

how to play bocce

RealGames

Objective

Be the first side to achieve the required total points score.

Number of players

Bocce is played by two sides with each side having 1, 2 or 4 players.

Setting up

Mark out your Bocce Court as shown below. Bocce is traditionally played on clay, soil or gravel, but works just as well on grass. Agree on the total number of points a side needs to win the game (this is typically either 7, 11 or 13). Each side receives four balls of the same colour. Randomly select a side to start the game.

Playing

A player from the starting side must roll or toss the small white ball known as the "Jack" or "Pallino" into the opposite half of the Bocce Court. The Jack must be thrown from behind a Foot Line and land within the boundaries of the court on the other side of the mid-court line. All balls in Bocce must be thrown or rolled underarm. If the Jack does not land in the required zone, one further attempt is allowed, however if this also fails, the opposing side may place the Jack wherever they wish in the opposite half of the Bocce Court.

Play then commences with the designated starting side taking the first throw. From behind the Foot Line, the first Bocce ball is tossed underarm into the Bocce Court – the aim being for your ball to stop as close as possible to the Jack. If the ball does not come to rest within the bounds of the Bocce court, that ball is out of play and takes no further part in the game for that frame. After the first ball is thrown, the other side then takes their initial throw from the same end. After each side has had their initial throw, play continues with the side whose ball lies closest to the Jack always taking the next throw. When a side has no balls left, the other side tosses all of its remaining balls until all balls have been thrown. The frame can then be scored.

Only the side whose ball lies closest to the Jack will score points. The number of points scored is determined by the number of balls that are closer to the Jack than the other side's closest ball. For example, if Side A has the first, second and third closest balls to the Jack and Side B has the fourth closest ball, Side A scores three points for that frame. The maximum points a side can score in a frame is 4.

During a frame, if the Jack is knocked out of play, the frame is over and must recommence from the other end. In this case, no points are scored unless there is only one side with any balls remaining in court and that side has not yet thrown all of its balls. The number of points scored by the side with balls in court is the number of balls that are not yet thrown. If no points have been scored by either side, the side that threw the Jack will throw again to start the next frame.

After a frame is scored, all balls are collected and the next frame commences from the opposite end of the Bocce court. The side that scored points in the previous frame will throw the Jack to start.

Winning

A game is over when one side has achieved a total score greater than or equal to the agreed winning score (typically 7, 11 or 13).

Tips & variations

1. The throwing technique must be underarm but can be varied depending on the court surface and game tactics. e.g. balls are often bowled / rolled for the full length of the throw but may also be tossed (with hand facing backwards) so they travel airborne for part of the throw before landing and rolling for the rest of the throw. Your Bocce balls are robust enough for normal play however throws that are reckless or that use excessive force may damage them.
2. The court size may be varied to suit the ability of the players.
3. The game can also be played individually with four players each having two balls of the same colour and ball markings.
4. Tactics include knocking opposing balls out of play or away from the Jack.