

## **Bocce**



Bocce is a relatively simple activity to learn, as only a few basic skills and strategies are required to play. Consistency and precision are at the heart of Bocce success. There are 3 basic throwing techniques:

1. Bowled delivery (Roll)
2. Raised bowl (Lob and roll, ball must be released below the waist)
3. Throw (Hit with ball released below the waist)

While some SO Bocce games and practices are on grass, others take place on hard surface venues and it is generally accepted that bowl (roll) technique is most accurate while the raised bowl technique is seldom used when balls prevent a roll to be executed. The throw skill is the most difficult of Bocce as the ball must be released below the waist and is rarely used in SO competitions. At SO World Games, bocce is played on artificial grass (often inside) with hard boards that balls bounce from.



## *Changing Expectations in Special Olympics*

Bocce games have variations on both distance and angle of throw as the “pallina” is often placed at different parts of the court. Basic skills acquisition must incorporate this variation of play. Other similar sports like curling and bowling have the same length of play for every throw. Strategies developing comfort zones (high shooting percentage) are an important part of bocce.

One of the objectives of basic bocce skill acquisition (20-hour program) is to increase shooting percentage over 70% for the roll and the lob and roll techniques. Bocce can easily be practiced at home, and both techniques should be acquired quickly when doing so.

Basic skill levels required are listed in the Bocce basic skill (next page). These sheets can be used as a guide, and when all skills are marked “yes”, participants can consistently place the ball in the three feet ring and are ready for more advanced intermediate skills.

It is important to note that Bocce is an activity that comes easy for SO participants and doesn't require lots of strength and physical training. Therefore, usually games are considered fun times. Changing expectations is related to improved basic skills but also refers to better physical conditioning. Participation in SO Bocce programs does not provide the minimum required exercises for healthy living, and additional training sessions must be considered.

### **Guidelines for using the skill sheet for bocce**

1. Bocce players are asked to deliver balls within a 3 feet circle at short distances using the roll technique. When athletes can achieve 4 out of 5 rolls in the circle consistently, the circle is moved to longer distances.
2. When the roll technique is acquired, the lob and roll technique is started.
3. Follow each step of the skill sheet (next page) until all basic skills are acquired. Progress will be mostly dependent on how many focused training sessions an athlete does.

**Bocce Basic Skills**

**Basic Skill: Roll delivery**                      **YES**    **NO**                      **Comments**

Sub Skills

Short delivery 4/5 in 3 feet circle                         

Middle distance 3/5 3 feet circle                         

Long rolls 2/5 in 3 feet circle                         

**Basic Skill: Lob (low trajectory) and roll**                      **YES**    **NO**                      **Comments**

Sub Skills (ball must be released below the waist)

Short delivery 4/5 in 3 feet circle                         

Middle distance 3/5 in 3 feet circle                         

Long rolls 2/5 in 3 feet circle                         

**Basic Skill: Artificial turf / Hard Boards**                      **YES**    **NO**                      **Comments**

Sub Skills

Short delivery 4/5 in 3 feet circle                         

Middle distance 3/5 3 feet circle                         

Long rolls 2/5 in 3 feet circle                         

Board bounce 3/5 in 3 feet circle                         

Middle distance left and right

**When athletes achieve all “YES”, they have acquired basic skills. Expectations are critical to skill acquisition.**

## **20-hour acquisition**

### **Skill Breakdown: Examples of priority elements to focus on during practice**

#### **Spend time on each one until acquired**

1. Delivery roll: Grip – Stance - Body position – Balance – Delivery – Release (forward roll on the ball)
2. Delivery Lob/Roll: Grip - Stance – Delivery – Back spin release – Forward spin release (always keeping hand lower than hips during delivery)
3. Board Bounces: Grip – Angles – Ball speed – Board rebound speed (left and right)
4. Game strategy: Short – Long – Angles – Raises – Ball grouping

Each skill requires 20 hours of focused training. The most important skill for Bocce, the roll delivery, is acquired first. When participants can achieve a shooting percentage around 70% (mid court), the lob and roll is started. Artificial turf and board bounces can be practiced indoor during winter time.

#### **Home skill practice is the best way to acquire Bocce skills:**



All basic skills can be practiced at home and can be practiced everyday.

#### **Bocce Example: Focused Basic Skills Session (1 hour)**

##### **Practice only one skill at a time: Example “ Roll Delivery” (15’ = 15 minutes)**

15’ Warm up and stretching (before practice)

Practice a few delivery motions (with high hand finish on follow through) and balanced swings

5’ Delivery roll warm up

40’ Roll delivery **(Use correct demonstrations and video, slow down demonstration when introducing a new skill, and use hands to guide movements when necessary).**

## *Changing Expectations in Special Olympics*

- Short roll delivery (10 rolls)
- 6' exercises (run/walk 1 minute rest 1 minute)
- Long roll delivery (10 rolls)
- 4' exercise (run/walk 20' rest 10 seconds repeat 8 times)
- Medium roll delivery (10 rolls)



Have a three feet circle around the pallina to determine accuracy. Have participants throw the pallina in the circle. For some athletes, a color target for ball path or ball landing can greatly help with precision.

### 15' Game

**Don't worry about delivery quality, just try to hit the three feet circle around the pallina.**

**When 70% accuracy is reached (50% for long and 85% for short distance) on a consistent level, start the same exercises with lob and roll technique.**

### **Conclusion:**

Bocce is probably the easiest SO sport to practice at home. Using the skill sheet is an excellent way to learn basic Bocce skills and encourage athletes to practice often, the more time spent with focused targets, the better each SO athlete will become. It is important to include artificial turf and hard boards whenever possible

Bocce does not elevate heart rate high enough to significantly contribute to healthy living, Club Fit sessions, personal training, participation in another sport and adding aerobic training are necessary.

**Lesson Plan**  
**Basic Skill Acquisition Program**  
(weekly or monthly)

Sport \_\_\_\_\_ Athlete Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Expectations**

**1- Weekly Practice** (attend all practices)

Day (S) \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

“What the group is working on”:

**2- Club Fit** 100% attendance (Including Functional Testing exercises)

Day \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

“What you need to concentrate on”:

**3- Basic Skill Development Homework** (4 times per week - 1 hour per day)

Skill \_\_\_\_\_

“Individual Home Practice Objectives”

*Changing Expectations in Special Olympics*