

L2 AN INTRODUCTION TO ASSOCIATION CROQUET

- 1. The Standard Lawn**
- 2. Principles of the AC game including shots peculiar to AC**

The Standard Lawn

The part of the yard-line from the first corner spot to the middle of the south boundary is the *A baulk-line*. The part of the yard-line from the third corner spot to the middle of the north boundary is the *B baulk-line*.

The *peg* sits in the centre of the lawn. It has two parts: the base and the extension (removable). The extension is used to hold clips in AC.

There are six *hoops*. The inner two hoops are set *7 yards* to the north and south of the peg. The outer four hoops are set *7 yards* from adjacent boundaries. The first hoop has the top (its *crown*) painted *blue*. The last hoop has its crown painted *red*. Hoops are 12" high, and are between 3 ³/₄" and 4" in width.

Hoop Order

A ball scores a point by passing through the correct hoop in the correct order: *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12* and in AC also *1-back, 2-back, 3-back, 4-back, penultimate, and rover*.

Balls

Balls are 3 ⁵/₈" in diameter.

Primary colours are blue and black versus red and yellow. If there is a second game being played on the one court *secondary* colours are used: green and brown versus pink and white.

Clips for AC

Clips are used to indicate which hoop each ball is for. There is one clip of each colour. When a ball is for hoops 1 to 6 the clip is positioned on *top* of the hoop (on the *crown*). When a ball is for 1-back to rover the clip is placed on the *side* (a *leg*) of the hoop.

Principles of the AC game including shots peculiar to AC

1. Roquet, Croquet, Continuation

When you walk onto a lawn at the beginning of your *turn* you have the option of playing either of your two balls (in doubles either player has the option of playing

their ball). The ball you elect to play is called the striker's ball. Initially you get only one stroke. You may elect to either:

- run the correct hoop in the correct direction
- try to roquet another ball

If you fail to do either of these your turn ends.

After Running A Hoop

If you run a hoop you are entitled to one further stroke (a *continuation* stroke). With this stroke you can try to run the next hoop, or roquet a ball.

Roquet

You roquet a ball by hitting the striker's ball onto it (either directly or indirectly). You may only roquet each of the other 3 balls once without running a hoop during a turn. After running a hoop you may roquet each ball again.

When you roquet a ball you are entitled to two further strokes – a *croquet* stroke and then a *continuation* stroke.

Croquet Stroke

When you have roqueted a ball you can take *croquet* from it. To do this you pick your striker's ball up (after it has come to rest, or when it is clear that it will not hit any other ball) and place it in contact with the ball you roqueted. You then play the croquet stroke by hitting the striker's ball in such a way that the ball you are taking croquet from also moves (or at least shakes). After the croquet shot you get your *continuation* stroke.

Continuation Stroke

In a continuation stroke you may elect to either run the correct hoop or roquet another ball. If you succeed at either then your turn will continue.

You are only ever entitled to one continuation stroke in a sequence – they do not add up.

The Laws

Roquet: If you play a ball that is in contact with another ball then a roquet is *deemed* to have been made on that ball. You do not have to roquet it; you simply pick your ball up and place it in contact with that ball in the position you want.

If you roquet two balls simultaneously you may elect which one you roqueted.

If you run a hoop in the croquet stroke and your ball hits the croqueted ball again a roquet is deemed **not** to have been made on that ball **unless** they come to rest in contact.

If you run a hoop and roquet a ball that was clear of the hoop then you have roqueted that ball ("*hoop and roquet*"). A ball is clear of the hoop if no part of it lies within the jaws of the hoop. In this case it does not matter whether you had roqueted that ball before you ran the hoop.

If, however, there is a ball in the jaws of the hoop and you run the hoop and roquet it, the outcome is dependent on whether you were live or not on that ball. If you were not live, then you have run the hoop, and not roqueted the ball (unless they come to rest together). If you had not used the ball, then you have roqueted it, and **not** run the hoop.

Croquet Stroke: When you place your ball against the roqueted ball in preparation for a croquet stroke you must **not** move or rotate the other ball, but you can touch and steady it with your hand.

In a croquet stroke if the ball you are taking croquet from does not move or shake then it is a fault and your turn ends.

