Playing Conditions 2026 - Divisions 1 & below

1. Playing Conditions

1.1 The conduct of all matches will be governed by The Laws of Cricket (2017 Code 3rd Edition - 2022) and all relevant ECB Regulations and guidelines, except as stated otherwise in these rules.

1.2 In Divisions 1 to 2B, all teams will play each other home and away. Matches shall be one innings each, played in accordance with the match rules specified in this handbook, starting at page 37.

1.3 In Divisions 3A to 6B all teams will play each other home and away. Matches shall be one innings each, played in accordance with the match rules specified in this handbook, starting at page 43.

1.4 In the Regional Divisions all teams will play each other home and away (other than in Division 15 where teams will play each other 3 times). Matches shall be one innings each, played in accordance with the match rules specified in this handbook, starting at page 49.

2. Umpires and Scorers

2.1 Each club with a team in Divisions 1 to 6B is required to register with the League every umpire that it considers to be attached to the club. The categories to be used are as follows:

- Panel: a qualified umpire who has been supplied to the League Umpires Panel.
- Qualified: an umpire not on the League Umpires Panel who is a member of the ECB ACO, with a valid DBS, who has completed both the ECB Umpiring Course and the ECB Umpire Development Course or their equivalents.
- Dispensation granted: an umpire who has received dispensation from the League on the grounds that he/she is a long-standing experienced umpire. A sub-committee will review and agree any dispensation, which is granted annually and does not carry over to subsequent seasons.
- Club Umpire: any other umpire which the club expects to use to cover absence of a qualified umpire, or one who has been granted dispensation, due to illness, injury or holiday.

2.2 ***Divisions 1 – 2B:***

Umpires for matches will be appointed from a panel by an appropriate sub-committee, subject to availability. Umpires will be paid by the League and each club will be charged for the cost of its umpire fees. The level and method of reimbursement will be determined from time to time by the League Executive Committee.

In the event of cancellation umpires should be notified no later than 2 hours before the scheduled start time. If one or both umpires arrive at the ground a reduced fee will be payable. In the event of a cancellation, the HOME club is responsible for contacting BOTH umpires.

If only one panel umpire is appointed to a match, he/she shall be entitled to receive an additional fee.

2.3 **Provision of panel umpires:**

All teams playing in Divisions 2B and above (note this is per Team not Club) are required to provide a Qualified umpire to the League Umpires Panel. They should make themselves available to umpire through the Who's the Umpire (WTU) system for a minimum of 9 games in the season.

Failure to meet this requirement will result in a 5-point penalty for each game below the minimum requirement that the team is able to provide umpire availability for. The penalty will be applied on a weekly basis at the point in the season where it is clear that the team will be unable to meet the minimum requirement. Note that the required minimum number of games can be covered by more than one suitably qualified umpire that is associated with the relevant team.

2.4 **Insufficient panel umpires:**

If there is only one appointed panel umpire to a match in either Div 2A or 2B, the home club will be notified in advance by the panel coordinator and must provide a qualified umpire for the match, who will take a full part in the match.

If there are no appointed panel umpires to a match in either Div 2A or 2B, both clubs will be notified in advance by the panel coordinator and must each provide a qualified umpire for the match.

Failure to meet this requirement will result in a 5-point penalty for each match. The provision of qualified umpires to cover for insufficient panel umpires must take precedent to providing qualified umpires in lower divisions.

2.5 ***Divisions 3A – 6B:***

Clubs must provide for every match, other than exceptionally (e.g., holidays or illness) either a qualified umpire or one who has been granted dispensation. Failure to meet this requirement will result in a 5-point penalty for each match.

2.6 **Umpires' positions:**

If there is only one non-playing umpire, he/she shall stand at the bowler's end throughout the match. If a non-qualified umpire is provided to stand with a panel umpire in Div 2A or 2B then he/she shall stand at the striker's end only.

2.7 **Scorers**

In Divisions 1-2B each club is required to register with the League a minimum of one scorer who either:

- Has completed the ECB Online Scoring Course and is a full member of the ECB ACO; or
- Has received dispensation from the League on the grounds that the club has a long-standing and experienced scorer. A League sub-committee will agree any dispensation on this basis. It is expected that the scorer(s) so registered will be appointed in all matches other than, exceptionally, in the case of holidays or illness. Failure to provide a competent scorer for the duration of matches in Divisions 1-2B will result in a 5-point penalty.

