

CANBERRA CROQUET CLUB

INTRODUCTION TO CROQUET LESSON PLAN

Lesson 1 AN INTRODUCTION TO GOLF CROQUET

Lesson content

1. The history of the game and Canberra Croquet Club
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 8. Six hoop game, including ball sequence
- Useful references

The History of the game and Canberra Croquet Club

The history of croquet throughout the world is documented at this link:

<http://milwaukeecroquet.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/History-of-croquet-4-14-16.pdf>

Another version of croquet, Golf Croquet, was introduced in Egypt in the 1920s through British colonialism.

Canberra Croquet club was established in 1928 as a Club for AC play and limited to women members only until 1964. The history of the club is documented on the website at this link:

<http://www.canberracroquet.org.au/history.html>

The Court and equipment

A *standard court* is a rectangle 35 by 28 yards (32 by 25.6 metres). The borders must be marked clearly (painted line, string, tape, etc).

The four boundaries are known as the *south*, *west*, *north*, and *east* boundaries regardless of their real orientation. The corners are known as *corners 1, 2, 3* and *4*.

The *yard-line* is an imaginary rectangle (not marked) which is 1-yard inside the boundary. Its corners are the *corner spots* (not usually marked).

The game is played using a mallet per player, 6 hoops set out on the court, and 4 balls. It can be played as singles (2 players) doubles (4 players).

Hitting a Ball

The mallet

- croquet balls weigh 1lb, so mallets weigh around 3lb to get the weight ratio
- most mallets are made of wood, but many now metal and/or carbon fibre
- taller mallets will help your back, so go as tall as you can

The grip (choices)

- Standard – good balance of power, direction and comfort – hands close, as close to top of mallet as comfortable
- Solomon – more control by using less wrist action & more leverage
- Irish – least favoured because less backswing so less accurate

Many players play with hands apart, but the bottom hand then does all the work

Grip with a firmness like holding a cup of coffee, rather than 'choking' it. If you grip too firmly, your body will tense up and interrupt the smooth back swing and follow through required for accuracy. You want a languid swing....

Stance and Swing

The secret is to develop a consistent swing. Not too fast and not too slow, in a fluid motion. The body should be still with little movement in knees or hips. The grip needs to be consistent; not loose nor too tight. Ensure that the head remains down, with eyes on the striker's ball and that the follow through is straight.



A good exercise (off the lawn) is to swing at an imaginary ball before taking your shot (like golf players do).

The feet

- Turn mallet head sideways in front of players 'feet. Player to point toes to each end of mallet head and keep feet parallel. This is the distance feet need to be apart, about shoulder width.
- Turn mallet head right way and place 1 inch in front of feet. This the hitting position.

Stalking

- Key to accuracy!
- Allows you to square your shoulders, toes and hips to the line of swing
- Stalk every stroke
- Do not change grip or feet after stalking
- If not comfortable – re-stalk

ACTIVITY 1 Hitting a ball

Points to stress:

- Stalk the ball
- Settle stance
- Keep head down and keep looking at ball as hit
- Swing through
- 3 points – the ball, your body and where want ball to go (to partner)

In pairs – distance from hoop 1 and 4 to centre peg line

Materials – 2 balls

ACTIVITY 2 Running a hoop

Points to stress:

- Same principles as 'hitting a ball'
- Aim point centre of hoop - marker
- Remind re stalking

Pairs at hoops

Materials – 2 balls + marker in ground at hoop centre

ACTIVITY 3 Hitting ball a distance

Points to stress:

- Hit through ball – don't just tap

Individuals lined 3 metres apart - hit ball to partner

After 2 successes move further metre apart

Repeat

Materials – 2 balls

ACTIVITY 4 Hitting to Hoop 1

Line up markers in front of 4 hoops 1 yard either side of front of hoop

Run as competition in 4 groups of 4 with Captain keeping score as in Greg Bury exercise

Each person to have 2 turns. Balls falling within triangle receive a point. Regroup and share scores.

ACTIVITY 5 SIX HOOP GAME

Ball sequence, hoop order and the court

Use cork board and markers to demonstrate

Some useful references

The following websites have downloadable information on golf croquet with practice drills and also published texts.

www.croquet-nsw.org

www.canberracroquet.org.au/

<https://worldcroquet.org/index.php/croquet-information/golf-croquet>

<https://croquet-australia.com.au/disciplines-3/#golf>

Images for golf croquet

www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s3962780.htm an interesting story on children playing the game.

