



Welcome to the wonderful world of bowls !

The origins of Bowls are comparable to some of our other great sports like golf and cricket being set against Victorian/Edwardian attitudes when the focus was on civil, respectful, fair and honest competition. To reflect the slightly more serious tone of this page we have taken the headmasters stance on selling the game to you. It's a long read and may get a bit boring in places, the good news is we won't be setting an exam paper at the end. Enjoy !

Instructions for new bowlers

You have been admitted into the membership of a bowling club, and no doubt you are keenly awaiting your participation in the game of bowls.

This page is compiled for you, pointing out what is expected of you as a member of your county organisation and your club, your general attitude to your fellow players and the playing of the game.

If you have played other sports in the past you will find that your ball game aptitude will be invaluable during your bowling career.

Tolerance, good fellowship to your opponents and indeed your club mates is unsurpassed in any other sport. To foster this comradeship in our great game prompts this advice. Let us now tell you something of its ramifications.

Your Club

You have been accepted into your club and are now a working part of it. At the outset, don't believe that you have joined only to play bowls. Every member assumes responsibility immediately he is admitted. You will find that the officers of the club generously give their time and energy so that you can enjoy and play game. Be appreciative of them, do everything you can to make their work as easy as possible; be punctual; willing to abide by their decisions, realising that they are made not just for you, but for the betterment of all. Support all social function and such like, organised for the good of the club and your enjoyment.

Never let your club down, be proud of it and at all times put it before yourself. Do nothing in your actions, words or appearance which will reflect against your club. Do your part to enhance its reputation so that it be known as a fine club.

Your Green

Your playing enjoyment is derived on the bowling green. This green is prepared by a green keeper or a club member who in the absence of a green keeper acts as such, and please remember that whoever it is he has a very difficult job. Often he is endeavouring to maintain a playing surface under adverse conditions. He is striving to grow grass for us to play on under all weather conditions. On our part we walk continually over the green, placing the mat without any consideration for wear; expecting to play afternoon and evening up to seven days a week. The result is that wear shows in patches, or some disease develops on the green and the green keeper is criticised for his incompetence. Your liaison with your green keeper is your green ranger, or a

senior officer of the club. The ranger in privately managed clubs is elected by your club, to in effect, be the manager of the green, in consultation with the green keeper. Never approach the green keeper regarding any criticism of the green, go to the ranger – *better still do not complain at all*. Help them by your thoughtfulness and tolerance; knowing that they are endeavouring to give you the best conditions possible and simply must protect the green against too much play. Do nothing to damage the green, either in your delivery or in any other way. It is essential that you develop clean grassing of your bowl without any bump.

Yourself

It is my belief, and I think that you will find that you will get out of the game of bowls just what you put into it. Your approach should be one of enthusiasm, friendliness, good fellowship and tolerance. Do not be upset by the first minor happening you feel to be unfair. By your desire to learn the game and accept responsibilities as a good member you will quickly be accepted by the more experienced members. Remember it is the calibre of individual members which combine to make a club. So play your part and make yours a good club.

Etiquette

According to the dictionary, etiquette means ‘the art of behaviour’. This does not mean that etiquette is the explanation of the duties of the various players in the team; but it is those little extras that give this wonderful game of bowls its great charm. Friendly sporting acts towards your team mates and opponents are appreciated and are reciprocated. Such acts could be; to keep still whilst others are delivering their bowls; to stand behind the jack and away from the head, perfectly still, or one metre behind the mat; commendation of a good shot by a team member or opponent; being frank in admitting a fluke when you receive one, and remember it when at some later time your opponent gets such a fluke against you!

Dress

Everything is changing in the bowls world as far as dress goes. Suffice to say the only thing you must always wear is a flat soled pair of shoes to protect the green. Forget about the days of being in boring old white gear from head to toe, it's all about colour now and having a bit of an identity.

The game of Bowls

Bowls is a relatively simple game. The action required to deliver a bowl is based on a fairly natural physical movement. It is not too difficult to learn and there are a number of qualified instructors willing to teach absolute beginners.

The beginner is often able, within a relatively short period of time, to bowl with some measure of success. It can be the case, that anyone visiting their local bowls club would find some member who might introduce them to the game of bowls. In the present day there are over 5,000 instructors in England alone who will introduce the beginner to the game according to the syllabus and guidelines of the English Bowls Coaching Scheme.

The instruction they offer is practical, on the green and geared towards getting the beginner bowling as soon as possible. The beginner will need to have a pair of flat soled shoes or overshoes, and for this first session would be able to borrow a set of four bowls to use.



Different formats of the game

Singles

When two players bowl four bowls alternately, the winner being the first player to score 21 shots.

Pairs

Two players constitute a team, the leads play four bowls alternately followed by the skips. The skip is also in charge of the tactical development of the game.

