

# Your Lawn Bowling Manual

Lawn bowls has stood the test of time, blending strategy, skill, social engagement, physical activity, affordability, competition, and pure enjoyment. While its fundamentals are easy to learn, true mastery is a lifelong pursuit.

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## The Playing Surface

Bowls is played on a flat grass surface called a green. A specific rink is marked out on the green, distinguished by:

- Numbers at each end
- White stakes along the banks (marking the boundaries)
- Ditches surrounding the edges of the green

## Equipment

The game uses three key pieces of equipment:

- Bowls: Large, biased balls with an elliptical shape. Because of this shape, bowls curve as they travel, gradually losing speed.
- Jack: A smaller white ball that acts as the target.
- Mat: A rectangular mat placed on the rink from which all deliveries must be made.

The challenge lies in gauging the necessary weight (force of delivery) to reach the Jack and choosing the correct line (path) to guide the bowl as close to the Jack as possible.

## Formats of Play

Lawn bowls can be played in different team formats:

- Singles
- Pairs
- Triples
- Rinks (Fours)

Each team's bowls form a matched set and feature distinct markings so they can be identified during competition.

## Setting Up the Game

Games are usually played over a predetermined number of ends (rounds). Singles games are often played until one player reaches 21 points.

- A coin toss determines which team starts. The winner can choose to deliver first or last.
- The winner of the toss chooses if they or the other team will place the mat.

## The Mat & Jack

The player rolling the Jack also places the mat.

- The mat must be set centrally on the rink, at least two meters from the near ditch and not past the nearest hog line.
- A legal delivery requires the player to have one foot on or above the mat at the point of release.

The Jack is rolled first and always travels in a straight line without bias. Players can roll the Jack at varying distances between the hog line and the ditch. This variation changes

the overall length of the end and can be used to suit team strategy or to exploit an opponent's weaknesses.

Once the Jack is centered, it becomes the target for that end.

## Delivering the Bowls

After the Jack is centered, teams alternate deliveries.

- In team play, the order is leads first, followed by seconds, thirds, and finally skips.
- Players alternate until all bowls have been delivered.

Because of the bowls' bias, they curve as they roll. Choosing the right combination of line and weight is the essence of skilled play.

## Scoring

After all bowls are delivered, the end concludes and scoring is determined:

- Points ("shots") are awarded to the team with the bowl closest to the Jack.
- Additional points are awarded for each bowl that is closer to the Jack than the opponent's nearest bowl.

Special situations can affect play:

- If the Jack is bumped into the ditch or off the green, it can dramatically alter scoring and strategy.
- Defensive or attacking shots may be required depending on how the head (the cluster of bowls and the Jack) develops.

The team that wins the end is responsible for:

1. Rolling the Jack to start the next end.
2. Delivering the first bowl of that end.

## Strategy in Play

Because both the Jack and bowls can be moved, the game is dynamic and constantly changing. Players must adapt their tactics based on the evolving situation. Common strategies include:

- Draw shots – rolling a bowl carefully to rest near the Jack.
- Blockers – delivering a bowl to block an opponent's path.

- Drives – using force to disturb the head or move bowls out of play.
- Promoting – nudging a teammate’s bowl into a better position.

Careful observation of opponents’ bowls is essential, since a single shot can shift the position of the Jack and change the outcome of the end.

## Etiquette

### Good Sportsmanship

- Begin and end each game with a handshake.
- Refrain from distracting your opponent while they’re on the mat preparing to bowl.
- Appreciate good shots, whether they’re made by your opponent or your own team.
- Gracefully acknowledge fortunate shots made by either team.
- Avoid thanking opponents for unintended results that favor you.
- Resist the urge to verbally influence bowls to achieve desired outcomes.

### Green Preservation

- Treat the green with care by not bouncing bowls and maintaining proper delivery posture.
- Always wear appropriate footwear when on the green.
- Minimize time away from the green during the game.
- Stay within your designated rink boundaries.
- Hand bowls to each other conveniently.
- Return mats and jacks to storage after the game.

### Where to Stand

- Stay behind the mat or the head when it’s not your turn to bowl.
- Move behind the mat once your bowl comes to rest, as the possession of the rink shifts to your opponent.
- Avoid obstructing your opponent’s view of the bowl’s path.
- Stand still if you’re in the line of vision of a player on the mat.
- Don’t block boundary pegs or rink markers.

## Handling Wins and Losses

- Support your team members regardless of the outcome.
- If you're the skip, refrain from commenting on a player's bad bowl; mistakes happen to everyone.
- Be gracious whether you win or lose; both are part of the game.
- Embrace the game and always strive to do your best.

## Know and Respect the Rules

- Familiarize yourself with the Laws of the Sport of Bowls.
- Always accept and respect decisions made by officials.