It's a game you might remember from Alice in Wonderland, a hobby of the crazy Queen of Hearts. Okay, so croquet isn't really about using flamingos as mallets and hedgehogs as balls. It's a real game that's lots of fun!

www.woodmallets.com/howto/playcroquet.htm

There are many Youtube sites. Have a look at this one and check others:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=O2ZXOUTITXQ

Texts (both in CCC library & available for loan)

- *Bury Greg, Through the Hoops Techniques for Golf Croquet 2nd Edition*
- *Hague Michael, Golf Croquet Tactics 2nd Edition, Croquet Association, UK.*

L2 AN INTRODUCTION TO ASSOCIATION CROQUET

- 1. The Standard Lawn**
- 2. Principles of the AC game including shots peculiar to AC**

The Standard Lawn

The part of the yard-line from the first corner spot to the middle of the south boundary is the *A baulk-line*. The part of the yard-line from the third corner spot to the middle of the north boundary is the *B baulk-line*.

The *peg* sits in the centre of the lawn. It has two parts: the base and the extension (removable). The extension is used to hold clips in AC.

There are six *hoops*. The inner two hoops are set *7 yards* to the north and south of the peg. The outer four hoops are set *7 yards* from adjacent boundaries. The first hoop has the top (its *crown*) painted *blue*. The last hoop has its crown painted *red*. Hoops are 12" high, and are between 3 ³/₄" and 4" in width.

Hoop Order

A ball scores a point by passing through the correct hoop in the correct order: *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6,7,8,9,10,11,12 and in AC also 1-back, 2-back, 3-back, 4-back, penultimate, and rover*.

Balls

Balls are 3 ⁵/₈" in diameter.

Primary colours are blue and black versus red and yellow. If there is a second game being played on the one court *secondary* colours are used: green and brown versus pink and white.

Clips for AC

Clips are used to indicate which hoop each ball is for. There is one clip of each colour. When a ball is for hoops 1 to 6 the clip is positioned on *top* of the hoop (on the *crown*). When a ball is for 1-back to rover the clip is placed on the *side* (a *leg*) of the hoop.

Principles of the AC game including shots peculiar to AC

1. Roquet, Croquet, Continuation

When you walk onto a lawn at the beginning of your *turn* you have the option of playing either of your two balls (in doubles either player has the option of playing

their ball). The ball you elect to play is called the striker's ball. Initially you get only one stroke. You may elect to either:

- run the correct hoop in the correct direction
- try to roquet another ball

If you fail to do either of these your turn ends.

After Running A Hoop

If you run a hoop you are entitled to one further stroke (a *continuation* stroke). With this stroke you can try to run the next hoop, or roquet a ball.

Roquet

You roquet a ball by hitting the striker's ball onto it (either directly or indirectly). You may only roquet each of the other 3 balls once without running a hoop during a turn. After running a hoop you may roquet each ball again.

When you roquet a ball you are entitled to two further strokes – a *croquet* stroke and then a *continuation* stroke.

Croquet Stroke

When you have roqueted a ball you can take *croquet* from it. To do this you pick your striker's ball up (after it has come to rest, or when it is clear that it will not hit any other ball) and place it in contact with the ball you roqueted. You then play the croquet stroke by hitting the striker's ball in such a way that the ball you are taking croquet from also moves (or at least shakes). After the croquet shot you get your *continuation* stroke.

Continuation Stroke

In a continuation stroke you may elect to either run the correct hoop or roquet another ball. If you succeed at either then your turn will continue.

You are only ever entitled to one continuation stroke in a sequence – they do not add up.

The Laws

Roquet: If you play a ball that is in contact with another ball then a roquet is *deemed* to have been made on that ball. You do not have to roquet it; you simply pick your ball up and place it in contact with that ball in the position you want.

If you roquet two balls simultaneously you may elect which one you roqueted.

If you run a hoop in the croquet stroke and your ball hits the croqueted ball again a roquet is deemed **not** to have been made on that ball **unless** they come to rest in contact.

If you run a hoop and roquet a ball that was clear of the hoop then you have roqueted that ball ("*hoop and roquet*"). A ball is clear of the hoop if no part of it lies within the jaws of the hoop. In this case it does not matter whether you had roqueted that ball before you ran the hoop.

