



ABOUT THE SPORT OF CURLING

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How the Game is Played

Curling is a seemingly simple sport: two teams, each with four players, slide [stones](#) down a curling sheet to a target at the other end; sweepers help the rocks on their way, and the team with the most stones closer to the center of the target than the other team wins. It is a sport that emphasizes [strategy](#), communication, and good sportsmanship. It is a game that people of all ages and physical abilities can play. It is a game that everyone in Colorado can play!

Team responsibilities

A curling team consists of four players: Lead, Second, Vice-Skip, and Skip (team captain). Each member of the team delivers two stones, alternating delivery with players on the opposing team. As each person delivers a stone, two other team members may sweep in front it. [Sweeping](#) a rock will make it travel farther in distance and keep its path on a straighter line. The sweepers are in charge of determining if sweeping is needed for weight (distance). The skip calls the shots from the '[house](#)', or the scoring area, using a [broom](#) as a target for his/her teammates. The skip is in charge of sweeping calls for line (direction). When the skip throws, the vice-skip holds the target broom and is in charge of line calls. Communication between the sweepers and the person calling line is vital - how hard a stone is thrown (weight) affects how much the rock will [curl](#), (curve).

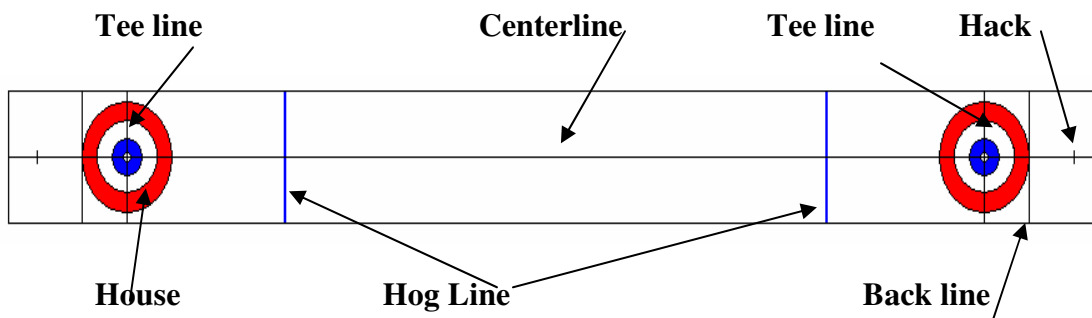
Equipment

The Ice

A curling sheet of ice is approximately 146 feet long and 15 feet wide, the surface of which is kept near 23°F. The surface is prepared for each game by sprinkling water droplets onto the ice (known as pebbling). Due to the friction between the stone and pebble, the stone turns to the inside or outside, causing the stone to 'curl'.

At each end of the sheet is a target, called the 'house'. The house is made up of concentric circles, 12 feet, 8 feet, and 4 feet in diameter. The center of the house (typically 1 foot wide) is known as the button.

Running across the sheet are the tee lines (through the center of the button), the back lines (6 feet behind the tee line, tangent to the back of the houses), the hog lines (21 feet in front of the tee line). When delivering a stone, a curler must let go of the stone before crossing the near hog line, and the rock must completely cross the far hog line before coming to a stop. Rocks that do not completely cross the far hog line, or that completely cross the far back line are removed from play.



Stones

Curling stones are made of granite, carved from granite quarries in Scotland. They weigh 42 pounds and measure 4.5 inches tall and 11 inches in diameter. Very little of the stone actually touches the ice. The bottom of a stone has a concave cavity about 6 inches wide. Stones slide on the outside edge of that cavity, known as the running surface. Stones have handles that are bolted to the top to allow the person delivering the stone to put a 'curl' on it. When the rock is thrown with the right hand, clockwise rotation is referred to as an in-turn. Counter-clockwise rotation is referred to as an out-turn. The opposites are true if the rock is thrown with the left hand.

Brooms- Sweeping

The curling broom is used by players to sweep the ice surface in front of the stone. Aggressive sweeping momentarily melts the ice, which lessens friction, thereby lessening the stone's deceleration while straightening its trajectory (ie making the stone travel farther and straighter). The broom can also be used to clean debris off the ice, which is important to keep a throw from 'picking' debris and altering the course of the stone. When a stone is delivered, it is important that there be two players following the stone so that they are ready to sweep its path if needed.

