

SURREY LAWN BOWLING CLUB



HANDBOOK

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HISTORY OF LAWN BOWLING¹



There are numerous theories regarding the origin of the sport, however archaeological findings from Egypt suggest a sport with biased stone balls was played close to 7000 years ago. A variation of the sport, which later came to be known as 'bocce', was popular in Rome in the days of Julius Caesar. The spread of the Roman Empire may explain the early introduction of the game to much of Europe, while other variations of the game were gradually appearing across the globe, from China to Polynesia.

The oldest surviving bowling club is in Southampton (England) and dates back to 1299, and as the game grew in popularity in the 14th Century, the respective kings of France and England banned the sport as it was seen to be distracting people from the militarily-critical practice of archery. The sport is referenced in no less than three of William Shakespeare's plays, at a time when it was almost exclusively played by nobleman and punishment was enforced when commoners were caught playing amongst themselves.

The preferred style of play at the time was 'crown bowls', perhaps a reference to the popularity of the sport amongst the royals. The game was played on an uneven grass surface until the flat-green game was developed in Scotland where it found a welcome home. The Scots also developed a formal code of laws, the essence of which still form many of the current rules and regulations.

Perhaps the most famous historical game took place in 1588, with legend claiming that Sir Francis Drake insisted on finishing a game of bowls at Plymouth even as the invading Spanish Armada approached.

As the British colonised much of the world, so did the sport of lawn bowls spread: to Australia, Canada and the United States amongst others. Although the sport has never reached great heights in the United States, George Washington's father Augustus was a keen competitor and is believed to have commenced construction of a bowling green in 1732, the year of George's birth.

In the late 1800s, national bowling associations were being established across the globe. The Royal Victorian Bowling Association (Australia) was formed in 1880, while the Scottish Bowling Association came into existence in 1892.

Today there are more than 55-member National Authorities in 51 Member Nations, with the prestigious World Bowls Championships taking place every 4 years.

¹Excerpt from World Bowls, <http://notlbows.ca/WorldBowlsIntroductionToLawnBowls.pdf>

RULES OF ETIQUETTE²

³Etiquette is an important part of lawn bowling – and in all sports. Lawn bowling club members should not only practice it, but it is also very important for new members to know the etiquette of the game.

1. Always wear correct footwear – smooth-soled and without heels.
2. Be punctual. Arrive at least 15 minutes before starting time.
3. Be ready to bowl when it is your turn (with your bowl in hand).
4. All bowlers are encouraged to have measuring tape and chalk and ready to mark bowls that touch the jack.
5. Stand on the mat until your bowl has come to a complete stop, so you can see what corrections are needed.
6. Once your bowl has stopped, you lose control of the mat.
7. After bowling each bowl, step off the mat to the **right**. As you approach the mat to bowl, do so from the **rear left**. This is a useful habit to avoid collisions.
8. Communication between the skip and the team members can only be done when in control of the mat.
9. When requested if a bowl is in or out of bounds, always stand directly behind the boundary marker.
10. If the jack is improperly delivered by both Leads, the Skip whose Lead delivered the jack first, will set the jack 2 meters from the edge of the green.
11. If the jack stops less than 2 meters from the edge, the skip will place the jack 2 meters from the edge.



² For hand signals in lawn bowling, see pp. 8-11 and UTube, https://youtu.be/6Oewr1ks_Ew.

³ Edited excerpt from Doncaster Bowling Club, www.doncasterbowlingclub.org.au, "Lawn Bowls – How to Play the Game: Etiquette, Strategy, Rules, Guidelines"

12. Only a delivered bowl can be a toucher.
13. Do not give your Skip the green unless he or she asks for your advice.
14. While at the head end, stand between the markers so the bowler can see the markers.
15. Bowlers who are not raking after an end should assist by kicking the bowls together to make raking faster and easier.
16. Players at the head end should be ready to stop bowls from crossing into the next rink. As well, watch for bowls from the next rink heading into your rink.
17. Do not move about in the Head when someone is on the mat ready to deliver a bowl.
18. Pay attention to the game. It is frustrating for others when you are inattentive and not giving your best.
19. Show good sportsmanship and acknowledge a show of good skill by another bowler.
20. If an umpire is called, move away. The umpire's decision is final.
21. Be a gracious winner and good loser.
22. Bowlers should shake hands at the beginning and at the end of a game.
23. After the game, all bowlers should help to clear away the equipment.



