



SHORT MAT BOWLS LAWS OF THE GAME

NOTE

These Laws have been transcribed and updated to the Amended Short Mat Bowls "Laws of the Game" booklet as amended 2014 version.

Should the reader find any discrepancies please inform the WebMaster.

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A.EQUIPMENT

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(1) THE RINK MAT

- (a) The rink mat shall be of a suitable material conducive to the true running of the bowls as approved by the E.S.M.B.A.
- (b) The maximum length shall be 13750 mm (45') and the minimum length 12200 mm (40') including ditches. The width shall be 1830 mm (6') with a tolerance of 50 mm (2").
- (c) The floor surface should be level.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(2) THE DELIVERY MAT

The delivery mat shall be 610mm (24") long and 356mm (14") wide or 600mm long and 360mm wide.

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(3) THE DITCH AND FENDER

- (a) The depth of the ditch shall be 300 mm (12"), this measurement to include the 12 mm (½") marking tape. The width of the ditch shall be 1830 mm (6'). It shall be enclosed at the back and both sides with a fender not less than 70 mm (2¾") and not more than 75 mm (3") above the surface of the rink mat, with a maximum thickness of 75 mm (3") and a minimum thickness of 70 mm (2¾").
- (b) The fender shall be coloured white and shall be of rigid timber construction with the fixed return ends being 90° to the back rail. It MUST NOT be covered with any type of material.
- (c) The fender should be fully constructed in hardwood or softwood. The back rail should be of one continuous piece of timber and the return ends should be fixed rigidly at 90° to the back rail. This means that there should be no hinged sections within the fender construction. If because of transportation problems, hinges have to be fixed, it should be ensured that the method of fixing the hinged sections in a rigid position is employed once the fenders have been placed at the rink mat.
- (d) All fender dimensions are taken from the rink mat surface. This is because most manufacturers are allowing an extension to the mat length to enable the fender to be placed on top of the mat to form the ditch confines.
- (e) It is perfectly acceptable to fix lifting strips to the return ends of the fenders to make them level with the mat surface.

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(4) THE CENTRE BLOCK

- (a) The centre block shall be 380 mm (15") long, not less than 70 mm (2¾") or more than 75 mm (3") above the surface of the rink mat, with a maximum thickness of 75 mm (3") and a minimum thickness of 40 mm (1½").
- (b) It may be square or rounded at the ends and must be made of timber.
- (c) It shall be coloured white and must not be covered by material.
- (d) It must not be affixed to the surface of the rink mat.

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(5) RINK MARKINGS

All line markings on the rink mat must be in 12mm (1/2") wide white adhesive tape. All markings must be clearly and correctly defined at all times. (See Appendix 4 diagram).

- (a) Ditch and Dead Lines. Lines representing the ditch shall be marked across each end of the rink mat 300 mm (1') from the fender and similar transverse lines shall be marked 2745 mm (9') from each ditch line to represent the dead-lines.
- (b) Jack Line. The jack line shall be 915 mm (3') long and in the middle of the rink mat with one end 915 mm (3') from the ditch line and the other end 915 mm (3') from the dead line.
- (c) Delivery Lines. Delivery lines shall be marked 1370 mm (4' 6") long starting at right angles from the ditch line and the distance on each side from the centre line of the rink mat shall be 330 mm (13").
- (d) Delivery Mat Lines. Delivery mat lines shall be marked 300 mm (12") long starting at right angles from the ditch line towards the fender and the distance on each side from the centre line of the rink mat shall be 175 mm (7").
- (e) Centre Block Lines. The centre block line shall be 380 mm (15") long and centred across the centre of the rink mat.
- (f) Bowls can be made of wood composition or plastic and maybe of any colour.
- (g) There is no requirement in the Short Mat game for players to bowl with a matched set of bowls.

B.THE BOWLS

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(1) GENERAL

- (a) Bowls shall not exceed 134 mm (5¼") or be less than 114 mm (4½") diameter and shall not exceed 1.59 kg (3½ lb) in weight.
- (b) Loading of bowls is strictly prohibited.
- (c) Coloured discs or stickers may be used to identify team or club bowls and for this purpose they shall be classed as part of that bowl. The placing of a number of stickers on top of each other will render that bowl illegal.
- (d) For the purposes of play in all competitions players are required to use bowls specifically produced for all the codes of bowling which are recognised by the E.S.M.B.A.
- (e) The ESMBA recognises bowls which are produced specifically for the use of bowlers in the following codes: Short Mat, Flat Green, Indoor Rink, Crown Green, Federation.

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(2) A LIVE BOWL

A live bowl is

- (a) A bowl which in its original course comes to rest wholly within the live area, even though it overhangs the edge of the rink mat or,
- (b) A bowl which in its original course breaks the ditch line, but does not interfere with any toucher or the jack in the ditch, does not touch the fender or make contact with the floor or the centre block and comes to rest wholly within the live area, even though it may overhang the edge of the rink mat or
- (c) A bowl which in its original course on the rink mat touches the jack, either directly or by deflection off another bowl or bowls, even though it settles in the ditch or makes contact with the fender after it has touched the jack Such a bowl shall be live and be called a toucher and its position in the ditch should be suitably marked so that it may be accurately replaced in the event of it being illegally disturbed.

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(3) DEAD BOWL

A bowl is dead and MUST be removed from the rink mat if

- (a) It is delivered from a foot fault position or
- (b) It contacts the centre block or passes over it or
- (c) It does not travel beyond the dead line or
- (d) It finishes in the ditch without touching the jack or
- (e) It touches or rebounds from the fender or contacts a toucher or the jack which is in the ditch, unless the bowl in question is a toucher or
- (f) When it comes to rest any part of the bowl breaks any part of the ditch line, unless it is a toucher or
- (g) When it comes to rest any part of it intersects any part of the dead line or
- (h) It makes contact with the floor or leaves the rink mat (Except as in F12) or
- (i) It is carried beyond the dead line by the player who is in possession of the rink mat.

