



Chapter 2: USBC General Playing Rules

Leagues and Tournaments

Rule 1. Leagues and tournaments must be organized and bowled in accordance with USBC Bylaws, rules and regulations. These events must be scheduled on lanes that are currently USBC certified and only USBC approved equipment may be used.

Game – Definition

Rule 2a. A game of American tenpins consists of ten frames. A player delivers two balls in each of the first nine frames unless a strike is scored. In the 10th frame, a player delivers three balls if a strike or spare is scored. Every frame must be completed by each player bowling in regular order.

Baker System Team Game

Rule 2b. The Baker System is a modified format consisting of teams of two or more bowlers. (See Rule 100a.)

1. All team members follow each other in order, each bowling a complete frame, until a complete game is bowled.
2. Ten frames are combined to calculate a team game.

NOTE: Refer to page 98 for further information on the Baker Format, and USBC Rule 51d for award information.

Game - How Scored

Rule 3a. Except when a strike is scored, the number of pins knocked down by the player's first delivery is to be marked next to the small square in the upper right-hand corner of that frame, and the number of pins knocked down by the player's second delivery is to be marked inside the small square. If none of the standing pins are knocked down by the second delivery in a frame, the scoresheet shall be marked with a (-). The count for the two deliveries in the frame shall be recorded immediately.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
X	X	X	7/2	8/	F/9	X	7/	9=	X/X/8
30	57	76	85	95	104	124	143	152	180

Strike

Rule 3b. A strike is made when the full setup of 10 pins is knocked down with the first delivery in a frame. It is marked by an (x) in the small square in the upper right-hand corner of the frame where it was made. The count for one strike is 10 plus the number of pins knocked down on the player's next two deliveries.



Double

Rule 3c. Two consecutive strikes is a double. The count for the first strike is 20 plus the number of pins knocked down with the first delivery following the second strike.

Triple or Turkey

Rule 3d. Three successive strikes is a triple or turkey. The count for the first strike is 30. To bowl the maximum score of 300, the player must bowl 12 strikes in succession.

Spare

Rule 3e. A spare is scored when pins left standing after the first delivery are knocked down with the second delivery in that frame. It is marked by a (/) in the small square in the upper right-hand corner of the frame. The count for a spare is 10 plus the number of pins knocked down by the player's next delivery.

Open

Rule 3f. An open is recorded when a player fails to knock down all 10 pins after two deliveries in a frame.

Split

Rule 3g. A split is a setup of pins left standing after the first delivery, provided the head pin is down and at least one pin is down:

1. Between two or more standing pins; i.e., 7-9 or 3-10.
2. Immediately ahead of two or more standing pins; i.e., 5-6.

NOTE: A split is usually designated by a (0), but any other symbol may be used.

Legal Delivery

Rule 4a. A delivery is made when the ball leaves the player's possession and crosses the foul line into playing territory. Every delivery counts unless a dead ball is declared. (See Rule 8.) A delivery must be made entirely by manual means. No device may be incorporated in or affixed to the ball that detaches on delivery or is a moving part during delivery except as provided in Rules 4b and c.

Special Equipment to Grip the Ball

Rule 4b. A player may use special equipment to aid in grasping and delivering the ball if it is in place of a hand, or major portion thereof, lost by amputation or otherwise.

Mechanical Aids to Grip the Ball — Alternating Delivery

Rule 4c. A player may, if granted permission by the USBC and each league or tournament in which the player participates, alternate right/left-handed delivery and/or use special equipment to aid in grasping and delivering the ball.



1. The aid cannot incorporate a mechanical device with moving parts that would impart force or impetus to the ball.
2. Permission may be granted by USBC if the following is submitted:
 - a. A doctor's certificate is furnished to USBC, describing the disability and the reason to alternate right/left-handed delivery and/or recommending the aid.
 - b. A description, drawing or model of the aid (only for mechanical aid).

When authorization is given, USBC will provide the player with a special card stating that alternating right/left-handed delivery and/or the use of the specified mechanical aid has been approved by USBC. If permission is denied, the player has the right of appeal to the USBC Legal Committee. Permission may be withdrawn for cause.

A Resolution, adopted March 19, 2004 and May 4, 2004, allows USBC to grant permission to individuals with physical disabilities who can not impart force or impetus to a ball to use a mechanical device with moving parts.

These individuals must provide a description of the device and evidence that the use of the particular devices is necessary to participate.

