foam pads are strong, light and offer great protection, but are expensive.



Bellingham & Smith Men's Volcano  
Batting Pads  
**R400.00**



Kookaburra Kahuna Pro 400 Boys  
Batting Pad  
**R470.00**



Bellingham & Smith Youth Fireball  
Batting Pads  
**R680.00**



New Balance DC 580 Youth Batting  
Pads - Right Hand  
**R1,100.00**

## GROIN GUARD AND THIGH PADS:

Groin guards are vital!! Choose a groin guard that fits well!! It is an inexpensive item, and rather buy one every now-and-again and make sure that the “vitals” are protected ☺

 <p>A white, teardrop-shaped abdominal guard with a padded interior and a thin white border. A small circular logo with a checkmark is in the bottom left corner.</p> <p>Bellingham &amp; Smith Men's Abdominal Guard <b>R45.00</b></p>	 <p>A white, teardrop-shaped abdominal guard with a green border and a small black logo at the top. A small circular logo with a checkmark is in the bottom left corner.</p> <p>Kookaburra Youth Player Protection Abdo Guard <b>R68.00</b></p>
 <p>A black and silver, teardrop-shaped groin guard with a mesh-like texture and the 'SHOCK DOCTOR' logo at the top. A small circular logo with a checkmark is in the bottom left corner.</p> <p>Shock Doctor Ultra Carbon Flex Cup <b>R330.00</b></p>	 <p>A white, rectangular thigh guard with orange borders and black straps. It features a black silhouette of a kookaburra and the 'ANTX PROTECTION' logo. A small circular logo with a checkmark is in the bottom left corner.</p> <p>Kookaburra Boys Cricket Thigh Guard <b>R195.00</b></p>

 <p>Gunn &amp; Moore 909 Thigh Guard</p> <p><b>R200.00</b></p>	 <p>Aero Junior Cricket Stripper Pants - Right-handed</p> <p><b>R700.00</b></p>
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**HELMETS:**

If possible, buy your child a helmet. While the school will probably have kit helmets, sharing a helmet is not great for hygiene, and helmets might not fit well and be uncomfortable. By batting with a well-fitting helmet, the batsman will have more confidence about not getting hurt.

Choose a helmet that fits the head well, and where the grill can be adjusted. The difference between the fibreglass and moulded foam helmets are just weight – and price of course. Both offer excellent protection.

 <p>Bellingham &amp; Smith Cricket Helmet - Small</p> <p><b>R390.00</b></p>	 <p>Bellingham &amp; Smith Moulded Cricket Helmet</p> <p><b>R550.00</b></p>
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## SHOES/BOOTS:

Cricket (studded/spiked) shoes are not essential, but do offer an advantage to grip. I would suggest that you DO NOT buy a spiked shoe, as a lot of our cricket is played on synthetic pitches where spikes are not allowed. Our nets are also cement slabs, and spikes will definitely not work well there. Buy a studded shoe – it will be more than enough to grip.



## BATS:

The most expensive (arguably) and important part of most cricketer's kit will be his bat. Please look out for the following things when you choose a bat for your child:

- LENGTH (SIZE)

BAT SIZE	APPROX. AGE	HEIGHT OF BATSMAN	BAT LENGTH	BAT WIDTH
1	4-5 Years Old	Up to 4ft 3inches	64.1cm	REGULATION WIDTH
2	6-7 Years Old	4ft 3" - 4ft 6"	70.4cm	
3	8-9 Years Old	4ft 6" - 4ft 9"	73.0cm	
4	9-10 Years Old	4ft 9" - 4ft 11"	75.5cm	
5	10-11 Years Old	4ft 11" - 5ft 2"	78.1cm	
6	11-13 Years Old	5ft 2" - 5ft 5"	80.6cm	
HARROW	12-14 Years Old	5ft 5" - 5ft 8"	83.1cm	

FULL SIZE (Short Handle)	15+ Years Old	5ft 8" - 6ft 3"	85.cm	
FULL SIZE (Long Handle/Blade)	15+Years Old	6ft 3" and above	86.8cm	

Please also note that bats weights vary a lot. If possible, let your child feel the bat before buying. A bat should be comfortable to pick up, and should not be too heavy.