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(4) BOWL DISPLACEMENT

(a) Displacement by a non-toucher

- (i) If a head is disturbed by
 - A bowl which rebounds from a toucher which is in the ditch or
 - A bowl deflected by the fender or
 - A bowl or jack in the ditch which is moved by a non-toucher (except as in B5)

It shall be restored as near as possible to its original position by the opposing player who is in charge of play at the head and the end completed.

- (ii) If a head is disturbed by
 - A bowl delivered from a foot fault position or
 - A bowl which strikes, contacts or passes over the centre block (Except as in B5)

The opposing Skip shall have the option of

- Restoring the bowl or bowls as near as possible to their original position or
- Letting the head remain in its new position or
- Playing the end again and it MUST be from the same direction.

(b) Displacement by a participating player

If a bowl while in motion or at rest on the rink mat or if a toucher in the ditch be interfered with or displaced by one of the players, the opposing Skip shall have the options.

- Restoring the bowl as near as possible to its original position or
- Letting it remain in its new position or
- Declaring the bowl dead and removing it from the rink mat or
- Playing the end again and it MUST be from the same direction.

(c) Displacement by a non-player

If a bowl while in motion or at rest on the rink mat or if a toucher in the ditch be interfered with or be displaced by any person not playing or by a jack or bowl from another rink mat or by any other object, the two Skip s will come to an agreement regarding its original position. Should the Skip s fail to agree, the end shall be played again in the same direction.

(d) Displacement by the marker in a Singles game

If a bowl is displaced while it is being measured by the Marker, it shall be restored as near as possible to its original position by the Marker, subject to the agreement by both players. If the players cannot agree, the end shall be played again from the same direction. (If any other displacement should occur, Law B4(c) will apply. For this purpose the Singles players are deemed to be Skip's).

If a shot or shots have already been awarded, the player holding the shots will have the option of accepting this as the score for that end.

(e) Displacement by the Umpire

If the Umpire accidentally displaces the bowl(s) whilst measuring, the Umpire will replace it or them as near as possible to the original position before completing the decision. The Umpire will be the sole arbiter in the matter.

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(5) BOWL DRIVEN OVER THE FENDER

(a) If a bowl be delivered with such force as to pass or to cause another bowl to pass over the back or sides of the fender, the opposing Skip shall have the following options:

- Claiming three shots and counting the end as played or
- Counting the end as an end played and claiming the shots lying or
- Completing the end or
- Playing the end anew as in a dead end.

(b) If a bowl and the jack are driven over the back or sides of the fender at the same time, the rule concerning the jack will take precedence. (See Law C5).

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(6) TOUCHER

(a) A toucher shall be clearly marked with chalk by a member of the player's side before the next bowl comes to rest (see also TOUCHERS in Appendix 1).

(b) If a bowl is not so marked before the succeeding bowl comes to rest it will cease to be a toucher (see Law D10(c)).

(c) If in the opinion of either the Skip or the player in charge of the head that to attempt to chalk such a bowl could cause it to fall or move it shall not be chalked, but it MUST be nominated as a toucher and it should then be marked if the danger ceases during the course of play.

(d) The marker in a singles game should mark all touchers and should indicate to the players any bowl which is a toucher that they were unable to mark.

(e) All toucher marks should be removed before any bowl is played.

(f) Should a bowl be played which has not had the chalk removed, the Skip, the player in charge of the head or the Marker shall remove the mark as soon as the bowl comes to rest, or if there is danger that such a bowl should fall and alter the head or its position, it should be indicated and that mark removed if the position is changed.

(g) Touchers may act upon the jack or other touchers in the ditch. The jack and any such touchers moved shall remain in their new position.

(h) Touchers rebounding from the jack or the fender or from other touchers in the ditch onto the live area shall remain in play where they have come to rest.

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(7) LINE DECISIONS

- (a) A line decision can be called for at any time during an end and any offending bowl will be removed.
- (b) Any non-toucher in the ditch will be removed whenever it is found. In other words a dead bowl is a dead bowl no matter what the circumstances.

C.THE JACK

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(1) GENERAL

The jack shall be round and coloured white or yellow and be made of a material approved by the ESMBA. Its diameter shall be not less than 63 mm (2½") or more than 70 mm (2¾"). It shall weigh not less than 397g (14 oz) or more than 907g (32 oz).

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(2) LIVE JACK

- (a) The jack is live and may be played by a live bowl if the jack is within the live area or if any portion of it is within the live area when it is breaking the ditch line. A live jack may legitimately act upon a toucher in the ditch which shall remain in its position, which should be suitably marked so that it may be accurately replaced in the event of it being illegally disturbed.
- (b) If any portion of the jack is in the live area when it is intersecting the ditch line, it can be played by a live bowl and this bowl would be determined to be a toucher. This also means that any live bowl which in its original course enters the ditch, without touching the fender or any bowl which is at rest within the ditch, and touches any part of the jack which is intersecting the ditch line and has a portion in the live area, will be determined a toucher and should be marked. Should it come to rest within the ditch its position should be suitably marked so that it may be accurately replaced in the event of it being illegally disturbed.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(3) DEAD JACK

The jack is dead if

- (a) any portion of it comes in direct contact with the floor or any other non-playing surface other than the fender (except as in Law or
- (b) it is driven by a bowl in play beyond the boundary of the rink mat, ie. over the fender, off the side, or over the dead line. (See Law C7 and C5) or
- (c) after rebounding it comes to rest either wholly within the dead area or with any portion of it breaking the dead line. If the jack is knocked to the edge of the mat and falls off during subsequent play without the action of another bowl hitting it, the end will be declared dead and will be replayed from the same direction.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(4) JACK DISPLACEMENT

(a) Displacement by a non-toucher

- (i) If a jack is disturbed by a bowl which
- has been delivered from a foot-fault position or
 - strikes, contacts or passes over the centre block or
 - being a non-toucher rebounds from the fender or

- being a non-toucher contacts it in the ditch (Except as in Law C5)
it shall be restored as near as possible to its original position by the opposing player who is in charge of the head.
- (ii) If the jack and the bowls are disturbed then the provisions of Law B4(a) will apply.