Individuals must receive permission from USBC to use such devices, and must also receive permission from each league or tournament prior to participation.

This resolution is effective through July 31, 2008.

Special Considerations to Deliver the Ball

Rule 4d. A player unable to execute a delivery in accordance with any of the foregoing procedures may bowl in USBC competition provided:

1. The league's board of directors or tournament management authorizes such participation.
2. The league's board of directors or tournament management establishes specific provisions to govern such participation.

The average established by the player is not acceptable in another league or tournament unless allowed by the rules of that league or tournament. The bowler is eligible for all USBC awards.

Definition of a Foul

Rule 5a. A foul occurs when a part of the player's body encroaches on or goes beyond the foul line and touches any part of the lane, equipment or building during or after a delivery. A ball is in play after a delivery until the same or another player is on the approach in position to make a succeeding delivery.



The certification and inspection committee of a local association can require that the foul line be plainly marked on the walls, posts, division boards or any other structure in a bowling center on a line with the regular foul line.

When a foul is recorded, the delivery counts but the player is not credited with any pins knocked down by that delivery. (See Rule 6b.)

NOTE: The foul line is of infinite length including walls, flooring, posts and ball returns. (Footwear and clothing are considered part of the body.) A foul is not committed when foreign objects such as pens, jewelry, coins, cigarettes, etc., drop from a bowler's pocket or fall from a person's body or clothing. A player should request permission to cross the foul line to retrieve any items that have fallen beyond the foul line.

Deliberate Foul

Rule 5b. When a player deliberately fouls to benefit by the calling of a foul, the player shall be credited with zero pinfall for that delivery and not allowed further deliveries in that frame. If questions arise, Rule 10, Provisional Ball, should be followed.

Foul Detection

Rule 5c. A USBC approved automatic foul detecting device must be used if available. When not available, a foul judge must be stationed in a position to have an unobstructed view of the foul line. Should a foul detecting device become temporarily inoperative, the following procedures shall be used to call fouls:

1. In tournament play, management shall assign a foul judge or have the official scorers call fouls.
2. In league play, the opposing team captains shall call fouls or designate a foul judge.

Failure to provide for the calling of fouls as specified shall disqualify scores bowled for USBC high score award consideration.

Apparent Foul

Rule 5d. A foul shall be declared and recorded if the automatic foul detecting device or foul judge fails to call a foul that is apparent to:

1. both captains or one or more members of each of the opposing teams, or
2. the official scorer, or
3. a tournament official.

If there is a dispute, refer to Rule 10, Provisional Ball.



Legal Pinfall

Rule 6a. Pins to be credited to a player following a legal delivery shall include:

1. Pins knocked down or off the lane surface by the ball or another pin.
2. Pins knocked down or off the lane surface by a pin rebounding from a side partition or rear cushion.
3. Pins knocked down or off the lane surface by a pin rebounding from the sweep bar when it is at rest on the pin deck before sweeping dead wood from the pin deck.
4. Pins that lean and touch the kickback or side partition.

All such pins are termed dead wood and must be removed before the next delivery.

No pins may be conceded and only pins actually knocked down or moved entirely off the playing area of the lane surface as a result of a legal delivery may be counted.

Illegal Pinfall

Rule 6b. When any of the following occur the delivery counts but the resulting pinfall does not:

1. A ball leaves the lane before reaching the pins.
2. A ball rebounds from the rear cushion.
3. A pin rebounds after coming in contact with the body, arms or legs of a human pinsetter.
4. A pin is touched by mechanical pinsetting equipment.
5. Any pin knocked down when dead wood is being removed.
6. Any pin knocked down by a human pinsetter.
7. The player commits a foul.
8. A delivery is made with dead wood on the lane or in the gutter and the ball contacts such dead wood before leaving the lane surface.
9. A delivery is made with dead wood on the lane or in the gutter, and a pin, after coming into contact with the dead wood, knocks down one or more pins.

If an illegal pinfall occurs and the player is entitled to additional deliveries in the frame, the pin(s) illegally knocked down must be respotted where they originally stood before delivery of the ball.

Pins – Improperly Set

Rule 7a. It is each player's responsibility to determine if a setup is correct. The player shall insist that any pin(s) incorrectly set be respotted before delivering the ball, otherwise the setup is deemed to be acceptable.

When bowling at a full setup or to make a spare, if it is discovered immediately after the delivery that one or more pins are set improperly, but not missing, the delivery and resulting pinfall count.



