

THE GAME

The Bowl – (not a ball), is slightly radially asymmetrical and has a small emblem and ring on one side, a large emblem and ring on the other. Always keep the small ring on the inside of your delivery.

Who can play

The popularity of lawn bowls lies in its unique appeal to people of all ages, sizes, shapes and abilities. Although traditionally played by senior citizens, the sport has been rejuvenated in recent years and the average age of participants in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Malaysia has dropped sharply.

The 2002 Australian movie 'Crackerjack' introduced a new generation to the sport and has significantly boosted casual bowling participants in Australia, with clubs offering social and unstructured 'barefoot' bowling sessions.

The average age of many national representative teams is now significantly younger than that of other sports against which lawn bowls generally competes for the younger demographic, such as cricket and golf.

The bowling green

Is a four sided area of grass or synthetic playing surface surrounded by a ditch.

It is divided into playing areas – rinks, with a chalk line marking the centre of the rink. (In some countries only)





The mat

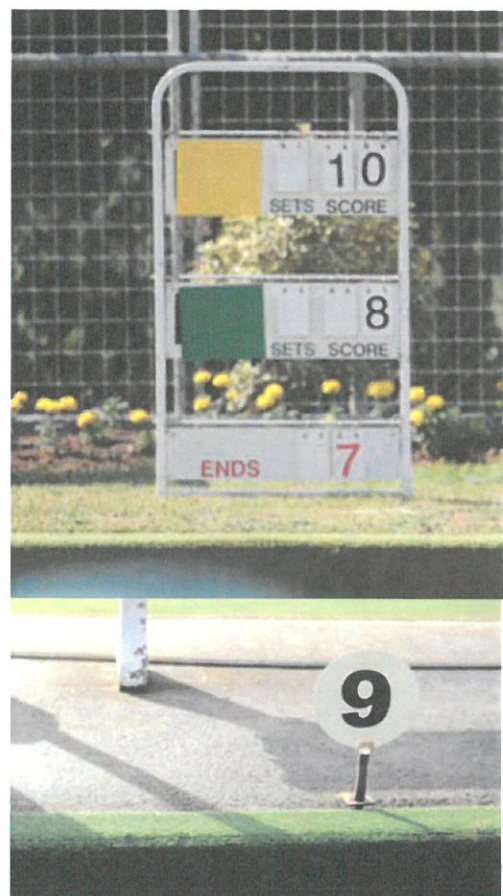
Is either rubber or plastic, is the area from which you deliver the bowl. The mat end is called the rear ditch and the end to which you are bowling is called the front ditch.

The Scoreboard

Is situated at the end of each rink. It displays the opponents names or team colours, the score for the current match and the number of ends played.

The bank

Is the vertical wall of the outer edge of the ditch above the surface of the green. The plinth is the edge of grass which adjoins the ditch. The rink marker is the white disc and number situated on the top of the bank.



The Bowl

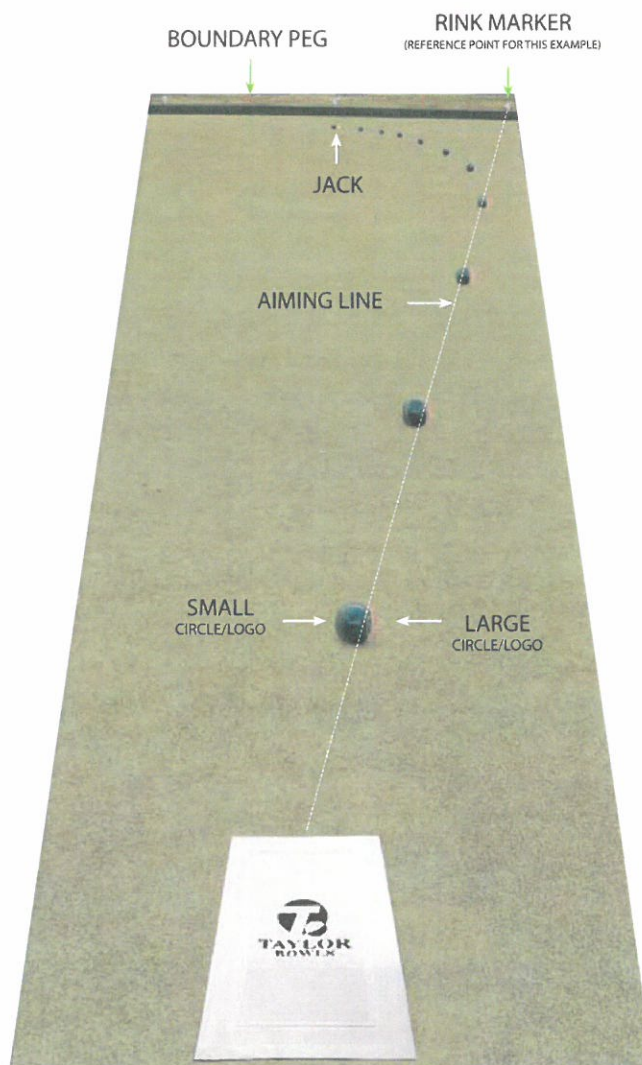
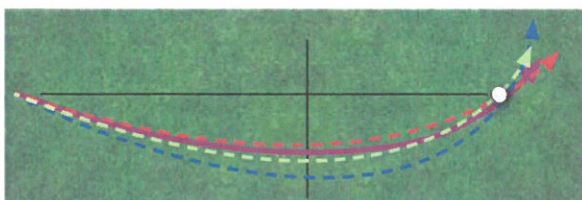
(Not a ball), is slightly radially asymmetrical and has a small emblem and ring on one side, a large emblem and ring on the other. Always keep the small ring on the inside of your delivery.