If, however, there is a ball in the jaws of the hoop and you run the hoop and roquet it, the outcome is dependent on whether you were live or not on that ball. If you were not live, then you have run the hoop, and not roqueted the ball (unless they come to rest together). If you had not used the ball, then you have roqueted it, and **not** run the hoop.

Croquet Stroke: When you place your ball against the roqueted ball in preparation for a croquet stroke you must **not** move or rotate the other ball, but you can touch and steady it with your hand.

In a croquet stroke if the ball you are taking croquet from does not move or shake then it is a fault and your turn ends.

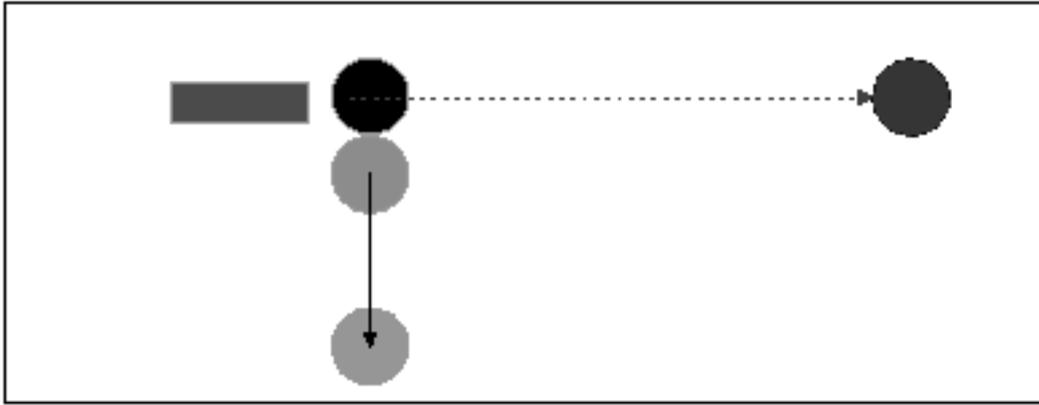
Your turn will also end if on the croquet stroke you send the croqueted ball off the court, or your striker's ball goes off without making a roquet or running its hoop.

You must not allow your mallet to hit that other ball – if it does then it is a fault and your turn ends.

2. The Take-off

You will find many occasions where you want to leave the croqueted ball in the same place but send your ball as far as desired. For this we use a thin *take-off*.

To do this place the striker's ball in contact with the ball you will be taking croquet from so that a line through their centres is at right angles to your destination. Then when you hit the striker's ball ensure that you hit in a little so that it moves (or at least shakes) the croqueted ball. The diagram below shows a thin take-off.



You can take-off from either side of the ball you are taking croquet from. There are instances where you would only take-off from one side. For example, if you are very close to the boundary and there is a danger the croqueted ball could be sent off the lawn in the take-off, you would use the side that sends that ball into the lawn (your turn ends if either the croqueted ball or your ball goes off the lawn in the take-off stroke).

Pull

A further important aspect of the take-off is *pull*. Your coach will demonstrate this. When you play take-offs over a distance of about 10 metres or more you will see that the striker's ball tends to pull in one direction. If you take-off from the left hand side your ball will pull to the right, and vice versa for taking off from the right hand side. Across the full 30 metres of the lawn this can amount to over a metre of pull. You must allow for this when lining up for a take-off.

Thick Take-Off

We will only briefly mention a *thick* take-off in this Module. Suppose you have a need to send the croqueted ball a few metres and not just leave it where it is, this can be accomplished by lining everything up as in a normal *thin* take-off, but hitting into the ball more and hitting it harder on the croquet stroke. Hitting more into the ball causes your ball to travel less distance, and hence, you have to hit harder. This is a stroke that requires much more familiarity with your game than you will have at this stage as you have to "feel" how much harder to hit the ball, how much to hit into the ball, and how much more pull there will be.

The Laws

There are a number of things you are not allowed to do when you strike a ball (*faults*). The most important ones that you need to know about at this time are:

- you are **not** allowed to touch the head of your mallet with your hand
- you are **not** allowed to rest the mallet shaft, or an hand or arm on the ground

- you are **not** allowed to strike the ball with any part of the head other than an end face
- you are **not** allowed to *push* or *pull* the ball (maintain contact)
- you are **not** allowed to *double tap* the ball (hit it more than once)
- you are **not** allowed to crush your ball against a hoop or the peg
- you are **not** allowed to touch any ball apart from the striker's ball with your mallet
- you are **not** allowed to touch any ball with any part of your body or clothing
- in a croquet stroke you are **not** allowed to play away from, or fail to move or shake the croqueted ball
- you are **not** allowed to play a stroke that is likely to, and does, cause substantial damage to the court

Exercises

In these exercise notes we only use thin take-offs. For each exercise you **must** be able to take-off from both sides of the ball. In each case make sure that the ball you are taking croquet from moves or at least shakes!

