

# Indoor Bowls

## Beginners Handbook



Queensland Indoor Bowling Association Inc.

# FORWARD

*The sport of Indoor Bowls caters for all people.*

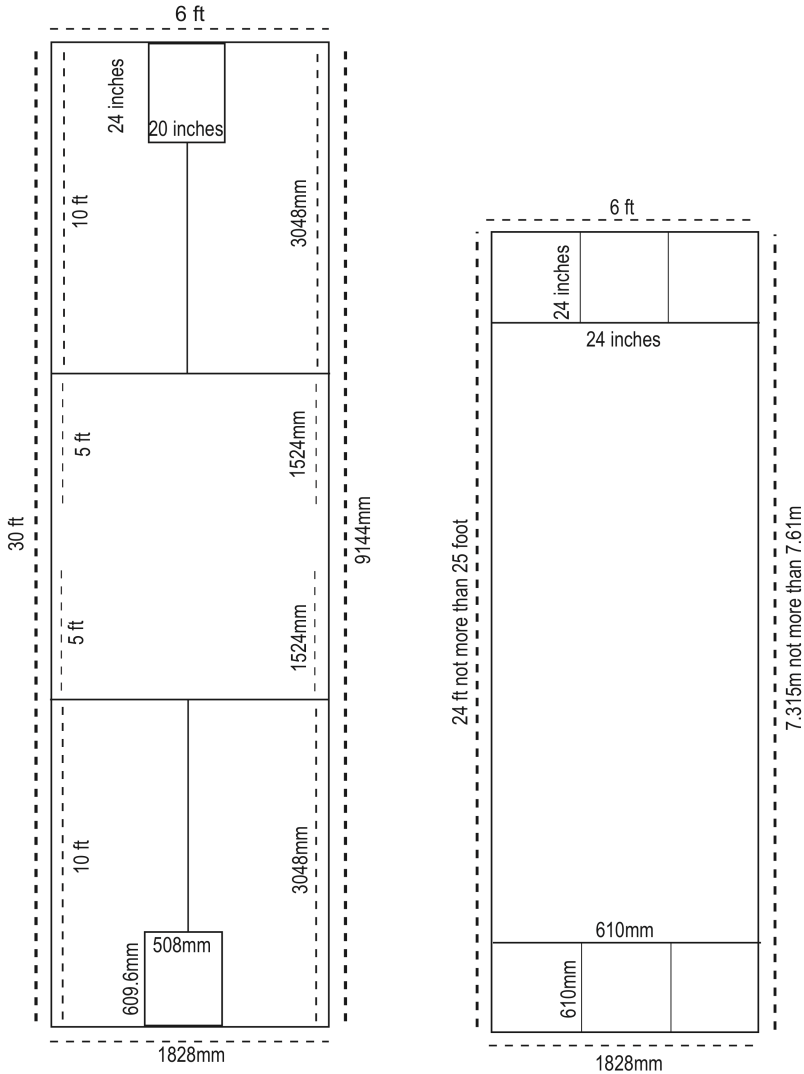
*Irrespective of age or physical capabilities, the participant has the opportunity for social contact, enjoyment, skill development and the challenge of competitive play.*

*The Queensland Indoor Bowling Association Inc. recognised the need to reinforce the enthusiasm of the newcomer by having introductory information readily available. The task of preparing such a handbook was undertaken by the coaching Committee.*

*The information presented in this booklet is intended as a guide to give greater understanding of the preliminaries of the sport and a typical delivery technique for the beginning bowler.*

*“Sincere appreciation is extended to the Coaching Committee and them any persons who contributed so generously to the production of this handbook.*

*Queensland Indoor Bowling Association Inc.*



**Figure 1.**

- A. Markings and measurements for the Queensland mat
- B. Markings and measurements for the Australian carpet

# OVERVIEW

Indoor bowls is a sport for opposing teams. Games can be contested between teams comprising of only one player (singles), two players (pairs), three players (triples), four or six players (rinks).

The basic strategy for this contest is to direct your bowl as near as possible to a target ball and finish closer than the bowl of your opponent.

