

THE JUNIOR CRICKET BAT BUYING GUIDE

By AJ Sports

Selection of a cricket bat is possibly the most exciting but also the most technical part of purchasing cricket equipment. Choosing the right bat for the right age is essential for developing the technique required to progress in cricket. This is especially true for young cricketers who are just starting off in the game but also those who have played the sport for a while but may not have had the right guidance when purchasing equipment. The following will try and offer a few simple guidelines to follow when making a decision on getting the right bat.

1) Type of Willow

There are predominantly two types of willow which are used to make cricket bats – Kashmir willow and English willow.

Kashmir willow tends to be hard wood with minimal natural stroke in the bat. This means that even though these bats can be used with a hard ball, due to a lack of stroke, the player will need to use a lot more strength when striking the ball. Therefore Kashmir willow bats are generally recommended for beginners using a softer ball such as incrediballs, windballs or tennis balls.

English willow is a much softer wood which offers a lot more natural stroke and 'give' when striking a hard cricket ball. This willow tends to help develop the right technique where timing the strike of a cricket ball becomes essential. English willow bats are highly recommended for players who are using a hard cricket ball or are about to use a hard ball.

2) Size

In order to get the right size, the full length of a cricket bat should reach just below the waist. Sizes range from size 0 to size Harrow in junior bats and up to long handle in senior bats (please refer to the size chart below).

Having the wrong size can adversely affect the learning and development of a child's technique and is a fundamental part of the bat selection process.



Height of Junior Player	Recommended bat size
Up to 120cm (3'11")	0
120-129cm (3'11" - 4'3")	1
129-137cm (4'3" - 4'6")	2
137-144cm (4'6" - 4'8")	3
144-150cm (4'8" - 4'11")	4
150-157cm (4'11" - 5'2")	5
157-163cm (5'2" - 5'4")	6
163-168cm (5'4" - 5'6")	Harrow
168-175cm (5'6" - 5'9")	Academy
175cm and over (5'9" +)	Full Size

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3) Weight

Another important factor is the weight of a bat. To check the right weight, the youngster should be able lift the bat up in front of him at a right angle with his weaker hand for 5-10 seconds. This gives a good indication as to whether the bat is the right weight but other factors should also be taken into account, including balance.

4) Balance

As important as the bat weight is, balance is probably the most important. This is how the bat feels in the 'pick-up' position. To check this, the child would need to get into his stance as he would in a match situation and lift the bat to play a simple front-foot defensive shot. A well balanced bat would not feel too heavy or too light when this shot is played. The one with the best balance will go a long way in deciding which bat to go for.

5) Quality/Stroke

The better the grade of willow is, the better the performance of the bat tends to be. English willow bats are graded in five different qualities. Grade one being the top grade and grade five being the most basic range. Kashmir willow bats on the other hand tend to be of a similar quality across the range and are priced accordingly as well. These are also cheaper than the English willow bats due to the quality and hardness of the wood.

6) Price

As noted, the Kashmir willow bats are a more affordable option but are only recommended for beginners and soft ball users. These tend to range from £25 to £35 mark.

English willow bats offer a completely different playing experience, especially when used against a hard cricket ball. Junior bats in this range would start at around the £45 mark for the basic graded willow up to £200 for the very best.

Cricket is a simple yet technical game. We also understand that it can be a pricey one if wrong equipment is purchased. Keeping these guidelines in mind when purchasing your next bat will help you get the best value in the long run.

If you have any questions in regards to this or anything else related to cricket, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at any time on the details below:

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