



**FUNDAMENTAL LAWS OF THE SPORT OF
BOWLS
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Fundamental Laws of the Sport of Bowls

This booklet goes throughs some of the more common Laws of the Sport of Bowls as detailed in the Crystal Mark Fourth Edition August 2022.

For more details, please consult the official Laws.

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DURING THE ENDS

Choosing the Rinks

The skips in team games or the opponent in singles must make a draw for the rink on which the games are played.

LAW 3.1

For a match requiring one rink, a minimum of two rinks shall be offered to the opponent. For a match requiring more than one rink, the minimum number of rinks offered shall be at least equal to the number of rinks required as follows:

- One rink required = Two rinks offered
- Two rinks required = Two rinks offered
- Four rinks required = Four rinks offered
- Five rinks required = Five rinks offered
- Six rinks required = Six rinks offered

Trial Ends

Before the start of play one trial end must be played in either direction.

LAW 5.1.1

For Domestic play the controlling body can limit the trial ends to none or one.

LAW 5.1.2

Trial ends are played on the same rink as the game being played.

LAW 5.1.3

The number of bowls used cannot exceed the number of bowls being played in the game.

LAW 5.1.4

A bowler can use any combination of bowls taken from different sets, but no more than the number of bowls to be used in the game.

LAW 5.1.5

The second trial end shall be started by the opponent of the team which started the first trial end.

LAW 5.1.6

The team or opponent starting the trial end must; place and centre mat then deliver and centre jack. The jack can be delivered to any length and adjusted by the skip if necessary.

LAW 5.1.7

Once the first bowl has been delivered, the jack cannot be moved and must be replaced to its original position if moved.

LAW 5.1.9

Tossing for Opening Play

The skips in team games or the opponents in singles, toss a coin to decide who starts the game. The winner of the toss decides if they want to; place the mat, deliver the jack and the first bowl. If not, that task goes to the opposition.

LAW 5.2.1

The opposing player cannot refuse to place the mat, deliver the jack and the first bowl.

LAW 5.2.2

From here on the winner of the last end places the mat, delivers the jack and the first bowl.

LAW 5.4

DURING THE ENDS

Drawn Game

If in a final with a fixed number of ends, the game is tied after all ends have been played, an extra end needs to be played to decide the winner.

The skip in team games or the opponents in singles, toss a coin to decide who starts the extra end.

LAW 28.1

The winner of the toss decides if they want to place the mat, deliver the jack and the first bowl. If not, that task goes to the opposition. (The opponents cannot refuse to place the mat, deliver the jack and the first bowl).

LAW 28.2

The end must be played from where the previous end was completed.

LAW 28.3

If the extra end is a tie, another extra end must be played.

LAW 28.4

If more than one extra end is needed the skip in team games or the opponents in singles, toss a coin to decide who starts the extra end.

LAW 28.5

If the extra end is declared dead the first to play on the previous end plays first.

LAW 20.3

Order of play

The team must play their bowls in order of play as outlined on the scorecard.

LAW 11.2.1

Position on rink

Players at the mat end of the rink who are not delivering a bowl must stand at least 1m behind the mat.

LAW 12.1.1

Players at the head who are not controlling play must stand:

- Behind the jack if they are members of the team in possession of the rink,
- Behind the jack and head if they are not in possession of the rink,
- On the surrounds of the green if the jack is in the ditch.

LAW 12.1.2

As soon as a bowl is delivered, the player who is controlling the play must move behind the jack and head.

LAW 12.1.3

Neighbouring rinks

A player must not go into a neighbouring rink where play is in progress.

LAW 12.2.1

A player must not walk in a neighbouring rink while an opponent is about to deliver or delivering their bowl.

LAW 12.2.2

DURING THE ENDS

Possession of the rink

Possession of the rink belongs to the player or team whose bowl is being played.

LAW 13.1

As soon as each bowl comes to rest, possession of the rink passes to opposing player or team after allowing time for marking a toucher as soon as it comes to rest. If a player follows their bowl down the rink, they must be behind the head or mat by the time the bowl comes to rest.

LAW 13.2

A player must not deliver a bowl until the previous bowl comes to rest.