- From the South Boundary in front on Hoop 1, take-off to that hoop stopping your ball so that it is in position to run the hoop.
- From the non-playing side of a hoop practice take-offs to send your ball directly in front of the hoop on the playing side in a position to be able to run the hoop (and run it!). Do this for distances from under a metre to about 10 metres, and from various angles around the hoop.
- "Pull". Practice take-offs over distances of at least ½ court length and note the amount for pull. Then practice taking this into account when setting up for the take-off.
- Put a ball at each of the 6 hoops. Starting at hoop 1, roquet the ball, take off to the hoop, run the hoop, and roquet the ball again. Then take-off to the next hoop. Roquet that ball, and continue. If you make a mistake play the shot again.
- The "ultimate" test. From a corner spot take-off to the diagonally opposite corner to a ball on that corner and roquet it. This must be done without the ball which you are taking croquet from going off the lawn! When you can do this consistently you will have excellent control and it will be time to start thinking about thick take-offs.

3. Straight line strokes

To play this place your striker's ball and the ball you have roqueted together for a croquet stroke. If you then play a shot so that your mallet swings directly through the centres of the balls they will both travel in a straight line in the same direction, as shown in the figure below.



You can vary how far the striker's ball and the croqueted ball travel relative to each other by varying your stance and how you strike the ball with your mallet.

Stance

Standing closer to the striker's ball means you will be hitting down on it; standing further back means you will hit up slightly. In a croquet stroke hitting down means your ball will travel further than if you hit through parallel to the ground. And vice versa for hitting up.

The Drive

The croqueted ball will travel about 3–4 times as far as the striker's ball.

Stance: Normal

Grip: Normal

Follow through: Normal

The Stop Shot

The croqueted ball will travel at least 5 times as far as the striker's ball. Ratios of over 10 can be achieved but depend upon the type of mallet used.

Stance: Feet further back than normal

Grip: Hands right at the top of the mallet, and loosen the grip on impact

Follow through: As little as possible, grounding the mallet on impact

1/2 Roll

The croqueted ball will travel twice as far as the striker's ball.

Stance: Slightly closer to the ball than normal

Grip: Lower your bottom hand about 1/3 way down the shaft

Follow through: Normal

Full Roll

The croqueted ball will travel as far as the striker's ball.

Stance: Feet further forward than for the ½ roll.

Grip: Lower your bottom hand further down the shaft than for the ½ roll, and use your top hand to grip the mallet properly

Follow through: Normal

Pass Roll

The striker's ball will travel further than the croqueted ball (obviously they cannot travel in exactly the same line for this to happen!)

Stance: As for a full roll

Grip: Lower than for a full roll

Follow through: Normal

Exercises

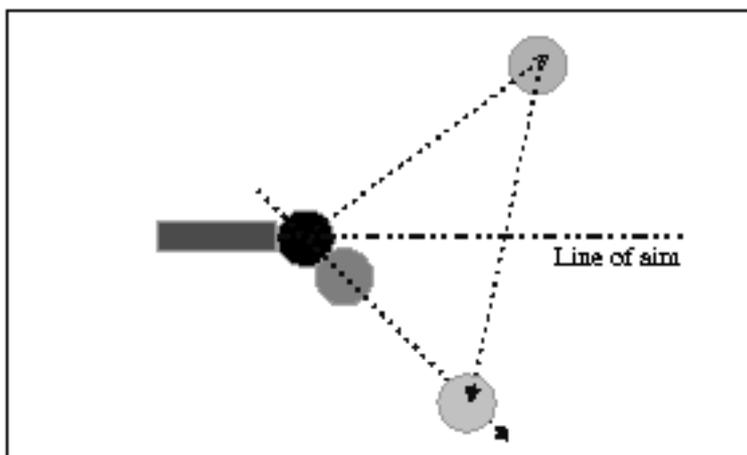
All the above shots should be practised (ignoring the pass roll for now), becoming familiar with the feel of all lengths (less than a metre to the full length of the court). You will need to practice to find exactly what stance and mallet grip you need to achieve the different ratios. Using a lawn with the hoops set out will help you judge your ratios.

