

# Gateball for Beginners



**A resource book of skills, drills and instructions on how to succeed as a Gateball team member.**

*Gateball Australia is the name that the 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.*

# Gateball – a team sport

Gateball is a mallet sport played as a team. Without cooperation a team cannot do well.

To succeed in a Gateball team a player needs to:

❖ **Develop individual skills**

Every player needs to develop routines for the basic skills of stroking, sparking and sliding and to work at improving these through drills and practice.

❖ **Understand team skills**

This involves co-operating and following the instructions of the team captain. Sometimes players will be asked to play a ball to a specific position which will assist another player in the team. Being able to do this and not have an individual focus is important.

❖ **Develop thinking skills so strategy and tactics are understood**

Players who develop this ability become better and may decide to be a team captain.

This booklet contains 4 sections:

1. **How to Play Gateball** – a brief description copied from World Gateball Union materials.
2. **Basic Skills and Routines for Gateball** – steps that must become automatic.
3. **Basic Gateball Tactics and Playing with a Captain** – a start in understanding strategy.
4. **Drills and Practice** – how to adapt and improve skills for some common game situations.

Further resources can be found on [www.gateball.com.au](http://www.gateball.com.au) and through the World Gateball Union website <http://gateball.or.jp/wgu/play/>

## 1. How to Play Gateball

To start playing Gateball, you will need to have a basic understanding of:

- ❖ The equipment
- ❖ Start stroking
- ❖ Passing a gate
- ❖ Out-ball
- ❖ Finishing (Agari)
- ❖ Scoring

Materials on the next two pages are copied from the Spark Magazine published by the WGU and are available through [www.gateball.com.au](http://www.gateball.com.au)

# Lesson 1

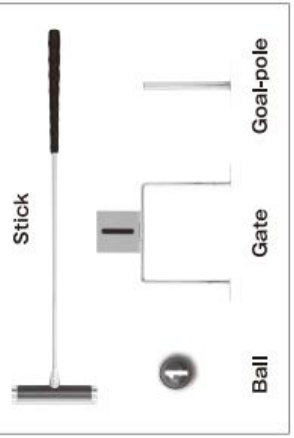
## ABC of the Basics - "A"

### What kind of Sport is Gateball?

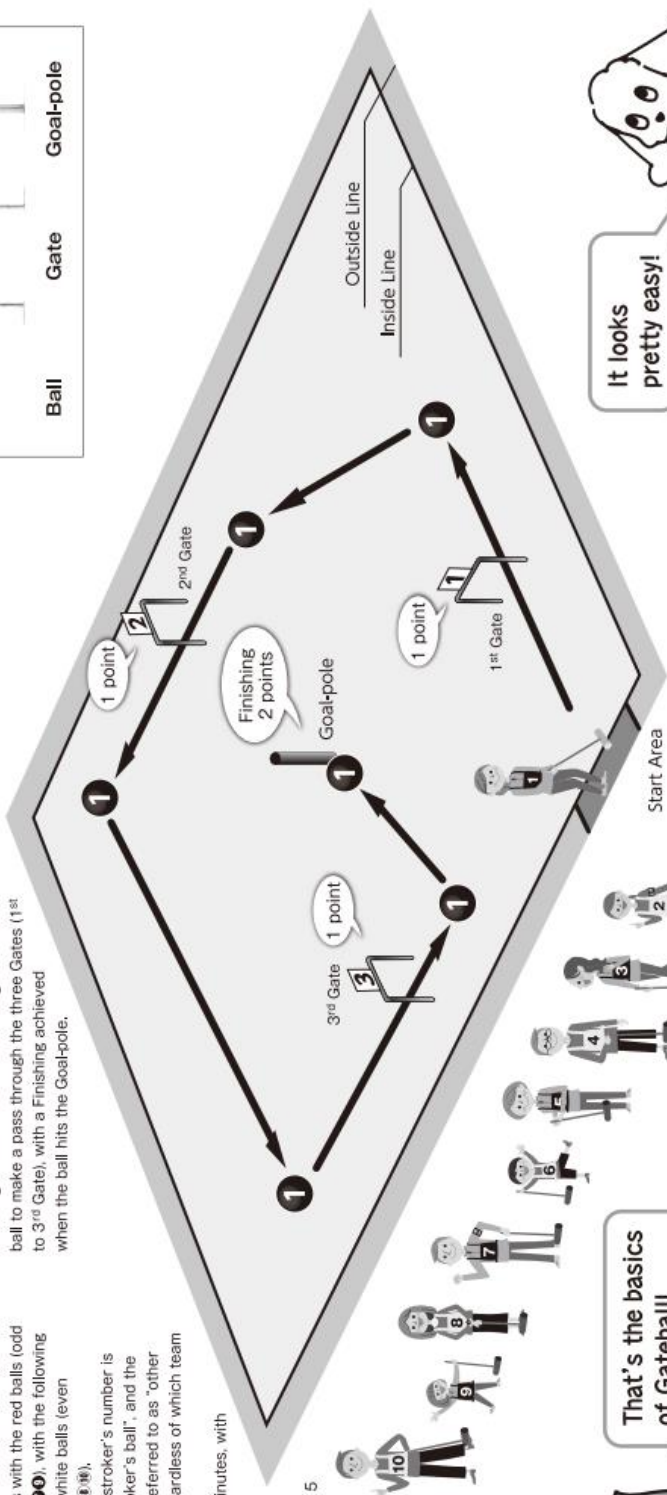
- Gateball involves 2 competing teams with 5 players in each team, with only one person playing at any time on the court.
- The leading team plays with the red balls (odd numbered balls ①③⑤⑦⑨), with the following team playing with the white balls (even numbered balls ②④⑥⑧⑩).
- The ball reflecting the stroker's number is referred to as the "stroker's ball", and the remaining 9 balls are referred to as "other balls"/"another ball", regardless of which team the ball belongs to.
- A match lasts for 30 minutes, with the winning team determined by the total number of points achieved by the 5 players in each team.

