

# Gateball for Competition Players



## A resource book of practice activities for Gateball players wishing to do well in competitions as a Gateball team member

Beginners who play Gateball learn the skills of stroking, sparking and sliding. They are working at understanding the steps they need to follow to carry out a successful stroke, spark or slide. They need to consciously carry out these steps and practice until they become automatic. This motor learning then needs to be applied so that basic skills are mastered. This means that, on a majority of occasions, players can accurately place cross court strokes and sparks, spark and stroke balls tight to the line, run gates, make gate/touches and touch gates, use helper balls and place balls in positions called for by a team captain. The drills in Gateball Information Pamphlet No 15 outline the basics.

This pamphlet is for those who have mastered those basics and are really working at improving their performance in competition play. Game understanding is developing and players often come to know what strokes and sparks they need to play in order to succeed.

Good competition players:

- **think** about what they need to do - almost to the point where they can predict what their captain will call;
- **plan** how they will play the stroke or spark and
- **do** what is required.

The process of thinking, planning and doing needs to be developed through practice activities that are beyond simple drills that beginners need to master.

Rather than practicing the same skill over and over again (Block Practice,) use an approach that randomises repetitions (Random Practice.) This video explains why:

<https://trainugly.com/portfolio/block-random-practice/>

*Gateball Australia is the name that the Australian Croquet Association Incorporated (ACA) has registered and uses for its Gateball operations. The ACA is the recognised National Sporting Organisation for mallet sports in Australia. Gateball Australia is the Australian representative member of the World Gateball Union.*

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# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

In deciding how to practice it is important to consider the variability in Gateball:

## How does Gateball differ from Croquet?

In the big ball games there are 4 balls. They can be arranged in 24 different sequences:

{blue\_red,black,yellow} {blue\_red,yell ow,black} {blue\_black,red,yell ow} {blue\_black,yellow\_red} {blue,yellow\_red,black}  
{blue,yell ow,black,red} {red,blue\_black,yellow} {red,blue,yell ow,black} {red\_black,blue,yellow} {red\_black,yell ow,blue}  
{red,yellow\_blue,black} {red,yellow\_black,blue} {black,blue\_red,yellow} {black,blue,yell ow\_red} {black\_red,blue,yellow}  
{black\_red,yellow\_blue} {black,yellow\_blue,red} {black,yellow\_red,blue} {yellow\_blue,red\_black} {yellow\_blue,black\_red}  
{yell ow\_red,blue,black} {yellow\_red\_black,blue} {yellow\_black,blue\_red} {yellow\_black\_red,blue}

In Gateball there are ten balls that can be arranged in 3,628,800 different sequences

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{1,2,3,4,7,10,5,6,8,9} {1,2,3,4,7,10,5,8,6,9} {1,2,3,4,7,10,5,8,9,6} {1,2,3,4,7,10,5,9,6,8} {1,2,3,4,7,10,5,9,8,6} {1,2,3,4,7,10,5,9,8,6,5}  
{1,2,3,4,7,10,6,5,8,9} {1,2,3,4,7,10,6,5,9,8} {1,2,3,4,7,10,6,8,5,9} {1,2,3,4,7,10,6,8,9,5} {1,2,3,4,7,10,6,9,5,8} {1,2,3,4,7,10,6,9,8,5}

..and so on for 17,487 pages. On court there are millions of possible sequences when playing!

Every game of Gateball is different, so practising the same drills again and again neglects millions of other possible combinations of strokes and sparks. It does not develop the flexible thinking required to play well.

The real challenge in undertaking an effective practice session is to play game like sequences of strokes, slides and sparks. The activities in this pamphlet are examples only. Play them, adjust them and develop new ones appropriate to the games you play. Research shows us that game like random practice at this stage of a player's development is important.

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY



## 1. Be the master of the first gate pass

- The first and most difficult move of the game,
- Use a variety of coaching approaches to avoid paralysis by analysis,
- Some practice well but fail under game pressure, others play better when under pressure in a game. Combine this activity with 2,3,4 and 15

### Frame of mind – Before the game...

- remain confident and stay calm
- think of something fun other than GB
- some like to practice before a game others avoid it
- do some deep breathing, rotate your shoulders, splash some water on your face: relax mentally and physically

### Frame of mind - During the game...

- concentrate - see the back of the ball and the line to the gate, visualise a pass
- think positively - even missing gate 1 can be a bonus. Come on later to devastating effect!

### Deep, Midway and Shallow Passes



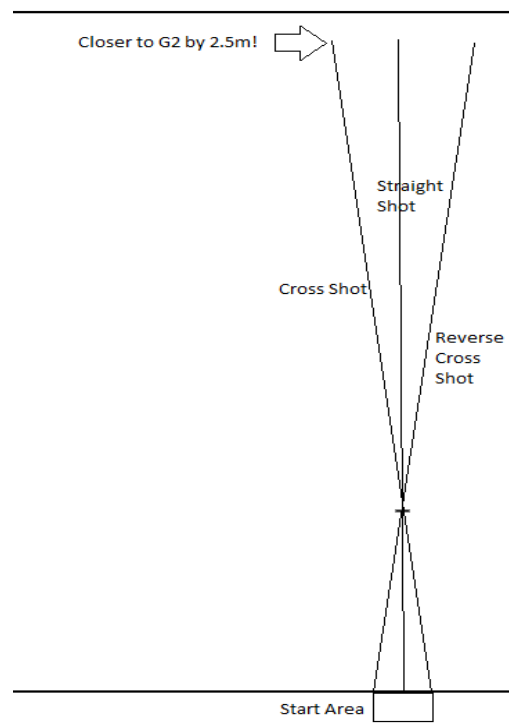
A deep shot finishes in an ideal position for tucking tight to line 2.

A midway shot can be useful to touch a pivot ball or aim for Gate 2.

A shallow shot can be useful for attacking a close opposition ball.

**Take 5 Balls to the start area. Play 2 deep shots, 2 shallow shots and a midway shot.**

### Cross Shots



Be able to play from anywhere across the Start Area. Use the cross shot whenever advantageous as it places a ball approximately 2.5m closer to Gate 2 than a straight shot.

Don't get locked into only playing straight shots. A straight shot is 4m to the gate. A cross shot only increases the distance to 4.1m.

A reverse cross shot may sometimes be required to take a ball close to corner 2.

