

# Guidance for new bowlers and the etiquette of bowls

You have just become a member of an International Sporting Organisation by joining the Bowls Club of your choice. No doubt you are now keenly anticipating your participation in the game of Lawn Bowls.

This publication has been compiled to assist you in preparing yourself for the many years of enjoyment you will experience as a bowler.

As a member of a Bowls Club you can become a registered member of Bowls Victoria.

The State of Victoria is divided up into areas which are designated as Regions. There are 16 Regions in Victoria.

If you become a member of a Club, designated as part of the Melbourne metropolitan area, the Club will have been allocated to a particular Region, according to its location.

Each Region is made up of delegates from each Club within that Region.

Check the Bowls Victoria Club and Region Guide for further information and contact details.

Bowls Victoria administration appoint delegates to represent Victoria to the national governing body, Bowls Australia. In turn Bowls Australia appoint delegates to the international body, the World Bowls board.

## **TRADITION**

Since its inception in Victoria in 1864, the game has the reputation for being recognised as a gentleman's game, with the conduct of the game played in a friendly but competitive atmosphere. The conduct of players at all times should be exemplary. The prestige of bowls clubs within the community has always been recognised and it is up to all members to see the tradition built up by our forebears continues. Each individual can play their part in honouring this tradition by conducting our affairs within our sport to the highest principles of sportsmanship, loyalty and general good fellowship. In this way we can pass on to future generations a game that is admired by all. The origin of the game has not been definitely identified, but it is known that the game has been played for centuries and is steeped in a tradition that we should endeavour to maintain.

## **YOUR CLUB**

The Club you have now joined has an administration which perform the everyday functions required to maintain the operational standard that is required in any organisation. As well as being a bowls member, at some future date it would be of great benefit to your Club if you made yourself available to assist with the administration of your Club.

The maintenance of the Club and the greens on which the game is played is an unenviable task for all Club administrators, and assistance with regard to supporting social functions etc, for the raising of the financial requirements of the Club should also get your support.

Always be aware that you are known throughout the bowling fraternity by the name of the Club of which you are a member, therefore do nothing that will reflect badly on the Club, and therefore on the other members.

Remember to be always appropriately dressed when participating in the game. Make yourself familiar with dress requirements. Every Club has a uniform for official pennant etc games.

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## THE GREEN

This is the area where you will be spending quite a lot of your time and it is well to remember that all members use this facility and there are particular members responsible for its maintenance and upkeep.

Always be aware that damage can occur to a green if it is in any way abused. There are two main services of greens, grass and synthetic. The grass type takes specialised care and maintenance so that the surface can be acceptable for playing during the playing season. Unnecessary damage can be caused by not having an acceptable delivery. Your coach will ensure that your delivery action will be acceptable before you actually begin your playing career. Your coach shall explain all the pertinent points with regard to the green, such as size, rinks, boundaries, ditches, boundary pegs, numbers, centre line and mat.

Synthetic greens are more durable with respect to damage but still must be treated with respect as they require upkeep to maintain the surface.

## ETIQUETTE

This subject is not contained in the rules of the game but is a major part of the conduct of lawn bowls, and has been since the game began.

Our definition of the word etiquette is “acceptable professional conduct”. First and foremost adhere to the old cliché, “do unto others as you would others do unto you”.

Do not behave in any way that would bring you, your Club or the game into disrepute. Do not behave in such a manner as to divert the attention of a player about to deliver a bowl.

Conversing loud enough for the player to be aware also is a distraction.

Standing behind the player and shouting compliments or encouragement to a player, or players, on another rink is certainly distracting and should not take place when any player is preparing to deliver a bowl on your rink.

Do not intrude onto an adjacent rink.

Be courteous at all times.

It is customary to invite your opponent to join you in a friendly drink on completion of the game.

Always remember that good sportsmanship in relation to your team mates and opponents will be reciprocated.

It is customary to pick up the mat in any game whenever your opponent has delivered the last bowl of the end.

You must not be in the area of play after your bowl comes to rest. The rules state that the possession of the rink is in the control of your opponent when your bowl comes to rest. The only exception to this is when a director has to mark a toucher. Therefore you are required to be a minimum of 2m. behind the mat or the head when your bowl stops.

The Lead in a team game, or opponent in a singles game, is to pick up the ‘jack’ and hand to their opponent at the start of an end when the previous end was won by the opponent.

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When you play against an opponent on your own Green, remember you are the host and must treat that player and his team as guests. Be sociable at all times and display a friendly manner.

Always be gracious in defeat and humble in victory.

Do not blame outside influences for your defeat, such as the green, the weather conditions, our opponents 'lucky' shots, the umpire or spectators.