The game is played on a felt-type mat or carpet measuring approximately 7.2 metres (24 foot) long by 1.8 metres (6 foot) wide (for Queensland and International games against New Zealand), and on a carpet measuring approximately 9 metres (30 foot) long by 1.8 metres (6 foot) wide in each of the other Australian States and for Australian Championships. The three carpets used (Queensland, Australian and International) are of similar texture, but are marked appropriately to conform with the variations of rules of each of these differing games. The bowls used in each of the games are of standard size – four and three quarter inch diameter for Queensland bowls and four inch diameter for International and Australian versions, with the bowls to be used by each opposing team, appropriately coloured (black or brown or with different paint markings on their sides) so that they can be easily distinguished.

The target balls, coloured white, are known as kitties or jacks (approximate diameter size 2.5 inches (63mm) for the Queensland game and 2 inches (52mm) for the other games. All of this equipment – mats or carpets, bowls and kitties are supplied by the club or association running the sport. The player need only to supply his or her own flat soled footwear.

# THE GAME

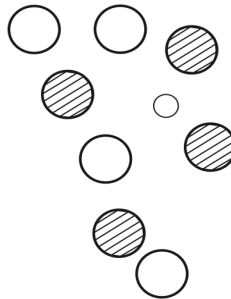
The length of a game is predetermined before commencement of play – usually to be decided over a number of ends, sometimes it can be first to a particular score, or sometimes to a time limit. If at the end of the game, the scores are even and a winner is required, one or more extra ends might have to be played to determine the ultimate winner, or the organisers of the game might decide the winner by some other method. These conditions are usually announced before play commences.

The object of each of the games mentioned in the overview is the same – to accumulate more points than the opposition can accumulate over the duration of the game.

Points are scored thus – when all bowls have been rolled toward the kitty and have come to rest, one point is scored for each bowl which is closer to the kitty than the closest opposition bowl.

Measuring the distances of the contentious bowls to the kitty might have to be undertaken to decide how many point or shot are scored. Also, penalty points are scored by the opposing team if a player plays a shot that could incur a penalty, that is, a “penalty bowl” is played off the mat (in the Queensland game), or, the kitty is played off the carpet (in the Australian or International game).

**FIGURE 2.**



If the kitty is moved by any bowl in the course of play, it remains in such new position until the end is complete, and the points have been scored. If the kitty is taken off the mat or carpet in the course of play the procedure to be followed must be in accordance with the rules of play for that particular game.

# PLAY

## THE COMMENCEMENT OF PLAY

The opposing skips usually decide who should commence play by the toss of a coin. The winner of the toss usually has the choice of bowls, and can decide whether or not to lead up first or send the opposition in, that is, the opposing team rolls the kitty and delivery the first bowl.

The lead player of the team playing first, picks up the kitty and rolls it up along the mat. When it stops rolling it is centred at that distance by the team's skip. Should it be rolled incorrectly, that is, not having reached the minimum length, or run off the mat, the opposing lead attempts to roll it correctly. This alternates according to the rules of the game until it can be centred for the game to commence.

The player who was meant to play first then proceeds to deliver the first of his or her team's bowls. When the first bowl has come to rest, the opposing player then delivers his or her first bowl. These players continue to alternate until their quota of bowls have been delivered. If these are other team members to play subsequent bowls from that end, they then proceed alternately and in turn until all the bowls have been delivered. When all bowls have come to rest, the number of shots or points (including penalty points) are decided and scored. This procedure concludes an "end" in the game. The bowls and kitty are then gathered to the closed end of the mat where the lead payer of the team who won the previous end then proceeds to roll the kitty and the first bowl of the next end. This second end will be played towards the end of the mat where the game commenced.

This procedure playing the bowls towards one end of the mat of the first end, then playing them back for the second end continues for the duration of the game, at the end of which the winner id determined.

Variations of this procedure happen in Australian and International games where "penalties" are decided when the kitty is taken off the carpet in playing a shot. The penalties are awarded, and the end has to be replayed from the same end of the carpet. Consequently all bowls and kitty are returned and the end is recommenced in the same starting order.

In all games, players retain the same playing position for the whole the game. The lead always rolls the kitty and players the first bowls for the team, followed by the second, third and skip, if these players are members of the team.

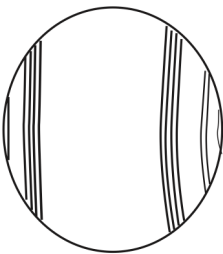
## THE BOWL

A bias bowl is made from a kind of plasticised ceramic material which is almost indestructible on impact. Very few ever break despite the treatment they receive in the course of play.

A bowl is almost spherical in shape, but ground slightly smaller on one side. When the bowl is travelling at its fastest – at the point of delivery – it runs on the highest part of its circumference (running surface). As it slows the smaller inner side takes over and it will turn in that direction. The ability of a bowl to turn is known as its bias.

