

BOWLSUSA.us



Last Updated:
SPRING 2024

RESOURCE FOR BOWLERS



Table of Contents

Overview	7
Why Play Bowls?	7
Objective of the Game	7
Bowls Definitions and Terms	8
AIM LINE	8
BIAS	8
CENTERLINE	8
DITCH	8
END	8
GREEN	8
HEAD	8
HOG LINE	8
JACK OR “KITTY”	8
MAT	8
MAT LINE	8
PLINTH	8
POSSESSION OF THE RINK	8
RINK	8
TEE	8
Terms About The Movement of Bowls	9
AT REST	9
DEAD BOWL	9
DELIVER/DELIVERY	9
GRASS	9
HAND	9
HEAVY/LONG	9
LIGHT/SHORT	9
JACK HIGH or JACK LEVEL	9
NARROW	9

ORIGINAL COURSE	9
SHOT BOWL or POINT	9
TOUCHER	9
WEIGHT	9
WICK	9
WIDE	9
Terms For People in a Game	10
COACH	10
MARKER	10
UMPIRE	10
TEAM MEMBERS	10
LEAD	10
SECOND	10
THIRD	10
SKIP	10
The Green	10
Green Speed	12
Green Safety	12
The Confusing Conversation about Green Speed	13
Equipment	14
Attire	14
The Bowl	15
Overview	15
Markings	15
Bias	16
Choosing the Right Bowl	17
Grip	18
Consistency in Grip	18
Styles of Grip	19
CRADLE GRIP	19
FINGERTIP GRIP	19

CLAW GRIP	19
Delivery of the Bowl	19
Pre-delivery Routine	19
Grip	19
Determine your “hand”	19
Position of the feet	19
Aim line	20
STANCE	21
Delivery Motion	21
WEIGHT	21
Fault Analysis and Quick Reference Guide	22
Playing a Game	24
Disciplines	24
Player Position Responsibilities	25
THE LEAD	25
THE SECOND	25
THE THIRD	25
THE SKIP	25
For all players	26
Starting a Game	27
Delivering the Jack	27
Centering the Jack	27
Playing Order	28
Moving the Jack	28
Touchers	28
Scoring	28
Determining Shot	29
Measuring for Shot	29
How to Fill Out a Scorecard	31
Raking	33

Length of a Game	33
Markers	33
Hand Signals	34
Playing Shots	36
DRAW SHOT	36
WICKING SHOT	36
CHOP AND LIE	37
POSITIONAL SHOT	37
BLOCK SHOT	38
WEIGHTED SHOTS	39
TRAIL SHOT	39
YARD-ON SHOT	39
DRIVE SHOTS	40
Tactics	41
Building a Head	41
Delivery Strategies for Starting an End	41
Additional Tactics for Building a Head	41
Mat and Jack Tactics	42
Tournaments	42
Conditions of Play	42
Trial Ends: Important Laws of the Game	43
Club Level Tournaments	44
Division Level Tournaments	44
Division Open	44
Playdowns	44
National Level Tournaments	45
National Championships	45
U.S. Open	45
International Level Tournaments	45
Team USA – the National Team	46

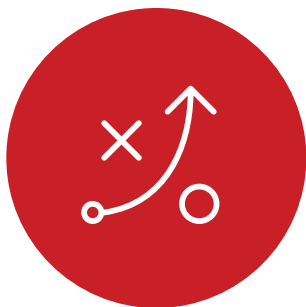
How Bowls is Organized	47
Vision, Mission, and Values	48
Sources and Additional Resources	49
BOOKS	49
WEBSITES	49
INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS	49

Overview

WHY PLAY BOWLS?

Let's start with the best part: It's fun!

- It's easy to learn
- It's a great way to socialize and exercise
- Gameplay is quick, about 1-2 hours
- No team required, join a game at the green
- All ages can play together
- It can be played by people with a wide range of physical abilities
- Lasting friendships and meaningful connections
- Tournament play for those who want a challenge
- Bowls is a global community, find clubs worldwide
- **Discover the joy of bowls**—fun, inclusive, and globally embraced



OBJECTIVE OF THE GAME

The goal of bowls is to position your or your team's bowls nearest to the white ball called a "Jack." Each bowl closer to the jack than your opponent's bowls, earns your team a point. At the conclusion of a game, the team with the greatest number of points wins.

Bowls Definitions and Terms

AIM LINE

The visualized path a bowl takes, including its bias, to reach the target area.

BIAS

The curve a bowl takes in its path to the jack.

CENTERLINE

An imaginary line between the center markers at each end of the rink. Both the mat and the jack are placed on the centerline at the beginning of each end.

DITCH

The trough surrounding the green.

END

When all bowls have been delivered by both players/teams in one direction.

GREEN

The playing surface in bowls.

HEAD

The collection of bowls that have been delivered and have come to rest around the jack.

HOG LINE

The minimum distance a jack can be delivered (21 meters) from the mat, shown by a distance marker on each side of the green.

JACK OR “KITTY”

The small target ball in the game.

MAT

A mat placed on the centerline where players stand to deliver their bowls.

MAT LINE

The front edge of the mat. It is the starting point when determining if a jack is placed at a legal distance from the mat.

PLINTH

The board that separates the edge of the green from the ditch.

POSSESSION OF THE RINK

The time when a team’s bowl is being played. It starts when the opponent’s bowl comes to rest and ends when your delivered bowl comes to rest. Team members can signal to each other only when they have “possession of the rink.”

RINK

The playing area for a game, usually 14 feet wide and 120 feet long. The rink number, posted at each end shows the center of the rink. The side boundary lines also have indicators at each end of the rink.

TEE

A mark on the green 2 meters from the ditch on the centerline.

Terms About The Movement of Bowls

AT REST

A bowl or jack that has stopped rolling after having been delivered.

DEAD BOWL

A bowl outside the boundaries of the rink or in the ditch without touching the jack.

Dead bowls are placed on the bank until the next end starts.

DELIVER/DELIVERY

Rolling a bowl.

GRASS

The path the bowl travels to the jack or its intended final resting spot. "Take more grass" means aim your next bowl wider. "Take less grass" means aim narrower.

HAND

The side of the rink relative to the centerline, on which the bowl is to be delivered, either a forehand delivery or a backhand delivery.

HEAVY/LONG

When a bowl is delivered beyond the jack or target.

LIGHT/SHORT

A bowl that does not reach the jack or target.

JACK HIGH or JACK LEVEL

A bowl that stops even with the jack.

NARROW

A bowl that crosses the centerline of the rink indicating that the aim line was not wide enough.

ORIGINAL COURSE

A jack or bowl from its delivery until it comes to rest.

SHOT BOWL or POINT

The bowl that is nearest to the jack.

TOUCHER

A bowl on its original course that touches the jack before coming to rest.

WEIGHT

The effort put into delivering the bowl, determining its distance.

To "add weight" means to put more effort into the delivery. To "take off weight" means to put less effort into the delivery. Two factors in adjusting weight are step length and speed of delivery.

WICK

Any movement that results when a bowl strikes another bowl or the jack.

WIDE

A bowl that comes to rest well to one side of the jack or a bowl.



TERMS FOR PEOPLE IN A GAME

COACH

A designated advisor to a bowler or team.

MARKER

A neutral person assigned to help in a Singles match by centering the jack and, upon request, reporting positions of bowls in the head.

UMPIRE

A person trained in the laws of the game that may be called upon to perform measures or to interpret the laws of the sport if there is a dispute between the teams/bowlers.

TEAM MEMBERS

LEAD

The first member of a team to bowl

SECOND

The second member of a team to bowl

THIRD

The third member of a team to bowl

SKIP

The last member of a team to bowl

The Green

Bowls is played on a green, usually 120' to 125' square, surrounded by a sand-filled ditch. The green is divided into 6 to 8 lanes called "rinks," each measuring approximately 14' wide by 120' long. Each rink is marked with a centered number and side boundary markers.

Hog lines, indicated by markers on each side of the green, guide the minimum distance for delivering the jack, typically around 69' (approximately 21 meters or 68' 10.77"). This distance is measured from the mat. (Refer to "Delivering the jack" for more details.)

Bowling greens can be made of grass, artificial turf, or rubico, resembling a clay tennis court.