LAW 13.3

Absent players

If 30 minutes after the schedule start time a player is absent the game must continue but:

- The number of bowls played by the defaulting team must be made up by the lead and second, both playing 3 bowls singly in turn,
- For the defaulting team one fourth of the total shots must be deducted after the game has finished.

LAW 39.2.2

Start of Play

In any game the start of play is the delivery of the jack.

LAW 5.3.1

In any end the start of play is the delivery of the jack.

LAW 5.3.2

Mat Rules

The mat line is described as the edge nearest to the front ditch and all measurements are taken from the centre of the mat line at the front of the mat.

At the start

At the start of each end, the front of the mat must be placed at least 2m from the from the rear ditch and at least 25m from the front ditch.

LAW 6.1.1

The mat can be adjusted by the first player before the jack is delivered.

LAW 6.1.2

If after the jack has been delivered and before the first bowl is delivered it is noticed that the mat position is wrong, the opposition repositions the mat and redelivers the jack. The opposition must not deliver the first bowl.

LAW 6.1.3

After the first bowl has been delivered the mat length cannot be altered.

LAW 6.1.4

During the End/Game

After the start of play the mat cannot be removed from its original position unless:

- The mat is moved during play and must be repositioned to its original position,
- The mat is out of line and must be strengthened on the centre line,
- The mat is off the centre line and must be correctly aligned,
- A player picks up the mat before the end is complete and the opposition player must replace the mat.

LAWs 6.2.1 – 6.2.4

DURING THE ENDS

Stance on the Mat

Before delivery of the jack or a bowl, a player must be standing with all or part of at least one foot on the mat. At the moment of deliver the player must have all or part of one foot on or above the mat.

LAW 7.1

Noncompliance with this law results in a foot fault.

LAW 7.3

If the umpire, either by their own observation or on appeal from one of the skips decides a player is foot faulting they should, on the first occasion, warn the player in the presence of the skip, and advise that a warning has been given.

LAW 8.1

On each occasion after this the umpire should have the player's bowl stopped and declared dead.

LAW 8.2

If the bowl disturbs the head, then the opposition skip has the following options:

- Replace the head,
- Leave the head as altered,
- Declare the end dead.

LAW 8.3

Delivering the Jack

If the jack comes to rest less than 2m from the front ditch, then the jack must be recentred and replaced on the 2m position which is achieved by placing the jack alongside the edge of a 2m measuring stick.

LAW 9.2

After the first bowl has been delivered then the jack cannot be repositioned.

LAW 9.7

Improper delivery of Jack

The jack has been improperly delivered if it comes to rest:

- In the ditch,
- Completely outside the boundaries of the rink,
- At a distance of less than 23m from the front of the mat to the nearest point of the jack,
- On the rink after contact with the face or bank,
- On the rink after any contact with objects completely outside the rink.

LAW 10.1.1 – 10.1.5

If a player improperly delivers the jack the opposing player must place the mat, re-deliver and centre the jack. The opposing team must not play first.

LAW 10.2

If the jack is improperly delivered once by each player in any end, then the jack is centred on the 2m line from the ditch using a 2m measuring stick. The first player to play places the mat, delivers the jack and delivers the first bowl.

LAW 10.3

DURING THE ENDS

Touchers

A bowl, that in the course of its travel (from the hand until it comes to rest) touches the jack either directly or by touching other bowls on its way is called a Toucher.

LAWS 14.1

Bowls in motion (being moved by other bowls hitting them) that touch the jack are called non-touchers.

LAWS 14.1

A bowl is also a toucher if:

- After coming to rest it falls and touches the jack before the next bowl is delivered,
- It is the last bowl of the end and falls to touches the jack within a 30 second period.

LAW 14.2

No bowl can become a toucher when the jack is in the ditch.

LAW 14.3

The position of a toucher in the ditch must be marked with an indicator on the face or on top of the bank. As well as the indicator, a line can be drawn with chalk around the toucher.

LAW 14.4

Marking a toucher

A toucher must be marked with chalk by a member of the team who delivered the bowl as soon as it comes to rest.

LAW 15.1

If by marking the toucher there is a possibility of it moving, then the bowl can be nominated as a toucher.

