

The Basic Rules of Golf Croquet

The following is a simplified set of the rules of Golf Croquet.

Introduction

There are two forms of croquet, both played socially and competitively, up to international level. The older and more complex is Association Croquet ("AC") - while Golf Croquet ("GC") can be picked up and played by beginners very rapidly. In GC, there is still a great deal of skill and tactics involved, but it is a quicker game, often taking something like 50 minutes.

Outline of the Game

1. The sides are Blue and Black *versus* Red and Yellow (or Green and Brown *versus* Pink and White). Doubles or Singles can be played: in Singles the player plays both balls of that side in alternate turns; in Doubles each player plays one ball only.
2. Play progresses in strict colour order: Blue, Red, Black, Yellow (the order of colours on the peg), then back to Blue again. If second colour balls are used the sequence is Green, Pink, Brown, White.
3. Each turn consists of one stroke only. There are never any extra strokes for running hoops or hitting other balls.

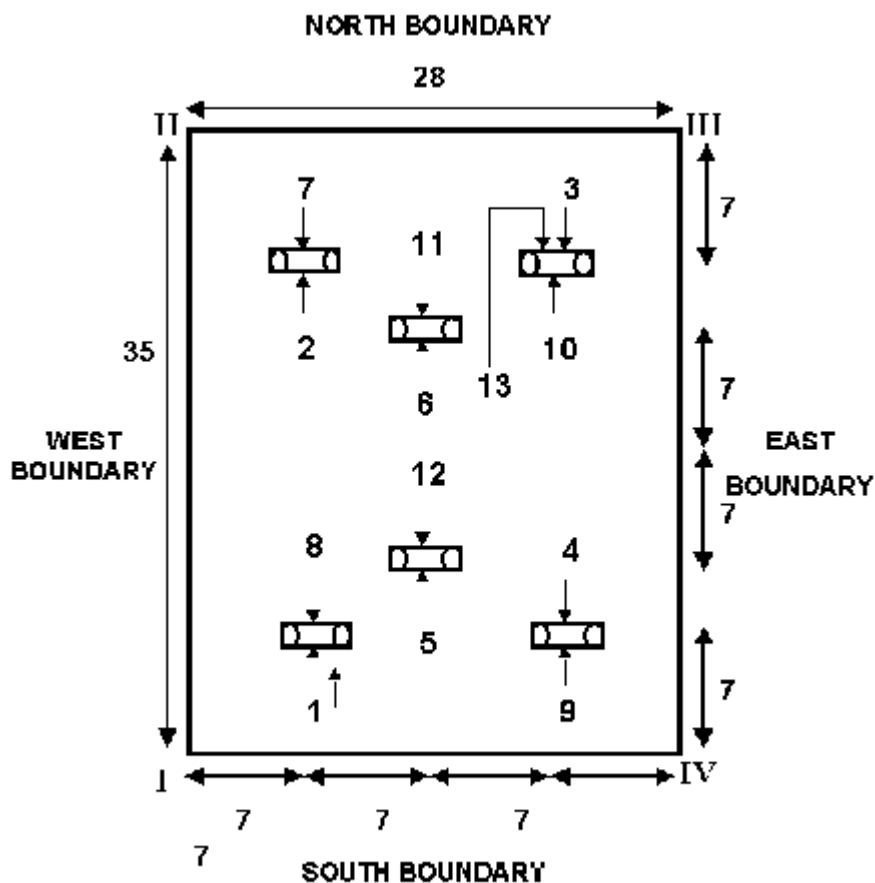


Diagram 1: The Standard court

4. The court settings and equipment are the much the same as for AC. Sometimes, each side carries six clips of their own colour, which are placed on the hoops to mark which team scored each one as the game progresses.
5. The game starts by playing the balls in order from a position within one yard of corner 4 (see Diagram 1). Note that for friendly or club games this rule is often relaxed to be anywhere within one yard of the East boundary, and between corner 4 and level with the 4th hoop - this is so as to reduce wear on the corner area.
6. All players try in successive turns to run hoop 1. As soon as any player completes the running of hoop 1, then the hoop point is scored for that side. All players then move on from where their balls currently are to contest hoop 2, and so on around the court. So each hoop is scored only once, for one side or the other. The side scoring the hoop may place one of their coloured clips on the hoop.
7. The hoops are run in the order and direction shown in Diagram 1. The game is usually played as a "best of 13 point" game, and stops as soon as one player has scored 7. If the points are level after running the 12th hoop, the game is decided by contesting hoop 3 again. The peg plays no part in GC, other than as an obstacle and a reminder of colour order.

The Turn

8. A turn consists of a single stroke. A stroke is played when the striker (the owner of the ball due to be played next) hits the correct ball with their mallet and causes it to move, or commits a fault (see para. 21). A player may not deem a stroke to be played.
9. When any ball leaves the court, it is placed on the boundary where it went off. If, when a boundary ball comes to be played, there is insufficient space outside the boundary to allow the striker to play the stroke freely, then the ball may be moved in from the boundary by the minimum amount required to allow an unhampered stroke.
10. If a boundary ball obstructs the playing of another ball, the boundary ball may be temporarily removed. If replacement 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 to allow the stroke to be played.
11. A ball may be jumped over a hoop or another ball, provided that the lawn surface is not damaged by the mallet (see faults para 21(e)).

