

Welcome to our tutorial on lawn bowls.

The Objective of the Game

The object of the game is to deliver bowls closer to the jack (the small white ball) than your opponent to earn the right to score points. The player or team with the closest bowl to the jack earns one point, or "shot," for each bowl closer to the jack than the nearest opponent bowl.

Game Formats

There are three game formats:

SHOTS – In this format, a game point is predetermined. In Singles championship play it's 21 points. As scoring bowls are called "shots," the first player to attain 21 shots is the winner of the game.

ENDS – In this format, a game is comprised of a predetermined number of ends, ranging from 15 to 21. The team with the most points after playing the predetermined number of ends is the winner of the game.

TIME – In this format, a game is played for a predetermined period of time. The team with the most points at the end of this time period is the winner of the game. (this format is mainly adopted in indoor games where you may book a rink for a set period of time say 2 hours).

Singles, Teams and Sides

Bowls is played between opponents in various arrangements, including Singles, Teams and Sides.

SINGLES – This is a game between two players, each playing two, three or four bowls singly and alternately. In championship matches, the first player to earn 21 points is the winner.

TEAMS – Teams may be comprised of two, three or four players.

Pairs – This is a game between two teams comprised of two players each. In championship matches, a Pairs game is 21 ends, four bowls per player, played alternately.

Triples – This is a game between two teams comprised of three players each. In championship matches, a Triples game is 18 ends, three bowls per player, played alternately.

Fours – This is a game between two teams comprised of four players each: Lead, Second, Third and Skip. In championship matches, a Fours game is 21 ends, two bowls per player, played alternately. Fours Play is the basis of the game of bowls.

SIDES – This is a match between any agreed number of teams and/or singles players, whose combined scores determine the results of the match.

The Green

The green is the rectangular playing surface bounded by a ditch and divided into playing areas called rinks.

The Rink

A rink is comprised of several features.

THE DITCHES – A rink is terminated at each end by a ditch. The front ditch is at the far end, and the rear ditch is behind the mat. Both ditches are within the boundaries of the rink. A bowl falling into the front ditch is considered "dead" unless it first touches the jack before falling into the ditch – in which case it's called a "toucher" and remains in play.

In Federation format bowls, ALL bowls that fall into the ditch are considered "dead" and are removed from the ditch.

THE BANK – A defined area beyond the ditch is called the bank. The face of the bank rises higher than the level of the green and facilitates markers that indicate the centre and side lines of each rink.

THE SIDE LINES – Side lines are not marked on the rink, but are indicated by markers on the face of the bank. Bowls that travel beyond the sideline but curve back in are still in play.

The Mat – The mat is placed on the center line of the rink by the lead bowler of each end. One foot of the bowler must be on the mat when delivering the bowl or jack. A second mat is used at the other end of the rink for the return end.

The Jack

The jack, the small white ball, is delivered first, to establish the target.

A coin is flipped to determine which player/team delivers the jack to start the game. The winner of the previous end delivers the jack to start the next end.

Once in play, the jack may be knocked by a bowl to a new position.

Delivering the Jack

First the jack must be properly delivered.

Then it must be centred at that distance.

If it's a long delivery — within 2m of the front ditch — the jack must be spotted on the centre line at a point 2m from the ditch.

Improper Delivery of the Jack

If the jack is not properly delivered it must be returned and given to the opposing team to deliver. Following are examples of a jack improperly delivered:

When the jack is delivered ***less than 23m from the mat***

When the jack is delivered ***too long and falls into the front ditch***

When the jack is delivered ***outside the side boundary of the rink***

Regardless of who delivers the jack, the winner of the previous end remains the lead bowler.

The Bowls

Bowls are available in a choice of nine sizes and weights.

The interesting feature about bowls is that they are not exactly symmetrical — one side is more rounded than the other, causing the bowl to curve to one side as it slows down. This is referred to as the "bias" of the bowl.

Scoring

At the completion of an end, only the player/team with the closest bowl to the jack is entitled to score points — one point for each bowl closer to the jack than the nearest opponent bowl.

In Federation Bowls, any bowl (sometimes called 'woods' because when the game first started the bowls were actually made of wood) must be within 2M of the jack to score, bowls outside 2M distance do not count.

Sometimes it's difficult to eyeball which of two bowls is closer to the jack. For this reason, players usually carry a measuring device devised for this purpose, but bowls can't be measured until the end is completed.