

BOWL to WIN

A Practical Guide to Better Bowling

by Julie Halliday



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HELPFUL HINTS

- Keep your concentration at peak level.
- Keep weight on the balls of your feet when taking stance.
- Take a normal walking step.
- Step straight along proposed line of delivery.
- Tuck your right knee behind your left leg, allowing the forward movement of the arm to have the inside-out action.
- Use your arm as a firm pendulum on the forward movement of your bowling arm.
- Do **not** bend your elbow when delivering your bowl.
- Keep your arm close to your body throughout delivery.
- Deliver OUT and DOWN with chest well forward, using an INSIDE OUT action.
- Do not pull your arm across your body.
- The palm of the hand must be facing up along the line of delivery at completion of stroke.
- **Stay down**. If you come up too eagerly you will tend to move off the mat, chasing your bowl. This causes a loss of follow-through and thrust with consequent short bowls.
- By staying down longer you will eliminate the desire to move off the mat. Your length control will improve. Practise frequently at home to Bend – Step – Deliver in one free-flowing movement.

THE HAND



The hand should **NOT** be closed **NOR** the fingers turned up or bent up after delivering a bowl. The fingers **MUST** be outstretched but **NOT** rigid, palm **UPWARD** and fingers down. Fingers snapped shut will produce a flick at the last fraction of a second of delivery and your length will be astray.

One of the fundamentals of delivering a bowl on the forehand is to avoid a “round-arm” action. This can be achieved by a slow back-swing and a pendulum movement of the arm, keeping your hand **UNDERNEATH** the bowl until your delivery has been completed. If this hand position is mastered, then you will experience the bowl rolling off your fingers and running smoothly over the course you have selected. It will also obviate the turning of the hand at delivery and thus

sending the bowl on a course other than the one you have selected.

One of Australia's greatest bowlers, and certainly one of Australia's outstanding stylists has said: "**NOT FIVE** bowlers in a **HUNDRED** complete their forehand delivery without turning their hand".

FOOT-WORK AND STANCE

Your RIGHT foot should be the first part of your body on the mat. (Reverse for left-handers).

Carefully align your RIGHT foot to the grass line (or shoulder of the green) you have selected and when you have completed this important movement – then, and then only, should you bring your left foot to a position alongside your right foot.

Weight should be on the balls of your feet and knees relaxed.

Avoid the "stand-at-ease" position.

Remember – good bowls cannot be achieved with incorrect footwork.

When you have been carefully positioned, then your "Bend, Step and Deliver" action can be carried out with a "fingers down" and "palm up" follow through.

<p>A Law: "A player must be standing on the mat with all or part of at least one foot on the mat before delivery. To avoid foot-faulting a player must have all or part of one foot on or above the mat at the time the Jack or Bowl is released from the hand."</p>
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THE DELIVERY OF THE BOWL

Don't rush at it – take your time. A slow backswing is essential.

With the right shoulder relaxed, let the weight of the bowl drop your arm back like a pendulum and then take a normal walking step.

90% of the weight of the body should then be on the left foot. Place the left hand on the left knee for balance. The reverse, of course, for left handers.

The eyes should not stray from the point you have chosen as the width of the “green” (the stare-point).

At the point of delivering the bowl the right leg (left leg for left handers) should be almost parallel to the ground, and the bowl sent away about 25 centimetres in front of the left foot. This distance can vary according to a person's stature or the length of a person's arms, but you must be right over your work, making sure the bowl gets away in front of the left foot and **not** level with it.

Don't forget the all-important follow through. Steering the bowl, or jerkiness, must be avoided. Stay down a little longer.

Enough stress cannot be placed on the importance of a delivery that is simple and **never** varies.

You will never be consistent unless you follow the same routine for every bowl you put down.

Don't be tense, try to remember these points and you have gone a long way towards your goal.

THE FINISH OF THE DELIVERY



A hint that is so important to ensure the bowl runs smoothly and unerringly over your selected 'Grass-line' or 'Shoulder' of your Green:

- Try to finish the forward pendulum with your thumb lying FLAT.
- You will be able to do this if you keep your armpit closed during delivery, thus avoiding a round-arm action.