Hoop Point

12. A ball scores a hoop point by passing through the next hoop in the order and direction shown in Diagram 1. This is also known as running a hoop.

DIAGRAM 2 - RUNNING A HOOP

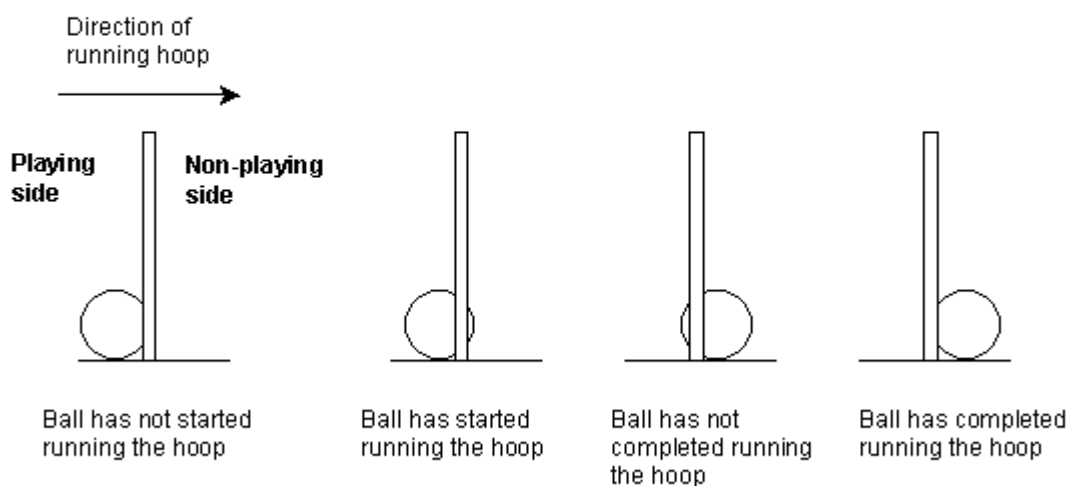


Diagram 2: Running a Hoop

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13. A ball begins to run a hoop when any part of it first emerges from the back (non-playing side) of the hoop and finishes doing so when the whole of it finally enters the front of the hoop (playing side), provided that it does not come back past this point later in the stroke (see Diagram 2).

14. A ball may take more than one turn to complete the running of a hoop.

15. If a ball other than the striker's ball is knocked through the next hoop in order, then that hoop is scored for side owning that ball. If more than one ball runs a hoop in the same stroke, then the ball which was closest to the hoop at the start of the stroke is deemed to have scored the point.

16. If a ball runs two hoops in the same stroke, then both hoop points are scored.

Balls Played Out of Sequence

17. If the striker plays the wrong ball of their side in singles, or the striker's partner plays their own ball instead of the striker playing the correct ball in doubles, then the balls are replaced to their positions before the stroke in error, and play continues by the right person playing the correct ball, without penalty. However, if the striker or their partner plays any ball other than their own, or if another player plays, then play is stopped and no points scored. The opponent chooses whether to have all the balls that were moved left as they are or replaced where they were before the error, then re-starts the sequence with either of their balls.

Playing for the Next Hoop

18. Players may play towards the hoop after the one being contested if desired, but may not go more than halfway - otherwise it becomes an 'offside ball'. Immediately after the hoop in order is scored, the opponent(s) of any ball beyond the halfway line between the hoop just run and the next hoop in order may choose to have the offside ball placed on one of the two penalty spots, unless one of the exceptions in paragraph 20 applies.

19. The penalty spots are the half-way points on the East or West boundaries.

20. Balls are not offside if they reached their position as a result of:

- (a) the stroke just played, or
- (b) a stroke, wrong ball play or fault by an opponent, or
- (c) contact with an opponent's ball, or
- (d) being directed to a penalty spot.

Faults

21. The striker must hold the mallet by its shaft and swing it so as to attempt to hit the ball cleanly with an end face of its head. A fault is committed if, when playing a stroke, the striker:

- (a) touches any ball or the striker's mallet touches any other ball, or
- (b) hits their own ball more than once, or
- (c) squeezes their ball against a hoop or the peg, or
- (d) plays a stroke in which their mallet causes actual damage to the court.

22. If a fault is committed the striker's turn ends, no points are scored in the stroke, and the opponent chooses whether the balls are left as they lie or replaced to their earlier positions.

Other Forms of Play

Handicap Games

23. In handicap play, the stronger side gives the weaker side a number of extra turns. One or more of these can be taken at the striker's option at the end of their normal turn, but only playing the same ball. No hoop point may be scored for the striker's side during an extra turn.

24. In singles, the number of extra turns to be given is the difference between the handicaps of the two players. In doubles, extra turns are given to a player, not a side. The number given by the lower-handicapped player on one side to the lower-handicapped player on the other side is half the difference between their handicaps. Similarly, the higher-handicapped player on one side gives the higher-handicapped player on the other side a number of extra turns equal to half the difference between their handicaps.

Longer or Shorter Games

25. Games may also be played as 7 or 19 point games. In these, the winner is the side which first scores 4 or 10 points respectively. In a 19 point game, after the first 12 hoops are scored, hoops 3, 4, 1, 2, 11 and 12 are played, followed by hoop 3 again as the 19th hoop if required.

[last updated July 2016]