(b) Displacement by a participating player

If the jack which is in motion or at rest on the rink mat be interfered with by a player, the opposing Skip shall have the following options:

- restoring the jack as near as possible to its original position or
- letting it remain in its new position or
- playing the end again from the same direction

(c) Displacement by a non-player

(i) If the jack which is in motion or at rest on the rink mat be interfered with or moved by a non-player or by a jack or bowl from another rink mat or by any other object, the players in charge of the head shall come to an agreement regarding its original position and the jack will be restored.

(ii) Should they fail to agree, that end will be played again and it must be from the same direction.

(d) Displacement by the marker in a Singles game

(i) If the jack is moved by the Marker whilst it is being measured, it will be replaced as near as possible to its original position and both players will agree its position. If the players cannot agree, the end shall be played again from the same direction

(ii) If a shot or shots have already been awarded, the player holding the shots shall have the option of accepting this as the score for that end.

(f) Displacement by the Umpire

(i) If the Umpire accidentally moves the jack whilst in the act of measuring, he will replace it in its original position before completing his decision.

(ii) The Umpire will be the sole arbiter in the matter and his decision shall be binding.

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(5) JACK DRIVEN OVER FENDER

If the jack is driven over the BACK or SIDES of the fender by a player, the opposing Skip shall have the following options:

- claiming 3 shots and counting the end as played or
- playing the end anew as in a dead end.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(6) DITCHED JACK

If a jack is driven into the ditch its position must be suitably marked with chalk so that it can be accurately replaced in the event of it being illegally disturbed. It shall not be moved except by a toucher.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(7) JACK OFF THE MAT

- (a) In a game of 10 ends or more, each team (Single, Pair, Triple or Four) will be allowed to knock the jack off the side of the mat a maximum of 3 times without penalty. For each additional end on which they knock the jack off the mat, a 3 shot penalty will be awarded to the other team.
- (b) Non-penalty ends will be replayed from the same direction and will not count as ends played. All ends on which shots are claimed will count as ends played.
- (c) In games of less than 10 ends, each team may knock the jack off the mat twice only before incurring a penalty.
- (d) In all instances the non-offending team has the option of declining the shots awarded and playing the end again.

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(8) REBOUNDED JACK

Should the jack be driven against the fender and rebound onto the live area or should it rebound from a toucher in the ditch onto the live area or after being played into the ditch it be moved by a toucher so as to find its way onto the live area it shall be played to in the same manner as if it never left the live area.

D. PLAYING THE GAME

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(1) FORM AND DURATION

A game of bowls shall be played on 1 rink mat or several rink mats. It shall consist of a specified number of shots or ends or shall be played for any period of time as previously arranged.

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(2) PLAY ARRANGEMENTS

A game shall be played on 1 rink mat as

- (a) a Singles game with two players, each player playing 2, 3 or 4 bowls singly and alternately.
- (b) a Pairs game with two players on either side, each playing 2, 3 or 4 bowls. The 2 leads shall play all their bowls singly, alternately and in turn before changing ends with the Skip s who will then bowl their bowls singly, alternately and in turn
- (c) a Triples game with 3 players on either side who shall be called Lead, Second and Skip , each player playing 2 or 3 bowls singly and alternately, each lead playing all their bowls before the Seconds are allowed to bowl their bowls. The leads will remain at the mat end until both Seconds have delivered all their bowls, then these 4 players will change ends with the Skip s who will then bowl their bowls singly, alternately and in turn.
- (d) a Fours game with 4 players on either side who shall be called Lead, Second, Third, and Skip according to the position and order in which they play. Each player will play two bowls only, each singly, alternately and in turn.
- (i) The leads will play all their bowls before the Seconds be allowed to bowl theirs.
- (ii) If no Third is at the head end both Thirds will then bowl their bowls singly and alternately. These players will then change ends with the Skip s who will now bowl their bowls singly and alternately.
- (iii) Where one or both Thirds elect to be at the head end whilst Leads and Seconds play their bowls (see also Law E2), the Leads and Seconds will play their bowls as above and then

proceed to the head end. The Thirds will leave the head end when it is their turn to bowl and may not return to the head end.

(e) A team game shall be played by 2 sides on a given number of rink mats, each side composed of an equal number of players.

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(3) TRIAL ENDS

Trial ends shall be at the discretion of the controlling body.

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(4) TOSSING FOR START

(a) The captains in a team game shall toss. The winner has the option to play first or second on all rinks

(b) In games played on 1 rink mat, the Leads shall toss and the winner shall have the option of playing first or second.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(5) PLAYING FIRST

(a) In all subsequent ends to the first, the winner of the preceding end shall play first.

(b) In the event of a tied end (no score) or a replayed end, the player who played first in that end shall again play first.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(6) PLACING THE DELIVERY MAT

(a) At the beginning of an end the player who is to play first shall place the delivery mat within the delivery mat lines with the shorter side in contact with the fender.

(b) The delivery mat must not be moved until the end is complete. If accidentally moved it must be returned to its proper position by the following player.

(c) The last player to bowl in that end shall remove the delivery mat clear of the rink mat.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(7) PLACING THE JACK

(a) The Marker in a Singles game shall place the jack on the jack line where the player who is to play first requires it.