**Take 5 balls to the start area. Play two cross shots, 1 straight shot and 2 reverse cross shots.**

**Strategy & Tactics practised:** Vary the length and employ cross shots at start stroking.

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

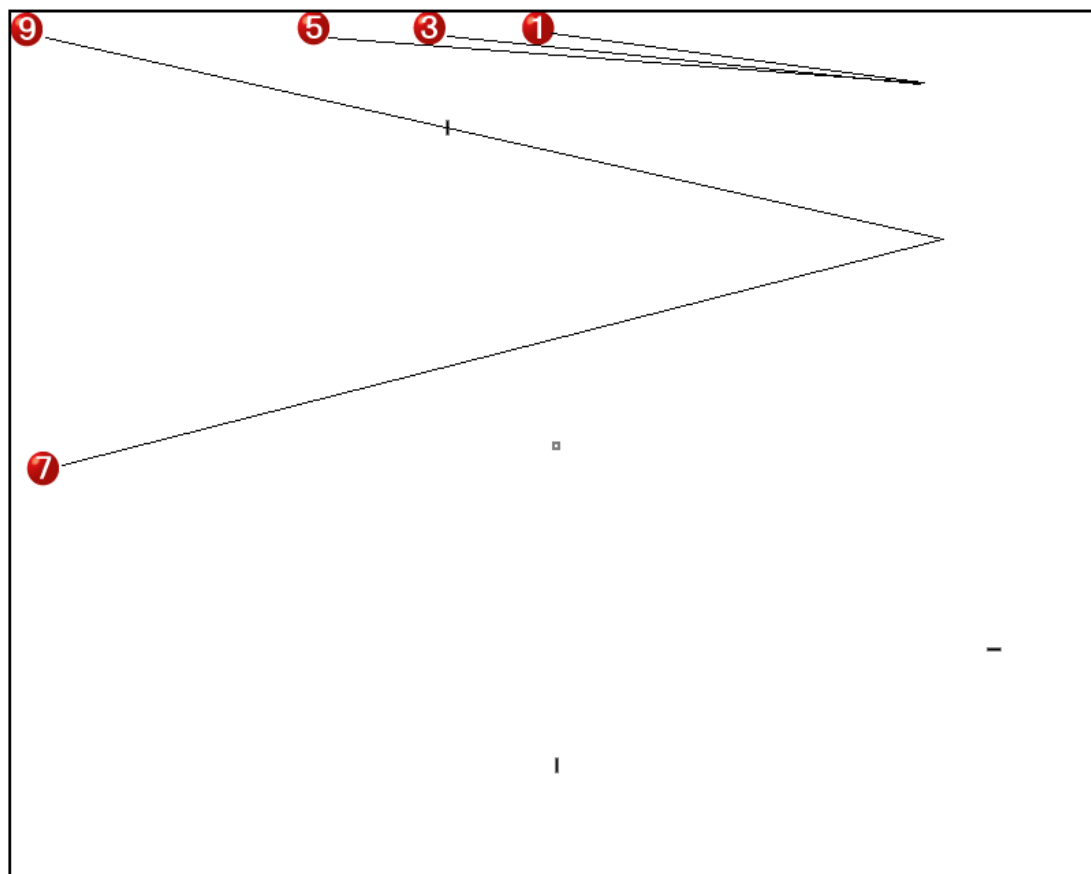
## 2. Opening Set Up (Leading Team Balls)

Stroke red balls through gate 1 and with the continuation stroke, position balls:

- 2m from gate 2 and up to 350mm from line 2
- level with gate 2 and up to 350mm from line 2
- 1m behind gate 2 and up to 350mm from line 2
- 1m from line 3, near the centre of line 3
- Pass Gate 1 with a deep stroke, attempt a pass of gate 2 but finish up to 1m from corner 3 and under 1m from line 3

These shots can be played as a continuation of activities 1 and 2. All require cross shots. 2 shots need to be midway and 3 shots need to be long.

**PLEASE NOTE:** There is no intention to propose that these numbered balls should always be placed as shown in this diagram. They are just examples of the typical strokes a captain may call.



**Make it a game:** One player plays red, the other plays white as in 4 (below.) Score a point for each ball that makes its target position.

### Strategy & Tactics practised:

Vary the length and employ cross shots at start stroking, Gate 2 Side Strategy, Gate 2 Side Strategy +, or Taking the Japanese/reception/Connecting position. Other opening strategies for the leading team can include the Double Gate Grab and Partial Holdback.

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

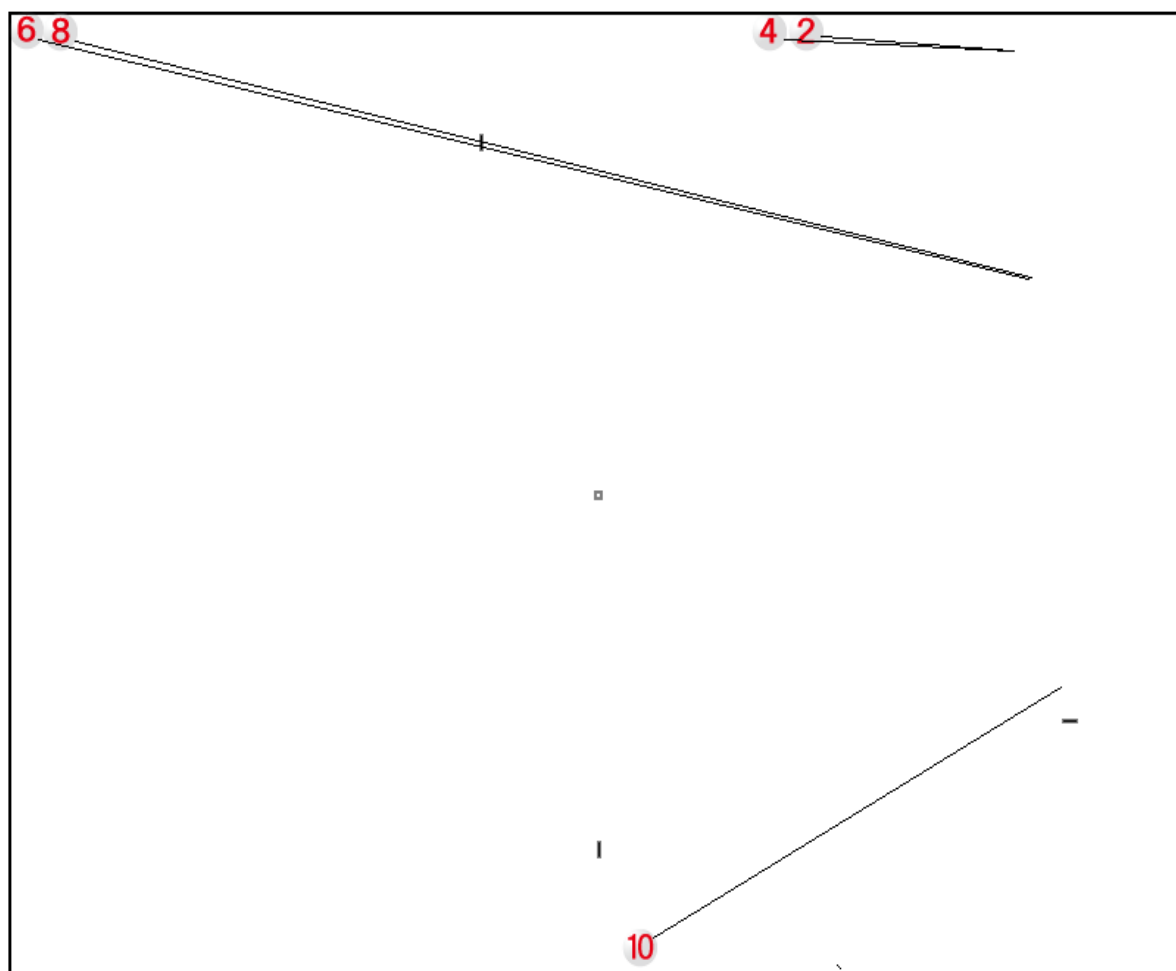
## 3. Opening Set Up (Following Team Balls)

Stroke white balls through gate 1 and with the continuation stroke, position balls:

- 4-5m from gate 2 and up to 200mm from line 2. Do this twice.
- Enter at a medium length, attempt gate 2 but finish 1m from corner 3. Do this twice.
- Enter with a short stroke and place a ball 350mm from line 4 but between gate 3 and the line

These shots can be played as a continuation of activities 1 and 2. All require cross shots. 2 need to be midway, 2 need to be long and 1 needs to be shallow.

**PLEASE NOTE:** There is no intention to propose that these numbered balls should be placed as shown in this diagram. They are just examples of the typical strokes a captain may call.



