

UNITED STATES CROQUET ASSOCIATION (USCA)



The Official Rules of 9 Wicket (Backyard) Croquet

**Including
Challenging Options & FAQ's**

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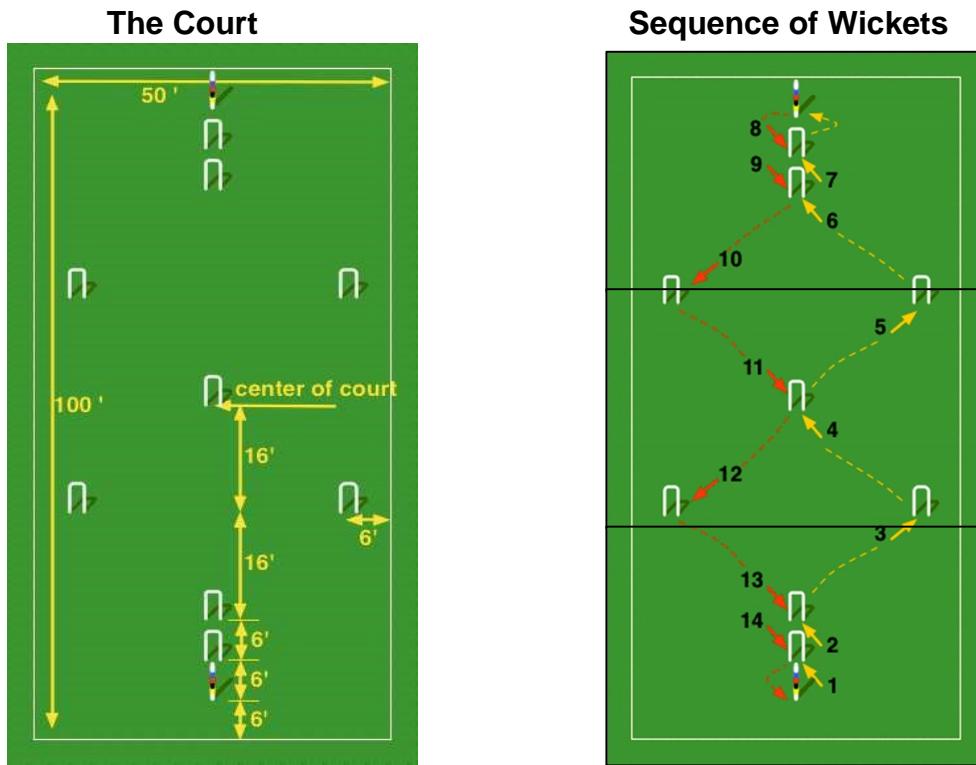
Welcome to the World's Greatest Backyard Sport!

The game of croquet (pronounced "crow-KAY") is a tradition of backyard recreation in America, as well as a sport that can be enjoyed by young and old alike. Whether you are a novice who plays the occasional friendly game or a determined competitor who gives opponents no quarter, you need to know the rules and have them handy for reference during a game. This special edition of the rules was prepared by the sport's governing body, the United States Croquet Association (USCA), as a guide for informal backyard play. It is the purpose of the USCA to offer croquet enthusiasts a standard set of rules with many options included. If a variation is to be used, it should be announced before the start of a game or in the case of a tournament, prior to its start.

You will find some challenging options for tournaments in the Challenging Options and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) in the Backyard Croquet Rules.

The USCA sanctions 9-wicket events throughout the year. The USCA 9W Committee requests that any sanctioned tournament uses the 9-wicket Basic Rules along with any Challenging Options from this document that the local organizers may wish to include. If there is more than one flight then the rules may differ between flights. If the sponsoring organization has specific rules, they would like to use that are not included in the USCA 9W Basic Rules/Options, then they should contact the USCA 9W committee well in advance of their event.

Basic Rules of 9 Wicket (Backyard) Croquet



A backyard croquet court doesn't have to be a perfectly manicured lawn, but short grass provides the best playing surface. If you have room, the official full-size court is a rectangle, 100 feet long by 50 feet wide. For backyard play you can adjust the size and shape of the court to fit the available space. Use string or chalk to mark definite boundaries if you choose, or just mark the corners with flags or stakes.

