



Golf Croquet Course
Stage 1 – Beginners

Stephen Custance-Baker

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About the course:

This Golf Croquet course, which is at three levels, is not a course on how to coach GC. Its purpose is to provide coaches and players with advice, guidance and material to help the learning process.

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The author would appreciate feedback on the content or recommendations on additional material required.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Course content

1. This course is intended to guide the complete beginner to Golf Croquet up to the level at which they can enjoy a friendly or competitive game of singles or doubles.
2. It is addressed to the player but is also intended as a teaching guide for Golf Croquet coaches.
3. Two main forms of croquet are played in Britain; Association Croquet and Golf Croquet. The equipment, the layout of the lawn and the order in which the hoops are played are the same for the two games but the rules are very different. This course is solely for Golf Croquet though many of the shots and skills required are the same for both codes.
4. There are five main parts to this beginner's course:
 - i. The Basics
 - The layout of the lawn, the structure of a game and the basic rules.
 - How to hold and swing a mallet.
 - How to approach the ball.
 - How to approach a hoop and then run it.
 - Basic rules and faults.
 - Handicaps and extra strokes.
 - ii. Various Shot Types
 - Hoop shots
 - Clearance shots, stop-shots and split shots
 - Blocking shots
 - iii. Basic Etiquette
 - Noise
 - Pace of play
 - Following the ball
 - Positioning and shadows
 - Double-banking
 - Self-refereeing
 - iv. Thinking Ahead
 - Tactical planning
 - Partner play
 - v. Exercises for each section
 - Skills
 - Tactics

5. All dimensions are given in imperial units because these are used to define the equipment. For conversion, 1 inch (1") is 2.5 cm and 1 yard (1^x) is 36 inches or 0.9 metres.
6. Croquet is one of the few sports played equally by men and women and all references to 'he', 'him' and 'his' should be taken to include 'she', 'her' and 'hers'.

1.2 Further courses

7. For those who have mastered the basics and want to learn some more subtle aspects of the game, its rules and its tactics, there are two further courses:
8. The Intermediate Course covers :
 - Using extra strokes
 - Using the half-way rule
 - Jump shots
 - Angled hoops
 - The wrong ball rules
 - Making the most of a hoop
 - Rush shots and cut rushes
9. The Advanced Course is aimed at low handicappers who already play in matches and tournaments and would like to improve their game further. It covers:
 - Playing against extra strokes
 - Finishing off
 - Advanced rush shots, setting up and achieving
 - Obstruction shots and when to use them
 - In-off shots, creating and avoiding them
 - Judging shot strength
 - Hampered shots
 - Ricochet shots

2 Lawn Layout and Hoop Order

2.1 The lawn

10. Three different sizes of lawn are used but the most common, which is used for all serious games and matches, is the full-sized lawn, (35 yards long and 28 yards wide). (The others are the half lawn, 28x17½, and the short lawn, 24x16.)
11. One end is called the 'south' boundary, with the others called 'west', 'north' and 'east' in a clockwise direction.
12. There are 6 hoops and a centre post. For ordinary club play the hoops have an internal width of about 3¾ inches, which gives a gap of 1/16" either side of the ball.

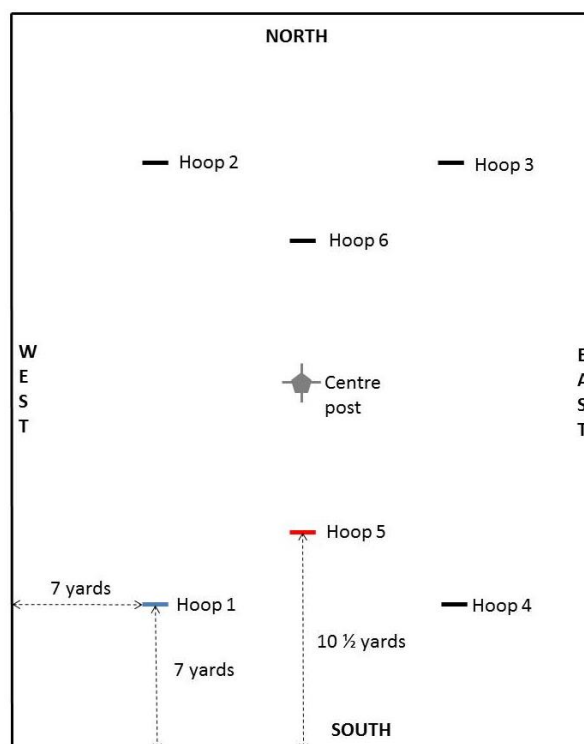


Figure 1 A full-sized croquet lawn

13. The centre post is about 18 inches high and has four coloured bands which are, from the top, blue, red, black and yellow.
14. Hoop 1, which always has a blue top, is placed 7 yards from the south and west boundaries and Hoop 5, which always has a red top, is placed 10½ yards from the south boundary and equidistant between the west and east boundaries.
15. The hoops are always placed with their openings orientated to the south and north boundaries.

2.2 Hoop order

16. In a standard 13-point game the hoops must always be played in order, starting with hoop 1, followed by hoops 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