### What kind of Equipment is Required?

Sticks, balls, Gates and a Goal-pole are used in Gateball.



Passing 1 <sup>st</sup> Gate	1 point
Passing 2 <sup>nd</sup> Gate	1 point
Passing 3 <sup>rd</sup> Gate	1 point
Finishing (Agari)	2 points
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>5 points</b>



**It looks pretty easy!**

▶ **Pegasus:**  
A male toy poodle puppy. He's in the process of learning the rules of Gateball from Professor Memuro, but as he tends to lose interest easily, his game isn't improving. This doesn't worry him, however, because he's so easy going.

Starting with stroker Red ① in the Start Area, each player follows his/her number, aiming to pass stroker's ball through the 1<sup>st</sup> Gate.

**That's the basics of Gateball!**



◀ **Professor Memuro:**  
An Ural owl born in Memuro town, Hokkaido. A veteran who's been playing Gateball since its inception. Although he tends to nag, he regards himself as a Gateball evangelist, a role that he's deeply passionate about.

## Start Stroking

- The stroker's ball is placed in the Start Area and is then stroked so that it passes through the 1<sup>st</sup> Gate in a single stroke.
- The stroker's ball can be placed anywhere in the Start Area.
- ※ If the start stroke doesn't result in the ball successfully passing through the 1<sup>st</sup> Gate, then the player makes another attempt with the next stroke.



The correct position of the balls at start stroking (1, 2 and 4) and the incorrect position (3 and 5).

3 and 5 represent stroking fouls.



## Finishing (Agari)

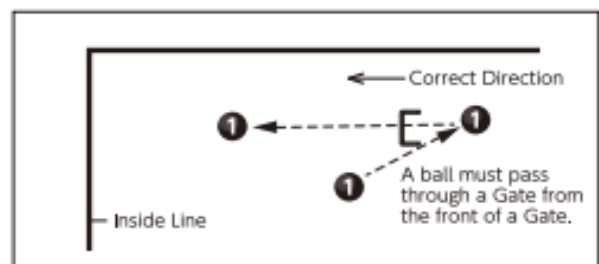
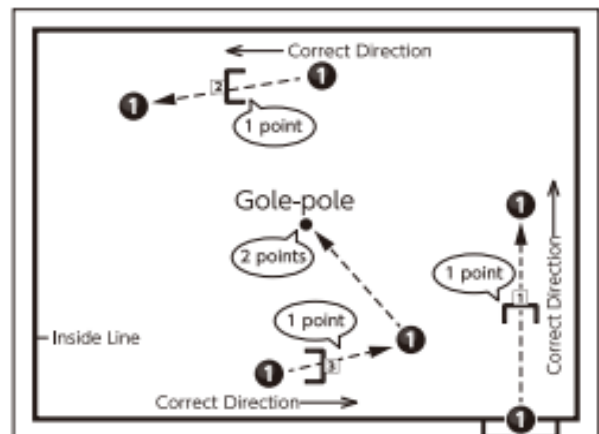
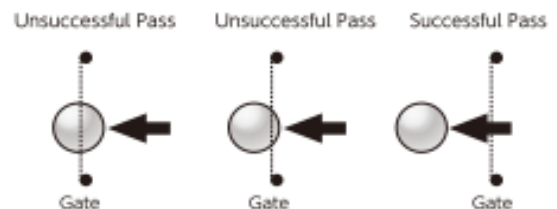
- Finishing or "Agari" refers to a ball that has passed through the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gate to hit the Goal-pole in the center of the court, and the stroker is awarded 2 points.
- A ball that has achieved Finishing is no longer played, and is removed from the court.



## Passing a Gate (Gate Tsuka)

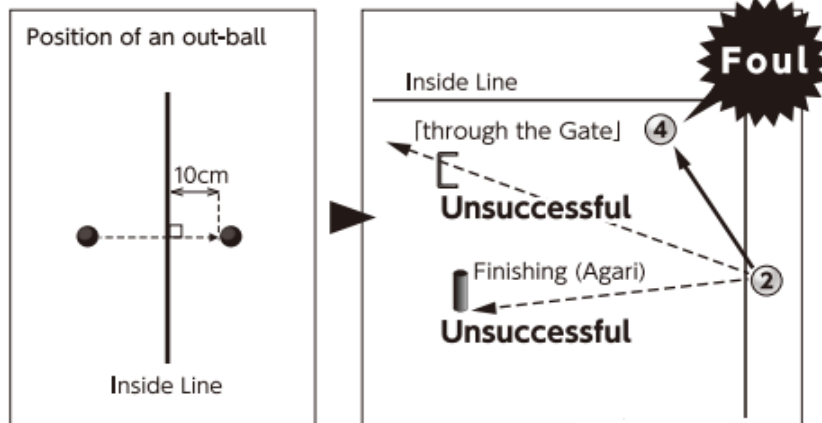
- Passing a Gate or "Gate Tsuka" takes place when a ball passes through the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Gates. One point is awarded to a stroker each time a ball passes through a Gate. If a stroker's ball stops in the court, then the stroker can stroke one more time.
- Each Gate has a front and a back. To be awarded a point by passing a ball through a Gate, the ball must pass a Gate in the designated (correct) direction. As points will not be awarded if the ball passes through a Gate in the wrong direction, a ball that's at the back side of a Gate must be moved to the front of a Gate first and then stroked through a Gate.