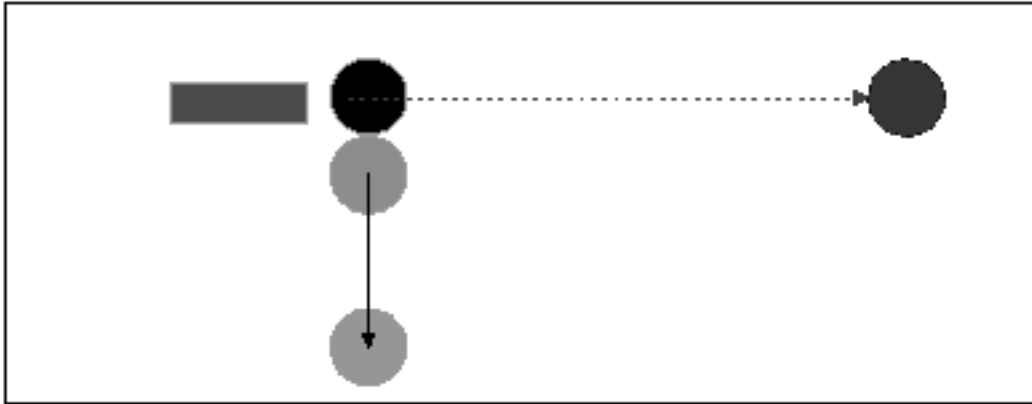
Your turn will also end if on the croquet stroke you send the croqueted ball off the court, or your striker's ball goes off without making a roquet or running its hoop.

You must not allow your mallet to hit that other ball – if it does then it is a fault and your turn ends.

2. The Take-off

You will find many occasions where you want to leave the croqueted ball in the same place but send your ball as far as desired. For this we use a thin *take-off*.

To do this place the striker's ball in contact with the ball you will be taking croquet from so that a line through their centres is at right angles to your destination. Then when you hit the striker's ball ensure that you hit in a little so that it moves (or at least shakes) the croqueted ball. The diagram below shows a thin take-off.



You can take-off from either side of the ball you are taking croquet from. There are instances where you would only take-off from one side. For example, if you are very close to the boundary and there is a danger the croqueted ball could be sent off the lawn in the take-off, you would use the side that sends that ball into the lawn (your turn ends if either the croqueted ball or your ball goes off the lawn in the take-off stroke).

Pull

A further important aspect of the take-off is *pull*. Your coach will demonstrate this. When you play take-offs over a distance of about 10 metres or more you will see that the striker's ball tends to pull in one direction. If you take-off from the left hand side your ball will pull to the right, and vice versa for taking off from the right hand side. Across the full 30 metres of the lawn this can amount to over a metre of pull. You must allow for this when lining up for a take-off.

Thick Take-Off

We will only briefly mention a *thick* take-off in this Module. Suppose you have a need to send the croqueted ball a few metres and not just leave it where it is, this can be accomplished by lining everything up as in a normal *thin* take-off, but hitting into the ball more and hitting it harder on the croquet stroke. Hitting more into the ball causes your ball to travel less distance, and hence, you have to hit harder. This is a stroke that requires much more familiarity with your game than you will have at this stage as you have to "feel" how much harder to hit the ball, how much to hit into the ball, and how much more pull there will be.

The Laws

There are a number of things you are not allowed to do when you strike a ball (*faults*). The most important ones that you need to know about at this time are:

- you are **not** allowed to touch the head of your mallet with your hand
- you are **not** allowed to rest the mallet shaft, or an hand or arm on the ground

- you are **not** allowed to strike the ball with any part of the head other than an end face
- you are **not** allowed to *push* or *pull* the ball (maintain contact)
- you are **not** allowed to *double tap* the ball (hit it more than once)
- you are **not** allowed to crush your ball against a hoop or the peg
- you are **not** allowed to touch any ball apart from the striker's ball with your mallet
- you are **not** allowed to touch any ball with any part of your body or clothing
- in a croquet stroke you are **not** allowed to play away from, or fail to move or shake the croqueted ball
- you are **not** allowed to play a stroke that is likely to, and does, cause substantial damage to the court

Exercises

In these exercise notes we only use thin take-offs. For each exercise you **must** be able to take-off from both sides of the ball. In each case make sure that the ball you are taking croquet from moves or at least shakes!

- From the South Boundary in front on Hoop 1, take-off to that hoop stopping your ball so that it is in position to run the hoop.
- From the non-playing side of a hoop practice take-offs to send your ball directly in front of the hoop on the playing side in a position to be able to run the hoop (and run it!). Do this for distances from under a metre to about 10 metres, and from various angles around the hoop.
- "Pull". Practice take-offs over distances of at least ½ court length and note the amount for pull. Then practice taking this into account when setting up for the take-off.
- Put a ball at each of the 6 hoops. Starting at hoop 1, roquet the ball, take off to the hoop, run the hoop, and roquet the ball again. Then take-off to the next hoop. Roquet that ball, and continue. If you make a mistake play the shot again.
- The "ultimate" test. From a corner spot take-off to the diagonally opposite corner to a ball on that corner and roquet it. This must be done without the ball which you are taking croquet from going off the lawn! When you can do this consistently you will have excellent control and it will be time to start thinking about thick take-offs.