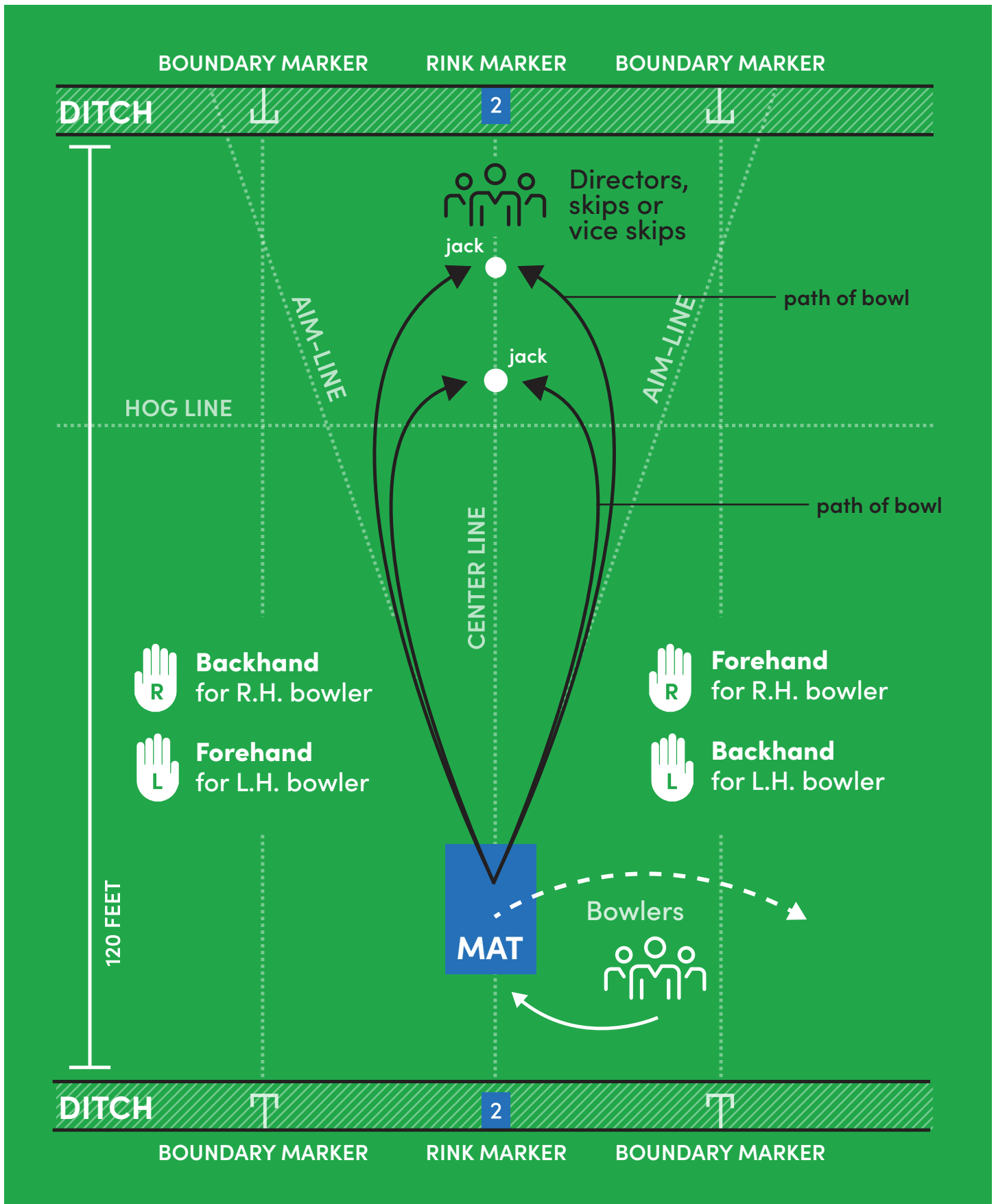


FIGURE 1. RINK LAYOUT, AIM AND PATH

GREEN SPEED

Bowling greens are characterized by their "speed" which is measured in seconds. This measurement indicates the time it takes for a bowl to be rolled over a distance of 27 meters (88.5 feet) on the green.

To determine the speed of a green, a stopwatch is used to time multiple rolls, and the results are then averaged. Several factors can influence the speed or pace of a green:

- How the green was constructed
- Humidity, surface moisture
- The type or variety of grass
- Aeration of grass greens or cleaning of artificial greens
- Temperatures, both daytime and nighttime
- Length of the grass (how recently it was mowed)
- The climate at the location of the green
- Frequency of grooming, rolling, or sweeping

In general, a damp, seldom mowed, soft green has high friction and is referred to as *"slow"*

A dry, firm, frequently mowed and rolled green has low friction and is referred to as *"fast"*

A bowl rolling against low friction takes less effort to deliver to a specific length

A bowl rolling against low friction takes longer to slow to a stop

A bowl rolling against low friction has more time to demonstrate its bias (curve) as it slows

GREEN SAFETY

- Be aware of the surrounding ditch
- Use a ramp or walkway to step onto the green; otherwise, stand parallel to the ditch and step over
- Avoid walking backwards on the green.
- Never stop a moving bowl, let it roll into the ditch

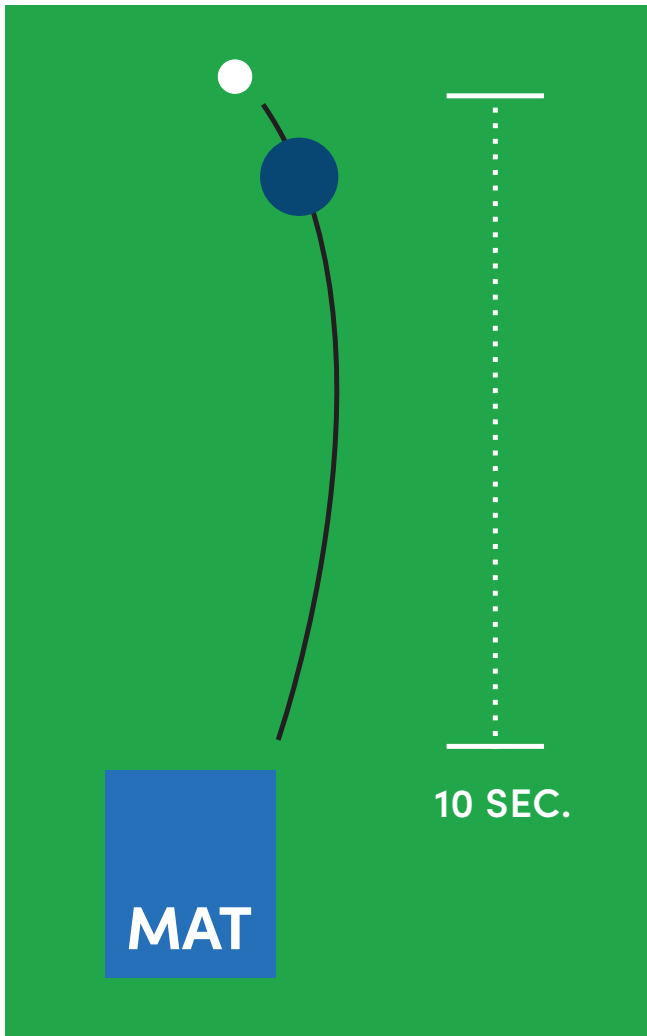


FIGURE 2. SLOW GREEN

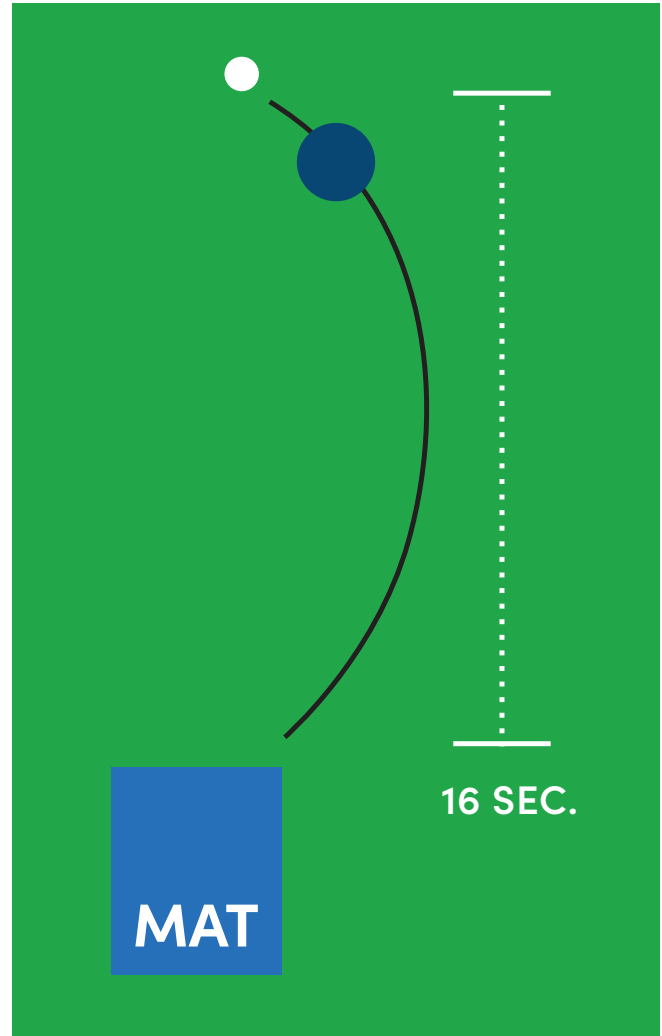


FIGURE 3. FAST GREEN

THE CONFUSING CONVERSATION ABOUT GREEN SPEED

It may seem counterintuitive, but a bowl on a fast green actually takes longer to reach its intended distance compared to a slow green.

On a fast green, the bowl's greater curve (bias) causes it to travel in a larger arc towards the target, resulting in a longer overall travel time.

Understanding green speed is crucial for bowlers as it affects the delivered bowl's behavior, and strategy during the game. Adapting to different green speeds allows players to make accurate judgments and effectively control their bowls.

Equipment

The equipment for a bowls game is:

- a set of four bowls
- a jack
- a pair of mats
- a scorecard
- flat-soled shoes (grooved soles carry seeds or weeds onto the green)



A club has this equipment available for you to use. Many clubs also have specialized bowls equipment for players who have movement or balance issues.

Other bowls items you may be interested in are:

- A bowls bag or carrier
- Gripping agents (Grippe, Wilgrip) which can be applied to bowls or fingers to improve grip
- A bowls measure/tape
- Soft chalk or spray chalk for marking a bowl as a toucher

Attire

Very few clubs today adhere to strict dress codes, comfort is more important. While the dress codes are pretty relaxed, it's still important to maintain a respectable appearance. It's best to avoid clothing with offensive language or graphics.

Bowling tournaments may have their own rules about clothing, but they are easy to accommodate.



The Bowl

OVERVIEW

- Bowls vary in size, weight, color, design, and bias.
- Bowls are not round, they appear more like a tire.
- Bowls come in sets of four
- Each set has matching logos
- The smaller logo is the side to which the bowl will curl as it slows down
- The “running surface” is the longest circumference around the bowl that comes into contact with the green
- A bowl’s size is based on its circumference
- Sizes range from 0000 (smallest) to 6 (largest)

MARKINGS

The World Bowls Stamp on a bowl looks like this:

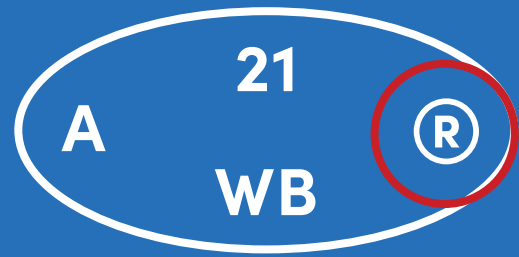


EXPIRATION DATE

The number at the top of the stamp on bowls indicates the last two digits of the year when the international certification expires. Most bowlers don't worry about expired bowls unless they play in international tournaments.