When viewed from above,



# Out-ball

- An out-ball refers to a ball that goes beyond the Inside Line.
- When stroking an out-ball, the stroker can stroke only to have it go back within the Inside Line. A pass through a Gate or a Finishing is not possible with an out-ball. It is a foul if an out-ball hits a ball inside the court and it becomes an out-ball again from where it hit the other ball and is placed outside the court.



## Scoring

A record of gates passed can be kept on a scoreboard. The scoreboard on the left shows that all the leading team balls, odd numbered balls 1 through 9 have passed gate 1. On the other hand, the following team have made some substantial scores.

Gates score 1 point but G, the Goal Pole or Agari, scores 2 points. In this example, the leading team has scored 5 and the following team, 13.



All Gateball players are encouraged to wear an electronic wrist timer. As shown on the right.

The corresponding button for each ball is pressed when it passes a gate or hits the goal pole. The total number of points for each team is automatically calculated on the far right of the screen.

The timer performs other useful functions. It is started at the beginning of a game when the referee calls "Play Ball!" On the right of the middle row the timer shows 30 minutes and immediately starts to count down. The timer beeps at 15, 10 and 5 minutes remaining. Most importantly it beeps at the end of the game to indicate when 30 minutes has elapsed.



The 10 indicated on the right shows the timer also has the facility to count the ten seconds within which a player should stroke or spark. This function is rarely used and, in fact, the rules preclude it.

All players are encouraged to purchase a timer.

## 2. Basic Skills & Routines for Gateball



Gateball players need to develop three basic skills:

- 2.1 Stroking
- 2.2 Touching and Sparking
- 2.3 Sliding

The steps for each of these skills need to be followed every time you play. The three routines need to become automatic.

### 2.1. Stroking

#### 2.1.1 Grip

There is no correct grip other than the one that is chosen should be comfortable and the mallet should not twist if the grip is tightened. The basic families of grips are:



**Standard Grip:** The shaft is grasped near its top with the knuckles of the upper hand pointing forward and the thumb up. The lower hand supports the back of the shaft with the knuckles pointing backwards and the thumb down. The spacing between the top and lower hand varies with the type of stroke being played.



**Solomon Grip:** Both the upper and lower hands grasp the top of the shaft of the mallet with the knuckles forward and the thumbs uppermost. The hands are nearly always very close together. This grip is suitable for shorter players and provides a big back swing.



**Irish Grip:** The knuckles of both hands point back with both thumbs pointing down. The hands are held close together. The grip is generally lower down the shaft than with the other styles.

#### 2.1.2 Stalk

Stalking is the act of walking up to the ball to be struck along the line in which you wish to hit it.

Stalking is ESSENTIAL. Its purpose is to get the feet correctly positioned and the body aligned with the direction of the stroke every single time. The shoulders and hips should be perpendicular to the direction of the aim. The only way to hit consistently is to always start a stroke with your body in the same position.

You should aim to come to position with the ball approximately 10 - 25 mm in front of your mallet and your nose approximately above the back of the ball.

### 2.1.3 Stance

**Centre Style:** The feet are placed across the direction of the stroke with the feet level. The mallet is then swung between the legs. This is the most popular playing stance.

**Side Style:** The mallet lies down the outside of the right leg pointing ahead. Either foot can be forward with the weight on the forward foot. *This is now a rare style.*

**Golf Style:** While this is possible for gateball, it is only recommended for those who have previous experience of playing Golf.

### 2.1.4 Swing







During the swing you must keep your head down and not lift it until after the ball has been struck. It is one of the most frequent reasons for missing a roquet - the head comes up too early, moving the shoulders and spoiling the shot.

The mallet is swung mainly from the **shoulders**, not the wrists, giving you a long pendulum. This is important. It maximises the energy which can be put into a stroke and means that the wrists do not move excessively. Since the wrists are solely supporting the mallet, the mallet can be held gently, preventing it from being twisted. The mallet should not be swung using the lower hand to waft the mallet forwards, or worse, swung by pushing one hand forward and the other back.

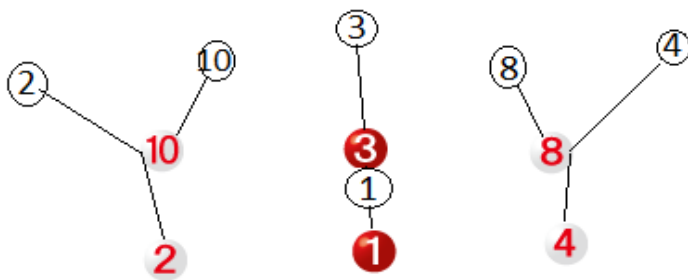
Keep the body almost still and draw the mallet back. The body should be relaxed with the legs not locked - the body needs to move to keep your balance. Keeping your eye on the back of the ball allow the mallet to come forward mainly at its own speed but gently accelerating it to get the strength of the shot. If you attempt to force the mallet forward or jerk it, your grip will tighten and the shot will be spoilt.

