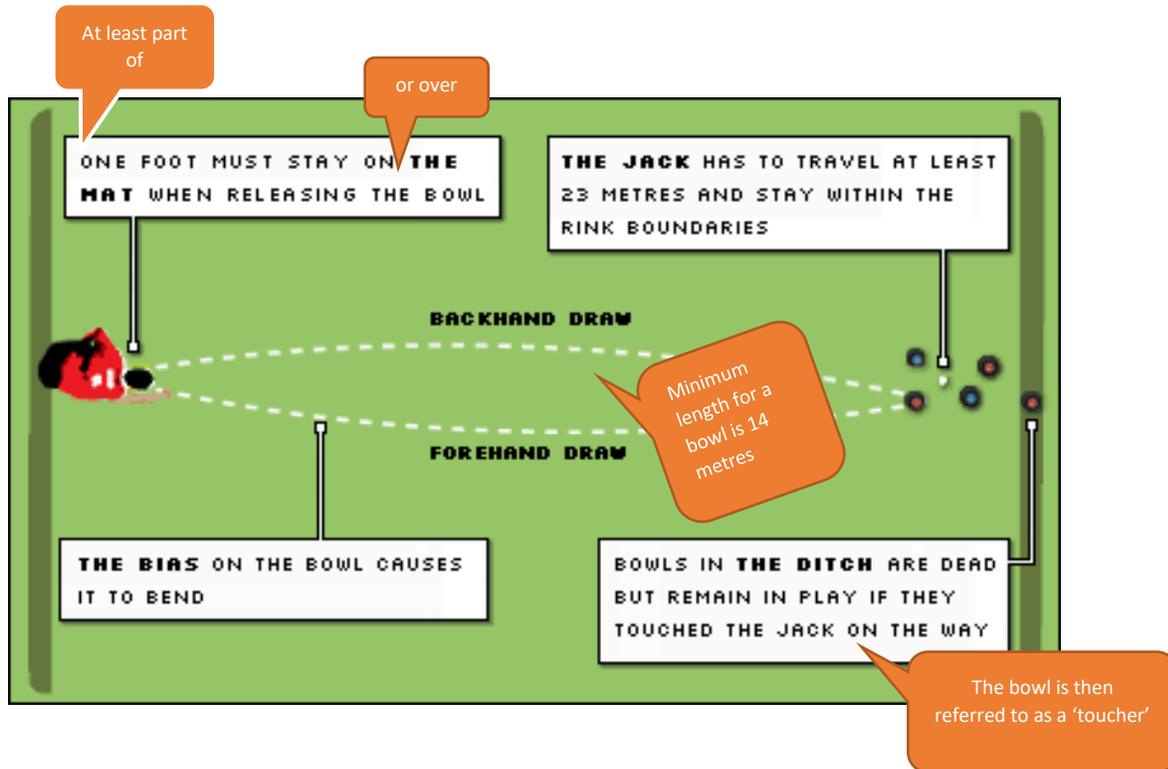


Beginner's guide to bowls*



The aim of the game is simple. Get your bowls as close as possible to a small white ball called the 'jack'.

It might sound easy, but the fact that the bowls do not travel in a straight line seriously adds to the tactical challenge.

Bowls can be played indoors or outdoors, and the rules are the same, with top stars from both formats coming together to play lawn bowls at the Commonwealth Games.

HOW COMPETITIONS UNFOLD

All the action takes place on a standard bowling green, which is a flat square 34-40m long. This is divided into six or eight playing areas called rinks.

Bowls can be played in singles, pairs, triples and four-player teams. Each player has four bowls per end in singles and pairs competitions, three in triples, and two in fours. The team captain is

* Extract adapted from *BBC Bowls – Beginners* http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/other_sports/bowls/4747148.stm by Shirley Phillips

called the 'skip', always plays last and is instrumental in directing the team's shots and tactics. The first person to bowl is called the 'lead'

After a coin toss to decide order of play, the first 'lead' places the mat and rolls the jack to the other end of the green as a target.

The jack must travel at least 23m (past the hog line ) and, when it comes to rest, it is moved across to the centre of the rink by the skip following centring directions from the lead's hand signals.

The players then take turns to bowl. Leads first, then seconds, then thirds (as applicable). The skips then swap places with the rest of the team and they play their bowls in turn.

When all the bowls have been played, a competitor or team gets one point for each of their bowls that is closer to the jack than the opponent's closest bowl.

After all the bowls have been delivered, the direction of play is reversed. This is the end of an "end"!

TYPES OF DELIVERY

The bowls are not quite round. They are shaved on one side which gives them the bias.

As the bowl slows, it begins to roll in the direction of the bias.

Bowlers will therefore change the side of the bias, depending on the direction in which they want the bowl to curve.

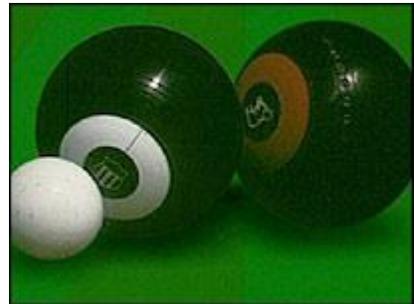
The challenge of all shots is to be able to adjust line and length accordingly.

Bowls, too, have a minimum distance to travel (15m), and if shorter than that will be removed from play for that end.

Draw shot: This allows the bowler to roll the bowl to a specific location without disturbing the other bowls too much.

For a right-handed bowler, 'forehand draw' is initially aimed to the right of the jack, and curves in to the left.

The same bowler can deliver a 'backhand draw' by turning the bowl over in the hand and curving it the opposite way, from left to right. In both cases, the bowl is usually rolled as close to the jack as possible.



Jack: 6.35 cm diameter
Bowls or Woods: 12-13 cm diameter
1.25-1.6kg
Made of a hard plastic composite material

The drive: Involves bowling with considerable force with the aim of knocking either the jack or a specific bowl out of play. There is very little curve on this shot because of the speed of delivery.

Upshot or metre through (used to be called yard on): Involves delivering the bowl with enough power to move the jack or disturb other bowls, but without killing the end.

DITCH RULES

Bowls reaching the ditch are removed from play.

However, if the bowl touches the jack before heading into the ditch it remains 'live' and in play and this is indicated by a chalk mark on the running surface.

If the jack is knocked into the ditch it remains 'live' unless it is out of bounds to the side of the rink.

TACTICS

There can be a large number of bowls on the green towards the conclusion of an end - particularly in the team games - and this gives rise to some complex tactics. (This area is called 'the head'.)

For example, the team with the closest bowl will probably decide not to aim for being close to the jack. It is probably in their interest to opt for a more blocking shot by setting their bowls up to make it difficult for opponents to get their bowls in towards the jack, or to insert a back bowl where the jack may spring to if their opponent moves the jack.

Sometimes we take ourselves too seriously, so remember that we are all here to have fun, relax and enjoy this wonderful game of bowls.

It is customary to shake hands before and after play, and say "*Good bowling!*".