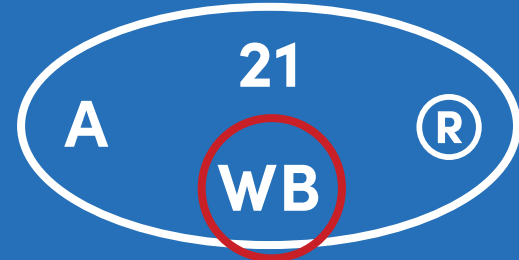
THE TRADEMARK

If you see the letter "R" on the stamp, it means that the stamp is a registered trademark, confirming its authenticity as an official product.



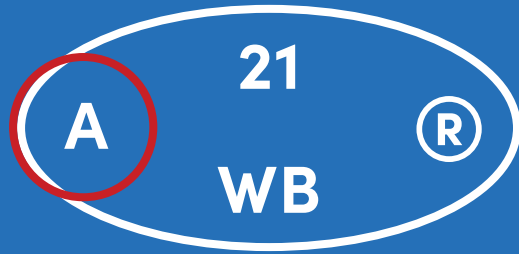
THE STANDARD

Look for the letters "WB" at the bottom of the stamp. They indicate that World Bowls has established the performance standards for the bowl, ensuring its compliance with international regulations.



THE MANUFACTURER/TESTER

The letter on the left of the stamp represents the licensed manufacturer, designated by World Bowls, to officially test the bowl. Each manufacturer has a unique code associated with their name.



BIAS

Bowls have a bias, which is indicated by the smaller logo on one side compared to the opposite side of the bowl. The bias side has a slight bulge. As the bowl slows down, it loses momentum and leans toward the smaller logo side, creating an arc. Different bowls are manufactured with varying degrees of arc to suit different green speeds.

It's important to note that all bowls in a set must have the same bias, and during a game, a player must use bowls from the same set. Bowls with different biases are available to cater to different conditions and types of greens.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT BOWL

Finding a bowl that fits comfortably in your hand is crucial for an enjoyable game. Here's a simple method to estimate the size:

Take a bowl and place both hands around its longest circumference, with your middle fingers touching and thumbs touching at the top. If the fingers touch this size bowl should be correct.

To confirm this size is correct, with the bowl facing down, swing your arm at your side. If the bowl falls out of your hand or if you're straining to hold it, try a smaller size. Repeat this process until the bowl remains comfortably in your hand.

There are several well-known bowls manufacturers, such as Taylor Bowls, Henselite, Drakes Pride, and Aero Bowls. If you decide to purchase your own set, make sure to know the proper size and the desired amount of bias before buying.

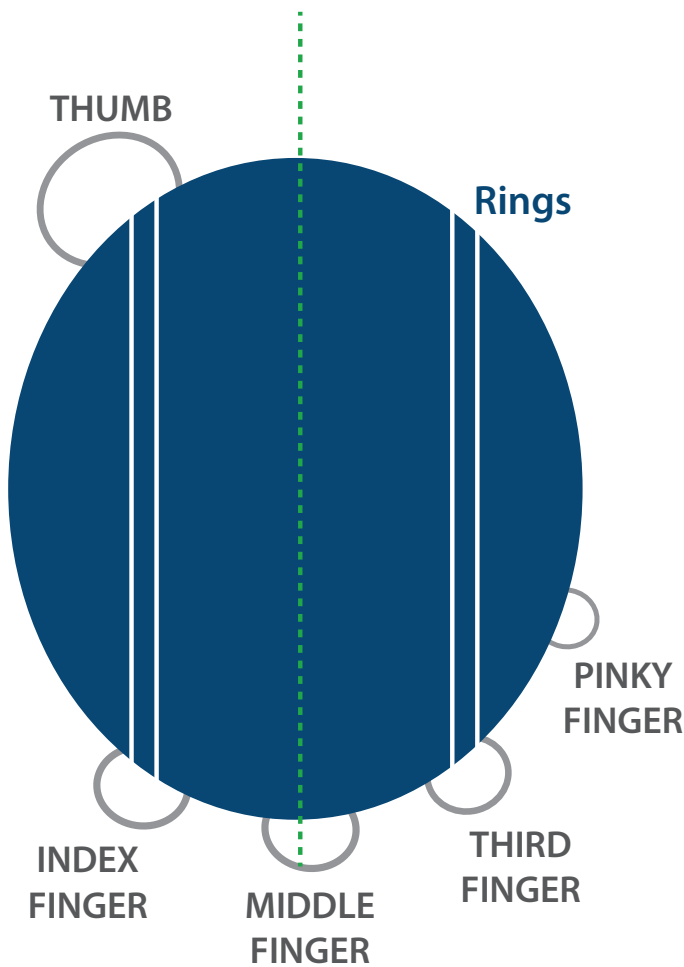


Grip

CONSISTENCY IN GRIP

Having the same grip each time you pick up your bowl makes your shot more predictable.

CENTER OF THE RUNNING SURFACE



- Place the bowl in your non-bowling hand with the running surface (longest circumference) in the palm
- Place your bowling hand on top of the bowl with the index, middle, and third fingers on the running surface
- Space out your index and third fingers evenly from the middle finger
- Allow your pinky finger to rest comfortably on the side of the bowl
- Flip the bowl onto the palm of the bowling hand and place your thumb toward the top of the running surface

FIGURE 4. CORRECT HAND POSITIONING

STYLES OF GRIP



CRADLE GRIP

The bowl rests in the palm of the hand. The fingers cup the bowl. The thumb rests two-thirds of the way up the side of the bowl.



FINGERTIP GRIP

The bowl sits forward on the fingertips with little to no contact with the palm. The fingers are slightly apart. The thumb is moderately high on the side of the bowl.



CLAW GRIP

Like the fingertip grip, the bowl sits forward on the fingertips with little to no contact with the palm. The fingers are spread further apart. The thumb rests on the outer ring of the bowl.

Delivery of the Bowl

PRE-DELIVERY ROUTINE

GRIP

It should be comfortable and not too tight. Your fingers are aligned with the running surface and the running surface is aligned with your arm.

DETERMINE YOUR "HAND"

Decide whether you are playing on your forehand or backhand side of the rink before stepping on the mat.

POSITION OF THE FEET

Standing on the mat, place your feet slightly apart. Since your bowl has a bias, your feet, hips, and shoulders must be angled towards your aim line to account for the draw (curve) of the bowl.

AIM LINE

Before a delivery is made, the bowler decides the path they want the bowl to travel. This is the line that the player visualizes the bowl taking to reach its target.

The aim line directs the bowl towards the jack unless the bowl should finish in another spot (See Building a Head).

There are key aiming points that can assist in identifying the correct line of delivery. Most bowlers rely on one of these for their aim line:

- ***At the Shoulder*** – The shoulder is the location at which the bowl starts to bend inward
- ***Jack High*** – At a length even with the distance of the jack, but far enough away, either left or right of the jack, to account for the bias
- ***Using a Mark on the Bank*** – Identify a mark on the bank towards which to deliver the bowl
- ***Aim Point on the Green*** – Locate an imperfection or discoloration on the green over which you will deliver the bowl

Other factors may impact the decision regarding the line of delivery like a crosswind and conditions of the rink surface. Players are encouraged to try different aim line strategies to see which one works best for them.



STANCE

Use a stance that feels stable, here are some options:

- **Upright or Vertical** – This allows the player to exert more momentum into the delivery
- **Crouch** – The knees are bent deeply. The shoulders lean forward even with the knees.
- **Semi-Crouch** – The knees are slightly bent with weight towards the balls of the feet.
- **Fixed Stance** – This delivery has no forward body movement, just the delivery arm. Usually one foot is ahead of the other. A fixed stance can also be done on one knee with the other leg bent, foot flat on the ground.

DELIVERY MOTION

Assuming your body is balanced and angled toward your line of delivery (See Aim Line), you can begin your delivery with a smooth, pendulum swing of your bowling arm.

- **Back Swing** – The back swing starts naturally as you step forward and stays alongside your body, moving straight back
- **Forward Swing** – The arm begins its swing forward with a walking step along the aim line. The forward movement of the arm propels the bowl
- **Head Position** – The head stays still with your eyes on your aim line until the bowl is well on its way
- **Knee Bend** – The knees bend to lower yourself towards the ground

- **Release** – Let go of the bowl even with, or slightly ahead, of the front foot, placing your bowl's running surface on the green
- **Non-Bowling Arm** – The non-bowling hand is placed on the knee or thigh of the stepping leg
- **Follow Through** – The arm ends at or below shoulder level with the palm facing upwards and pointing towards your aim line. Stay down, keep your body and head still until the bowl has traveled well along its line. Watch the bowl and learn from its path until it comes to a rest.
- **Completion of Delivery** – Once the bowl has come to rest (stopped rolling), step off the mat to your right. If there is another bowl to deliver, pick it up and move behind the mat so you are ready when it's time to deliver another bowl.

WEIGHT

Weight determines the distance the bowl travels. Weight is the amount of momentum placed on the bowl at the time of release. Once you have the right distance, keep that "feel" in mind to repeat it during your next delivery.

Common ways to adjust the weight are:

- Alter the height of your hand before your backswing.
- Change the speed of your forward arm swing.
- Shift your bodyweight more or less as you move forward.

