

ADVANCED BOCCE CLINIC ONLINE COURSE



(Print in color)

BOCCE STRATEGY

The bocce strategy discussed below is aimed at typical players in social type competitive leagues. Strategy in bocce matches of highly skilled players and those that allow lofting of balls is not covered.

Bocce is good physical exercise. By using your brain to think about all aspects of each shot by applying strategy, you also have good mental exercise. In addition, you will win more games!

DEFINITION

strat·e·gy

Function: *noun*

Inflected Form(s): *plural -gies*

Etymology: Greek *stratEgia* generalship, from *stratEgos*

1 a : the science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions

2 a : a careful plan or method b : the art of devising or employing plans toward a goal

KNOW YOUR TEAM and YOUR OPPONENT'S TEAM

- Be aware of the overall skills of each player. This is very important so you can match player against player with similar playing skills. A bad mismatch may lead to one end scoring points almost every frame they play.
- Know the specific shot skills of each player. Some players are better at rolling for points, others at banking, and others at spocking. It would be great if all were good at all 3, but few are. Often, depending on the position of the balls on the court, specific shots are needed and therefore, it makes sense to use the person best suited to make the shot.

TEAM COMMUNICATION

-Team players at the same end should continuously discuss the strategy to be played for each shot and decide who would be best to make the shot. The old saying 2 heads are better than one certainly applies in this case.

-Team players at the opposite end should provide the throwing end as much information as possible about the position of the balls on the court and possible plays available to them. It is helpful to know how far away the closest opponent's ball is from the pallino, which ball is IN, how many balls are in, how far a ball is off the side rail, how far the pallino is from the back wall, etc. Remember this must be done within the rules by signals and without going on the court or verbally telling them.

STAY IN THE GAME

-Watch your team mates and opponents each time they play a ball. You can see how hard the ball is thrown & how far it went, the lay of the court, and oddities on the court surface. For banking this is particularly important so you can learn the best spot on the side rail to aim your ball and how hard to throw it.

-Watch where balls end up and how they got there. Be aware of how many balls that your opponent has left to throw. Always be planning ahead based on these factors.

RISK VERSUS REWARD

-Assess your play options for each throw. It may appear obvious what the play is but always consider what might happen if you miss on the play. It is very discouraging to bump an opponent's ball in or to knock your points out. Be aware that sometimes there is no good play and you need to play safe.

-If your opponent has balls left, think of what your opponent may do with those balls to score points. You may want to play a blocking shot.

PALLINO PLAYING

-Probably the most universal strategy in bocce is to place the first ball as close to the pallino as possible, preferably right in front of it.

-Placement of the pallino should be a spot that is suitable to both team players. If one player has more trouble with distances than the other, place the pallino in the best spot for that player. However, if you note a weakness in your opponents for certain placements, you may want to place the pallino there.

-When you go to throw the pallino take a bocce ball with you so you can follow the pallino from the same spot you threw the pallino.

SPOCKING

- Spocking is a great shot to completely change your situation on the court but too many missed spocks can be costly. Who and when to spock must be given serious consideration.

-What is the probability that you will hit the ball you intend to hit. Certainly if you can't do that at least 50% of the time, you should reconsider using the spock. If you are a good point roller, consider a "soft spock", a pointing shot rolled a little harder than normal.

-Consider all the ramifications if you miss – will your opponent score more points, will you knock out your own points, will you take too many of your balls out of play.

- When to spock is limited. If your opponent has placed the first ball so close to the pallino making it unlikely you can score, it may pay to try a spock with your first ball. After that you should play defense and get your balls close to hold your opponent to no more than 1 point. If your opponent has played all 4 balls and you have 2 or 3 balls left, you should consider a spock if you can decrease the opponent's score or significantly improve your score. Sometimes you need to clear out some balls so you can roll for points with balls you have left. However, if it is the game ending point, you have no choice but to hit the opponent's ball or the pallino.