(b) The Skip whose side it is to play first shall place the jack on the jack line at any length he/she chooses.

(c) The jack may be placed on the jack line in any position and may overhang the end of the jack line providing it is in contact with the jack line.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(8) STANCE ON THE DELIVERY MAT

(a) A player at the moment of delivering the bowl shall have the whole of one foot entirely within the confines of the delivery mat. The foot must be either in contact with or directly above the delivery mat.

(b) The other foot may be placed totally on the delivery mat or partially on the delivery mat and the delivery area or totally within the delivery area.

(c) The delivery area is shown diagonally hatched on the diagram in Appendix 3. The delivery lines, the visible ditch line and the delivery mat lines do not form part of the hatched legitimate delivery area.

(d) No part of the body shall be in contact with the ditch area or any part of the rink mat outside the legitimate delivery area.

Failure to observe this Law constitutes foot faulting.

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(9) FOOT FAULTING

- (a) In all disciplines only players at the delivery end and Umpires can call foot faults.
- (b) Once a foot fault is called, any player at the head end shall stop the bowl and remove it clear of the rink mat, except in Singles where this shall be done by the Marker.
- (c) In all other cases the opposing player who is in charge of the head shall stop and remove the offending bowl.

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(10) POSSESSION OF THE RINK MAT

- (a) Possession of the rink mat shall belong to the side whose bowl is being played.
- (b) The players in possession of the rink mat shall not be interfered with, annoyed, barracked or have their attention distracted by their opponents
- (c) As soon as each bowl has come to rest, possession of the rink mat shall be transferred to the other side, time being allowed for marking a toucher, removing dead bowls or making line decisions.

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(11) POSITION OF THE PLAYERS

Players not in the act of playing or controlling play **MUST** be clear of the rink mat and if practical be behind the fender.

E. PLAYERS AND THEIR DUTIES

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(1) SKIP

- (a) The Skip shall have **SOLE** charge of their side and their instruction must be obeyed by all their players.
- (b) With the opposing Skip s they will decide all disputed points or shots. When both Skip s agree their decision shall be final. If they cannot agree either one will call the Umpire who will then arbitrate and whose decision shall be final and binding. In the absence of an official Umpire, any person mutually agreed by both players will act as the Umpire and their decision will be binding.
- (c) Whilst at the head they will be responsible for marking all touchers or removing the chalk mark from any non-touchers. They will be responsible for removing any dead bowls from the rink mat. They will decide on any line bowls with the other Skip and any other matters or will call the Umpire to adjudicate.
- (d) They may remain at the head end until it is their turn to bowl. They may visit the head when in possession of the rink mat but may not carry their bowl beyond the nearest dead line. Any bowl carried beyond the dead line will be declared dead and must be removed from the rink mat.
- (e) It will be the responsibility of the Skip to call foot faults whilst at the delivery end. (See also Law D9).

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(2) THIRD

- (a) The Third will do all measuring and agree the shots, allowing the opposite number to also measure and will inform the Skip of the result. Only if the thirds cannot agree will they call the Skip's who will then arbitrate.

(b) The Third will mark all touchers or remove the marks from any non-touchers and will remove any dead bowls from the rink mat and will see that the jack or any toucher in the ditch is not disturbed except by another toucher.

(c) The Third will take charge of the head only when it is the Skip's turn to bowl and their side is in possession of the rink mat. If the head is changed he/she will inform the Skip and direct the play accordingly.

(d) The Third's may remain at the head end until it is their turn to bowl. They may not return to the head end or pass beyond the delivery end dead line until they change places when the first Skip comes to the delivery end, except to replace the block if disturbed by a bowl that they have personally bowled.

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(3) SECOND IN A TRIPLES GAME

(a) The second will keep the score card as in a fours game, but will also agree the shot or shots with the opposing second and having recorded them will inform the skip

(b) The second will prove the claim for shots by measuring, but will not cause any bowl to be moved until the shot or shots are agreed, allowing the opposing second to also measure and if they cannot agree will call the skips to arbitrate

(c) The second will take charge of the head when it is the skip's turn to bowl and their side is in possession of the rink mat. They will inform the skip if the head has been altered and guide the play accordingly

(d) The second will chalk all touchers and remove the marks from any non-touchers

(e) The second will remove any dead bowls from the rink mat or the ditch

(f) The second will not visit the head whilst at the delivery end and will remain behind the mat until the opposing second has bowled all their bowls

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(4) LEAD

(a) The lead shall place the delivery mat correctly and see that the jack is correctly centred on the jack line before playing the first bowl.

(b) The lead's shall bowl singly and alternately until all their bowls have been played.

(c) The lead's will not visit the head or go to the head end until all the other players at that end have delivered their bowls.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(5) DIRECTING PLAY

Only 1 player shall be allowed to direct play of the team member about to bowl. Other team members may assist with deciding how to make the next play and for this purpose may be allowed onto the mat to examine the head. All must leave the mat before the next bowl is delivered.

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(6) FORCING SHOTS

(a) A player who intends to play a forcing or firing shot MUST give a VERBAL and a VISUAL warning to the player in charge of the head end or the Marker in a singles game and must then allow time for those in the vicinity of the head to be made aware of their intentions before delivering their bowl.

(b) Once advised that a forcing or firing shot is intended, the player in charge of the head or the Marker in a singles game must advise all other players in the vicinity of the head end and any nearby Markers, Umpires or spectators that such a shot is about to be played.

(c) It is ultimately the responsibility of the player delivering the bowl to ensure that no other person is placed at risk of injury.