18 or 21 ends constitutes a game of pairs – the winner being the pair who have scored the most shots at the end of the 18 or 21 ends.

Triples

Constituted by three players. Lead, second and Skip and played over 18 ends. The triple scoring most shots after the 18 ends is declared the winner. Once again each player bowls three bowls alternatively.

Fours

A team of four players who bowl two bowls alternatively for 18 or 21 ends. Leads, seconds, third and skip. The winner being the team with the most shots after 18 or 21 ends. Each player in the team has certain duties to perform during the game, these are:

Leads

- a) Lay the mat
- b) Deliver the Jack
- c) Delivers mainly draw shots to lay good foundation for the development of the head.

Second

- a) Records the progress of the game on the rink scoreboard
- b) Should be a capable and versatile player as he may be called upon to play all types of shots.

Third

- a) Acts as the measurer to determine the number of shots scored each end.
- b) Directs the skip in choice of shot to play
- c) Must have a good knowledge of the laws of the game
- d) Should be a versatile and experienced player

Skip

- a) Tosses the coin with his opponent for the right of possession of the mat at the start of the game.
- b) Introduces the team to the opposition
- c) Directs the development of the head
- d) Needs to have a good knowledge of the laws and a sound knowledge of the game
- e) Should be a good tactician, a natural leader, realising that the basis of good teamwork is acceptable leadership
- f) Should be a capable, experienced and versatile exponent of the game since he is in charge of the four.
- e) Keeps record of the score on the scorecard



Object of the game in all formats

The object of play is to direct your bowl as near as possible to the jack, or such objects as may be indicated by the skip. Play is always from the mat.

End explanation

After the completion of playing all the bowls from the mat end of the green, an end has been completed.

Scoring

After the completion of an end the number of your teams bowls which have finished closest to the jack count. Thus, if you have three bowls closer than your opponent your score is three for that end. One shot is allowed for each bowl nearer the jack and the nearest bowl of your opponent. Do not disturb / remove any bowl from the head until the score has been agreed by both sides.

Position on the mat & stance

It is desirable that the feet be positioned on the centre of the mat to avoid the possibility of foot fault. Do not stand square to the jack, but face out to either side of the mat in order that the bowl can be delivered to allow the bias to take effect.

Stance

The diagram above indicates a fairly common stance i.e. feet parallel and slightly apart, pointing along the line on which the bowl is going to travel. The stance should be well balanced and comfortable. The bowl should be held so that the bowler has both comfort and control, and on a line just outside the right hip (for the right handed player) so allowing an unimpeded backswing. Eyes should be looking along the delivery line.

Delivery

Some players prefer to combine the movement of forward stride simultaneously with the backswing – others place the front foot a walking pace in front of and parallel to the back foot before the backswing – It is a matter of personal preference. On the completion of the backswing the player must now consider the forward swing, at the same time bending the knees so that the moment of release the hand holding the bowl is as close to the bowling surface as is possible. This ensures that the bowl is delivered smoothly.

The player steps forward with the left foot and at the same time swings back the right arm holding the bowl. The body is lowered down and the left hand placed on the left knee for support, as the right arm comes forward to deliver the bowl on the green when the body has dipped to the lowest point. For the left handed player, of course the procedure is reversed.

Position of the feet

One foot should be placed on the green in front of the mat, taking a normal walking step, and at the moment of delivery of the bowl. One foot should be wholly on or within the confines of the mat.

Follow through

A smooth follow through is desirable, as in other sports the follow through is most important. The right hand should be brought forward parallel with the body throughout its movement, and continue, even after the bowl has been delivered.

Concentration

Concentration is of course an essential requirement for any bowler aspiring to an improved standard. So many players allow outside factors to interfere with their concentration that it is probably the greatest single reason why they fail to improve. It is often noticeable that even top grade players will play a good shot when attempting to convert or save, but it is surprising how many times the same player will fail to add to the score when they have plenty of room to draw another shot. This is due to a lack of concentration when playing your game – nothing less will do.

Competitive bowls

The game of bowls is a splendid medium for limited exercise, sociability and competitive recreation. The sportsmanship of the player is always to the fore, and this attribute is a vital necessity to all who play it. The newcomer to the game whilst possibly diffident about entering competitions, is strongly advised to play in as much competitive play as possible as this is the means of improving his play, developing his knowledge of the game, and enjoying still further the opportunity of making new friends.

It has been said of bowls that it is a contest calling for courage, skill and self control. It is a test of temper and certainly a revealer of character. It includes companionship with friends, sociability and opportunities for courtesy, kindness and generosity to an opponent. It provides not only physical health but moral stamina. May you have many years of bowling enjoyment in this great fraternity of sportsmen, with a number of lifelong friendships you may make along the way.