

LEVEL-O CERTIFICATE COURSE IN CRICKET COACHING

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Lecture 42: Base Up and Two-Hand Pick Up.

The "base up" technique in cricket fielding is more than just a momentary stance; it's a dynamic state of readiness that underpins a fielder's ability to react swiftly and effectively to the ball once it departs the bowler's hand. It's a preparatory movement, finely tuned to the rhythm of the bowler's delivery stride, particularly during the crucial loading phase. The timing of this initiation is paramount. Too early, and the fielder risks becoming unbalanced or telegraphing their intended movement. Too late, and the precious milliseconds needed for a quick reaction are lost. Ideally, the fielder's subtle forward steps should harmonise with the bowler's action, almost as if they are mirroring the build-up of energy in the delivery. Observing the bowler's cues – the angle of their approach, the lift of their arms, and even subtle shifts in the batsman's stance – can provide a fielder with invaluable pre-information, allowing for a more informed and anticipatory base up. These aren't large, bounding strides, but rather controlled, almost spring-like movements that load the muscles in the legs and core, preparing them for an explosive reaction in any direction.

The stance adopted during the base-up is equally critical. A foundation of stability and agility is achieved with the feet positioned roughly shoulder-width apart. This spacing provides a balanced platform, facilitating rapid lateral movement without compromising the ability to change direction or maintain footing. The knees should be flexed, adopting an athletic posture that lowers the body's centre of gravity. This lower stance enhances agility and the capacity to absorb impact when stopping or diving for the ball. The distribution of weight should favour the balls of the feet, avoiding a flat-footed or overly forward or backwards lean, which could impede the quick initiation of movement. The hands, held slightly forward in a relaxed "cup" shape, serve as the primary receptors for the ball, offering a larger and more yielding surface for a clean catch. Maintaining a steady gaze is non-negotiable. The eyes should track the bowler during their run-up and

then seamlessly shift focus to the batsman's bat, anticipating the moment of contact. The head should remain as still as possible to aid in this visual tracking and maintain overall balance.

The purpose of the base is multifaceted. Primarily, it overcomes the inertia of a static position, allowing the fielder to generate the initial momentum needed for a quick dash towards the ball. This pre-movement essentially primes the body for action, reducing the reaction time. Furthermore, the balanced and athletic stance inherent in the base-up contributes to improved overall balance, a crucial element for executing sharp turns, sudden stops, and accurate throws. An astute fielder also leverages the base to incorporate anticipation. By reading the game – understanding the batsman's preferred shots, the bowler's tendencies, the pitch's behaviour, and the overall tactical situation – a fielder can subtly adjust their base-up position or be mentally prepared to move in a specific direction even before the ball is struck. This proactive approach, from a well-executed base-up, can distinguish between a routine stop and a brilliant save.

Moving on to the "two-hand pickup," this technique is a cornerstone of secure and efficient ground fielding, particularly when dealing with balls travelling along the turf. It prioritises certainty in gathering the ball and sets the stage for a swift and accurate throw. The initial approach to the ball is paramount. For a right-handed thrower, aligning the back foot with the anticipated line of the ball is the first key movement. This establishes the correct body orientation for a balanced pickup. The front foot then moves towards the point of interception, positioning the fielder to comfortably lower their body and collect the ball in front. This approach should be controlled, allowing for adjustments if the ball deviates from its initial trajectory.

The actual pickup involves a deliberate lowering of the body by bending both knees. This action brings the hands closer to the ground and provides a stable platform for collecting the ball. The posture adopted is akin to sitting, ensuring the fielder's body is behind the line of the ball, minimising the risk of it passing by. While lowering the body, maintaining a relatively straight back is important for balance and for generating power in the subsequent throw. Hunching over can compromise both stability and throwing efficiency. The hands play a crucial role, forming a "cup" shape with fingers slightly spread and palms facing upward. This two-handed approach offers a larger and softer target, significantly increasing the likelihood of a clean catch and reducing the chances of the ball spilling. The concept of "soft hands" is vital here; the hands should yield slightly

upon contact with the ball, absorbing its momentum and preventing it from bouncing out of the grasp.

The legs also serve as a vital secondary line of defence. Particularly, the front leg, positioned ahead of the body, can act as a barrier if the ball is misjudged or takes an unexpected bounce just before reaching the hands. This prevents the often-costly error of the ball going through the fielder's legs. Once the ball is securely gathered in the two-handed cup, the fielder initiates an upward movement, bringing the ball smoothly towards their throwing arm. Throughout the pickup and this transition, maintaining balance is crucial. A stable base allows for a more controlled and powerful throw. The two-hand pickup, when executed correctly, facilitates a faster and more controlled transition to the throwing action, leveraging any momentum gathered while approaching the ball. It provides a more reliable method for collecting the ball, especially on uneven surfaces where a one-handed attempt might be riskier. Ultimately, mastering this fundamental technique builds a fielder's confidence, encouraging them to be more proactive and attack the ball with assurance.