2.8 **Penalties**

2.8.1 The penalties of 5 points (umpires & scorers) will not be applied as follows:

- In 2.4 where the club has supplied at least as many umpires as it has teams playing in Divisions 2B and above to the Umpires Panel

- In 2.5 where the club has supplied at least as many umpires as it has teams playing in Divisions 6B and above to the Umpires Panel or has supplied a qualified umpire to a match as required in 2.4, and
- In 2.7 where the registered scorer is also a registered umpire and that umpire is a member of the Umpires Panel.

2.8.2 It is expected that in cases where a club is able to claim exemption from the penalty of 5 points that it will make every effort to provide, in all matches, an umpire or scorer as applicable for the benefit of the participants.

2.8.3 It is the responsibility of every club to ensure that its umpires and scorers are correctly registered on the League website and a claim for exemption under 2.8 will be determined from those registration details.

3. Cancellation

3.1 In Divisions 1 to 2B no game shall be cancelled without the explicit agreement of at least one of the appointed umpires, or a deputy from the Umpires Panel nominated either by one of the appointed umpires or the Umpires Co-ordinator. An umpire attending to inspect the ground may request reasonable travelling expenses not exceeding £10 from the home club, which will be payable as specified in 2.2 above.

3.2 For all other divisions, prior to the toss the home team is the ground authority for all games and is the sole arbiter as to whether or not the ground is fit for play.

4. Ground and Covers

4.1 Up to one hour before the scheduled start time covers shall be used at the discretion of the home club and its groundsman to protect the pitch.

4.2 When one hour or less remains before the scheduled start time and either panel umpires or non-playing umpires have been appointed, the umpires shall be responsible for decisions concerning the fitness of the ground for play and the use of covers.

4.3 Covering of pitches and bowlers' run-ups shall be allowed after play has commenced. Where only partial covers are available, to ensure play can resume as quickly as possible, bowlers' run-ups shall be covered up to a distance not exceeding five feet in front of the popping crease.

5. Pitches

5.1 Grounds on which matches are to be played shall be listed in the handbook. Alternative grounds may be used, providing the visiting team and umpires are advised of the change before 8pm on the Thursday prior to the date of the match, and formal acknowledgement of the change obtained from an officer of the opposing club and the umpires (where appropriate).

5.2 No game shall be switched to a ground (or pitch) other than the one on which the game is scheduled and/or is normally used by the home team, after 8pm on the Thursday prior to the date of the match. Exceptional circumstances may apply, if a late change of ground is approved by the League.

5.3 Artificial pitches may be only be used in games in Divisions 10 and below of the Regional Divisions.

6. Team Sheets

Captains must pass team sheets to the umpires prior to the toss taking place. Team sheets will contain the names of players and, if applicable, identify all players aged under 20 so that all applicable ECB Regulations with respect to young players can be monitored.

7. Number of Players

Both teams are required to field a minimum of 8 players during both innings to constitute a league match. Subject to the following conditions, any team that does not have at least 8 players available and at the ground after 1 hour of actual playing time, shall be deemed not to have fulfilled the fixture:

- In matches where panel umpires are appointed, should there be fewer than 8 players present at the scheduled start time, the umpires shall decide whether the game shall start or if there is to be a concession.
- In all other matches, where both captains agree, a match may start, even though the batting side has fewer than 8 players at the ground, providing missing players, with names on the team sheet, are expected to arrive.
- In all matches, there will be a general allowance that games may start up to 15 minutes after the scheduled start time, at the request of either or both captains, to take account of traffic or similar problems and there shall be no reduction in overs on account of this allowance. For clarity, beyond these 15 minutes, there shall be no further delay to the start, regardless of the number of players available to either team.

8. Balls

8.1 All league fixtures will be played with cricket balls that have been approved by the League (see inside back cover).

8.2 One new ball will be used from the commencement of each innings. New balls are to be supplied by the home club.

8.3 Home clubs must ensure that at least two spare new balls (one for use in each innings if required), of the correct make and grade and a selection of suitable spare balls of varying ages and use are available to the umpires prior to the start of the match. The umpires may delay the start of a match if suitable spare balls are not provided.