Bowls are biased, so they do not roll in a straight line but in a curve. This makes the skill of bowling more challenging, as it relies on bowlers judging the distance, weight and aim (or line).

They are solid and reasonably weighty (between 1.4kg - 1.59kg). The weight of a bowl varies depending on the size, with the size of the bowl ranging from sizes 00 to 5 catering to all ages and hand sizes, with 00 being the smallest. The bowl is not a perfect sphere as they are designed to curve as the bowl slows down. 'Bias' is the 'draw' or amount of 'curve' the bowl takes as it rolls smoothly along the green. The curve is due to shape of the running surface which is slightly higher on the non-bias side.

The faster a bowl is delivered the straighter it will run, as it loses speed the bias takes effect, reaching the maximum 'draw' as the bowls slows down towards the target before coming to a stop.

For a beginner, if a genuine bowl is not available, a tennis ball, cricket ball, softball, etc. can be used and the effect of the bias can be created by adding a lump of blu-tac to one side. These balls would be delivered with the lump facing the forehand or backhand to create a curve.



FOREHAND SHOT FOR A RIGHT HANDER
BACKHAND SHOT FOR A LEFT HANDER

Coaching Tip

The 'bias' side is identified by the smaller of the circles or logos marked on the bowl. As you hold the bowl in front of you, the small circles should always be facing the centre of the rink.

Games and activities

There are a number of games which are played in lawn bowls. They include:

- **Singles** – one player against another (opponent), four bowls are played alternatively.
- **Pairs** – two players in each team with two, three or four bowls being used, each player alternating against an opposing team member.
- **Triples** – three players, each playing two or three bowls alternately against an opposing team member.
- **Fours** – four players, each playing two bowls alternately against an opposing team member.

Types of games

Bowls can be played in different ways depending on the type of competition and time available:

- **Number of ends** – For example, a game can be up to 25 ends. The team with the most 'shots' or 'points' after 25 ends is the winner. It can take around four hours to play this format.
- **Sets play** – Similar to tennis, the game is broken into 'sets' of a determined number of ends.
- **Points** – Sometimes you might play a game where the winner is the first to 11 or perhaps 18 points for a longer game
- **Time** – For beginners or juniors, you may want to set a time limit. For example, the team leading after 30 minutes of play is the winner.

Game variations

A number of variations may be played as competition or games.

Consistency

Played by two, three or four players with four, three or two bowls respectively. The objective of the game is to deliver bowls as close to the jack as possible with the four closest bowls scoring,

which can belong to any player, the closest bowl scores four points, the next closest three points, the next two points and the fourth bowl one point.

Target bowls

Played by two, three or four players with two, three or four bowls each. Three circles are carefully chalked on the green and points are gained for delivering a bowl into the circles on a three, two, one basis. (Remember: to consider the time required for four participants using four bowls in the above two variations and the impact on the enjoyment of players.)

Jack target

Against an opponent deliver four jacks to four different positions on the rink, e.g. short, long, wide, narrow – at various lengths. Each player delivers one bowl to each jack. The player does not have to bowl to the same jack in the same order as his opponent. The scoring is as in a singles game. The closest bowl to each jack receives one point.

Role of the Lead, Second, Third and Skip

In a team each player has a different role, it is important to understand these differences.

