**Plant shot:** The bowler delivers their bowl to strike other bowls that are in line to gain their objective.
**Rink:** The rectangular area of the green between 4.3 metres and 5.8 metres wide on which play takes place.
**Rink of players (or Fours):** A group of four players against four, each player bowling two bowls.
**Rub Off:** A bowl, which during its running course, comes into light contact with another so that the line of direction can be affected.
**Second bowl:** The bowl which finishes closest to the jack other than the shot bowl.
**Short bowl:** Where a bowl has not been delivered with sufficient pace to reach its objective.
**Short jack:** Near to or the shortest distance allowed from the front edge of the mat to the jack.
**Shoulder of the green:** The point on the green where the bowl begins to curve inwards towards its objective.
**Skip:** The player who captains the fours, triples, or pairs. The last to bowl and is responsible for dictating the tactics of the game.
**Slow (or Heavy) green:** Where the surface offers greater resistance to the progress of the bowl, the bowl will usually take a shorter time to reach its objective, because the green line is much narrower.
**Stance:** Position adopted on mat prior to delivery.
**Scorer:** In a match between teams is responsible for keeping scores on the master scoreboard.
**Shot:** The bowl that is nearest the jack at any stage of play.
**Side (or Team):** Any agreed number of players whose combined scores determine the result of a match.
**Taking the green (or Land):** On forehand or backhand, the bowler bowls to the shoulder so their bowl will curve and come to rest as near as possible to the objective.
**Tied end:** If the nearest bowls of both sides are exactly the same distance from the jack at the completion of the end (for example when both sides have a bowl actually touching the jack) neither side scores, but it is a completed end and should be entered on the score card with no score to either side.
**Toucher on the green:** A bowl that touches the jack during its original course, and before the next bowl is delivered, should be marked with a chalk mark before the next bowl delivered comes to rest.
**Toucher in the ditch:** A toucher which has fallen into the ditch shall be a 'live' bowl, but not if it has come to rest outside the confines of the rink.
**Umpire:** Umpires can be seen in action at events including Club and County finals, Inter-County matches, National Championships, International Matches and Commonwealth Games.
**Using the mat:** Is the movement of the mat (within the limits of the laws) for the purpose of lengthening or shortening the length of the jack.
**Wick:** A bowl comes into contact with another bowl and its course is altered.
**Wide bowl:** Where the player has allowed too much green (or Land) for their bowl.
**Wrecked:** An attempted shot frustrated by contact with another bowl which lay between the mat and the jack.


## Ewell Village Bowling Club

**Gibraltar Recreation Ground West Street, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT17 1XU**

**Club Contact:** **Phone: 07592 233697**

**Club Coach:** **Phone:**

**Email: ewellvillagebc.secretary@gmail.com** **Website: https://ewellvillagebc.co.uk/**


* This document is based on GUIDANCE FOR NEW BOWLERS Issue 14 - which was originally produced by Bowls England. Publication ceased and has subsequently been taken up and reissued by numerous bowls clubs because it provides a useful and comprehensive guide to the sport for beginners. SB 10/2025.



# GUIDANCE FOR NEW BOWLERS Issue 14*


**1. WELCOME** 1
**2. BOWLS BASICS** 2
- The Game
- The Green
- Yourself
- Etiquette
- Dress

**3. INSTRUCTIONS FOR BEGINNERS** 3
- Starting out
- Delivery
- Delivering the jack
- Delivering the bowl

**4. BOWLS** 4
- What makes the bowl turn?
- Choice of bowl

**5. PLAYING THE GAME** 5
- Scoring

**6. FORMATS OF THE GAME OF BOWLS** 5

**7. TECHNICAL SUPPORT** 6
- Position on the mat and stance
- Delivery
- Position of the feet
- Follow through
- Concentration
- Competitive bowls

**8. GLOSSARY OF BOWLING TERMS** 7


## 1. WELCOME

Bowls truly is the sport for all - all ages, all sexes and all abilities.
Bowls is a sport that takes just a short time to learn - and the rest of your bowling career to master.
Bowls is a relatively cheap game compared to other sports and leisure activities. There are now more than 2,000 clubs affiliated to Bowls England where you can learn to play bowls with the help of more experienced players and qualified coaches.