DUTIES OF A LEAD

1. Place the front end of the (delivery) mat not less than 2 meters from the edge of the green.
2. Center the delivery mat to the number of the green, that is the number of the green should be in line with the center of the mat.
3. To center the jack, stand in the center of the mat. Put your arm out in the direction that the jack is to move, horizontal to the ground and gradually lower your arm until centered. Slap your thigh indicating the jack is centered.
4. When changing ends, stay within the bounds of your own rink and walk quickly past the head. After changing ends, Leads may stand on the green to watch the head build and the strategy of the Skips. Leads must stand at least two meters behind the Vice-Skips and remain still and quiet.
5. Do not move any bowls until the score has been determined.
6. The losing Lead rakes the bowls, and the winning Lead sets the mat and delivers the jack.



DUTIES OF A VICE-SKIP

1. Stand about 1.5 meters behind and to the side of the jack.
2. Do not give the Green or suggest strategy – only if asked by the skip.
3. Advise the Skip of any changes in the count only when the Skip is in possession of the rink. As soon as your Skip's bowl stops you lose possession of the rink.
4. Only give specific answers to questions asked by the Skip.
5. If it is felt necessary, you may suggest to the Skip to come down to the head to see the situation in accordance with Conditions of Play (Laws of Bowls).
6. No bowls are to be moved at the completion of an end until both Vice-Skips have agreed to the result.
7. Measure for shot between the nearest points of the Jack and Bowl. Always measure from the Jack to the Bowl.
8. At the completion of an end, the two Vices count the shots. If your team is shot, the opposing Vice removes the agreed upon shot Bowl or Bowls to a towel. If a measure is needed for the balance of the shots, it should be done by the opposing Vice who removed the shot Bowls.
9. Assist the opposing Vice-Skip in measuring if necessary. Either Vice-Skip may measure any shot. Generally, if one Vice-Skip has difficulty in kneeling down the other Vice-Skip should be measuring. Do not touch your own team's bowls.
10. Do not remove any bowls until there is agreement on the count.
11. Be aware that the Skip is in charge of the game.
12. Losing Vice-Skip changes the score board. Second when playing fours. When advising Skip of outcome of end clearly indicate up shots (tap shoulder), down shots (tap thigh).



DUTIES OF A SKIP

1. Give good clear instructions and signal to your team members.
2. Do not verbally criticize or embarrass your team members in any way. Remember no one purposely makes a bad shot. Never complain about your teammate's play even if they are performing badly.
3. Know when to call an umpire or experienced member to resolve a point of contention and always accept and respect the decision given.
4. Warn players when a drive shot is planned.
5. Advise your front end only when you are in possession of the rink. You must leave the head as soon as your teammate's bowl stops.
6. When changing ends, do not have a lengthy discussion with your Vice-Skip in the middle of the rink.
7. A Skip should always know the Laws of the Game and be in possession of the latest copy of the rule book (available online).



HAND SIGNALS IN LAWN BOWLING

let your hands do the talking

	BOWL ON THE FOREHAND Extend your left arm to the side (if bowler is righthanded).		HAVE YOUR BOWL STOP HERE Put your foot where you want the bowl to finish and point to it.
	BOWL ON THE BACKHAND Extend your right arm to the side (if bowler is righthanded).		BOWLS ARE TOUCHING Touch knuckles together.
	THIS IS OUR BOWL Point closely to the bowl and tap your shoulder or chest.		WHERE IS THE JACK? Bending down, hold your palm forward.
	THIS IS THEIR BOWL Point closely to the bowl and wave your arm away.		THE SHOT IS A MEASURE Wave hands apart, together, apart as if measuring.
	SHOTS FOR US Tap your shoulder or head.		THE BOWL IS THIS FAR IN FRONT OR BEHIND OF THE JACK Spread your hands one above the other. NOTE: Always give the DEPTH distance not the WIDTH.
	SHOTS AGAINST US Tap your leg.		CHALK MY TOUCHER Cross your hands at your wrist and hold them in front of you.
	WATCH THE HEAD Before throwing a "runner," simulate a fast delivery with your bowling arm.		

Lawn Bowls Hand Signals

LET YOUR HANDS TO DO THE TALKING

1. Voices cannot be heard over the sounds of road and air traffic.
2. Shouting disturbs players on the rinks.
3. Your team will feel more in sync if you can read each others signals.
4. Signals will help communication and the flow of the game.
5. You can signal without drawing attention of your opponents to certain situations.

