Gateball for Beginners



A resource book of beginner 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. **Drills and Practice** how to adapt and improve skills for some common game situations.
- 4. Basic Gateball Tactics and Playing with a Captain the building blocks of team strategy

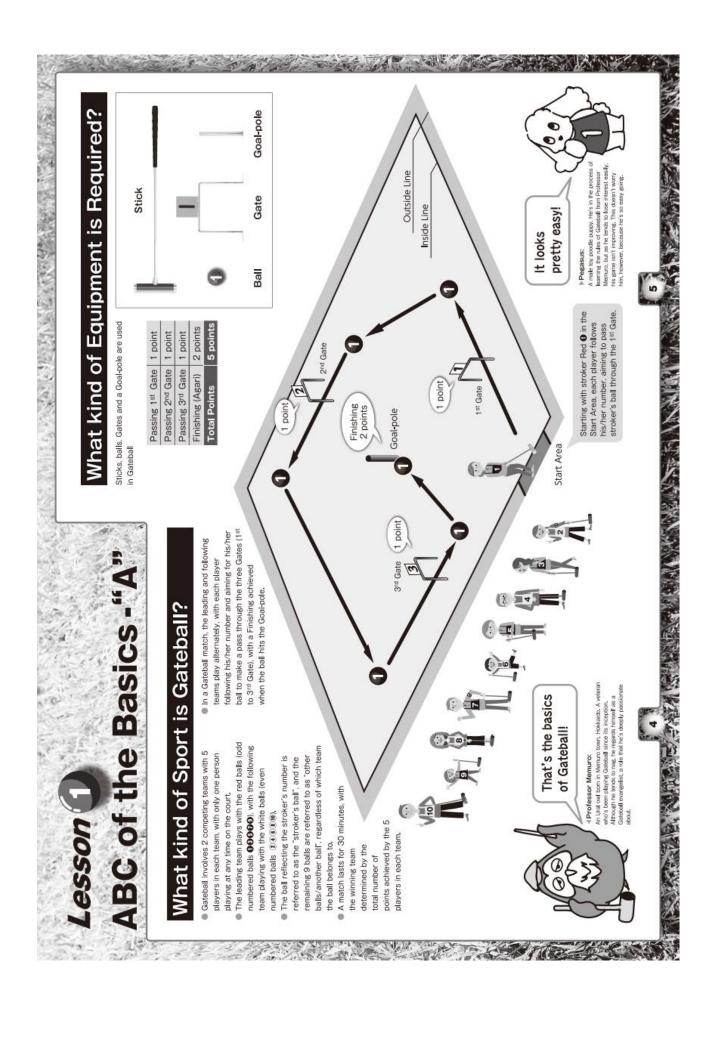
A guide to resources for beginners is found on www.gateball.com.au and beginners may want to look at the World Gateball Union website http://gateball.or.jp/wgu/play/

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

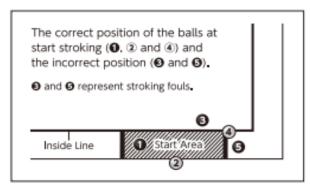
Materials on the next two pages are copied from the Spark Magazine published by the WGU and are available through www.gateball.com.au



Start Stroking

- The stroker's ball is placed in the Start Area and is then stroked so that it passes through the 1st 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 1st Gate, then the player makes another attempt with the next stroke.



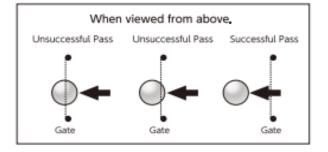


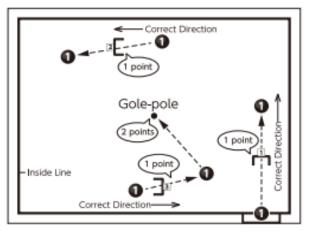
Finishing (Agari)

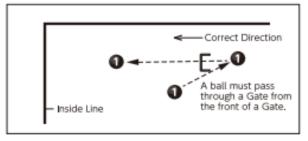
- Finishing or "Agari" refers to a ball that has passed through the 3rd Gate to hit the Goal-pole in the center of the court, and the stroker is awarded 2 points.
- A ball that has achieved Finishing is no longer played, and is removed from the court,

Passing a Gate (Gate Tsuka)

- Passing a Gate or "Gate Tsuka" takes place when a ball passes through the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd 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.