Avoid bats that are painted (especially on the back)!! This will hide flaws in the Willow!!

### THE PICK-UP

When you are trying a cricket bat, position yourself in your normal stance as you would at the crease. Then simply pick the cricket bat up as you would as if the bowler was about to deliver the ball. When you pick the cricket bat up, note how the bat feels in your hands, i.e. is it light? Is it heavy? Where is the balance of the bow? Is it a lower middle or a higher middle? More generally can you hold the cricket bat in one hand, when stretched out in front of you?

This has implications on your choice of cricket bat as you may want a heavier cricket bat for striking that feels like it has a comparatively light pick up. It is unlikely for instance that you would want to follow the great Sachin Tendulkar by choosing a 3lb plus cricket bat. Unless you have strong arms and wrists, your speed to pick-up and follow through may become too slow with such heavy cricket bats.

When trying out cricket bats, it would be advisable foy you to wear a pair of batting gloves. That way you gain a reliable insight into how the cricket bat actually feels in your hands. It would also be advisable for you to practice some shots without a ball, to see if you can use the bat effectively.

### **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING DESIGN FEATURES WHEN SELECTING CRICKET BATS:**

#### COVERED OR UNCOVERED FACE

The uncovered look means that the grain of the cricket bat is showing, whereas the covered look means that the blade of the bat is not immediately showing [although you may be able to see the blade through transparent protective coating]. Each of the above will appear differently on cricket bats, but most importantly of all, you should note that the bat's performance will not be hindered. Protective coating [anti-scuff] is, on balance, advised in most cases in order to add maximise protection to the face of the cricket bat. This should prevent additional moisture being absorbed into the wood, as well as to help bind surface cracks together.

#### THE NUMBER OF GRAINS ON THE BAT

There are many views surrounding grains on a cricket bat. Generally speaking though, the number of grains on a cricket bat is something that can be left to the discretion of the individual. The number of grains will often differ from bat to bat. A cricket bat between 6 and 12 grains is a good indicator of quality willow. Cricket bats with 6 grains, for example, are likely to be slightly softer than 10-12 grains and therefore take longer to knock-in and reach optimal performance initially. However, please note there are some extremely good premium range bats with lower grains.

## WILLOW GRADE

### Grade 1+ [A]

highest quality of English willow, historically used for the manufacturer's sponsored players, but increasingly being rolled-out to top end bats for the public across specialist stores. The grains are straight and even, the wood unbleached and there should be minimal to no marking or discolouration on the bat face.

### Grade 1 - G1 [A]

top quality English Willow. Good straight grain structure and unbleached with minimal marking or discolouration in the face.

### Grade 2 - G2 [B]

Unbleached English Willow with some irregular grain patterns and some blemishes/colouring across the blade.

### Grade 3 - G3 [C]

Usually unbleached English Willow with irregular grain pattern and some marking and discolouration in the blade.

### Grade 4 - G4

English Willow usually bleached and often non oil with a covering to the face of the bat.

## THE SHAPE, SIZE AND BOW OF THE CRICKET BAT

This is normally a matter of personal preference. Some players prefer cricket bats with a large bow where as others don't. Increasingly, professional players' preference for a larger bow and thicker edges to better meet the rigors of the modern game is being reflected in the designs available to the general public. The size of the bow can have an impact on the pick-up of the cricket bat, as an increased bow can often result in the cricket bat having a heavier pick up. Some bows are higher or lower down the bat depending on batsmen's hitting style, or to reflect the pitches which you play on. A low bouncing wicket may suit a lower bow compared to the dry climate and bouncy.

