



## **Bowling Lingo: A to Z**

### **ABC**

The American Bowling Congress was founded in 1895 and was dissolved in 2004. It was replaced officially on January 1, 2005 by the United States Bowling Congress as an organization to combine the efforts of the ABC, WIBC, YABA, and USA Bowling.

### **ACTION**

- 1) Spin on the ball and the movement of the pins caused by that spin. A relatively slow ball with a lot of action can be much more effective than a very fast ball with little action.
- 2) Pins flying and mixing, ending with a good makeable leave.
- 3) Bowling for money, usually one-on-one.

### **ADDRESS**

The bowler's stance before beginning the approach.

### **ADJUSTMENT**

The changing of part of your game to be more competitive on the particular lane and/or lane condition you are bowling. This can mean an alignment change, equipment change, or even changes in your physical or mental game; some are subtle, others more pronounced.

### **APPROACH**

- 1) The space extending back from the foul line used to make the steps and delivery.
- 2) How the bowler gets to the foul line.

### **AREA**

A player has "area" if they are able to hit a larger number of boards and still get the ball back to the pocket. Modern high scoring environments can often give a player a 5-8 board area.

### **ARMSWING**

The path your arm takes from your pushaway to release. Generally it is desirable to have your armswing in a consistent plane of movement.

### **ARROWS**

The triangles embedded on the lane used in aiming the throw.

### **AXIS**

Generally the reference is to the positive axis point (PAP), which is the point on the ball where the bowler's release creates the initial axis of rotation.

## **AXIS TILT**

Ranging from 0 to 90 degrees, this is determined by the direction your axis is facing when you release the ball. 0 is parallel to the gutters, 90 is parallel to the foul line. The less axis tilt you have, the sooner the ball will go into a roll. Higher degrees of axis tilt promotes skid.

## **BABY SPLIT**

The 2-7 or 3-10 split. Easier to pick up compared to a regular split.

## **BACK ENDS**

Usually refers to the far end portion of the lane where the most hook can occur. If the back ends are very dry, the ball will continue to hook with power for most players; if the back ends are tight, most players will see more deflection in the pocket and fewer strikes.

## **BACKUP BALL**

A ball that curves left to right for a right-handed bowler or right to left for a left-handed bowler. Professionals normally do not throw back up balls.

## **BAD RACK**

A full set of pins that appears to have one or more not properly positioned; generally undesirable. See Re-rack

## **BAGGER (SUCH AS FIVE BAGGER)**

A string of strikes; i.e., five bagger is five in a row.

## **BAKER GAME/SYSTEM**

A method of team play in which in all five players bowl together to make one game; player #1 bowls frames 1 and 6; player #2 bowls frames 2 and 7 etc. Most Baker matches are two games, total pins.

## **BALANCE (AS APPLIED TO A BALL)**

The weight of a bowling ball is not always evenly distributed in the sphere. USBC rules allow a ball to vary 3 ounces from the drilled top half to bottom half of a ball, and one ounce from the left to right side. Before resin balls, these weights were used to subtly change the roll pattern of a ball. A ball that has negative balances tends to be influenced to turn away from the pins; a ball with positive balance will be influenced to turn into the pins.

## **BALANCE (AS APPLIED TO A PLAYER)**

A player is in balance if, at the point of release, they are able to complete their follow through without falling off to one side; generally means that the release and slide are simultaneous.

## **BALANCE HOLE**

As a general rule, if you take a bowling ball and place the label in front of you and then exactly dissect the ball into two equal halves, a right and left side, the gross weight of each half would be the same. However, if you dissect the ball off center, a greater portion of the weight block will be on one side of the ball, possibly making that half of the ball too heavy vis-a-vis the other half; also, modern high tech balls and their asymmetrical cores can be drilled in such a manner as to be in violation of the maximum tolerances allowed by the USBC for side to side weight (which is a one ounce differential); to get the ball back to legal compliance an extra, non-gripping hole may be drilled to remove the excess weight. This extra hole is the balance hole. The balance hole can also be used to increase or decrease a ball's reaction and/or to fine tune a more subtle change in ball reaction.

## **BALL RETURN**

The physical part of the equipment upon which the ball sits after being sent back to you after a delivery.

## **BALL SPINNER**

A machine that is used to spin a ball in a container so that the user can apply ball polish or sand the ball down more quickly.

## **BALL TRACK**

1) the area of the lane where most balls are thrown;

2) the area on a ball where the ball rolls; most balls will show scratches and wear in this area after several games.

