

World Bowls Lawn Bowls Etiquette: The Unwritten Rules Every Player Should Know

These aren't complicated regulations designed to catch you out. They are simple courtesies that ensure your games are enjoyable, fair, and respectful for everyone on the green. They help to keep a friendly and competitive club running smoothly!

Before the Game Begins

Good sportsmanship starts before the first bowl is even rolled.

- **Be on Time:** Arrive at the club with plenty of time to change your shoes and have your bowls ready for the start of the game. It shows respect for your teammates and opponents.
- **Help Set Up:** If rink markers or mats need to be put out, offer a hand. Many hands make light work!
- **The Handshake:** Always start a game by shaking hands with your opponents and introducing yourself, if you don't know them. It sets a friendly tone for the match ahead.

The Zone of Silence

The mat is where a player's concentration is at its peak and stillness and silence is needed at the head end. Your behaviour must not hinder a player.

- **Stillness and Silence:** When a player is on the mat preparing to deliver their bowl, you must stand still and remain silent. No chatting, no rustling your waterproofs, and definitely no walking about at either end of the rink.
- **Give Them a Clear View:** Stand well back from the mat. Position yourself behind the player, never in front of them or, at the head end, directly in their view of the rink markers.
- **Behind the Head or Mat:** At the head end, players who have already bowled should stand well behind the jack and out of the line of sight of the player on the mat. Similarly, at the mat end, players waiting to bowl should stand behind the mat.

Rink Awareness: Respecting the Space

A bowling green is a shared space. Being aware of your surroundings is crucial for safety and courtesy.

- **Stay Within Your Rink:** Keep to the confines of your own rink as much as possible. Cutting across another rink where a game is in progress is a major faux pas.
- **Walk With Care:** When changing ends, walk swiftly down the centre of your rink. This avoids distracting players on neighbouring rinks.

Handling the Equipment with Care

- **Bowls are for Rolling:** Your bowls are precision instruments. When you get to the green, place them on the green gently. Dropping from a height can damage both the bowl and the delicate playing surface.
- **The Jack:** The lead player rolls the jack to start the end. Let them do their job. Don't rush to pick it up or interfere unless asked.

During the End: The Flow of the Game

Marking Touchers

When a bowl touches the jack during its original course, it becomes a "toucher."

- **Mark It Promptly:** If you're at the head, it's your responsibility to mark the bowl with chalk, or spray, before the **next** bowl comes to rest, otherwise it is no longer regarded as a toucher! If you're on the mat, remain there until your toucher has been marked.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Shout back to the player on the mat, "That's a toucher!" to confirm it has been marked.

The Art of Measuring

When an end is finished, and it's too close to call with the naked eye, it's time to measure. This is a moment for calm and precision.

- **Who Measures?:** In a team game, the "number three" from each team is typically responsible for measuring. In pairs or singles, the players agree.
- **Don't Crowd the Head:** Only the designated measurers should be in the head. Everyone else should stand back and give them space to work.
- **Agree the Shot:** The measurers should agree on the result before touching any bowls. If there is a dispute, don't argue! Call for an umpire or a neutral third party to make the final decision.

Pace of Play

Nobody enjoys a slow game. Good etiquette means being ready to play when it's your turn.

- **Be Ready:** Have your bowl in your hand and be thinking about your shot while your opponent is on the mat. As soon as your opponent leaves the mat you should be ready to step up.
- **Don't Dawdle:** After the bowls have been delivered, walk to the head at a reasonable pace.
- **Action:** Be prepared to retrieve and position the mat, or if your opponents win the end, roll the bowls back behind the mat, as soon as the score for an end is announced.

Sportsmanship: The Heart of the Game

This is the most important rule of all. How you conduct yourself defines you as a player.

- **Praise Good Shots:** Always be ready to acknowledge a great shot, whether it's from your teammate or your opponent. A simple "good bowl" is all it takes.
- **Accept Defeat and Victory Gracefully:** At the end of the game, shake hands warmly, win or lose. Thank your opponents for the game. Congratulate the winners and commiserate graciously if you've lost.
- **Welcome Newcomers:** If you see a new member or a beginner struggling, offer a word of encouragement. We were all beginners once, and a friendly word can make all the difference.

In the Clubhouse

The game doesn't end on the green. The social side is just as important.

- **Offer a Drink:** It's a wonderful tradition in bowls for the winner to offer to buy the loser a drink after the game. It's a gesture of friendship that transcends the result.
- **Dress Code:** Be aware of your club's dress code. Some clubs may require you to change out of your bowling footwear before entering the bar or lounge area.

By following these simple, unwritten rules, you contribute to the fantastic spirit of our sport. You show respect for the game, the club, and your fellow players. Now get out there and enjoy your roll-up!