In earlier days, brooms were made of corn strands and were similar to household brooms. Brushes were used primarily by elderly curlers as a substitute for corn brooms. Today, brushes have replaced traditional corn brooms at every level of curling, but are universally referred to as brooms. Curling brushes may have fabric, hog-hair, or horse-hair heads. Most modern broomsticks are now made of materials such as carbon fiber, allowing faster sweeping. Brooms are also used by most curlers as a balancing aid during delivery of the stone.

Shoes

Experienced curlers wear specially designed curling shoes. However, anyone can curl wearing clean rubber soled athletic shoes.

On curling shoes, the sole of one foot has a slider made of Teflon which enables the curler to slide when delivering the stone. The sole of the foot placed in the hack is made of rubber which provides traction on the ice. When sweeping, many curlers place a gripper over their slide foot to provide additional traction. Right-handed curlers slide on their left foot; left-handed curlers on their right foot.

Play

All curling games begin and end with hand-shakes among all the participants. A game is divided into [ends](#), either 6 ends (social games), 8 ends (recreational leagues or [bonspiels](#)), or 10 ends ([bonspiels](#)). An end consists of each member of both teams throwing two stones, alternating delivery between teams. After the first end, (the first end is determined by a coin toss) the team that scored first will throw the first stone in the next end. This allows the opposing team to throw the last stone (also called having the 'hammer', which is advantageous.) In all subsequent ends, the hammer belongs to the team that did not score in the preceding end. In the event that neither team scores, the hammer remains with the same team. Naturally, it is easier to score points with the hammer than without; in tournament play, the team with the hammer generally tries to score two or more points. If only one point is possible, the skip will often try to avoid scoring at all in order to retain the hammer until the next end, when two or more points may be possible. This is called a blank end. Scoring without the hammer is commonly referred to as stealing, or a steal, and is much more difficult. After all 16 rocks have been delivered, the vice-skips agree on the score for the end (see below). At the end of a game, if the score is tied, extra end(s) are played to determine the winner.

Strategy

Essentially, there are two kinds of shots in curling, the draw and the takeout. There are many variations of these shots, however. Draws are shots in which the stone is thrown only to reach the house (or in front of the house - when the rock is called a guard), while takeouts are shots designed to remove stones from play. Choosing which shot to play will determine whether the thrower will use an in-turn or out turn, for a right-handed person, the clockwise and counter-clockwise rotation of the stone, respectively. Possible draw shots include guard, raise, come around, and freeze. Takeout shots include peel, hit and roll, chip and tap. All with the goal of having [shot rock](#).

Strategy in an end of curling depends on the circumstances. It depends on the team's skill, the opponents' skill, the conditions of the ice, the score of the game, how many ends remain, and whether the team has last rock advantage. A team may play an end aggressively- that is to have a lot of rocks in play by throwing mostly draws. This makes for an exciting game, but is very risky. However, the reward can be very great. A team may also wish to play an end defensively. This means throwing a lot of hits preventing a lot of rocks in play. This is generally considered to be less exciting, and is less risky. A good drawing team will usually opt to play aggressively, while a good takeout team will opt to play defensively.

If a team does not have the hammer in an end, they will opt to try and clog up the "four foot" (the four foot wide area surrounding the centre line) so as to prevent the opposing team from being able to access the button. This can be done by throwing "center line" guards (rocks in front of the house touching the center line). These can be tapped into the house later, or drawn around. If a team has hammer, they want to keep this four foot zone free of rocks, so they have access to the button area at all times. A team with hammer may throw up a "corner guard" as their first rock of an end to utilize the free guard zone. A corner guard is a rock in front of the house that is not in the four foot zone. Corner guards are key for a team to score two points in an end, because they can either draw around it later, or hit and roll behind it making the opposing team's shot to remove it more difficult.

Scoring

After both teams have delivered eight rocks, the team with the rock closest to the button is awarded one point for each of its own rocks that is closer than the opponent's closest rock. Rocks that are not in the house (further from the center than the outer edge of the 12-foot ring) do not score even if no opponent's rock is closer. A rock is considered in the house if any portion of its edge is over any portion of the 12-foot ring. Since the bottom of the rock is rounded, a rock just barely in the house will not have any actual contact with the ring, which will pass under the rounded edge of the stone, but it still counts. This type of rock is known as a 'biter.'