## **BEAK**

The nose; the center of the headpin.

## **BED POSTS**

The 7-10 split.

## **BELLY THE BALL**

Describes the type of shot where a player stands inside and tosses it to the outside in the hopes it returns to the pocket for a strike.

## **BIG FOUR**

The 4-6-7-10 split.

## **BLIND SCORE**

When a league bowler is "blind" and can't find his/her way to the league that evening, the bowler's average is simply used (as if he/she just bowled that score) when figuring the team's total for each game.

## **BLOW**

A miss or an error failing to convert a spare other than a split.

## **BOWL OUT**

The practice of allowing a team player to complete their game by bowling more than their scheduled turn at one time; allowed as a courtesy to a player that has other time commitments; league and tournament rules can prohibit the practice.

## **BOARD**

A lane consists of 39 strips of wood, each called boards; they are usually numbered by the player and used as targeting terms; i.e., I was throwing the 5th board; in synthetic lanes there are no boards as such, but usually the synthetic overlay has a pattern that resembles natural wood lanes.

## **BODY ENGLISH**

Movements and contortions of the body intended to steer the ball as it travels down the lane.

## **BOOMER**

A big hooking ball; a person that throws a big hooking ball.

## **BOTTOM WEIGHT**

The weight of a bowling ball is not always evenly distributed in the sphere. USBC rules allow a ball to vary 3 ounces from the drilled top half to bottom half of a ball, and one ounce from the left to right side. Before resin balls, these weights were used to subtly change the roll pattern of a ball. A ball that had higher top weight would tend to go longer before hooking; a ball with bottom weight would tend to roll earlier. Although still used in ball drilling layouts, it is less important with the modern ball.

## **BREAK POINT**

The portion on the lane where the thrown ball begins to hook back to the pocket. Finding the proper breakpoint (called “breakpoint management”) is critical to the modern game. A ball that hooks too early or one that hooks too late will make it very difficult for a player to be consistent. Breakpoints can be adjusted by making changes in alignment, target, ball, ball surface and ball speed.

## **BROOKLYN (see JERSEY SIDE)**

Refers to a ball that crosses over to the other side of the headpin opposite the side it was thrown (i.e. a Brooklyn strike hit the 1-2 pocket for a right-hander).

## **BUCKET**

A diamond-shaped, four-pin cluster, e.g., the 2-4-5-8 or 1-2-3-5. Some claim it to be the 2-4-5-8 for right handers, the 3-5-6-9 for a lefty.

## **CARRYDOWN**

The oil conditioner on the lane does not soak into the boards, it sits on top. As balls are thrown, the oil is subtly moved...it may be pushed left and right, or, it may be moved farther down the lane (carried down). Usually, but not always, a house with a lot of carrydown will not allow a ball to hook as much on the back ends and scores will be lower. In some houses and oil patterns, the initial pattern is too much over/under and carry increases as the carrydown effect takes place. Carrydown is invisible to bowlers and cannot be seen. A top professional can anticipate carrydown and make adjustments accordingly.

## **CENTER OF GRAVITY (CG)**

The heaviest part of a bowling ball. The “CG” is signified by a dye mark placed on the ball by the manufacturer designating the center of the weight mass relative to the top of the ball.

## **CHANNEL (also GUTTER)**

Semicircular grooves or drop-off area on each side of the bowling surface.

## **CHOP**

To knock down one pin of a spare leave, while the pin next to or behind it remains standing.

## **CLEAN GAME**

A game without any open frames.

## **CLOSED POCKET**

A full rack of pins set up for your strike ball such that the head pin is a tad off spot towards your ball hand; i.e., to the right for a right handed player; closed pockets can give unpredictable results, often negative.

## **CONDITIONER**

Another name for lane oil. All lanes need some type of protective coating to prevent burn marks in the heads from the force of the thrown balls. In the “old days” lane conditioner was used primarily as a protective measure; today, under the System of Bowling, some centers legally use the lane conditioner as a tool to assist in scoring and guiding a ball to the pocket. The area of a lane that is heavily conditioned will retard the hook, and if there is heavy conditioner in the center/pocket area of the lane it can assist the ball into the pocket.

## **CONVENTIONAL GRIP**

A type of ball drilling where the fingers are placed up to the second joint. Not used by many higher skilled players as it is much harder to get a hook on this type of drilling, although, it may assist accuracy in some players.

## COUNT

Usually the number of pins knocked down in the next frame that apply to a spare or strike.