POINTING

-Other than the first ball played, you should consider whether aiming for the pallino is the best shot. If you have a clear shot at the pallino, go for it, but if there is a probability of bumping an opponent's ball in, moving the pallino closer to your opponent's balls, or knocking your point out, consider other options. Often your opponent's balls are far enough away from the pallino and you can aim away from the pallino and still get in for a point.

-Generally, when pointing it is better to roll straight down the court rather than cross court. If you are blocked from a straight shot, check for an opening cross court or use the bank shot.

-Sometimes the probability of getting in for a point is small or it is likely you will knock an opponent's ball IN or your point out, seriously consider playing safe and take the point(s) you have.

BANKING

-Bank shots are used to get around blocking balls.

-If you are comfortable banking and the pallino is within a few feet of the side rail, a bank shot is often easier than a straight shot.

RIDING THE RAILS

-A shot using the side rail is one of the easiest shots to make. Always check to see if you can make a play by rolling down the side rail. If a ball is sitting less than the width of a ball off the side rail, you may be able to bump it over towards the pallino. If your opponent's IN ball is at the side rail, it can be bumped out and replaced by your ball. When playing to a pallino in or close to a back corner, you can place a ball on the side rail and bump it up or stack your balls behind it by rolling down the side rail.

-Side rail shots should be played as close to the rail as possible with a slight drift to the rail to prevent the ball from banking off the rail.

-Generally side rail shots need to be thrown slightly harder to overcome the rubbing of the ball against the rail and rolling on a less packed court surface near the side rail.

SITUATIONAL PLAYS

-There are more situations that can exist when you come up to throw a ball than possible to demonstrate. The following are ten situations shown to demonstrate the thinking process to play good bocce strategy.

-Consider each situation and decide which of the multiple choices you would take. Always consider what can go wrong & the consequences and also the rewards if you make the shot. Write down your choices for all 10 examples and then check your choices against the suggested plays at the bottom of the page.

-The ability to make a certain shot heavily depends on your bocce skill level and would influence your choice of shots. So, for this exercise assume you have better than average skills and have a high probability of making any shot you choose.

-As a reality check and to prepare yourself if one of these situations arise, you should redo the exercise making choices based on your actual skill levels.

Shot definitions:

Pointing- rolling the ball for the purpose of getting close enough to the pallino to score a point.

Spocking- a hard throw purposely for hitting opponent's balls, your balls, or moving the pallino for your own advantage.

Blocking- placing a ball in a position to make it difficult for your opponent to get to the pallino or score additional points.

Banking- using the side rails to change the angle of approach to get around blocking balls.

Safe- playing a ball in a manner that will not have a chance to affect the point(s) you currently have.

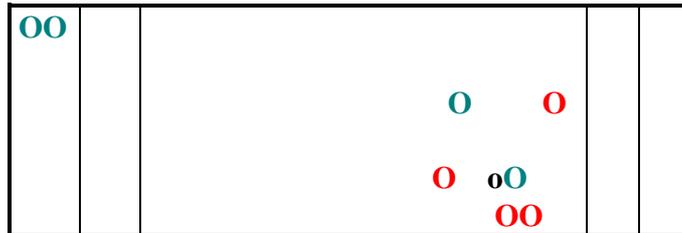
Setups- placing a ball in a location so that you or your team mate can hit it into a scoring position.

SITUATIONAL PLAYS (O = GREEN, O = RED, o = PALLINO)

YOU ARE O. What is your next play? If you have more than one ball left, think about what you do with the other balls.

