



RULE 18: BOWLING BALL – ALTERING SURFACE

A significant change in Rule 18 became effective Aug. 1, 2019. Bowlers no longer can use liquids or add anything, including but not limited to rosin or powder, to the surface of the bowling ball. We have created this document to explain how the rule change affects you and your bowling ball(s) during USBC league and tournament play.

Rule 18 – Bowling Ball - Altering Surface

While bowling in USBC competition, a bowling ball cannot:

- a. Have the surface altered by the use of an abrasive.
- b. Be cleaned with any liquid substance or cleaning agent.
- c. Have any foreign material on it including, but not limited to, powder, rosin, marker or paint.

All bowling balls so altered or cleaned must be removed from the competition.

Note: Should a foreign substance appear on the outer surface of a bowling ball which cannot be removed with a dry towel, an approved cleaner may be used with consent from a league or tournament officer.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE RULE CHANGE

1. **When does competition start?** Competition starts once any bowler throws a ball for score in a league or tournament.
2. **Can I clean my ball with an approved cleaner during practice?** You can clean your ball with an approved cleaner during practice, unless otherwise specified by league or tournament rules.
3. **Can I clean my ball with an approved cleaner between games during certified competition?** No. You cannot clean your ball between games, because the competition has started.
4. **Can I clean my ball with an approved cleaner between tournament squads?** You can clean your ball with an approved cleaner between squads unless otherwise specified by tournament rules. "During competition" could be defined by tournaments to include or exclude practice and time between squads.
5. **What type of towels are approved for use during USBC certified competition?** Any dry towel or cloth that does not alter the surface of the bowling ball is allowed. This includes the use of dry shammys.





6. **If I used a towel with a liquid cleaner on it to clean my ball prior to the start of the competition, can I use that same towel to clean the ball during the competition?** No, another towel should be used. That same towel can only be used during the competition once the towel is dry.
7. **If I take a ball out of my bag that I have not bowled with, can I clean it with an approved cleaner?** No, approved cleaners cannot be used once competition has begun. This rule applies to balls from a bowler's bowling bag, locker or car, etc. We suggest you clean all your bowling balls prior to the start of competition.
8. **What happens if a bowler uses a cleaner, abrasive, or puts a foreign substance on the ball?** If the bowler was not aware of the rule, the ball is removed from competition. The bowler also should be given an explanation of the rule. Conversely, if the bowler knows a ball cannot be cleaned, patted with rosin or powder or use an abrasive, the ball must be removed from competition and the games are subject to forfeiture. If there is a question as to whether a bowler knew the rule or not, the league board of directors makes the determination.
9. **Can I pat my ball with rosin or powder if I wipe the ball before it is delivered?** No. Wiping the ball with a towel does not make the ball compliant to the rule. Patting a ball with a product is adding a foreign substance to the ball and cannot be done during competition. A product can only be applied to a bowler's hand and not leave residue on the surface of the ball.
10. **If my ball comes back with residue on it and I cannot clean it with my dry towel, rag or shammy, can I use an approved cleaner?** Yes, provided you get permission from a league officer or tournament official. If you clean your ball without prior permission, you may be asked to remove the ball from competition, and/or the games may be subject to forfeiture.
11. **When I have permission to clean my ball, may I clean the entire ball?** Yes, you may clean the entire surface of a bowling ball or just the area needing to be cleaned.
12. **I have a ball cleaner that has the USBC "Approved Anytime" logo on it. Can I still use the cleaner during competition?** No, the cleaner can no longer be used during competition.
13. **I still see there are products with the USBC "Approved Anytime" logo on it. Why is that?** USBC communicated the rule change with bowling ball cleaner companies prior to the adoption of the rule changes to allow the companies to make the necessary adjustments to labeling and cycle through existing inventories. There will be USBC "Approved Anytime" products in the marketplace until inventories are depleted; however, these products cannot be used during competition.

