

A one page guide to Golf Croquet

Overview: There are at least four different versions of croquet. The one most suitable for “social” games of short duration is **Golf Croquet**. In doubles, you each own a ball, which only you can hit with a mallet, but play in pairs – with the aim to be the first (and only) pair to get one of your balls through the relevant hoop (explained below). You play one shot each – Player 1 of Pair 1, then Player 1 of Pair 2, Player 2 of Pair 1, and Player 2 of Pair 2. Once a hoop is won, the next player in sequence sends their ball towards the next hoop – starting from where it lies, and so on.

So – the short term objective is to win a hoop, and the longer term objective is to score more hoops than your opponents, and so win the match.

Using the mallet: There is very little to say here about the grip, stance and swing – because it will make much more sense when you’ve actually got a mallet in your hand. However, there is no one *right way* – except that you need to find a position that you are comfortable with, and then swing the mallet as smoothly as possible.

The balls: The colours of the *primary* set of balls are Blue, Red, Black and Yellow – and they are played in that order. Blue always starts, and the pairs are Black and Blue v Red and Yellow.

However, to make most efficient use of the lawns, we often have a second game going on at the same time (which we call “double banking”) – and to avoid confusion they use a *secondary* set – Green, Pink, Brown and White. (Think Green for spring, Pink for summer, Brown for autumn and White for winter.) Green and Brown play against Pink and White.

The start: The owner of Blue (who we will call “Blue”) starts from a prescribed corner and hits their ball towards hoop 1, followed by Red, Black and Yellow.

Tactics: Blue then plays again, and, depending on the position of all the balls, will have to choose between (1) trying to run the hoop (if Blue is well placed to do so), (2) getting better position to do so, (3) *somehow* stopping an opponent who looks like they could run the hoop, or (4) *somehow* helping their partner to do so. Making good decisions often involves thinking ahead (as with eg snooker or even chess), and comes not only with experience but also with knowing your own strengths and limitations. Unless and until (1) is on, the aim is always to leave your side better placed to win the hoop than your opponents.

Rules: there are many situations which incur a penalty, including sending your ball up close to the next hoop, because you think your opponents are bound to win the current hoop on their next shot. We’ll quickly cover that one and the three most common unintentional faults.

Clothing: First, a reminder to wear flat-soled shoes/trainers. Second, we continue playing through light showers, and so please bring rainwear when it looks like it might be needed. Third, the usual croquet stroke involves swinging the mallet back between the legs and then forward to hit the ball, as you can see from the many videos on YouTube. So, tailored trousers (or shorts!) are best, but I did once suggest to someone who kept getting their mallet caught in very loose trousers that bicycle clips might be useful!

YOUR SAFETY: The lawn is full of “trip hazards”: 6 hoops, a peg, and 4 or 8 balls, and so (1) **never walk backwards on the lawn**, (2) **always face the play**, (3) **alert anyone in another game if you are going to hit the ball hard in their direction – whether that be on the other lawn or a *double-banked* game on your lawn**. Where possible, position yourself so that you can see each shot being played.

And last but not least – **have fun!**