You will find within this guide a basic introduction to the sport, but for more information please contact your nearest club.

### Joining a club

Your first job, if you haven't already, is to join a club. The clubs affiliated to Bowls England are spread across 35 counties, so there should be one near to your home. The most up-to-date information on clubs in your local area can be found on the Bowls England website - just go to: www.bowlsengland.com or telephone 01926 334609. Bowls clubs are very welcoming to new members, and many run open days and social nights to enable you to try the sport for the first time and meet club members in a relaxed environment.

### Your club

It goes without saying that clubs are the backbone of our sport. You will find many volunteers within your Club give their time to carry out a wide range of tasks so that you can enjoy your game, from the Club Secretary and Treasurer to the green keeping and kitchen staff.

Please be appreciative of their efforts and if there is any way you can help “off the green”, I'm sure your club would be pleased to welcome you on board as a volunteer.

**Bowls England**

Bowls England is the National Governing Body for the sport of outdoor flat green bowls in England for both men and women. Our aim is to deliver an exceptional sport and community experience that is appealing, entertaining and accessible to all - regardless of age, sex, race or ability.

As the National Governing Body, Bowls England helps clubs and counties to meet the ever-increasing demands on all organisations - not just bowls clubs - from topics such as insurance and child protection.

We also support and develop the key services that underpin the sport of bowls - for example coaching, umpiring and youth development.

The National Competitions and Championships organised by Bowls England each year are open to all members of affiliated clubs and culminate in National Finals held at various venues across England.

Our competitions are open to all, and provide you with the opportunity to test your new-found skills.

Bowls England is also committed to supporting affiliated clubs, and offers interest-free loans to clubs to enable them to improve facilities and to improve their playing surface and surrounds.

We also work with key external partners at county, regional and national level to raise the profile of the sport.

All this is done without external funding - Bowls England is reliant on member affiliation fees and limited sources of other income.

We are continuing to look at ways of generating additional income through new sponsorship arrangements and other commercial partnerships, and would ask you to support Bowls England's sponsors and partners where possible. Laws of the Sport of Bowls (Crystal Mark Third Edition) This guide has been updated to incorporate the Laws of the Sport of Bowls (Crystal Mark Third Edition) where appropriate. Copies of the Laws of the Sport of Bowls are available from Bowls England.

**2. BOWLS BASICS**

Like many sports, the object of bowls is essentially simple. Bowls can be played by anyone, but to play consistently well demands determination, concentration and practice.

The action required to deliver a bowl is based on a fairly natural physical movement.

Coaching for bowlers of all abilities is available and the instruction offered is geared towards getting the beginner bowling as soon as possible.

**The Game**

Players take turns to deliver their bowls from a mat at one end of the rink towards a small white ball called the 'jack' at the other end. The bowls are shaped so that they take a curved path towards the jack. This is known as 'bias', which is explained further in Section 4 of this book.

To be successful the bowl must be delivered with the correct weight, along the correct line. The object is to get one or more of your bowls closer to the jack than those of your opponents on each end - one point is scored for each counting bowl.

There are many different formats to the game, but the most common in England are singles or in teams of pairs, triples or fours. In singles, the winner is usually the first to score 21 points (known as 'shots') although there are other games played, for example you may have seen 'sets play' in televised matches.

In the other three formats, the winner is the team that scores the most shots over a set number of ends. For more details on formats see Section 6 of this guide.

**The Green**

Bowls is usually played on a square of closely cut grass called “the green”, which is divided into playing areas called 'rinks'. However, there are also artificial surfaces at a number of clubs across the country.