Wickets and Stakes

The nine wickets and two stakes are arranged in a double diamond pattern as shown in the above diagram. If you are playing on a smaller court, the distance shown should be scaled down in proportion to the length and width of the court. The wickets should be firmly planted in the ground, and the width of the wickets should be uniform throughout the court.

The Balls and Order of Play

In many croquet sets, there are six balls in these colors: Blue, Red, Black, Yellow, Green, and Orange. In a six-ball game, these colors are played in this order: Blue, Red, Black, Yellow, Green, and Orange. In a four-ball game they're played Blue,

Red, Black, and Yellow. Assuming the manufacturer references the Official United States Croquet Association 9 Wicket Backyard Croquet Rules, those colors are marked from top to bottom on the two stakes included in the set.

The Mallets

Each player uses a mallet. Only the striking (end) face may be used to strike a ball, unless the players have agreed to allow the use of “side” shots or other shot-making variations.

Optional Accessories

You can use colored clips or clothespins to mark the next wicket your ball must go through. The clip is picked up when a wicket is scored, then placed on the ball's next wicket at the end of the turn. You can use string or “chalk” to mark boundaries of the court, or just designate “off the grass” as a boundary.

Object of the Game

The object of the game is to advance your ball through the course of wickets scoring points for each wicket and stake in the correct order and direction. The winner is the first side to complete the course with all its balls. In a timed game, if the time expires, the team with the most points at the end of the time period wins. This is known as “sudden stop”. If the score is tied, the ball closest to its contested wicket gets an extra point for the win.

Teams

The game is generally played by one side against the other. Here are some examples,

1) The “Singles” game is played between two players, each player playing with two balls: Blue/Black against Red/Yellow.

2) The “Doubles” game is played between two sides, each side consisting of two players. One team plays the blue/black balls and the other the red/yellow balls. Each player plays only one ball (the same color ball) throughout the game.

Some other examples of teaming up with six balls.

3) Three teams, two players, having two balls on each side: Blue/Yellow, Red/Green, and Black/Orange playing against one another.

4) Two teams, three players, having three balls on each side: Blue/Black/Green against Red/Yellow/Orange.

5) Two to six players playing against one another with one ball each (called “Cutthroat” see explanation below).

Cutthroat

Many croquet players like to play singles with only one ball per side (known as cutthroat) with the winner being the player who advances his or her ball around the court first. This popular variation is played with the same rules as regular singles or doubles croquet, but any number of players from two to six can play, each with their own ball. The colors may be drawn by lot to determine who plays what color ball (again, the order of play being Blue, Red, Black, Yellow, Green, and Orange throughout the game).

After all balls have started the game, play continues in the same order until a ball has staked out. The first ball to stake out is the winner. If the remaining players wish to continue, the balls continue in the same order, skipping the ball that has finished the course.

Starting point

All balls are played into the game from a spot halfway between the finishing stake and Wicket #1.

Shots

If a player plays out of turn, there is no penalty. Any ball moved during the out-of-turn play is replaced to its position prior to the error and play continues properly. If an out of turn is initially condoned (not discovered) but then later discovered, only the last ball played out of turn is replaced and the correct ball then proceeds. Example: if Red plays, then Blue plays, then Yellow plays and it's noticed that Yellow incorrectly played after Blue, Yellow is replaced, and then Red plays correctly.

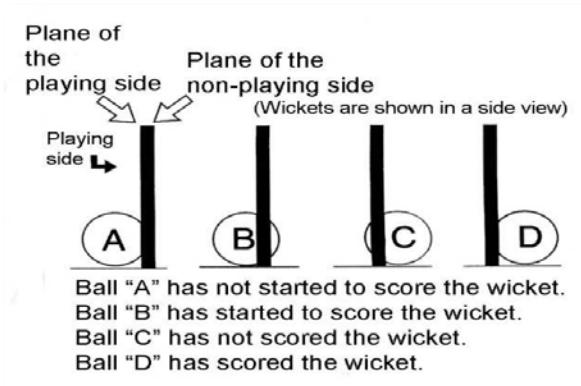
If the striker takes a swing at his/her ball and misses entirely, the miss counts as a shot and the turn ends, unless the striker had a second "bonus" shot.

If the striker's mallet accidentally hits another ball other than the striker ball, the shot must be replayed, but with no loss of turn.

