

Bowls Etiquette

Etiquette

In addition to the rules of bowls, a certain amount of etiquette is followed. 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.

The etiquette guidelines offered here should be noted by beginners and experienced bowlers alike. They are all based on common courtesy, which will make them easy to remember.

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 dress code (it will differ for different types of games).
- 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.
- 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 and decide which rink to play on.

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.
- Do not sit on the bank – it causes unwanted wear on the edge of 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 others have yet to bowl.
- Never complain about any green, including yours.

'Possession of the rink' must always be respected.

- “Possession of the rink shall belong to the team whose bowl is being played. The players in possession of the rink ... shall 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 behind and to the side of 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.

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 in front or behind 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.

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 bowler and will contribute to the enjoyment of the game for everyone involved, both on and off the green.

Source: Adapted from North London Bowling Club