**Make it a game:** One player plays red (as in activity 2), the other plays white. Score a point for each ball that makes its target position.

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

**Strategy & Tactics practised:**

Vary the length and employ cross shots at start stroking.

Second Line Edge Strategy.

Third Corner Swift Attack Strategy.

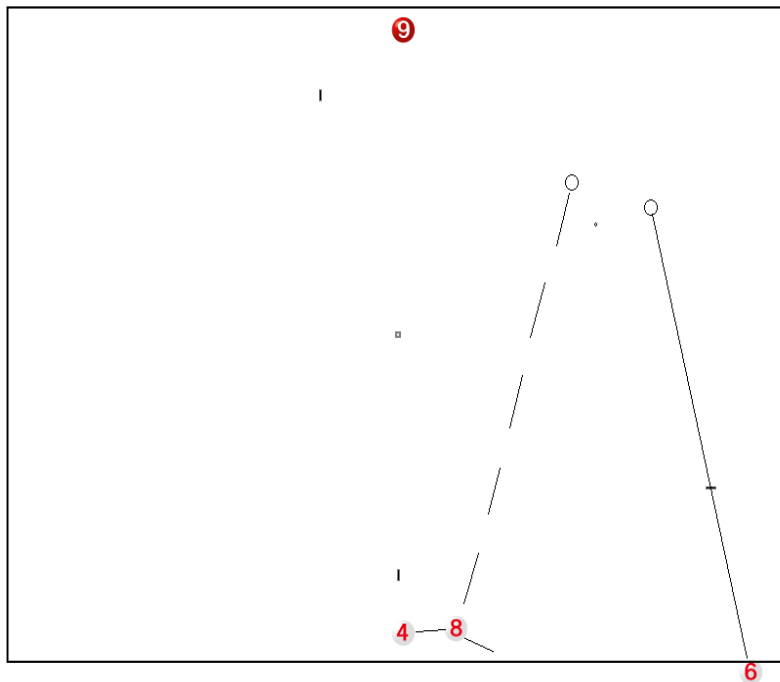
Take 3.

Other opening strategies for the following team can include Hold Back Approach, the Full Monty and Partial Hold Back.

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY



## 4. Executing Holdback



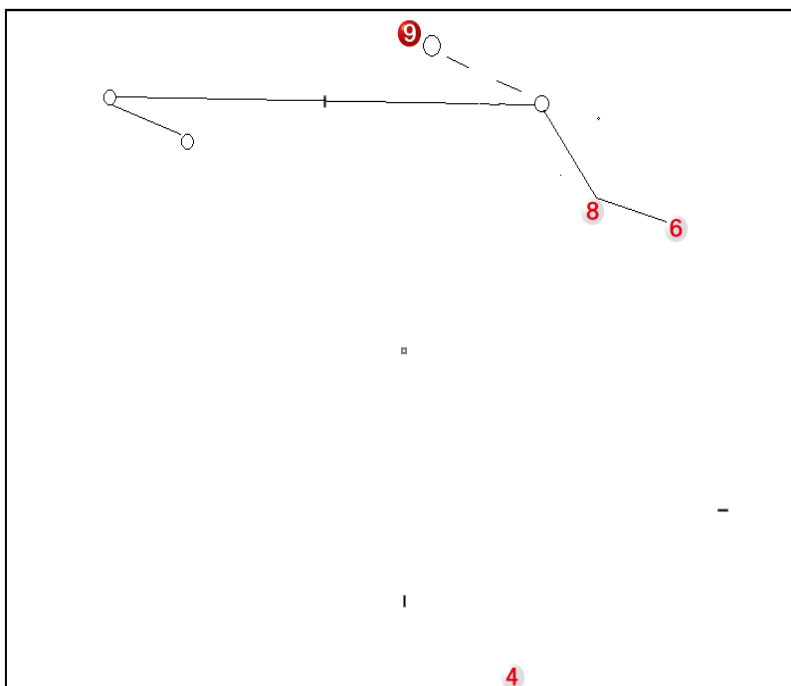
Place an opposition ball 2m in front of gate 2, about 500 mm from the line.

Place two of your own balls within easy touching distance near G3 and place another in the Start Area.

Play the first ball at G3 and spark it to a position where your other ball in the start area can slide touch it after passing G1.

This is a pivot or pioneer ball.

**Please note:** This is only an example of the use of holdback.



Place an opposition ball 2m in front of gate 2, about 500 mm from the line.

Place two of your own balls within easy touching distance near G3 and place another in the Start Area.

Play the first ball at G3 and spark it to a position where your other ball in the start area can slide touch it after passing G1.

This is a pivot or pioneer ball.

**Make it a game:** Two players take it in turns to complete this skill sequence. A "skill point" is awarded for each target achieved.

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

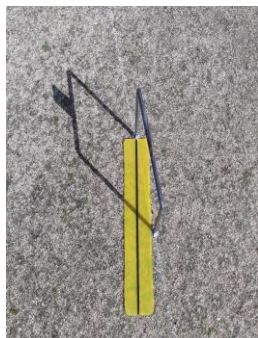
**Strategy & Tactics practised:** Vary the length and employ cross shots at start stroking, Place a pivot ball, Using holdback, and Slide Slide Slide.



# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY



## 5. Passing Gates 2 & 3



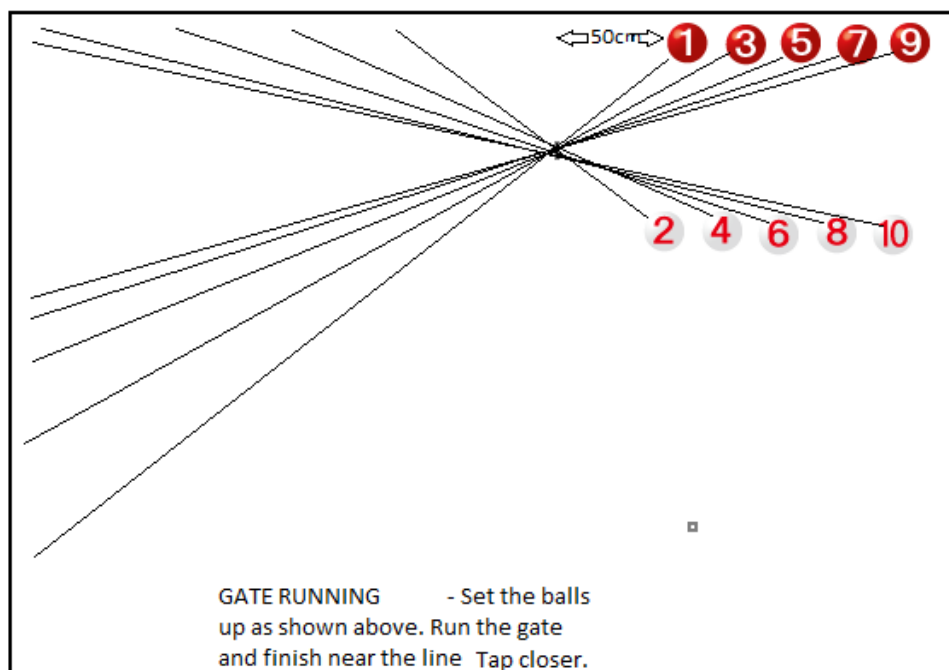
*Zone of Opportunity for Gateball. The yellow strip on the left is the width of a ball. The black line is the course of the centre of the ball and was used to mark the position of the red tapes in the second picture. Stroked firmly and with the gate solid in the ground, a ball on that course should pass the gate. The red tapes show the **Zone of opportunity for passing the gate**. It reaches the inside line about 50cm from where the extended gate line would also meet it.*

*How close to the 50cm mark can you consistently pass the gate?*



Position balls as shown in the diagram below.