## COVERSTOCK

The material that makes up the outer shell of the ball; the hardness, texture, and shine of a bowling ball. It is generally defined as “Aggressive”, meaning it is made of a high friction material that is prone to large hook or flip when it encounters dry boards; or, “Medium” which displays less tendency to hook; and, “Mild/Mellow” which is the lowest friction material and the least sensitive to dry lanes.

## DEUCE

A game of 200 or more.

## DOTS

1) Series of seven spots on the lanes past the foul line but before the arrows; used to assist in targeting and alignment; also, the same spots on the approach normally used to align your feet in your initial stance.

2) Markers on the runway that guide the bowler's approach.

## DOUBLE WOOD

Any two pins such that one is directly behind the other; i.e., the 2-8; 3-9; 1-5.

## DOWN AND IN

Refers to a line that is more direct and parallel to the boards; opposite of bellying the ball.

## DRESSING

The lane conditioner; the act of applying lane conditioner.

## DRIFT

The number of boards that you vary from straight in your approach to the foul line. For example, if you place the inside edge of your slide foot on board 15 on the approach, but your inside edge slides on the 12 board at the foul line, you have a three board inward drift.

## DUTCH 200

A game of exactly 200 made by alternating strikes and spares throughout the entire game.

## EARLY TIMING

Releasing the ball before the sliding foot completes its slide; usually results in less hook and a weaker ball as the player does not have the proper balance and leverage to hit up on the ball.

## ENTRY ANGLE

The angle relative to the pocket that the ball enters the pocket. As a rule, increased angle means increased strikes (hence the preference for a ball that hooks a lot, or for clean back ends.)

## FALL BACK SHOT

A type of shot that starts to the opposite side of the normal pocket and then fades back into the pocket; sometimes used on very oily lane conditions.

## FAST EIGHT

Describes an apparent good pocket hit that gets just eight (8) pins; typically the right-handed players will leave the 4-7 spare and the left-handed players the 6-10; usually the ball is a tad high when this happens.

## **FIFTH ARROW**

The 25th board from the right (right hand player). The fifth arrow is normally played by bowlers who have an “Out of Bounds” condition.

## **FILL BALL**

The ball thrown after a spare in the 10th frame.

## **FINGER GRIPS**

Inserts that are placed in the finger and/or thumb holes to allow a better grip and generation of more spin, later release and more lift.

## **FINGER WEIGHT**

The drilling of a ball so that the finger holes are closer to the ball's label than is the thumbhole; it is a form of positive weight.

## **FINGERTIP**

A type of grip in which the fingers are inserted only as far as the first joint, allowing much more spin.

## **FIRST ARROW**

The farthest to the right (for a right handed player); located on the 5th board.

## **FLARE (TRACK FLARE)**

The migration of the ball track from the bowler's initial axis- the axis upon release-to the final axis-the axis at the moment of impact with the pins.

## **FLAT**

A ball that deflects too much; ineffective ball; few revolutions; if a ball comes into the pocket on an apparent good hit but leaves a weak hit such as the 5-7 or 8-10 split, it is said to have hit “flat.”

## **FLAT GUTTER**

The normal gutter is shaped somewhat oval so that the ball can roll purely and cleanly to the pit area if it goes into the gutter early...the channel effect; however, at the end of the lanes by the pins, the gutters are flat, not ovaled. The height (from the pin deck to the bottom of the flat gutters) is regulated by the USBC as if the flat gutters are too high, they will allow much better pinfall as pins will deflect off the sideboards and bounce back onto the lane much easier resulting in more pin action.

## **FLUSH**

Being solid in the pocket.

## **FOLLOW THROUGH**

What your arm does after the ball leaves your hand. It is generally desirable to follow through towards your target and upward as this promotes more accuracy.

## **FOUL**

Crossing or touching the foul line at delivery. It's penalized by a count of zero pins. If the foul occurs on the first ball of a frame, the bowler gets a second shot at a new rack.

## **FOUL LINE**

1) The line that separates the approach area from the beginning of the playing surface.

2) A line, usually red, between the approach and the beginning of the lane, 60 feet from the head pin.

## FOUNDATION FRAME

The 9th frame.

## FRAME

A game of bowling is divided into 10 frames. In each frame there are two chances to knock down all the pins, except in the 10th frame.

## FULL ROLLER

A ball that rolls over its full circumference. The track of the ball cuts between the thumb and finger holes. Although once very popular, it is now rarely used because it lacks the carrying power of a semi-rolled ball due to the fact that it generally cannot create the increased entry angles that are helpful to carrying your strikes, particularly the off-hits.

