

# **LEVEL-O CERTIFICATE COURSE IN CRICKET COACHING**

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## **Lecture 39: OFF-CUTTER & LEG-CUTTER**

Alright, everyone, as we progress in our session on pace bowling, we now turn our attention to another crucial aspect: the stock deliveries known as cutters. Having already explored the techniques and development of inswing and outswing, we'll now delve into the world of off-cutters and leg-cutters. These are essential variations that a fast bowler can employ strategically during a match.

Just like swing bowling, cutters serve as valuable weapons in a fast bowler's arsenal. When conventional pace bowling isn't yielding the desired results, or when the pitch conditions offer opportunities for deviation, cutters can be highly effective. For instance, if the pitch has cracks, an off-cutter or leg-cutter bowled to exploit these imperfections can produce significant variation in bounce and direction, potentially leading to wickets. Similarly, even on surfaces conducive to batting, a well-executed cutter can disrupt a set batsman's rhythm and induce a false shot due to the change in pace and subtle movement.

Let's first understand the off-cutter. The grip for an off-cutter is specific. You begin with a basic bowling grip, then position your index finger just beside the seam while the middle finger rests on the leather. The thumb will be underneath the ball, along the seam. Now, to impart the off-cut movement, you need to turn the ball slightly in your hand just before release. This involves rotating your wrist towards the left side of a right-handed batter. The back of your palm will tend to face towards backward square leg at the point of release. The ball is typically released slightly away from the head to maximise the angle of deviation. The fundamental principle of an off-cutter is that after pitching, the ball will move away from the off-stump towards the batsman. This movement can be particularly pronounced if the ball hits a crack on the pitch. However, even without such assistance, the off-cutter's change of pace can be enough to deceive the batsman, leading to mistimed shots and potential dismissals. Practising the off-cutter involves the same progression we used for swing bowling: starting with one-step, then three-step, followed by walk-and-bowl and run-and-bowl drills, all while focusing on maintaining the correct grip and achieving the desired wrist rotation at release. It's generally recommended that bowlers develop a solid foundation in their regular pace bowling before learning to bowl cutters.

Now, let's discuss the leg-cutter. A leg-cutter is bowled to make the ball move from the leg-stump side towards the off-stump after pitching. Like the off-cutter, it can be particularly effective on cracked pitches or as a variation to disrupt a batsman's comfortable innings. The grip for a leg-cutter involves having both the index and middle fingers positioned on either side of the seam, with the middle finger very close to the seam and the index finger on the leather. The thumb will be underneath the ball, resting on the seam. To bowl a leg-cutter to a right-handed batsman, you need to turn your wrist downwards and slightly towards the leg side at the moment of release. Your palm will tend to face towards backward. The release point is also typically slightly away from the head to maximise the angle. The leg-cutter is generally considered a more challenging technique to master than the off-cutter and requires dedicated practice. The development of the action follows the same staged approach: one-step, three-step, walk-and-bowl, and run-and-bowl, with a strong emphasis on the correct wrist movement at release. Similar to the off-cutter, it's usually taught after a bowler has established good control over their basic pace bowling. Depending on a bowler's natural action and tendencies, a coach might decide to teach the off-cutter or the leg-cutter first. For instance, a bowler with a higher arm action might find the leg-cutter more natural initially. The introduction of these cutter variations adds significant depth to a pace bowler's skill set, making them a more versatile and unpredictable threat to batsmen.

In essence, both off-cutters and leg-cutters are valuable stock deliveries that complement the swing bowling techniques we've already discussed. They offer variations in pace and movement that can be crucial in different match situations. The key to mastering these deliveries lies in understanding the correct grip, practising the specific wrist action at release, and integrating them into the bowling action through progressive drills. It's also important for coaches to introduce these variations at the right stage of a bowler's development, ensuring they have a solid foundation in basic pace bowling first. By adding in-swing, out-swing, off-cutters, and leg-cutters to their repertoire, a pace bowler becomes a much more complete and challenging proposition for any batsman.