(d) Failure to comply with this rule will result in the offending player being warned at the first infringement. Subsequent infringements will result in the player being asked to leave the rink mat and take no further part in the competition.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(7) CONDUCT

(a) In the case of a wilful breach of the Laws of the Game or unfair play or unsporting conduct, the Umpire may caution the offending player(s) or spectator(s) or order them to retire from the rink mat or area.

(b) If the offender is a player no substitute shall be allowed.

(c) In all cases except SERIOUS MISCONDUCT a player shall receive ONE caution.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(8) VISITING THE HEAD - SINGLES PLAYERS

Players in a 4 bowl Singles game are allowed to visit the head when in possession of the rink mat only after each player has delivered 2 bowls.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(9) SUBSTITUTES

In Pairs, Triples and Fours games the players taking part in the first game shall constitute the team and will normally play together throughout the competition. One additional player – and the same player – may be used as a substitute at any time provided that he/she has not already played in the competition.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(10) SCORING

In all disciplines except Singles, the Skips must appoint one of his players, or himself, as scorers on the mat. Scorecards kept by anyone other than the appointed scorers have no legitimacy. It is the duty of the appointed scorers.

(a) To ensure that the names of all players have been entered on the scorecard.

(b) To ensure that the score agreed at the conclusion of each end is recorded together with the accumulated total both for and against.

(c) To check with the scorer on the opposite side after each end that both scorecards are in agreement.

(d) To ensure that the scoreboards are updated and agree with the scorecards.

(e) To ensure that their Skip is given the completed scorecard at the end of each game.

F.PLAY INFRINGEMENTS

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(1) FOLLOWING THE BOWL UP THE RINK MAT

(a) No player shall follow their bowl up to the head on the rink mat or leave the rink mat and follow it up the side.

(b) Any player who infringes this LAW must be warned as soon as they cross the nearest dead line and on the second offence the opposing Skip can have the bowl stopped and removed from the rink mat or have the end played again, but it must be from the same direction.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(2) PLAYING BEFORE THE LAST BOWL HAS COME TO REST

(a) A bowl played before the last bowl has come to rest must be stopped and removed from the rink mat.

(b) Any such bowl that disturbs the head or makes contact with any bowl or the jack, the opponent may leave the head as altered or declare it void. It will be replayed from the same direction.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(3) CHANGING THE ORDER OF PLAY

Players may change their order of play at the completion of any end but only with the approval of their Skip and the knowledge of the opposing Skip before the next end commences. If this is not done then any bowl delivered by a player who has changed their position without the knowledge of either Skip will have their bowl dealt with as defined under Law F4.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(4) PLAYING OUT OF TURN

(a) If a player plays before their turn, the opposing Skip shall have the right to stop the bowl and cause it to be played again in its proper order.

(b) If the bowl so played has moved the jack or altered the head, the opposing Skip shall have the option of allowing the head to remain as it is or to declare it void.

(c) If the head is declared void it will be replayed from the same direction.

(d) If the head is allowed to remain in its new position, the other players will follow in the new order of play.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(5) PLAYING THE WRONG BOWL

A bowl played by mistake shall be replaced by the player's own bowl.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(6) DROPPED BOWLS

If a bowl is dropped or slips out of the hand of a player whilst in the process of delivering their bowl, it may be retrieved and played again without penalty provided that it does not fully cross the nearest deadline. Otherwise it shall be considered as a dead bowl and shall be removed from the rink mat.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(7) CHANGING BOWLS

No player shall change their bowls during a game unless they become damaged or objected to as not complying with the LAW B1.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(8) LEAVING THE RINK MAT

(a) No player will leave the rink mat while a game is in progress without first consulting their opposite number and then for a period not exceeding 10 minutes.

(b) If during a team game a player is forced to leave the game through illness or any other just cause, their place may be taken by a substitute if both captains agree.

(c) Should the sick or indisposed player return after the substitute has joined the game on the rink mat, even though the substitute has not delivered any bowl the player will not be allowed to re-join the game, nor can they act as a substitute in any other set.

(d) Should the opposing team captain not agree to the playing of a substitute or should there not be a substitute available, the game will continue with the missing player being classed as the Second.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(9) ABSENTEE PLAYERS

- (a) If a player is absent from a side at the time laid down for the commencement of the game, a wait of 10 minutes may be allowed.
- (b) If trial ends are to be played they will take place. The missing player will forfeit their rights to trial ends.
- (c) If the missing player arrives before the trial ends are completed they will be allowed to play, only the trial ends will be forfeited.
- (d) If the missing player has not arrived by the expiry of the time allowed, a Singles or Pairs game will be awarded to the opponents.
- (e) A Triples or Fours game will commence with the missing player being considered as the Second and the playing order defined as in Law F10.
- (f) If the missing player arrives after the delivery mat has been placed for the first end, they will not be allowed to play.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(10) PLAYING WITH PLAYER MISSING

There will be no penalty or extra bowls played by the side with a player missing, but in Triples or Fours games the missing player will be considered as the Second and a definite order of play will be maintained.

It shall be LEAD, LEAD, SECOND, LEAD, LEAD, SECOND.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(11) OBJECTS ON THE RINK MAT

Under NO circumstances shall any object to assist any player or to influence the play be placed on the rink mat or on the fender or on the jack or on a bowl or elsewhere.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(12) FENDER DISPLACEMENT

- (a) Should the fender become displaced by a non-toucher entering the ditch, the following laws apply.
 - (i) In a Singles game, the Marker will replace the fender and restore the jack and any touchers which may have been at rest in the ditch to their original marked positions.
 - (ii) The player who is in charge of the head shall be responsible for replacing the fender and restoring the jack and any touchers that may have been at rest in the ditch to their original marked positions.
- (b) Should the fender be displaced by a toucher or the jack entering the ditch and where such bowl(s) or the jack should touch the floor surface within the confines of the displaced fender, the following rules apply.
 - (i) In a Singles game, the Marker will replace the fender and place the jack and/or bowl(s) in the position(s) at which it/they contacted the fender or left the rink mat, also restoring the jack and/or any touchers which may have been at rest in the ditch to their original marked positions.
 - (ii) The player who is in charge of the head for the opposing side shall be responsible for replacing the fender and placing the jack and/or bowl(s) in the position(s) at which it/they contacted the fender or left the rink mat, also restoring the jack and/or any touchers which may have been at rest in the ditch to their original marked positions.