## GREEK CHURCH

1) A split leave of five pins similar to the 4-6-7-9-10 so called because it reminds people of an old cathedral type church with spires, etc.

2) Any split on which there are three pins on one side of the lane and two on the other.

## HALF TEN

The description of a 10-pin that was left by a ball in the pocket and the 6-pin laying down in front of the 10-pin in a half hearted manner; same as "weak 10".

## HANDICAP

An adjustment in scores in order to equalize competition by adding pins on a predetermined basis.

## HEADS

That part of the first portion of the lane that is usually hard maple (wood lanes) to absorb the impact of the thrown balls, generally the first 20 feet of the wood lane.

## HEAD PIN

The 1 pin.

## HIGH

A ball that hits more to the center of the head pin, often leaving a split.

## HIGH HIT

1) A solid hit on a pin due to contact near its front center

2) hitting too much head pin on a strike attempt.

## HOUSE

The bowling establishment or building.

## JERSEY SIDE/HIT

A ball that hits on the opposite side of the player's normal pocket; i.e, a Jersey for a right handed player would hit on the 1-2 pocket; usually refers to getting a strike in the "wrong" pocket. Called a "Brooklyn" in most locations of the country.

## KEGLER

German word for bowler.

## **KICKBACKS**

The side boards around the pins that divide lanes, where pins frequently rebound or “kick” back onto the lane aiding in pin action.

## **KING PIN**

The 5-pin. It is a key pin to produce a strike: a light pocket hit or deflected hit leaves this pin standing.

## **LEAGUE**

Organized competition on a weekly basis for team play.

## **LEAVE**

Pins left standing after the first ball has been rolled.

## **LIGHT HIT**

A ball hitting the side of the pin deflecting it sideways.

## **LILY**

The 5-7-10 split; also known as the “sour apple”.

## **LOFT**

The distance the ball travels between time of release and the time it hits the lane.

## **LONG OIL**

Condition in which the lane conditioner is applied from the foul line farther than normal. There is no magic standard, but 35-40 feet or more of application was considered long oil. It can be a more difficult condition in that there will be less back end to generate pocket entry angle. Long Oil in today’s environment would be considered anything longer than 40 feet of oil. 35 is now considered short oil.

## **MAPLE**

The hard wood used for the head portion of the lanes (foul line to arrows). Wood lanes are mostly obsolete on the PBA Tour. Only 1 center will have wood lanes during the 2005-06 season.

## **MASS BIAS**

Mass bias in a bowling ball occurs when the weight block or portion of weight block is more dominant in one direction inside of a bowling ball.

## **MATCH PLAY**

A type of competition in which two bowlers compete against one another, rather than against the field as a whole. Typically, the winner of a match advances to the next round for another match.

## **MESSENGER**

The name given to the pin that rolls across the pindeck into a pin or pins to either get a strike or break up a split.

## **MINUS**

In competitive play, the amount of pins (including bonus, if any) that a player is scoring under a 200 average. A player that shoots 1,534 for eight (8) games is “minus” 66.

## **NEGATIVE WEIGHT**

Weight on a ball that tends to hold back the hook and/or to get the ball into a roll earlier; bottom weight, negative side weight and thumb weight are considered negative weights. These are considered static weights that can be drilled into a ball.

## **NO-TAP**

A type of competition where nine (9) pins on the first ball is scored as a strike; in some instances there are 8-pin no-tap events; in those, eights (8) pins or more on the first ball counts as a strike.

## **OPEN FRAME**

A frame having neither a spare or strike.

## **OPEN BOWLING**

Bowling for the fun of it, as opposed to competing in league or tournament play.

## **OUT OF BOUNDS**

An area from which the ball can't get to the pocket with its usual break. If, for example, a right-handed bowler delivers the ball from too far to the right, it is said to be out of bounds.

## **OVER**

To a professional bowler, the number of pins above 200. Thus a score of 224 is "24 over."

## **PAP (POSITIVE AXIS POINT)**

The point on the ball that is equidistant from all points of the release ball track.

## **PAR**

To a professional bowler, a 200 game.

## **PERFECT GAME**

A game of all strikes--twelve strikes in a row--resulting in bowling's maximum score of 300.

## **PICKET FENCE**

The 1-2-4-7 or 1-3-6-10 spares.

## **PIN DECK**

Area on which the pins are set.