Scoring Wicket and Stake Points

Each ball can score wicket and stake points for its side only by going through a wicket or hitting a stake in the proper order and direction. Going through a wicket out of order or in the wrong direction is not counted as a point gained or lost. A ball caused to score its wicket or stake during another ball's turn earns the point for its side, but no bonus shot is earned as a result. A ball scores a wicket point only if it comes to rest clear of the playing side of the wicket. If a ball passes through a wicket but rolls back, it has not scored the wicket. If a ball travels backwards through its wicket to get position, it must be clear of the non-playing

side to then score the wicket in the correct direction. Because wickets can be loose in the ground, it's best not to run the side if the mallet head up or down either plane of the wicket. It's always better to use your judgement sighting by eye.



Bonus Shots

The striker earns one bonus shot if the striker ball scores a wicket or hits the turning stake. The striker earns two bonus shots if the striker ball hits another ball (a "roquet").

You are "dead" on a ball for bonus shots until you clear your next wicket or on the start of your next turn whichever comes first. However, the maximum number of bonus shots earned by a striker is two; there is never a time when a striker is allowed three shots. (See the "Exceptions" section below for examples.)

If two bonus shots are earned by striking another ball, the first of these two shots may be taken in any of four ways:

1. From a mallet-head distance or less away from the ball that was roqueted ("taking a mallet head").
2. From a position in contact with the ball that was roqueted, with the striker ball held steady by the striker's foot or hand (a "foot shot" or "hand shot").
3. From a position in contact with the ball that was roqueted, (a "croquet shot").
4. From where the striker ball stopped after the roquet. (If a boundary is in use and the striker ball went out of bounds, the ball should be measured in one mallet length from where it crossed the boundary).

The second bonus shot after a roquet is an ordinary shot played from where the striker ball came to rest, called a "continuation shot".

Bonus shots may not be accumulated. Upon earning a bonus shot by scoring a wicket, hitting the turning stake, or roqueting another ball, any bonus shot

previously earned is forfeited. For example, if a ball roquets a ball and in that same stroke the striker ball hits another ball, the second ball hit is not a roquet and remains where it comes to rest (with no deadness incurred on that ball).

Exceptions: Two bonus shots are earned when the striker ball scores two wickets in one shot. If the ball also hits the turning stake after scoring two wickets, two strokes are earned, not three. Conversely, if the striker ball scores the seventh wicket and hits the turning stake in the same shot, it earns two shots. After the striker ball roquets another ball, it does not earn any bonus shots for hitting it again in the same turn before scoring the next wicket in order. However, there is no penalty for hitting the ball again.

Wicket and Roquet

When the striker ball scores a wicket and then in the same shot hits another ball, only the wicket counts and the striker has earned only the one bonus shot for scoring the wicket. The striker may then roquet any ball to earn two bonus shots. When the striker ball roquets another ball and then goes through a wicket, the wicket has not been scored but the striker earns two bonus shots for the roquet.

The Boundaries

If boundaries are established, whenever more than half of a ball (50%+) crosses the inside edge of a boundary, it is "Out of Bounds" and should be brought inbounds and placed one mallet length (or 36 inches) into the court. If players are using mallets of different lengths, agree to a common distance you'll measure in during the game. The ball should be placed 90 degrees inbounds and perpendicular to the line and not diagonally from the line. (*Exception*): When the striker ball has just roqueted (hit) another ball, the striker may choose to place it in contact with or up to a mallet-head from the ball that was roqueted.) All balls are also immediately brought in a mallet length from the boundary when they are less than that distance from the boundary, except for the striker's ball when the striker has a bonus shot.

If more than one ball crosses the boundary on the same spot, the striker may measure any ball inbounds first and then place the other(s) up to a mallet-head's length away from it on either side.

Rover Balls

After a ball scores all of the wickets in the course, its player may choose to keep it in the game as a "rover" to help advance that side's remaining ball(s) and to prevent the opposing side from advancing. During this ball's turn, it may roquet any other ball only once per turn, gaining bonus shots accordingly, but it does not earn any bonus shots or wicket points for running a wicket. Any player may put a rover out of the game by causing it to hit the finishing stake. The rover's side earns the point for the stake, and the order of play continues without the staked-out ball.

Time Limited Games

If time does not permit a game to be played to the stake, a time limit may be set beforehand. A kitchen timer works well to alert players to the end of the time. When the time limit is reached the game is over. This is known as "sudden stop". If the score is tied in the "sudden stop" format, the ball closest to its contested wicket gets an extra point for the win.