FAULT ANALYSIS AND QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Fault	Possible Source or Cause	Recommended Cure
NARROW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Anchor foot not on delivery line <input type="checkbox"/> Feet and delivery arm not aligned <input type="checkbox"/> Hooking delivery arm across body <input type="checkbox"/> Delivery arm swing not next to body <input type="checkbox"/> Poor or no delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> No or incorrect Point-of-Aim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> Establish Point-of-Aim <input type="checkbox"/> Straight arm swing next to body
WIDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Anchor foot not on delivery line <input type="checkbox"/> Incorrect delivery arm movement and timing <input type="checkbox"/> No or arched backswing <input type="checkbox"/> Poor stepping foot landing position <input type="checkbox"/> Poor or no delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> No or incorrect Point-of-Aim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> Establish Point-of-Aim <input type="checkbox"/> Straight arm swing next to body
PUSH DELIVERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Poor or no delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> Stepping too early <input type="checkbox"/> Poor timing <input type="checkbox"/> Initial arm position incorrect <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of playing too long on fast green 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Correct arm position <input type="checkbox"/> Correct timing of swing: Arm back, then step when arm passes anchor leg <input type="checkbox"/> Forward swing once stepping foot planted
LOSS OF BALANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Body out of alignment with delivery line <input type="checkbox"/> Too much forward movement of body during forward swing <input type="checkbox"/> Step is too long or incorrect timing of step <input type="checkbox"/> Exaggerated forward swing <input type="checkbox"/> Poor timing during delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> Body stationary before arm starts forward swing <input type="checkbox"/> Bend knee on delivery and keep bent

Fault	Possible Source or Cause	Recommended Cure
BUMPING BOWL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Releasing bowl too early <input type="checkbox"/> Initial stance too high <input type="checkbox"/> Poor speed / timing of swing <input type="checkbox"/> Forcing forward swing <input type="checkbox"/> Grip too loose or bowl too big <input type="checkbox"/> Delivery shoulder too low in stance <input type="checkbox"/> Wrist not locked during delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Correct upper body position not too upright <input type="checkbox"/> Keep knee bent during delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Use smaller bowl and / or lock wrist and elbow
SHORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No or incorrect Point-of-Aim <input type="checkbox"/> Walking off the mat <input type="checkbox"/> Not staying down during delivery <input type="checkbox"/> No follow through <input type="checkbox"/> Elbow not locked during delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Misreading green speed <input type="checkbox"/> Dipping head or eyes during delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Correct Point-of-Aim <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure wrist and elbow are locked <input type="checkbox"/> Keep knee bent during delivery
TIMING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Poor or no delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> Movement too fast or too slow <input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Slow the backswing to allow time for forward step to be completed before starting forward swing <input type="checkbox"/> Speed of forward step and swing critical for good timing
INCONSISTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Poor or no delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> No or incorrect Point-of-Aim <input type="checkbox"/> Poor concentration <input type="checkbox"/> Easily distracted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop delivery routine <input type="checkbox"/> Establish Point-of-Aim



Playing a Game

DISCIPLINES

Typically, a game starts with deciding which discipline will be played, depending on the number of players available, followed by a draw to determine the team members.

Singles – two people compete against each other. Each player delivers four bowls.

Pairs – two people join to form a team, playing as a *lead* and *skip*. Each player delivers two, three, or four bowls depending on the game format.

Triples – three people form a team, playing as *lead*, *second*, and *skip*. Each player delivers two or three bowls.

Fours – four people form a team, playing as *lead*, *second*, *third*, and *skip*. Each player bowls two bowls.



POSITION









-  Lead
-  Second
-  Third
-  Skip

FIGURE 5. TEAM STRUCTURE

PLAYER POSITION RESPONSIBILITIES

Position	Responsibilities
<p> THE LEAD <i>The first member of a team to bowl</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place the mat on the centerline, at least 2 meters from the rear ditch or wherever the skip indicates (See Setting the Mat) Deliver the jack to where the skip is standing Give directions to the skip to center the jack Draw your bowls close to the jack or just behind it Determine the shot count in a Pairs game Manage the bowls after shots have been counted: the winning lead kicks the bowls towards the centerline for the losing lead to rake and place behind the mat
<p> THE SECOND <i>The second member of the team to bowl</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draw bowls into the head if the lead was unable Place bowls around the back of the head to protect against the possible movement of the jack Determine the score count in a Triples game
<p> THE THIRD <i>The third member of a Fours team to bowl</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Function as the “backup” skip Deliver bowls as needed to set up a favorable head for the skip Stands in the head and directs the skip when they bowl Determine the score in a Fours game
<p> THE SKIP <i>Final member of a Fours team to bowl</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as the team captain Make tactical decisions to put their team at the best possible advantage, remaining aware of how the head is developing and counteract areas of vulnerability in the head Instruct teammates on which hand and shot to play Consider the strengths and weaknesses of teammates and opponents Execute the required shots Resolve disputes with the opposing skip or involve an umpire if necessary Record all shots scored for and against both teams on the scorecard after each completed end Sign both scorecards and turn them in to the Scorekeeper



Note: For all players

- Once your bowl comes to rest, step off the mat to your right. If you have another bowl to deliver, pickup the bowl to be ready.
- Stand at least 6 feet (2 meters) behind the mat while your opponent delivers their bowl.
- Stay still in the head.
- Motion for the skip to come to the head and look closely if a dangerous situation is developing.
- If the jack enters the ditch, draw a ring in the sand around it and place a white indicator on the backboard to indicate where the jack is positioned.
- If a toucher enters the ditch, draw a ring in the sand around it and place a colored marker on the backboard to indicate its location in the ditch.
- If the jack gets hit out of bounds, place it on the centerline at the 2-meter mark (the “Tee”).
- Mark your team’s touchers with chalk before the next bowl comes to rest.
- Remove a dead bowl from the ditch or out of bounds and place it on the bank.
- Allow heavily weighted shots to roll into the ditch without trying to stop them.
- If responsible for shot count, signal the skip with the score

While it is true that many inexperienced players begin as leads, and more seasoned or experienced bowlers usually move on to become seconds, thirds, or even skips, player position is a personal choice. A player that can execute a shot with consistency and accuracy is highly prized regardless of their position.

Choosing to specialize in any position deserves full respect.

STARTING A GAME

Once the teams have been formed, the players determine their positions within the team. Following that, a coin toss takes place to decide which team will bowl first. The team that wins the toss has the choice to "take the mat" or let the opposing team take it.

When taking the mat, the lead turns and faces the backboard, placing the mat lengthwise as close to the center line as possible. The front edge of the mat must be at least 2 meters (6'6") from the front edge of the ditch. The mat can be placed anywhere along the centerline up to the first hog line marker. The distance of the mat can be varied, as directed by the skip. This is part of the strategy of the game.

DELIVERING THE JACK

The delivery of the jack is the responsibility of the lead player and is directed by the skip. Here are the key points regarding delivering the jack:

- The lead player delivers the jack to the distance determined by the skip, usually where the skip is standing.
- To be considered "legal," the jack must meet certain criteria after it comes to rest. It should:
 1. Land on the green surface.
 2. Stay within the side boundaries.
 3. Be at least 21 meters (68' 10.77") from the front edge of the mat (mat line) to the center spot where the jack settles.
- If the jack is delivered incorrectly, it is returned to the mat, and the opposing lead player gets the opportunity to deliver it again. This lead player also has the option to set the mat in a different location.
- If both leads deliver the jack improperly, the jack will be set at the 2-meter mark, also known as the "Tee," located at the front end of the rink. At this point the initial lead may then change the mat length, as directed by their skip.

CENTERING THE JACK

When the jack comes to rest, as the lead, you stay on the mat and help center it. Use hand signals to guide your skip in moving the jack right or left until it aligns with the center rink marker at the other end. Once it's centered, signal to your skip that it's in the correct position.

PLAYING ORDER

In a game of bowls, players take turns delivering their bowls, alternating with the opposing player in the same position. The leads go first, followed by the seconds, and then the skips. The end is completed when all players have delivered their bowls.

MOVING THE JACK

During the game, if a jack is moved by a bowl, the jack remains in its new location. Players continue to bowl to the new position as long as it stays within the boundaries of the rink. If the jack is driven out of bounds, it is typically reset at the 2-meter mark (the "Tee").

TOUCHERS

When a delivered bowl makes contact with the jack, it is known as a toucher. A chalk mark is placed on the toucher for identification. A toucher is considered a "live" bowl and remains in play, even if it ends up in the ditch. Once a bowl becomes a toucher, it retains that status until the end is completed. The chalk mark should be removed before the marked bowl is delivered at the next end.

However, if a bowl that was already at rest (delivered earlier) is driven into the jack by another bowl, it does not become a toucher.

Any bowls, whether touchers or not, that are driven out of bounds beyond the side boundaries are removed from the playing surface until that end is completed.

In summary, a toucher is a delivered bowl that touches the jack, marked with chalk, and remains in play regardless of its location. Bowls driven out of bounds are removed from play until the end is complete.

SCORING

After all players have delivered their bowls, scoring occurs to determine the points earned in the end. Only one team (or player in Singles) can score shots. Each shot counts as one point.



DETERMINING SHOT

- Responsibility for determining the shot count is with the lead in Pairs, the seconds in Triples, and the thirds in Fours.
- Circle around the head to look for shot(s) from different vantage points. Both players should be assertive when declaring what they see.
- The player conceding shot(s) is the one who adds up the shots until their team's bowls are the next closest to the jack.
- Before any bowls are removed or handled, the opponents must agree to the shot count. Once agreed, the shot count cannot be changed.
- When the players agree on the shot(s), each bowl earning a shot is removed from the head and placed on the towel, to prevent that bowl from being counted twice.
- The score is signaled back to the skips for recording.

MEASURING FOR SHOT

- To determine which bowl is closest to the jack use a measuring tape. If a tape measure cannot be positioned between the jack and the bowls to be measured without disturbing them, calipers are used, as shown in the photo on the next page.



- To measure, the player kneels directly over the bowls and jack so they can see each end of the tape clearly.

- The tape is positioned without moving the jack or bowls.

- » The back end of the tape just touches the widest side of the jack.

- » The pointed end of the tape just touches a spot on the bowl which is nearest the jack.

- » When that distance is determined, the length of the tape is locked into place.

- The tape is then placed between the jack and the opposing bowl to determine whether it is closer or further away.
 - » Optimally the player is perpendicular to the line between the jack and bowl to be measured.
 - » If a second bowl is measured, the player repositions to remain perpendicular to the jack and new bowl to be measured, repeating as necessary.
- If it is difficult to make a judgment, repeat the measure for both bowls.

If it isn't clear whether a shot is scored after measuring, the players may agree that it is a tie and stop measuring further. If no shots were agreed to prior to a measure, the end is recorded as completed with no shots awarded. (In this case, the lead who won the prior ends delivers the jack.) The scores from the prior end are recorded again.

In a tournament, players can request an umpire to make a final measurement if they cannot agree. Whatever the umpire determines stands as the final decision.

