

Indoor v Outdoor Bowls



Indoor and outdoor bowls share the same skills but demand different adjustments. Understand the key differences so you can adapt quickly and play confidently in any setting.

Why It Matters

Treating indoor and outdoor greens the same leads to wrong adjustments, missed opportunities and poor results.

Knowing what changes—and what stays the same—helps you choose the right line, weight and length faster, and gives you a clear edge over opponents who do not adapt.

What Stays the Same / What Changes

- WHAT STAYS THE SAME**
- The principles of line, weight and length.
 - Reading the head and using clues.
 - Good delivery technique.
 - Decision-making under pressure.

- WHAT CHANGES**
- Pace and how line behaves.
 - Surface consistency.
 - The influence of weather.
 - The size of the adjustments.

INDOOR BOWLS	V	OUTDOOR BOWLS
Generally faster pace and very consistent.	PACE	Slower and more variable (green, weather, time of day).
Line holds straighter for longer with less natural bend.	LINE	More natural bend. Line influenced by pace, slope and surface.
Smooth, even and uniform surfaces.	SURFACE	Varies with grass quality, moisture, wear and roll.
Controlled environment—no wind, rain or sun.	WEATHER	Wind, rain, sun and temperature affect bowls and the green.
Immediate and repeatable feedback.	FEEDBACK	Feedback can be delayed by changing conditions.
Smaller changes in weight and line produce big results.	TACTICAL ADJUSTMENT	Allow for bigger changes. Re-assess often.

At a Glance: Key Differences

Factor	Indoor Bowls	Outdoor Bowls	Coaching Implication
Pace	Faster and uniform	Slower and variable	Use lighter weight indoors; build a feel for pace outdoors.
Line	Straighter for longer	More bend, less predictable	Start straighter indoors; account for bend outdoors.
Surface	Perfectly even	Varying grass and moisture	Inspect and feel the green before deciding.
Weather	None	Wind, rain, sun, temperature	Adjust line, weight and length to conditions.
Feedback	Instant and consistent	May be delayed	Be patient; confirm before over-correcting.
Adjustment Size	Small changes matter	Larger changes needed	Make purposeful changes, then re-check.

Practical Example

The same shot attempted indoors and outdoors.

INDOOR		OUTDOOR
Use a lighter weight to avoid running long.		Use a heavier weight to counter slower pace.
Aim slightly straighter.		Aim to allow for natural bend to the head.
Expect consistent grip and roll.		Check moisture and wear; expect variation.
No wind or sun.		Allow for wind direction and strength.
Judge length from repeatable feedback.		Confirm length with a practice or two.

Common Mistakes / Things to Watch

- ⚠ **Over-correcting pace:** changing too much weight or line at once.
- ⚠ **Ignoring the conditions:** not checking wind, sun or moisture.
- ⚠ **Using indoor settings outdoors:** too light a weight and too straight.
- ⚠ **Chasing results:** changing plan after one end without a reason.
- ⚠ **Poor green assessment:** not using touch, sight and test shots.
- ⚠ **Not allowing time to adapt:** expecting indoor feel outdoors.
- ⚠ **Forgetting the basics:** technique, focus and decision-making still win.

Try This

- Play 3 ends indoors and 3 outdoors (if available).
- After each end, note one difference you observed.
- Choose one variable to adjust next end.
- Review your results and refine your plan.
- Aim for progress, not perfection.

Summary / Key Takeaway

Indoor bowls is faster, straighter and more predictable.
Outdoor bowls is slower, curvier and influenced by many factors.

Read the conditions, adjust with purpose, and trust your process.

Related Public Resource

Explore more in this series:

- How to Read a Head
- Understanding Line, Weight and Length
- Choosing the Right Shot
- Weight and Line
- Game Sense and Strategy

Visit your club or association website to access these free resources.