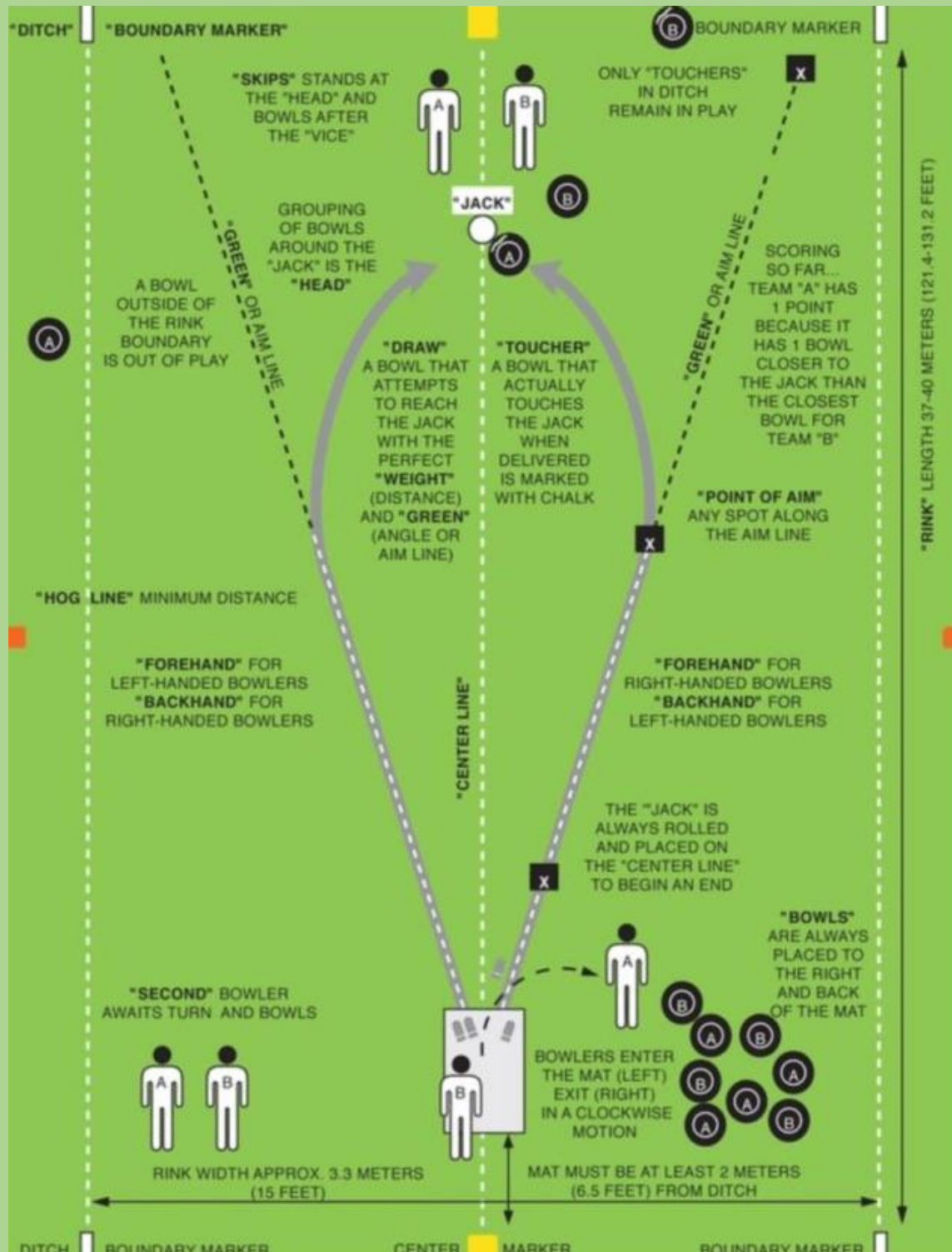
RULE NUMBER 1:

You can ONLY communicate with your team when you have possession of the mat.

RULE NUMBER 2:

Give information (especially the Vice) ONLY when asked for.

AIMING POINTS IN LAWN BOWLING



TYPES OF DELIVERY IN LAWN BOWLING



“Draw” shots are those where the bowl is rolled to a specific location without causing too much disturbance of bowls already in the head. For a right-handed bowler, “forehand draw” is initially aimed to the right of the jack, and curves to the left.