LENGTH

Consistent length is something that only comes with practice, practice and still more practice, as well as experience of various paced greens.

That all important and elusive length. If you do make a slight error in the judgement of your “greens”, but your weight is right, you won't be far away.

How many times do you see a bowler one metre short with the first bowl, then two metres over with the next bowl? Have you ever thought how much effort it takes to roll a bowl a near metre? Two turns of the bowl in fact. The circumference of a Size 3 bowl is approximately 39 cm. So, if you are one metre short two rolls of the bowl is approximately 78 cm, which would bring you within 22 cm of the jack.

Finally – if you can do everything the same for each delivery, the application of control of movement for weight will put you on the road to consistent length.

BACK-SWING

The backswing should always be slow and rhythmical – NEVER hurried. If hurried, the body has not sufficient time to get into position for a smooth delivery, and this will result in the bowl being delivered whilst there is too much weight on the back foot. The player, trying to reach out, may hold onto the bowl too long and finally chuck or throw it.

The back swing should be like a saucer, low and shallow, NOT like a soup plate – steep at the top.

Swing the Jack and the Bowl in a pendulum motion



Short end
or Fast Green

Medium end
or Medium
Pace

Long end
or Heavy
Green

TENSION

Tenseness produces hurried actions such as:

- (1) Rushing onto mat, and
- (2) Quick delivery movements

They add up to wayward bowls which can be minimised by taking more time to concentrate on the shot that is called for, whether it be in singles play or team play.

By taking these few extra seconds to settle yourself and study the shot to be played, you will greatly enhance your chances of playing more consistently and scoring more shots.

RUSHING was never intended to be part of the bowling scene - neither was excessive slowness.

TAKING GRASS

As a keen observer, it is interesting to note the number of narrow bowls that are delivered causing disappointment and, at times, frustration.

What is the cause or causes? These could be many and varied, but in my opinion, two stand out, and with a little patience and concentration can be overcome to add more enjoyment to our games, in addition to increasing our bowling prowess.

- (1) Looking too far up the green for the turning point of the bowl – the bowl turning before this point has been reached.
- (2) Delivering a bowl along an angle other than the one selected.

Most bowlers believe a bowl starts to turn two-thirds of the distance between mat and jack. This is wrong. If a bowl is delivered on an even keel for a draw shot it will start to turn immediately, although the curve is not discernible until the bowl has travelled three to four metres according to the green speed.

The slower the bowl is delivered the sooner the turn is noticeable.

A GUIDELINE FOR TAKING GRASS

The boundary peg is a good object to fix on as a starting point ONLY.

Bring your eyes back along the grass in a perfectly straight line to a Stare Point approximately 6 metres from the front of the mat along the diagonal line.

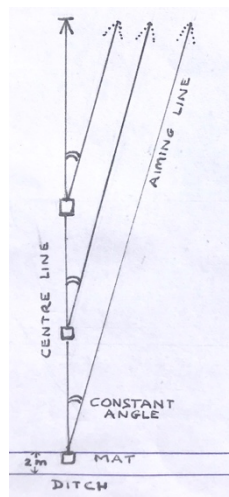
Then align your right foot (left foot for left handers) to this “6 metre spot” – bringing your other foot alongside.

Do not take your eyes off this “6 metre spot” until your bowl is well past it. Looking at the Jack can produce narrow bowls.

Let me emphasise that the “6 metre spot” can vary according to the pace of the green.

If the green is said to be fast, then select a point about one metre outside the boundary peg...still applying the “6 metre” rule.

On a true green without wind: for a draw shot the angle of the grass-line to the centre line of the rink remains constant for any length end.