No change can be made in the position of any pins left standing after a delivery, unless the pinsetter moved or misplaced any pin after the first delivery.

Pins – Rebounding

Rule 7b. Pins that rebound and stand on the lane must be counted as standing pins.

Pins – Replacement

Rule 7c. Should a pin be broken or otherwise badly damaged during the game, it shall be replaced at once by another pin as nearly uniform in weight and condition with the set in use. The league or tournament officials shall determine whether pins shall be replaced.

A broken pin does not change the score made by the bowler. The pins knocked down are counted, after which the broken pin is replaced.

Dead Ball

Rule 8. When a dead ball is called, the delivery does not count and the correct pins must be respotted. The player is allowed to rebowl that delivery.

A ball shall be declared dead if any of the following occur:

- a. After a delivery, attention is immediately called to the fact that one or more pins were missing from the setup.
- b. A human pinsetter interferes with any standing pin before the ball reaches the pins.
- c. A human pinsetter removes or interferes with any downed pin before it stops rolling.
- d. A player bowls on the wrong lane or out of turn, or one player from each team on the pair of lanes bowls on the wrong lane.
- e. A player is interfered with by the pinsetter, another player, spectator, or moving object as the ball is being delivered and before delivery is completed. In such case, the player has the option to accept the resulting pinfall or have a dead ball called.
- f. Any pin is moved or knocked down as a player delivers the ball but before the ball reaches the pins.
- g. A delivered ball comes in contact with a foreign obstacle.

Bowling on Wrong Lane

Rule 9. In normal league or tournament play, a dead ball shall be called and the player or players required to rebowl on the correct lane when:

- a. One player bowls on the wrong lane.
- b. One player from each team on the pair of lanes bowls on the wrong lane.



1. If more than one player on the same team bowls on the wrong lane in turn, that game will be completed without adjustment. Any succeeding game must be started on the correctly scheduled lane.
2. In singles match play competition, where a player normally bowls two frames each time it is the player's turn to bowl, and the player bowls on the wrong lanes, a dead ball shall be called and the player required to rebowl on the correct lanes, providing the error was discovered before the opposing player has made a delivery. Otherwise, the score stands as bowled, with all subsequent frames in the game bowled on the correct lanes.

Provisional Ball

Rule 10. A provisional ball or frame shall be bowled when a protest involving a foul, legal pinfall or a dead ball is made and cannot be resolved by the two team captains or a tournament official. The following procedures apply when a dispute occurs:

- a. For the first ball of any frame, or after the second ball in the 10th frame if the first ball was a strike:
 1. Foul: The player shall complete the frame and then bowl one provisional ball at a full setup of pins.
 2. Illegal Pinfall: The player shall complete the frame and then bowl one provisional ball at the same setup which would have remained standing had the disputed pin(s) not have fallen.
 3. Dead Ball: The player shall complete the frame and then bowl a complete provisional frame.
- b. On a spare attempt or the third ball of the 10th frame:
 1. Foul and Illegal Pinfall: No provisional ball is necessary.
 2. Dead Ball: A provisional ball shall be bowled at the same setup which was standing when the disputed ball was bowled.

The scoresheet and a record of both scores for the frame in which the provisional delivery was made shall be kept. The protest must be referred to the league's board of directors or tournament management for a decision. If they are unable to make a decision, the local association or USBC can be asked for a decision on submission of the facts relating to the protest.

Forfeit – Delay of Game

Rule 11. No unreasonable delay in the progress of any game is permitted. If a player or team in a league or tournament refuses to proceed with a game after being directed to do so by a league or tournament official, the game or series shall be declared forfeited.

Approaches Must Not Be Defaced

Rule 12. The application of any foreign substance on any part of the approach that detracts from the possibility of other players having normal conditions is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, such substances as talcum powder, pumice and resin on shoes; also soft rubber soles or heels that rub off on the approach. [CAQ #11]



Parental Consent

Rule 13. Unmarried grade school and high school students under the age of 18 must have written consent of a parent or guardian before participating in any USBC league or tournament where merchandise valued over \$50, or any cash and/or bonds are offered.