The same bowler can deliver a “backhand draw” or “thumb peg” by turning the bowl over in his hand and curving it the opposite way, from left to right. In both cases, the bowl is rolled as close to the jack as possible, unless tactics demand otherwise.

A “drive” or “fire” or “strike” involves bowling with force with the aim of knocking either the jack or a specific bowl out of play. With the drive’s speed, there is virtually no noticeable (or at least, much less) curve on the shot.

An “upshot” or “yard on” shot involves delivering the bowl with an extra degree of weight (often referred to as “controlled” weight or “rambler”), enough to displace the jack or disturb other bowls in the head.

A “block” shot is one that is intentionally placed short to defend from a drive or to stop an opposition’s draw shot. The challenge in all these shots is to be able to adjust line and length accordingly, the faster the delivery, the narrower the line or “green”.

COMMON LAWN BOWLS DELIVERY FAULTS⁴

A good lawn bowls delivery will only have a handful of key ideas.

Getting your delivery technique right is the easy part in lawn bowls. The hard part is doing it repeatedly every shot!

We all know what it feels like – you play 2 or 3 shots well, but for some reason the next one doesn't go down the right line, or pulls up short despite the fact you thought you did everything the same.

These issues are usually caused by some small fault in your action that leads to the inconsistent release. Here are 5 common lawn bowls delivery faults – and how to fix them!

Wobbling Bowl on Release

This is one of the most common issues for beginner bowlers who are finding their feet.

The issue is immediately after the release the bowl appears to “wobble” – the best place to see this is on the grips of the bowl. The bowl will then straighten slightly and then continue on its way.

This is a problem as it can affect the line and weight. The line is affected as the bowl can grip onto a different line than the one it was delivered on, and the weight is affected as a wobbling bowl causes more friction on the group along the running surface which takes some of the energy out of the bowl.

The wobbling bowl is usually caused by the grip. The bowl isn't released with the running surface directly down the release line, which in turn means the bowl isn't perfectly perpendicular to the line of travel.

To fix this, reassess your grip. It could be a slight alignment of the bowl in the hand, or possibly the placement of the fingers along the running surface.

Try a few things out on the practice greens, and ask your club coach if you are still having issues.

Bouncing the Bowl on Delivery

A “bounced delivery” is when the bowl is released slightly too early and the bowl thuds into the ground before carrying on along the delivery line.

⁴ <https://www.jackhighbowls.com>, an excerpt with minimal reformatting from *5 Common Lawn Bowls Delivery Faults: A Complete Guide*, by Reece Williams
Surrey Lawn Bowling Club Handbook, 01/05/2023

As you can imagine the issue with a bounced bowl is that a lot of the energy is lost when it hits the ground which causes the bowl to pull up short. For those who do this often, there is a secondary issue: it makes it harder to judge weight for the times you do release the bowl smoothly.

The cause is a timing issue in the delivery. This may not just be about the point of release, but is often how the step and the backswing interact. To overcome this issue go for a roll up and practice at a comfortable weight (this issue often gets worse the more weight you apply to the bowl) and focus on a smooth action and release.

Stepping Across the Line

“Stepping across the line” is when your leading foot doesn’t step towards the aiming point. This is common on backhand shots where the foot steps across the body – toward the jack instead of the aiming point. This can also happen in the opposite way on a forehand where the foot steps towards the jack and not the aiming line.

In both scenarios this misplacement of the foot leads to narrow shots. The bowl ends up going towards the jack and not the desired line. This can sometimes be compounded by the player trying to compensate for the misplaced foot by delivering the bowl at an angle – this can be a problem as the misplaced foot can be an intermittent issue, and this causes a lot of confusion and frustration as to why the bowler is missing their line.

The cause of this is likely an alignment issue on the mat. Many coaches recommend focusing on the feet to arrange the alignment, however my recommendation is to focus on the hips, as this will guide where the foot steps. If you stand square on to our target line (with feet side by side) then ensure your hips are fully square to the line. If you use the shooter stance then the alignment will come from your front hip.

Play around with this on the practice greens and ask your club coach if you still have issues.

