

Glossary

A list of common terms used in the sport of bowls.

Back Bowl: A bowl that comes to rest beyond the jack.

Backhand: A bowl aimed to the left of the jack which curves to the right as it slows down (for right handed bowlers).

Bias: The curve of the path of a rolling bowl. A bowl is not a sphere. There is a weighted side to a bowl which makes turn as it rolls. Each set of bowls — there are four in a set — has it's own unique symbol. On one side of the bowl, the symbol is large. On the weighted side of the bowl, the symbol is small. When the bowl slows down as it rolls, it falls to the weighted side with the smaller symbol and turns.

Blocker: A bowl that blocks someone from reaching the desired target

Burned End: When the jack has been knocked out of the side of the rink, the end is declared a burned (or dead) end. In most social games, the end is scored zero points for each team and the game proceeds with the next end. In many tournaments, the bowls are raked back to the mat they were bowled from and the end is replayed.

Cutthroat: A game for three people bowling. Each bowler is competing against the other two.

Dead Bowl: A bowl that has gone into the ditch without touching the jack or out of the side of the rink is a dead bowl and is removed from the rink.

Draw Shot: The bowl is rolled to stop at a specific location without disturbing the bowls already in the head.

Drive: This involves bowling with considerable force so the bowl runs almost straight with the aim of knocking either the jack or a specific bowl(s) out of play.

Dead Bowl: A bowl that either goes in the ditch without touching the jack, or comes to rest outside the rink markers.

Down: When your team does not have the shot bowl at any time before all the bowls have been delivered for that end. (See Shot Bowl)

End: Playing of the jack and all bowls of both teams in the same direction on a rink.

Forehand: A bowl aimed to the right of the jack which curves to the left (for right-handed bowlers).

Fours: A game in which there are four players on a team — a lead, second, third, and skip. Players only use 2 bowls each. This game is commonly called “Rinks” which is it's historical name.

Grass: A term most often used by a skip asking a bowler to “Take more grass” (bowl wider) or “Take less grass” (bowl more narrow).

The Green: A square of grass turf, or artificial surface, about 40 yards square which can be divided into eight areas of play called rinks.

Hand: The side on which the bowl is delivered — either forehand or backhand.

Head: The bowls that have come to rest around the jack within the boundary of the rink.

Hog Line: A line that indicates the minimum distance beyond which the jack must be rolled to begin an end.

Holding Shot: The bowl closest to the jack. (See Shot Bowl)

Jack: The white ball used as a target.

Lead: The first person of a team to bowl. The lead of one team (the team that won the previous end once the game is underway) places the mat and rolls the jack to begin an end.

Line: The straight path between the mat and the jack. At the beginning of an end it is the centerline of the rink. If the jack is moved during play, there may be a new line. A bowl is said to have a good line if it comes to rest on that path even if it is in front of the jack or behind it.

Mat: The 14" x 24" surface that is bowled from.

Measure: A device (metal tape or string on a spool) that is used to determine which bowl is closest to the jack when opposing team bowls are too close to visually decide which is closer.

Narrow: A term that describes a bowl that has crossed the direct line to the jack before it comes to rest. (See Wide)

Pairs: Games in which each team has two players — a lead and a skip.

Points: One point is awarded to each bowl that is closer to the jack than any bowl of an opponent at the conclusion of an end.

Potato Bowl: A badly rolled bowl that hops, skips and jumps.

Promoting a bowl: Hitting a bowl already in the head with another bowl in such a way that the struck bowl ends up in a better position.

Rink: The rectangle of the grass playing surface defined by markers used for a game.

Second: The person who plays after the lead. In triples, the second can communicate with the skip and is responsible for deciding the winner of a head, and recording the results. In triples, this player is historically called a vice, or vice skip.

Skip: The team captain who always bowls last. This person is usually the most experienced player, who also guides the strategy.

Shot Bowl: The bowl closest to the Jack.

Third: In the game of fours, this person bowls before the skip. The third can communicate with the skip and is responsible for deciding the winner of a head, and recording the results.

Tie: When the two closest bowls belong to opposing teams and are both exactly the same distance from the jack after measurement, the end is declared a tie if they are the shot bowls. If they are for the second or third, etc., closest shot, no additional point is awarded to the winner of that end.

Touchers: Bowls that hit the jack on their original course. These bowls are marked with chalk and remain "alive" even if they are in the ditch. However, if a toucher is knocked out of the side of the rink, it is a dead bowl and is removed. A bowl that is knocked into the jack by a subsequent delivery is not a toucher.

Trial Ends: Formal practice ends, usually only allowed at the start of a tournament, in which each team rolls at least two bowls, usually a forehand and a backhand in each direction, down and back to get a feel of the green. Such ends do not count in the scoring.

Triples: A game in which each team has three players on their team — a lead, second, and skip. Players only use three bowls each.

Up: When your team has the shot bowl, you are considered to be up. You may be up by one or more points.

Weight: The amount of speed applied in delivering the bowl from the mat. A delivery is considered “heavy” if the bowl comes to rest behind the desired resting spot and “light” if it is short of that spot.

Wick: When a bowl bounces off another bowl.

Wide: A bowl that comes to rest without reaching the direct line to the jack.

Woods: An old term for bowls, which were formerly made of wood. Bowls are now made of a composite plastic material.

Yard On: A shot delivered with an extra degree of speed to displace the jack or a bowl a short distance. There is far less force used than in a drive.

(C) Copyright 2015, Palo Alto Lawn Bowls Club. Please email info@palbc.org with updates or corrections. Many thanks to long-time member Ron Le Blanc who originally compiled this glossary.