

A guide to improving technique at lawn green bowls

For most people playing bowls, technique is very important and will encourage more consistent play. Occasionally, someone bowling in an unorthodox manner will bowl well, but this is quite rare.

There are three key elements to improving technique - grip, stance and delivery - and this guide outlines some of their key features:

1. Grip

There are two main types of grip:

Claw Here the key features are:

- The bowl is placed in the lower part of the palm of the hand and along the fingers and thumb.
- The fingers are evenly spaced across the running surface of the bowl.
- The index finger and little finger are nearest the largest rings on the outside and inside of the bowl respectively, with the longest finger down the centre of the running surface.
- The thumb should be placed on (or close to) the grip near the largest ring on the upper side of the bowl.
- The final grip must be **comfortable**, with firm contact, but not too tight or too slack.

Cradle Here:

- The bowl is rested further back in the palm of the hand.
- The thumb, index and little fingers are placed lower down the sides of the bowl.
- Much less use is made of the provided grips.

A third (**Finger**) grip can be used. This is a variation of the claw, where the bowl is placed lower down the hand, only on the digits. This is sometimes used on faster greens, where little propulsion is needed.

For all grips, it's important to remember that the bowl is an extension of the hand, wrist, arm and shoulder, and it should follow such a line (see below). The primary objective is for the bowl to roll with good balance (keep the central plane upright), without wobbling.

2. Stance and position on the mat

There are two main stances, with a few variations:

Upright Here:

- The bowler stands in an upright position (only slight bending of the knees), with the two feet close and parallel to each other.
- The feet should be positioned in the general **line of delivery**.
- The legs, torso, head and eyes should follow this line.

Crouch Here:

- The body is lowered or dropped into a much lower position, through a greater bending of the knees.
- The bowl in the delivery hand should be touching or very near to the green itself.
- The feet position should be as in the upright stance.

Variations include the **semi-crouch**, where the knees are bent midway between the upright and crouch positions and the bowl is held in a midway position (a common stance). The **fixed** stance has the front foot placed (fixed) one step forward on the green before (not as) the bowl is delivered. The **South African** style has the front foot placed half a step forward on the green, with the other half step forward being made during delivery.

Whichever stance is preferred (most comfortable), it's important to deliver the bowl as low to the ground as possible. However, just as important as the grip and stance is the **position of the feet** on the mat:

- When the bowl is released, ensure that one foot is within the confines of the mat (on or above the mat).
- The position of the feet is very important for finding the **line of delivery**.
- Unlike when delivering the jack, the feet (parallel to one another) should not be pointing directly down the green towards the jack.
- Instead, the feet should be positioned in the direction of the **line of delivery** and towards what is known as the **shoulder of bias** (about three-fifths of the way down the green where the bias begins to take effect).
- The feet are effectively positioned in relation to the angle which points to the shoulder of bias (about 5 past the hour for forehand and 5 to the hour for backhand - for a right-handed bowler).

3. Delivery (or movement)

This involves the **harmonised** and **balanced** action of the hands, wrist, arms, legs, torso and head that are required to release the bowl along the **line of delivery**. A number of elements are important in this movement:

- The delivery arm swings (both backward swing and forward swing) like a clock pendulum and in a direction down the line of delivery.
- The delivery arm needs to be kept **close** and **parallel** to the body. It should not be bent or far from the body.
- Co-ordinate the start of the backswing with the forward movement of the front foot (unless bowling with a fixed stance), transferring the body weight to the front foot and bending the knee of the rear leg as much as possible.
- Release the bowl about 6-9" ahead of the front foot.
- The non-bowling hand can come to rest above the knee of the front leg.
- Keep the rear foot on or above the mat until the bowl has been delivered. Avoid any movement of the rear leg forwards or off to the right of the mat.
- Stay down, with a still head, until the bowl has been delivered.

- In the follow through, do not raise your delivery arm above knee high. If the delivery arm is raised too high, this will affect balance and thus the line of delivery.

Above everything else, one needs to be **comfortable** and **balanced** in grip, stance and delivery. Thus, it is important for the individual to choose what is best for them, given the different options and styles outlined in this document.

There are so many other things to consider when playing lawn green bowls. For example, the positioning of the mat at different distances from the ditch has not been considered here and neither has the rolling of the jack to specific lengths. These and other aspects of the game can be explained once the basic technique of delivering the bowl has been mastered.