3. Straight line strokes

To play this place your striker's ball and the ball you have roqueted together for a croquet stroke. If you then play a shot so that your mallet swings directly through the centres of the balls they will both travel in a straight line in the same direction, as shown in the figure below.



You can vary how far the striker's ball and the croqueted ball travel relative to each other by varying your stance and how you strike the ball with your mallet.

Stance

Standing closer to the striker's ball means you will be hitting down on it; standing further back means you will hit up slightly. In a croquet stroke hitting down means your ball will travel further than if you hit through parallel to the ground. And vice versa for hitting up.

The Drive

The croqueted ball will travel about 3–4 times as far as the striker's ball.

Stance: Normal

Grip: Normal

Follow through: Normal

The Stop Shot

The croqueted ball will travel at least 5 times as far as the striker's ball. Ratios of over 10 can be achieved but depend upon the type of mallet used.

Stance: Feet further back than normal

Grip: Hands right at the top of the mallet, and loosen the grip on impact

Follow through: As little as possible, grounding the mallet on impact

1/2 Roll

The croqueted ball will travel twice as far as the striker's ball.

Stance: Slightly closer to the ball than normal

Grip: Lower your bottom hand about 1/3 way down the shaft

Follow through: Normal

Full Roll

The croqueted ball will travel as far as the striker's ball.

Stance: Feet further forward than for the ½ roll.

Grip: Lower your bottom hand further down the shaft than for the ½ roll, and lower your top hand to grip the mallet properly

Follow through: Normal

Pass Roll

The striker's ball will travel further than the croqueted ball (obviously they cannot travel in exactly the same line for this to happen!)

Stance: As for a full roll

Grip: Lower than for a full roll

Follow through: Normal

Exercises

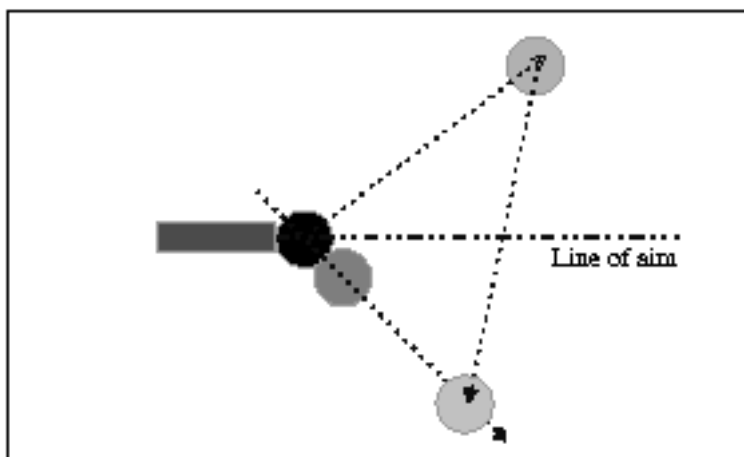
All the above shots should be practised (ignoring the pass roll for now), becoming familiar with the feel of all lengths (less than a metre to the full length of the court). You will need to practice to find exactly what stance and mallet grip you need to achieve the different ratios. Using a lawn with the hoops set out will help you judge your ratios.

From	To (your ball and croqueted ball)	Type
West Boundary	Hoops 1 and 4	drive
South Boundary	Hoop 5 and North Boundary	drive
South Boundary	Hoop 1 and North Boundary	stop shot
West Boundary	Hoops 1 and 5	½ roll
Hoop 5	Peg and Hoop 6	½ roll

4. The split shot

You can send both balls to their required places as shown in the figure below. As with a straight line croquet stroke you can vary how far the striker's ball and the croqueted ball travel relative to each other by varying your stance and how you strike the ball with the mallet. We have left the split shot until the last croquet stroke as it is the most complicated, requiring judgement of angles, lengths, and changing stance and mallet grip all in the one shot.

The diagram shows most aspects of the split shot. The angle between the path of the croqueted ball and the *line of aim* is called the *angle of swing*. The croqueted ball will travel along a line through the centres of the balls. However, the striker's ball will **not** move off along the line you hit it. It will diverge at approximately twice the angle of swing. The bigger the angle the further the striker's ball will travel, and the less the croqueted ball (after all if the angle of swing is very nearly 90° you will be playing a take-off)



With a split shot it is impossible to get the balls to travel apart at more than 90°. In fact, for any angle of swing greater than 45° the balls will move off at 90°.

