

General Playing Rules

Leagues And Tournaments

RULE 1: Leagues and tournaments must be organized and bowled in accordance with the MTBA Rules and Regulations. These events must be scheduled on lanes that are currently certified and MTBA approved.

Game - Definition

RULE 2: A game of tenpins consists of ten frames. A player delivers two balls in each of the first nine frames unless a strike is scored. In the tenth frame, a player delivers three balls if a strike or spare is scored. Every frame must be completed by each player bowling in regular order.

Game - How Scored

RULE 3 a: Except when a strike is scored, the number of pins knocked down by the player's first delivery is to be marked next to the small square in the upper right hand corner of the frame, and the number of pins knocked down by the player's second delivery is to be marked inside the small square. If none of the standing pins are knocked down by the second delivery in a frame, the score sheet shall be marked with a (-) in the top right hand square. The count for the two deliveries in the frame shall be recorded immediately, unless a strike or spare is rolled.

Strike

RULE 3b: A strike is made when the full set of pins is knocked down with the first delivery in a frame. It is marked by an (x) in the small square in the upper right-hand corner of the frame in which it was made. The count for one strike is ten plus the number of pins knocked down on the player's next two deliveries.

Double

RULE 3c: Two consecutive strikes are called a double. The count for the first strike is twenty plus the number of pins knocked down with the first delivery following the second strike.

Triple or Turkey

RULE 3d: Three successive strikes are called a triple or turkey. The count for the first strike is thirty. To bowl the maximum score of 300, the player must bowl twelve strikes in succession, in the same game.

Spare

RULE 3e: A spare is scored when all the pins left standing after the first delivery are knocked down with the second delivery in that frame. It is marked by a (/) in the small square in the upper right-hand corner of the frame. The count for a spare is ten plus the number of pins knocked down by the player's next delivery. When a spare is scored in the tenth frame, a third ball shall be bowled in that frame.

Error

RULE 3f: An error is made when the player fails to bowl down all ten pins after two deliveries in a frame unless the pins left standing after the first delivery constitute a split (vis RULE 3g). An error is designated by a (-) in the small square in the upper right-hand corner of the frame. The number of pins knocked down after the first delivery, before the player bowls at the remaining pins, should be marked in the upper right-hand corner of the frame. The count in every frame where an error is committed shall be recorded immediately following the player's second delivery.

Split

RULE 3g: A split is a set-up of pins left standing after the first delivery, provided the head pin is down and:

1. At least one pin is down between two or more standing pins: i.e. 7-9 or 3-10.
2. At least one pin is down immediately ahead of two or more standing pins: i.e. 5-6.

NOTE: A split is usually designated by a (O) but any other symbol may be used. The number of pins knocked down on the first delivery should be marked next to the small square in the upper right hand corner of the frame before the second ball is rolled.

Automatic Scoring Devices

RULE 3h: A WIBC/ABC approved automatic scoring device may be used in league and tournament play. The device must be capable of providing a printed record of the score that can be audited frame by frame and shall comply with the scoring and playing rules.

Legal Delivery

RULE 4a: A delivery is made when the ball leaves the player's possession and crosses the foul line into playing territory. Every delivery counts unless a dead ball is declared (vis Rule 8). A delivery must be made entirely by manual means. No device may be incorporated in or affixed to the ball that detaches on delivery or is a moving part during delivery except as provided in Rule 4b and 4c.

Special Equipment to Grip the Ball

RULE 4b: A player may use special equipment to aid in grasping and delivering the ball if it is in place of a hand or major portion thereof lost by amputation or otherwise.

Mechanical Aids to Grip the Ball

RULE 4c: Permission to use special equipment necessary to grasp and deliver the ball because of other disability may be granted as follows:

1. A description or drawing and model of the aid is submitted to and approved by the MTBA.
2. A doctors certificate is furnished to MTBA, describing the disability and recommending that the aid should be used.
3. The aid does not incorporate a mechanical device with moving parts that would impart a force or impetus to the ball.
4. Permission to use the aid is given by each league or tournament that the player enters. When authorization is given, the player will be provided with a special card stating that the use of the specified mechanical aid has been approved. If permission is not granted, the player has the right to appeal to the MTBA Board. Permission to use the device may be withdrawn for just cause.