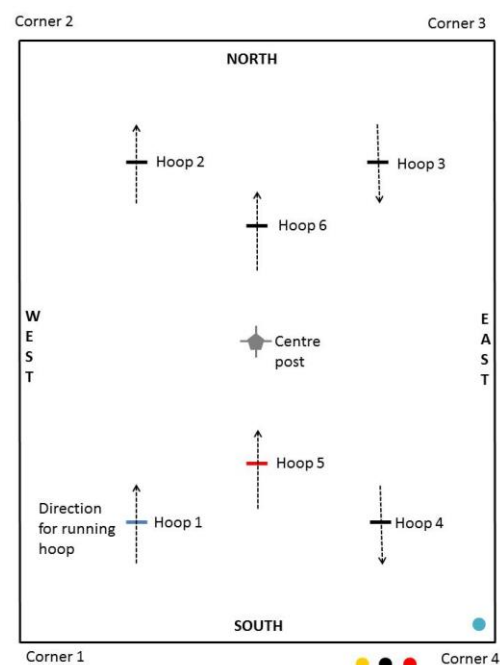


Figure 2 Direction of running hoops 1 to 6

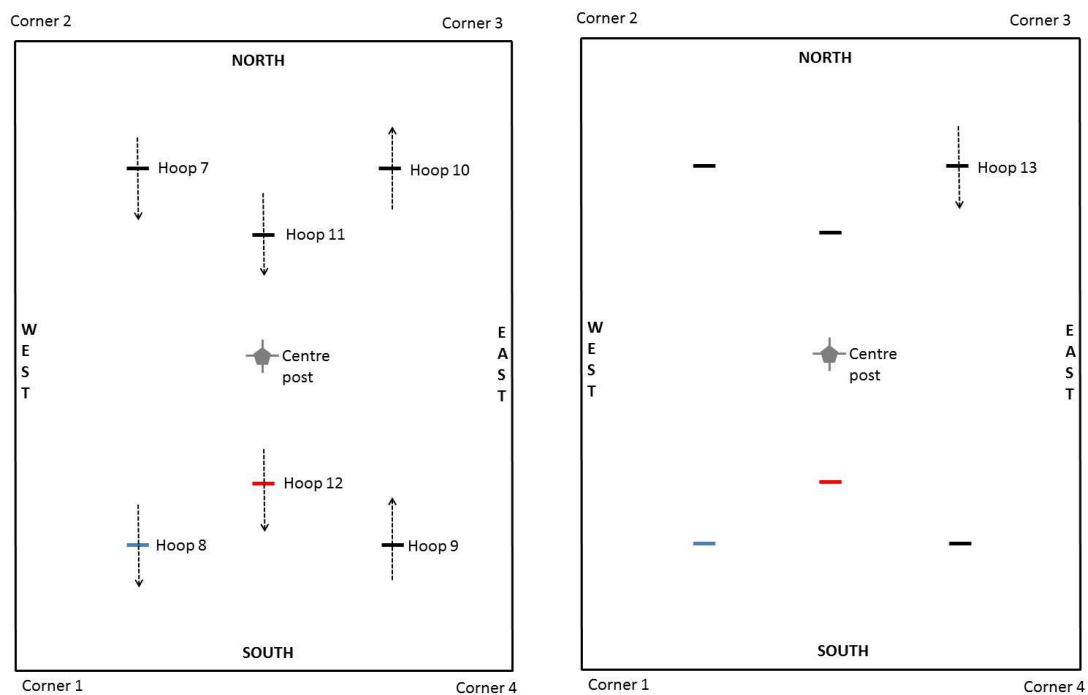


Figure 3 Direction of running hoops 7 to 13

17. When hoop 6 has been run, the hoops are played in the reverse direction, with hoop 2 becoming hoop 7.
18. Finally, if the game reaches a score of 6-6, then a 13th hoop is played, which is the same as hoop 3.

3 The Game

3.1 Outline

19. There are always 4 balls in the game, blue, red, black and yellow, and they are always played in that order, as shown on the centre post.
20. Blue and Black are partners and Red and Yellow are partners. In a singles game there are only two players. One plays the blue and black balls and is often referred to as "Bab"; the other plays red and yellow and is referred to as "Ray".
21. In doubles there are four players, each playing only one ball and the players are referred to by their colour; therefore "Red" refers to both the player and their ball.

3.2 Starting

22. The game starts with all the balls off the lawn and the players toss for start. The winner of the toss can choose whether to start or play second.
23. The first shot is played by Blue from a point on the lawn within 1 yard of Corner 4. This is a single stroke towards hoop 1, trying to get the ball into a position from which it can be hit through the hoop in Blue's next turn.

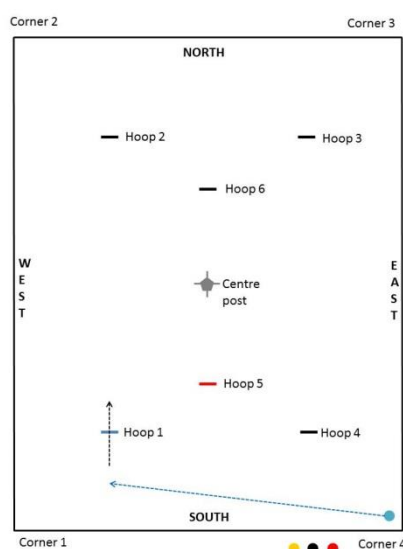


Figure 4 The opening shot

24. The other balls, Red, Black and Yellow are then hit towards hoop 1.
25. The sequence starts again with Blue which, depending on its position, may be hit through the hoop, put in front of the hoop or used to knock another ball away. This continues with each ball being hit once in turn until the hoop is successfully run by a ball.

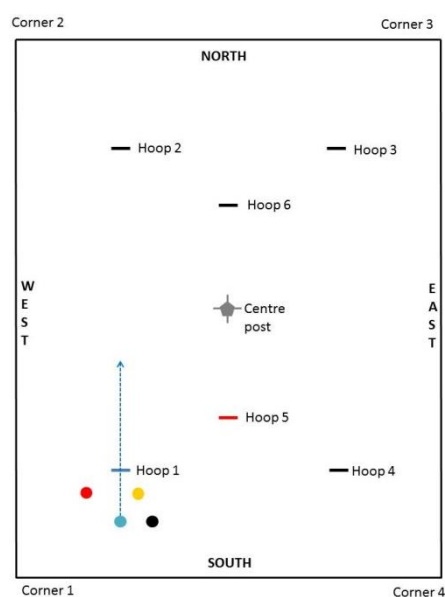


Figure 5 After the first four shots

3.3 Scoring a hoop

26. When a ball has scored hoop 1 a coloured clip is placed on the top of the hoop to signify which side ran the hoop. The balls are then played towards hoop 2.
27. If more than one ball passes through the hoop in the same shot then the point is awarded to the ball that was closest to the hoop before the shot.

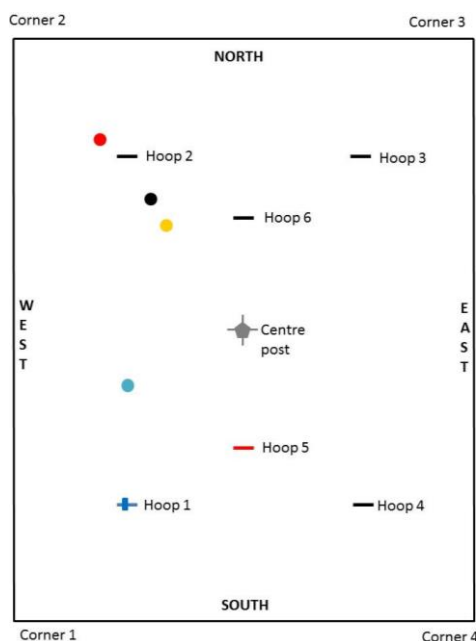


Figure 6 Approaching hoop 2

28. The faces of a hoop are defined as the 'playing' side, from which the ball must arrive at the hoop, and the 'non-playing' side, from which it must leave the hoop. A hoop is not scored if it is run in the opposite direction.
29. In the simplest case a ball starts with the whole ball clear of the hoop on the playing side, passes through the hoop and finishes with the whole ball clear of it on the non-playing side.
30. More difficult situations occur when a ball starts or finishes with part of it still within the hoop. If it starts with part of the ball showing on the non-playing side, having arrived at its position from the wrong side of the hoop then it cannot score a hoop point.
31. If it finishes with any part still showing on the playing side then it has not completed running the hoop and does not score the point.