## **PIN PLACEMENT**

Out or In. A drilling term that is relative to a bowler's track designed purposely for creating more ball dynamics. A Pin-in ball (when the pin is located within two inches of the Center of Gravity) is excellent choice for control and less hook; a Pin-out ball usually can be made to hook more and flip more dramatically than pin-in balls; they often give the driller more options.

## **PIT**

The area of the lane behind the pin deck. The area at the end of the lane.

## **PITCH**

Angle at which the holes in a ball are drilled.

## **PLUS**

In competitive play, the amount of pins (including bonus, if any) that a player is scoring over a 200 average; a player that shoots 1,734 for eight (8) games is "plus" 134. See also "minus", "over" and "under".

## **POCKET**

The desirable location for the ball to hit the pins to maximize strike potential. Generally the area between the 1-3 pins (right-hand player) or the 1-2 pins (left-hand player). This is the target for the first ball in a frame.

## **POSITIVE WEIGHT**

Weight on a ball that tends to enhance the hook and/or to get the ball into a roll later down the lane; top weight, positive side weight and finger weight are considered positive weights. These are considered static weights that can be drilled into a ball.

## **PUNCH OUT**

To finish with consecutive strikes, from any frame on.

## **PUSHAWAY**

The pushing out (forward) of the ball to begin the swing (coincides with first step of four-step approach.)

## **RADIUS OF GYRATION (RG)**

Identifies how fast a ball begins to rotate once it leaves the bowler's hand.

## **RANGE FINDERS**

Markers in the lane that help the bowler determine the target line. There are two sets of such markers: 10 dots located seven feet past the foul line and seven arrows arranged in a triangle beginning 16 feet beyond the foul line. There are also range finders at 35 and 40 feet down the lane per USBC rules.

## **RE-RACK**

Resetting the pins to a new full rack due to a perceived mis-spotting of one or more pins.

## **REVS/REVOLUTIONS**

The number of times the ball rolls over its circumference from when it is released until it contacts the pins; as a rule, more is better.

## **ROLL OUT**

A ball that loses its side rotation before hitting the pins; the hook action stops at that point and the ball straightens out.

## **SANDBAGGING**

Deliberately keeping an average low so that person can receive a bigger handicap.

## **SCRATCH**

The actual score the bowler makes; it is without any handicap adjustment (to equalize competition).

## **SIX PACK**

Six strikes in a row.

## **SKID**

What the ball does when it first hits the lane surface; all balls need to skid before hooking.

## **SLEEPER**

A rear pin that is not easily seen because of a pin directly in front of it (Ex.: 2-8, 3-9, 1-5). See Double Wood

## **SOUR APPLE**

A weak hit that leaves leaves the 5-7, 5-10 or 5-7-10 split; also, the 5-7-10 split itself. Also known as the “lily”.

## **SPAN**

On a bowling ball, the distance between the thumb and finger holes

## **SPARE**

To knock down the remaining pins standing left after the first throw with the second throw.

## **SPLIT**

Various combination of pins standing after a first throw where one or more pins has been knocked down creating a space between standing pins and thus a harder spare. Examples: 4-5, 5-6, 4-7, 6-10, 7-10, 4-6-7-10.

## **SPOT BOWLING**

A method of aiming the ball in which spots (arrows and dots) on the lane are used as targets rather than looking at the pins during the throw.

## **STRIKE**

Knocking down all 10 pins with the first effort.

## **TAP**

An apparent perfect hit for a strike but one pin is left standing.

## **TURKEY**

Three consecutive strikes.

## **THREE HUNDRED (300) GAME**

A perfect game.

## **TOP WEIGHT**

Drilling of a ball so that there is more weight above the label than there is below; it is considered a positive weight.

## **VACANCY**

A “dummy” score used when a team does not have the same number on the team roster as do other teams. The vacancy score is set by the league and carries a handicap the same as if some bowler was carrying that average.

## **VENT HOLE**

An extra hole drilled to relieve suction in the thumb hole; not a gripping hole.

## **WASHOUT**

A “split” with the headpin standing; symbolized as “W”; not making the spare is considered a blow or error, not a split. For example, the 1-2-4-10 or 1-2-10 for right-handed bowlers, or the 1-3-6-7 or 1-3-7 for left-handers is considered a “washout.”

## **WEIGHT BLOCK**

The interior portion of a ball that adds extra weight to it to bring the overall gross weight higher. Knowledge of the location of the weight block is used to create balls with differing positive and negative weight distributions.

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