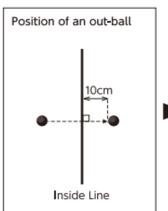


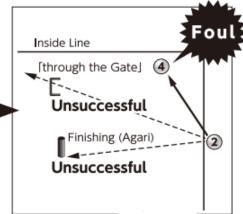




Out-ball

- 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 the all the leading team balls, 1-9 have passed gate 1, On the other hand, the following team have made some substantial scores.

Remembering that gates score 1 point but G, the Goal Pole or Agari, scores 2. 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 scores the goal pole or passes a gate. 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

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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 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.

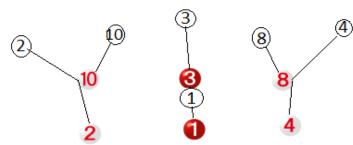
Keep the body almost still and draw the mallet back. The body should be relaxed with the legs not locked - the body needs to move to keep your balance. Keeping your eye on the back of the ball allow the mallet to come forward mainly at its own speed but gently accelerating it to get the strength of the 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 touch the other ball.	Move your stick to your right hand. Move briskly to the touched ball, wait for the balls to stop and pick up the touched ball	Set the direction by standing with your left shoulder in the direction you wish the ball to travel and point, ball in hand, in the required direction	Place the left foot on your own ball (the stroker's ball). Position the ball to be sparked, touching your own ball.	Strike your own ball	Wait until the sparked ball stops or goes out of play Play your continuation stroke

2.3. Sliding



Great advantage can be obtained by touching another ball on the left or right side. The finer the touch, the further the stroker's ball will travel. After sparking the touched ball, the stroker's 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 the stroker's 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

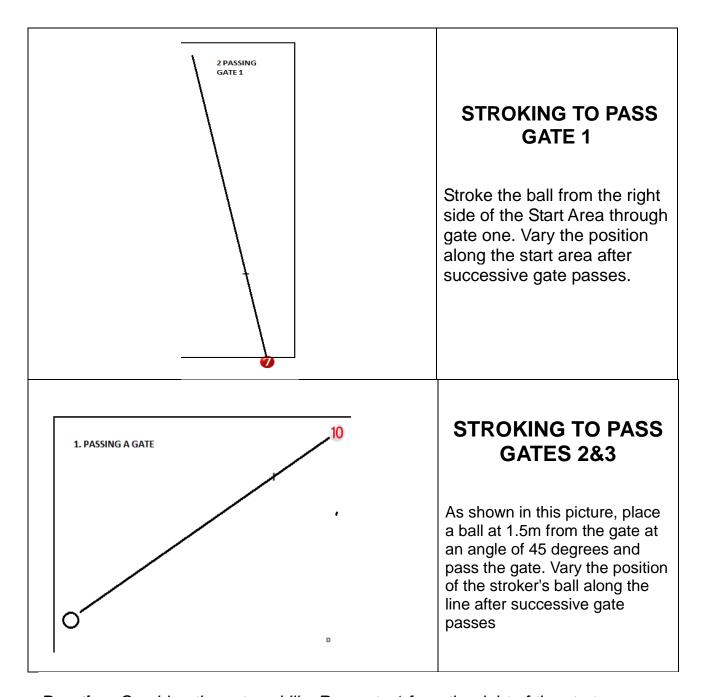
Touching and Sparking: https://gateball.com.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/07_gb_sparking_tips02.pdf

Sliding: http://gateball.or.jp/wgu/play/play_01.html

3. 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.

3.1 Drill and Practice: Passing Gates



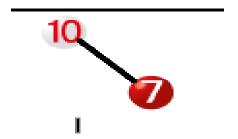
Practice: Combine these two drills. Run gate 1 from the right of the start area. Stroke it again to a position 1.5m and at an angle of 45 degrees as shown for the starting position in the second picture, pass gate 2 from whatever position the stroker's ball stops in.

3.2 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



Touch then... CROSS OVER SPARKING & STROKING 3 1 Stroke and Spark within 2m from the line

CROSS OVER STROKING & SPARKING

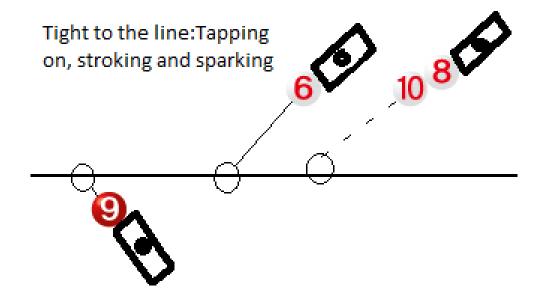
Spark a ball from one side of the court to the other, finishing within 2m of the opposite line. (Line 1 to 3 or vice versa).

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.