Very few Indoor Bowls have distinctive emblems on them as do Lawn Bowls, but they do have similar rings etched on each side. The “bias side” can be identified as it has a smaller innermost ring or “disc” than the other side. This small disc side should always be on the inside of the arc of the course of the bowl.

**FIGURE 3.**



As the bowls are all of a standard size and weight, they would each react the same if everything is equal. Some players can make a bowl start to turn sooner than others by tilting the bowl slightly inward from its vertical position during delivery. Also the bowl can be made to run a little straighter and for longer up the mat by tilting the bowl slightly outward from its vertical position during delivery. These skills come with practice.

If a bowl is delivered with a wobble, it will not react in the same way as a smoothly delivered bowl. A wobble in the bowl will prevent the bowl from biasing as much as it should. The amount that a bowl will turn and run towards the central line of the mat is sometimes referred to as the amount of draw.

This amount of draw is affected by many factors, such as, the condition of the floor (high parts, low parts, undulating surfaces, very few floors are perfectly flat and even), the amount of wear on the mat, the amount of humidity in the air, any breezes in the room (from fans or open windows etc). Consequently there are many problems to be overcome to master this sport.

As the kitty is centred on the centre line of the mat and the aim is to get as many shots as possible, one must attempt to finish as close as possible to the kitty. The path a bowl will take closely resembles that bend one might see in a fishing rod if a fish was dangling from the tip. The thicker part of the rod would be relatively straight, with the bend occurring more towards the tip.

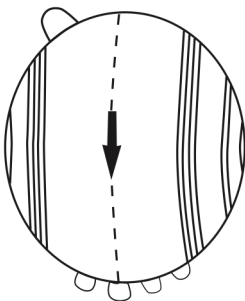




irrespective of where the kitty is centred on the mat, bowls delivered from the same delivery point in the delivery area need to follow the same initial path to draw to the centre of the mat.

For example – suppose you have decided that, on a full length end, the bowl will draw from 15 centimetres (six inches) from the side of the mat back to the centre line. You need to pick a spot about two thirds of the way up the mat, 15 centimetre (six inches) from the side, and try to have you bowl straightening and starting to curve back as it passes over this spot. That should be the widest part of the course taken by the bowl. If your calculations are correct, and your skills are sufficient, your bowl should finish near to where you want it to finish. If the length of the end (the position of the kitty) is shorter – even back to minimum length – bowls should still be delivered along the same path as for the full length delivery. The bowl, being delivered at a slow pace will not have the same momentum as the faster delivery, so will break off the path closer to the centre of the line. Because it has less momentum, it will not run as far, but it doesn't have to, to finish at the centre of the mat.

FIGURE 4



## GRIP

Perhaps one of the most important aspects playing indoor bowls is the **grip** or **hold** one has of the bowl for delivery.

The fingers on the delivery hand should be held together, then the centre line of the bowl should run down the middle finger. The bowl should sit comfortably on the three main fingers – index, middle and third finger – of the delivery hand. The thumb should be in a comfortable position somewhere near the rings on the topside of the bowl, and used lightly to hold the bowl in the fingers correctly until the moment of delivery.

It is important to deliver the bowl off the fingers as smoothly as possible so that it will bias as it has been designed to do. If the bowl is gripped too tightly, the little finger can cause a wobbly delivery. Spreading the fingers can also cause wobbly delivery.

### FIGURE 5

Alternately, form a cradle shape with the hand and place the bowl in it, the middle finger in the centre of the running surface. Slight pressure is applied between the little finger and thumb to steady the bowl, and are first to leave in delivery, allowing the bowl to run smoothly off the remaining three fingers.

For players whose hands are too small to grip the bowl in the more conventional way or have been affected perhaps by arthritis, may - choose to use a double-handed grip. The two hands form a cradle, the centre line of the bowl is placed between the two touching little fingers, and the thumbs hold the bowl in the hands ready for delivery.

The kitty should be held lightly with the fingers together and the thumb on top above the middle finger.

## STANCES

The position one adopts when delivering bowls may not vary considerably depending on the physical capabilities of the person, but the essential factors are stability and freedom of movement for the bowling arm. Consideration must also be given to the 'Rules of Play' which govern the sport such as, "players must not place any part of hand, feet or body on or under the mat when delivering a bowl".