The green is surrounded by a small ditch to catch bowls which leave the green, and a bank upon which markers indicate the corners and centrelines of each rink.



**GLOSSARY OF BOWLING TERMS**

**Back bowl:** A bowl that has come to rest beyond the jack or the main body of bowls in the head.

**Backhand:** When (for a right handed player) the bowl is delivered so the curve of the bowl is from the left to right towards its objective.

**Bank:** The outer wall of the ditch which surrounds the green, and which is above the playing surface.

**Bias**: That which is inbuilt into the bowl, which causes the bowl to travel in a curve.

**Centre line:** An imaginary line that runs length wise down the centre of the rink.

**Counter:** Any bowl which contributes to the score at the completion of the end.

**Dead bowl:** A bowl which comes to rest in the ditch, or is knocked into the ditch and is not a toucher, or a bowl that comes to rest outside the confines of the rink, either in its original course or by being knocked there, or comes to rest less than 14 metres, as measured in a straight line, from the mat, or is illegally delivered, is removed from play.

**Dead end/head:** An end is declared 'dead' if the jack leaves the confines of the rink or comes to rest less than 20 metres, as measured in a straight line, from the centre of the mat. No score is recorded and the end is played again.

**Delivery:** The moment the bowl leaves the hand.

**Ditch:** The green is surrounded by a depression whose edge marks the boundary of the playing surface. Measurements of the ditch need to conform to the laws of the game.

**Draw:** A bowl delivered at the correct weight, and with correct line, to arrive exactly at its objective.

**End:** The sequence of play beginning with the placing of the mat and ending with the coming to rest of the last player's bowl, after all have delivered their bowls in the same direction.

**Fast green:** Usually a dry and closely cut surface, which offers little resistance to the progress of the bowl, meaning it takes longer time to reach its objective.

**Fluke:** A shot that ends up being successful despite being off-target.

**Follow through:** Natural movement forward of the delivery arm following the line of the bowl.

**Foot fault:** The player should be standing on the mat at the start of the delivery and have at least part of one foot on or above the mat at the moment they deliver the jack or bowl.

**Forehand:** When (for the right handed player) the bowl is delivered so that the curve of the bowl is from the right to left towards its objective. Green: The total playing surface, the measurements of which are laid down by the laws

**Green/line:** The curved line that the bowl must travel from the mat to its objective. Many new bowlers will be advised to take more or less 'green' when bowling to help them to get closer to the jack.

**Head:** The jack and any bowls which have come to rest within the boundaries of the rink of play and are not dead.

**Heavy bowl:** Where a bowl has been delivered with too much pace and will end beyond its objective.

**Jack:** The round white or yellow ball towards which play is directed. The jack may also be referred to as the 'kitty' or 'white' in different areas. The jack is not biased and therefore will run in a straight line.

**Live bowl:** Any bowl that comes to rest within the confines of the rink or any toucher in the ditch.

**Long jack:** Near to or at the greatest distance allowed from the front edge of the mat to the jack.

**Mat:** The rectangular shaped mat from which the bowler must deliver the jack and/or bowl.

**Mat line:** The edge of the mat nearest to the front ditch.

**Mark:** The marking of a toucher with chalk.

**Marker:** A person who in a game of singles will mark all touchers, centre the jack, measure disputed shots when asked by the players and keep score.

**Measure:** A device used to determine which bowl is nearest the jack.

**Measuring**: The process of determining which bowl is nearest the jack.

**Narrow bowl:** Where a player has not allowed enough green for their intended shot.

**Pace or Weight:** The amount of force with which the bowl is delivered to execute a particular shot.

**Pairs:** Two players against two, each player using four bowls.

**Pace:** The number of seconds taken by a bowl from its delivery to the moment it comes to rest at approximately 27 metres from the mat line. The higher the number of seconds taken, the faster the pace of the green.