3.3 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

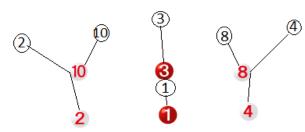
Set up a spark 60cm from the line. Spark the ball so that it finishes within a mallet head of the line.

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.

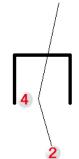
3.4 Drill and Practice: Sliding, Gates and Touches

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

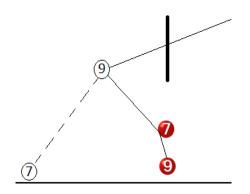


Place a ball against a gate leg, and from a distance of half a metre, slide through the gate for a touch and gate.

Repeat several times in succession and increase the distance from the gate to one metre. Place the

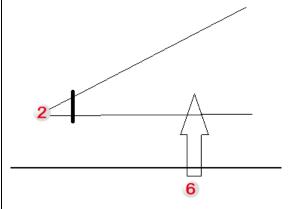
target ball on the other side of the gate to vary your practise.

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.

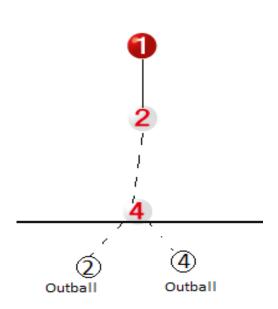
Repeat several times in succession and then place a ball 1m from the gate and repeat the process.

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

3.5 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. 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.

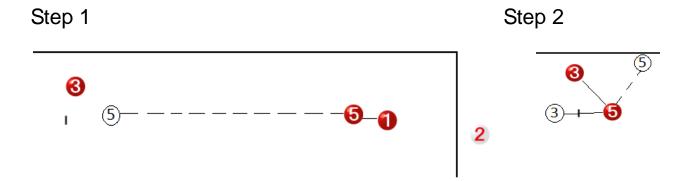
Stroke the first ball to touch the second and spark the second ball at the third one on the line so that both become out-balls. Aim slightly off centre on the third ball or there is a risk that the sparked ball can stop dead. See how gently this can be done. Repeat the activity but vary the positions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

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

3.6 Drill and Practice: Playing and Using Team Skills

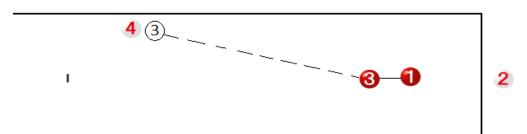
SEND AND USE A HELPER BALL

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.



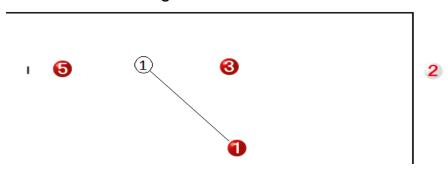
SEND AND USE AN ATTACK BALL

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.



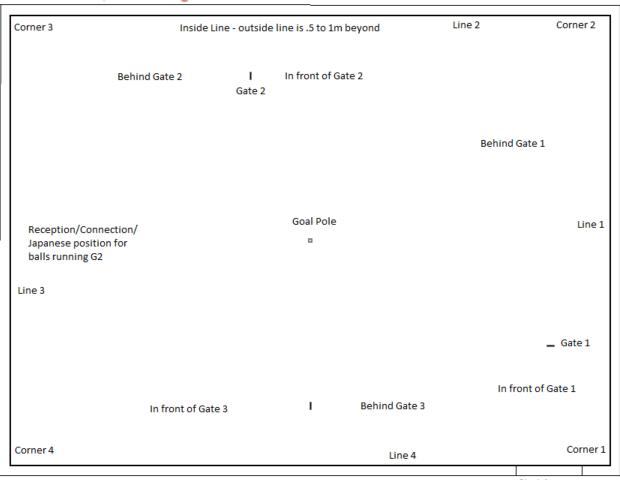
Practise: Complete each activity several times varying the stroker's and other ball's position.

4. 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 tactics through experience and explanation. These notes are an introduction.

4.1 A common language for parts of the court.

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 3rd Corner. Players need to know the parts of a court.