## 2.2. Touching and Sparking

Touching and sparking are two of the most significant skills to be mastered.

					
Stroke your ball to <b>touch the other ball</b> .	Move your stick to your right hand. Move briskly to the touched ball, wait for the balls to stop and <b>pick up the touched ball</b>	<b>Set the direction</b> by standing with your left shoulder in the direction you wish the ball to travel and point, ball in hand, in the required direction	<b>Place the left foot on your own ball</b> (the stroker's ball). Position the ball to be sparked, touching your own ball.	<b>Strike your own ball</b>	<b>Wait</b> until the sparked ball stops or goes out of play  Play your <b>continuation stroke</b>

## 2.3. Sliding



Great advantage can be obtained by touching another ball on the left or right side. The finer the touch, the further your ball will travel. After sparking the touched ball, your ball can be stroked from an advantageous position

The routine a player uses to stroke a ball needs a few adaptations in order to carry out an effective slide touch.

### Stalking

Make sure you have chosen a target to stalk to the left or the right of the ball you are about to slide touch.

### Stance

Make sure the stance you adopt is pointing towards the side of the target other ball and not towards its centre.

### Swing

It is even more important to keep focussed on the back of your ball. When you are sliding off the other ball there is a strong temptation to look at the target ball and twist your mallet as you swing.

### Acknowledgement of Sources:

Stroking: <http://www.oxfordcroquet.com/coach/beginners/bcn1.asp>

Touching and Sparking: [https://gateball.com.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/07\\_gb\\_sparking\\_tips02.pdf](https://gateball.com.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/07_gb_sparking_tips02.pdf)

Sliding: [http://gateball.or.jp/wqu/play/play\\_01.html](http://gateball.or.jp/wqu/play/play_01.html)

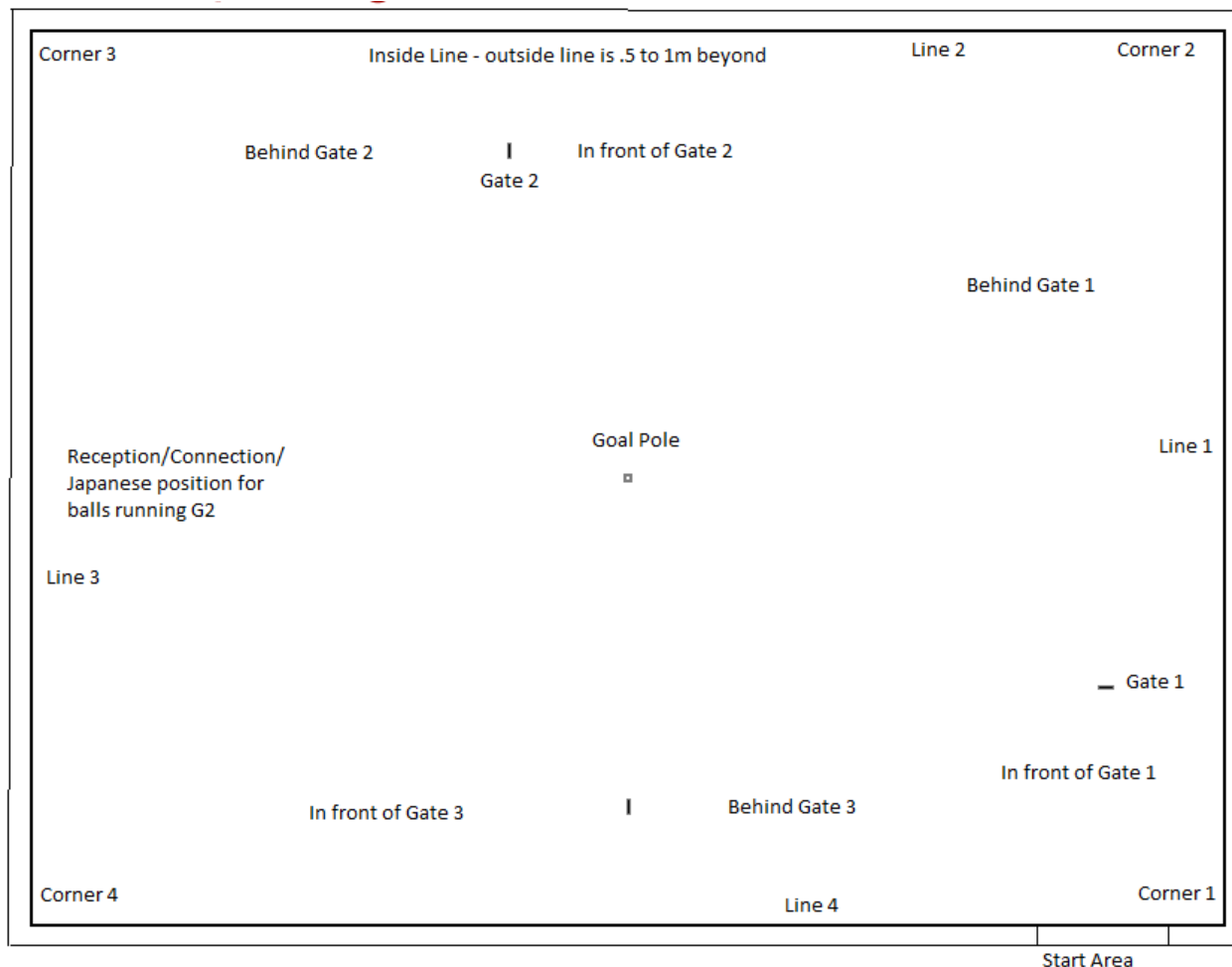




### 3. Basic Gateball Tactics and Playing with a Captain

Beginners can play Gateball without having to understand strategy. Players need to follow the instructions of a Captain on where to place their ball but need to learn about game strategy and tactics through experience and explanation. These notes are an introduction.