The following points should be observed for any stance:

- (a) This is an "aiming" sport, where part of the equipment is projected forward along a particular course to achieve the desired result. To aim correctly one needs to be looking along the delivery line vertically above and behind the delivery hand to ensure the hand delivers the bowl along this chosen course
- (b) Your adopted stance should be such that your body is stationary and, if possible braced, to prevent most movement during the delivery. Bracing means using your spare arm or hand in some way to keep your body still. During the delivery, the only parts of your body to move should be your delivery arm and then your head as you follow the course of the bowl.
- (c) Your weight should be distributed as evenly as is necessary to prevent body twist during delivery. If most of your entire body weight is supported on one limb, your delivery swing will cause some degree of body rotation, resulting in a loss of accuracy.

For right handed players, place the left foot approaching the mat in the direction of the line of delivery, the right foot extended back to a comfortable position, ensuring stability and freedom of movement for the right arm. Brace the left hand on the left knee or thigh.

## ALTERNATIVE STANCES

1. Feet apart, player bent forward to deliver bowl in a “pendulum” style from between feet, off-side hand resting on off-side knee for bracing.
2. Off-side foot forward, delivery side foot back, any position from full extension up to the delivery side knee resting on the off-side heel with non-bowling hand bracing wherever comfortable and convenient for the individual.
3. One-legged kneeling stance, where the delivery knee is tucked back out of the way with the non-bowling arm bracing against movement.
4. Double knee kneel with the non-bowling hand braced on the floor and delivering the bowl from in front of the knees.

One legged squatting styles are not recommended.

In all stances where one foot is further back than the other, the delivery-side foot should be the hind foot except where disability prevents this.

Various stances may be tried, but advice from a qualified Coach would be helpful and is recommended.

## THE DELIVERY

As the kitty has no bias, it can be rolled up the mat without an allowance for a turn.

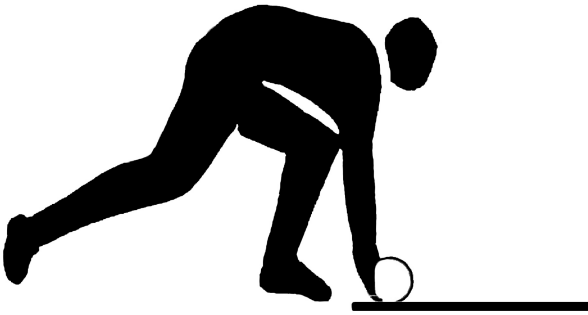


FIGURE 7

The delivery sequence.

- (a) Ready to commence
- (b) Backward swing
- (c) Forward Swing
- (d) Release
- (e) Follow through

## **To deliver a draw bowl:**

The length and position of the kitty should be checked to decide how fast the bowl should be delivered and the maximum width of the curve needed in the course of the bowl to reach the desired destination (green). Next check the bowl to ensure the bias is on the correct side. Face squarely on to the spot where you think the bowl will be at its widest as it turns to draw to the kitty, and picture the line the bowl should follow. Using a grip that best suits your hand, and a stance that best suits your physique, concentrate on rolling your bowl in a smooth swinging motion, along that imaginary line your pictured, ensuring that your hand and arm still continue to follow through after the bowl has left your hand. Watch your finger tips as they continue to move forward and see them pass through that imaginary line on the mat, fully completing the delivery action.

For a right handed player, bowling on the right side is the fore-hand, whilst the left side is the back-hand (the reverse for the left-handed player).

### To deliver an upshot

An upshot is delivered at a faster speed than a draw shot. It is designed to turn a bowl a couple of turns either into or out of the head. Because it needs to be delivered at a faster speed than a draw shot, the bowl will turn less than the draw shot. Consequently the imaginary line over which the bowl is to travel would be brought in considerably – perhaps allowing for a turn of about 30 centimetres.

### FIGURE 8

Normal delivery line for the draw shot  
Adjusted delivery line for the up-shot

### To deliver a drive

A drive is the fastest version a bowl is delivered in. It is used almost as a last resort to remove several bowls from the heat, or to remove those bowls that might be detrimental to your scoring. A drive is **not to be delivered at a speed that would cause injury** to person or property, but is delivered with sufficient speed to achieve the desire effect. Because of its speed, a drive will not deviate far off a straight course before it reaches its target.