G. RESULTS OF AN END

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(1) THE SHOT OR SHOTS

- (a) A shot or shots shall be adjudged to be the bowl or bowls nearer the jack than the nearest bowl played by the opposite side.
- (b) When the last bowl of the end comes to rest, 30 seconds shall elapse if either side request it during which time no bowls shall be touched, marked, measured or interfered with. The request **MUST** be made as soon as the last bowl has come to rest. No player may walk in the live area during that time.
- (c) Neither the jack nor bowls must be moved until both sides agree the result, except where a bowl or bowls have to be removed to allow another to be measured. Only the player conceding the shot(s) may remove the bowls from the rink mat. If a player removes a bowl(s) before agreement has been reached, a penalty of one shot per bowl removed may be claimed by the opposing team.
- (d) No measuring shall be allowed until after the last bowl has come to rest.
- (e) When the last bowl has come to rest at the completion of an end, only one player from each team shall be allowed on the mat for the purpose of deciding the shot or shots scored.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(2) LIVE END NO SCORE

- (a) When at the conclusion of an end the nearest bowls of each side are touching the jack or the two nearest bowls are of an equal distance from the jack or there are no bowls in the live area or touchers in the ditch, it shall be deemed to be a live end and **NO SCORE**. The end shall be recorded as an end played.
- (b) The player who played the first in that tied end shall again play first and it shall be played from where the last end finished.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(3) MEASURING

- (a) All measuring **MUST** be done with equipment approved by the ESMBA (See Appendix 6). Measuring with hand, foot mat or any other object other than the recognised measure is **PROHIBITED**.
- (b) All measuring shall be to the nearest point of both objects.
- (c) If a bowl requiring to be measured is resting on another bowl which prevents it being measured, the best means available shall be taken to secure it in position whereupon the other bowl shall be removed. The use of hand or finger for this purpose is **PROHIBITED**.
- (d) The same applies if more than one bowl is involved and also if a bowl not so resting is in danger of falling before measuring is complete.
- (e) If the jack is in such a position that it may be moved whilst it is being measured, the best means available shall be taken to secure its position prior to the measure being made.
- (f) The placing of the hand or finger on the jack or on any bowl to be measured constitutes disturbance and the opposing side shall claim the shot or shots or refuse to acknowledge the shot or shots in dispute.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(4) LAST BOWL IN AN END

Nothing in these Laws shall be deemed to make it mandatory for the last player to play their last bowl in any end, but they should make their intentions known to the opposing side before

commencement of determination of the result of the end. Once they have declared, that may not be played.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(5) EXTRA END

- (a) In the event of a draw at the conclusion of a game where a winner must be determined, an extra end must be played.
- (b) The team captains in a team game or the leads in other games shall toss for the start. The winner will have the right to play first or second.
- (c) The extra end shall be played from where the last end finished.
- (d) If at the conclusion of the extra end it is still a draw, a further extra end will be played. The toss will again be made and the end played from where the last end finished.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(6) GAME DECISIONS

The winner is the player or team with the highest number of shots or points at the end of the game.

H. DRESS CODE

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(1) DRESS REGULATIONS

Where dress regulations are stipulated for any match, championship or event, NO PERSON SHALL PARTICIPATE IF IMPROPERLY DRESSED.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(2) FOOTWEAR

- (a) Proprietary Bowling shoes or Bowling sandals MUST be worn whilst playing on the rink mat and they MUST be changed into at the venue.
- (b) The shoes maybe coloured Brown, Black, Grey or White unless a particular colour is specified in the dress requirement of a competition.
- (c) The above requirement applies to Umpires and Markers whilst officiating in a match.

I. DUTIES OF OFFICIALS

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(1) THE MARKER

The Marker shall

- (a) be familiar with the ESMBA Laws of the Game.
- (b) be in possession of a reliable measure, callipers and chalk.
- (c) be in possession of the scorecard and pen or pencil and will see that the names of both contestants are entered.
- (d) make themselves familiar with the identifying marks on the bowls of each player.
- (e) witness the toss for the start.
- (f) see the mat is correctly aligned and place the jack on the jack line at the position required by the player to bowl first.
- (g) observe a strict neutrality.

- (h) answer any questions put to them by the players BUT WILL NOT GIVE ANY INFORMATION unless requested.
- (i) not pass comments.
- (j) address ONLY the person who has possession of the rink mat.
- (k) record ONLY the score agreed by the players.
- (l) measure ONLY when requested, but will not cause any bowl to be moved until both players agree the shot or shots.
- (m) in any difficult measure not attempt to make a decision, but will call the Umpire to adjudicate.
- (n) keep the players informed as to the state of the game.
- (o) mark all touchers and remove the marks from any non-touchers.
- (p) remove all dead bowls from the ditch and the dead area.
- (q) adjudicate on all line bowls.
- (r) on completion of the game see that the scorecard is signed by the losing player and handed to the game controller or official.
- (s) ensure that all players, Umpires, spectators and other markers in the vicinity of the head are made aware that a player has signalled their intention to play a forcing or firing shot and indicate to such a player when this has been done.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(2) THE UMPIRE

The Umpire shall

- (a) enforce the ESMBA Laws of the Game.
- (b) see that the game is continuous and played in a competitive and sporting manner.
- (c) be available for consultation on any matter or point of Law concerning the game.
- (d) measure all difficult shots when requested. They will tolerate no interference and their decision IS FINAL AND BINDING.
- (e) arbitrate in any dispute and their decision IS FINAL.
- (f) pass no comment, advice or praise.
- (g) remain strictly neutral and unbiased at all times.
- (h) be fully conversant with the Laws of the Game and any changes thereto.
- (i) carry an up-to-date Rule Book at all times whilst officiating.
- (j) only measure with such equipment as is approved by the ESMBA
- (k) follow the code of conduct for Umpires as laid down by the E.S.M.B.A.