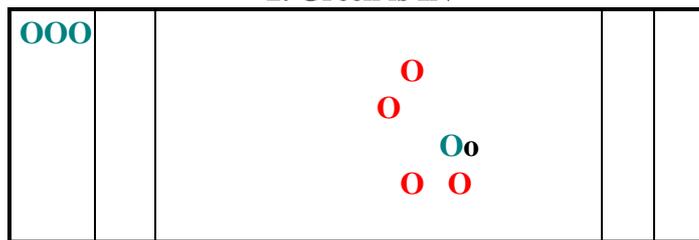
Choose A, B, C, or D for each situation:

1. Green is IN



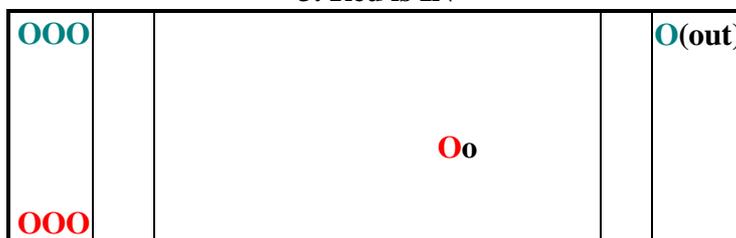
- A. Knock the front O out of the way to come in for another point.
- B. Spock the 2 Os on the rail out.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll a little harder than normal against the O balls on the rail.

2. Green is IN



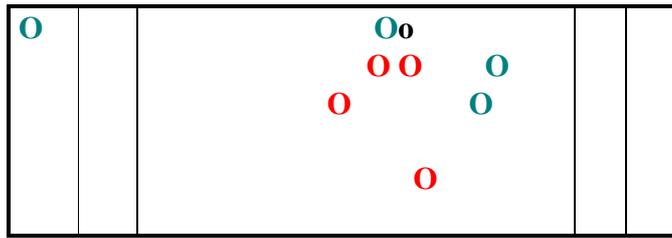
- A. Bank off the right rail..
- B. Spock the O ball.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll up against the O ball in front of the pallino.

3. Red is IN



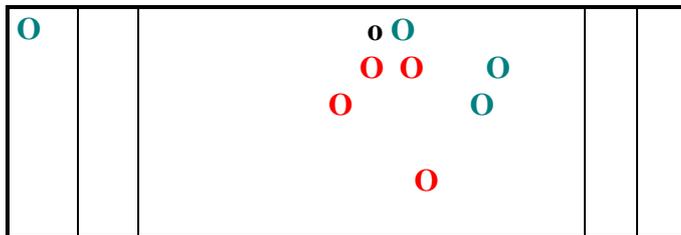
- A. Bank off the right rail.
- B. Try to spock the O ball again.
- C. Roll up in front of the O ball.
- D. Roll up close to either side of the the O ball.

4. Green is IN



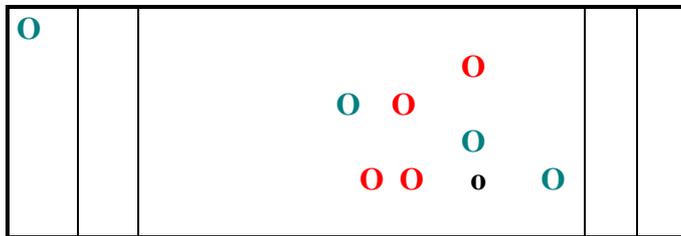
- A. Bank off the left rail..
- B. Spock the **O** on the rail.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll up close to the **O** ball on the rail.

5. Green is IN



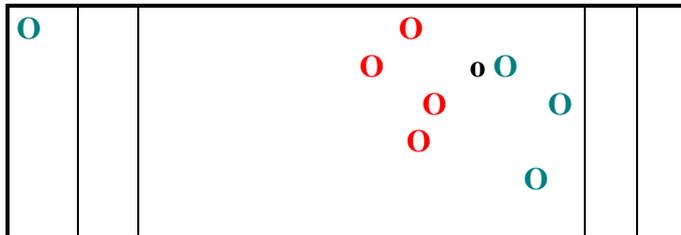
- A. Bank off the left rail..
- B. Spock down the left rail.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll up close to the pallino on the rail.

6. Green is IN



- A. Play up the right rail.
- B. Spock.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll between the **O** balls up behind IN **O** ball.