LAW 15.2

If before the next delivered bowl has come to rest, the toucher is neither marked nor nominated it ceases to become a toucher.

LAW 15.3

If a player fails to remove the mark from a bowl before delivery and that bowl does not become a toucher a member of the opposing team should remove the mark.

LAW 15.5

Movement of Touchers

The position of a toucher in the ditch can be altered if moved by:

- The jack,
- Another toucher.

LAW 16.1

If a toucher in the ditch is moved by a non-toucher entering the ditch, the opponent must reposition the toucher to its former position. The non-toucher entering the ditch is a dead bowl and should be removed from play.

LAW 16.2

Dead Bowls

A bowl is considered dead if:

- It is not a toucher and come to rest in the ditch,
- It is not a toucher and rebounds back onto the rink after contact with the face of the bank or a jack or toucher in the ditch,
- It comes to rest less than 14m from the front the mat,
- It finishes completely outside the boundaries of the rink of play.

LAW 17.1

DURING THE ENDS

A bowl is not considered dead if it:

- Is carried by a player while inspecting the head,
- Has passed outside the boundaries of the rink during delivery but comes to rest inside the boundaries of the rink of play,
- Is a toucher and rebounds from the face of the bank back onto the rink of play,
- Is a toucher and comes to rest on the jack or another toucher.

LAW 17.2

The skips in team games or opponents in singles must decide whether a bowl is dead as soon as possible.

LAW 17.3

A dead bowl must be removed from the rink of play as soon as it has been declared dead.

LAW 17.4

Live jack in the ditch.

A jack that is moved by a bowl in play into the front ditch and remains within the side boundaries of the rink is a live jack.

LAW 18.1

The position of the jack must be marked by a white marker of the face or on top of the bank. As well as the indicator, a line can be drawn with chalk around the jack.

LAW 18.2

The position of a jack in the ditch can be moved by a toucher entering the ditch.

LAW 18.3

If a jack in the ditch is moved by a non-toucher entering the ditch, then the opposing skip must replace the jack to its former position in the ditch and remove the dead bowl.

LAW 18.4

Dead Jack

The jack is considered dead if it:

- Comes to rest outside the rink of play,
- Comes to rest in a hollow in the face of the bank,
- Comes to rest at a distance less than 20m from the front of the mat.

LAW 19.1

The jack is not dead if it comes to rest on top of a toucher in the ditch.

LAW 19.2

If the jack is dead, then the end is considered dead and must be replayed.

LAW 19.4

Rebounding Jack

The end will continue if:

- A jack on the rink, is driven against the face of the bank and rebounds back onto the rink of play,
- A jack is at rest in the ditch, and it is moved by a toucher such that it ends back on the rink of play.

LAWs 21.1- 21.2

DURING THE ENDS

Driving or Firing Shots

These shots are recognised shots within the game of lawn bowls and carry a strategic risk due to high probability of missing the intended target and the unpredictability of the bowls and jack being hit at the head.

There is however a safety issue due to the power of the shot and it is the responsibility of the bowler to clearly warn those at the head of their intentions "I am Firing this bowl". This allows those in the head to move to a safe position either on the bank or to the side of the rink to prevent hit bowls interfering with neighbouring heads.

Failure to shout a warning will be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will result in the bowl being declared Dead and the opposing skip replacing the bowls to their original position.

Delivery of final bowl

It is not compulsory for the final bowl in the end to be delivered, but the player must tell the opposition.

LAW 25

Playing out of turn

If a player plays out of turn the opposing skip can stop the bowl and return it to the player to play in the correct order.

LAW 29.1

If the bowl has come to rest without disturbing the head the opposition skip must choose whether to:

- Leave the head as it is and have their team play two bowls,
- Return the bowl and get back to correct order of play.

LAW 29.1.2

If the bowl has disturbed the head the opposition skip must choose whether to:

- Leave the head disturbed and have their team play two bowls,
- Replace the head in its former position, return the bowl and get back to correct order of play,
- Declare the end dead.

LAW 29.1.3

Playing another player's bowl

If a player plays another player's bowl, the other player bowl must be replaced with the player's own bowl.