PRACTICE SESSIONS

- 1) If you are bowling too short, try quickening your step. This action will automatically produce a longer step and a longer backswing thus giving you added distance. Make sure you retain your rhythm throughout this action.
- 2) On the other hand, if you are bowling too long then try slowing down considerably every action associated with your delivery. This slowing down of movement is an absolute **MUST** and includes bending, stepping and a pendulum swing.
- 3) Control your delivery for fast greens and short lengths by tightening your core muscles.
- 4) Where possible, practise on your own. If you practise with another person, there is a tendency to turn the session into a match and perhaps overlooking correction of faults.
- 5) Tip: Practise the body-movement on a tennis court by delivering tennis balls from the centre of the base line along the centre line towards the tennis net.
- 6) Set yourself a goal by using four half tennis balls and the 40 Bowls Score Card (refer: Appendix A and Appendix B).
- 7) **THE GOLDEN RULE:** Keep your arm-pit closed throughout your delivery

FAULTS TO AVOID

1. Bending the arm after delivery – it must be kept extended.
2. Swinging the arm across the body after delivery.
3. Round arming – That is not keeping the arm as close to the body as possible.
4. Flicking the wrist after delivery.
5. Turning the hand during delivery, and not keeping the hand under the bowl all the time.
6. A too-long, or a too-short, backswing.
7. Too little time on the mat. Think about the shot to be played.
8. Lack of concentration.
9. Lifting the head and body too quickly.
10. Back swing too quick – must be slow
11. Too big a step – body lags and makes a sudden surge to catch up with the foot, - producing jerkiness in delivery

HAVE YOU STEPPED STRAIGHT?

Spend some time in perfecting the bend and straight step, making sure not to step over in front of the right foot towards the right-hand corner of the mat.

While a straight step is not easy, it is an essential part of a correct delivery. Most “round-arm” actions can be attributed to the fault of not stepping straight and not keeping your delivery arm very close to your body.

Do **NOT** turn the left foot towards the “green” you have selected, for with both forehand and backhand the **right foot** is the guiding factor and the left foot should always be facing to the left of your “green”.

On the forehand, the left foot is on the inside of your delivery arm as well as inside the proposed course you have selected. On the backhand, the left foot is on the outside of your delivery arm, and therefore on the outside of the proposed course you have chosen.

Stepping straight means the delivery arm delivers the bowl parallel to the left foot effortlessly.

Remember – on your Forehand:

The step that most players make towards the right-hand corner of the mat then takes the left foot outside the proposed course for your bowl to travel and results in a “round-arm” action.

The above applies to right-handers and the opposite, of course, would apply to left-handers.

THE LEAD

It is important to become proficient in rolling the jack to your Skip's feet. Games can be won or lost by inconsistency in this facet of our game.

A Lead should play up and down on one side of the rink, rather than keep changing sides. A good Skip will **NOT** change a Lead's hand under normal circumstances.

If you don't get the shot – try for the second shot and you have played your part. Always remember, there are more bowls to be played after the Lead has completed his/her job.

It is wise for a Lead to play the narrower hand – only on rare occasions is the wide drawing hand the best to play.

Experience has taught us that it is easier to put on a little extra length on the second bowl rather than take it off. Try not to be long with your first bowl.

A suggestion for Beginners before they step onto the Mat:

RIGHT-HANDERS:	LEFT-HANDERS:
<p>In the direction of your Aiming Line hold the Bowl in your Left hand with the Small Logo facing away from the Centre Line.</p> <p>Grip the bowl with your right hand then turn your bowl clock-wise in readiness for addressing the Mat.</p>	<p>In the direction of your Aiming Line hold the Bowl in your Right hand with the Small Logo facing away from the Centre Line.</p> <p>Grip the bowl with your left hand then turn your bowl anti-clock-wise in readiness for the delivery.</p>

-HOME PRACTICE-

THE ACTION FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE JACK & BOWL

1



Prepare for the delivery:

1. Relax the knees
2. Lean forward with your weight on the balls of your feet.

2



Commence the first step and watch your Stare Point.

3



Prepare to have 90% of your body weight on the FRONT foot

4



Keep bending the knees and stay down with shoulders square to the aiming line.