Definition of a Foul

RULE 5a: A foul occurs when a part of the player's person encroaches on or goes beyond the foul line and touches any part of the lane, equipment or building during or after delivery. A ball is in play after a delivery until the same or another player is on the approach in position to make a successive delivery.

The certification and inspection committee of the Association can require that the foul line be plainly marked on the walls, posts, division boards or any other structure in a bowling centre on a line with the regular foul line.

Deliberate Foul

RULE 5b: When a player deliberately fouls to benefit by the calling of a foul, the player shall be credited with zero pinfall for that delivery and will not be allowed further deliveries in that frame.

Repetition in the same series may render the player to disqualification from the rest of the game, and to be reported to the Disciplinary Committee for any further disciplinary measures.

In league play if no substitute is available to take the place of the removed player, his team shall be credited only with the pins knocked down up to the time the player was disqualified plus one-tenth of his blind score for each of the remaining frames in the game.

Foul Counts as Ball Bowled

RULE 5c: When a foul is recorded the delivery counts but the player is not credited with any pins knocked down by the delivery. Pins knocked down by the ball when the foul occurred must be re-spotted if the player who fouled is entitled to additional deliveries in the frame. If he bowls down all the pins with his second ball after fouling with the first, it shall be scored as a spare. When less than ten pins are bowled down on the second half after fouling on the first, it shall be scored as an error. A player who fouls when delivering his second ball of a frame shall be credited with only those pins bowled down with his first ball, provided no foul was committed when the first ball was delivered. When a bowler fouls during the delivery of his first ball in the tenth frame and bowls down all ten pins with his second ball (making a spare) he bowls a third ball and is credited with a spare plus the pins bowled down with the third ball. When a player fouls while delivering his third ball in the tenth frame, only those pins bowled down in delivering his first two balls shall be counted.

Foul Detection

RULE 5d: In competition, a WIBC/ABC approved automatic foul detecting device must be used if available. When not available, a foul judge should be stationed in a position to have an unobstructed view of the foul line.

Should a foul detecting device become temporarily inoperative, the following procedures shall be used to call fouls:

1. In tournament play, management shall assign a foul judge or have the official scorers call fouls.
2. In league play, the opposing team captains shall call fouls or designate a foul judge.

Failure to have the automatic foul detecting device in operation or to provide for foul line observance when it is inoperative may disqualify scores bowled for MTBA high score consideration.

Apparent Fouls

RULE 5e: A foul shall be declared and recorded if the automatic foul detecting device or foul judge fails to call a foul that is apparent to both captains or one or more members of each opposing team, or the official scorer, or a tournament official.

Duties of Foul Judge

RULE 5f: League or tournament officials shall select a foul judge, who shall determine whether any of the players violate any of the provisions of the rules and regulations, which pertain to fouls.

The selection of the foul judge may be left to the discretion of the management of the establishment where the games of the league or tournament are bowled, providing the league or tournament officials so agree.

After the foul judge is selected, he shall not be changed during the game except because of illness or by mutual consent of the majority of the team captains in the league or when a change is authorized by the tournament secretary or their representative.

The foul judge shall be required to make an immediate decision after any violation. He shall immediately declare as a foul any ball, which is delivered contrary to the rules and regulations, and in rendering his decision, he shall do so with some appropriate signal system.

No appeal shall be allowed from the decision of the foul judge, except when it is apparent that a foul may have been called on the wrong player, or due to a misinterpretation of the rules and regulations, or if the foul judge is incompetent or unfit to officiate in that capacity.

The station of the foul judge must be so arranged that he has an unobstructed view of all the foul lines. No spectators shall be permitted to interfere with him in any way during the progress of a sanctioned league or tournament game.

