

Sussex County Bowls

Etiquette in Bowls

What is Lawn Bowls Etiquette?

Lawn bowls etiquette refers to guidelines which control the way 'responsible players behave when bowling'. They ensure an enjoyable experience for everyone playing and watching. They are simple, common-sense rules which can be followed easily. 'Bowling etiquette' is about good sportsmanship, common sense and good manners, and, although some items are, most are not specifically covered in the 'Laws of the Sport'.

However, it is becoming increasingly obvious, that certain aspects of 'etiquette' are not being taught to new bowlers and are being ignored by an increasing number of more experienced ones - and that is sadly causing a decline in standards.

We play the sport for enjoyment, for the pleasure of pitting our skills against others, in friendly competition, and our sport has a long tradition for its common courtesy and etiquette. Whilst many aspects of our sport may need to be changed - or are indeed changing – we need to maintain the etiquette of - good manners.

The following are still valid today and should be taught to - and observed by - all players:

1. BE ON TIME

Be punctual for your game, being late is disrespectful to your opponents, and if in a team game, to your own colleagues too, and being rushed before an important game puts you at a disadvantage. Arriving on time will also give you adequate time to change before the game and being early will also give you a chance to help organize the equipment and familiarize yourself with the game. Ensure all equipment, jacks and mats are in position before the game begins.

2. DRESS CORRECTLY

Ensure that you know the dress code for the game. Remember to pack your gear in good time to avoid forgetting the essentials. Under normal circumstances do not arrive in your bowling shoes in case you carry harmful fungus to the greens.

3. PRIOR TO THE GAME

Introduce yourselves to your opponents by your first names, and exchange handshakes before the game, with perhaps a friendly comment such as 'Enjoy your game', or even 'Have a good game'.

4. DURING THE GAME

a) WHILST AT THE 'MAT END'

Do not move about and make disturbing noises whilst an opponent is on the mat, nor stand in a position where you might be in your opponent's line of vision, or in sunny conditions allow your shadow to cause distraction to the bowler. (The Laws of the Sport say a player should stand at least 1 metre behind the mat.)

According to the rules, after you have delivered a bowl, you have two choices. If you desire to track your bowl, you **MUST BE** at the head when it stops. If you choose to stay at the mat, you must be there when the bowl stops. By observing this rule, you ensure that the next player gets to play immediately when your turn is over.

Dropping or throwing bowls on lawns for no particular reason is considered impolite. Bowling lawns are delicate and dropping bowls on them could damage the greens. You should not kick bowls or drop them. Pick them up gently and place them on the ground if you do not need them.

Enter and Leave the Mat on the Right Side. Once it is your time to bowl, come into the mat from the left side and once you are done bowling, step off from the right side of the mat. It is customary to observe this rule to avoid bumping into other players as you exit the mat.

When moving to the head end, it is customary to move the bowl of the next person due to play to the delivery mat.

b) WHILST AT THE 'HEAD END'

i) WHEN AN OPPONENT IS ON THE MAT TO DELIVER A BOWL:

Do not move about - in or near the 'head' - as it can be a distraction to the one about to bowl. Do not gesticulate and wave your arms around;

Members of the opposing team should stand well behind the 'head' (generally six feet to two metres) when an opponent is on the mat, and if the jack is in the ditch, stand on the bank behind the "Head";

In sunny conditions avoid allowing your shadow to cover the jack or the area close to the jack;

Avoid obscuring rink centre or boundary markers.

ii) ONCE THE BOWL HAS BEEN DELIVERED

'Members of the opposing team' - should - **REMAIN** well behind the 'head' whilst the wood is travelling up the green and should **ONLY GO NEAR THE HEAD - once the wood has come to rest and they assume control of the rink;**

'Members of the team that has just delivered a wood' - should - once their wood has come to rest - immediately retire well behind the head. **THEY SHOULD – UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES - ENTER THE HEAD TO CHECK TO SEE WHO HAS THE SHOT** - and may only enter the head to mark a toucher.

NB: These appear to be two of the most common failings of etiquette - that players need to be made aware.

iii) Players at the head end should be ready to stop deflected bowls from crossing into the adjacent rink and interfering with neighbouring games; likewise, be alert to prevent bowls from adjacent rinks from messing up your own head. Pay attention!

iv) Compliment your opponents, as well as your own colleagues, for a well delivered bowl. In the event of your opponent having a 'lucky' result, do not make any derogatory comments, although you might think them. Better to say nothing in this situation. If one of your own players has a 'lucky' shot, please do not say 'Well bowled' because it was not well bowled, it was a fluke. Do not use offensive language or gestures.

c AT THE CONCLUSION OF EACH END

i) Unless you are the player responsible for measuring and agreeing shots scored, keep well away from the 'head' and do not under any circumstances 'kick away' or otherwise move any bowls in the head until the score has been clearly declared.

ii) The lead from the team who has won the end should proceed to pick up the mat and the lead from the team that has lost the end should use the pusher to round up the woods. The other players should move the woods into the centre of the rink to be collected by the lead with the pusher and someone should pick up the jack and pass to the lead of the team that won the end. This keeps the game flowing. The no 2 on the home side should update the scoreboard when at that end.

Pay attention to the game on your rink, it is very frustrating to your team-mates if they feel that you are not giving your full attention to the game by, for example, frequently leaving the green or chatting to players on another rink.

5. BE ALERT AS YOU WALK AROUND ADJACENT RINKS

If you are walking around the green or along the banking for any reason, ensure that you do not walk across the end of a rink where a player is on the mat and about to bowl towards you. Wait until the bowl had been delivered and then cross the rink. Do not walk across rinks that other people are using.

6) AT THE END OF THE MATCH

a) It is good sportsmanship to shake hands before and after a game, and introduce yourself when necessary. After a game, it is tempting to leave immediately, especially after losing. Always ensure that you shake hands and it is also customary to offer to buy drinks after you win a game.

b) All home players should assist in clearing the equipment for the rink after a game. In a team game score boards should not be moved until all rinks have been completed.

7) HOW TO HANDLE WROND DOING OR POOR ETIQUETTE

Unfortunately, even with several rules of propriety, behaviour contrary to the rules will arise once in a while. Whether deliberate or as a result of a mistake, a breach can be dealt with using the following framework.

Politely ask the player to stop breaking the rules. If necessary, explain which laws they are breaking through their behaviour. Be careful not to use insulting or vulgar language as it will only escalate the situation.

If necessary report to the team manager or Umpire.