Lead

- In team games places the mat at the discretion of the skip.
- Delivers the jack as close as possible, to a distance determined by the skip.
- Plays draw shots close to the jack to lay a good foundation for the development of the head.
- A lead should practise the art of delivering the jack and try and perfect the basic shot of the game. "The draw shot."

Second

- Should consolidate the head,
- Should always play up to, or through, the head
- Often undervalued a second player can have a massive influence on a game strengthening existing position or retrieving shot
- Should be open minded and prepared to play a range of shots

Third

- Should be a versatile and experienced player.
- Should be competent in playing all shots. Draw, metre on, resting shot, wresting shot, on shot and drive.
- Is the director for the time spent at the head.
- Acts as the measurer at completion of an end.
- Should have a good knowledge of the rules.
- One of the greatest strengths of a third is his/her ability to relate positively to the skip – being able to take pressure off the skip, as well as motivating and supporting the skip
- Should be a good communicator – giving precise and effective instructions to the skip in the manner the skip is comfortable
- Should act an effective link between the front end of rink and skip

Skip

- The most important player in the rink being in complete charge of it
- Should have wide experience of all playing positions
- Should be able to withstand pressure
- Should be a good communicator and motivator
- Should be adept at shot selection
- Should demonstrate tactical skills taking advantage of opposition weaknesses and utilising his/her team strengths to best effect

Basic Rules Of Bowls

Ensure that your players know and understand the basic rules of bowls and they display good sportsmanship. As the coach you will lead by example and should be able to answer any questions on the basic rules of the sport. A handy tip is to keep a current copy of the World Bowls Law Book in your bowls bag to ensure you can answer any questions which may arise from your players.

Tactics

Bowls is a game of skill which also requires a keen tactical ability. In simplistic terms, your aim as a coach is to ensure your players are aware that the aim of the game is to get as many bowls closer to the jack than one's opposition. Furthermore, you need to ensure your players are aware their aim is to deliver a bowl to a position that blocks your opponent from getting near the jack. This can be of particular advantage when the player already has one or more bowls closer to the jack.

Having said that, another basic strategy to teach is the jack is unlikely to be knocked forwards, so it is better to be a little behind the jack than short (unless the aim is to block the opposition line to the head). Another important tactic is teaching where to place the mat and roll the jack when starting an end. Good coaches educate their players to identify and take advantage of whether their opponent has trouble bowling either short or long distances to the jack.

At this level, tactics is only covered in brief.



Playing the Game

Preparation

Work out a personal strategy for your preparation before a game so that you are relaxed, focused and positive. Whatever that may involve, make sure that you always arrive in good time before a game and that you never have to rush onto the green to play.

Keep It Simple

Do not complicate things. The easier shot is usually the right one.

Reacting on the Day

Plan to play to your strengths and your opponents' weaknesses, learn too to react to the circumstances and conditions on the day. You may find that you are scoring at certain lengths simply because your opponent is worse than you, the bowls may not be close, but you are

finding it better than him. Try to keep that length. Remember that playing a mediocre game but scoring is better than playing well and not.

Scoring with the Draw

Master the draw shot – the vast majority of scoring shots are drawn to the jack. Do not become addicted to the driving shot. It has a valuable role to play, and must be used with discretion.

Watch the Back

Do not lose silly shots by ignoring the position against you at the back of the rink. Always try to cover any accumulation of opposition bowls.

Build the Head

Always ensure that you have more than one bowl in the head. Build the head early. This will increase your shot options later.

Short Bowls

Never be consistently short. Short bowls are the scourge of the game., and are the biggest single factor determining the outcome of the game. Short bowls lose games.

Touchers

Respond to an opposition toucher by trying to get your next bowl as close as possible. It will reduce of your opponent scoring another shot, and it will increase your own shot options.

Positive Play

Do not be negative. While it is unwise to play heavy bowls at the time, it is better to be positive than to be too cautious, particularly when playing at the back end of a rink. If it is possible to draw do so, do not be too tentative, if the hands are difficult to negotiate make sure you attack the head.

Decisions, Decisions

Do not be caught in two minds. Work out your shot options, select the best one and play positively, if you are still deciding whether to draw or drive you will play an in-between shot and miss your line.

Keep it Tight

If both hands are equally true then choose the tighter hand. It should be the easier to play.

Trial Ends

Make the best use of trial ends in competitive games. Watch and learn from all of the bowls being delivered. Stand behind the centre line if you can.

Team Spirit

Support Each Other

Show open and full support for your playing partners. Engage in positive encouragement and appreciation. Shaking hands, a slap on the back and a word of encouragement such as "you can get this" can be great motivators.