White balls should pass the gate and end up no further than .5m from the inside line. Tap closer to the line for defensive position. Red balls should pass the gate and end up no further than 1m from the inside line. Tap closer to the line for a defensive position.



**Make it a game:** One player strokes the red balls while the other strokes the white balls. Players score 1 point for each ball just touching the inside line.

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

**Strategy & Tactics practised:**

Running gates from any angle!

Tight to the line

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY



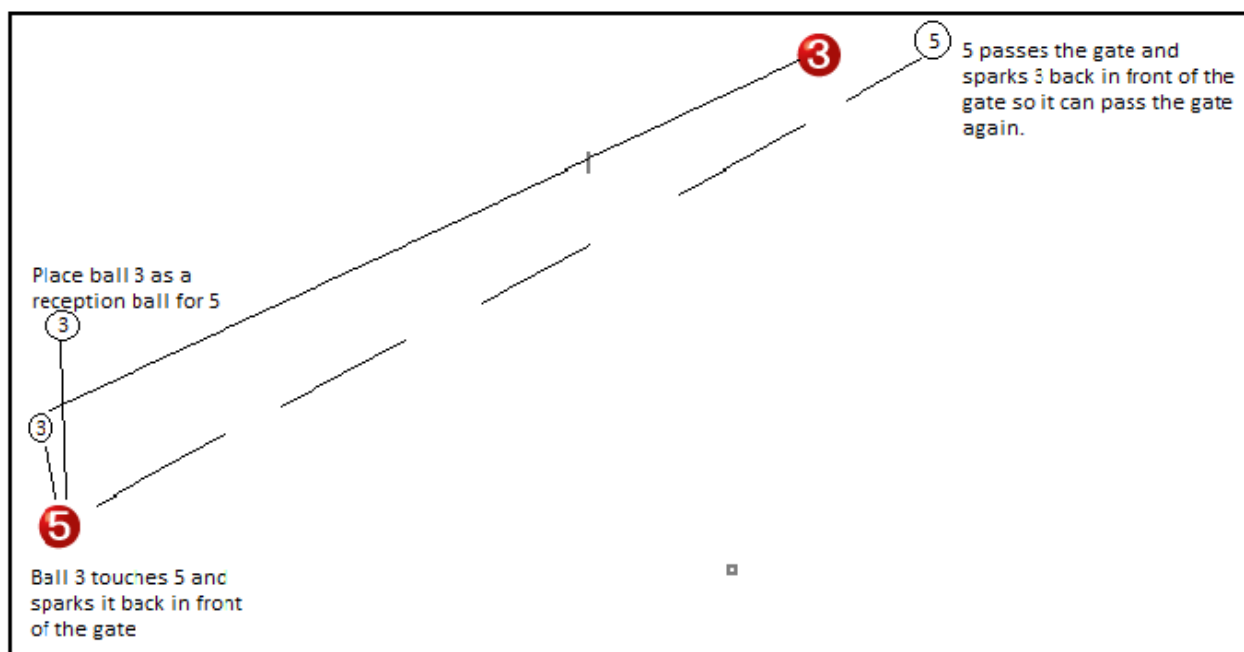
## 6. Gate Pass and Spark Back (Again and again and...)

Place a ball about .5m from line 1 or 3 near the centre of the line.

Place a second ball in front of gate 2 or 3 and up to 350mm from line 2 or 4.

Stroke the second ball through the gate, touch the first ball and spark it to a position in front of the gate where it can run the gate

Play the second ball into position as a reception ball for the ball sparked in front of the gate. Keep passing the gate, sparking back the reception ball to the front of the gate and then placing the ball as a reception ball. Keep the process going until it breaks down.



**Make it a game:** One player sets up as shown above, the other sets up in a mirror image at G3. Enact the scenario until one person fails to complete the sequence of plays.

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

### Strategy & Tactics practised:

Setting up behind a gate

**Level 2 Manual** p12, 22, 33



# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

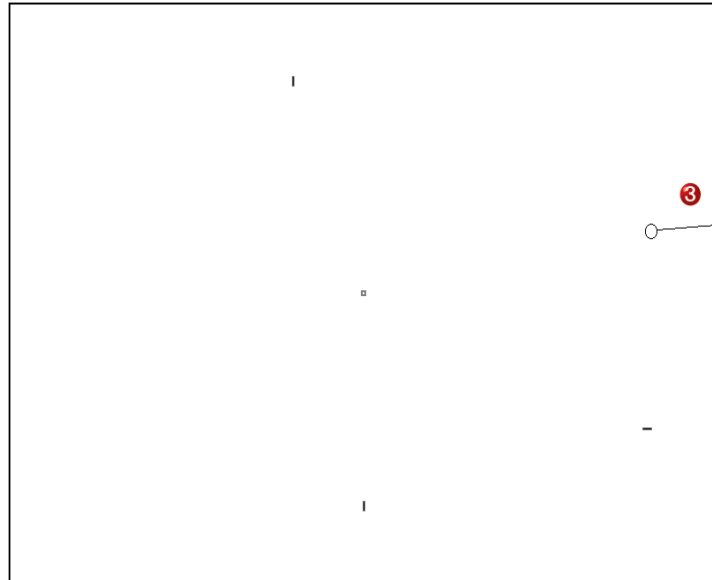


## 7. Slide to the goal pole

Place an outball at the middle of line 1.

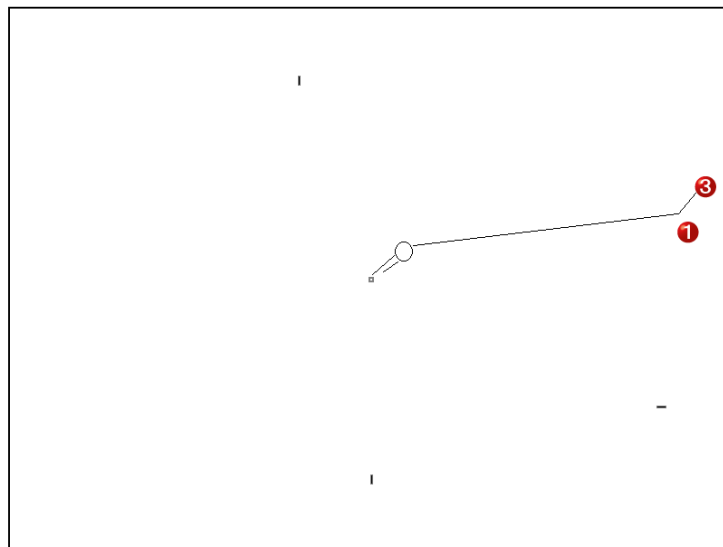
Place a second ball just to the right or left of the outball but in play.

Play in the outball so that that the inball can slide to the goal pole.



Slide the second ball to the goal pole

Spark the touched ball onto the goal pole and then your stroker's ball.



**Make it a game:** One player sets up on line 1 with red balls, the other on line 3 with the white balls. Repeat the activity 5 times – the winner is the one who scores the most Agaris.

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

**Strategy & Tactics practised:**

Slide Slide Slide, Making the Goal Pole, Goal Pole opportunities, Aggressive end game.

**Level 2 Manual** p13, 24,

## 8. Mini End Game Slide Fest



**Revise and improve sliding:** When making a slide, visualise another ball beside the target ball. For a fine slide the ghost ball should be barely touching the target ball. For a squarer slide, the aim point should be closer to the target ball.