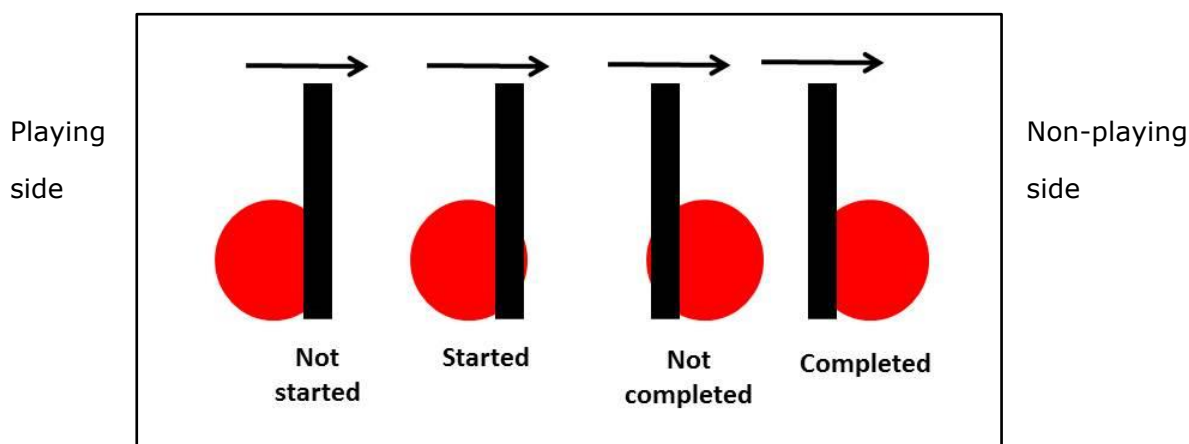


Figure 7 Deciding whether a hoop has been 'run'

3.4 Boundaries

32. If any ball leaves the lawn it is immediately replaced where it crossed the line. It should be positioned so that its outer side is just above, but not overlapping, the inner edge of the marked line as this is the true boundary.

3.5 Finishing

33. The sequence of hoop runs continues until one side has claimed 7 hoops and is declared the winner.
34. Games are often timed and a normal time limit is 50 minutes though 1 hour is also used.
35. The game does not finish immediately when the time is passed; 2 more shots are played with each ball. The rule is that the first ball to be struck after the time is called is the first of the extra shots.
36. If the scores are tied when the extra shots are finished then the result may be a draw unless it is necessary to have a winner. In this case play continues in the normal way until someone scores the next hoop in sequence (the Golden hoop).
37. If a second game is to be played between the same sides then the next game is started by the losing side. The sides keep the same colours but they may start the next game with either ball. The sequence then continues in the same order. Thus if the second game is started by Red then the next stroke is played by Black.

3.6 Secondary colours

38. It is frequently necessary for two games to be played simultaneously on the same lawn, which is called 'Double-banking'.
39. When this happens the first set of balls (Blue, Red, Black, Yellow) are called the 'Primary colours' and another set, the 'Secondary colours', are used for the other game.
40. These are Green, Pink, Brown and White and are sometimes referred to as spring, summer, autumn and winter. Green and Brown are partners and Pink and White are partners.
41. There are times when double-banked games can interfere with each other and these are discussed in Section 12.6.

4 Stance and Grip

42. There is no single right or wrong way to hold a mallet, or to stand, and each player learns the grip and stance that suits them. If you watch a number of players you will soon see that there is great variation in their posture and grip.
43. It is advisable to start with one of the standard positions and grips and only vary this if it isn't 'working' for you.
44. Start with a fairly upright stance, with the feet quite close together (e.g. 20 – 25 cm) and with one of the three 'normal' grips. These are described and shown for a right-handed player and the hands would be the other way round for a left-handed player.



Figure 8 Standard grip

Knuckles forward on the left hand.

Figure 9 Irish grip

Thumbs forward on both hands.





Figure 10 Solomon grip

Knuckles forward on both hands.

45. On the whole, players who use the Solomon grip tend to stand more upright and use a longer mallet handle whereas those who use the Irish grip have shorter mallets, but these aspects are down to personal preference. Try a variety of mallet lengths and weights to see what suits you best before investing in one for yourself.

5 The Swing and Follow-Through

46. There are many possible shots in croquet and each needs a different swing. The basic shot, "Positioning", is the one in which your ball is sent to a specific position on the lawn and for this shot the swing should be as smooth as possible.
47. Stand slightly behind the ball so that the mallet face is about 1/2" from the ball and the mallet shaft is exactly upright. Your eyes should be above the ball and looking down at it throughout the swing and strike.
48. Once you are in position, check that your mallet is pointing exactly in the direction you want to hit. If necessary, stand it in position and go back and look along the line. If you adjust the mallet direction when you are in your stance you should also move your feet so that they are pointing in the same direction as the mallet and are symmetrically placed either side of the line.
49. Swing the mallet head back between your legs with a minimum movement of your shoulders. Keeping your eyes firmly fixed on the ball, swing smoothly forward through the ball's position and continue the swing so that the mallet head finishes well ahead of your hands.

50. If you can get the process to happen smoothly you will find that you can hit the ball a considerable distance with very little effort; it should be the mallet head that does most of the work and not your arms and shoulders.
51. To begin with you should exaggerate the follow-through so that the mallet finishes parallel to the ground or even further. This not only establishes the follow-through in your style it also helps to ensure the mallet has followed a straight path from the back-swing through the ball and beyond.
52. The exercise for this is to place a ball on one of the side-lines near a corner and play it along the line to the far end of the lawn. If it doesn't reach a good distance up the line, don't try to force it, just increase the back-swing so that the mallet head has more momentum when it impacts on the ball.
53. If you find that you often hit with the side edge of the mallet face (the 'bevel') then you are not swinging straight. Try placing two sticks quite close together behind you so that your mallet passes between them on the back-swing. Gradually reduce the distance between the sticks until there is very little clearance for the mallet.

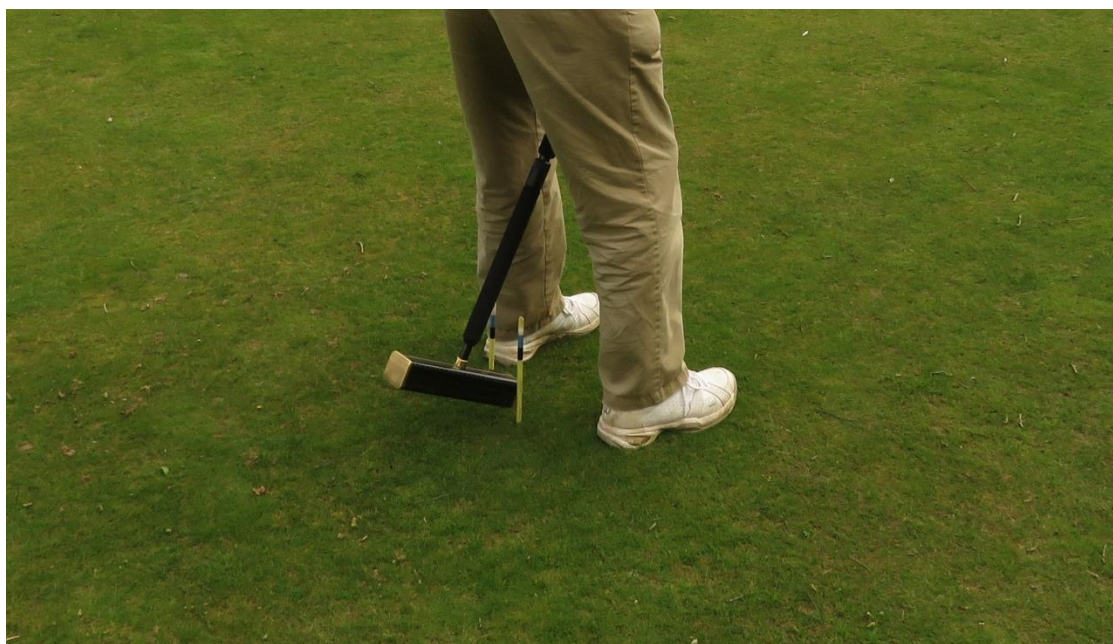


Figure 11 Practising with swing sticks

54. If you constantly 'top' the ball by hitting it with the lower edge of the mallet face then you are probably lifting your head (and your shoulders) just before impact. Try concentrating on watching the grass underneath the ball and make sure you are still looking at it after the ball has gone.

