

Top Tips - Playing in the Rain

Playing lawn bowls in the rain can be tough. Here is a guide on how to play to the best of your abilities in wet conditions.

Playing lawn bowls outdoors is great when the sun is shining, however when the weather turns ugly it's not so much fun.

As much as we dislike it, it is possible that you will have to play in the rain. Potentially it is much harder. It comes with a whole host of additional problems on top of the usual issues of finding line and length.

Here are some of the key issues when playing in the rain as well as some tips to help the next time you play in wet conditions.

Do you play lawn bowls in the rain?

Yes, we play in the rain. Play is only stopped if the rain is deemed so heavy that it either: Endangers the players – either through slipping or thunder. There is a risk to causing serious damage to the green. These rules are also enforced even after the rain has stopped, as time is needed for the ground to dry up after a spell of rain.

Playing in the rain provides many issues, from technical issues, to physical and equipment problems. Here are the top issues I find most bowlers struggle with in the rain.

Keeping your bowls dry. This is probably the most obvious issue – your bowls get wet! This is from the rain but mainly from the running surface as they go down the green.

Most bowlers only have 1 or 2 cloths which is probably not enough for most wet conditions. So often I see bowlers who can keep the bowls dry for 3 or 5 ends, but after that their towel is soaked and they can't get them dry after that.

Wet bowls cause further issues but the main issue is getting them dry and more importantly keeping them dry over 18 + ends.

Maintaining a good grip. The main issue with wet bowls is maintaining a good grip. This can be the most frustrating part of playing in the wet. It can be almost impossible to play once you lose confidence in your grip.

A poor grip leads to: Bowls being “dropped” on delivery causing issues causing bowls to come up short, Bowls wobbling on release causing issues with line control Bowls coming out the side of the hand causing a wasted shot Not only does this affect your game, as shots are not going where they need to go, but it also affects you mentally as you spend more energy and focus on holding the bowl then on the actual shot you are going to play.

Finding a new line: If it starts raining whilst you’re playing then the wet conditions will affect the green and how it plays.

A wet green will play heavier (the bowl won’t travel as far) and will be narrower. The wetter the green, then more these changes will happen. Often a change in conditions will affect the outcome of a game. A team playing well and with a healthy lead may struggle to adapt and will go on to lose the game.

Reaching on long jacks: In particularly wet conditions it can be much harder to reach long jacks. By “reaching” I mean being able to roll the bowl far enough to actually get to the jack. This is compounded by particularly competitive opponents, as once they see you struggle they will keep the jacks long, and effectively keep you out of the game.

Tips for how to play lawn bowls in the rain: There are a few things you can do to help play better in the rain. Here are a few of the best tips I’ve heard over the past few years.

Use plenty of towels as discussed previously. Bring at least 4 or 5 cloths or small towels to games when its clearly going to be wet. Also use one towel to dry and another to drape over the top of the bowls once you have dried them before each end. This keeps them dry as the end progresses.

Change your grip: Most players use some kind of variation of the claw grip, where the finger tips are used to help grip the bowl. This can be very tricky in wet conditions, as the bowl will just slip out from your tips. Some use the cradle grip. This is where you use your hand like a scoop and hold the bowl in the palm of your hand. This means the whole hand is in contact with the bowl, and will give you better grip. Not for mebut could work for you.

Adjust delivery stance: A solution to the slow greens in wet conditions is to adjust your stance. This will provide more body weight through the delivery giving extra force into the bowl. This is considered a better approach than bringing your arm back further, or using more shoulder muscles in the delivery.

These are advised against as the first will affect your line control too much, and the other has a great chance of causing injury.

Re-think line: If it starts to rain during a game, always keep an eye for the change of line. This is more of an awareness thing as opposed to any specific task or action. Watch your opponents & team mates. Get to know what lines they are taking. This gives you far more information to make judgements rather than just focusing on your deliveries. Of course different sets of bowls will be affected differently, so always base any final decisions of the line on your own set. Just use other players' shots as a guide.

Practice ready for the rain: Rain is extremely common in bowls, practice for it.

If you know your grip suffers in the wet, then practice with other grips – such as the cradle grip – during your roll ups and practice sessions.

You could go further by spraying your bowls with water to try and replicate wet conditions.

Conclusion: Playing in the wet can be tough. Wet conditions affect your line, your technique and your mindset, however with the right tools and adjustments you can still perform to the best of your ability.