Sharing a common language for parts of the court is important. A team captain may call a player to place a ball behind Gate 3 or to send their ball to 3<sup>rd</sup> Corner. Players need to know the parts of a court.



#### Working with a captain and the responsibilities of a player

A captain will call the shots for a team, but a player can help by:

- standing at the closest boundary to their ball position
- knowing where the next number opposition ball is at all times
- knowing where the team's next ball is
- walking to a position ready for the next stroke or spark, after making a stroke or spark
- watching the captain carefully
- thinking about the probable shot they will be asked to play, but having a couple of options in mind to avoid rigid thinking
- not discussing their shot when called – playing within 10 seconds
- being ready with any information a captain may wish to double check, for example, the last gate the ball has scored or if the ball has already passed a particular gate

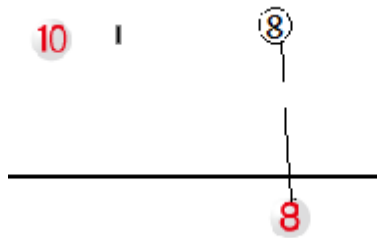
## Strategy in Action: Basic Captain's Calls

The call from a captain may take a few seconds. That can reduce the 10 seconds for the player to complete the stroke! As a beginner you need to know what common calls mean so you can carry them out quickly. Some common examples are explained below. Ask a coach or captain to explain the examples in more detail.

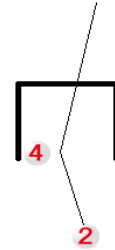
Note: A continuous line is a stroke and a dashed line, a spark

<p><b>HELPER BALL – PLAYER 1 - SEND BALL 5 TO HELP BALL 3 GET IN FRONT OF THE GATE</b></p> <p>A diagram of a gate with a top bar and a right-side bar. A ball (5) is shown on the left side of the gate. A dashed line indicates a stroke from ball 5 to ball 3, which is positioned in front of the gate. Player 1 is indicated by a red circle with the number 1.</p>	<p><b>USING A HELPER BALL – PLAYER 3 - TOUCH 5 SO YOU CAN PASS GATE 2</b></p> <p>A diagram showing a ball (3) on the left and a ball (5) in the middle. A solid line connects ball 3 to ball 5. A dashed line connects ball 5 to a ball (5) on the right, which is positioned to pass through a gate. Player 3 is indicated by a red circle with the number 3.</p>
<p><b>ATTACK BALL – PLAYER 1 - SEND BALL 3 TO ATTACK WHITE 4</b></p> <p>A diagram of a square field. A ball (3) is at the top center, and a ball (4) is at the bottom center. A dashed line connects ball 3 to ball 4. Player 1 is indicated by a red circle with the number 1.</p>	<p><b>BRIDGE BALL – PLAYER 1 - MAKE A BRIDGE FOR 3 TO 5</b></p> <p>A diagram of a gate with a top bar and a right-side bar. A ball (5) is on the left, a ball (3) is in the middle, and a ball (1) is at the bottom. A solid line connects ball 1 to ball 3, forming a bridge. Player 1 is indicated by a red circle with the number 1.</p>
<p><b>CLOSE TO THE LINE – PLAYER 7 - STROKE 7 CLOSE TO THE LINE or SPARK 9 CLOSE TO THE LINE!</b></p> <p>Two diagrams showing a ball (7) and a ball (9) on a horizontal line. In the first, a solid line connects ball 7 to another ball (7) above the line. In the second, a dashed line connects ball 9 to another ball (9) above the line.</p>	<p><b>TAP ON – PLAYER 9 - JUST TAP YOUR BALL ON TIGHT!</b></p> <p>A diagram showing a ball (9) on a horizontal line. A hand is shown tapping the ball. The text "TAPPING ON" is written above the diagram.</p>

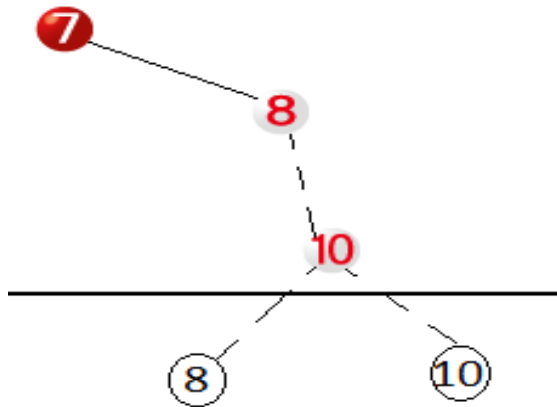
**GATE AND TOUCH – PLAYER 8 - SET UP A GATE & TOUCH FOR 10**