7. Green is IN



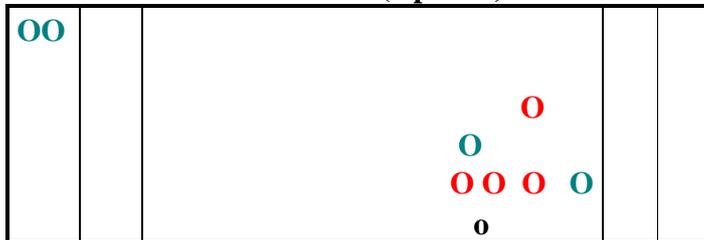
- A. Bank off the left rail..
- B. Spock.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll between the 2 center **O** balls.

8. Red is IN (2 points)



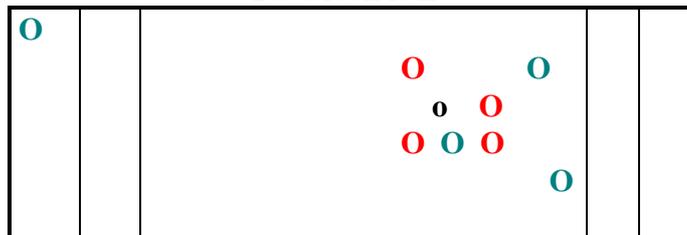
- A. Bank off the right rail into the 2 bottom **O** balls.
- B. Spock down the center to move all the balls around.
- C. Spock the **O** ball in front of the pallino.
- D. Spock the **O** ball in the corner.

9. Red is IN (3 points)



- A. Roll up close to the pallino on the rail.
- B. Spock the 3 **O** balls and knock them away from the pallino.
- C. Spock the pallino.
- D. Roll somewhat harder than normal and hit the pallino.

10. Green is IN



- A. Bank off the left rail..
- B. Spock.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll up behind the pallino for another point..

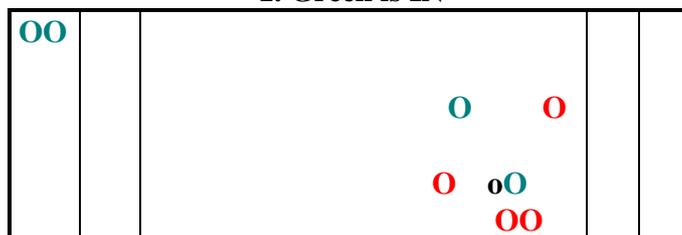
Next Page For Suggested Answers

SUGGESTED STRATEGY OR PLAY TO MAKE

The main object of the exercise is for you to realize that there are several possible plays that can be made and the best one may not be the most obvious. Always rolling directly at the pallino is not a good strategy. Bocce is good exercise for the brain as well as the body! The plays below are based on the assumption that you have better than average skills and have a high probability of making any shot.

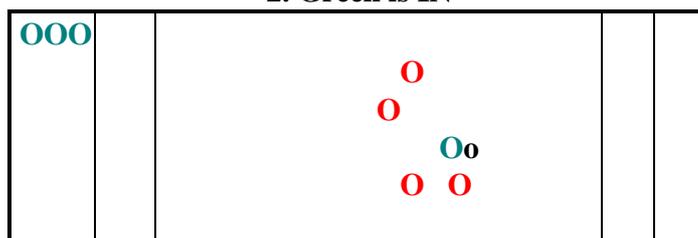
The suggested answer is in **BLUE**.