From	To (your ball and croqueted ball)	Type
West Boundary	Hoops 1 and 4	drive
South Boundary	Hoop 5 and North Boundary	drive
South Boundary	Hoop 1 and North Boundary	stop shot
West Boundary	Hoops 1 and 5	½ roll
Hoop 5	Peg and Hoop 6	½ roll

4. The split shot

You can send both balls to their required places as shown in the figure below. As with a straight line croquet stroke you can vary how far the striker's ball and the croqueted ball travel relative to each other by varying your stance and how you strike the ball with the mallet. We have left the split shot until the last croquet stroke as it is the most complicated, requiring judgement of angles, lengths, and changing stance and mallet grip all in the one shot.

The diagram shows most aspects of the split shot. The angle between the path of the croqueted ball and the *line of aim* is called the *angle of swing*. The croqueted ball will travel along a line through the centres of the balls. However, the striker's ball will **not** move off along the line you hit it. It will diverge at approximately twice the angle of swing. The bigger the angle the further the striker's ball will travel, and the less the croqueted ball (after all if the angle of swing is very nearly 90° you will be playing a take-off)



With a split shot it is impossible to get the balls to travel apart at more than 90°. In fact, for any angle of swing greater than 45° the balls will move off at 90°.

How To Judge The Type of Split Shot To Play

Firstly, estimate how far your ball will travel relative to the croqueted ball. From that and knowledge of your straight line croquet strokes you will know whether it would take a stop shot, drive, 1/2 roll, etc. Grip your mallet as for that type of stroke.

If your angle of swing is small (less than 15°) just play the shot as normal. If the angle is moderate (15° to 30°) then you will need to play more of a stop shot than

normal, so adjust your stance and grip accordingly (feet further back, and hands higher up the mallet shaft). If the angle of swing is large (greater than 30°) then you will need to play even more of a stop shot, and have to adjust accordingly.

How To Play A Split Shot

To ensure that you get everything right it is important to have a mental checklist for playing a split shot:

- visualise where you want the two balls to finish (remember they cannot end up more than 90° apart)
- line up the striker's ball behind the ball you are taking croquet from such that the line of their centres points where you want the croqueted ball to finish
- to judge the angle of swing visualise a point half-way between where the two balls will stop and aim directly through the centre of your ball at **that** spot.
- work out what type of shot is required using the information in the previous section and play that stroke.

Exercises

Start with practising small angle split shots – they require little or no adjustment to your stance and swing. When you are comfortable with those move on to wider angle shots. As with all the practice sessions you must ensure that you become familiar with all length shots from small ones (under a metre) right through to full court length.

- In this exercise take croquet at the first named position and aim to send your ball to the second position while the croqueted ball goes to the third position.

Small angles:	from the Peg to Hoops 5 and 4
	from Corner 1 to Hoops 1 and 5
	from Corner 1 to Hoops 5 and 4
Moderate angles:	from Hoop 4 to Hoops 5 and 6
	from Corner 1 to Hoops 1 and 2
	from the middle of the South Boundary to Hoops 1 and 5
Large angles:	from Hoop 1 to Hoops 5 and 2
	from Corner 1 to Hoops 4 and 2

- Using a split shot for hoop approaches is something you will often need to do. The idea is to ensure that the croqueted ball ends up on the non-playing side of the hoop so that after you have run the hoop you can easily roquet it and continue your turn. Practice around a hoop, giving yourself various angles and distances from which to approach and then successfully run a hoop.

5. The Rush

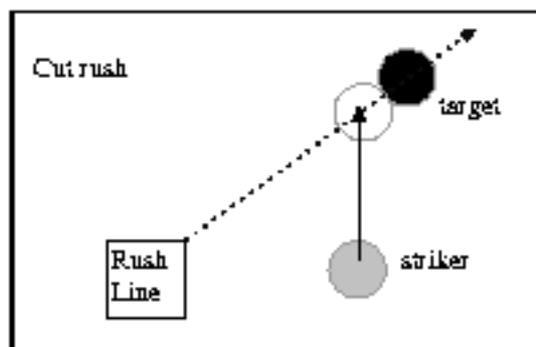
So far you have not learnt how to position balls on the lawn in any other way. You can use the roquet stroke as well. A *rush* is a roquet stroke in which your ball hits another ball and sends that to where you require it so that you can take croquet at that position on the court.