Toss three balls gently into the air directly behind a gate.

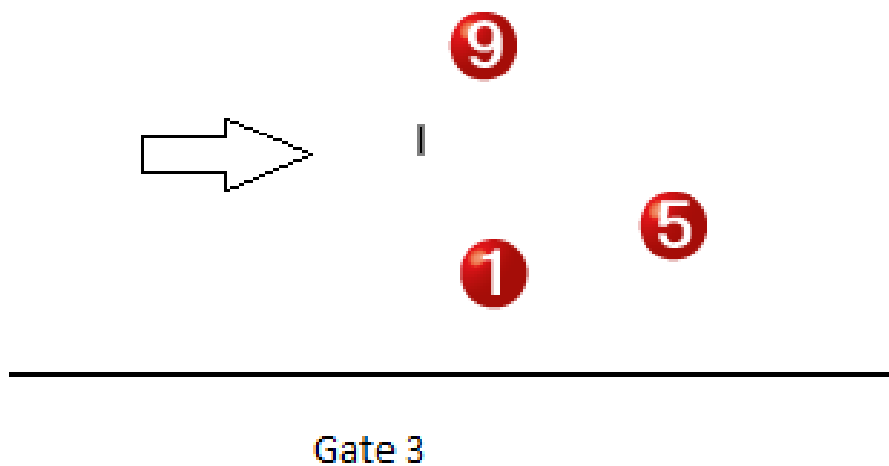
The stroker's ball is the one furthest behind the gate.

(An easier start to this activity is to start in front of the gate and work to the rear)

Use slides and sparks to

- spark **at least** one touched ball through the gate
- run the stroker's ball through the gate.

The picture shows three balls after landing. Each time the distribution of the balls will be different. In the example, play ball 5 as it is furthest behind the gate. The red arrow shows the direction for a gate pass. In this case it would be possible for ball 5 to put all 3 balls through the gate.



**Make it a game:** Players take it in turn to complete the activity. Whoever scores the most gates wins!

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

**Strategy & Tactics practised:**

Slide Slide Slide, Aggressive end game, Sparking your team's ball through a gate.

**Level 2 Manual** p13, 24,

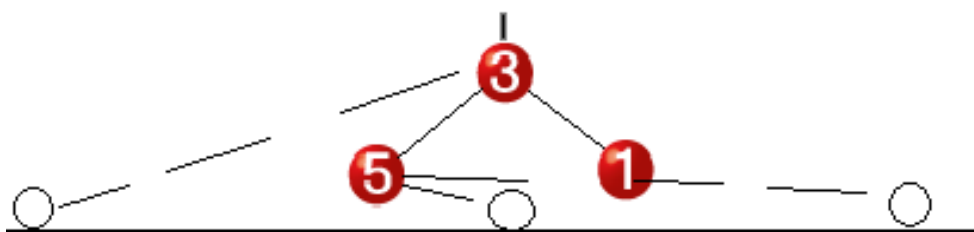
# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

## 9. Scattering

Set up three consecutive balls in an equilateral triangle with 800mm sides between gate 3 and line 4. 1 is the next ball to play.

Your opposition is about to achieve a gate touch at the gate on the opposite side of the field.

Scatter your balls as a defensive play. Each ball should be no more than 10cm from the line and at least 2m apart.



**Make it a game:** After scattering balls, the other player places two balls to make an easy gate/touch on the opposite side of the court. Make the gate touch. Spark the touched ball to attack one of the scattered opposition balls on the other side of the court. Use the ball that has earned two continuation shots to attack the other opposition balls on the other side. Reverse roles. The player with the most balls left on court is the winner.

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

**Strategy & Tactics practised:**  
Scattering

**Level 2 Manual** p14, 22

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

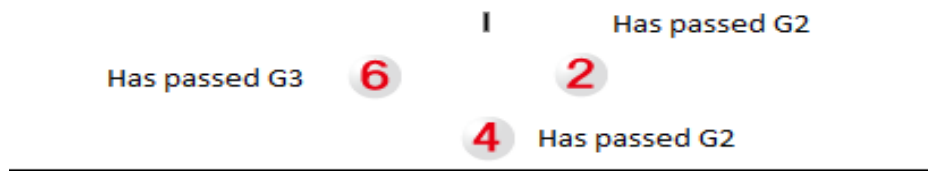
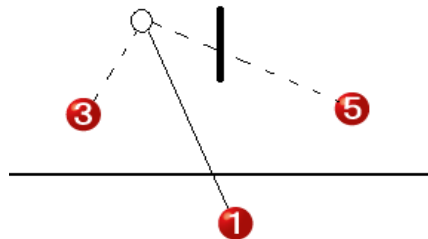


## 10. Straightener for gate touch/touch gate.

Place 3 consecutive balls as shown in these diagrams.

In the first scenario, 1 plays into position so 3 can use it to make a G&T on 5

The second scenario is more complicated. It's 2's turn. The aim is to get all 3 balls on the goal pole by the end of 6's turn. G&Ts and straighteners can be exploited if needed.



**Make it a game:** For the second scenario, one player sets up as shown above, the other sets up in a mirror image at gate 2. Enact the scenario scoring points for each ball that scores the goal pole (2pts) or ends up 1m from the Goal Pole (1pt).

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

### Strategy & Tactics practised:

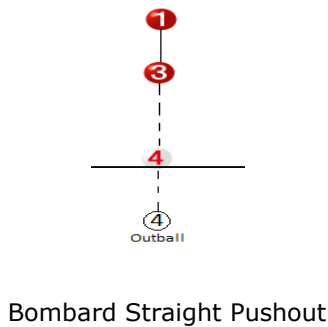
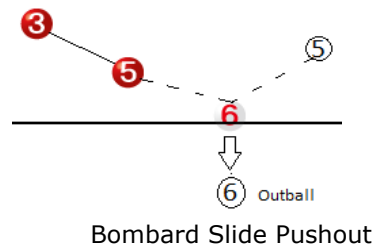
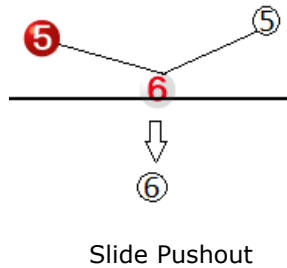
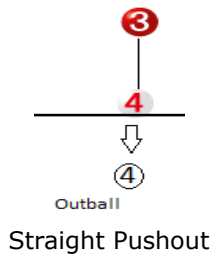
Making the Goal Pole, Goal Pole opportunities, Gate Touch and Touch Gate.

**Level 2 Manual** p15, 22

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY



## 11. Bombards and Pushouts



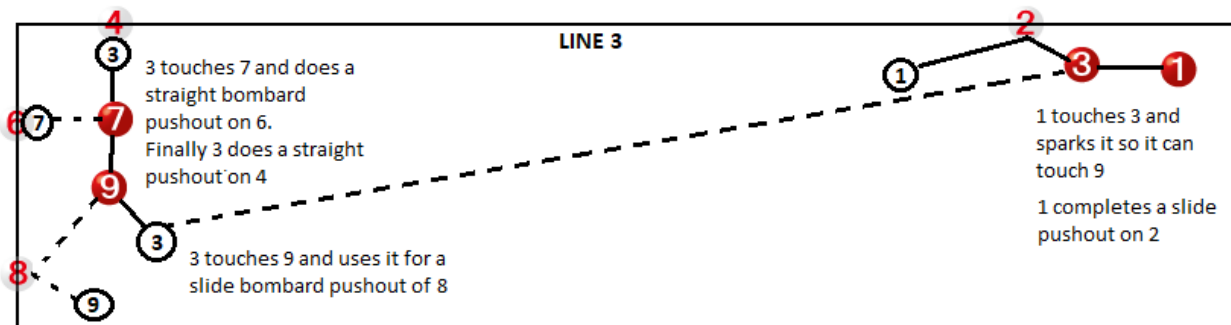
### Perfect these!