No foul judge shall be interested, directly or indirectly, in any game or series. If at any time the foul judge shall be found to be so interested, he shall be removed immediately.

Foul - Appeal

RULE 5g: No appeal shall be allowed when a foul is called unless it is proved that the automatic device is not operating properly, or there is a preponderance of evidence that the player did not foul.

Legal Pinfall

RULE 6a: Pins to be credited to a player following a legal delivery shall include:

1. Pins knocked down or off the pin deck by the ball or another pin.
2. Pins knocked down or off the pin deck by a pin rebounding from a side partition or rear cushion.
3. Pins knocked down or off the pin deck by a pin rebounding from the sweep bar when it is at rest on the pin deck before sweeping dead wood from the pin deck.
4. Pins that lean and touch the kickback or side partition.

All such pins are termed dead wood and must be removed before the next delivery.

Illegal Pinfall

RULE 6b: When any of the following occur, the delivery counts but the resulting pinfall does not:

1. A ball leaves the lane before reaching the pins.
2. A ball rebounds from the rear cushion.
3. A pin rebounds after coming in contact with the body, arms or legs of a human pinsetter.
4. A pin is touched by mechanical pinsetting equipment.
5. Any pin knocked down when dead wood is being removed.
6. Any pin knocked down by a human pinsetter.
7. The player commits a foul.
8. A delivery is made with dead wood on the lane or in the gutter and the ball contacts such dead wood before leaving the lane surface.

If illegal pinfall occurs and the player is entitled to additional deliveries in the frame, the pin or pins illegally knocked down must be re-spotted where they originally stood.

Pins - Improperly Set

RULE 7a: When bowling at a full set-up or to make a spare, if it is discovered immediately after the delivery that one or more pins are set improperly, but not missing, the delivery and resulting pinfall counts. It is each player's responsibility to determine if a set-up is correct. The player shall insist that any pin or pins incorrectly set be re-spotted before delivering the ball, otherwise the set-up is deemed to be acceptable.

No change can be made in the position of any pins left standing after delivery, unless the pinsetter moved or misplaced any pin after the first delivery.

Pins - Rebounding

RULE 7b: Pins that rebound and stand on the lane must be counted as standing pins.

Pins - Replacement

RULE 7c: Should a pin be broken or otherwise badly damaged during the game, it shall be replaced at once by another as nearly uniform in weight and condition with the set in use. The league or tournament officials shall determine whether pins shall be replaced.

A broken pin does not change the score made by the bowler. The pins knocked down are counted, after which the broken pin is replaced.

Pins - May Not Be Conceded

RULE 7d: No pins may be conceded and those actually knocked down or moved entirely off the playing surface of the lane as a result of a legal delivery may be counted.

Dead Ball

RULE 8: A ball shall be declared dead if any of the following occur:

- a. After a legal delivery attention is immediately called to the fact that one or more pins were missing from the set-up.
- b. A human pinsetter interferes with any standing pin before the ball reaches the pins.
- c. A human pinsetter removes or interferes with any downed pin before it stops rolling.
- d. A player bowls on the wrong lane or out of turn, or one player from each team on the pair of lanes bowls on the wrong lane (see RULE 9).
- e. A player is interfered with by the pinsetter, another player, spectator, or moving object as the ball is being delivered and before delivery is completed, the player has the option to accept the resulting pinfall or call a dead ball.
- f. Any pin is moved or knocked as a player delivers the ball but before the ball reaches the pins.
- g. A delivered ball comes in contact with a foreign obstacle.

When a dead ball is called, the delivery does not count. The pins standing when the dead ball occurred must be re-spotted and the player is allowed to re-bowl that delivery.

Bowling on Wrong Lane

RULE 9: In normal league or tournament play, a dead ball shall be called and the player or players are required to re-bowl on the correct lane when:

1. One player plays on the wrong lane.
2. One player from each team bowls on the wrong lanes.

If more than one player on the same team bowls on the wrong lane in turn, that game will be completed without adjustment. Any succeeding game must be started on the correctly scheduled lane.