In a long rush you will need to hit the ball harder, and for that you need a longer backswing. To play a rush you need to ensure that your hands are near the top of the mallet shaft. You will also need to stand slightly further back from the ball than when making a normal roquet.

For an accurate rush the ball you are roqueting (the target ball) should not be more than about a metre away. Longer distances will make the direction in which you rush the ball inaccurate.

To rush in a straight line ensure that the centre of your ball strikes the centre of the target ball.

A *cut rush* is where you deliberately cause your ball to hit the target ball off-centre to send the roqueted ball off at an angle. For a cut rush you will have to hit harder to send the target ball a given distance compared with a straight rush.



Exercise

- Start in Corner 1 with 2 balls about 50cm apart in a straight line to Hoop 1. Rush the target ball in front of Hoop 1; play a croquet stroke sending the target ball to the non-playing side of the hoop; and run the hoop on the

continuation stroke. (If you have played the croquet stroke well and sent that ball far enough forward you may have a rush to the second Hoop!)

- Play longer straight rushes:
 - from Corner 1 to Hoop 5
 - from Corner 1 to Hoop 2
- Cut Rushes: from Corner 1 practice cut rushes at different angles to Hoop 1 to learn the feel of what angle the roqueted ball moves off at, and how much harder than a straight rush you have to hit to send the ball the same distance.

L3 FURTHER ON GOLF CROQUET AND TACTICS, RULES & ETIQUETTE

Beginning Activity

Take a ball and go around the first 6 hoops

Recap on lessons 1 and 2

1. Take your grip
2. Stalk the ball
3. Position your body
4. Visualise the outcome
5. Keep your head down
6. Hit the ball in the middle
7. Follow through

Stress the **A.C.D.C** of mallet sports

ACCURACY

CONSISTENCY

DISTANCE

CHEST - BREATHING

Content – new shots and tactics

1. Stop shot
2. Blocking
3. Wiring
4. Jump Shots

1. Stop shot

- Place balls 1 foot apart
- Place marker under target ball
- Approach per normal, move feet back a little
- Put body weight in bottom (as sitting down)
- Tilt mallet handle back towards body – head will rise
- As hit, relax, do not follow through
- **Demonstrate**

ACTIVITY 1 Stop shots - Practice with 2 balls into west baulk 10 minutes

2. Blocking

- Explain when can be used
- Further the distance harder to block

- Always approach on an angle not at 90 degrees
- Getting close to opponents ball prevents jumps
- **Demonstrate**

ACTIVITY 2 Blocking 10 minutes

Each player to have 3 balls and attempt blocking from close distance and gradually further apart.

3. Wiring

You can gain a strategic advantage by placing your ball where the opponent cannot hit you. This is often a better option than hitting the opponent's ball away.

4. Jumping

When an opponent ball is in front of the hoop, especially if it is in the 'jaws', the only option you may have is to jump your ball over the top. This is worth practicing, but not essential for beginner croquet players. However it is good to know it is an option and can be used against you!

ACTIVITY 3 Jumping 10 minutes

Demonstration of jumping. Divide into pairs and have a go! Start with the striker ball about 50cm out from the hoop, and the opponent ball halfway through the hoop.

ACTIVITY 4 13 hoop Game 40 minutes

- Play 13 hoop game with guidance
- Use pegs
- Groups set out a lawn and bring in hoops and store
- Re outline order of hoops, starting point, ball colours
- Explain whether ball has run hoop and playing and non-playing sides
- Explain how to play from sideline
- Also half way line and off side

A qualified referee will present a 15 minute session on basic rules, most common faults and etiquette.

Basic skills for GC

Handout skills card and discuss how it is used.

Basic Skills for Golf Croquet

Player: _____

		Date	Score	Observer	Comments
Skill 1	Placement Shot				
Skill 2	Running Hoops – Straight On				
Skill 3	Running Hoops – 30o Angle				
Skill 4	Clearing Shot				
Skill 5	Blocking				
Skill 6	Jaw a Ball				
Tactics 1	When to run a hoop				
Tactics 2	Clearing vs Blocking				
Knowledge 1	Hoop: Playing / Non-playing Side				
Knowledge	Halfway Rules & Penalty Spots				

Terminology: SB: Strikers Ball; TB: Target Ball OB: Other ball.

Each skill is assessed 5 times, and the result recorded on the player's skills test card. Pass rate is 3/5. One attempt per day permitted (but practice beforehand encouraged).