[World Bowls also has good videos on the various techniques.](#)

HOW TO FILL OUT A SCORECARD

A scorecard keeps a record of each game and includes details such as where, when, and who played the game. Scorecards can vary in layout, but the information recorded is consistent.

A scorecard has several sections of information:

The top portion includes the name of the event, when this game was played, on which rink, and the names of the teams members.

Club Name Here	
Event:	
Date	Rink No:
	1st
	2nd
	3rd
	SKIP

The lower portion is the scoring. Each row represents a single end played. Remembering only one side can score each end, each row will have "0" or "-" on one side or the other.

POINTS	TOTAL	END	POINTS	TOTAL
		1		
		2		
		3		
		4		
		5		
		6		
		7		
		8		
		9		
		10		
		11		
		12		
		13		
		14		
		15		
		16		
		17		
		18		

- The "POINTS" column shows the shots won for the end.
- The "TOTAL" column shows the cumulative score at that moment in the game.
- The bottom portion contains the final score, and each skip or Singles player should verify the score and then sign their name.
- In a tournament, the winning player or skip turns in both scorecards to the Score Keeper.

Sample Scorecard

This is the scorecard between Team A and Team B in the Club Fours Championship. They played on Rink 4 in June of 2021.

It looks like Art and Betty are the leads for their teams, they'll deliver their bowls first. While Ariana and Barnie are the team skips, so they have the final bowls.

Team A got off to a good start by scoring 2 shots on the first end, for a total of 2 points.

In the second end, Team A scored 1 shot, so after two ends the team had a total score of 3.

In the third end Team B came on strong and scored a 4. After 3 ends the total score was Team A = 3 and Team B = 4.

The game continued for ten ends.

Team A scored in six of the ends while Team B scored in the four of the ends. The game finished in a tie at 9 shots for each team.

The skips agreed the score was correct and signed the scorecard.

Name of Bowls Club				
Game	Club Rinks Championships			
Date	6/10/21	Rink	4	
Team A		vs	Team B	
Art	1st		Betty	
Andrea	2nd		Bill	
Augie	3rd		Belinda	
Ariana	SKIP		Barnie	
POINTS	TOTAL	END	POINTS	TOTAL
2	2	1	0	0
1	3	2	0	0
0	3	3	4	4
0	3	4	1	5
1	4	5	0	5
2	6	6	0	5
0	6	7	1	6
1	7	8	0	6
2	9	9	0	6
0	9	10	3	9
		11		
		12		
		13		
		14		
		15		
		16		
		17		
		18		
Total	9		9	
Signature	Ariana		Barnie	

RAKING

Once shots are calculated, the losing lead gets the rake, and the other players kick the bowls towards the centerline. After being raked, the bowls are placed at least two feet behind and at least a foot to the right side of the mat, wherever the winning lead positions the mat.

LENGTH OF A GAME

The length of a game of bowls is determined by the number of ends agreed upon. Pairs games usually consist of 12 ends and take about one and a half hours. In tournaments, the number of ends played varies, typically ranging from 10 to 16 for Pairs, Triples, and Fours. In tournament Singles, the players compete until one bowler earns a specific number of points, instead of playing a set number of ends. Tournaments often impose a time limit on all matches, which varies depending on the discipline being played.

MARKERS

Markers are non-players that facilitate Singles matches in tournaments. They are critical to running a good tournament. A marker stays on a rink for an entire game, fulfilling many important jobs including:

- Centers the jack during trial ends and during the game.
- Returns the jack to players if it is less than 21 meters from the mat. A Marker may determine that a jack is too short even if the players do not ask.
- Marks touchers with chalk
- Removes non-toucher bowls that end up in the ditch, or any bowl that comes to rest outside of the side boundaries, and puts them on the bank until the end is completed.
- Protects a head from wayward bowls intruding from a neighboring rink.
- Assists in keeping the game on schedule and reducing the players' workload.
- Provides brief answers (1-3 words) to a player's question. For example: If asked, "Which is shot?" Marker's answer: "Blue (whatever the color of the bowl) is shot." If asked, "Am I up?" or "Am I jack high?" Marker's answer: "Yes" or "No." Provides no other information.

Hand Signals

Using hand signals is an uncomplicated way to communicate with your team without disturbing players in other games.

Just remember, you can only communicate when your team has possession of the rink, and you should only communicate when asked.



BOWL ON THE FOREHAND

Extend your left arm to the side (if bowler is righthanded).



BOWL ON THE BACKHAND

Extend your right arm to the side (if bowler is righthanded).



THIS IS OUR BOWL

Point closely to the bowl and tap your shoulder or chest.



THIS IS THEIR BOWL

Point closely to the bowl and wave your arm away.



SHOTS FOR US

Tap your shoulder or head.



SHOTS AGAINST US

Tap your leg.



WATCH THE HEAD

Before throwing a “drive” or “runner,” simulate a fast delivery with your bowling arm.



HAVE YOUR BOWL STOP HERE

Put your foot where you want the bowl to finish and point to it.)



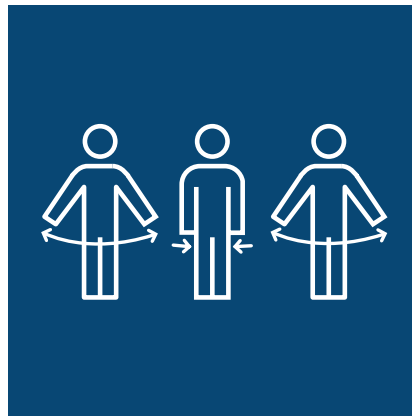
BOWLS ARE TOUCHING

Touch knuckles together.



WHERE IS THE JACK?

Bending down, hold your palm forward.



THE SHOT IS A MEASURE

Wave hands apart, together, apart as if measuring.



THE BOWL IS THIS FAR IN FRONT OR BEHIND THE JACK

Spread your hands one above the other. *Note:* Always give the DEPTH not the WIDTH.

Playing Shots

Different game situations in bowls may require players to execute different shots. These include the draw shot (to get close to the jack), drive shot (to remove opponents' bowls or the jack), trail shot (to follow the path of the jack), and blocking shot (to obstruct opponents' shots). Practicing these shots will help improve your skills.

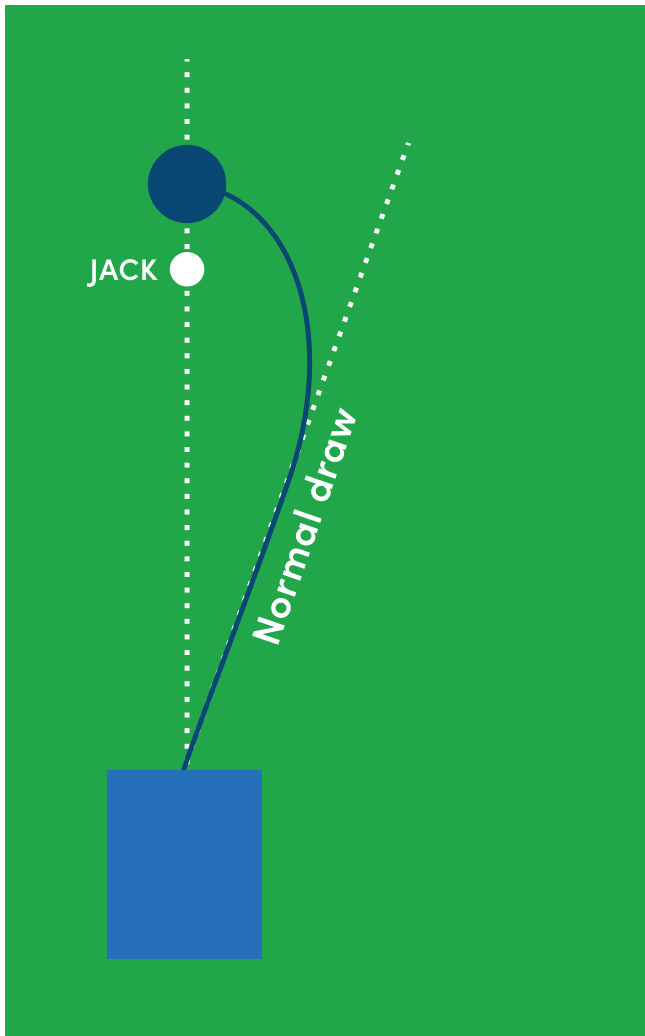


FIGURE 6. DRAW SHOT

DRAW SHOT

The draw shot is the most important shot in the game. In this shot the bowl draws to, or as close as possible to, the jack.

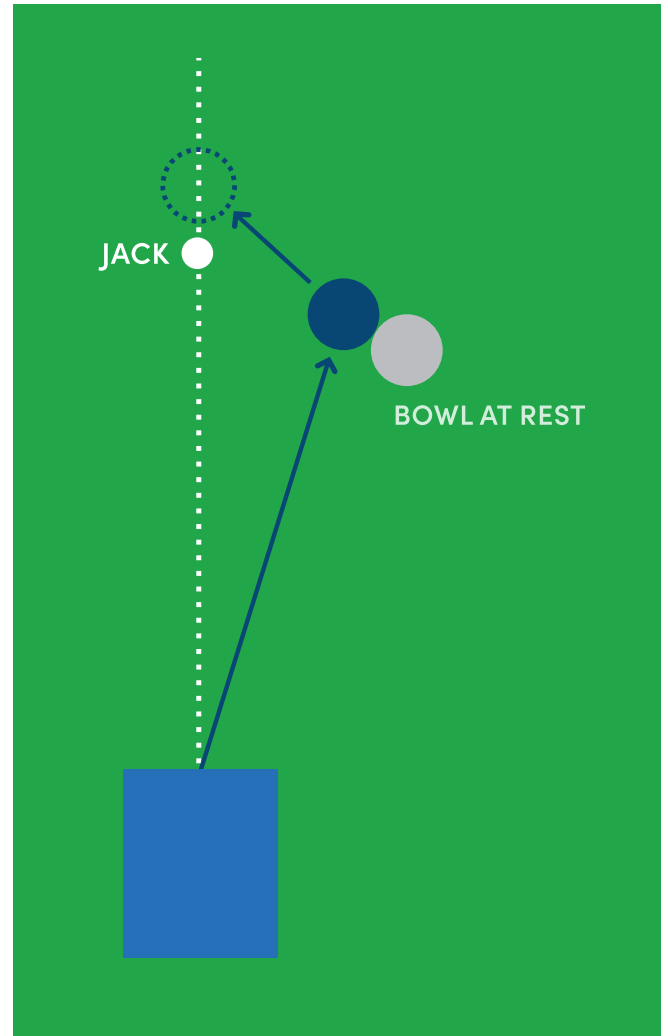


FIGURE 7. WICKING SHOT

WICKING SHOT

A wicking shot is deliberately delivered to make contact with a bowl at rest, causing your bowl to deflect favorably landing near the jack or a specific target. The purpose of this shot is to use the existing bowl as a guide.