**7. TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

**Position on the mat and stance**
Before delivery you should stand with at least part, or all, of at least one foot fully on the mat.

Face out to either side of the mat in order that the bowl can be delivered to allow bias to take effect.

It is recommended that you stand with your feet parallel and slightly apart, pointing along the line on which the bowl is going to travel. Your stance should be well balanced and comfortable.

The bowl should be held for both comfort and control, and on a line just outside the right hip (for a right handed player) so allowing an unimpeded backswing. Your eyes should be looking along the delivery line.

**Delivery**
Some players prefer to combine the movement of forward stride simultaneously with the backswing - others place the forward foot a walking pace in front of and parallel to the back foot before beginning the backswing - it is a matter of personal preference.

On completion of the backswing the player must now consider the forward swing, at the same time bending knees so that at the moment of release the hand holding the bowl is as close to the bowling surface as possible. This ensures the bowl is delivered smoothly.

The right-handed player steps forward with the left foot and at the same time swings back the right arm holding the bowl. The body is lowered down and the left hand placed on the left knee for support, as the right arm comes forward to deliver the bowl on the green when the body has dipped to the lowest point. For the left handed player, of course, the procedure is reversed as shown above.

**Position of the feet**
At the moment of delivery, the player should have all or part of one foot on or above the mat. If the player is using an approved wheelchair, at the moment of delivery the player should have all or part of one wheel on the mat. Any player who does not adhere to this may be found to be 'foot-faulting'.

**Follow through**
As in other sports, a smooth follow through is most important. The bowling hand should be brought forward parallel with the body throughout its movement, and continue, even after the bowl has been delivered.

**Concentration**
This is an essential requirement for any bowler aspiring to an improved standard. So many players allow outside factors to interfere with their concentration that it is probably the greatest single reason why they fail to improve. It is often noticeable that even top players will play a good shot when attempting to convert or save, but it is surprising how many times the same players will fail to add to the score when they have plenty of room to draw another shot. This is due to a lack of concentration.

The player must try to maintain 100% concentration when playing - nothing less will do.

**Competitive bowls**
The game of bowls is a splendid medium for limited exercise, sociability and competitive recreation. The sportsmanship of the player is always to the fore, and this is a vital necessity to all who play it.

The newcomer to the game is strongly advised to play in as many competitive games as possible to improve their play, develop knowledge of the game and enjoying the opportunity to make new friends.

Finally, may you have many years of bowling enjoyment in this great fraternity, and make a number of lifelong friends along the way.



Managing a bowling green requires great skill, and the green keeper will put many hours in to keep the playing surface in the best possible condition. You can help the green keeper by keeping off worn patches whenever possible and by using a good delivery to prevent damage to the green.

**Yourself**
Like any sport, it is generally believed you will only get out of bowls what you put into it. Your approach should be one of enthusiasm, friendliness and tolerance.
A club is only good as the members that it has within it, so please play your part in making your club one of the best that there is and somewhere that other new recruits will wish to join in years to come.

**Etiquette**
Etiquette refers to those little extras that give the game of bowls its great charm.
Friendly sporting acts towards team mates and opponents are appreciated and reciprocated, such as keeping still whilst others are delivering their bowls and standing behind the jack and away from the head.

**Dress**
Dress should be styled for comfort and action.
Each club has its own rules and many now encourage casual dress for practice sessions.
The majority of clubs and counties now wear their own colours for representative matches.
These brighten up the image of the sport and make it more attractive to all ages.

**3. INSTRUCTIONS FOR BEGINNERS**
**Starting out**
You will need to wear a pair of flat soled shoes, and most clubs and coaches will have some bowls readily available for you to use initially. It is important to try several sets of bowls to find a set that suit you before you purchase. Club notice boards are usually a good place to find second hand bowls and other equipment available for sale.