No matter how good you are, or think you are, all players have the capabilities of playing well on a given day, just as players can have an off day. Accept the defeat and give credit to your opponent in a sportsman-like manner.

Do not show your displeasure by being ungracious to your opponent. Be the first to offer your hand in congratulations for a game well played.

When an umpire is requested to decide a measuring situation, indicate the bowls in dispute and all players must retire to the bank. Accept the decision without displaying signs of disagreement. If on the interpretation of a rule, you may appeal to the Controlling Body, following the procedure as laid down in the Rules, but you must inform the umpire of your intentions.

Ensure you follow the dress rules and abide by the regulations for Attire of which all Clubs should have displayed in a prominent position in the Club.

When you have the services of a Marker, it is of utmost importance that you extend your thanks and appreciation for services rendered, and offer refreshment on completion of the game.

### **SPECTATORS**

If watching a match, do not allow your support for a player to become too vocal. Advice or criticism must not be given and barracking boisterously is bad form. Applause for good shots played is the usual practice. Being a spectator can be a helpful tool to improving your own game providing you pay attention to the selection of shots played by the competitors. Spectators come under the jurisdiction of the umpire.

### **THE GAME**

The game of bowls can be played in various formats.

#### **Singles:**

Each player participates with a set of four bowls played alternately. The first to play is determined by the toss of a coin.

The first to play on subsequent ends is the player who won the previous end. Shots are scored on each end by determining the number of bowls a player has that are closer to the 'jack' than those of his opponent.

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Agreement between the opponents must be reached before the head is disturbed. If agreement cannot be achieved then the umpire is called to determine the result. This applies in all games. (See under Umpire)

The umpire's decision is final. Games are usually up to a predetermined number of shots, or the greater number of shots after a predetermined number of ends.

### **Marker:**

In a Singles game, a Marker is required. The duties of a marker include: Alignment of the jack on the centre line at the beginning of each end, keeping the score card during play and informing the players of the score at the completion of each end and maintaining the rink score board each alternate end. The Marker shall remain stationary during play in a position to one side and behind the head. The Marker can answer questions from the player currently in possession of the rink. Questions such as: "Who is holding shot?" "What relationship to the jack is a particular bowl?" "How many shots UP or DOWN?"

"What is the situation?" This question allows the Marker to give an opinion as to how many shots the player may be UP or DOWN. A Marker cannot give an opinion as to what shot the player should attempt. A Marker must remain completely neutral at all times. By being permitted to answer questions a Marker alleviates the necessity for the player to walk up to the head every time there is some doubt as to the position of the head. The Marker should ensure the name of the winner entered for the next round on the draw sheet.

### **Pairs:**

Played by two players against two opponents. This game is played with a pre-determined number of bowls each. (2, 3 or 4)

The players are referred to as a team: Leader and Skip.

In the most common format of pairs (4 bowls each) the order of play is determined as for Singles, the leaders play their first two bowls alternately. The opposing skips who have been at the other end of the green now come to the "mat end" of the green and play their first two bowls alternately in the same rotation as the leaders. The leaders now proceed to the "mat end" and play their final two bowls alternately in the same order as previously. On completion the players change over again and the skips play their final two bowls.

The leaders now have the task of determining which team has the closest bowl / bowls to the jack and, on agreement relaying their information to the skippers.

Pairs are usually played to a pre-determined number of ends.

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## **Triples**

These games consist of a team of three players with usually three bowls each. A common variation can be two bowls each. The players are referred to as Lead, Second and Skip. The game commences as previously for Singles and Pairs. The leads play alternately then the second likewise, and then the players change ends with the skips who play their bowls in correct rotation. The seconds now determine which team has the “shot/s” and relays that information to the skips.

Triples also is usually played up to a pre-determined number of ends.

## **Fours:**

Is a team game with players designated as Lead, Second, Third and Skip. Play commences the same as other team games with the leads playing alternately, then the seconds followed by the thirds. Players then change ends and the skippers play their bowls. Determining the result of the end is the responsibility of the thirds. Informing the skipper of the result is as for other team games but in this game the second player enters the score for each end on the score card, whereas in pairs and triples the skip keeps the card.

Fours are usually played in a pre-determined number of ends. In Victoria pennant games are currently of a duration of 21 ends.

The skipper of a team is the person in control of the team and directs the players as to what “shots” to play, in the process of “building the head”. When it is the skipper’s turn to bowl, no player at the head should direct the shot to be played. Comments and/or suggestions should only be given “when the skipper requests such information or assistance”. Such remarks can break the concentration of the skip unnecessarily.

## **Mixed Games**

Teams can be formed with both ladies and men, with the positions as previously stated.

## **Umpire**

An official umpire is usually appointed when any competitive game is played. The duties of an umpire including making a decision as to which bowl(s) is / are shot, when opponents cannot agree. Determines whether a bowl or jack is within bounds, if opponents cannot agree.