9. Marking

9.1 For matches played in Divisions 1 to 2B, captains will mark umpires' performance using the facility on Who's The Umpire in accordance with the rules set out within this handbook. Umpires will mark the pitch, team discipline and facilities as well as reporting any instances of misconduct.

9.2 For matches played in Divisions 3A and below, captains will mark the facilities using the facility on the Play-Cricket website and report any instances of misconduct requiring a disciplinary report.

10. Discipline & Disciplinary Points

10.1 The standard HPCL Disciplinary rules will apply.

10.2 Law 42 will apply except that when a Level 1 or Level 2 offence has been committed by a member of the batting side, Laws 42.2.2 and 42.3.2 shall be replaced by 'Together the umpires shall inform the batters at the wicket and each incoming batter that an offence at this level has occurred and, as soon as practicable, inform the captain of the batting side.' Refer to the table within this handbook for guidance concerning dissent and serious dissent.

11. Fast Bowling Regulations

The ECB fast bowling regulations (published in the league handbook) shall apply to all league games and failure to comply will result in a 10 point penalty on each occasion.

12. Penalty Runs

Penalty runs to be awarded under the Laws of Cricket (2017 Code 3rd Edition 2022), shall only be awarded as follows:

- In all divisions, for illegal fielding (Law 28.2).
- In all divisions, for a ball striking a protective helmet placed on the ground (Law 28.3).
- In Divisions 1 to 2B, where there is at least one panel umpire, the awarding of penalty runs shall apply in full.
- In Divisions 3A to 6B, for breaches of the law on player behaviour (Law 42) provided there is at least one qualified non-playing umpire.

Match Rules - Divisions 1 - 2B

1. Duration

1.1 Hours of Play and Intervals

1.1.1 Matches will start at 12.00noon (except week 18 at 11-30am). For the purpose of determining the overs remaining in an interrupted match the Close of Play will be 7pm (week 18 will be 6-30pm).

1.1.2 There will normally be two sessions of play of 3 hours 15 minutes each, separated by an interval of 30 minutes between the innings.

1.1.3 If the innings of the team batting first is completed prior to the scheduled time for the interval then the interval shall, if considered practicable by the umpires, take place immediately and may be extended with the agreement of the captains and umpires, if necessary, by up to 15 minutes (to a maximum of 45 minutes).

1.1.4 In delayed or interrupted matches, the captains may agree to forgo the interval, in accordance with Law 11.9, in which case there shall be an interval between innings of 10 minutes.

1.1.5 Drinks intervals shall be agreed but no more than two breaks per innings are permitted, unless in exceptional circumstances. Time taken for drinks shall be regarded as an interval in accordance with Law 11.8.

1.2 Each match shall consist of a maximum of 50 overs per innings except where time is lost after the scheduled start time due to inclement weather or for any other cause the umpires deem reasonable, when the number of overs shall be reduced as hereinafter provided.

1.3 If the side batting first is dismissed before the overs to which it is entitled have been bowled, the team batting second shall be entitled to bat for its full entitlement of overs or as further reduced due to inclement weather or other cause. Declarations are not permitted.

1.4 In the event of delays due to weather or other causes, a minimum of 20 overs per side is required to constitute a match.

1.5 Delayed start or interrupted matches

1.5.1 First innings - When there is a delay to the start of the match or an interruption during the first innings, the object shall be to rearrange the number of overs so that both sides have the opportunity to bat for the same number of overs. The number of overs lost to be calculated based on one over per innings for each full 8 minutes of playing time lost. In calculating the time lost, the time for the interval may be altered in accordance with Law 11.4.

1.5.2 Second innings - If, owing to a delayed start to the second innings or a suspension of play during the second innings, there is insufficient time for the side batting second to face the same number of overs as the side batting first, the umpires will re-calculate, on every occasion, the number of overs to be bowled.

1.5.3 The number of overs to be bowled in 1.5.2 shall be calculated based on the time remaining in the match to the scheduled close of play, based on 4 minutes per over. In calculating the number of overs remaining to be bowled