



Etiquette in the Game of Bowls

(It's Just Good Manners)

Bowling etiquette is about good sportsmanship, common sense and good manners. Etiquette refers to the way in which we play the game to ensure enjoyment for everyone and so that all have the chance to play their best.

This guidance may be very useful for newcomers to the sport, but not exclusively to this category, for many bowlers of long experience sometimes fall into 'bad habits', perhaps not being aware of doing so, and therefore these notes would be useful for them too.

For bowlers and spectators

- Do not distract bowlers who are bowling towards you, by moving or walking across the end of the rink. Wait until the bowl has been delivered, then move.
- It is not good etiquette to interrupt other players when they are on the green, particularly during competitive matches. If you need to speak to players, it should be before or after their game.
- Respect and protect the green – the club's most important asset.
- Do nothing in your actions, words or appearance that will reflect badly on your club.

Before the game

- Make sure you know the rules of the game or competition you are playing.
- Know the correct, smart dress - Whites or Greys.
- Do not arrive in bowling shoes as you may carry harmful fungus on the soles of your shoes.
- Be early enough to be able to welcome visitors and help get things out on the green.
- Help set up the green to ensure that jacks, mats, scoreboards and other equipment are in place ready for the beginning of the game
- Always consider the Greenkeeper who has the right to cancel, decide which rink to play on or tell you to use nets if the green is too soft due to rain.

During the game

- Enter and leave the green by your rink number and use the footpaths – do not walk across the green.
- Do not drop your bowls on the green.
- When you walk to the other end, move in the centre of the rink and do it quickly enough to maintain the continuity of the game. Remember that bowlers on other rinks may have yet to bowl.
- Never complain about any green, including yours.
- Treat the green you are playing on with respect. It is costly to maintain, and everyone should try to deliver their bowls without ‘digging them’ into the turf.

‘Possession of the rink’ must always be respected.

- Possession of the rink belongs to the team whose bowl is being played. The players in possession of the rink should not be interfered with, annoyed, or have their attention distracted in any way by their opponents.
- Stand well behind the mat or the head, keeping still and quiet while others are delivering their bowls.
- Questions, information or instructions should only be exchanged while you have ‘possession of the rink’ – as soon as your bowl comes to rest, ‘possession of the rink’ is transferred to the opposing player or team.

Positions

- When at the head, bear in mind that some bowlers like a clear view of the rink markers. Stand behind the head, inside the rink markers, but not obscuring the central rink number.
- When at the head in sunny conditions, or as the sun sets, avoid standing where your shadow is cast over the jack, making it difficult to see from the mat.
- Similarly, standing directly behind a white jack in white shoes can make the jack difficult to see.
- Players at the mat-end of the rink who are not delivering a bowl should stand at least one metre behind the mat.

Responsibilities

- Follow the direction given by the skip, no matter whether you agree or disagree.
- Remember that the directions for the skip are only given by the number three in fours matches, or the number two in triples. Other players should not interfere, unless asked.
- Bowling short is sometimes a deliberate, tactical move to hinder the competition. It is a move made by the Skip who will occasionally ask a team member to deliver a short bowl or even a short jack.

Team Members' Duties - Each member of a team has a job to do.

Skip or Number 4 in rinks

- The Skip has sole charge of the team and all players in the team should follow the Skip's instructions. The Skip decides tactics and will instruct the team on how and where they should play. For outdoor bowls the Skip is usually responsible for recording the number of shots on the score card.

The Third or Number 3

- The Third measures any and all disputed shots using a special tape or callipers and tells the skip the number of shots scored. The Number 3 also provides information requested by the skip.

The Second or Number 2

- In outdoor rinks he has no duties apart from updating the score board. In outdoor triples however the Second measures and agrees the score with the opposing number two. As well as updating the score board the Second also provides information requested by the skip.

The Lead or Number 1

- Places the mat and delivers the jack as directed by where the skip stands, ensuring it is centred correctly before delivering the first bowl of the end. After everyone has bowled and the score decided then the Lead from the losing team, as well as other bowlers, collect the woods while the Lead of the winning team sets the mat and sends the jack for the next end.

It may sound a bit confusing but the other players will keep you right and you will soon get the hang of it. If unsure please ask - all club members will be happy to help with the rules and etiquette of the game.

Results of an end

- The result of each end (including measuring where required) is determined between the threes (or twos in triples). Other players should not be involved.
- Do not disturb the head until the result of the end has been agreed.

General

- Encourage, rather than criticise – no one delivers a bad bowl intentionally.
- Avoid stating the obvious but provide help by indicating how far a bowl is from the jack.
- ‘Call’ or shout at your own bowls by all means – but do not ‘call’ your opponents’ bowls to go through gaps, get ‘wrecked’, or to promote your own bowls – wishing misfortune on your opponents’ bowls is unsporting.
- Commend good shots.
- Learn to accept lucky shots, both for and against you – they will balance out in the long run.
- Don’t turn up for a fixture five minutes before it starts and leave immediately afterwards. Remember, it’s a social game.

After the game

- Shake hands. Congratulate the opposing team and offer to buy your opposite number a drink (after singles matches, your marker should be included in the invitation). Remember that your opponent is a guest of the club.
- Ensure that jacks, mats, scoreboards and other equipment are returned to the shed.
- Avoid making excuses for your lack of success the topic of conversation.

A knowledge of the above will make you a more well-respected club member and bowler and will contribute to the enjoyment of the game for everyone involved, both on and off the green.

Don’t forget...

All bowls clubs will expect members to help with the smooth running of the club’s facilities and activities . This will include helping with the gardening, maintaining the bowls green and looking after the club’s fixtures and fittings.



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