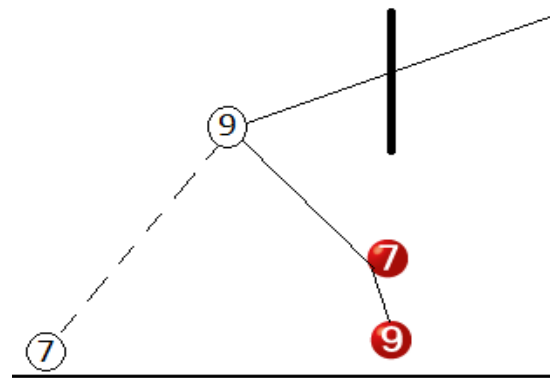
**TOUCH & GATE – PLAYER 2 - SLIDE OFF 4 TO GET A TOUCH AND GATE**



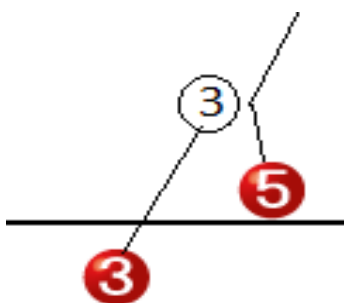
**BOMBARD – PLAYER 7 - TOUCH 8 AND BOMBARD 10**



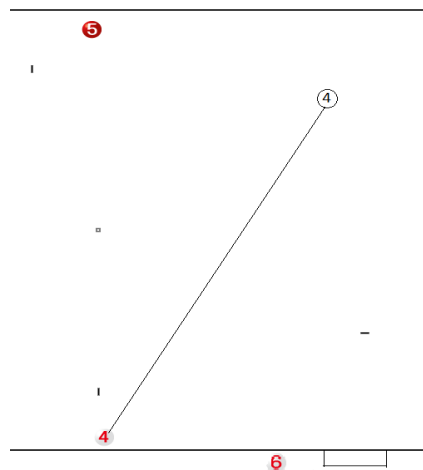
**SLIDE TOUCH TO RUN A GATE – PLAYER 9 - SLIDE OFF 7 TO RUN GATE 3**



**HELPER BALL FOR A SLIDE – PLAYER 3 – GIVE 5 A SLIDE TO THE GOAL POLE**



**PIVOT BALL - PLAYER 4 – PUT 4 BEHIND GATE 1 FOR 6 COMING ON**



## 4. Drills and Practice

Having learned a routine for Stroking, Sparking and Sliding, you need to apply your skills. The following drills and practice cards cover a range of the basic skill applications you need to play competently in a team.

### 4.1 Drill and Practice: Passing Gates

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STROKING TO PASS GATE 1</b></p> <p>Stroke the ball from the right side of the Start Area through gate one. Vary the position along the start area after successive gate passes.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>STROKING TO PASS GATES 2&amp;3</b></p> <p>As shown in this picture, place a ball at 1.5m from the gate at an angle of 45 degrees and pass the gate. Vary the position of the stroker's ball along the line after successive gate passes</p>

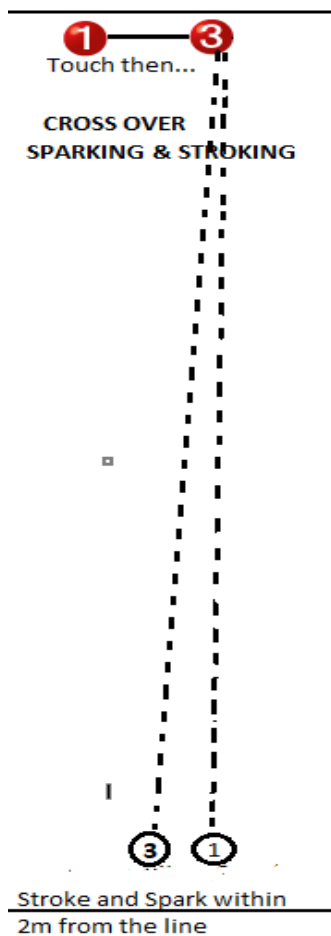
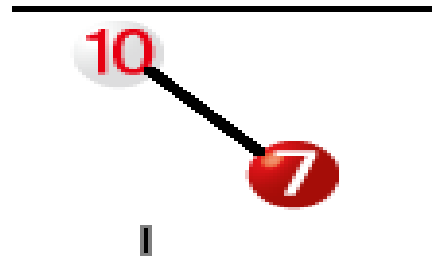
**Practice:** Combine these two drills. Run gate 1 from the right of the start area. Stroke it again to a position 1.5m and at an angle of 45 degrees as shown for the starting position in the second picture, pass gate 2 from whatever position the stroker's ball stops in.

### 4.2 Drill and Practise: Touching tight to the line then cross over stroking and sparking

## STROKING TO TOUCH TIGHT TO THE LINE

Place balls as shown. Stroke ball 7 to touch the other ball about 20cm from the inside line. Both balls need to stay on the court.

