

Golf Croquet - Object of the Game

Basic Info – Part I

Golf Croquet is played between two sides — the blue and black balls versus the red and yellow balls. In singles each player plays two balls (blue/black and red/yellow); in doubles each player plays the same ball throughout the game. The center stick indicates the order of play (blue, red, black, yellow).

The object is to be the first side to score **7** points. If time is short, you can play first to **4** points. A side scores a point when one of its balls is the first to pass through the hoop (wicket) in sequence. Note that each hoop is scored by only one ball, i.e., once one person has scored the hoop, the hoop is finished and everyone heads on to the next hoop from where they lie.

If the game is tied at 6-6, hoop #3 (#13) is contested again to break the tie.

Play is made by striking a ball with a mallet. The player who is playing a turn is called the striker, and the ball in play for that turn is the striker's ball. Turns are played in the sequence blue, red, black, yellow. Each turn consists of one, and only one, stroke. (There are no extra turns for hitting a ball or scoring a hoop).

The striker's ball may cause other balls to move and score points. However, the striker must never strike any ball other than the striker's ball. The striker must play using the mallet only, and must not play a stroke while touching any ball. The striker must strike the ball with one of the mallet's two striking faces, never with a side face or bottom of the mallet, or with the shaft. The striker must strike the ball cleanly and only once during the stroke. There is more discussion on striking faults below.

Starting the Game

The side that wins a coin toss plays blue and black. The winner of the coin toss cannot choose to play red and yellow. The blue ball plays first followed by red, then black, then yellow. Each ball is played into the game from the starting corner.

The Turn

A turn consists of a single stroke. A stroke is played when the striker hits his ball with his mallet, even if the ball does not move, or commits a fault (see below). A player may not deem a stroke to be played, or “pass.” You must touch your ball. However, if you accidentally touch your ball while you are aiming, stalking or setting up your shot, your turn is over. On the other hand, “air swings” don't count, i.e., if you take a swing at your ball and you completely miss it, even if you were intending to strike it, your turn is not over. You may take another swing.

Keeping Score

Each time a point is scored, the side scoring the point announces the score. This is good practice, not rubbing it in. You do this to avoid any confusion over the score as early as possible. It can be easy to mix up the scoring, especially in double-banked games where you start the second game from the second corner instead of the fourth corner, or in timed matches on a double-banked court where you skip a hoop that is being contested in the other game.

Boundaries

A ball goes out of bounds as soon as its center lies directly over a boundary. When a ball goes out it is placed just inside the boundary nearest to where it went out.

If at any time a boundary ball obstructs the playing of another ball, the boundary ball may be temporarily removed. If the replacing of a ball on the boundary is prevented by the presence of another ball which will be played first, then the ball is replaced after the obstructing ball has been played. Otherwise the obstructing ball is temporarily removed until the ball is played.

The Halfway Rule

This rule prevents a player from just skipping the hoop being contested by taking a great position in front of the next hoop in order.

You may only go as far as halfway to the next wicket until the current wicket is won. Immediately after the hoop in order is scored, any ball resting beyond the halfway line between the hoop just run and the next hoop in order is considered "offside," and is placed on one of the two penalty spots chosen by the opponent of the ball's owner unless (a) one of the exceptions listed below applies or (b) the opponent decides that the ball shall remain where it lies. The penalty spots are on the East and West boundaries, even with the peg.

There are three key concepts here:

- 1) The penalty is assessed only after the hoop in question is scored. A ball resting offside may come back legally onside on its next turn if the hoop in question has still not been scored. If your ball is offside legally (see below) you must return onside if you have a chance to avoid being penalized if the hoop is scored before your next turn.
- 2) The opponent elects whether to assess the penalty. If the opponent forgets and hits its next ball before assessing the penalty, it is waived and cannot be enforced. Also, if the offside ball is further away from the next hoop or at an angle worse than where it would be on either of the two penalty spots, you may decide to waive the penalty and just let your offside opponent play the ball where it lies.
- 3) There are exceptions to the offside rule. Specifically, your ball may be legally offside and not subject to the penalty if it reached the position as a result of:
 - (a) hitting an opponent's ball, or
 - (b) an opponent hit your ball there, or
 - (c) scoring the previous hoop, either by being struck through the hoop, peeled through the hoop, or peeling another ball through the hoop, or
 - (d) being struck by its partner ball which scores a point in the same stroke, or
 - (e) you had previously been directed to place your ball on a penalty spot and you had done so before the hoop in question was scored.