Scores are hung on a scoreboard, of which there are two types. In curling clubs, the permanent numbers on the scoreboard indicate the cumulative score, and the vice hangs a number representing the end in which that cumulative score was achieved. In the example below, Team 2 defeated Team 1 by a score of 7-6, scoring 2 in the 1st end, 3 in the 5th end, and 2 in the 8th end. Team 1 scored 2 in the 2nd end to tie the game, stole single points in the 3rd and 4th two ends, and scored 2 in the 6th end. The 7th end was blanked.

Team 1		2	3	4		6										
Points	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Blank Ends
Team 2		1			5		8									7

On television, it is not unusual to see "baseball-type" scoreboards that are the opposite of the above: the permanent numbers are the ends of play, and the numbers hung represent the score tallied in that end.

Traditions and Etiquette

More so than in many team sports, good sportsmanship is an integral part of curling. For example, celebrating an error by the opposing team, fully acceptable in some sports, is frowned upon in curling. Even at the highest levels of play, a player is expected to "call their own fouls", so to speak, such as alerting the opposing skip if they burned (or touched/fouled a moving stone.) It is also traditional for the winning team to buy the losing team a drink after the game. This is often referred to as the "Spirit of Curling".

It is not uncommon for a team to concede a curling match after it believes it no longer has a reasonable chance of winning but before all ends are completed. Concession is an honorable act and does not carry the stigma associated with quitting. To concede a match, the losing team removes their curling gloves (if they wear them) and offer congratulatory handshakes to the winning team. Thanks and wishes of future good luck are usually exchanged between the teams.

Etiquette

Be on time. Get to the club in time to change and warm up before the game. When you're late you're holding up seven other players. If you know you'll be unavoidably late, inform your team in advance.

Get a sub. On occasions when you're not able to curl as scheduled, it's your responsibility to get a substitute of similar ability and experience. Specific substitution rules may apply in your league; be aware of these before arranging for a sub. Call your skip and give the name of the curler substituting for you or the names of people you have called. No shows are no-no's. Practice on a different sheet. If you arrive early and want to throw a few stones to practice or warm up, by all means do so. But be sure not to use the sheet you'll be playing on.

Start with a handshake. At the beginning of a game, greet the members of the opposing team with a handshake, tell them your name, and wish them good curling. Make sure that everyone knows everyone else.

Finish with a handshake. When the game is over, offer each of the players a hearty handshake and move to the warm room. The winning curlers traditionally offer their counterparts some refreshment. In turn, your opponent should reciprocate.

Keep the ice clean. Change your shoes in the warm room. Sand, grit, and dirt are the ice's worst enemy. The shoes you wear should only be used for curling. Keep them clean.

Compliment a good shot. One of the nicest curling traditions is that players and spectators compliment a good shot by either side while not remarking on a poor shot or a competitors misfortune.

Be ready. Take your position in the hack as soon as your opponent has delivered his/her stone. Keep the game moving: delays detract from the sport. Be prepared to sweep as soon as your teammate releases the rock. Don't be caught off guard and have to run after the stone.

Be courteous. Don't distract your opponent in the hack. Keep your distance, be silent and motionless. Don't walk or run across the ice when a player is in the hack. Don't gather around the back of the house when an opponent is throwing. Sweepers should stay on the sidelines between the courtesy lines when not sweeping, including when walking back from sweeping a shot.

Wait for the score. Vice skips are the only players allowed in the house while the score for the end is being decided. All other players should wait beyond the hog line until told they may move into the house to clear the rocks, or until the vice skips move the rocks in the house

Glossary:

BONSPIEL: A curling competition or tournament.

CURL: The amount a rock bends while traveling down the sheet of ice.

END: A portion of a curling game that is completed when each team has thrown eight stones and the score has been decided.

HOUSE: The rings or circles toward which play is directed consisting of a 12-foot ring, 8-foot ring, 4-foot ring and a button.

SHOT ROCK: At any time during an end, the stone closest to the button.

SLIDER: Slippery material placed on the sole of the shoe, to make it easier to slide on the ice.

SWEEPING: The action of moving a broom or brush back and forth in the path of a moving stone.

To view a full glossary of Curling Terms, please visit:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_curling_terms