Any dispute not provided for in these Laws shall be decided by the Umpire whose decision shall be final.

APPENDIX 1

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

[\[RETURN\]](#)

BACKHAND	to the <u>right-handed</u> player it is a delivery to the left hand side of the centre block. To the <u>left-handed</u> player it is a delivery to the right hand side of the centre block.
BIAS	is the peculiar property of one side of the bowl, caused by shaping which enables it to follow a curved course.
BLOCKING	means covering the lying shot or jack with a guarding bowl in order to hinder an opponent.
CENTRE BLOCK	means the obstacle which is placed midway between each end of the rink mat on the centre block line.
CONTROLLING BODY	means the body having immediate control of the conditions under which the match is played.
DEAD AREA	means that section of the rink mat between the dead lines.
DELIVERY LINES	means the markings within which players' feet are restricted to deliver the bowl.
DELIVERY MAT	means the foot mat upon which the stance is taken to deliver the bowl.
DISPLACED/DISTURBED	means accidentally moving a bowl or jack otherwise than by a bowl in play.
DRAW	means delivering the bowl with sufficient impetus to reach its objective with the necessary green to allow the bias to take effect.
END	means the placing of the delivery mat and the jack and delivery of all the players' bowls in any one discipline in the same direction on the rink mat. An end is completed when the last player's bowl comes to rest.
FENDER	means the surround that encloses the ditch.
FIRING/FORCING SHOT	a bowl which is delivered at a very fast pace.
FOREHAND	to the <u>right-handed</u> player it is a delivery to the right hand side of the centre block. To the <u>left-handed</u> player it is a delivery to the left hand side of the centre block.
FOUR	means 4 players on each side whose positions in order of playing are called Lead, Second, Third and Skip.
HEAD	means the jack and such bowls as have come to rest within the boundary of the rink mat and are not dead.
JACK HIGH	means that the nearest portion of the bowl referred to is the same distance from the dead line as the nearest portion of the jack.
LEAD	means the player on each side who plays first.
LINE DECISION	is a decision that must be made when the jack or a non-toucher is thought to be intersecting the ditch line or where the jack or any bowl is thought to be intersecting the dead line.
LIVE AREA	means that section of the rink mat between the dead line and the ditch, delineated by the inside edge of the half inch marking.
ORIGINAL COURSE	is the curved line that the bowl takes from the delivery mat to its objective.
PAIR	means 2 players on each side whose positions in order of playing are called Lead and Skip.
RINK MAT	means the whole rectangular playing surface.

RUNNING WOOD	means a bowl delivered with sufficient impetus to prevent its bias from taking effect (used for removing a bowl or breaking a head).
SKIP	means the player who controls the play on behalf of his side on any rink mat.
SINGLES	means one player competing against another.
TEAM	means any agreed number of players on one side.
TOUCHER	<p>is the term applied to a bowl which touches the live jack while the bowl is in motion on the rink mat and before it comes to rest.</p> <p>It shall also be a toucher if the said bowl is deflected off a bowl at rest or if the jack is sprung to touch the bowl whilst it is still in motion or if it falls and touches the jack before the next bowl has been delivered.</p> <p>The toucher will remain in play until the end is completed even when in the ditch. It shall be indicated by a chalk mark, which should be placed on it before the next bowl comes to rest. If this is impractical because there is a danger of the bowl falling over or moving, it shall be nominated and chalked when the danger has passed.</p>
TRAILING	means contacting the jack with sufficient momentum so as to move it and follow it to the new position.
TRIPLE	means 3 players on each side whose positions in order of playing are called Lead, Second and Skip.
WICK	is the term applied to a bowl which glances off another bowl or bowls so as to change its natural line of travel.

APPENDIX 2

EQUIPMENT AND LINE MARKINGS SPECIFICATIONS

[\[RETURN\]](#)

Please refer to Law A THE EQUIPMENT for full explanation of measurements below.

THE RINK MAT	Max length	13.75 m	(45' 0")
	Min length	12.20 m	(40' 0")
	Width	1830 mm	(6' 0")
	Tolerance	+/- 50 mm	(2")
THE FENDER	Back	1830mm	(6'0")
	Sides	300mm	(12")
	Max Height	75mm	(3")
	Min Height	70mm	(2.75")
	Max Thickness	75mm	(3")
	Min Thickness	70mm	(2.75")
THE CENTRE BLOCK	Length	380mm	15"
	Max Height	75mm	(3")
	Min Height	70mm	(2.75")
	Max Thickness	75mm	(3")
	Min Thickness	40mm	(1.5")
THE DELIVERY MAT	Length	610mm	(24") or 600mm
	Width	355mm	(14") or 360mm
BOWLS	Min Diameter	114mm	(4.5")
	Max Diameter	134mm	(5.25")
	Max Weight	1.59kg	(3.5lbs)
THE JACK	Min Diameter	63mm	(2.5")
	Max Diameter	70mm	(2.75")
	Min Weight	397g	(14oz)
	Max Weight	907g	(32oz)
MARKING TAPE	White Adhesive	12mm	(0.5")
DELIVERY LINES	From Centre Line	330mm	(13")
	From Ditch Line	1370mm	(4'6")
DITCH LINE	From Fender	300mm	(12")
DEAD LINE	From Ditch Line	2745mm	(9'0")
DELIVERY MAT LINES	From Centre Line	175mm	(7")
	Length	300mm	(12")
JACK LINE	From Dead Line	915mm	(3'0")
	From Ditch Line	915mm	(3'0")
BLOCK LINE	Length	380mm	(15")