6 Stalking

55. One way to help in lining up your shot is called 'stalking' and it is a good habit to get into.
56. When you have decided on the direction you are going to play your ball, walk away from it to a position perhaps 3 or 4 yards back. Then approach the ball straight down that line moving your view from the ball to the target position and back again. You will find that when you settle into your stance you are naturally orientated correctly.
57. With practice you will learn the distance of stalk that suits your style and how to vary it depending on the shot to be played.

7 Hoop Approach

58. Clearly, a key factor in the game is the scoring of the hoop point by running a hoop. It might seem that your ball should therefore be played to a position in front of the hoop and as close as possible but this is not the case.
59. As you play more Golf Croquet you will learn that it is sometimes better, for tactical reasons, not to put your ball directly in front of the hoop. Even if you do, you should not try to put it very close to the hoop. This is because the closer to the hoop you put the ball the less margin of error you have.

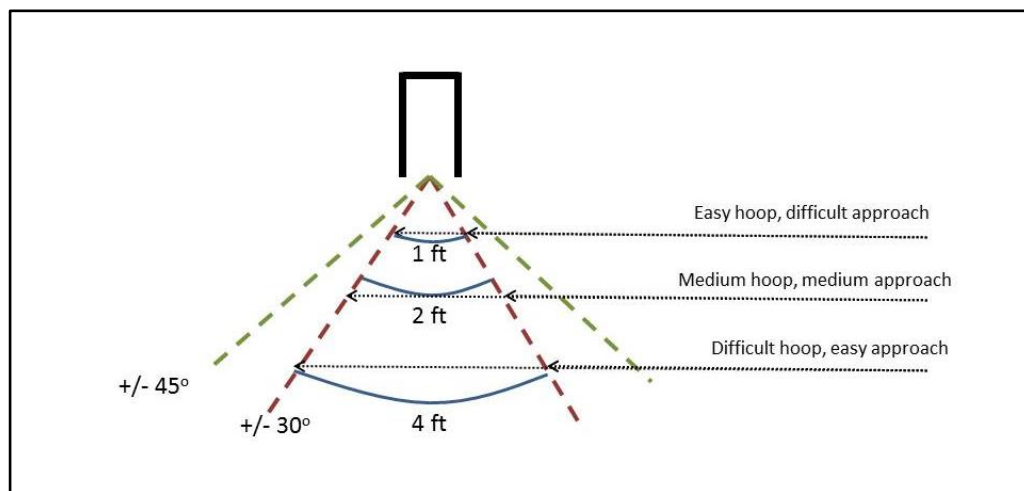


Figure 12 Approach wedges

60. In Figure 12 the ball is being played across the front of the hoop with the intention of running the hoop next time. Although a hoop can be run from an angled position it is better to get as close to a straight position as possible. Not only is the hoop shot easier but the ball will travel further beyond the hoop, making the subsequent shot easier.
61. If you try to put the ball within 1ft of the hoop then it will have to stop very accurately. To be within 30° of straight in front it will have

to be hit to stop with 6" of the perfect range.

62. Allowing for a 2ft hoop run means that an accuracy of +/- 1 ft on the shot is needed and a 4ft hoop run requires an accuracy of +/- 2ft.
63. If the ball is too wide from the hoop, i.e. more than 30°, then the hoop run is difficult and at more than 45° it is virtually impossible.
64. The exercise that goes with this lesson starts with you picking the distance from the hoop that you believe gives you a good chance of running it. Mark that spot with a plastic marker and then, playing from a distance to one side, perhaps 10ft, try to stop as close to the marker as possible.
65. If you find that you can finish consistently very close to the marker then reduce the marker's distance from the hoop and increase the distance from which you are playing. This will enable you to learn the tolerance you should allow for when playing this shot in a game.

8 Hoop Shots

66. Actually running the hoop is very straightforward if the ball is in the perfect position in front of the hoop but it should be done firmly rather than tentatively. Line up on the centre of the gap and play with a confident swing and follow-through. Don't jab at the ball as that will tend to make it go off course.
67. The fundamental rule when approaching from an angle is to strike the ball so that it just misses the nearer hoop upright. There are different techniques for lining up when the hoop is to be run from an angle and these are covered in the Intermediate Course.

9 The Basic Rules

9.1 Introduction

- 68. There are a lot of rules for Golf Croquet but this summary concentrates on the most relevant for a simple social game. Most of these become second nature to a regular player and more rules will become relevant as your play improves.
- 69. You should remember that croquet is largely a self-refereeing game. Although a qualified referee may be called upon to explain a rule it is usually up to the players, particularly the striker, to identify and 'own up' to faults.
- 70. The rules described here are from the 6th Edition of the GC Rules, published in early 2022.

9.2 The wrong ball rule

- 71. As the balls must be played in a specified order and by specified players any breach in this sequence is a 'Wrong Ball'. Thus, if it is Black's turn to play and Red plays then Red is at fault. Similarly, if it is Black's turn to play but the player of Black plays the Red ball then he is at fault.
- 72. The consequences can be quite difficult to understand at first and it is best to consult an experienced player, if possible.
- 73. This rule is covered in detail in the Intermediate Course.

9.3 The half-way rule

74. Although the diagram Figure 13 looks complicated, the half-way rule is very simple in practice.
75. There is an imaginary line half way between the current hoop and next. If a ball is clearly past this line when the hoop is run then the ball is in an off-side position.
76. However, it isn't actually offside if it reached that position off an opponent's ball or because of an opponent's shot. Nor is it offside if it got there as a result of the shot that scored the hoop.