Incorrect Weight Distribution

Having an incorrect weight distribution is when you aren’t balanced in your delivery stance. This can be in any direction (weight too much on either foot, too much on your toes, or too much on your heels). The issues caused by incorrect weight distribution will depend on where your weight goes:

- Too far either side makes it tricky to balance through the shot and can affect your step, and the line control.
- Too far back and you will have trouble reaching on longer jacks as you will find it hard to bring your weight through.
- Too far forward and you will over balance on delivery which can cause weight and line issues (this can be seen when the bowler can’t help but walk off the mat after delivery)

The recommendation is to have slightly more weight on the anchor foot in the delivery stance – however simply being aware of your balance, and how it is affecting the delivery is important. Much like many of these issues practice this during a roll up, and focus on a smooth and controlled action. You can then adjust for different weighted shots after.

Twisting the Hand on Release

The final issue I wanted to raise is twisting the hand on release. When delivering the bowl it is ideal to keep your palm facing up and your fingers pointing towards the target point. This gives your body the best chance to deliver the bowl along the correct line. Sometimes a bowler will twist their hand after releasing the bowl, and is often paired with a twisting/bending of the arm.

Twisting your hand and arm can lead to bowls going across the body (narrow on the forehand and wide on the back hand), as even though the bowl has left the hand, the twisting often starts very subtly whilst you still have control of the bowl.

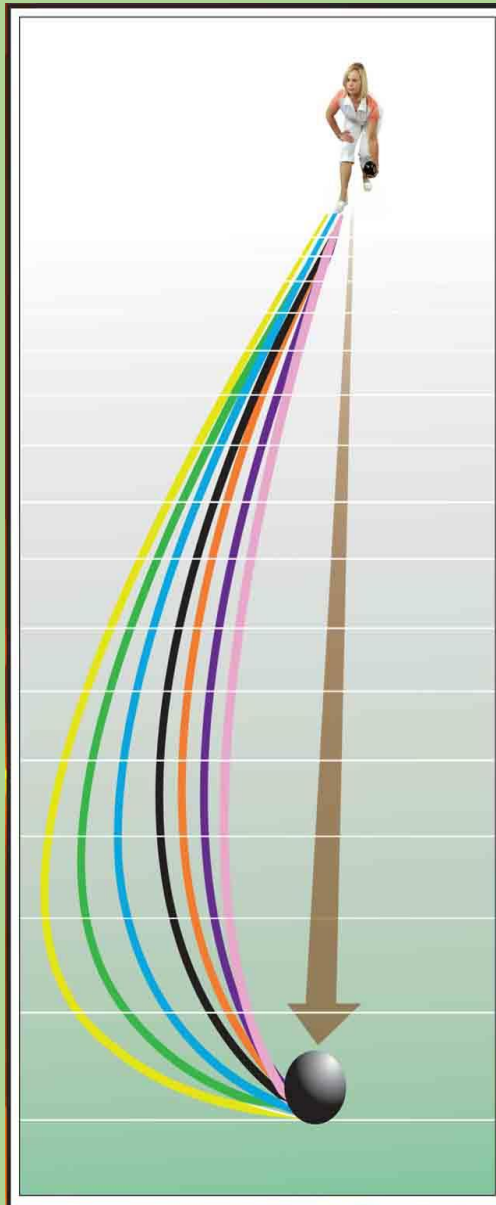
To fix this focus on raising your hand with your palm up and fingers pointing to the target line. Try to hold this pose for a second before standing back up. This will train the mind to bring the arm through straight.

BOWLS SELECTION, Selecting the Correct Size Bowl

One of the most important things for bowlers is selecting the correct size bowl, as this lays the foundation for their whole game and enjoyment.

There are many theories as to the correct size bowl in relation to the hand. Experience shows that you should use the bowl that can be most comfortably held and controlled in the hand under all playing conditions likely to be encountered.

A good indicator that the player can hold and control the size and weight bowl under consideration, is to place the bowl on the running surface and with the hand, fingers, and thumb extended downwards, place the thumb and fingers over the bowl. Then, gently close them and lift the bowl upwards towards you. Next, turn the wrist and bowl over, retaining a natural, relaxed grip. Does it feel comfortable in your hand?



LAZER



A slim profile bowl. Precision narrow bias. Designed for indoor and fast outdoor conditions. Progrid as standard. Available in Black only.

VECTOR-VS



Narrow drawing arc with no hook at the finish. Recommended primarily for all indoor surfaces and artificial surfaces. Progrid as standard. Plain to order.