-HOME PRACTICE-
THE FOLLOW-THROUGH MOMENTUM

5



Watch the Jack or Bowl take its course

6



Relax the delivery arm

7



Bring forward the back foot to align with the front foot

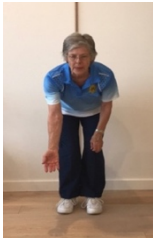
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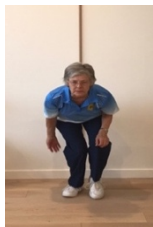
Watch the Jack or Bowl come to rest

-HOME PRACTICE-

STEP STRAIGHT OUT PARALLEL TO THE AIMING LINE



- You need to have your head and shoulders square to the aiming line
- Keep your arm-pit closed throughout your delivery



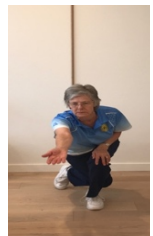
- Step out straight keeping your head and shoulders square to the line
- Tuck your right knee towards the left calf muscle
- Keep bending your left knee



- At the time you complete the step, the backswing is at its highest level of the pendulum

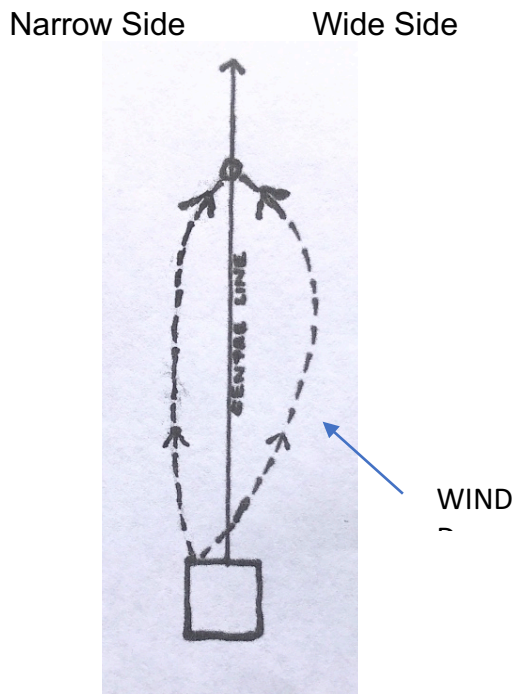


- As the forward swing commences, your delivery arm swings as closely as possible to the hip and thigh
- Do not stop bending the left and right knees



- After having delivered your Jack or Bowl along the aiming line, stand up bringing your back foot up to the front one and then watch the bowl come to rest before moving behind the mat for the next player

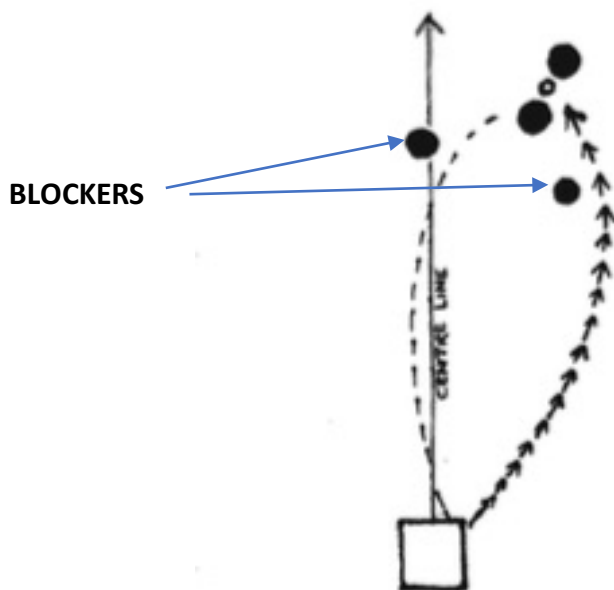
WIND – Tips on Using the Mat wisely



There are Narrow and Wide sides on windy days.

To handle the Narrow side a bowler would be advised to deliver from the 'outside' of the mat and, for the Wide side, from the 'inside of the mat'.

BLOCKER – Tips on Using the Mat wisely



By using the right-hand side of the mat the player would find it easier to go around the Blocker on the forehand and inside the Blocker on the backhand.