Complete several times in succession but vary the positions of the balls



## CROSS OVER STROKING & SPARKING

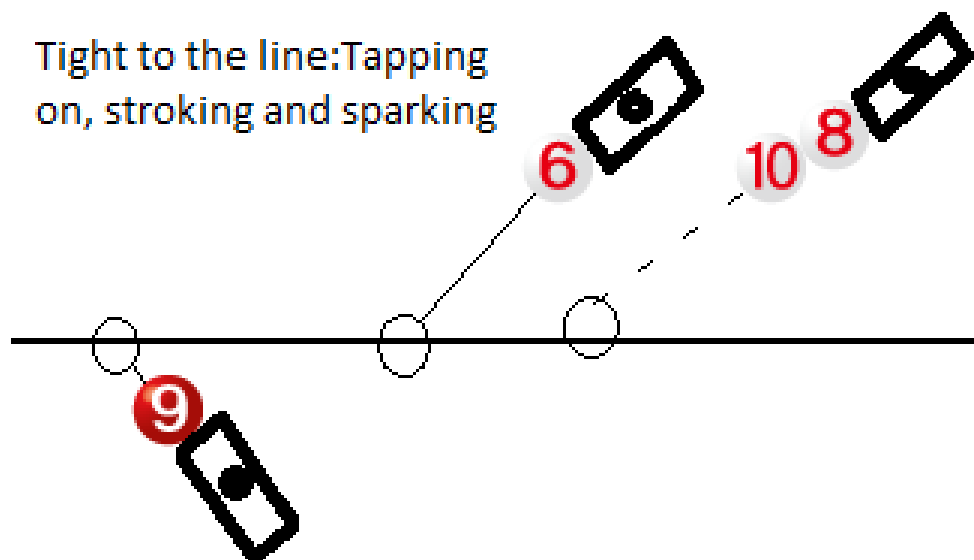
Spark a ball from one side of the court to the other, finishing within 2m of the opposite line. (Line 1 to 3 or vice versa).

Stroke the remaining ball from one side of the court to the other, finishing within 2m of the opposite line.

Do this successfully 3 times in succession and then reduce the target distance by 0.5m from the opposite line

**Practice:** Combine these drills. Touch a ball tight to the line and spark it across the court close to the opposite line. Stroke across the court and end up near the line and the sparked ball. Bring them back to the other side of the court using the same steps.

### 4.3 Drill and Practice: Tight to the line – Stroking, Sparking and Tapping On



#### TAPPING ON

Stroke an out ball into play so that some part of the ball remains within 20cm of the line. Repeat several times.

#### STROKING TIGHT TO THE LINE

Place a stroker's ball 60cm from the line. Stroke the ball so that it finishes within a mallet head of the line.

Repeat several times and increase the distance of the stroker's ball from the line to 1m.

#### SPARKING TIGHT TO THE LINE

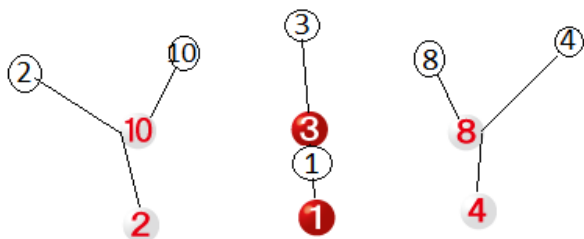
Set up a spark 60cm from the line. Spark the ball so that it finishes within a mallet head of the line.

Repeat several times and increase the sparking distance to 1m from the line.

**Practise:** To test how well you can do this, place a ball of another colour a stick length from the line. See how many of the balls played close to the line you can touch and spark out with this one ball.

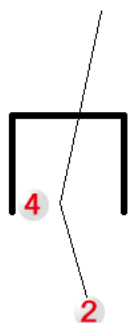
## 4.4 Drill and Practice: Sliding, Gates and Touches

### SLIDE TOUCH



Place two balls in the middle of the court. Stroke a ball to hit the other ball on the left, then repeat, sliding to the right. Ball must slide at least half a metre in the designated direction. Stroke the ball to hit dead centre.

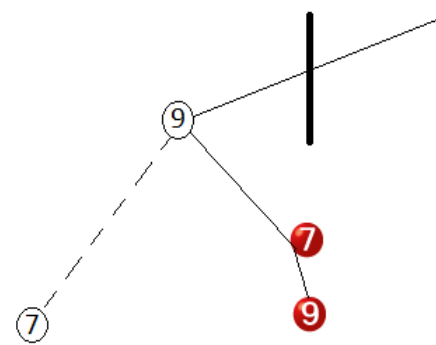
### SLIDING TO MAKE A TOUCH AND GATE



Place a ball against a gate leg, and from a distance of half a metre, slide through the gate for a touch and gate.

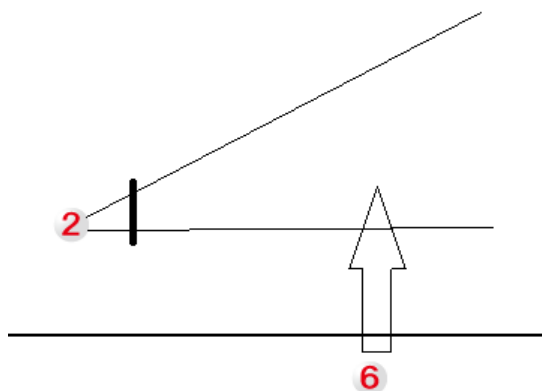
Repeat several times in succession and increase the distance from the gate to one metre. Place the target ball on the other side of the gate to vary your practise.

### SLIDE FROM THE SIDE TO PASS THE GATE



Place two balls at the side of a gate as shown. Stroke the ball closest to the line (Ball 9) so it slides off the other ball (Ball 7) and moves into a gate running position. Spark the touched ball tight to the line in a gate running position. Run the gate. Repeat successfully several times in succession but vary the position of the balls.

### SETTING UP AND MAKING A GATE AND TOUCH



Place a ball 50 cm in front of a gate.

Play in an out ball to set up a gate and touch. Stroke the ball in front of the gate to make the gate and touch.