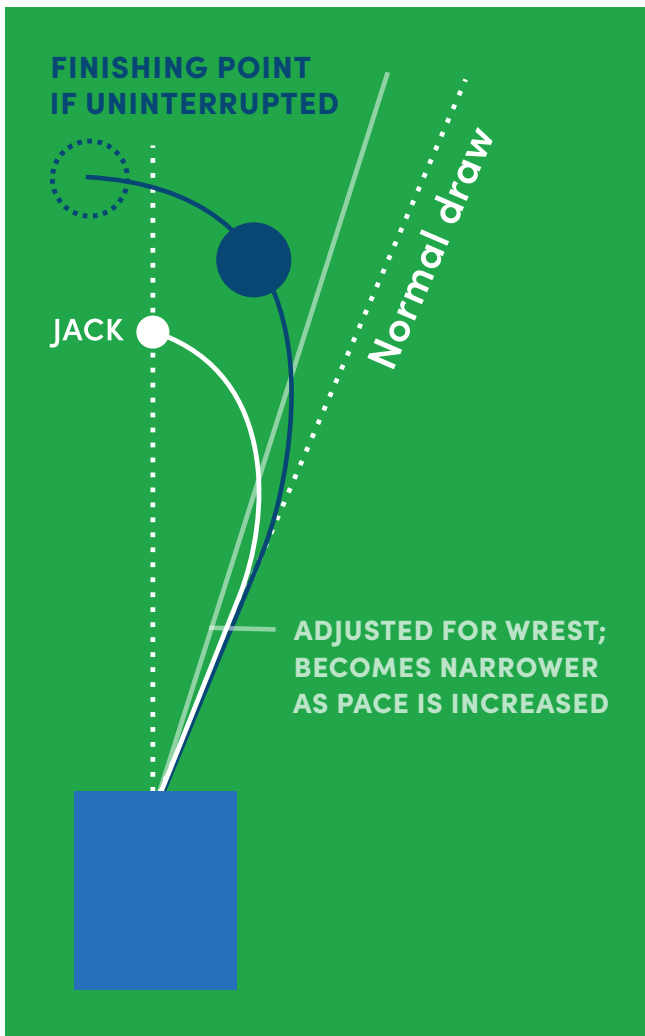


FIGURE 8. CHOP AND LIE SHOT

CHOP AND LIE

This shot is a forceful delivery aimed at displacing your opponent's bowl from the head while taking its place. It involves delivering your bowl with more weight.

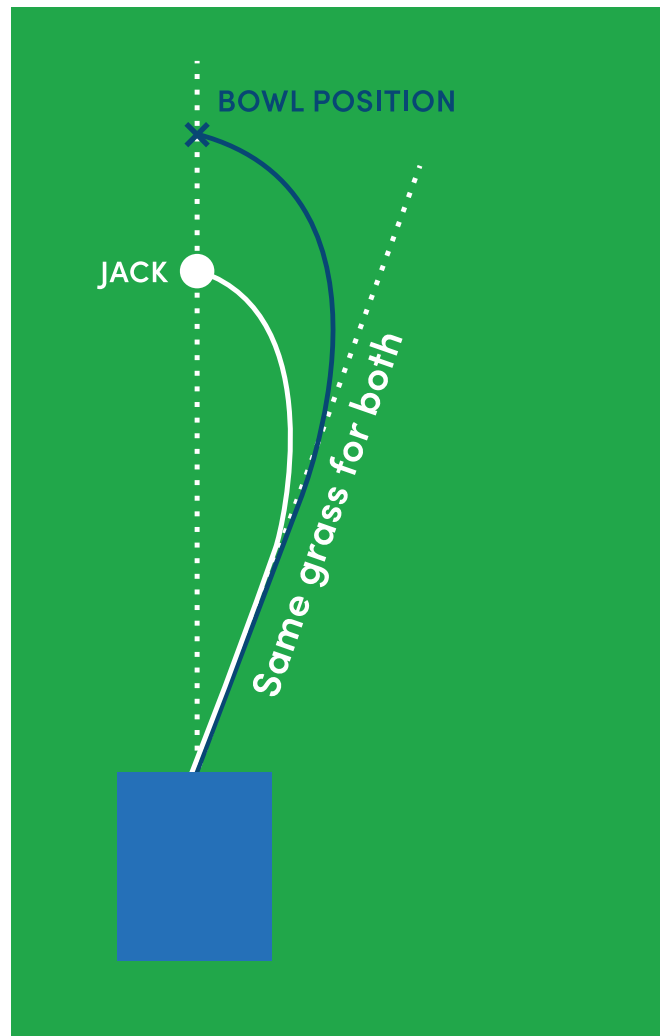


FIGURE 9. POSITIONAL SHOT

POSITIONAL SHOT

This is a specific type of draw shot that is placed behind the jack, in the general area of the head. It protects against the jack being trailed backwards by an opponent and is especially true if your opponent has bowls waiting behind the jack. Begin this shot by identifying the spot where you want your bowl to finish. Because you are aiming somewhere beyond the jack, some weight must be added to a normal draw shot and the line to the jack must be adjusted slightly wider to bypass the head.

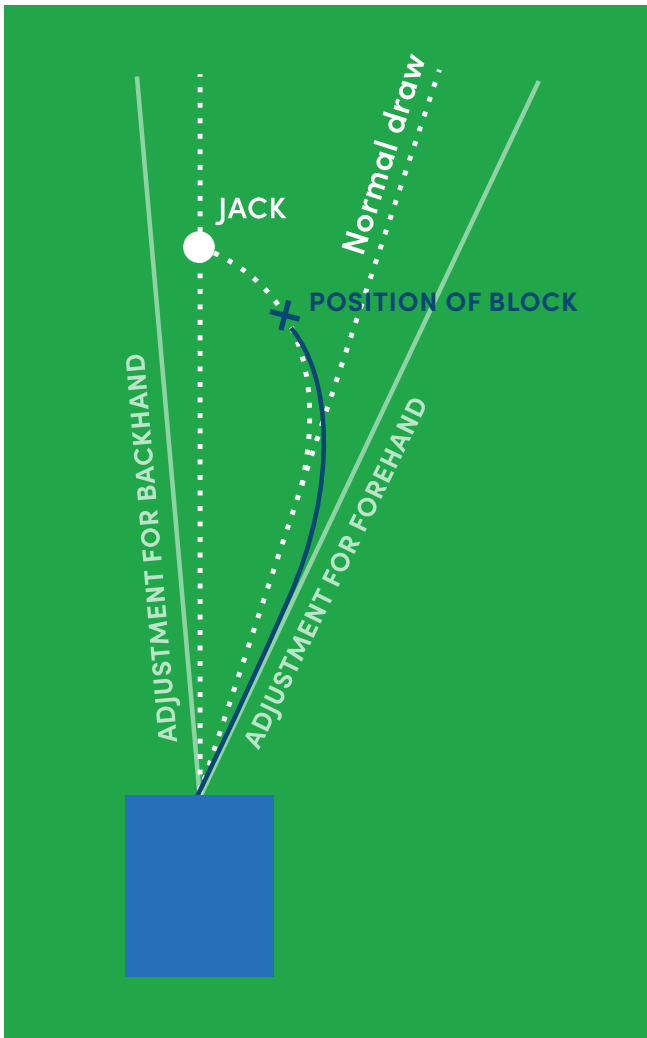


FIGURE 10. BLOCK SHOT A

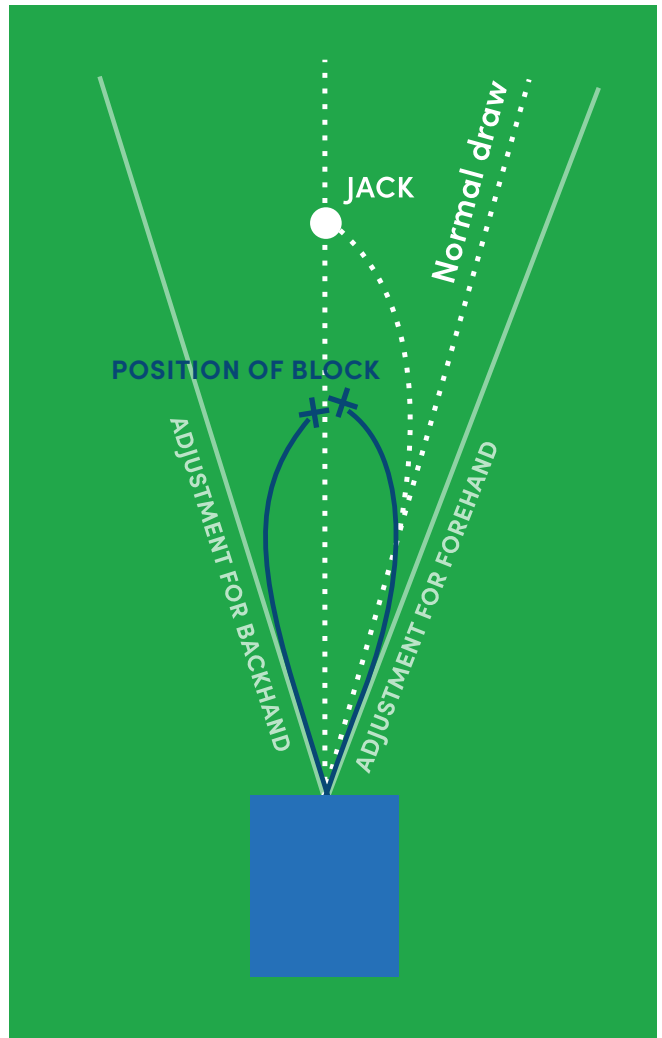


FIGURE 11. BLOCK SHOT B

BLOCK SHOT

A block shot is a defensive strategy where your bowl is positioned in your opponent's path, 2 or 3 feet away from the jack.