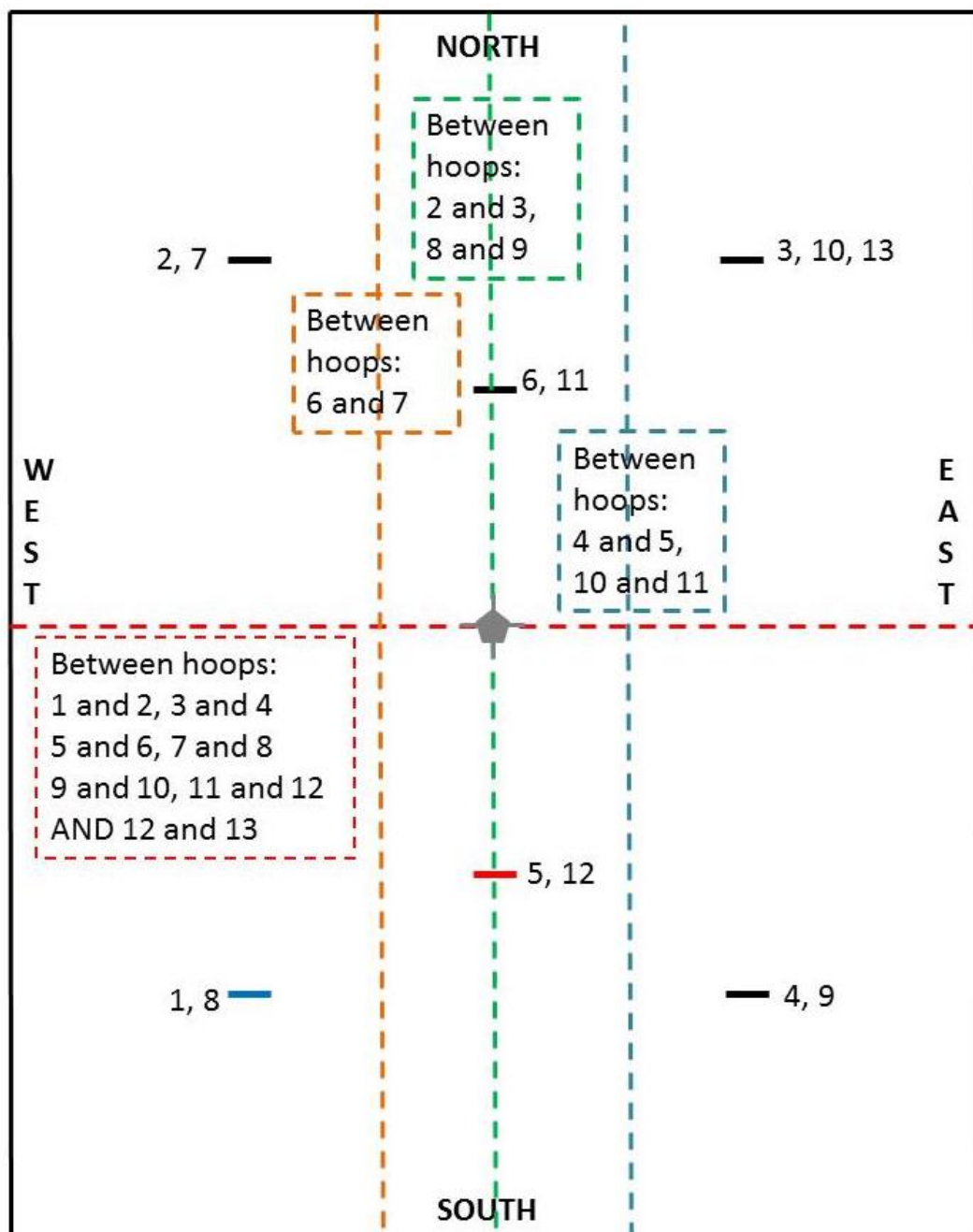


Figure 13 Positions of the half-way lines

77. If it is offside then the player should ask the opponents where they would like the ball to be placed.
78. There are only two possibilities:
 - i. It can be left where it lies.
 - ii. It can be placed in a penalty area selected by the opponent.
79. There are two penalty areas, West and East, as shown in Figure 14.

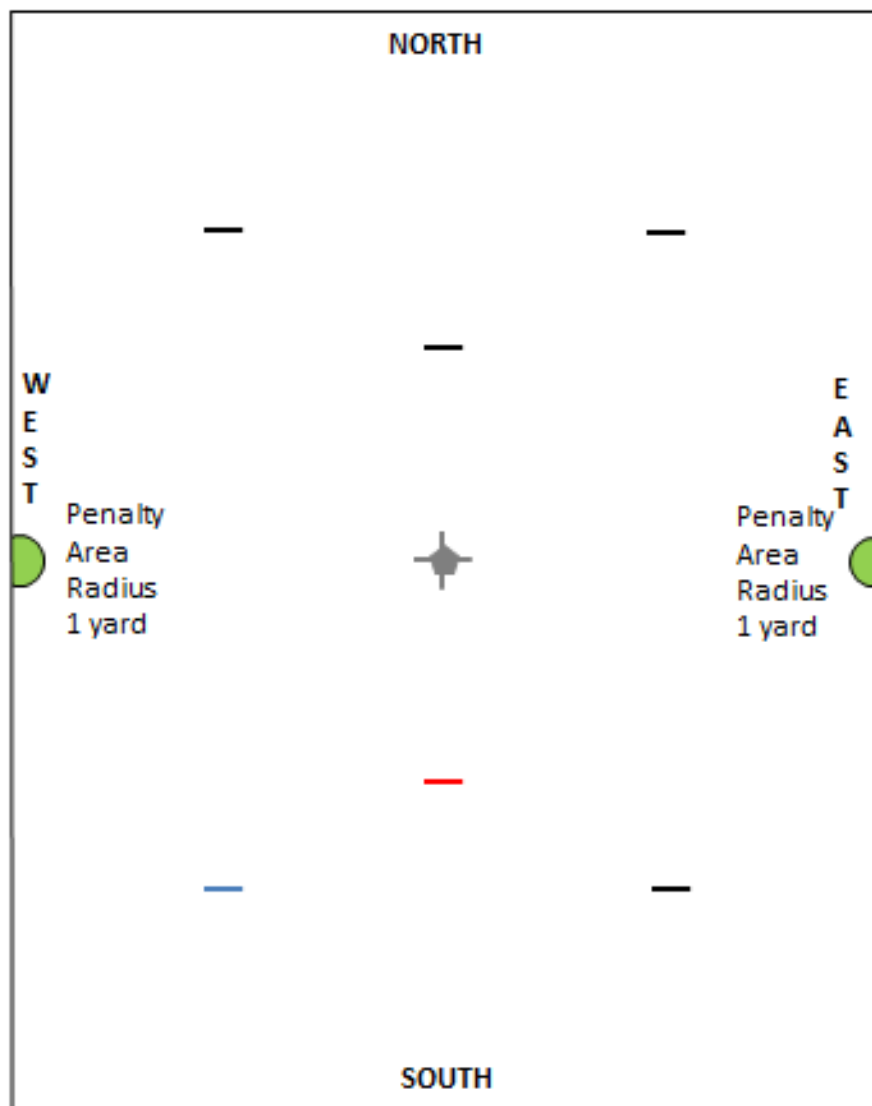


Figure 14 Positions of the penalty areas

9.4 Air shots and miss-hits

80. There are many rules relating to different types of miss-hit or fault but the main ones are :

Air shot: The mallet does not make contact with any ball, in which case the player may re-play the shot. (Hitting a hoop with the mallet is not a fault and counts as an air shot, unless a ball is

moved by the impact on the hoop.)

Bevel edge: Hitting the ball with the edge of the mallet face (the 'bevel') is not a fault if it happens in normal play. However, if the shot being played is awkward or hampered then it counts as a fault.

Damage: Causing significant damage to the surface of the lawn is a fault.