Skill 1 Placement Shot

Place a ball 2 meters from Hoop 4 and play shot to take position in front of Hoop 5. Run Hoop 5 on next shot with same ball.

Skill 2 Running Hoops – Straight On

Make any hoop from 2 feet directly in front.

Skill 3 Running Hoops – 30o Angle

Make any hoop from 2 feet out on an angle of 30 degrees left and right on center.

Skill 4 Clearing Shot

Place a ball (TB) 2 foot in front of Hoop 1 and SB half way to West Boundary in line with Hoop 1. Clear the TB from in front of Hoop 1.

Skill 5 Blocking

Place a ball (OB) directly in front of Hoop 5 another ball (TB) 2 yards behind on 30 degree angle. With SB 1 foot away and to the side. Place SB 2 yards to side of Hoop 5. Play shot to block the TB from a Clearing Shot on OB.

Skill 6 Jaw a Ball

Place a ball 1 foot from hoop 5 on a 60 degree angle & play the shot to remain in the jaws of Hoop 5.

Tactics 1 When to run a hoop

Discuss the risks and rewards for running a hoop when your opponent balls are in position nearby.

Tactics 2 Clearing Opponent Ball vs Blocking

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of clearing an opponent ball versus blocking an opponent ball.

Knowledge 1 Playing / Non-playing Side of Hoop

Identify the playing and non-playing side of the hoop. Describe the consequences when a ball is halfway through a hoop from both playing and non-playing side.

Knowledge 2 Halfway Rules and Penalty Spots

Identify the halfway point for each hoop. Identify the two penalty spot.

L4 FURTHER ON ASSOCIATION CROQUET, STROKES AND TACTICS

Tactics and game explained in more detail

- How to start the game
- The "standard" opening
- Basic ideas about how to leave the balls at the end of your turn
- Basic ideas about 3- and 4-ball breaks

The Toss

Before the game the players *toss*. The winner selects either the *choice of lead* (to play first or second) or the *choice of balls*. The loser then chooses from the other option.

The First Four Turns

The first four turns of the game consist of the four balls being played onto the lawn. Each ball may be played in from any point on either the A or B baulk lines. Once a ball is played onto the lawn it may immediately, in that stroke, score hoops, make roquets, etc.

The Standard Opening

It is extremely unusual for a player to try and run the first hoop as they play their ball in during the first four turns. If they did and failed and their ball stopped at the hoop it would present an easy target for their opposition to roquet. There are many different types of *openings* (much like Chess) but the one termed the *standard opening* is as follows:

- Turn 1: The first ball is played to the East Boundary a couple of metres out of Corner 4.
- Turn 2: The second player plays their first ball about 7–10 metres up the West Boundary and *lays a tice*.
- Turn 3: The first player has the option of being enticed and shooting at the tice. If the roquet is missed the player needs to ensure that the ball ends up in the second Corner. They will then have lost the advantage of going first. Instead they can elect to shoot at their first ball on the East Boundary.
- Turn 4: The second player tries to roquet their first ball and if fails then ends up in the second Corner. The player can also elect to shoot at the two balls on the East Boundary which may present themselves as a *double target*.

The Leave

It would be nice to think that when you walked off the court at the end of a turn you had left all four balls just where you wanted them. On the whole this doesn't happen! However, some points worth considering are:

Balls Together: It is best not to leave your opponent an easy roquet. If possible you should ensure that their balls are left apart (how far depends on their roqueting ability) and well into the lawn, and that yours are together (within your roqueting distance) and near a yard-line.

Double Targets: When leaving your balls together ensure that they do not present themselves as a double target to either of your opponents balls. Even a gap of 2–3 balls between them can still give a useful target to aim at.

Balls Near Hoops: Try not to leave either (or both) your balls near a hoop that your opponent is for. If they roquet then they should have any easy hoop to make. Conversely, try to leave their balls at hoop(s) your balls are for.

Rush: If you cannot leave your balls near a hoop that you are for then try to arrange leaving one with a rush to its hoop.

Loading the Next Hoop But One (3-Ball Break)

If during the course of a turn you have the opportunity to load the next hoop but one you should do it. The ball loaded at the hoop is termed a *pioneer*. It will help because after you make the hoop you are for, you can simply roquet and take-off to the ball at that hoop. If you can, in addition, get a rush after making the hoop to the new next but one hoop you can continue making hoops in this fashion. This is called a 3-ball break.