WEIGHTED SHOTS

These are shots which are intended to play past the jack. As the name infers, these shots require a different amount of delivery weight depending on the planned outcome.

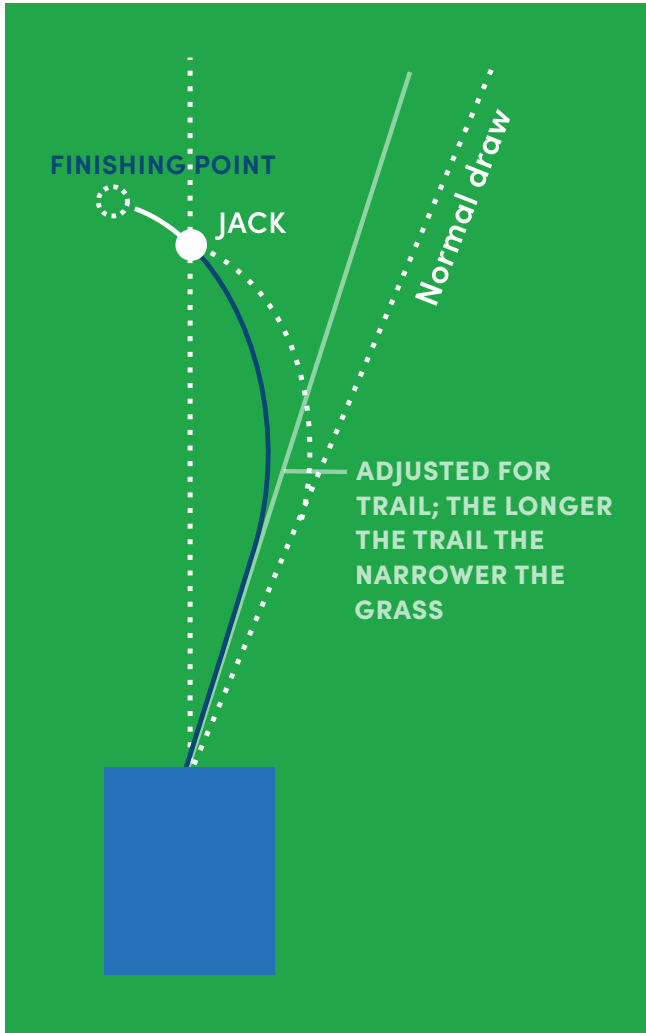


FIGURE 12. TRAIL SHOT

TRAIL SHOT

This shot is a controlled weighted shot aimed at moving the jack back towards bowls positioned behind it. Visualizing the desired location for the jack helps determine your aim line.

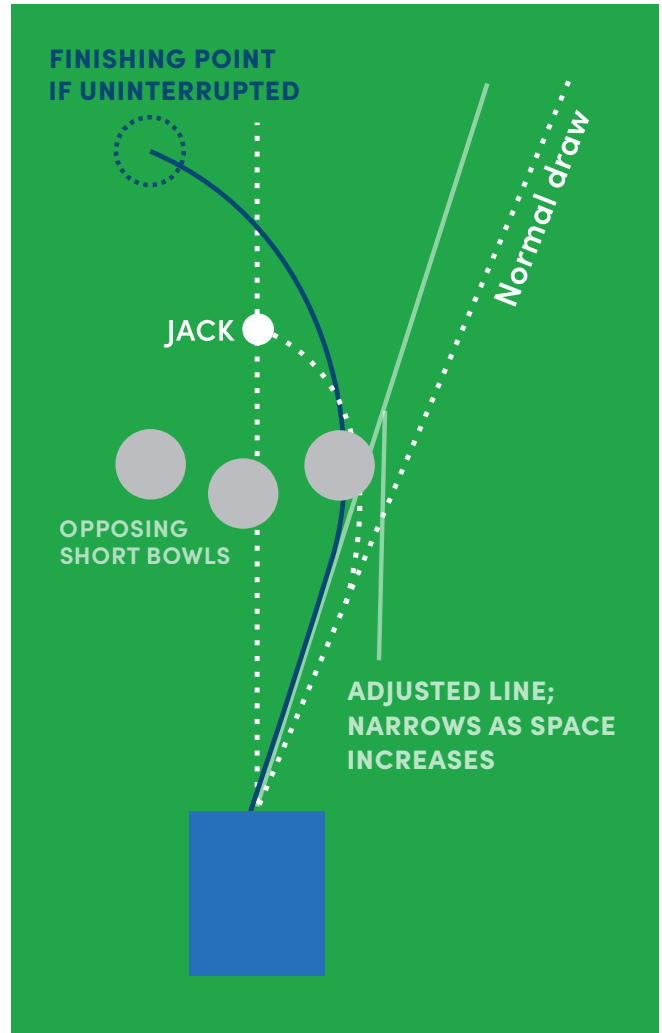


FIGURE 13. YARD ON SHOT

YARD-ON SHOT

A yard-on shot is a controlled weighted shot with multiple purposes. It can be used to promote a teammate's bowl towards the jack, displace opponent's bowls from the jack or the head, separate bowls and create distance from the head, knock a bowl into the jack, or reposition the jack to a desired location.

DRIVE SHOTS

A drive, also known as a "runner," is a heavy weighted shot used sparingly in order to disrupt the head. It involves delivering the bowl with significant force to displace the head and remove bowls from the target area.

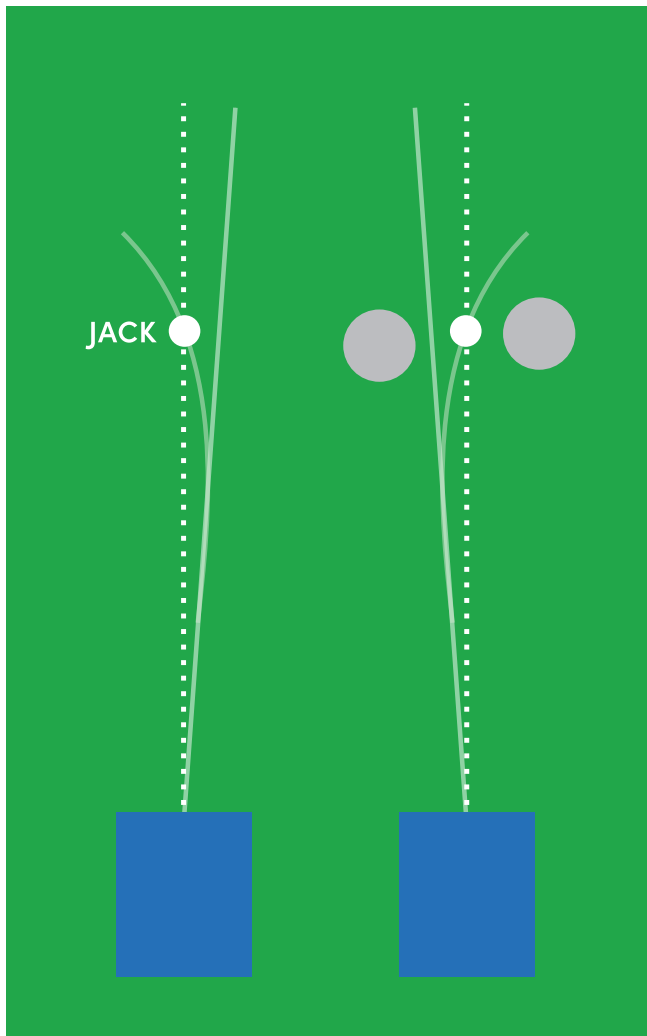


FIGURE 14. DRIVE SHOTS

To execute a drive shot:

- Take a narrow draw/direct line towards the target.
- Use a stance similar to delivering the jack, with the grounded foot positioned in the center of the mat, toes forward towards the target.
- The delivery requires a longer backswing and may have a higher starting position.
- Thrust the delivery arm forward as the stepping foot advances in line with the target.
- Take a longer step than usual to transfer more body weight into the shot.
- It's important to remember that the drive shot should be used with a purpose and as a last resort.

Tactics

BUILDING A HEAD

Each end should start with good draw shots, then shift toward protecting the head. Building a head requires:

- Assessing the head, considering the positions of the bowls and the jack.
- Anticipating your opponent's next shot.
- Then choosing which shot to play: draw, block, weighted, drive, etc.

DELIVERY STRATEGIES FOR STARTING AN END

- First bowl is delivered to just behind the jack or is a toucher.
- Second bowl holds second shot in the head.
- Third bowl is positioned behind the head (1.5 – 2 feet) so if the jack gets moved, there is a bowl to receive it, referred to as a “catcher.”
- Fourth bowl is positioned between your opponent's closest bowl and the jack. If a drive is likely, have a bowl at the 2-meter mark in case the jack is driven out of bounds.
- Subsequent bowls should prevent your opponent from getting to the jack.

ADDITIONAL TACTICS FOR BUILDING A HEAD

- A bowl on its running surface is easier to push away; a bowl on its side is good to wick off.
- Force your opponents to play to their weaknesses and make difficult shots.
- Play “percentage” shots that have multiple ways to be successful.
- If you don't hold shot, get second shot.
- Play aggressively if you are behind in the end or game.
- If losing a match, change the mat length and/or jack length, or play your opponent's preferred hand.
- Don't allow your opponent to cluster bowls.
- Be sure to place a “back bowl.”

If the **Conditions of Play** (next page) dictate that the jack will be re-spotted at the 2-meter mark, a bowl in that location is advantageous.

MAT AND JACK TACTICS

Placement of the mat and jack are important parts of strategy. The front edge of the mat can be placed anywhere from just over the 2-meter mark to the hog line. Wherever the mat is placed, the jack must be delivered to at least 21 meters from the front edge of the mat.