(solid line is a stroke, dashed line is the course of a sparked ball)  
Start where the balls are two mallet heads apart. On the second round start three mallet heads apart. How far can you get?

**Strategy and Tactics Practised:** Bombards and Pushouts



Bombard through a gate



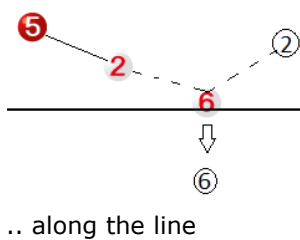
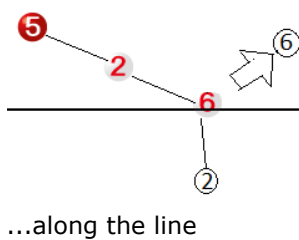
The aim of the leading team is to remove all opposition balls from the court. 5 and 10 are outballs and not engaged with the scenario. Starting with ball 1, follow the instructions on the diagram starting from the right. If you can obtain the same outcome by another means, by all means do so. This is a challenging activity. When first attempting it, set the balls quite close.

**Make it a game:** 2 players complete the drill several times – each outball scores a point

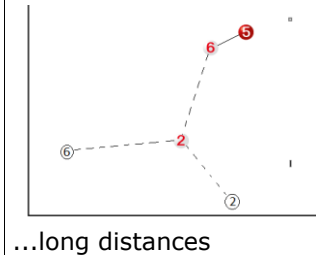
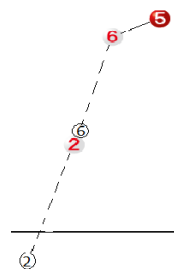
**Change it:** Vary the activity.

**Strategy & Tactics practised:** Bombards & Pushouts, Watch opposition play.

### Beware when bombarding...



...the next ball to play



Level 2 Manual p16, 25, 26

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY



## 12. Cross Court Spark Attack

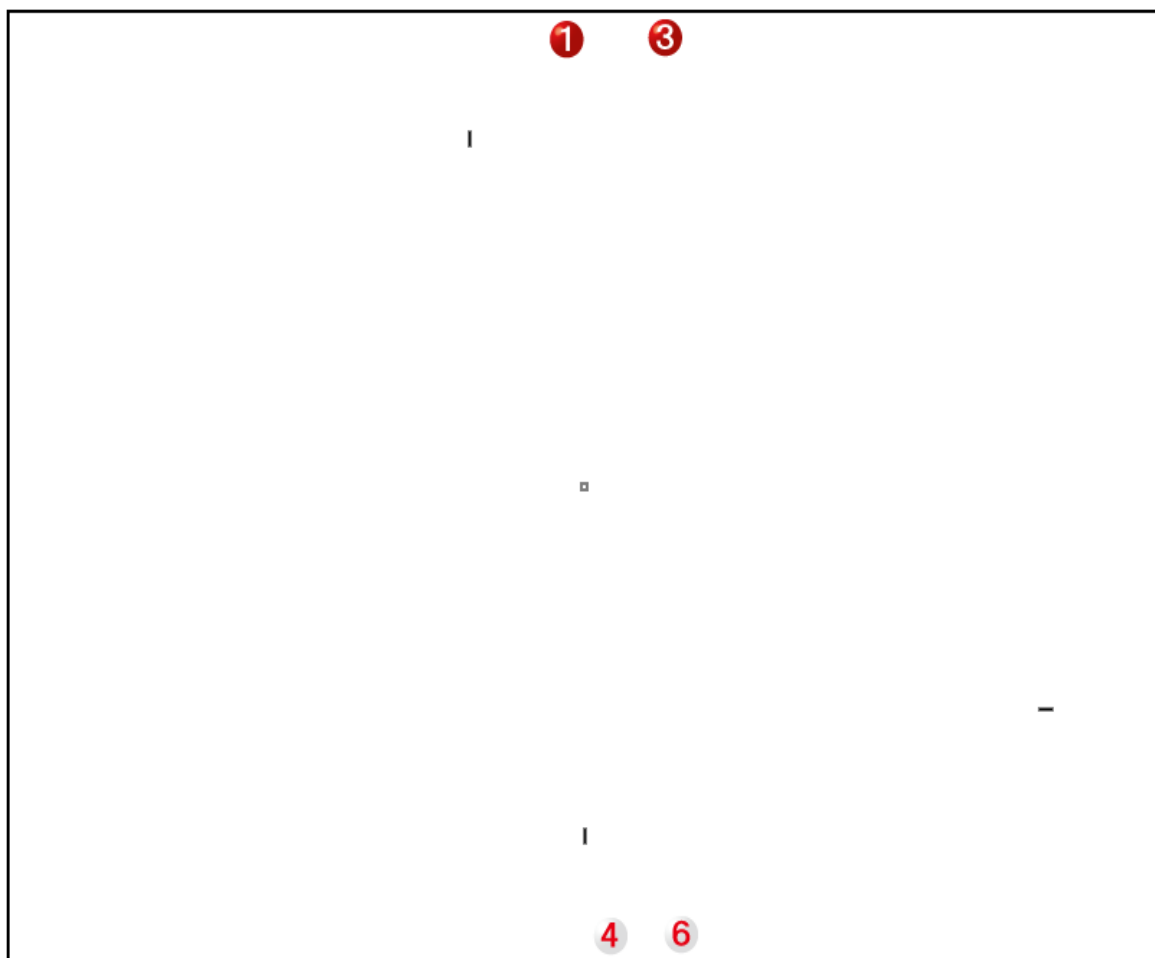
Position two balls near line 2 about 800mm apart and parallel to line 4. Balls should be about 30cm from the line.

Place two opposition balls on the opposite side of the court. Again the balls should be parallel to the line, about 30cm from the line and 80cm apart.

Stroke your first ball to touch the other ball of the same colour.

Spark this ball to a position where it can attack an opposition balls on the other side of the court. Leave your own ball tight to the line.

After removing the opposition balls leave your attacking ball tight to the line in gate running position.



**Make it a game:** 2 players enact their scenarios at the same time. Players use their sparked ball to attack their opponent's ball placed "safely" by the line.

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

### **Strategy & Tactics practised:**

Looking for gaps in numbers, Watch opposition play.