Avoid Criticism

Never openly criticize your teammates. Never turn your back on any of their deliveries as a mark of disgust, and do not provide unnecessary or gratuitous information, such as "your narrow" "you are not up" or " you are heavy again. These are the biggest turn-offs in the game.

Hide Your Feelings

Never allow the opposition to see that you are worried or rattled. Be careful your body language does not give you away. Miserable faces and frustrated gestures can inspire opponents. The game as they say "is never over until the fat lady sings". Quite often she may be clearing her throat, also quite often she can be prevented from singing by a spirited fightback.

Work as a Team

A good four/triple/pair know each others' strengths and weaknesses and play the appropriate tactical game to suit. If the situation allows it let the player play the shot he fancies.

Communication

Always communicate instructions and information clearly and concisely. Support your vocal advice with hand signals to indicate distances, which hand to play and shots held.

Etiquette

Just as the coach is a role model in terms of sportsmanship, the same applies to demonstrating appropriate etiquette.

Some of the common etiquettes for the sport of bowls include:

- Wear appropriate footwear (flat soled shoes)
- Avoid dumping bowls
- Avoid leaving the rink for long periods of time
- Avoid resting feet on the plinth
- Avoid straying on to neighbouring rinks
- Hand bowls to one another when convenient
- Avoid distracting players on neighbouring rinks
- Share the task of kicking bowls after the completion of an end

- Avoid distracting players whilst a player is on the mat preparing for delivery
- Refrain from interfering with the head until the result of an end has been agreed upon
- Shake hands at the start and end of the game
- Collect all mats and jacks and return to the usual distribution point

Bowls Environment

Green care

A key role of the coach is to educate your players on the importance of green care. All clubs rely heavily on the quality of their greens and it is the responsibility of all players to ensure the work of the greenkeeper is not detrimentally affected by any player's actions during practice or play.





All players should be advised that appropriate footwear (flat soled shoes) should be worn on the green at all times and twisting or dragging of feet will cause damage to the green. Jacks or bowls should not be dropped or dumped on to the green. Advise players not to stand or sit with their feet on or near the plinth area nor in the ditch.

Coaching Tip

Let new players know how to identify the 'bias' side – by the smaller of the circles or logos marked on the bowl. As you hold the bowl in front of you, the little circles would always be facing the centre of the rink.

Bowls equipment – the bowl

The weight of a bowl varies depending on the size. Bowls are manufactured in different sizes ranging from 00 to size 5, with 00 being the smallest. The appropriate bowl size is determined by several methods relating to the players' hand and finger size, wrist and arm strength. The final decision on choosing bowl weight would be made by the player as to what feels most comfortable. Bowl sizing charts can be used to determine the most appropriate size bowl. Alternatively, a simple method of fitting a bowl in between your players fingers and thumbs may also be used as a guide (see photo). Ultimately, you should ensure your player is comfortable with the size of their choice.

Game time

Many players will think about the opposition and their history or recent form. The most important aspect of being in control is being confident and fully aware of your own game. It is more likely that you will succeed in the game by playing to your strengths and control the various aspects of your game to improve on in the match. You can certainly affect your opponent's impact on the game by the Jack length played in the match and the ability to change the length when necessary.

While some of this comes with experience, a good deal of it comes from to being able to observe accurately and make sound game time decisions. Don't convince yourself that you cannot win the game before you start. Be positive!

Outside influences

It is vital you have an awareness of the things you can control and things you cannot. Sound preparation is all about preparing yourself to control the controllables and limit the influence of the things you cannot control.

The fixture, the opposition, the rules and conditions of play, the playing surface, the venue, any other outside influences (for example, crowds moving, delays at lunch, inconsistent markers/umpires) are all examples of things you cannot control. Therefore, they shouldn't alter your thinking or have a negative influence on your tactical game.

Laws and conditions of play

The laws of the sport of bowls

Just as it is important for a player to know how to play the game, it is equally important to be familiar with the most current laws by which the game is played. World Bowls create the laws that govern the sport of bowls. Bowls is played under these laws right around the world, including Australia except where World Bowls grants an exemption. These exempted laws are covered in Australia's domestic regulations. The domestic regulations are also included in the law book.

The ability to locate laws with ease prevents a time delay during games and allows the correct decision/interpretation to be made quickly and without fuss. Players should have a sound understanding of the index of the law book.

The laws of the sport of bowls is available for purchase from World Bowls. Every player should have an up-to-date copy of the law book.