Repeat several times in succession and then place a ball 1m from the gate and repeat the process.

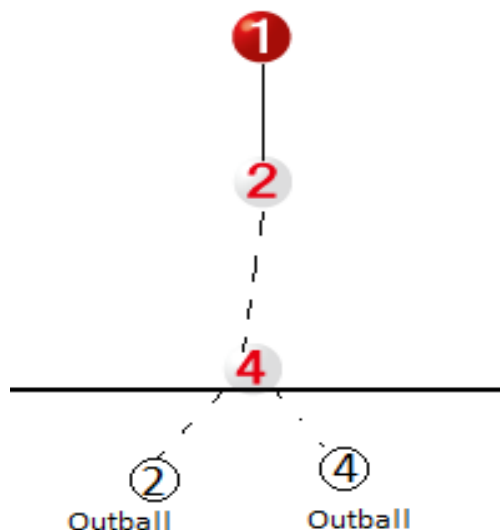
**Practise:** Complete several times varying the stoker's and other ball's position.

## 4.5 Drill and Practice: Sparking and Bombarding

### SPARKING OUTBALLS ALL AROUND THE COURT

Place two balls about 1m apart near the middle of the court. Stroke one ball to touch the other ball. Spark the touched ball out of the court. In turn, spark them out near each of the four corners of the court and near the middle of each line.

### BOMBARDING



Place three balls as shown. The first ball (Ball 1) should be about 1m from the line. The second ball (Ball 2) needs to be placed at half a metre from the first and the third ball (Ball 4) should be touching the line.

Stroke the first ball to touch the second and spark the second ball at the third one on the line so that both become out-balls. Aim slightly off centre on the third ball or there is a risk that the sparked ball can stop dead. See how gently this can be done. Repeat the activity but vary the positions of all 3 balls.

**Practise:** Complete several times varying the stroker's and other ball's positions.

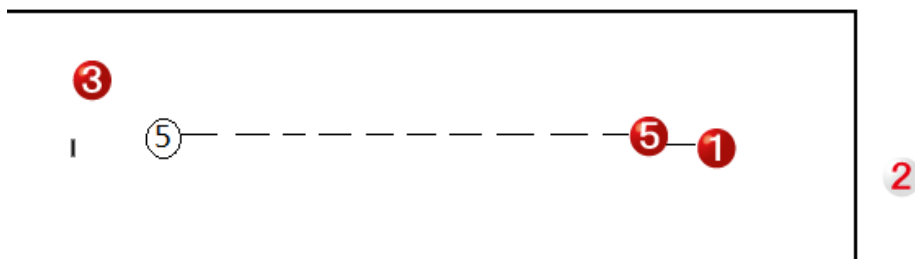


## 4.6 Drill and Practice: Playing and Using Team Skills

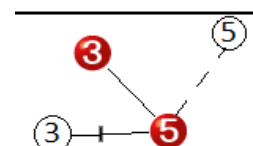
### SEND AND USE A HELPER BALL

Touch and spark to send a helper ball to gate 2. Then use the helper ball to run the gate with the next ball to play.

Step 1

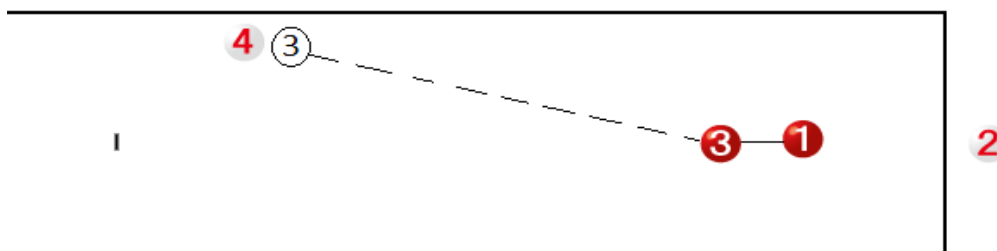


Step 2



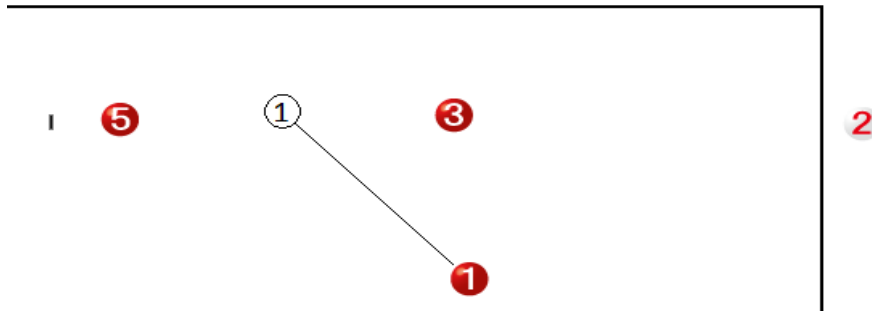
### SEND AND USE AN ATTACK BALL

Touch and spark a ball to attack an opposition ball at the gate. With the next ball to play touch the opposition ball and make it an out-ball. If possible pass the gate.



## STROKE A BALL TO MAKE A BRIDGE, THEN USE IT WITH THE NEXT BALL TO PLAY

Stroke the first ball, to make a bridge for the next ball to play. Use the bridge with the next ball and run the gate.



**Practise:** Complete each activity several times varying the stroker's and other ball's position.