**Level 2 Manual** p22, 32



# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

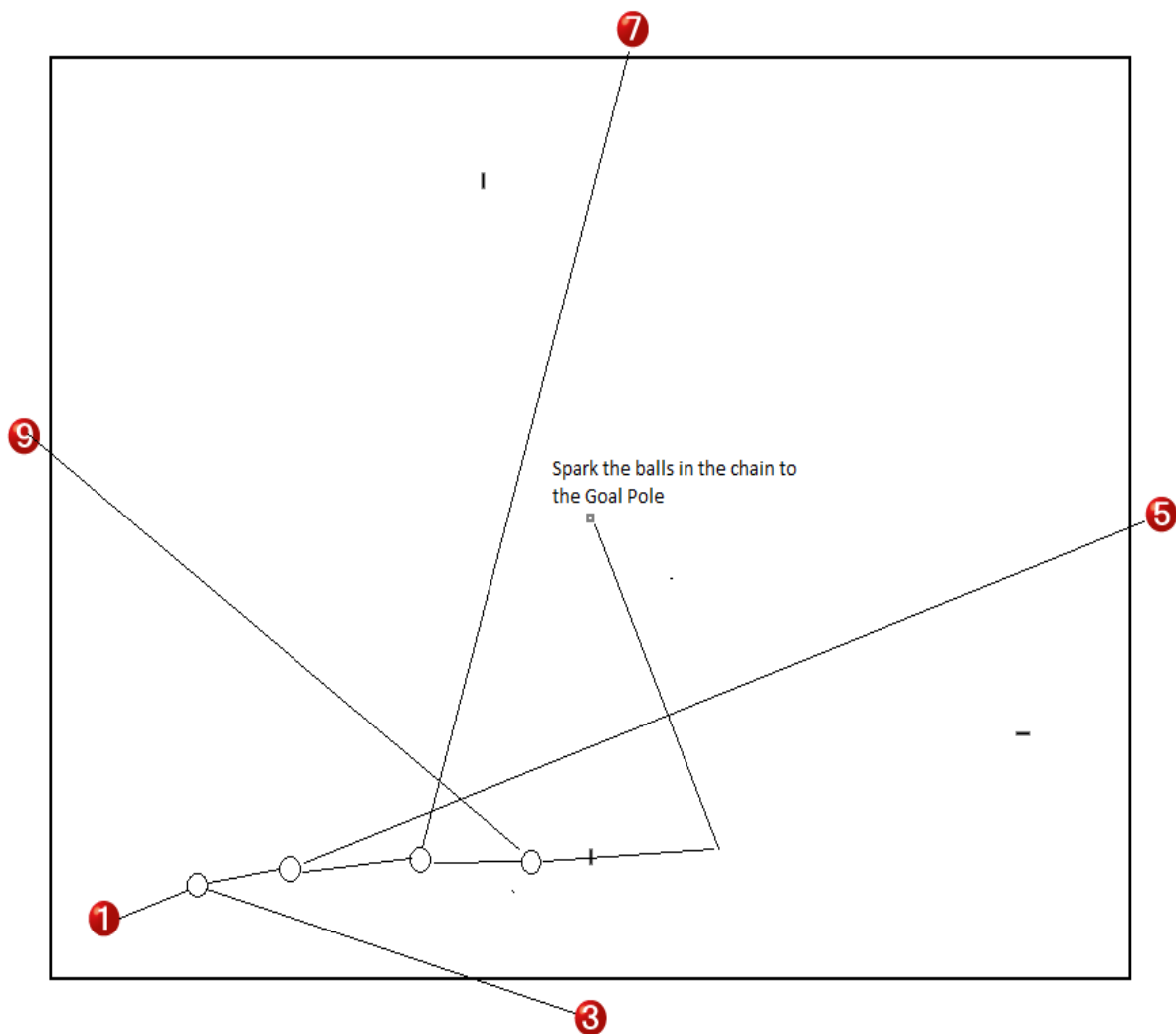


## 13. Ladders / Chains

Choose five red or white balls. Position the first ball in corner 4.

The four other balls should be placed in the middle of each side of the court. Play in the four balls from the middle of each side to build a ladder or chain for the first ball in the corner so it can make the gate.

Use the ladder for the first ball to pass gate 3 and then stroke it to the goal pole. Stroke the touched balls as close to the goal pole as you can. Spark all remaining balls on the goal pole with the next ball's turn.



**Make it a game:** One player sets up as shown above, the other sets up in a mirror image at gate 2. Enact the scenario scoring 1 point for each ball that ends up 1m from the Goal Pole.

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

### Strategy & Tactics practised:

Chains, Making the Goal Pole, Goal Pole opportunities

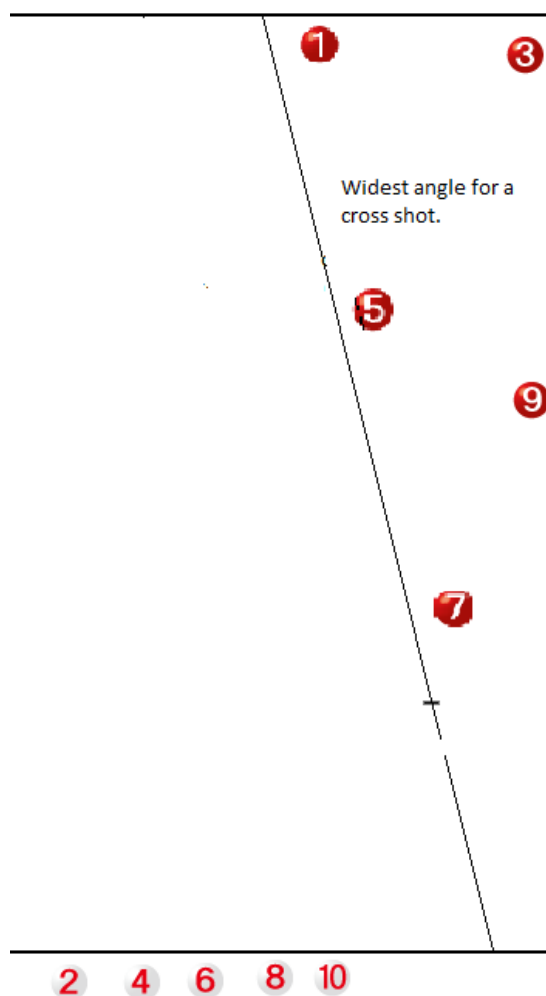
Level 2 Manual p24, 34

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY



## 14. Gate 1 Shoot Out

Varying angles to pick up balls from a pass of Gate 1 is an important skill. Play the red balls through Gate 1 and into a variety of positions in or near possible zone of entry behind gate 1. A player now passes gate 1 with the white balls and attempts to touch the red balls with the continuation stroke. Spark the red balls out of the court when touched. If the touch and spark with the white ball is successful, play it to the front of gate 2. How many balls remained on the court? To calculate white's score, subtract the number of remaining red balls from the number of white balls stroked to gate 2. Try again and improve your score.



**Make it a game:** One player plays red, the other plays white. For a second round white plays onto the court and red tries to hunt them down. Calculate scores after each round and declare a winner.