In singles match play competition, where a player normally bowls two frames each time it is the player's turn to bowl, the player bowls on the wrong lanes, a dead ball shall be called and the player required to re-bowl both frames on the correct lanes, provided the error was discovered before the opposing player has made a delivery. Otherwise, the score stands as bowled, with all subsequent frames in the game bowled on the correct lanes.

Provisional Ball

RULE 10: A provisional ball or frame shall be bowled by a player, when a protest involving a foul, illegal pinfall or a dead ball is made and cannot be resolved by the two team captains or a tournament official.

a. If the dispute occurs on a player's first ball in any frame, or on the second ball in the tenth frame after making a strike on the first ball in the tenth:

1. If the dispute is over whether the player fouled, the player shall complete the frame and then bowl one provisional ball at a full set-up of pins.
2. If the dispute involves alleged illegal pinfall, the player shall complete the frame and then bowl one provisional ball at the setup, which would have remained standing had the disputed pin(s) not fallen.
3. If the dispute is over whether a dead ball should have been declared, the player shall complete the frame and then bowl a complete provisional frame.

b. If the dispute occurs on a spare attempt, or on the third ball on the tenth frame, no provisional ball is necessary unless the dispute is over whether a dead ball should have been declared. In that case a provisional ball shall be bowled at the same set-up, which was standing when the dispute ball was bowled.

A record of both scores for the frame in which a provisional delivery was made shall be kept and the protest referred to the league committee or the tournament managing committee for a decision. If they are unable to decide, the MTBA Disciplinary Committee can be asked for a decision upon submission of the facts relating to the protest.

Forfeit - Delay of Game

RULE 11: No unreasonable delay in the progress of any game is permitted. If a player or team in a league or tournament refuses to proceed with a game after being directed to do so by a league or tournament official, the game or series shall be declared forfeited.

Approaches Must Not Be Defaced

RULE 12: The application of any foreign substance on any part of the approach that detracts from the possibility of other players having normal conditions is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, such substances as talcum powder, pumice and resin on shoes (including proprietary products such as Easy Slide); also soft rubber soles or heels that rub off on the approach are prohibited. Powder should not be taken into the players' area.

Gambling

RULE 13: A member of MTBA shall not participate or be involved in the operation of any gambling scheme where all or part of a score bowled in an MTBA or sanctioned league or tournament determines the winners.

Penalty: Membership may be suspended or denied to anyone who is a participant or involved in a violation of this rule.

NOTE: Programmes involving chance, where luck of the draw determines the winner rather than the skill of the participant, are prohibited by this rule. Programmes in leagues where the participating bowlers pay a fee, optional or otherwise, and receive prizes for high game and/or series, with or without handicap, do not violate the rule because these involve merit pinfall based solely on the skill of the participant.

Using Assumed Name

RULE 14a: No person shall bowl under an assumed name or under the name of another person scheduled to bowl in an MTBA or sanctioned league or tournament.

Penalty: Forfeiture of games in which the player has been used and all found to be involved are subject to suspension.

Suspended Bowler Ineligible

RULE 14b: A suspended bowler or a bowler who has been denied MTBA membership is ineligible to bowl, pace or hold office in any MTBA or sanctioned league or tournament until reinstated. Should the suspended bowler appeal against the suspension, then that bowler may continue to participate in all MTBA activities until the Appeal is heard. Should the appeal, however, appear to be a frivolous one, then the original period of suspension will be increased by the Appeal's Board.

Penalty: When a team uses a suspended bowler, it shall forfeit all games in which the suspended player was used and all involved are subject to suspension.

Unfair Tactics

RULE 15: A player can be charged with attempting to gain an unfair advantage in league or tournament play for the following reasons:

- a. Directly or indirectly tampering with lanes, pins or bowling balls so they no longer meet MTBA specifications.
- b. Misrepresenting an average to gain a greater handicap, or qualify for a lower classification in an event.
- c. Establishing an average below the player's ability, to gain an unfair advantage in handicap or classified competition.

