

THE BASIC OF BOWLS TO GET YOU GOING

It's normal to feel slightly apprehensive about starting something new, but bowls is a sport that is easy to take up. The rules of the game are relatively simple, the basic technique is not complex and you don't need lots of new kit. This section explains more.

Like boules on the beach or a game of skittles, it'll take you no time to figure out the basic rules of the game.

Bowls is played on a square of grass called a green, which is divided into lanes called rinks. Players take turns to deliver their bowls from a mat at one end of the rink towards a small white target ball, often referred to as the 'jack', situated near the other end. The bowls are shaped so that they take a curved path towards the jack, known as the bias.

The aim of the game is to get your bowls closest to the jack. One point is given for each bowl nearer the jack than the nearest bowl of your opponent. For example, if you or your team has three bowls closer to the jack than your opponent's nearest bowl then you will score three for that end.

Each game is split into individual ends. 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.

There are different formats of the game. You can play singles or as part of a team, and a match can vary in lengths. 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 sport of bowls takes a minute to learn, but a lifetime to master. The action required to deliver a bowl is based on a fairly natural physical movement and your first shot could be every bit as good as a world champion's.

Every bowler's delivery is slightly different but you can't go too far wrong, and no-one's going to laugh at you whilst you're getting the hang of it. Once you have got the basic delivery sussed, you'll be hooked on getting consistently close to the jack. Here's a basic guide to help beginners get started. If you have a physical disability, you may need to adopt a different approach.

The Position on the mat and Stance

Before delivery you should stand on the mat. Face forward with your feet pointing towards the jack, but to one side of it depending which way you are planning to curve the bowl. The bowl should feel comfortable in your favoured hand and be placed outside the hip to enable an unimpeded backswing. You should be looking where you're aiming.

The Delivery

Most players combine a forward stride with their backswing. On completion of your backswing, then swing your arm forwards whilst bending your knees so, at the moment of release, the hand holding the bowl is almost touching the ground. This helps the bowl roll smoothly. At the moment of delivery, make sure one of your feet is on the mat. Simple as that!

The Bias

Oh yes, the bias is the slightly tricky bit! The bias is the shape of the bowl that makes it turn. To make it easy, bowls have a large disc one side and a small disc on the other. The bowl curves towards the side with the smaller disc. So, if you are a right hander holding the bowl with the small disc on the side nearest their thumb, the bowl will curve from left to right so you need to aim to the left of the jack.

What Clothes Should you wear:

The image of players dressed in 'whites' is far from the reality these days. For newcomers playing social bowls, the dress code is usually relaxed and whatever makes you feel comfortable. A t-shirt or polo shirt, together with tracksuit bottoms, shorts or jeans would be our suggestion.

If you start playing more competitively and go on to represent your club, it is likely you will be asked to buy some club kit so you look part of the team.

If you're looking for kit, your club members will be best to advise you where to go, sometimes clubs have used but good condition items for sale very cheaply.

What Footwear should I use:

To help keep the playing surface in good condition, it's important to wear a pair of flat-soled shoes, this helps protect the carpet. If your just starting out, you can still play in your socks.

Do I need a set of bowls:

Most clubs will have bowls available for newcomers to use free of charge. Once you have decided to take up the game, you may wish to invest in a set of bowls.

Bowls come in sets of four and each is identical. You can choose different sizes and weights depending on your hand size and physique, and even pick your favourite colour!

You can pick up a suitable set for under £50 second hand, or from around £250 if you splash out on a new set – that's less than the price of a decent golf club! Sets can last a lifetime and so it works out very reasonably in the long run.

NOW YOU HAVE THE BASIC KNOWLEDGE GO AND GIVE IT A TRY.
HERE AT **GEDLING INDOOR BOWLS CLUB** WE OFFER A FREE TRIAL SESSION, SO COME ON..... HAVE SOME FUN...!!!