How To Judge The Type of Split Shot To Play

Firstly, estimate how far your ball will travel relative to the croqueted ball. From that and knowledge of your straight line croquet strokes you will know whether it would take a stop shot, drive, 1/2 roll, etc. Grip your mallet as for that type of stroke.

If your angle of swing is small (less than 15°) just play the shot as normal. If the angle is moderate (15° to 30°) then you will need to play more of a stop shot than

normal, so adjust your stance and grip accordingly (feet further back, and hands higher up the mallet shaft). If the angle of swing is large (greater than 30°) then you will need to play even more of a stop shot, and have to adjust accordingly.

How To Play A Split Shot

To ensure that you get everything right it is important to have a mental checklist for playing a split shot:

- visualise where you want the two balls to finish (remember they cannot end up more than 90° apart)
- line up the striker's ball behind the ball you are taking croquet from such that the line of their centres points where you want the croqueted ball to finish
- to judge the angle of swing visualise a point half-way between where the two balls will stop and aim directly through the centre of your ball at **that** spot.
- work out what type of shot is required using the information in the previous section and play that stroke.

Exercises

Start with practising small angle split shots – they require little or no adjustment to your stance and swing. When you are comfortable with those move on to wider angle shots. As with all the practice sessions you must ensure that you become familiar with all length shots from small ones (under a metre) right through to full court length.

- In this exercise take croquet at the first named position and aim to send your ball to the second position while the croqueted ball goes to the third position.

Small angles:	from the Peg to Hoops 5 and 4
	from Corner 1 to Hoops 1 and 5
	from Corner 1 to Hoops 5 and 4
Moderate angles:	from Hoop 4 to Hoops 5 and 6
	from Corner 1 to Hoops 1 and 2
	from the middle of the South Boundary to Hoops 1 and 5
Large angles:	from Hoop 1 to Hoops 5 and 2
	from Corner 1 to Hoops 4 and 2

- Using a split shot for hoop approaches is something you will often need to do. The idea is to ensure that the croqueted ball ends up on the non-playing side of the hoop so that after you have run the hoop you can easily roquet it and continue your turn. Practice around a hoop, giving yourself various angles and distances from which to approach and then successfully run a hoop.

5. The Rush

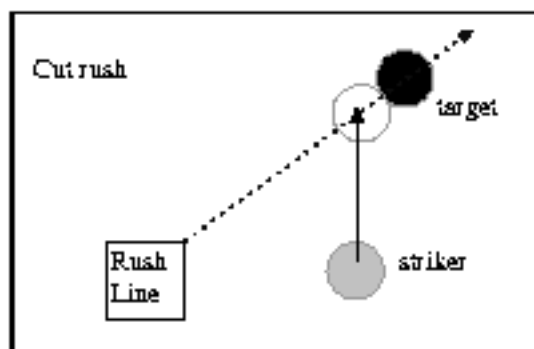
So far you have not learnt how to position balls on the lawn in any other way. You can use the roquet stroke as well. A *rush* is a roquet stroke in which your ball hits another ball and sends that to where you require it so that you can take croquet at that position on the court.

In a long rush you will need to hit the ball harder, and for that you need a longer backswing. To play a rush you need to ensure that your hands are near the top of the mallet shaft. You will also need to stand slightly further back from the ball than when making a normal roquet.

For an accurate rush the ball you are roqueting (the target ball) should not be more than about a metre away. Longer distances will make the direction in which you rush the ball inaccurate.

To rush in a straight line ensure that the centre of your ball strikes the centre of the target ball.

A *cut rush* is where you deliberately cause your ball to hit the target ball off-centre to send the roqueted ball off at an angle. For a cut rush you will have to hit harder to send the target ball a given distance compared with a straight rush.



Exercise

- Start in Corner 1 with 2 balls about 50cm apart in a straight line to Hoop 1. Rush the target ball in front of Hoop 1; play a croquet stroke sending the target ball to the non-playing side of the hoop; and run the hoop on the

continuation stroke. (If you have played the croquet stroke well and sent that ball far enough forward you may have a rush to the second Hoop!)

- Play longer straight rushes:
 - from Corner 1 to Hoop 5
 - from Corner 1 to Hoop 2
- Cut Rushes: from Corner 1 practice cut rushes at different angles to Hoop 1 to learn the feel of what angle the roqueted ball moves off at, and how much harder than a straight rush you have to hit to send the ball the same distance.