

Bowls - Back to Basics

Here's a selection of the basics we can work on to help improve our game.

Grip and Stance

Grip options are: Cradle or a Claw or somewhere in between.

Stance/Delivery (feet and shoulders) - Fixed (crouch) - Semi-fixed with a fixed step forward before delivery of the bowl or the step and deliver in one motion a Shooter stance with the lead foot facing the line of delivery with the other foot at an angle behind you. A Consistent approach to the mat along with a Consistent position on the mat plus a Consistent delivery action will help to work wonders.

Delivery and Line

The aiming point

The line you are taking does not change with the length you are bowling. It is the line the bowl will take towards the jack.

Very important to have a consistent bowling delivery

Approach the mat in line with your aiming point

Ensure your shoulders are square to your aiming point

Use a pendulum action that is square to your shoulders and in-line with your aiming point

Aiming Points

Bank or ditch You can use the rink boundary markers as a point of reference.

Jack Length The distance from the mat to the jack will also help you to gauge the length of the delivery required as well.

Shoulder The point at which your bowl starts to bend.

Close A point on the green 1 – 3 metres in front of the bowler or a position on the Bank/Ditch. The choice is yours. Use whatever works for you.

Finding the Line when Drawing

Here's a coaching exercise that should help you to discover the best line into the jack for you and your bowls.

You will need 4 disks. Place the mat on the 2 metre point.

Bowl a forehand wood and ask a colleague to place a disk on the line your bowl took, about 3 metres from the front of the mat. Look at where your wood finishes, is it on the centre line? If it finishes within 1 foot of the centre line your line is about right. If it crossed the centre line you are too narrow. If it did not cross the centre line you are too wide. Adjust your disk appropriately (an inch this end is about a yard at the jack line) Do the same for both hands, from both ends.

The Mat and Jack □ **Placing the Mat.**

The front of the mat must be at least 2m from the rear ditch and 25m from the front ditch. After 2 improper deliveries of the Jack, the jack is placed on the 2m line and the mat is placed by the team who went first. The Jack length cannot be questioned once the first bowl has been delivered. If the mat is placed incorrectly, and the jack delivered, the opposing lead places the mat and delivers the Jack. The mat cannot be questioned once the first bowl has been delivered.

Foot Faulting Before delivery the player must be standing on the mat with all or part of one foot on the mat. At the moment of delivery the player must have all or part of one foot on or above the mat.

Delivering the Jack Accurate Jack delivery can win matches! Practice if you are a lead or a singles player.

The Basics Revisited

Although everyone has their own style of stance and delivery, sometimes dictated by their physical abilities, the principles of bowls remain the same for ALL players and may well be worth re-visiting frequently: Adopt a consistent stance on the mat, with feet pointing along the line of delivery; Shoulders should be square to the line of delivery; The 'step' (if taken) should be along the line of delivery; Straight-line arm swing, with shoulder, elbow and wrist in line; Follow-through along the line of delivery, ending palm uppermost (feel the rain), with fingers pointing at the aiming point (along the delivery line).

Length Control

Adjusting Length of delivery Backswing - Length of step and follow through - Speed of Delivery - Gauging length required - Estimate length between 23m and 30m, by sight. Distance from the mat or 23m line and calculate. Remember that the distance the bowl has to travel will increase the more bias your bowls have. Think about how to adjust your weight if long/short.

Avoid Bumping – Delivering the bowl from height.

A wood not delivered at surface level, that is dropped from a height, will take some weight off the bowl. The problem is caused by our knees not bending as much as they used to when we were younger. The cure is ensure your knees are bent a little further when you take up your stance on the mat. Make sure they remain in that position. Consider adopting the semi-fixed stance. Also work on your flexibility through various warm up exercises. If unsure what these are talk to one of the Marldon B.C. Coaching team.

Different lengths

To develop the skill of bowling to jacks at different lengths The exercise is: Place three jacks at short, medium and maximum lengths on the centre line. First bowl to be delivered to furthest Jack, the second to the middle jack and the third to the nearest jack. The fourth bowl to the jack you were furthest from. Complete on backhand one way, forehand coming back, forehand going up and backhand coming back The variation is: Same as above but in reverse, start at the nearest jack, then middle jack, then the furthest jack.

Adjusting Weight

Learning Outcomes to develop the skill of fine adjustment of bowl speed

The Game - Place two jacks 4m apart on the centre line. (28m and 32m) First bowl to be delivered to finish between the two jacks, the second to finish past the first, and so on. Variation; Same as above but in reverse, each subsequent bowl landing shorter than the previous bowl. Progression; reduce the distance between the two jacks to 3 metres.

How to Avoid Hooking

A common problem is 'hooking' your arm across your body, usually on the forehand. On the forehand your arm is thrusting away from your body, which can make the elbow move too far away from your body. The hip can obstruct the movement of the arm away from the body. Solutions Turn your feet on the mat clockwise, which moves your hip out of the way Use the 'shooter' stance. This allows your arm to go forward close to your body in a straight line along your delivery line instead of hooking around your hip.

Q&A: Ask the Coaches

Have a question about strategy, technique, or anything else related to lawn bowls? If yes please talk to your coaching team, and we'll try to provide expert answers and insights to help you overcome challenges you may face whilst playing bowls. Whether you're struggling with consistency or looking for tactical advice, our coaches are here to support you on your quest for improvement.

Graham & Kays Challenge

Getting both the line and the weight right! Drawing is the 'bread and butter' shot, the shot you will be playing 90% of the time, whatever position you are playing.

Set up a number of rinks with different mat positions and Jack lengths (Can be completed on a single rink).

Bowl 2 bowls backhand, and 2 bowls forehand. Re-spot any moved Jacks. Score 1 point for each bowl within 1 yard of the Jack. Keep a scorecard and note your successes on both hands and compare at the end . . .

Which hand is your strongest? Bonus point if 3 bowls are within 1 yard (for a total of 4 points), 2 bonus points if all 4 bowls are within 1 yard (for a total of 6 points)

Play 8 ends in this way, varying the mat position and jack lengths. □ Aim to achieve as high a point total as possible. 30+ 25+ 20+ 15+ 10+ 30+= Out of this world!!
25+= Excellent, 20+= Very Good, but could be better! 15+= Good, but could do with more practice 10+= Okay, but needs more practice

But most of all enjoy your practise sessions!

Graham Sowerby

Bowls England Level 2 Coach & Umpire

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