Checks the length of a rolled jack, if in dispute.

An umpire is also the arbitrator when queries regarding rules of the game are either in dispute or not known.

The umpire’s decision is final.

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## The Head

Consists of the jack and bowls which have come to rest within bounds on the rink, and are not dead.

## Players Duties

**Lead** in a team game places the mat at the discretion of the skip, except on the first end of a game where it is placed on the 2 metre mark. Rolls the jack, as close as possible, to a distance determined by the skip. Plays draw shots close to the jack to lay a good foundation for the development of the head.

A lead should practice the art of rolling the jack, and try and perfect the basic shot of the game, “the Draw Shot”.

**Second** keeps the score at each end on the card provided. Records the progressive score on the scoreboard, at each alternate end (when playing at home). Checks score after each end with opponent.

Checks total score at end of game with opponent. Sign both cards when scores are verified as correct.

Needs to be a versatile and competent player. Should have the capabilities to draw to the jack or to a position as requested by the skip. Should be a competent “on shot” player.

**Third** acts as measurer at completion of an end. Must have a good knowledge of the rules. Should be a versatile and experienced player.

Should be competent in playing all shots. Draw, metre on, resting shot, on shot and drive.

**Skip** is the person in charge of the team. Directs the players to develop the head. Needs to have tactical and bowling skills. Should have the capabilities to get the best from the team. Must never be critical. Should display encouragement.

Should have comprehensive knowledge of the rules. Should be a capable exponent of the game.

## Points to Remember

Team members will improve their chances of success if they follow the advice listed below.

Should have concentration, confidence, co-operation, and commitment.

Should not be careless, critical, show conflict or be complacent.

It makes sense if your team has the desirable qualities listed but no matter what their individual expertise happens to be, they will perform. As a team, and enjoy the game, much better than the team that has the undesirable qualities.

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## Club Coach

A coach will teach you about such things as placing the mat, rolling the jack, bias of a bowl, grip. Stance and swing. The aiming line (grass line, angle), pace of the delivery (weight, length), in fact all there is to know about how to deliver a bowl.

A coach will advise the current rules with regard to placement of the mat, stance on the mat, what constitutes a foot fault. Also the rules about incorrectly rolling the jack. When it comes to rest off centre line when rolled. When it comes to rest between the 2m mark and the ditch. What happens when both Leads have incorrectly rolled the jack.

It is essential that a new bowler is aware of these particular rules because they are pertinent to playing in a Lead position where a new bowler generally begins playing.

A coach might also explain procedures for entering club games when eligible, etc.

## Ambitions

When you begin playing competitive bowls is the time for you to decide what you intend to achieve in your new sport. There are many levels of accomplishment in the game which should become apparent in the early stages.

Options include learning each of the four positions in pennant, lead, second third and skip. Participate in Club championship events. Attempt Group or State championship events. The options are never ending.

The importance of setting goals cannot be emphasized too much because it ensures that you are always looking to improve your game. You may not attain all your goals but it a way to approach the game so that you will always be competitive and dedicated for self satisfaction.

Remember to always enjoy the game.

## Competitive Bowls

The game of bowls is a grand medium for exercise, sociability and competitive recreation with one of its greatest characteristics being the sportsmanship of the player being always to the fore which is an attribute vitally necessary for all who play the game. The newcomer to the game, while diffident about entering competitions, is strongly recommended to play as much competitive bowls as possible, as this is a means of improving your play whilst developing knowledge of the game and enjoying the early opportunity of making new friends.

Social bowls is most enjoyable and should be used to encourage the keen new bowler to analyse faults and improve playing standards. The opportunity to represent your Club in Pennant should be your aim as soon as is practical.

Consult your coach at regular intervals to ensure that faults are not developing your game.

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This quotation from the “Bowls Encyclopaedia” emphasises the great benefits of the game and also has a hidden reference to the importance of sportsmanship.

“Bowls is a science, the study of a lifetime, in which you may exhaust yourself but not the subject. It is a contest, a duel, calling for courage, skill and self-control. It is a test of temperament, a trial of honour, a revealer of character.

It is a cure for care, an antidote for worry. It includes companionship with friends, sociability and opportunities for courtesy, kindness and generosity to an opponent. It also provides, not only physical health but moral force.”

May you have many years of enjoyment in this great game with the number of life-long friends you will make.

Enjoy the game and always be gracious in defeat and humble in victory because the result could be reversed the next time you play.

It is the hope of those who prepared this document that the new bowler will have gained some knowledge and benefit from its content.

*Source: Royal Victorian Bowls Association (RVBA) (11<sup>th</sup> Edition)*