Penalty: Loss of games, prize winnings and subject to suspension from or denial of MTBA membership.

A member can also be charged with the following violations:

- d. Engaging in improper or unfair tactics or conduct in connection with the game of bowling.
- e. Failing to distribute prizes to team members consistent with verbal or written agreements.
- f. Failing to pay fees due for participation in an MTBA or sanctioned league or tournament.
- g. Misusing any funds held in trust by any officer appointed by the MTBA.

Penalty: Membership may be suspended or denied to anyone who is involved in a violation of this rule.

Bowling Ball - Private Ownership

RULE 16: A bowling ball is considered the property of the owner. A player is prohibited from using another player's ball without the owner's consent.

Bowling Ball - Altering Surface

RULE 17: Altering the surface of a bowling ball by the use of abrasives or by adding a foreign substance on the surface of the ball while bowling in competition is prohibited. Competition is defined as Players are permitted to use only a clean, dry towel/cloth for the purpose of removing oil etc. from the surface of a ball. Once league competition or tournament play has begun, the provisions of this rule will apply throughout the entire session. As a result, it is not permissible to use abrasives or foreign substances between each game of a particular league session, or a tournament block.

All bowling balls so altered must be removed from competition.

NOTE: If it is shown a bowler had prior knowledge that her/his actions were in violation of Rule 17, the game/s in which the violation occurred is subject to forfeiture. In addition, the bowler is subject to dismissal from the league and suspension of membership. Competition is defined as the remaining games in the series being bowled.

This rule applies also to the practice session immediately preceding an event.

Libel or Slander

RULE 18: A bowler who libels or utters slanderous accusations against an official or officials, member or members of an association, league or team affiliated with the M.T.B.A., which cannot be substantiated by sworn facts in the case, shall be deemed unworthy of retaining membership in the M.T.B.A.

Slow Bowling

RULE 19: Bowlers who are in readiness to step on the approach to deliver a ball shall have the following rights and obligations:

- a. They may claim right of way only over anyone moving to the approach or preparing to bowl on the lane immediately to their left.
- b. They shall give way to any player who is moving towards the approach or preparing to bowl on the lane immediately to their right.
- c. Players shall be ready to bowl when it is their turn and shall not delay the start of their approach or delivery, if a lane immediately adjacent to them on the left and right side is clear.
- d. If a player does not observe the procedures outlined in a, b and c it may be construed as slow bowling.

A bowler who does not observe the procedures outlined in a, b and c of this rule shall be warned by an authorized tournament official for the first offence (no penalty), as well as for the second offence (no penalty). For the third offence and each succeeding one thereafter in a block of games the bowler shall be given zero pinfall for the frame.

NOTE: Blocks of games are defined in the rules as the six games each for singles and doubles, and three games for trios, and five-person teams. The eight games on the first day of match play, the seven games on the second day of match play, and all games in the Grand Finals also shall be construed as separate blocks. The number of warnings shall NOT carry over from one block to another.

Fund Shortages

RULE 20:

- a. When an officer of an MTBA or sanctioned league or tournament embezzles, defalcates or absconds with any funds entrusted to him, he shall be liable for indefinite suspension from membership in the MTBA.
- b. The officer required to make monthly verifications of the accounts of such organizations may also be liable for indefinite suspension from membership if he has been guilty of malfeasance or nonfeasance in performing his duty.

Fund Shortages - Action to be taken

RULE 21: When the General Secretary of the MTBA is advised, after appropriate investigation, that a member has been guilty of acts within the meaning of Sections a and b, or both, of Rule 20, he/she shall cause the following action to be instituted.

1. Notify the person or persons that suspension charges are being preferred and the reason thereof.
2. Such notification shall be sent by Registered Mail and shall specifically state the cause of the action and outline the time and method for filing an appeal.
3. Notification of the action shall be filed with the appropriate league or tournament officials.
4. Submit a report and his findings to the MTBA Disciplinary Committee.

Reinstatement of membership in all cases where a suspension is imposed shall be available only upon written application to and approval by the MTBA.