**Change it:** Adapt the activity by placing the balls in a variety of positions for slides to Gate 2 or 3.

**Strategy & Tactics practised:**  
Using cross shot through Gate 1

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY



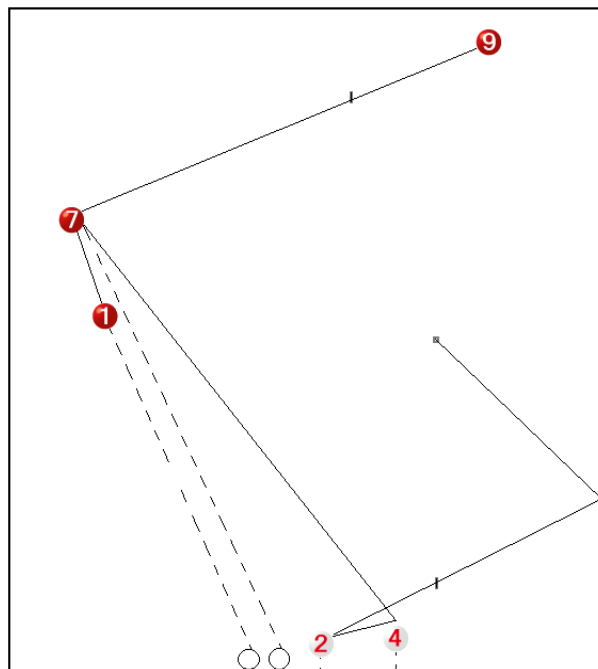
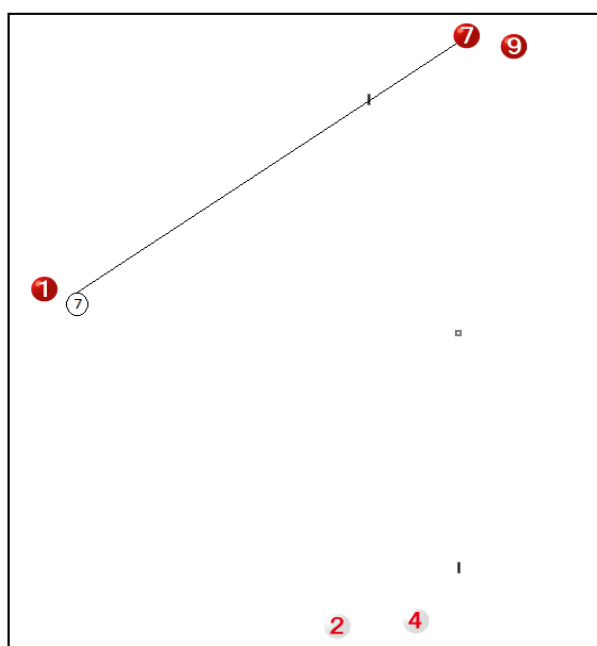
## 15. Gate 2 to 3 in Style

**Part 1.** Set up the balls as shown. Ball 1 has already passed G2. Ball 7 passes G2 and positions 1 and 7 for a possible long distance G&T for 9.

**Part 2.** Ball 9 passes G2 and may make the G&T, sparking 7 and 1 to G3.

If the G& T is not successful, 9 still sparks 1 and 7 to G3 and attempts to slide to 3 to attack 2 and 4.

**Taking it further...** 9 passes 3 and either scores the GP or sets up a G&T for 1.



**Make it a game:** Enough of a challenge as is, but, two players could compete to see who does better with the same scenario!

**Change it:** Vary the activity.

**Strategy & Tactics practised:** G&T, Slide Slide Slide, Sparking an attack ball.

Adapted from an idea from B Northcott

# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

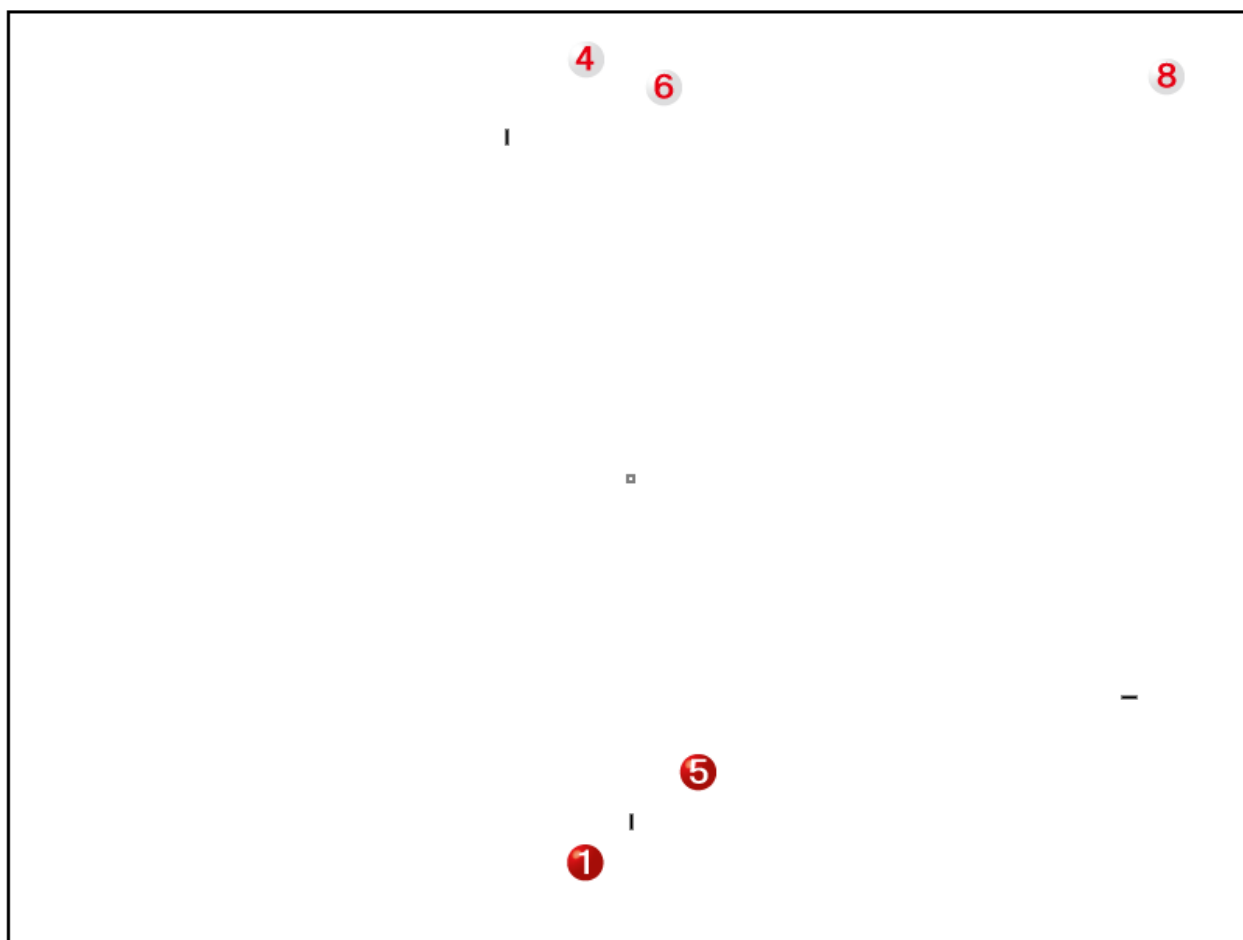


## 16. Hunting Mk2!

*Hunting was a name given to an activity developed about 15 years ago in Canberra. At that time, touching two balls earned two continuation strokes. To develop the skill of hunting down opposition balls after a double touch the Hunting activity was developed whereby a ball placed in corner three used two shots to attack opposition balls on the court. Since 2015, two continuation strokes are only earned after a touch/gate or gate/touch.*

So, a rewrite of this activity begins with an easy G&T set up. The player should make the gate touch and then chase opposition balls and attempt to put them out of play with both the sparked and stroker's two continuation shots.

Set the balls up as shown. Play ball 1 and make the G&T. Spark ball 5 as an attack ball and use the two continuation strokes. All white balls should become outballs.



**Make it a game.** Two players can enact the scenario and compare the outcome.

**Change it:** Change the location of the white balls.

### **Strategy & Tactics practised:**

G&T, Slide Slide Slide, Sparking an attack ball and using two continuation strokes.

Adapted from an idea from Glen Whitehead



# INTERMEDIATE GATEBALL SKILLS, DRILLS, TACTICS & STRATEGY

## 17: Make Your own and send to [info@gateball.com.au](mailto:info@gateball.com.au)

**Instructions.** Choose a sequence of skills; sparks and slides, which, from observing your team's games are important to play more consistently. Write the instructions here:

**Diagram.** Draw one by hand or for a more professional look use <http://www.gateball.asia/court-app-en>

**Make it a game:**

**Change it:**

**Strategy & Tactics practised:**