1. Green is IN



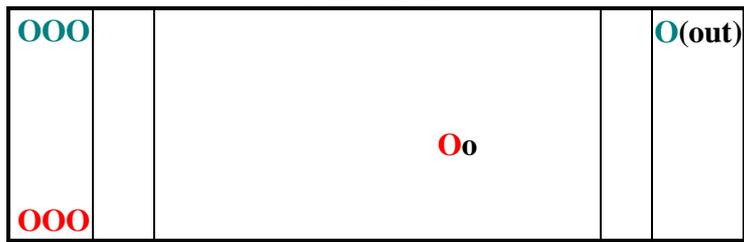
- A. Knock the front **O** out of the way to come in for another point.
- B. Spock the 2 **O**s on the rail out.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll a little harder than normal against the **O** balls on the rail.
- D. Roll down the rail up against the **O** balls. As long as you lightly hit the **O** ball, you have another point and set yourself up for a third point by rolling the last ball down the rail against your previous ball.**

2. Green is IN



- A. Bank off the right rail..
- B. Spock the **O** ball.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll up against the **O** ball in front of the pallino.
- B. Spock the pallino and your ball back to the backboard by hitting your ball. Now you have 2 more balls to roll past the **O** balls. A high probability for 3 or 4 points.**

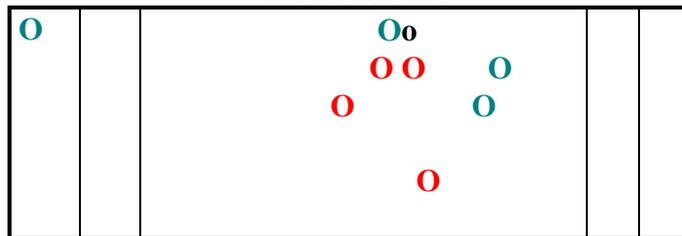
3. Red is IN



- A. Bank off the right rail.
- B. Try to spock the **O** ball again.
- C. Roll up in front of the **O** ball.
- D. Roll up close to either side of the the **O** ball.

C. Apparently the spock with the first ball missed. Roll now to get close in the center. You may bump the **O ball out but in any case you have a ball positioned that your opponent in not likely to try to spock away so they score more points. Once you have a ball close, continue to roll at the center to possibly move the **O** ball and/or provide additional blockers. Usually best to concede a point than to keep trying to spock and give your opponent a chance to score more points. However, if that is the game point you must try to knock the **O** ball away.**

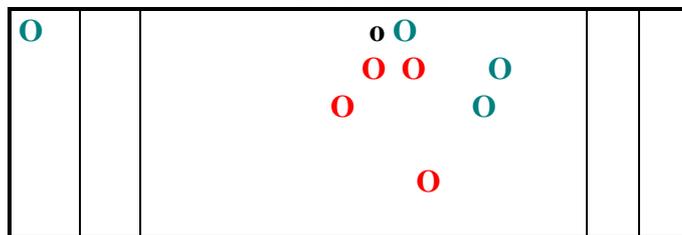
4. Green is IN



- A. Bank off the left rail..
- B. Spock the **O** on the rail.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll up close to the **O** ball on the rail.

B. Spock your ball on the rail against the pallino for additional points. The pallino and your ball in front of the pallino will head to the backboard for 3 points with a possibility of 4 points.

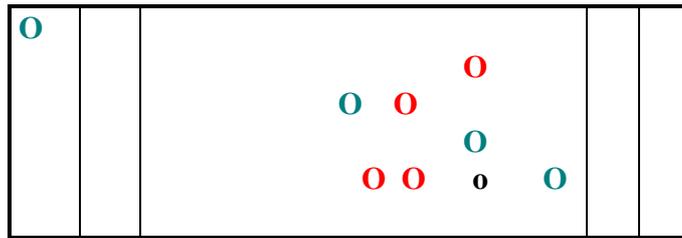
5. Green is IN



- A. Bank off the left rail..
- B. Spock down the left rail.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll up close to the pallino on the rail.

