

Playing Pétanque – basic instructions for Stanway U3A Pétanque Group

What is Pétanque? - It is a form of the French game Boules and played with heavy metal balls (Boules); however it is played on a dirt or gravel surface and players throw from a circle.

Object of the game – is for one of the opposing teams to reach a score of 13 first.

How is it played?

Whilst there are detailed rules for serious competition players, as a social activity we try to keep things relatively simple.

1. We usually play with 2 opposing teams of 3 or 4 players, depending on numbers, and teams wear coloured sashes to distinguish teams.
2. Players use 2 Boules each where there are 4 players on each team. If there are only 3 players on one team then 2 of the players can play 3 boules each so each team throws the same overall number of Boules.
3. To start the game, we usually have one player hold the small jack (cochonnet) in one closed hand and an opposing team member guesses which hand. The winner can choose to start or allow the opposing team to start.
4. The first player throws the jack to a distance of between 6 and 10 metres from the standing circle, then throws their first Boule to get as close to the jack as they can.
5. The opposing team then plays their Boules until one gets nearer the jack than the other team; this could be their first boule played, sometimes all boules are played out without success.
6. Once the opposing team have “won” the jack or played all their boules the other team plays their boules until they get closer to the jack.
7. Play could switch regularly until all boules are played.
8. In the event it is difficult to judge by eye who is closest to the jack a measuring line will be used to determine this.
9. At the end of play the number of boules closest to the jack from the winning team are counted and put on the score board.
10. The team that reaches a score of 13 is the winner.