Double taps: Hitting your ball twice with the mallet is a fault. This is very likely to happen if you hit straight at another ball close to your own.

Push: Allowing your mallet to remain in contact with the ball for more than an instant is a fault.

Crush: Hitting your ball so that it is crushed against a hoop (or post) is a fault, i.e. your mallet is still in contact with your ball when the ball is touching the post or a hoop, unless you are hitting away.

Touching a ball with your clothes: The slightest touch of any part of your clothing, such as a shoelace, against a ball is a fault if you are in the process of playing your shot.

81. If a fault occurs then no point can be scored for the striker's side and the opponents can decide whether to have all of the balls replaced in their positions before the shot or left where they finished. If the balls are left where they finished then any point scored for the opponents by the fault will count.

10 Handicaps, Advantage and Extra Strokes

10.1 Handicaps

82. Golf croquet has two alternative methods for playing handicap games. The purpose of both is to enable players of different levels of ability to enjoy a game together with an equal chance of winning. Analysis of competition results has shown that this is true for a wide range of handicap differences.
83. When you start to play proper games you will be assessed by the club handicapper who will award you an initial handicap, probably in the range 10 to 16.
84. This will change up or down as you play competitive matches, depending on how many singles games you win and lose. If the handicapper decides that it is completely wrong they may reduce it or increase it by several steps. The entire range is from -6 to 20.
85. The effect of a handicap is to give the player with the higher handicap an advantage to offset the difference in skill. The result is that the game is fair and is therefore more enjoyable for both players.
86. The way in which the handicap affects the game is that the higher handicap player is either given a head start of a number of hoops ("Advantage") or is given a number of extra strokes, to be played after their normal turn. In singles, the number of extra strokes is simply the difference between the players' handicaps. The rule for doubles is more complicated and is not covered here.

10.2 What is an extra stroke?

87. If you have some extra strokes, which are usually tallied by small glass beads carried by the player or by sticks placed beside the lawn, then when you have played a shot in your normal turn, you can play another shot.
88. You can play more than one extra stroke, if necessary, after your main turn but an extra stroke has two limitations:
 - i. The extra stroke must be played with the same ball as the normal turn.
 - ii. You cannot score a hoop point for your side with an extra stroke. If you do run a hoop or knock your partner ball through a hoop then the balls remain where they finished, but the hoop has not been scored.
89. Some players don't like using extra strokes. They find them distracting and either fail to use them or use them up quickly in order to be rid of them. Doing this makes it much harder for them to win

against a better player. With correct use of their 7 extra strokes a 16 has a good chance of beating a 9.

10.3 How to notify opponents before using an extra stroke

90. There are two times for notifying an opponent. In both cases make sure that you have been heard.
 - i. Before taking your main turn, warn your opponent that you are thinking of using an extra stroke after the shot.
 - ii. Immediately after playing, forestall the opponent's shot by saying 'I'm thinking of taking an extra stroke'. This must be before the opponent has played their stroke, but the earlier the better.
91. If you say you are taking an extra stroke you can change your mind right up to the last moment and decide not to take it.
92. However, if you say you are not going to take one then you cannot change your mind.

10.4 When to use an extra stroke

93. The optimal use of extra strokes is a separate skill and is dealt with fully in the intermediate course.
94. The guiding principle should be that you only use an extra stroke if it will significantly enhance your chance of gaining a hoop point. This may be by clearing an opponent to leave yourself, or your partner, in a hoop-running position or by being the first ball at the next hoop.

10.5 When not to use an extra stroke

95. In general terms, don't use an extra stroke if its only effect is likely to be a delay in losing the hoop.
96. There is no purpose in using an extra stroke to clear an opponent from a hoop unless you can put yourself in position by doing so. Even then it doesn't help if the other opposing ball will run the hoop.

11 Clearance Shots, Stop-Shots, Blocking Shots and Split Shots

11.1 Outline

- 97. There are several types of shot but some of the basic ones are the clearance, blocking, stop-shot and split shot. In some circumstances they can be combined, particularly the stop-shot and clearance shot.
- 98. Other types of shot, such as roll shots, promotion shots, cut shots, jump shots, in-offs and rush shots are more advanced and are covered in the Intermediate and Advanced courses.

11.2 Clearance shot

- 99. A clearance shot has a simple purpose, to remove an opponent from a hoop-running position. The key factors are the distance to the target ball and the distance that you want to send it.
- 100. A common mistake is to hit the target ball so softly that it is still in a hoop-running position. A clearance should therefore be played with confidence or not at all.

11.3 Stop-shot

- 101. The purpose of a stop-shot is to play your ball so that it hits another ball and stops very quickly while the other ball travels a long way.
- 102. This is achieved by hitting your ball with mallet head angled slightly upwards and playing with no follow-through. Having selected your target ball, go through the normal procedure of stalking and settling into your stance. Then move your feet back a few inches. This will have the effect of changing your mallet handle from upright to leaning slightly backwards and will lift the front mallet face.



Figure 15 The stance for a stop-shot

103. This is the position your mallet should be in when it hits the ball. One way of practising playing this shot with no follow-through is to ground the back of the mallet at the exact moment of impact.

104. A stop-shot should usually be played hard, not gently. It may seem contradictory but if the target ball is hit dead-centre then the harder the stop-shot the shorter the distance the striker's ball will travel after the impact.

11.4 Blocking shots

105. Blocking shots are used to stop an opponent running a hoop. Your ball needs to be played onto the opponent's approach line or into the jaws of the hoop.

106. However, blocking shots won't always work against a player who can play jump shots.

11.5 Split shots

107. A split shot is used to send two balls to particular positions in different directions. For example, if the opponent's ball is beside the hoop then a split shot can be used to send it behind the hoop while your own ball goes in front.

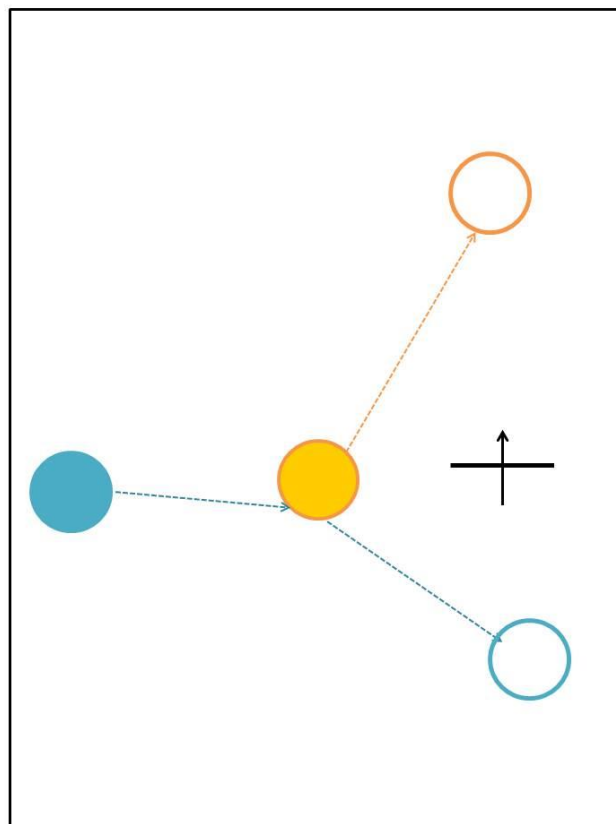


Figure 16 The split shot

12 Basic Etiquette

12.1 General

108. The Rules of Golf Croquet contain a considerable list covering behaviour that would be considered poor etiquette. Most of them are very obvious and do not need to be detailed here.
109. The following are a few of the commonest problems that occur and players guilty of them are often unaware of their actions.