Start Area

4.2 Working with a captain and the responsibilities of a player

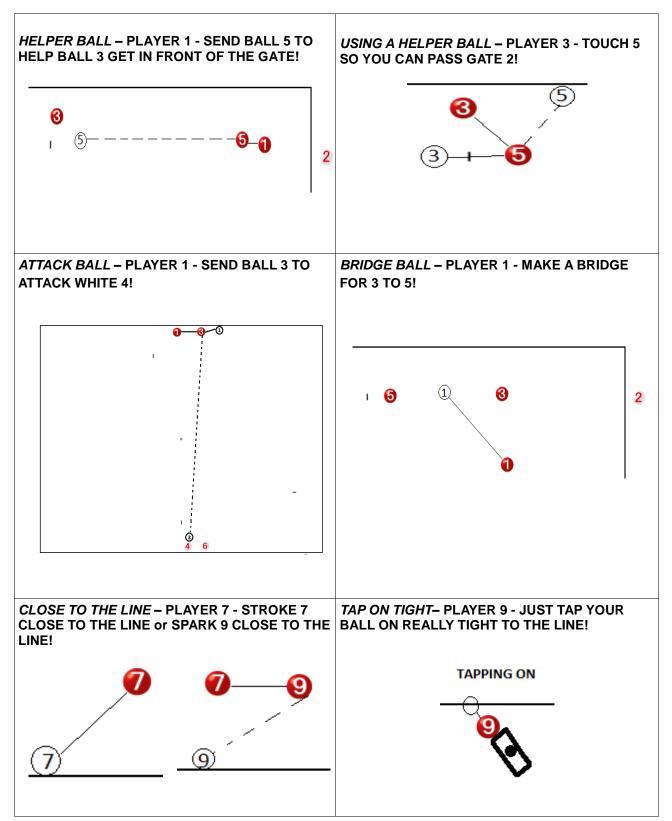
A captain will call the shots for a team, but a player can help by:

- 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
- after making a stroke or spark, walking to a position ready for the next 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, eg. the last gate the ball has scored, or if the ball has already passed a particular gate.

4.3Tactics in Action: Basic Captain's Calls

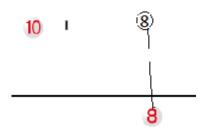
The call from a captain may take a few seconds. That can reduce the 10 seconds for the player to complete the stroke! As a beginner you need to know what common calls mean so you can carry them out quickly. Some common examples are explained below. Ask a coach or captain to explain the examples in more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

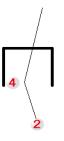
Note: A continuous line is a stroke and a dashed line, a spark



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

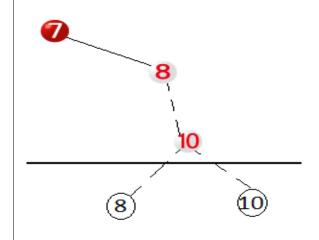


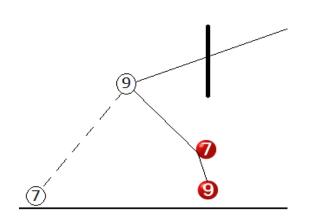




BOMBARD – PLAYER 7 - TOUCH 8 AND BOMBARD 10

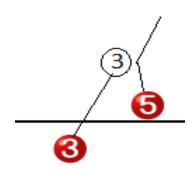
SLIDE TOUCH TO RUN A GATE – PLAYER 9 - SLIDE OFF 7 TO RUN GATE 3

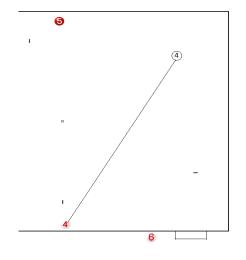




HELPER BALL FOR A SLIDE – PLAYER 3 – GIVE 5 A SLIDE TO THE GOAL POLE

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





4.4 Stroking a ball: Thinking about Direction and Weight/Length

Controlling both the direction and weight of a stroke is important. Far too many of us have had the experience of attempting a stroke or spark, seeing it go in the right direction only to sail over the side line.

When asked to stroke in Gateball – particularly a difficult one – the natural inclination is to focus all your energy and concentration on making sure that you hit the target. This is understandable, but can often do you a disservice.

Everyone misses sometimes – EVERYONE.

Most people will touch (or score) a target, most of the time at 1 or 2 metres. Beyond that distance the percentage of success decreases.

A key question is to **think** about what happens when you miss? Will you go sailing out of the court because you hit the ball too hard? Will you stop just inside the line? Will you come to rest safely near another ball on your team? Will you end up close to an opposition ball that will touch and spark you out of play? Think **consequences.**

Every shot has two elements: direction and weight/length.

Think about how you should hit the ball so that, if you miss, you still end up in a tolerable position.

You must **think** about weight/length on most of your strokes, particularly when you are attempting a difficult shot with a reasonable chance you will miss the target. Even if you get the direction wrong and miss, **thinking** about how powerfully to hit the ball beforehand is very important. A well-weighted miss may only be a small miss-step instead of a catastrophe.