APPENDIX 3

[\[RETURN\]](#)

THE DELIVERY AREA

Diagram

Refer to the Laws of the Game Booklet

APPENDIX 4

[\[RETURN\]](#)

RINK MAT MARKINGS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Diagram

Refer to the Laws of the Game Booklet

APPENDIX 5

[\[RETURN\]](#)

GUIDELINES FOR BOWLERS WITH BOWLING DIFFICULTIES

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THESE ARE GUIDELINES AND NOT RULES. IT IS EXPECTED THAT EVERY ACCOMODATION SHOULD BE MADE FOR ANY DISABILITIES EITHER TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT BUT NO SET OF GUIDELINES CAN COVER EVERY PROBLEM. GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP AND FAIR PLAY SHOULD BE THE OVERALL DECIDING FACTOR.

Where the rules of short mat are concerned, probably the most important element of a delivery is the point at which the bowl is released. These guidelines have been set in order to try and assist bowlers with a delivery difficulty the same opportunities (as near as is practical), as the delivery advantages that an able bodied bowler has.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(1) BOWLING WITH A CHUTE

(a) A chute may be used to deliver a bowl. The chute may be of any suitable construction. The end of the chute on the bowling mat must be placed with in the delivery area and may not extend beyond the end of the delivery lines. NOTE: It is common to use a type of guttering for a chute but other designs are perfectly acceptable.

(b) Where a helper is involved, they may place the bowl in the chute and position the chute at the request of the bowler. The bowler must release the bowl by hand or other device. Helpers must face away from the head and not offer any bowling advice except comment on the state of the head, if asked.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(2) BOWLING FROM A WHEELCHAIR

(a) A very complex and very difficult subject as wheelchair bowlers can bowl freehand or may use a chute. In practice a freehand wheelchair bowler can bowl with their chairs in a fore and aft position, at an angle or with their chairs at right angles to the mat etc.

(b) When bowling with a chute or similar device, wheelchair bowler may be on or off the mat provided they meet the conditions laid down in the Bowling chute section.

(c) When bowling freehand from a wheelchair in a fore or aft position and assuming the delivery mat is in the normal forehand position the axle centre hub of the main wheel of the chair, of the hand that the bowler is using i.e. left or right, should be positioned over the delivery mat and may be left or right of the delivery mat as appropriate. The other wheel may be off the delivery mat.

(d) If a freehand wheelchair bowler is positioned at an angle to the mat, they must have the axle/centre hub of the main wheel level with the centre of the bowling mat.

NOTE: this is to allow the wheelchair bowler the same freedom of positioning that an able body bowler has with their back foot.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(3) BOWLING FROM AN ORDINARY CHAIR

When using an ordinary non wheeled chair, to prevent any damage to the bowling mat, the delivery mat can be placed at right angles to its normal position and may be positioned anywhere in the ditch within a backward extension of the delivery lines. Both front legs of the chair must be positioned on the delivery mat.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(4) BLIND BOWLERS

(a) There are a number of different methods that blind bowlers use. They should be subject to normal foot faults but if they are about to foot fault they should be warned BEFORE they deliver their bowls.

(b) As to instructions from the head, players are usually informed using the hands/face of a clock to advise them of the various positions of the bowls. Sometimes a helper at the head end may indicate the angle at which a bowl should be delivered by a clap of hands from off the side of the mat or another sound etc. Helpers are not allowed to inform bowlers as to which side of the mat to bowl.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(5) LEARNING DISABILITIES

For bowlers with learning disabilities who fall outside the other groups, they are expected to follow the rules of short mat bowls but some leeway must be used to allow for their general understanding of the game. Good sportsmanship and understanding is expected to prevail once again.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(6) BOWLING WITH A FOOT

It is expected that any bowler using a foot to deliver his/her bowl should comply with the full rules of Short mat bowls where practicable and must deliver bowls with their non-bowling foot fully on the delivery mat.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(7) USING A SUPPORT

Where a stick or other support device is used to enable a bowler to maintain balance, the stick/support may be placed outside of the delivery lines. Also, if necessary, the back foot may be off

the side of the delivery mat but the front foot must be within the delivery lines. All other ESMBA rules apply.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(8) USING A DELIVERY DEVICE

A device exists which enables a bowler to deliver a bowl from an upright position swinging backwards and forwards. This usually has a hand grip to release a bowl release. The full rules of our sport apply where the bowler falls outside of any other disability.

[\[RETURN\]](#)

(9) OTHER DELIVERY PROBLEMS

It should be clearly noted that the above sections refer to known problems that exist. This is not necessarily a definitive list and other difficulties may also exist. It would help if the ESMBA is informed of any problems not covered by these guidelines so a suitable solution can be found to assist with the problem.

APPENDIX 6

[\[RETURN\]](#)

ESMBA APPROVED MEASURING EQUIPMENT

Refer to the Laws of the Game Booklet

APPENDIX 7

[\[RETURN\]](#)

ESMBA NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP RULES

Refer to the Laws of the Game Booklet

APPENDIX 8

[\[RETURN\]](#)

ESMBA COMPETITIONS

Refer to the Laws of the Game Booklet

APPENDIX 9

[\[RETURN\]](#)

ESMBA SERVICES

Refer to the Laws of the Game Booklet

APPENDIX 10

[\[RETURN\]](#)

ESMBA DRESS CODE

Refer to the Laws of the Game Booklet