12.2 Noise

110. Golf Croquet is a very sociable game, particularly doubles, but that means that it is easy to let the noise level rise to a point at which it disturbs the striker or, even worse, disturbs another game.
111. Some discussion is inevitable, particularly between partners, but all speech and movement must stop when a player starts to address their ball.

12.3 Pace of play

112. One cannot be specific about playing speed as different players have different styles. Some take little time over their planning or shot and others spend some time thinking or take several practice swings.
113. The game is much more enjoyable for all players if it is played with reasonable dispatch.
114. The rules specify a maximum of 1 minute between shots but this should really be regarded as a maximum. A player or a partnership that takes a minute every time would be considered as extremely slow. Keep partnership discussions on tactics to a minimum or each hoop becomes a debate.

12.4 Following the ball

115. When you play your ball from one hoop to the next, it is very tempting to walk after it. This should only be done if you are the last player or if you are thinking of playing an extra stroke.
116. If this is the case then you must make it clear to the opponents that this is what you are doing.

12.5 Positioning and shadows

117. When a player is addressing their ball, try to stand so that you are not close to their striking line.
118. Players' shadows can be very obtrusive. Try to stand so that your shadow does not lie across the striker's ball, the target ball or the target hoop.

12.6 Double-banking

119. Having two games going on simultaneously on the same lawn means that each game must be played with consideration for the other.
120. If you are about to play a shot that is likely to send your own ball or another towards the other game then you should either wait for that game to move on or ask the other players to mark the balls that are close to your line.
121. It frequently happens that one game catches up with the other and needs to wait for a hoop to be cleared. Whether or not the clock is stopped depends on the agreement before the game.
122. A more difficult situation arises when two games meet at the same hoop but in opposite directions. For example, if the primary game (Blue, Red, Black, Yellow) is playing hoop 9 and the secondary game (Green, Pink, Brown White) has just run hoop 3 then the games are crossing. One of the games should be 'pegged down' so that the other can play through. This involves marking the positions of all four balls with plastic markers.
123. If any ball is very close to the line of a hoop or another ball then its position should be marked very carefully, using two markers.
124. Most clubs have a supply of markers kept for players' use but it is a good habit to carry markers of your own as they are frequently used when lawns are busy.

12.7 Self-refereeing

125. It is the job of all the players to referee the game. An external referee should only be called if:
- i. The players cannot agree. If the disagreement concerns a shot that has happened then a referee, having not seen the shot, may not be able to adjudicate. In this case the decision is left to the striker as the player with the best view of what happened.
 - ii. A rule needs to be clarified. It is always best to get a qualified person to decide, rather than find out later that an incorrect action has been taken.
 - iii. A hampered shot needs to be watched. If a ball is to be played that lies very close to a hoop or another ball then the ball positions should be marked and the shot watched. The marking is done so that, if the shot is deemed to be a fault, the balls can be returned to their original positions.
126. If a player causes damage to the playing surface they should not attempt to repair it until a decision has been made about its severity. After this the damage should be carefully repaired.

12.8 Trampling

127. Golf Croquet tends to cause more damage to the lawns than Association Croquet. This is because jump shots are used more often and there are more people on the lawn, resulting in more trampling.

128. This is particularly true around the hoops but it can be reduced by some simple precautions.

- i. Try to avoid crowding around a hoop, i.e. only approach a hoop closely when it is your turn to play.
- ii. When walking on the lawn, deviate slightly to avoid walking close past another hoop.
- iii. If you cause any damage, then gently lift the damaged turf with a divot tool and flatten it out.

13 Thinking Ahead

13.1 Thinking through the four turns

129. If you want to improve your Golf Croquet you need to think ahead, rather than simply playing the most obvious shot. The best way of thinking ahead is to look at the balls' positions and decide what the next four shots will be after you have played yours. This therefore includes your own next shot.
130. This is the first stage in developing your tactical understanding of the game. For example, consider the two situations in Figure 17. Yellow is to play and could shoot for Hoop 1 with some chance of success.

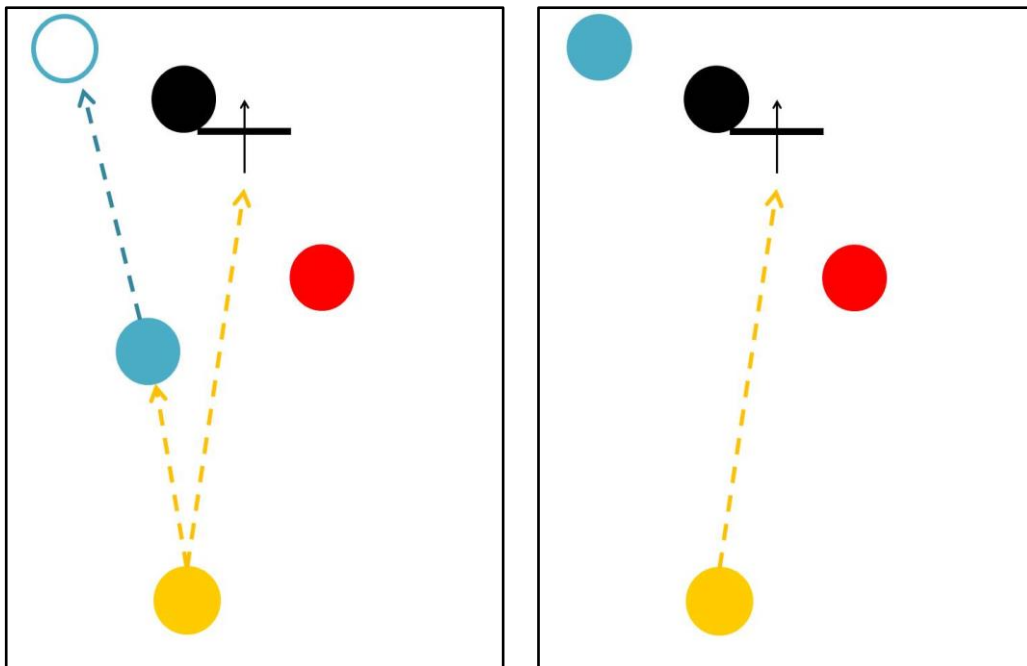


Figure 17 Alternative shots for Yellow

131. In the first case Blue is also in a hoop-running position and if Yellow fails to run the hoop then Blue will probably be able to do so. If Yellow hits Blue to a position behind the hoop then it cannot run the hoop, nor can it clear or block Red. Red will therefore have a very good chance of running the hoop. Black cannot interfere and Yellow will probably be left in a position to run up to the next hoop. The correct shot for Yellow is therefore to clear Blue.
132. In the second case Blue is already in a position where it cannot interfere with Red. Now Yellow can aim for the hoop without leaving the opponents with an easy chance. The shot should be played hard so that it either goes through or bounces off enough to leave the hoop clear for Red. Once again Yellow should be left with a clear shot for the next hoop.