For example, suppose you are for Hoop 1. You load a pioneer at Hoop 2, and then go and make Hoop 1. If you can get a rush to Hoop 3, and take-off to the pioneer at Hoop 2 then you can roquet it and make the hoop. Then get a rush to Hoop 4, take-off to the pioneer at Hoop 2, etc.

You will note that the getting a rush is the difficult part. You may be able to accomplish both the load of a hoop and going to the pioneer using a split croquet stroke, but it may be a long and difficult shot.

The 4-Ball Break

Bringing the fourth ball into play simplifies a break greatly. The pioneer is used in the same way as for the 3-ball break. But, in addition, you place a *pivot* ball somewhere near the peg.

After making a hoop, you simply roquet a ball. Then on the croquet stroke you load the next but one hoop while going to the pivot ball with a $\frac{1}{2}$ roll, or similar. You roquet the pivot, and take-off to your pioneer. Having the pivot means you are playing straight line rolls and take-offs without trying difficult split shots, and all your shots are shorter.

Practice

- 2-ball break. Firstly, use only two balls. From in front of Hoop 1 play a croquet stroke to put the striker's ball in a position to run the Hoop and the croqueted ball in such a position that after you run the hoop you can rush it to hoop 2. Run the hoop and try to rush to Hoop 2. Continue on in this manner and see how many hoops you can make. Even top players have trouble making more than 5 hoops in this way!
- 3-ball break. Now use the setup described above under the 3-ball break section. And see how much easier you find it. Start off by putting a ball at Hoop 2, with your ball and another at Hoop 1.
- 4-ball break. Similarly, for the 4-ball break described above. Start off with Hoop 2 loaded with a pioneer and a pivot ball in place near the peg. Have the other two balls at Hoop 1.

The 4-ball break is the one to master, although you need to be able to play the 3-ball break as not all four balls may be easy to use in a game (one ball may be in a corner well away from you).

- Practice the standard opening. Try playing both first and second. See what happens if you shoot at the first ball with the second one and miss. See what happens if you shoot at, and miss, the tice with the third ball.

Basic Skills for Association Croquet Player: _____

		Date	Score	Observer	Comments
Skill 1	Roquet Shot				
Skill 2	The Drive				
Skill 3	Roquet, Croquet, Continuation				
Skill 4	Rush Shot				
Skill 5	Take off				
Skill 6	½ Roll				
Skill 7	Full Roll				
Skill 8	Split Roll				
Knowledge 1	Standard Opening				
Knowledge 2	3 Ball break				

These skills are a guideline to useful skills for playing Association. You are encouraged to return to it as you become more familiar with playing.

Skill 1: Roquet shot

Place a ball 2 meters from striker ball. Roquet to hit the ball ready to take a croquet shot.

Skill 2: The Drive (Croquet shot)

Place the striker ball touching the target ball and play a drive from the West boundary so the target ball reaches as far as Hoop 4 and the striker ball reaches as far as Hoop 1.

Skill 3: Roquet Croquet Continuation

Place a ball 1 – 2 metres in front of any Hoop. Place the striker ball 1-2 metres further out. Play a gentle roquet, then play a croquet shot (drive) so that the target ball is on the far side of the hoop and the striker ball is ready to run the hoop. Run the Hoop.

Skill 4: Rush Shot

Place 2 balls about half a metre apart in Corner 2 in a straight line to Hoop 1. Rush the target ball in front of Hoop 1; play a croquet shot sending the target ball to the nonplaying side of the hoop; run the hoop on the continuation shot.

Skill 5: Take off

From the South Boundary in front of Hoop 1 take off to that hoop, stopping your ball so that it is in a position to run the hoop.

Skill 6: ½ Roll

Place the striker ball touching the target ball and play a drive from the West boundary so the target ball reaches as far as Hoop 5 and the striker ball reaches as far as Hoop 1.

Skill 7: Full roll

Place the striker ball touching the target ball and play a drive from the West boundary so the striker ball and the target ball reach the same distance.

Skill 8: Split Roll

Place the striker ball touching the target ball near the Centre peg. Play a split shot so that the target ball goes to Hoop 4 and the striker ball goes to Hoop 5 (or Hoops 3 and 6).

Knowledge 1: Standard Opening

Demonstrate a standard opening using all 4 balls.

Knowledge 2: 3 Ball break

Demonstrate a 3 ball break, using bisques (extra turns) if needed.