

How To Play Bocce



Bocce originated in Egypt at 5200 BC. The game spread throughout the Middle East and Asia, and to Greece around 600 BC where they introduced it to the Romans. The Romans spread the game around the world as the Roman Empire invaded different countries. This game became "bocce" in Italy, "boules" or "petanque" in France and "bowls" or "lawn bowling" in England. In the late 19th century, Italian immigrants brought their game of bocce to the United States, Australia, South America and many other countries where it is widely played today.

Bocce is played between two players or two teams of up to four players on a team. Bocce is played with 8 large balls, 4 of one color, 4 of another color and one small target ball called the *Jack*, or *Pallino*. Players seek to place their Bocce Balls nearer to the target than their opponent or displace the opponent's Bocce Ball and so improve the position of their Bocce Ball in relation to the Jack, (*Pallino*). Bocce can be played in a variety of ways using various rules.

Equipment

Two sizes of balls are used to play bocce. The balls are usually made of a tough, composite material like small bowling balls (without the finger holes). The target ball, pallina or pallino, is about 2.25 inches in diameter. The team balls are called bocce's and are about 4.25 inches in diameter. Four bocce's are used for each team and are color-coded by team. The pallina can be white, cream, or yellow but contrasts in color with the bocce balls.

Open Bocce or Lawn Bowling

Open Bocce is the Italian game modified for American conditions. It may be played almost anywhere on a variety of surfaces like smooth lawn or rough grass, a sandy beach, on level ground or hilly terrain. Variety in surface and terrain calls for variety in skills and techniques of play, producing a game rich in surprise and suspense.

To set-up the playing surface, remember that backstops are placed 60 feet apart. Backstops are 12 feet wide with sides 4 feet long. Backstops and sides must be at least 4 1/2 inches high. A foul line is marked out 10 feet from each backstop.

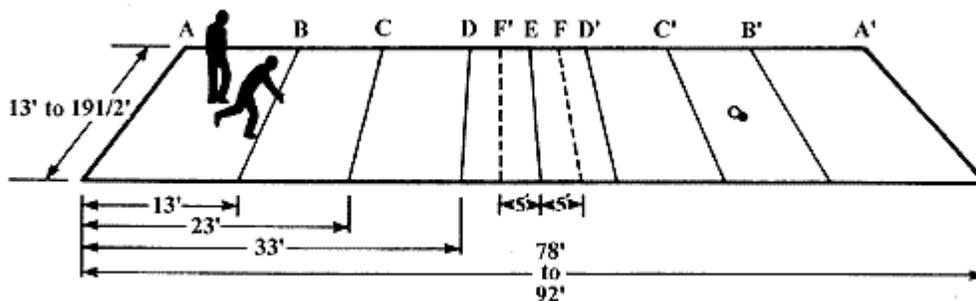
- The target ball, the *Pallino*, is thrown out by a member of Team A. He may toss the target ball any distance and in any direction that he chooses.
- The same player then rolls or throws his two Bocce Balls as close to the *Pallino* as possible.
- A player on the opposing team rolls and tries to place his balls nearer the target ball.
- Then, the second player from Team A rolls.
- Finally the last player from Team B.

A variation to the above is allowed. The "Nearest Ball" rule may be adopted as follows: The first player rolls or tosses his first Bocce Ball only. He then steps aside and does not bowl again until the opposing side has gotten one of its Bocce Balls closest to the Pallino. The side whose Bocce is closest to the Pallino is called "Inside" and the opposing side "Outside." Whenever a team gets "Inside" it steps aside and lets the "Outside" team bowl. This continues until one side has used all its Bocce Balls. Players must follow their proper turn throughout the game. A player must use all his balls at each turn, except in a game of 2 individuals (singles). Then each player uses 2 balls at each turn.

Closed Court Bocce

Rules are added and methods of play defined by the court layout in closed court bocce.

- Any type of surface may be used. The playing field should be traced on your playing surface as per illustration A.
- At the beginning of the game the right of the first throw is decided by the flip of a coin. Thereafter, it belongs to the team that last scored.
- The Pallino is thrown from behind the foot line.
- A throw is valid when the Pallino comes to rest in the small rectangle at the far end-- the Pallino must be within the lines.
- If the first throw fails, the same team has the right to throw again.
- After two attempts, the opposing team may place the Pallino in the 5m rectangle (at least 50cm 120 in. from any line).
- When the Pallino is thrown, all the other players must stand behind the same foot line as the thrower.



Type of Shot

Balls may be thrown in one of the three following methods:

Standard Shot

The player must stand between lines A and B of the starting half and roll the ball towards the Jack. He must release the ball before line B but he may advance not further than line C after he releases the ball (see illustration above). The ball must stop at least on or beyond line F of the finishing half, must not run out of bounds and must not hit or move any other ball or the Jack in the court. The object of this shot is to get as close as possible to the Pallino. If the ball thrown fails to comply with the above regulations, it is disqualified and removed from the court. All balls moved by such a foul shot must be returned to their original positions.

Call Shot

The player must stand between lines A and C and release his ball before line C but he may advance not further than line D after he releases the ball. The ball must stop on or before line F of the finishing half and must not run out of bounds. In this case, however, the player specifies his target beforehand and his ball must hit that target, or at least another ball or the Pallino, if they happen to be within one foot of the target named. In the absence of any object within one foot of the target, the player must hit the target itself. The ball must hit the target (or another within one foot) first, before hitting or moving any other ball on the court. All measurements are made from the outer dimensions of the balls and not the distance between the balls. Failing to comply with any of the above regulations, the ball is disqualified and removed from the court. All balls (including the Pallino) moved by such a foul shot should be returned to their original position and the game resumed. If the shot was good, however, then the balls (and the Pallino) moved shall remain where they lay. All balls knocked out of bounds are disqualified. Also any ball knocked before line F of the Finishing Half is disqualified; and of course, if the Jack is knocked out of bounds or before line F of the Finishing Half, the whole Frame is invalid and must be repeated.

Aerial Call Shot

This shot is similar to shot No. 2 (call shot) in all respects, except that the ball is hurled through the air and must land either directly on or within 1 foot of the target named and immediately proceed to hit the target or an object (ball or Pallino) within 1 foot thereof (the original target). The ball must, as in case of shot No. 2, hit the target (or another object within 1 foot thereof) before hitting or moving any other ball in the court.

Scoring

Scoring is done after all bocce balls are thrown by both teams. There is no minimum distance to the pallina. One point is awarded for each ball that is closest to the pallina and "inside" of any opponent's ball. Therefore, at least 1 and as many as 4 points may be awarded to a team in each frame.

Strategies

- Spot your ball directly in front of the pallina. Although this often invites a bomb (see next), it makes it difficult for your opponent to get around your ball and be closer.
- "Spocking" or bombing. This involves intentionally knocking your opponent's ball away from the pallina. If this is done with skill, you can end up with your ball closest to the pallina while your opponent's ball rolls down the neighbor's driveway.
- You can also spock the pallina if you wish to move it away from your opponent's ball and against the other three balls that you've carefully positioned in previous rolls.
- Sometimes you have to sacrifice. If an opponent's ball is in a solid position against the pallina, you can spock it out of contention, taking your ball with it. The starting team must now re-establish the point ball which (hopefully) will be in a better position for you to get inside.
- If you're playing on a bocce court with backstops and sides, all kinds of bank shots are possible, making ball placement more critical. Ideally, you knock the pallina into a corner and surround it with your balls.

(Excerpts and illustration from *Sportcraft's Official Rule book for 23 games*)