ETIQUETTE

- Associated with this great game of bowls are Skill, Luck, Sportsmanship and Etiquette – and not the least is Etiquette. Sometimes amidst the exuberance and fortunes of a game this ingredient is overlooked. This is a pity.
- Players should remain behind the person delivering the last bowl before “change-over” until that bowl comes to rest. This allows each player to see where the bowl finishes – more particularly the last player.
- It is not in keeping with Etiquette for a player to walk sideways after delivering a bowl, and perhaps distract players on an adjoining rink. In any case the bowl is usually narrow.
- At the change-over it is kinder perhaps to place your player’s bowl on the mat, rather than carry it half-way up the rink only to be carried back to the mat by your player.

A POINT OF ETIQUETTE THAT IS FREQUENTLY BROKEN:

A Third in a Fours Team (Second in a Triples Team) advises his Skip **only when so requested.**

Appendix A

Instructions for the 40-bowls Drawing Skill**Objective:**

Draw as close to the jack as possible, maintaining good line and length over varied length ends.

Requirements:

4 Jacks or 4 Half-Tennis Balls
10-end Score Card.

Procedure:

Place one jack on the “T” in both directions.
Place 2nd jack 1 metre from minimum length in both directions.
Place 2 bowls to short jack, followed by 2 bowls to long jack.
Play forehand one direction, backhand the other.
Mat always positioned on the “T”.

Scoring:

5 Points = Draw within 1 mat width of jack.
3 Points = Draw within 1 mat length jack.
1 Point = Draw within 2 mat lengths of jack.
0 Points = Finish outside 2 mat lengths of jack.

To achieve better performances, complete the 40-bowls test (only 10 ends) as it gives participants an excellent summary of their actual ability. It will surely inspire players to continue using the system to improve their drawing skills.

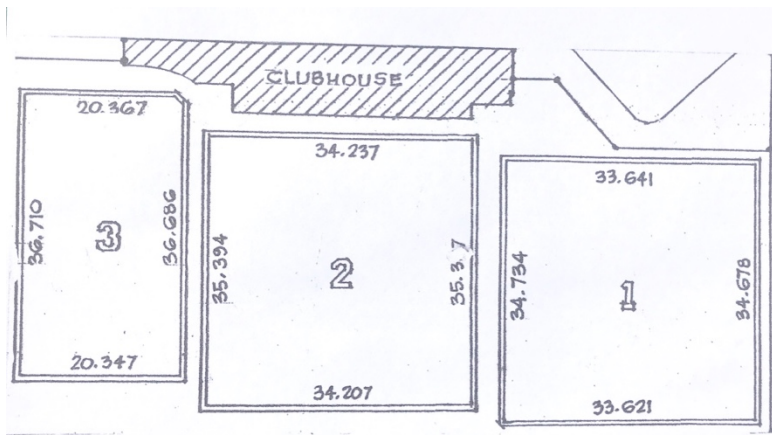
In fact, I would like to see it used to aid the selectors in announcing the handicaps for playing members. I suggest every new bowler would benefit by including practice sessions in his/her weekly routine.

Appendix B

Score Card for the 40-bowls Drawing Skill

Name:					
Date:			Category:		
Exercise:		Drawing Ability			
	Short End	Short End	Long End	Long End	Total
F/H					
B/H					
F/H					
B/H					
F/H					
B/H					
F/H					
B/H					
F/H					
B/H					
=					
F/H Total:		Short End:		<u>CARD</u>	
B/H Total:		Long End:		<u>TOTAL:</u>	
				/200	

As per the current Laws of the Sport of Bowls (Crystal Mark 3rd Edition) the Lengths of Greens being played are 'between 31 metres and 40 metres'.



You would be familiar with the lengths of your own Club's Greens. Should you have to play bowls on an unfamiliar Green, it is advisable to measure the new Green by stepping out the length between the 21 metre mark and the nearest ditch.

My passion and interest for this wonderful game was inspired by my father, Bill Cocks. Special thanks also extend to Rick, Macca, Len, Maurie, Ed, Gof, Wilson, Peter, Billie and Michael of Bowls Australia who have encouraged me to participate and enjoy Lawn Bowls as a Coach and Umpire.

