**LAWN BOWLS FOR BEGINNERS - HOW TO PLAY BOWLS - A HELPFUL GUIDE**

This is a guide to the rules of lawn bowls for beginners who just want to understand the basics of lawn bowling, without any extra complication. Read our guide, get out on the greens and get playing.

The best way to learn lawn bowls is by playing it. Here is our rundown of the basic rules of lawn bowls; once you understand these you can get out into the greens and learn the rest as you go!

**The Object of the Game**

The aim of lawn bowling is to roll your bowl as close to a smaller white ball (known as the jack) as possible.

You want to get one or more of your bowls closer to the jack than your opponent

**Playing the Game**

What are the rules of lawn bowls?:

A coin is tossed to decide which team bowl first. The first bowler places the mat. It must be placed centrally - see below for more details on how to place the mat.

The first bowler rolls the jack to whatever distance they like. The only restrictions is it must be at least 21 meters from the mat, and must stay out of the ditch. There is usually a marker on the side of the rink to show where the minimum distance is.

Once the jack has come to rest it is placed centrally by the skip or marker with the help of the bowler. The jack now becomes the target.

Teams alternate taking shots. Each member of the team will take all of their shots before the next one takes over. When playing any shot the player bowling must always have one foot on the mat.

Any bowls that are in play can be moved by another shot, and they stay active to where they finish. This includes the jack. Any bowl that finishes in the ditch is considered out of play.

Once all players have finished their shots the game is scored. The winning side gets one point for each bowl that is closer to the jack than their opponent’s nearest bowl.

The winning team will get to go first on the next “end”. This will be played in the opposite direction to the previous end.

**The Equipment**

Here are the basic items needed for a game of bowls:

**The Jack**

The jack is a small ball - usually white, but sometimes yellow. Used as the target in the game. One is required for a game of bowls.

**Bowls**

These are larger balls (referred to as “bowls”) that players use to roll towards the jack. They weigh no more than 1.59 kilograms and are weighted on one side which allows them to curve. The weighted side has a set of big rings engraved on it so you know which side is which. The number of bowls each player requires differs depending on the number of players.

**Mats**

Two mats are required for a game, one is placed at either end of the green. Mats are made of rubber, and are roughly the size of a door mat.

**Placing the mat**

How to place the mat lawn bowls:

What are the lawn bowls mat placement rules? The mat must be placed by the bowler about to roll the jack. The mat must be placed centrally and squarely in line with the rink markers, with the back edge of the mat being at least 2 meters (6ft 6in) away from the ditch and the front edge no more than 25 meters (82ft) from the ditch at the mat end of the rink.

*6.1.1 Before the start of play in each end, the player to play first must place the centre line of the mat lengthwise along the centre line of the rink, with the mat line at least 2 metres from the rear ditch and at least 25 metres from the front ditch.*  *(World Bowls Rules)*

**Scoring the Game**

How to score in lawn bowls:

The winning person/team is determined by who got a bowl closest to the jack.

One point (also known as “shots”) is awarded for each bowl that is closer to the jack than the nearest bowl from the losing team.

The winning player/team gets to roll the jack for the next end.

*22.1 A shot or shots refers to the bowl or bowls (called shot bowls) which is or are nearer to the jack than the nearest bowl played by the opposing team or opponent in Singles (World Bowls Rules)*

**Winning the game**

The team who has received the most points (or “shots”) after all the ends are played is the winner.

**Number of players, bowls and ends**

The number of bowls, and how many ends are played is usually determined by the format of the game, namely how many players are on a team. Here is a general overview of the number of ends and number of bowls required for each format (although there are many variations discussed later).

Number of players Number of bowls (per player) Number of ends played

1 (singles) 4 21

2 (pairs) 4 21

3 (triples) 3 18

4 (fours) 2 21 or 25

There you have it. All you need to know to get out and start playing bowls.

As with any sport there is far more depth to the rules than can be covered in a short summary. Be open to new rules as they arise during a game.

There are a number of different types of shot you can play, and loads of tactics to employ, however the best way to learn is by DOING.

We recommend playing alongside an experienced bowler to help you the rest of the way.

**Common variations**

There are some common variations to the stars game setup described above. We’ll go over a few of these now.

* “First to X” number of shots. This is a common one for singles play. Instead of playing for a certain number of ends, you play until someone gets to a specific score. This is usually “first to 21” or “first to 25” and in tight games it can make for a tense (and sometimes very long!) game
* the highest number of ends won.
* the highest number of sets, usually played against different opponents. These act almost like “mini games” of 9 ends. Best of 3 games is the winner
* 2 bowl games. Again, another variation on the singles, pairs or triples format. In this game each player only gets two bowls. This is a true test of a players’ lead abilities
* 100-Up. This is a variation on singles, where the four bowls closest to the jack, in order score 4, 3, 2, and 1 point respectively. This means possible scores on each end can be 10-0, 9-1, 8-2, 7-3, 6-4 or 5-5. The first player to reach 100 is the winner.

Other variations of the game include:

* Playing until a certain number of shots is reached
* Playing until a time limit is reached

**How long is a game of lawn bowls?**

A game of bowls will last between 1 and a half hours and 3 hours. The duration of a game of bowls will vary depending on the format. Singles will be on the shorter time frame and Fours taking much longer.

**Lawn Bowls Green Dimensions**

A lawn bowls green must be between 31 meters and 40 meters long. Each rink on the green must be between 4.3 meters and 5.8 meters wide. This makes the average 6 rink bowls green between 25.8 meters and 34.8 meters wide.

**Minimum jack length in bowls**

The minimum jack length is 21 meters. This is measured once the jack has come to rest, and is placed in the centre of the rink. The measurement is taken in a straight line from the centre of the mat, to the nearest point of the jack.

If the jack is under 21 meters from the mat the jack is given to the opposition. They will then have to opportunity to re-place the mat and to deliver the jack.

**Maximum jack length in bowls**

The maximum jack length in bowls is 36 meters.

All of the information in this guide can be found in the official Laws of the Sport of Bowls. The latest version is 3.2 released in 2020.

We acknowledge the following Source for articles:

Jack High Bowls (www.jackhighbowls.com)