Such consent must be on file with the league or tournament secretary at least one week before participation when the youth is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian. If the youth is accompanied by his/her parent or guardian the form must be submitted prior to his/her participation. Failure to file the consent form will cause the player to be ineligible and subject games bowled to forfeiture or disqualification. The consent shall be given in the following form:

I, _____, am the parent or legal guardian of _____, an unmarried grade school or high school student under the age of 18. I understand that by signing this form I am authorizing my child to bowl, substitute or pace in USBC competition, which violates Rule 400.

By signing this form I verify I have read and reviewed USBC Rule 400 (see below). I agree and understand that when my child bowls in competition where merchandise valued over \$50, or any cash and/or bonds are awarded to any participant, my child is in direct violation of Rule 400. I am aware that rejection of any prizes does not prevent the violation of Rule 400.

I recognize that by bowling, substituting or pacing in competition which violates Rule 400, his/her amateur status may be jeopardized. I understand that to ensure compliance with high school and collegiate rules I should check with a compliance officer and/or academic counselor at his/her school.

This form must be submitted to the league secretary/tournament manager at least one week prior to participation when the youth is unaccompanied by parent or guardian. If the youth is accompanied by his/her parent or guardian the form must be submitted prior to his/her participation. This form must be submitted to EACH league or tournament the youth enters.

Parental Signature _____ Date _____

Rule 400: Youth Membership Eligibility
1. Age requirement:
a. Individuals must not have reached his/her 22nd birthday on or before August 1 of the current bowling season.
b. Individuals authorized as mentally challenged - age requirement is waived.
2. Youth membership may be suspended or denied to any youth bowler who bowls, substitutes or paces in any bowling activity where any of the participants are:
a. Involved in any form of gambling. Winners must be determined on merit pinfall based solely on the skill of the participant.



- b. Awarded any amount of cash or bonds for bowling accomplishments with the exception of Collegiate Competition. Team awards are acceptable provided the award is paid to the bowling program.
- c. Awarded prizes exceeding \$50 in value, not including costs for engraving, lettering, postage and/or tax. The \$50 figure is waived for the following:
 - 1) Bowling Equipment — must be personalized.
 - 2) Charity Bowl-a-thons approved by USBC.
 - 3) Entry Fees paid directly to the tournament manager or travel to another youth tournament.
 - 4) High school and collegiate competition.

Cash or prizes CANNOT be waived to allow the youth to participate. Buying or selling of earned awards is prohibited.

- 3 Youth bowlers may bowl in competitions that offer scholarships with no limits on the amount. This also includes side competitions and brackets provided all entries are returned 100% in the form of scholarships. In adult/youth competition, side competitions/brackets must be separate from adult.
- 4. Youths may bowl in pro-ams and Team USA competition provided they follow the requirements in Item B-1 through 3 and bowl in a separate division.

NOTE: Holding USBC adult membership does not violate Rule 400.

Supplemental Fees

Rule 14. No member of USBC shall participate or be involved in the operation of a scheme or arrangement requiring a supplemental fee of any type or character for the purpose of having any part or all of a player's score in USBC league or tournament play qualify for a prize where competing entrants bowl in different bowling centers, except as follows:

- a. Mail-o-graphic league.
- b. Mail-o-graphic tournament.
- c. League scores may be used to determine prize winners in a supplementary contest when the following conditions are observed:
 - 1. A minimum of two-thirds of the gross collected as entry fees must be donated to a recognized charitable organization.
 - 2. Entry is made available to all bowlers in a single local association and its metropolitan area.
 - 3. The maximum entry fee shall not exceed \$2 per entry.
 - 4. Operating costs shall not exceed 20 cents per person, per entry.



Penalty: Membership may be suspended or denied to anyone who is a participant or involved in a violation of this rule.

Gambling

Rule 15. A member of USBC, while bowling in USBC competition, shall not participate or be involved in the operation of any gambling scheme which is in violation of any applicable law, where all or part of a score bowled in USBC play determines the winner.

Contests or schemes which threaten the integrity of the game and/or entice a player to bowl beneath his/her ability are strictly prohibited.

Membership may be suspended or denied to anyone who is a participant or involved in the violation of this rule.

NOTE: Programs in leagues/tournaments where the participating bowlers pay a fee, optional or otherwise, and receive prizes for high game and/or series, with or without handicap, do not violate the rule because these involve merit pinfall based solely on the skill of the participant.

Using Assumed Name

Rule 16a. No person shall bowl under an assumed name or under the name of another person scheduled to bowl in a USBC league or tournament.

Penalty: Forfeiture of games in which the player was used and all found to be involved are subject to suspension.