**Delivery**
Every bowler's delivery is as unique as their fingerprints, which means that no two bowlers deliveries will be identical. However, in general three criteria need to be satisfied:

- That the delivery action is comfortable; can be repeated precisely for long periods of play, and does not produce unnecessary strain
- That it is effective
- That it conforms to the Laws of the Sport of Bowls The following pages outline the type of introductory session that a new bowler may take part in with a qualified coach.

**Delivering the jack**
You will be asked to stand on the mat and be given a jack. You will be asked to roll the jack towards your coach who will be standing with feet apart.

This natural movement in rolling a ball is what the coach uses in helping you to establish a delivery action which enables them to build on the good points in your natural delivery and to encourage any necessary correction in your stance, timing and rhythm.

The coach will then vary the places where they stand, in relation to the mat, so that you have to vary your stance on the mat, and change the position of your feet, to accommodate the new angles of delivery. Once a smooth and easy delivery action is evident, then you are ready to repeat it - this time using a bowl.

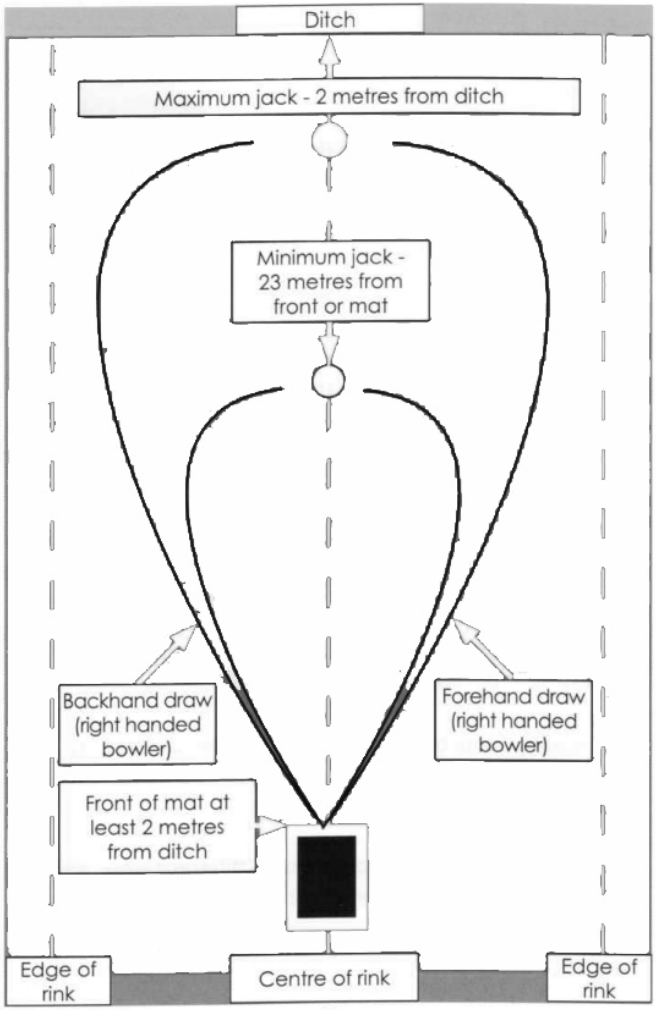
**Delivering the bowl**
The coach will ask you to pick up a bowl. At this point, they will advise you on the best way to hold the bowl so it is held comfortably and confidently in your hand. If the bowl is delivered smoothly, the coach will make no further adjustments. If this is not the case then a small adjustment in grip, or perhaps the size of bowls being used, may be necessary, but again the coach will advise on this.

**4. BOWLS**

**What makes the bowl turn?** Many people believe one side of a bowl is more heavily weighted than the other. However it is the shape of the bowl that makes it 'turn' rather than anything to do with weight. This is known as 'bias'. The curved path taken by the bowl is always towards the side with the smaller disc, but this only happens when the bowl begins to slow down. The point at which the bowl begins to turn is known as the 'shoulder' and this will vary according to the distance, or length, that the jack is from the mat. A simple guide is that the shoulder is roughly two thirds of the distance the bowl has to run to arrive at its objective.