C or D. C is safer but if you have good control, try D. and roll up behind the pallino for an additional point. The difference here from # 4 is that if the pallino is hit hard it will hit the ball behind it and probably bounce over to the **O balls.**

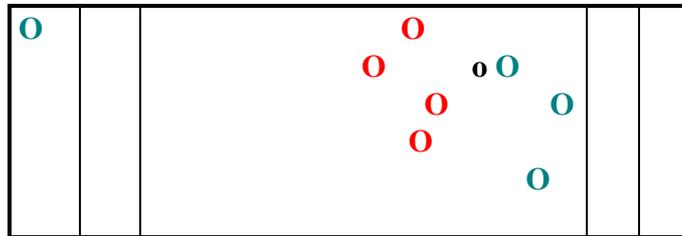
6. Green is IN



- A. Play up the right rail.
- B. Spock.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll between the **O** balls up behind IN **O** ball.

A. Play a shot up the right rail and try to stop even with the pallino. There is little danger in making things worse for you.

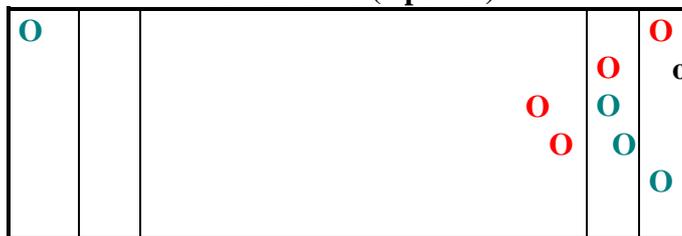
7. Green is IN



- A. Bank off the left rail..
- B. Spock.
- C. Play safe and take the sure point.
- D. Roll between the 2 center **O** balls.

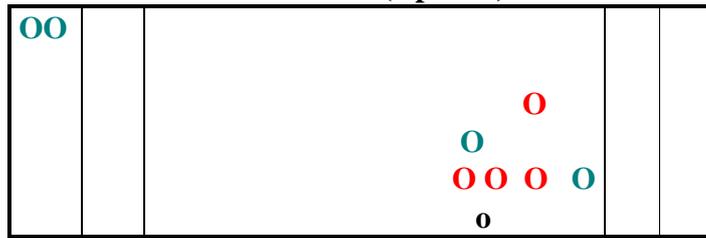
C. Play safe. You have a point and only one ball left. The probability of another point is close to zero. The probability of hitting an opponent's ball closer to the pallino is pretty high.

8. Red is IN (2 points)



- A. Bank off the right rail into the 2 bottom **O** balls.
- B. Spock down the center to move all the balls around.
- C. Spock the **O** ball in front of the pallino.
- D. Spock the **O** ball in the corner.
- D. Spock the **O** ball in the corner. You have a high probability of good things happening for multiple points and low probability of making things worse. If you miss the corner ball you will likely hit the other **O** ball and move the pallino.

9. Red is IN (3 points)



A. Roll up close to the pallino on the rail.

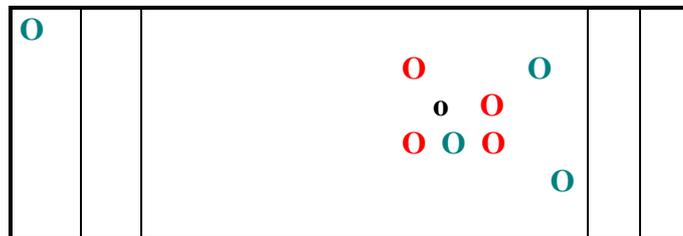
B. Spock the 3 O balls and knock them away from the pallino.

C. Spock the pallino.

D. Roll somewhat harder than normal and hit the pallino.

D. Roll down the rail sufficiently hard enough to knock the pallino into the corner with your ball following right behind it for 2 points. Then roll down the rail to the corner for a third point. A 6 point swing, minus 3 your opponent didn't get and plus 3 for you.

10. Green is IN



A. Bank off the left rail..

B. Spock.

C. Play safe and take the sure point.

D. Roll up behind the pallino for another point..

C. Play safe. You have a point and the probability of another point is low. If you try to roll up to the pallino, the probability of hitting the pallino closer to the opponent's ball is pretty high and if you miss to either side you may knock a O ball over to the pallino or knock your ball out.