# **THE DIFFERENT GAMES**

## **PLAYER POSITIONS And RESPONSIBILITIES**



## THE DIFFERENT GAMES

In all games, the commencement procedure is the same. The winner of the toss of the coin has the right to choose the bowls to use for the match, and the choice of whether or not to commence play on the first end. In all subsequent ends in that game, the winner of the previous end rolls the kitty and the first bowl of the next. In all games, opposing teams play alternate bowls.

### SINGLES

Singles is contested between two players with each contestant having four bowls. Each of the three different games is played very similarly, with the only differences in the actual play being the penalties. Under Queensland rules the penalties are awarded for penalty bowls that are taken off the mat. In Australian and International rules, penalties are awarded if the kitty is taken off the carpet, whereupon the end is then replayed.

This procedure continues until the conclusion of the game.

### PAIRS (Queensland)

Two players per team contest the game called Pairs, with each team having four bowls. The first player of each team is called the lead, whose job it is to roll the kitty and the first two bowls for the team. While the lead is playing, the second player or skip of the team is usually at the other end of the mat to direct the lead. The players then change ends allowing the skips to play their bowls. The result of the end is declared and the leads gather the bowls in and commence the new end.

### PAIRS (Australian and International)

Teams in these contests have eight bowls per team with leads playing alternately two bowls each – skips two bowls each, leads two bowls each – then skips, to complete each end. In these games players change ends to supervise the lead while their partner plays his or her bowls. At the conclusion of the skips last bowls, the leads declare the end, gather in the bowls and commence the next end, while the skips keep score.

In international competition against New Zealand another game known as six-bowl pairs is played, whereby the leads play the first three bowls, then change ends to allow the skip to play the last three bowls per end.

### **TRIPLES (Queensland)**

Teams of three players – a lead, second and skip per team, with each team having six bowls. The leads play alternately the first two bowls for their team, then the seconds continue and play their two each (while the skips direct the head from the other end of the mat). Players then change ends while the skips play their two bowls. When all bowls have been played, the seconds declare the end, the bowls are regathered and the new end commences.

### **RINKS (Queensland)**

Rinks of four are played in Queensland, using six bowls per end per team. The game is sometimes referred to as “split-fours”, meaning the team is split into two halves. Half of the team play the bowls one way up the mat and the other half play them back. There is a lead and a skip at each end of the mat. The lead plays three bowls, then the skip plays three. The skips usually direct the other end’s bowls and declare the completed end.

A variation on the above game can be made by using four bowls per team per end.

A further variation of rinks is played where teams of six are split into two triples, with each triple playing from opposite ends of the mat. Six bowls per team are used in this game.

### **RINKS (Australian and International)**

Australian and International rinks are played with teams of four, each player playing two bowls each per end. While the skips direct the head from the other end of the carpets, the leads, followed by the seconds, then thirds, each play their bowls before all players change ends for the skips to play their last two bowls for that end. The thirds might advise the skip when requested, then declare the end, before the bowls are regathered to commence the next end.

# THE PLAYERS

## LEAD

The lead is the player whose duty it is to commence the game for the team. The first task is to roll the kitty, judging it to finish in the position that best suits your own team's play. The lead should practice rolling the kitty so that it finished where it is intended. The different positions or lengths might be **very short** (near the minimum playing length), **medium** (to about half-way along the laying area), **long** (about 30 centimetres short of full length), and **full length** (maximum length).

It is much better to have the kitty where you want it, rather than put it in a position which you think will upset the opposition.

Taking care in rolling the kitty can assist the lead to decide two things – **(a)** the pace of the mat (the kitty might tend to either roll on it if it is a fast mat, or putt up if it is slow), or **(b)** if it rolled straight up the mat and runs off to one side, it might mean that there is a big draw on one side.

The lead should play almost exclusively drawn bowls, trying to finish as close as possible to the kitty. If the first bowl is on the kitty, try to place the next just behind. A bowl that finished out to the side of the kitty is not necessarily very good. The kitty can easily be taken away from it. Having two bowls finishing as near as possible to the kitty puts pressure on the opposition. If you have the shot, then they have to try and get it from you. If you don't have the shot your bowls should be closed enough to prevent them from scoring extra shots.

A lead should try not to become disgruntled about his or her good lead bowls being "driven out" of the head and becoming useless. If you force the opposition to use even only one of their bowls to disturb the situation, you have done a good job for your team.

It makes you feel good to have the shot when you have finished your bowls, but it is not essential. It is important, however, to have good close bowls when you have finished, as the other members of your team might be able to use them to your advantage, or they may prevent your opposition from scoring extra shots.