Here are some tactics to consider regarding the movement of the mat and the delivery of the jack:

- Maintain consistency if winning at a certain length.
- Adjust the mat location to disrupt your opponent.
- Move the mat to a different location on the rink to minimize inconsistencies on the green.
- Place the mat just behind the hog line to involve the ditch.
- Consider your opponent's skill set when determining jack-to-ditch distance.
- Avoid using the same mat and jack lengths as your opponent.

Tournaments

One of the benefits of belonging to Bowls USA is having the opportunity to play in Bowls USA sanctioned tournaments. Tournament play gives you a chance to:

- Play against bowlers from other clubs
- Challenge your skills
- Learn new tactics and strategies
- Discover how you respond in a competition
- Explore different clubs and greens across the United States
- Experience various green surfaces
- Connect with like-minded individuals who share your passion for the game

CONDITIONS OF PLAY

Every tournament has Conditions of Play (CoP), a list of how the matches and tournament will be conducted and any requirements for entry.

It will include information about the format:

- Disciplines being played (i.e., Singles, Pairs, Triples, or Fours).
- How many teams may enter.
- The number of games to be played each day.
- How many ends in a game and the number of bowls used per player
- Whether trial ends are permitted (see below).
- Practice times prior to the tournament, also called a roll-up.
- How the score will be calculated: points for a win; points for a tie; tiebreak method.
- Which laws of the sport will be followed.
- Dress code.
- Player substitutions.
- Time limits per match.
- The Tournament Directors' overall rights and responsibilities.
- Prizes, if any.

Entry information includes:

- Membership in Bowls USA or World Bowls requirements
- Team make-up (single gender or mixed teams)
- Deadline for registration
- Entry fee per discipline
- To whom the form and payment are submitted

When the number of competitors is limited, entry is on a first-come, first-served basis, consequently, submitting an entry form may not guarantee your participation. However, submitting an entry signals your commitment to adhere to the Conditions of Play.

TRIAL ENDS: IMPORTANT LAWS OF THE GAME

Before the start of a tournament game, or occasionally in club games, players engage in what is known as "trial ends." These trial ends are an opportunity for players to familiarize themselves with the speed of the green and the width of aim.

During a trial end, the jack is set to a specific length the same as during an actual game. Each player takes turns delivering a bowl, carefully observing its movement on the green. Once each bowl comes to a rest, they are promptly moved away from the jack, and no scoring is recorded.

Typically, players are allowed two, and sometimes four, trial bowls. It is common for players to deliver a bowl on both their forehand and backhand to note any differences that may exist between the two sides of the rink.

After the trial ends have been played in both directions on the green, the scoring game officially begins.

CLUB LEVEL TOURNAMENTS

Most bowls clubs host tournaments.

A **Club** tournament is for club members only. The Club Tournament Director decides on the game format and how many players can participate.

An **Invitational** tournament is for club members and any other players the club invites. An example would be an “Under 25” Invitational for bowlers living in the area.

An **Open** tournament allows any bowler to participate regardless of their membership in the host club or any other club.

DIVISION LEVEL TOURNAMENTS

There are seven divisions in Bowls USA. Divisions host a variety of tournaments during the year, but two tournaments held annually are a Division Open and the Playdowns.

DIVISION OPEN

Division Open is a tournament hosted by a division which is open to Bowls USA players from all divisions or who have membership in World Bowls. The division sets the location and dates for play, then posts it on their division website.

PLAYDOWNS

Playdowns is an annual tournament that is a qualifier for the National Championships.

Here are four important Conditions of Play for the Playdowns:

1. This is not an Open tournament. You can only compete in the Playdowns in the division in which you pay your Bowls USA dues and declare your primary membership. You may not enter another division’s Playdowns.

2. You must be a U.S. citizen.
3. The Playdowns feature four competitions: Men's and Women's Pairs and Men's and Women's Singles. Playdown winners in one event may not compete in the other event.
4. When you enter the Playdowns, you commit to representing your division at the Championships to be held that same year. Likewise, if you are a Runner-Up in the Pairs or in the Singles competition, you commit to competing at the Championships should the winner of that discipline be unable to attend.

NATIONAL LEVEL TOURNAMENTS

Currently, Bowls USA oversees two national level tournaments.

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

This tournament is a competition between the Playdown winners from each division: winners of the Men's Pairs and Men's Singles, and the Women's Pairs and Women's Singles (See Playdowns). The Championships are held every year, moving among the seven divisions of Bowls USA.

The tournament has its own Conditions of Play. The format is a round robin among the 8 teams in each discipline. The tournament begins with an Opening Ceremony and ends with the presentation of awards to the winning players.

The Men's and Women's Singles Champions earn automatic invitations to participate in the World Champion of Champions, a prestigious World Bowls event that invites national champions from around the world.

U.S. OPEN

Every year the "Open" is held in a division where several clubs are in proximity and can accommodate many bowlers at one time. Like division opens, this tournament is open to all Bowls USA members as well as bowlers from across the world who are members of World Bowls. The Open offers matches in six disciplines: Men's Fours, Pairs, and Singles, and Women's Fours, Pairs, and Singles and hosts as many as 300 bowlers. Like the National Championships, this event has its own Conditions of Play.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TOURNAMENTS

World Bowls is the recognized international body for the game of bowls. Bowls USA is a Member National Authority (MNA) along with over 50 other countries.

International events conducted by World Bowls host national teams to compete in:

- World Championships
- World Indoor Singles
- World Champion of Champions Singles
- World Indoor Under 25's

To learn about World Bowls competitions, go to www.worldbowls.com

TEAM USA – THE NATIONAL TEAM

Team USA, the National Team representing Bowls USA, consists of men's and women's teams that participate in international tournaments. In addition to World Bowls events, Team USA may receive invitations from other countries to compete in their international tournaments.



TEAM USA 2023

Any member of Bowls USA can apply to be a part of Team USA. Applications are assessed by National Team Selectors, who consider a player's potential as an international competitor. Players who show promise are invited to a camp for tryouts, where selectors evaluate their abilities and willingness to compete internationally. The final composition of Team USA is determined based on the selectors' assessments.

Team USA is typically comprised of 10 men and 10 women. Depending on their experience and the tournament format, players are selected to participate in specific international events.

How Bowls is Organized

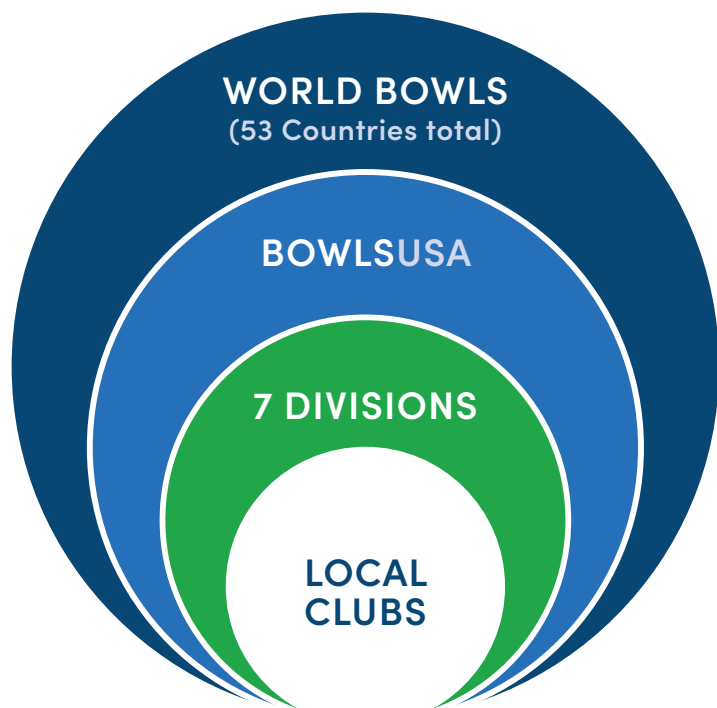


FIGURE 15. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Lawn bowls ensures representation and inclusivity through its organizational structure:

- At the local level, club delegates represent the interests and opinions of their club members at division meetings.
- Divisions, in turn, appoint Councilors who advocate for the needs and perspectives of their division members at Bowls USA meetings.
- Bowls USA, as the national governing body, appoints international delegates who represent the interests of Bowls USA members at World Bowls meetings.

This hierarchical system allows for the exchange of ideas and opinions, ensuring that the voices of lawn bowlers are heard and considered at every level of decision-making.



VISION, MISSION, AND VALUES

VISION

Our vision is for Lawn Bowls to become the most diverse, inclusive, and accessible sport in the United States, where everyone is welcome to participate and succeed regardless of their background, abilities, or identity.

MISSION

Our mission is to foster the growth and promotion of lawn bowls as a sport and to provide support to the community of lawn bowlers at all levels of play in the United States. Through our efforts, we aim to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for players of all backgrounds and abilities, and to help them achieve their full potential while enjoying the game.

VALUES

1. The sport of lawn bowls provides social, recreational, and physical benefits for its participants.
2. BowlsUSA values diversity and inclusivity, welcoming members of all ages, ethnicities, genders, and physical abilities.
3. BowlsUSA strives to foster an equitable and collaborative community where all members are valued and encouraged to contribute their ideas for the betterment of the game.
4. BowlsUSA recognizes and celebrates the essential role of volunteers in advancing the sport and supporting its members.
5. BowlsUSA is committed to responsibly allocating its resources to meet the needs of its divisions, clubs, and bowlers.
6. BowlsUSA leads by example, upholding the principles of transparency, fairness, and integrity in all its actions and decisions.
7. The bowling community respects tradition while embracing and championing beneficial innovation for the advancement of the sport.

Sources and Additional Resources

BOOKS

Crowood Sports Guides: Bowls Skills, Techniques, Tactics, by John Bell, The Crowood Press, 2007.

Lawn Bowls The Game & How to Play It Well, by Robert (Bob) Tuck, Copyright 2020.

Game of Bowls, Pinehurst Lawn Bowls Club, 2019.

Bowls USA Laws of the Sport of Bowls, Crystal Mark Fourth Edition, Bowls USA, 2023.

WEBSITES

[BowlsUSA.us](https://www.bowlsusa.us) including Division Websites

[WorldBowls.com](https://www.worldbowls.com)

INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS

[John Snell](#)

Search "How to lawn bowl" on youtube