

Bocce Ball / Pétanque Rules

BOCCE COURT

In order to play bocce, you need a smooth, flat surface. This can be grass, sand or turf. A regulation-size bocce court is 13 feet wide by 91 feet long. For social play though, the court can be whatever size you need to accommodate your space. It's recommended to have a raised barrier around the outside rectangle of the court, but isn't necessary for social play.

After outlining the rectangle of your court, you'll also need to place two foul lines — one on each side — to mark where players cannot step when they throw. This is typically done 10 feet from the end of the court. You will also need to mark a center line. You can use string, chalk or even draw a line in the sand to set these line markings.

PLAYERS

Bocce can be played with anywhere from two to eight people, which makes it great for small and large groups alike. The number of bocce balls per player is determined by team size. Teams with one player will 'bowl' all four balls, while two- and four-player teams will have the balls divided evenly among them.

BOCCE RULES

Once you have your court set up and teams divided, it's time to play. Each bocce game consists of a series of rounds called "frames," after which points are awarded. Game play goes as follows:

1. The first player to roll will toss the pallino to set the target for the frame. The pallino must fall behind the center line.
2. After throwing the pallino, the same player will bowl a bocce ball. Try to cup the ball from the bottom and toss it underhand. The goal of the toss is to get the bocce as close to the pallino as possible.
3. Next, a player from the opposing team will throw one of their bocce balls with the intent of getting closer to the pallino than their opponent. If they succeed, the ball will be considered "inside." If they do not, they will continue throwing all of their balls, rotating turns among their players, until one is inside.
4. The team that does not have the ball closest to the pallino will always be the one to throw. Frames will end once all balls have been thrown.

It's also important to note that you are allowed to hit your opponent's bocce balls or even the pallino during your turns. This can be a strategy to be closer or to, change the area of, the target.

BALL SCORING

At the completion of a frame, one or more points may be awarded to one team. Whichever team has a bocce ball closest to the pallino will receive point(s). If two teams are equal in distance from the pallino, no points are awarded in the frame. Most of the time this can be determined from sight alone, but you can also use a measuring tape for accuracy.

Each ball that is inside is typically worth one point. If a team has multiple balls closer to the pallino than the opponent's closest ball, they will receive a point for each one.

Some versions of the rules allow bocce balls that are directly touching the pallino — referred to as a "kiss" — to count for two points.

The game will continue until one team scores the predetermined number of points, which is typically 12, but can be any number that meets personal needs or time constraints.

Now that you know the setup, rules and scoring of bocce, GRAB YOUR BALLS...IT'S BOCCE TIME!