

The Basic Rules of Bocce

Getting Started: The basic rules are a great way to introduce the game of Bocce without overly complicating things. They can be played on any relatively flat surface and do not require any specific dimensions or court be defined or constructed.

Equipment: A set of bocce balls: consisting of eight large bocce balls (half of which are of a different color or pattern) and a smaller "object ball" (sometimes called a "pallina" or a "jack")

Playing Surface: The playing surface should be reasonably flat and level and can consist of packed dirt, fine gravel or short grass. While some prefer to play on a manufactured court, a gravel driveway or backyard make acceptable playing surfaces.

Players: The game is played with two teams; each team can have one, two, or four players.

Four Player Team - each player throws one ball

Two Player Team - each player throws two balls

One Player Team - player throws all four balls

Object: The object of the game of bocce is for one team to get as many of their balls closer to the pallina than the opposing team's closest ball.

Play: The toss of a coin determines which team will start. The starting team chooses which color (or pattern) ball they will play with. The first team member throws the pallina and then rolls his/her first ball as close to the pallina as possible. It is now up to the opposing team to roll a ball closer to the pallina than the starting team.

If the opposing team uses all four balls and fails to get closer to pallina than the starting ball, the starting team rolls each of their remaining balls, trying to place them closer than the opponent's closest ball.

However, if the opposing team succeeds in placing one of their balls closer to the pallina, the starting team must then roll again to attempt to get closer or "better the point". Each team continues to roll until it beats the point of the opposite team.

While the object is to get close to the pallina, it is permissible for a player to roll his/her ball as to knock an opponent's ball away from the pallina. Likewise, a player may knock or move the pallina toward his/her own team's balls. The pallina is playable anywhere on the playing surface.

Scoring: When all balls have been played, this concludes the frame and ONE team is awarded one point for each of its balls which is closer to the pallina the closest opposing team's ball. Thus, a team may score up to four points per frame. If the closest ball of each team is equal in distance from the pallina, NO points are awarded. The team that scores in a frame starts the next frame by throwing out the pallina and playing their first ball. Play continues until a team wins by reaching a score of sixteen points.

Horseshoes

Set-up the Court: Find a grassy, sandy or dirt filled area that is about 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. Insert about 4 to 5" of the pointed end of the two stakes into the ground about 10 to 20 feet apart. The older and more skilled the players, the further apart the stakes should be. Be careful when inserting the stakes into the ground. If the ground is extremely hard, it is recommended that a suitably sized pilot hole be created in the ground prior to pushing the plastic stake into the ground. This can be accomplished using a wood dowel or even by using a large diameter drill bit. If possible, try to angle the stakes towards one another by about 10 to 15 degrees.

The Rules:

1. Each player pitches both shoes followed by the opponent's two shoes.
2. In pitching a shoe, the player's feet may not cross the foul line which is an imaginary line that run perpendicular to the stakes at each end of the court.
3. When playing teams, half the team throws from one stake and half throws from the other.
4. The team that scored the most points on the previous round of throws, throws first in the next round of throws.
5. Games can be played to 21 points in a point limit game. If a tie exists then each player can take a half win or an additional round of shoes can be tossed (4 shoes, 2 for each team) until the tie is broken. An alternative is to fix the total number of shoes that will be tossed in a game (for example, 40 shoes in total counting both teams) and the team with the highest total at the end of 40 shoes wins. This limits the total time that a game may take and is a good rule to determine winners for beginners.

Scoring

1. Any shoe must be within one horseshoe-width (measured across the outside of the open end of the shoe) of the stake to be considered for points. The closest shoe to the stake gets 1 point.
2. If you have two shoes closer than any of your opponent's, you get 2 points.
3. Ringers are worth 3 points each and must completely encircle the stake so the ends can be touched with a straight-edge without touching the stake. If you have the closest shoe and a ringer, it's 4 points.
4. If your opponent throws a ringer on top of yours, they cancel and no points are scored.
5. Leaners are generally worth 1 point and are considered closer than any adjacent shoe except ringers. Some people like to play with leaners worth 2 points. Before the start of the game, all players should agree to the value of leaners.