When passing a gate, it is often very important to think about the weight/length of your shot. A ball may be placed on line 3 or 1 and a long shot could connect with those. It might be necessary to connect with a ball behind the gate so it can be placed in a strategically advantageous position for your team or there may be an opportunity to make an opposition ball an outball.

Weight/length can also be an important part of the game in other ways. When you've made a gate-touch, you will often be asked to either hunt a distant ball using both shots, or to move from gate 2 to gate 3. In both cases, the first shot is much more about weight than accuracy.

It's not appropriate to wait for a detailed captain's call. Just imagine, you have just passed G2, to a depth of about 1m. Your captain wants you to end up in a position near line 4 but in a position to pass G3. However on the way over there is an opposition ball lurking half way across. A captain may call, "I want you to end up in Gate 3 running position near line 4 but see if you can touch ball 7 on the way over". That takes about 7 seconds to say! Captains could say "Go through 7 to get to the front of gate 3. That call might only take 3 seconds BUT it needs the player to **think** for themselves and realise that they need to get close to line 4 to avoid being attacked by ball 7 in a following turn. When a captain knows a player is really "Thinking like a Captain," they may only have to say "set up in front of 3".

THINK ABOUT LENGTH AND WEIGHT!

4.5 Understanding the stages of a game

It is important for players to understand the different stages of a game – The stage of the game will affect the calls a captain makes and will affect how you are asked to play!

1. The first ten minutes

At the beginning of the game, ball placement is very important. The leading team must seek the most advantageous position, so that it can score (offence) but also keep the opposition subdued (defence). Your captain should be able to ask you to play cross, straight and reverse shots to a variety of lengths as you come onto the field of play. They may ask you to hold back your ball and not play it in. This stage can lay the groundwork for the rest of the game.

2. The middle stage of the game.

About ten minutes into the game, teams will be trying to both score and stop the other team from scoring, often by keeping them off the court as much as possible. Gate Touches and Touch Gates are opportunities to destroy the opposition's ball placement. Watching the numbers and looking for opportunities to send attack balls is important. The thinking player is concentrating on what's happening. They are ready with information, can see some possibilities for their ball and are actively undertaking their responsibilities.

3. The final stage of the game

During the final ten minutes, predictions are made as to how many points the team can score and whether the other team can score too. The balance between offensive and defensive play needs to be carefully thought out. If one team has dominated the game but neglected to keep control of opposition scoring, especially at G2, then the opportunity for a comeback exists.

It is important to keep an eye on the time left. Sometimes, especially at the very end, it can be important to play a turn quickly or use the full amount of time available. It may be important to let your next team ball play, if it has the potential to score plenty of points. A captain may call on you just to tap on your ball in this situation. Read the game and be speedy! Conversely, a following opposition ball may be in a position to rack up a large number of points and your team may be able to touch many balls just to minimise the opposition's chance to score those points! Remember too that every turn played after the 5 or 6 minute mark will be the last for that ball! For example, playing in so a ball can pass a gate on its next turn is useless. Helper roles for your ball are all that can be considered. As well as their other responsibilities, a thinking player will realise whether their captain wants a shot played very quickly or using the maximum allowance of time.

Resources for Beginners on the Gateball Australia Website – www.gateball.com.au

A role of a L1 coach should also include being a "curator" of resources relevant to beginner players. Coaches should be able to direct players to relevant material that could reinforce their coaching. It is important for coaches to be aware of what information is available on www.gateball.com.au especially under the Coaches Corner heading.

Our most useful resource for beginners is the Gateball Australia "Gateball for Beginners ". It can be found by selecting **Coaches Corner/Gateball Information Pamphlets** and then scrolling down the list to **016**.

It also helps many beginners to watch a game. A list of YouTube Channels with plenty of GB games can be found by selecting **High Performance** from the home page. The third heading in the list is **Gateball Videos**. From this page **a list of YouTube sites with multiple Gateball videos can be accessed.**



Coaches Corner

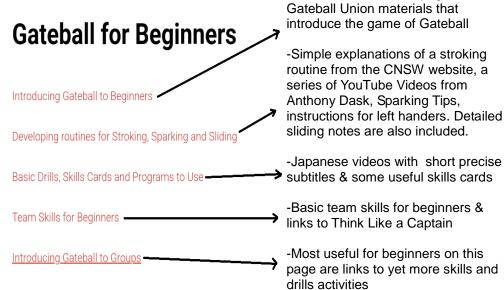
Gateball for Beginners

Gateball for Deginners

Gateball for Competition Players

Player skill development theory

Introducing Gateball to groups



-There is a link on this page to World