LAW 29.2.1

If the bowl which was replaced was a toucher, then the player's own bowl will become a toucher.

LAW 29.2.2

Inspecting the Head

After delivering their first bowl, players will only be allowed to walk up to the head under the following conditions:

- Singles Game – the opponents after delivery of their third and fourth bowls,
- Pairs Game (4 bowls each)
 - The leads, after delivery of their third and fourth bowls,
 - The skip, after deliver of their second, third and fourth bowls.
- Pair Game (2 Bowls each)
 - The leads, after delivery of their second bowls,
 - The skip, after the delivery of each of their bowls.

Appendix A.4.1.1 – A.4.1.4

DURING THE ENDS

Delaying (slow) play

Players must play without undue delay and in a way which does not prevent their opponents from being able to play their bowls.

Appendix A.5

Leaving the Green

No player must delay play by leaving the green unless their opponent agrees and then only for 10 minutes.

LAW 32.1

If a player has to leave a team game and cannot return within 10 minutes an approved substitute can be introduced.

LAW 32.2

If a player has to leave the green in a singles game and cannot return within 10 minutes the game will default to the opponent.

LAW 32.7

Game Stoppages

If an end is stopped because of darkness or weather condition the game must be continued on the same or different day. The score will be as they are when the game stopped.

LAW 33.1

If an end has started but all the bowls have not been played it must be declared dead even if one or more players remain on the green during stoppages.

LAW 33.2

If all the bowls have been played the process of deciding the scores must be completed before the games stops.

LAW 33.3

END OUTCOME

There are only three outcomes to an end:

- Scoring,
- Tied End,
- Dead End.

Scoring

The shot or shots are the number of bowls which are nearer to the jack than the nearest opposition bowl.

LAW 22.1

No bowl must be moved until the opponents have agreed whether it is a shot or not.

LAW 22.2

As each shot is agreed they can be removed from the head.

LAW 22.3

Deciding the number of shots scored must not start until after the last bowl required to be played has come to rest or 30 seconds after the skip has asked for this time-period, in case the bowl is at an angle and falls on its own accord.

LAW 23.1

No bowl which is likely to fall can be secured during this 30 second period.

LAW 23.2

No measuring can start until after the last bowl has come to rest or after the 30 second period.

LAW 23.3

All measurement must be made between the nearest points of the jack and the bowl.

LAW 23.4

At any time during the process of deciding the number of shots:

- A bowl is likely to fall, wedges can be used to secure its position,
- A bowl falls of its own accord, it must be left in its new position while deciding the number of shots continues and all shots agreed before the bowl fell count.

LAW 23.6.1 – 23.6.5

Tied End

There will be no shot scored by either team if:

- The nearest bowl of each team is touching the jack,
- The nearest bowls of each team are equal distance from the jack,
- No live bowls are left within the boundaries of the rink of play.

LAW 24.1.1 -24.1.3

The end must be declared tied and recorded on the score card as a complete end.

LAW 24.2

The player who went first, places the mat, delivers the jack and the first bowl.

LAW 24.3

Dead End

If the jack is dead, then it is considered a dead end and must be replayed.

LAW 19.4

A dead end is not counted as a complete end even if all the bowls have been played.

END OUTCOME

LAW 20.1

A dead end must be replayed in the same direction unless the skips or opponents in singles agree to play in the opposite direction.

LAW 20.2

If the end is declared dead, then the first to play in that end must be the first to play when the end is replayed.

LAW 20.3

CARDS & SCOREBOARD

The skips must:

- Be responsible for the score card during play,
- Make sure all names of all players are entered correctly on the score card,
- Record, on the score card, all shots scored for and against both teams as each end is completed,
- Compare and agree the score card with that of the opposing skip as each end is completed,
- At the end of the game, sign their own and the opposing skip's score cards.

LAW 40.1.7

MISC

SPECTATORS

Spectators are an important and welcome part of the game.

They must stay outside the boundaries of the green and clear of the players.

Law 45.1

They must not disturb or advise players in any way.

LAW 45.3

The umpire can ask the spectator to stay within the law and if necessary, ask the controlling body to take action.

LAW 45.4

No betting on a game within the grounds of any club.

LAW 45.5