

STICK CURLING STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL APPROACH

Approach each end as a separate game and play the easiest shots appropriate for your skill level. The first three rocks delivered in each end are critical to establish the style of play for that end. You can either employ a conservative (defensive) approach or an aggressive (offensive) approach. This will depend on several factors:

- The skill level of you and your partner as well as the other team;
- Whether you have the hammer or you don't have the hammer;
- The score in the game; and
- Which end you are playing.

If you do not have the hammer your goal should be to either steal one or more points or force your opponent to take a single point. You can do this by shrinking the scoring area and drawing your first rock to the button or at least a tight centre guard. Since your first rock can't be removed you will either guard your first rock or draw around it with your next shot.

When you have the hammer you will deliver the second rock of the end and your goal is to score two or more points or blank the end to retain hammer. Obviously in the last end of a tie game you will only need to score one point to win. You may want to do this by expanding the scoring area and keeping the 4 foot area open for your last rock. Your approach or strategy will be guided mostly by the scoreboard.

Often the shots that are missed either by yourself or by your opponent will influence your strategy and you may want to switch your approach from one to the other during any end of the game.

Generally to improve your chances of winning, you should learn how to read the ice, learn how rocks react when they contact other stones, develop a consistent delivery and avoid playing falling turns whenever possible.

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WHEN TO USE A CONSERVATIVE APPROACH

- In the first 2 ends of the game while you learn to read the curl and pace of the ice and while the score is still tied;
- In the last end when you have the hammer and the score is tied; or
- At any point in the game when you have a lead of 2 or more points.

How to play this strategy

A. Without Hammer

- Play your first 2 rocks of the end into the button or 4 foot area,
- Try to never leave any of your rocks short of the house so they can be used as guards by the opposition;
- Remove any opponents rocks as soon as allowed by the rules rather than playing draws or guards;
- Try to not leave any rocks behind the tee line that can be used by the opposition to freeze to;
- If you have a comfortable lead throw your rocks through the house rather than playing draw shots.

B. With Hammer

- Try to take play away from the 4 foot area by playing your first rock to either open side of the house;
- Keep all draw shots in front of the tee line but never short of the rings;
- If you have a comfortable lead throw your rocks through the house rather than playing draw shots;
- Remove all opposition rocks, especially guards, from play as soon as allowed by the rules;
- When removing rocks from behind the tee line try to have your delivered rock roll out of play also;
- With the last rock of the end hit and roll out of play to blank the end and retain the hammer or hit and stay to win the game.

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WHEN TO USE AN AGGRESSIVE APPROACH

- Whenever you need to steal 1 or more points during the game;
- In the fifth end if you want to force the opposition to take 1 point so you can have the hammer in the last end; or
- Whenever you have the hammer and you need to score 2 or more points.

How to play this strategy

A. Without Hammer

- Play your first 2 rocks of the end into the button or 4 foot area or short of the house on the centre line as tight guards;
- Utilize all guards when available;
- Keep your draw shots in front of the tee line, especially when drawing around guards;
- Tap your opponent's rocks to the back of the house;
- Freeze to opponent's rocks behind the tee line or if in the 4 foot and behind guards.

B. With Hammer

- Play your first rock of the end to either open side of the house to expand the scoring area;
- When drawing to an open house, spread your rocks across the rings to prevent possible double take outs;
- Position your rocks in front of the tee line or even as corner guards;
- Utilize all guards available, especially corner guards;
- When drawing around longer guards on the centre line and the 4 foot area is open, try to leave your rocks in the front portion of the house;
- If the 4 foot area is not clear, freeze to any opponents rocks behind the tee line or tap them to the back of the house.