BLAZE



The draw is between the Vector VS and the Ace with a nice sweep at the end. Can be used for both indoor and outdoor surfaces. Premier Grip as standard. Plain to order.

ACE



Slightly wider drawing arc than the Vector VS with no hook at the finish. Recommended for all indoor and outdoor surfaces. Progrid as standard. Plain to order.

INTERNATIONAL



Similar to the Ace but with a stronger finish. Recommended for all indoor and outdoor surfaces. Crescent Grip as standard.

LEGACY SL



A neat slim profile bowl, for easier grip and control. Medium to wide bias with a controlled draw to the jack. Progrid as standard. Available in Black only.

LIGNOID



Predominantly an outdoor, grass surface or Short Mat bowl with a wide draw. The Lignoid retains a high quality finish at an extremely competitive price. Progrid as standard.

RENTAL BOWLS & STORAGE LOCKERS

The Surrey Lawn Bowling Club has a limited number of bowl sets for rent. These bowls are available to members of the club only and rental preference will be given to first- and second-year bowlers.

- ❖ Rental cost per season for each set of lawn bowls: \$30.

The Club only has boxes for rental bowls. The person who rents bowls can store them in the tray, but they must be designated as being rented to prevent someone else from using them.

- ❖ Storage lockers are available for rent for \$25 per annum.

Please contact any of the Directors for further information.

GLOSSARY

BIAS	Bias is the amount of curve that a bowl will take during its course to the jack. Bowls are available with several different biases for use in different conditions and competitions. As part of the manufacturing process all bowls are tested against “Master Bowl”, which defines the limits of this bias.
BURNED/BURNT END⁵	A Burned End is one where the Jack was moved outside the boundaries of the rink by a bowl in play. The controlling body can decide if Jacks are placed on the 2M mark, or, replay the end for the game to carry on. See the footnote for more details.
DELIVER/DELIVERY	Deliver is the term used for rolling a bowl. The delivery is the action of delivering a bowl. A bowler with a good delivery can be compared to a golfer with a good swing.
DRAW	The term draw can have several meanings in bowling. As a noun it can refer to the type of shot being played. A dead draw is an attempt to deliver the bowl as close as possible to the target (generally the Jack). It can also be used as a verb. You may hear a skip issuing an instruction such as just draw to the Jack.
DRIVE	A drive is a type of shot in bowling where the player delivers the bowl with controlled force towards the target.
END	An end of bowls comprises the placing of the mat, the delivery of the Jack and the playing of all the required bowls of all the players in one direction on the rink.
GUARD	A guard is a bowl played to a position that restricts the opposition from getting to the target – also known as a blocker.
HEAD	The head refers collectively to the Jack and the bowls that have been delivered and come to rest within the boundaries of the rink.
HEAVY	When a player unintentionally delivers a bowl beyond the jack of the intended target, it is described as heavy.
JACK	The jack is the small white or yellow ball that is the target in bowls.

⁵ [SECTION 5 -THE GAME \(worldbowls.com\)](#) Dead Jack 19, and [V&D Event Convenor’s Handbook \(vndba.com\)](#), General Conditions of Play, p.5

JACK HIGH	If a bowl is jack high it means that it has reached a position such that it's nearest part is literally aligned with the jack effectively it means that the bowl and the Jack are level.
LEAD	A Lead is the person who plays first in pairs, triples, or fours game. The Lead is responsible for setting the mat and delivering the jack to start the end.
LINE OF AIM	The imaginary line at which a bowl is delivered for a specific shot.
SECOND/VICE	The Vice is normally responsible, with his/her corresponding opponent, for deciding the result of an end. That is, who is lying shot and how many shots have been scored. The umpire or Skips, however, have the final say in this in the event of any dispute.
SHORT	A bowl that does not reach the Jack of the intended target is described as being short.
SKIP⁶	The Skip is the captain of a team in pairs, triples or fours play. The Skip is always last to play and is responsible for directing the play during an end. The other players in a team must follow the Skip's instructions.
TOUCHER	A Toucher is a bowl that during its course touches the jack before finishing within the boundaries of the rink. A toucher remains live even if it finishes in the ditch.
WEIGHT	Weight is the term used to refer to the power applied to a delivery.

⁶ [SECTION 5 -THE GAME \(worldbowls.com\)](#), *The Skip*, 40.1.7, 40.1.9, 40.1.10.