## A TOE GUARD

The toe on all cricket bats can be vulnerable to breakages. It can be better prevented through fitting a toe guard. Many cricket bats now come with a toe guard already attached. A cricket bat is designed to strike the ball 6-8 inches up from the toe, in the centre of the blade. When batsmen face "Yorker" deliveries at the toe end, the impact of a moving bat meeting the speed of the ball can be very high, thereby causing the wood to dent or split. As a result it would be advisable to fit a toe guard to reduce the risk of breakage.

## PREPARATION AND MAINTENANCE

Preparation and maintenance is the key to a long bat life. Once you've purchased your cricket bat, the next step is to prepare it for action and then maintain it.

Preparation comes in two phases: (1) Oiling and (2) Knocking it in.

### Part 1: Oiling Your Cricket Bat

- Using a soft rag, apply a light coat of oil to the Face, Edges, Toe and Back of the cricket bat. AVOID getting oil on the splice of the bat as it may undermine the glue holding the handle and blade of the bat together!
- Avoid over oiling the cricket bat.
- After the coat of oil has been applied, leave the cricket bat in a horizontal position to dry over night.
- On the next day, apply a second coat, following the same directions as the first one. Leave to dry.
- After oiling the cricket bat, the next phase begins - Knocking In
- Try and oil your bat regularly to keep the fibres of the wood supple and prevent the face of the cricket bat cracking.

If applying anti-scuff  oil only once, very lightly.

A number of cricket bat manufacturers indicate that over half of the bats sent back to them for repair, have not been sufficiently oiled or have in turn been over oiled. A balance needs to be struck, with a light coating as the main instruction provided by bat manufacturers.

If the cricket bat you have just purchased has an anti-scruff cover, the face will not need oiling. However the back of the cricket bat will need oiling.

### PART 2: KNOCKING YOUR BAT IN:

After purchase, all cricket bats should be knocked in to prepare them for use in competitive matches. The edges, toe and blade of the bat all need to be sufficiently knocked in, as these areas face large amounts of impact from the cricket ball, therefore making them vulnerable to breakages and damage. Knocking your cricket bat in is an effective way of ensuring that the bat has been compacted enough to prevent impact damage. As the knocking in process is a very important aspect of preparing your cricket bat for action, it cannot be rushed and must be done carefully. Knocking your cricket bat in is effectively ensuring that the wood of the bat is compact as the fibres are compressed and knitted together. Consider the following steps when knocking in:

- Using a hardwood bat mallet, gently strike the face and the edges of the cricket bat, simulating what the ball would do in a competitive game situation.
- Repeat the above on multiple occasions, gradually increasing the power. Use the same method as above to round the edges of the cricket bat, but be careful. Avoid using too much power to begin with as this could result in unnecessary damage. Note: Do not hit the edge directly with the mallet, gradually round the cricket bat off. It is important to knock the edges of the bat in as they can often be vulnerable to damage during competitive matches and net play.

- After 2-3 Hours of knocking the cricket bat in, you can take it to the nets and hit some short catches using an old ball. If seam marks or small indentations appear on the face of the cricket bat, it would be necessary to return to the first step.
- After continuing to knock the cricket bat in and completing some close catching sessions, you could try the bat in your normal net practice.
- After a few net sessions, your cricket bat should be ready to use in a competitive match.

THE EXAMPLES AND PRICES I INCLUDED WERE ALL TAKEN FROM SPORTSMAN'S WAREHOUSE. MR PRICE SPORT HAS SOME EXCELLENT EQUIPMENT AT GOOD PRICES AS WELL.

I WOULD HOWEVER SUGGEST THAT YOU JOIN THE "**MK HANDCRAFTED**" PAGE ON FACEBOOK. IT IS A SMALL COMPANY IN CAPE TOWN THAT MAKES SOME OF THE BEST BATS, AND NOW SELLS AN AMAZING RANGE OF EQUIPMENT AS WELL. THEY DO REPAIRS, CUSTOM BAT FITTINGS AND SERVICE A LARGE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS' BATS. I DO NOT HAVE ANY AFFILIATION WITH THEM, BUT SUGGEST THAT YOU CONSIDER THEM – THEIR PRODUCTS ARE WELL PRICED AND OF GREAT QUALITY.