Suspended Bowler Ineligible

Rule 16b. A suspended bowler or a bowler who has been denied USBC or CTF membership is ineligible to bowl, pace or hold office in any USBC league or tournament until reinstated.

Penalty: When a team knowingly uses a suspended bowler, it shall forfeit all games in which the suspended player was used and all involved are subject to suspension.

Unfair Tactics

Rule 17a. An individual can be charged with attempting to gain an unfair advantage in league or tournament play for the following reasons:

1. Directly or indirectly tampering with lanes, pins or bowling balls so they no longer meet USBC specifications.
2. Misrepresenting an average to gain a greater handicap, or qualify for a lower classification in an event.
3. Establishing an average below the player's ability to gain an unfair advantage in handicap or classified competition.



Penalty: Loss of games, prize winnings, league removal (see Rules 115a or 115c), and subject to suspension from or denial of USBC membership.

Rule 17b. An individual can also be charged with the following violations:

1. Engaging in improper tactics or conduct in connection with the game of bowling including, but not limited to, physical and verbal abuse toward other persons.
2. Failing to distribute prize money to team members consistent with verbal or written agreements.
3. Failing to pay fees due for participation in a USBC league or tournament. (See Rule 115b for league procedures to suspend an individual for nonpayment of league fees.)
4. Misusing/mishandling/misappropriation of any funds held in trust by an officer of a USBC league, an adult supervisor or coach of a youth league, or a board member of a chartered USBC local or state association.
5. Misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance.
 Misfeasance – The performance of a lawful action in an illegal or improper manner.
 Malfeasance – Wrongdoing or misconduct.
 Nonfeasance – Failure to act, especially failure to do what should be done.

Penalty: Membership may be suspended or denied to anyone who is involved in a violation of this rule. Leagues may also remove the individual following the provisions in Rule 115a or 115c.

Rule 17c. An adult leader, while involved in youth activities, can be charged with improper conduct which is not in the best interest of youth bowling including, but not limited to:

1. Using tobacco products, illegal drugs or alcoholic beverages. [CAQ #172]
2. Using foul language or gestures.
3. Wearing clothing depicting foul language or gestures.

An adult leader includes any individual acting in an official capacity during a youth activity including, but not limited to: league supervisors, league officials, tournament managers, league coordinators, in-state instructors, certified coaches, youth directors or designated coaches having leadership in prescribed areas of youth involvement.

Penalty: Membership may be suspended or denied to anyone who is involved in a violation of this rule.

Rule 17d. Individuals holding youth membership can be removed from competition and/or suspended/denied membership, for the following:

1. Conduct derogatory to the best interest of youth bowling including, but not limited to, the following in conjunction with youth competition and functions:
 - a. Using tobacco products, illegal drugs or alcoholic beverages.



- b. Using foul language or gestures.
 - c. Wearing clothing depicting foul language or gestures.
2. Prior adjudication of delinquency or conviction of a crime, including but not limited to, crimes involving physical or mental abuse or sexual assault.

Infractions of Rule 400 – Youth Membership Eligibility

Rule 17e. Upon witnessing, or being informed of an infraction, the adult leader shall do the following:

1. Explain to the youth bowler:
 - a. How they violated Rule 400 and that youth membership could be suspended or denied because of the violation
 - b. They must stop bowling in the activity immediately.
 - c. Any cash or awards received in violation of Rule 400 must be returned.
 - d. The violation will be documented with USBC.
2. File a written report to USBC. The report should be filed within seven days of contacting the youth bowler and include:
 - a. Bowler's name, address and birthdate.
 - b. Date and location of activity
 - c. How they violated Rule 400.
 - d. List any cash or awards received in violation of Rule 400 and/or returned.

The individual's membership status remains unchanged until a decision is made by USBC. [CAQ #174]

Bowling Ball – Altering Surface

Rule 18. Altering the surface of a bowling ball by the use of abrasives while bowling in USBC competition is prohibited.

All bowling balls so altered must be removed from the competition. (See Chapter 7, section 2, for additional information.)

NOTE: If it is shown the bowler had prior knowledge his/her actions were in violation of Rule 18, the game(s) in which the violation occurred is subject to forfeiture. In addition, the bowler is subject to dismissal from the league and suspension of membership.

Competition is defined as the remainder of the current game and remaining game(s) in the series being bowled.

The use of approved cleaning agents such as isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol and polishing machines is permissible.