**Choice of bowl**

Once you have decided to take up the game, one of your first decisions will be choosing a set of bowls.
Bowls come in sets of four and each is identical. The bias of different sets can vary, but every set of bowls must meet minimum standards for bias. There is now so much to choose from different sizes, weights, makes and colours, so be sure to take your time in choosing the right set for you.






**5. PLAYING THE GAME**

Outdoor bowls is played on a flat grass (or artificial) surface called “the green” that should be either rectangular or square. The length of the green in the direction of play should be between 31 metres and 40 metres.
The green is divided into sections called 'rinks' which should be between a minimum of 4.3 metres and a maximum of 5.8 metres wide for outdoor play. Surrounding the green is a ditch, and a bank where markers indicate the boundaries and centre lines of each rink. See diagram on previous page for details.

Each game is split into individual ends. At the start of each end one player will place the mat on the centre line of the rink and deliver the jack. The jack is then put on the centre line at the other end of the rink. The jack must be a minimum of 23 metres from the mat at the start of the end. Players from each team then deliver bowls alternately from the mat. The aim is to get one or more of your bowls closer to the jack than the closest bowl of your opposition, with one point scored for each counting bowl.

After playing all the bowls in one direction, and agreeing the score, the next end is played back down the rink in the opposite direction. The winner of the previous end will cast the jack. Every game consists of a series of ends and the winner can either be the one who has scored the most shots after a specified number of ends or the first to reach a designated score. The art of bowls is to be able to deliver (draw) bowls consistently close to the jack.

**Scoring**

After the completion of an end the team's bowls which have finished closest to the jack are counted.
One shot is allowed for each bowl nearer the jack than the nearest bowl of your opponent. For example, if your team has three bowls closer to the jack than your opponent's nearest bowl then you will score three for that end.
Any bowls forming the head must not be disturbed or removed until the score has been agreed by both sides.

**6. FORMATS OF THE GAME OF BOWLS**

The most common formats of the game of outdoor bowls are:
**Singles:** Two players with four bowls each - winner is first to 21 shots.
**Pairs:** Two teams of two with four bowls each - winner is team with most shots after 21 ends.
**Triples:** Two teams of three with three bowls each - winner is team with most shots after 18 ends.
**Fours:** Two teams of four with two bowls each - winner is team with most shots after 21 ends.
In competitive games of pairs, triples and fours, an 'extra end' is played if the scores are level after the allotted number of ends have been completed.
In team games each member has a particular role.

To illustrate team games, the following section gives a brief outline of the duties of each player in a fours game:
**Lead:** The Lead is the first to play. The Lead places the mat, delivers the jack and centres it before attempting to bowl as close as possible to the jack.
**Second:** The Seconds play after the Leads have each played their two bowls. The Second may be asked to play a variety of different shots by their skip depending on what the Leads have done.
**Third:** The Third may be called upon to play different shots in order to score more or to place bowls tactically to protect an advantage. In addition the Third is also responsible for:

- Advising the skip when requested;
- Agreeing the number of shots with their opposite number each end and measuring as required.

**Skip:** The Skip has overall responsibility for the rink and should be an experienced and capable player to offer assistance to new bowlers. The Skip's duties include:

- Directing the development of each end;
- Overall responsibility for the rink;
- Settling any disputed points with the opposite Skip - especially in event of no umpire being present.

The Skip is also responsible for the score card, but may delegate this duty to another member of their team (subject to the same player in both teams assuming this duty). The responsibilities include:

- Entering the names of all players of both teams on the score card;
- Recording on the score card all shots scored for and against the team as each end is completed;
- Comparing the score card with that of the opposing Skip as each end is completed; and
- At the end of the game, recording on the score card the time that the game finished and then sign it.