13.2 The Importance of partner play

133. Another key to successful Golf Croquet is Partner Play. This is the term for a shot that is intended to give an advantage for the partner ball rather than the striker's own ball. It doesn't matter which ball on your side scores the hoop and if you improve your partner's position then you may greatly improve the situation.

134. An important consideration in partner play is that your partner's next shot comes before yours. This means that only one of the opponent's balls can interfere with the position you have placed your partner in.

135. In the example shown in Figure 18, Yellow is to play and could, possibly, run Hoop 1.

136. Assume that Yellow goes for the long hoop run:

- i. If it succeeds then the opponent will have the first two balls at the next hoop because the next three shots are :
 - a) Blue has a clear run to hoop 2.
 - b) Red is blocked by the hoop from running to hoop 2.
 - c) Black, having been moved to one side by Yellow, has a clear run to hoop 2.
- ii. If the hoop run fails then Blue will clear Red, leaving itself in front of the hoop and a good position will have been lost.

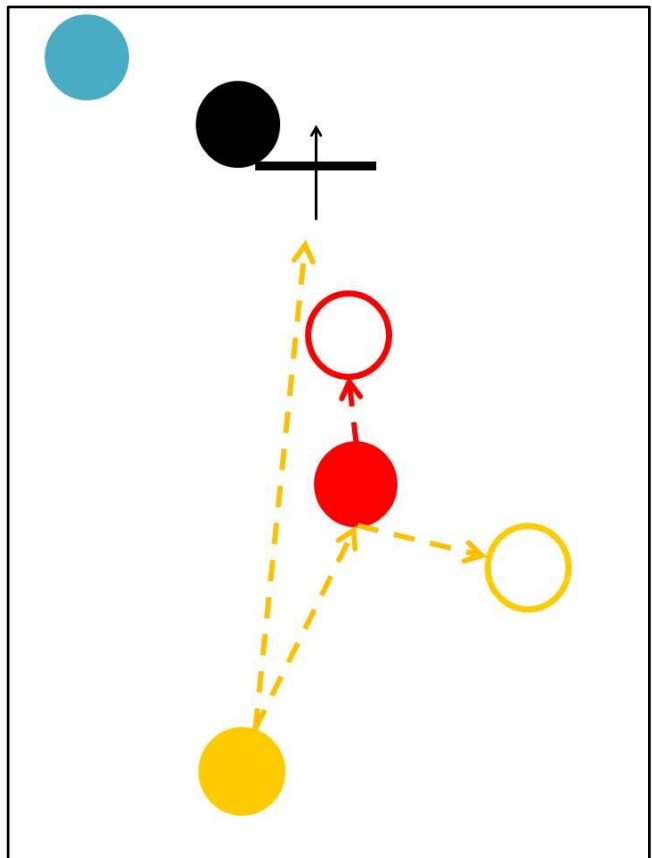


Figure 18 Promoting your partner

137. The alternative for Yellow is to play a gentle shot on Red. This has three benefits:

- i. Red will be in a much better hoop-running position than Yellow.
- ii. Blue can no longer clear Red.
- iii. Yellow will have a clear run to Hoop 2.

14 Exercises

14.1 Skills

14.1.1 Single ball

138. Take a single ball and play it through 13 hoops in the correct order.
This will establish in your mind the correct sequence of the hoops.
139. For every shot, select the point where you would like the ball to finish and carry out the proper stalking procedure.
140. Get into the correct stance and, with your eye firmly on the ball, play a smooth swing through it without dipping or raising your shoulders.
141. For all of the longer shots, exaggerate the follow-through, lifting the mallet head in front of you on the line of the shot.
142. When setting up in front of a hoop, pick a distance from the hoop that gives you a reasonable chance of running it on your next shot and try to get the ball to stop on the spot. You will soon find how difficult it is to make the ball stop exactly in a good position if you pick a point too close to the hoop.
143. Play the hoop shots firmly, not tentatively.

14.1.2 Clearance shots

144. Place two balls about 1 yard apart, stalk your ball and play it smoothly to strike the other ball. Hit it hard enough that the other ball moves at least a yard.
145. When you are confident that you can get a good contact on the target ball, vary the exercise in two ways :
- i. Gradually increase the distance between the balls until less than 80% of your shots hit the target ball enough to move it.
 - ii. Keep the balls at 1 yard separation but play the shot harder and harder, trying to move the target ball by 2 yards, 4 yards etc.

14.1.3 Stop-shots

146. Although stop-shots can be played with greater separation this exercise is intended to get the movements firmly established. Place the balls about 1 foot apart and play a stop-shot.
147. If this is done correctly then the striker's ball should travel no more than 1 foot beyond the target ball's position and the target ball should travel at least 2 yards.
148. Ensure that the contact is as straight as possible then gradually increase the force of the shot, minimising the follow-through.

14.1.4 *Blocking shots*

- 149. This requires a similar skill to setting up in front of a hoop, i.e. trying to get your ball to stop at an exact point.
- 150. Place an opponent's ball about 4 ft in front of a hoop. Start with your ball about 4 ft to one side and play a gentle shot so that your ball stops exactly on the line between the opponent's ball and the hoop.
- 151. Repeat this from greater distances and different angles to gauge your ability.

14.1.5 *Split shots*

- 152. These are a rather more advanced skill but the basic exercise is very simple. Place two balls very close together (about 6") alongside a hoop and play a gentle stroke that sends your ball in front of the hoop and the target ball behind it.
- 153. Repeat this from further away and at different angles.

14.1.6 *The Swing*

- 154. A smooth, consistent and efficient swing is very important. It is difficult to control a swing that is jerky or involves too much force from the arms and shoulders.
- 155. The greater the transfer of energy from the mallet to the ball, the less the effort needed to hit a ball a long way. The control of distance comes from the degree of backswing and the accuracy comes from the backswing and follow-through.
- 156. Put two sticks in the ground as shown in Figure 11 on page 10. Keeping your shoulders on a level and your eyes on the ground where the ball would be, swing the mallet backwards and forwards
- 157. If you find that you can do this without touching the sticks then reduce their separation.
- 158. Do the same exercise, but with a ball, and make sure that your mallet finishes with the head well in front of your hands, i.e. get the forward swing to be at least as great as the back swing. Always keep your eyes on the back of the ball until long after the strike.

14.2 Tactics

14.2.1 Thinking ahead

- 159. This exercise is best done with someone else.
- 160. Put all four balls around a hoop and pick each one in turn as the striker ball. Discuss what the options are for the striker ball and, when that shot has been played, what the subsequent four shots will be.
- 161. Repeat this with different starting positions for the balls.

14.2.2 Partner play

- 162. Place the partner ball in a position where it cannot run the hoop, being either too wide or too far. Put your own ball about 2 ft from it and try to hit the partner ball so that it travels into a position from which it can run the hoop.
- 163. Repeat this with different starting positions for the balls.