At the conclusion of each end the lead should assist in the gathering of the bowls in preparation for the next end to commence. As well, in pairs, the lead may have to measure the contentious shots, observe

the play to determine penalties, and might have to give information to the skip about the state of the head or suggestions regarding the shot to play.

In triples, or in Australian or International fours games, the lead does not have any tasks other than collecting bowls and commencing each new end, but should remain involved with the other members of the team regarding strategic play, and in any discussion of the shot to be played.

The lead should follow the directions of the skip, but generally should play on the one side of the mat, unless an opposition bowl blocks the path. This aids consistency to the way ensuing bowls are played.

## **SECONDS and THIRDS**

The main task for a second in a team is to build up the head, to ensure that the team has bowls close to the kitty, or to cover opposition bowls. The main type of shot played by a second is a draw, so that bowls finish in the head or in such a position that any danger situation is covered. The second might also have to bump bowls to disturb the situation, but should follow the directions of the skip, who should decide the type of shot to be played.

In a triples game, the second might be asked to play a running shot, or drive to open the head, so should practice these shots as well as the draw. By the time the second gets to play, the kitty may be moved to another position on the mat, so the second (in the Queensland game) and the third (in the Australian and International games) should be able to draw close to any position on the mat/carpet. The player preceding the skip needs to be competent in all types of shots.

Practice is particularly important, and should include the full range of shots to object bowls and kitties placed anywhere within the playing area, from minimum length to the end of the mat.

Both seconds and thirds should be competent at measuring as this is their duty.

## **SKIP**

The role of a skip is most demanding and responsible. He or she must shoulder the responsibility for determining the strategy as well as directing all shots played by the team.

Gaining the confidence and respect of the team members at the outset will encourage them to willingly follow directions, so the skip become the team “leader” not a “boss”.

Likewise, the players must have confidence in each others ability and combine to produce a successful unit. The very essence of team play is that every member realises that each has a specific roll to play and is equal in importance to any other member of the team. No one member is a so called “star”.

There is not room for dissension within the team either before, during or after the game. The players each try to do the best they can. At times they will know they are not playing well, and they will be concerned. A good skip will recognise this, accept the position and without any indication that a problem exists, restrict demands to the shots that they can be expected to play successfully.

Good communication and clear directions are vital. It is important the team members fully understand what action the skip required them to do.

Players quite often have preferences in the shot they play. A It is advisable for the skip to know these and make use of them if and when the opportunity arises. Be aware of the opponents strong and weak points, so they may be used to your advantage also.

The development of a game in play is ever-changing. Complete concentration on the part of the skip is essential, is that the correct shot to play is chosen at the right time. Always look for opportunities that allow you to score in relative security.

Being the last team member to play, naturally when the team does not have the shot the skip must attempt to get it. Therefore he or she must be well practises in the full range of shots. It is well worth studying the action of the bowls and kitty in collision then practice the principles for future use.

It will now be realised that a skips task is not an easy one. Having confidence in your team and complete concentration on the task yourself should inspire those qualities in your fellow members. By having a positive attitude and tolerance a skip can set an example in sportsmanship, and whether the game is won or lost, should surely have helped his team to enjoy their favourite sport.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

Kitty or Jack:	The white target ball
Mat or carpet:	The green felt-type surface for play
Dead or heavy:	A slow paced mat or carpet
Green or grass:	Width of the curve in the path of a bowl
End:	Kitty/Bowls quota played in one direction
Head:	The kitty and such bowls that have come to rest in an end.
Dead or even end:	The closest bowl of each opposing side is of equal distance from the kitty
Tied game:	On conclusion of the agreed number of ends the scores are equal
Declaring the end:	Decision the result of an end
Draw shot:	A bowl played up to and comes to rest next to the kitty or a particular spot
Firm shot:	A light impact shot – a little over the draw
Running shot/Upshot:	A bowl played with more weight than a light impact shot
Fast shot or drive:	A bowl played with the maximum weight
Spotter:	A neutral person to assist the players in a game of singles (within the Rules of Play)
Referee:	An official appointed to help govern the Rules of Play and if requested by both opponents to determine the result of an end
Measures:	Calipers, flexible measure, used to measure contentious bowls to award shots

It is hoped this little book has been informative and beneficial to you, and that you have many years of enjoyment, satisfaction and fellowship through this great game of Indoor Bowls.