



INTERMEDIATE SKILLS

Picking Up Corner Pins and other Single Pin Spares

While it may sound easy, sometimes single pin spares can be tricky. Some tournaments that have traced spares find that as much as 50% of spares are missed! The key to single pin spares is to be accurate. A straight ball is more accurate than a curve release.

If you use a big curve, get a plastic ball and/or learn to release the ball straight. With the straight ball, the ball reaction does not depend on lane conditions. Straight on a dry lane and straight on an oily one look the same. Master the straight ball and you won't have to go hunting for where to stand and aim when you are facing a different lane condition.

In the **basic spare shooting tip**, a basic 3-6-9 system is described for rolling a straight ball. If you generally roll a curve ball at strikes, you can still use this system by finding out during your practice where you need to stand and aim in order to get your straight ball into the pocket. Once you know this, the chart in the other tip will work well. You may also use this chart as a guideline in developing your own system if necessary.

Make sure you use a couple of shots during your practice play to work on your spare line. One effective strategy is to roll at the corner pins on your first shot then try for the pocket on your second ball.

Eliminating corner pins

You just rolled a great shot that hooked into the pocket, but you left a corner pin standing. Sometimes what may have appeared to be a perfect shot didn't hit quite so perfectly. Let's take a look at why this happens and what we can do about it.

The most common leave for a right-hander is the 10 pin. On a perfect strike hit, the ball hits the 1-3 pocket before continuing through and hitting the 5 and 9 pins. The 3 pin is driven into the 6 pin and the 6 pin in turn hits 10 pin as shown in Figure 1. If the 10 pin stands, you need to find out where the 6 pin went. Did it get driven straight back to where the 9 pin stands? This would be a high shot. Did the 6 pin go to the side wall as in Figure 2? This indicates a light shot.

The scenario is the same but on the opposite side for a left-hander who leaves a 7 pin standing. The direction of the 4 pin (like the 6 pin for a right-hander) is the key to finding out why the hit wasn't perfect.

You can make your adjustment once you know whether your ball hit high or light. Remember the general rule of adjustments is to move in the direction on the miss (miss right = move right) with your feet. Just a slight move is all that is needed to get rid of corner pins.

Understanding the reaction of the pins can help solve the mystery of most spare combinations.

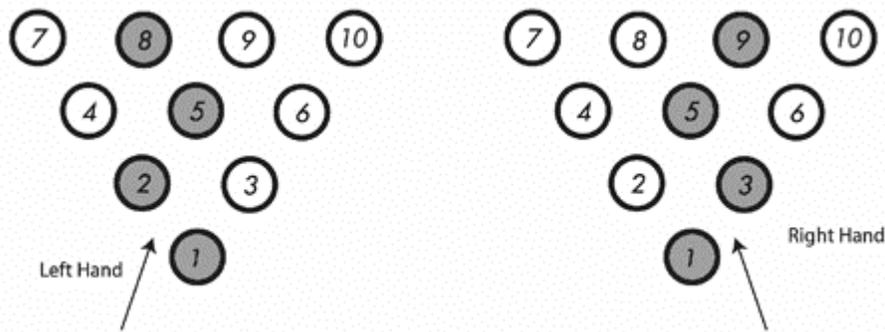


Figure 1: (Strike Pocket. Source, USBC Coaching Level I manual, Chapter 7)

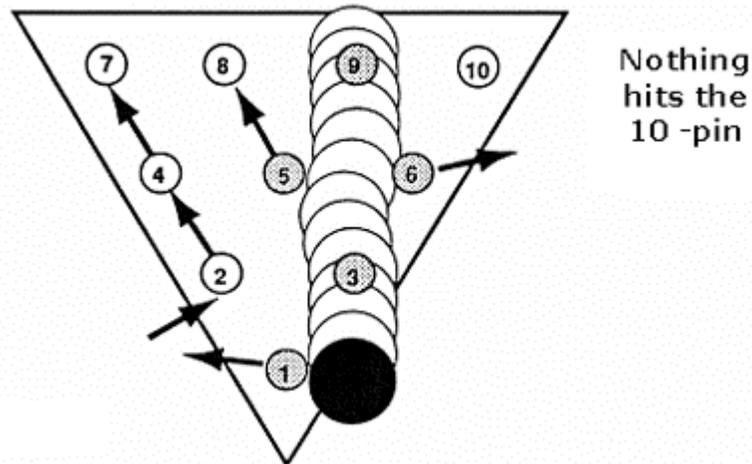


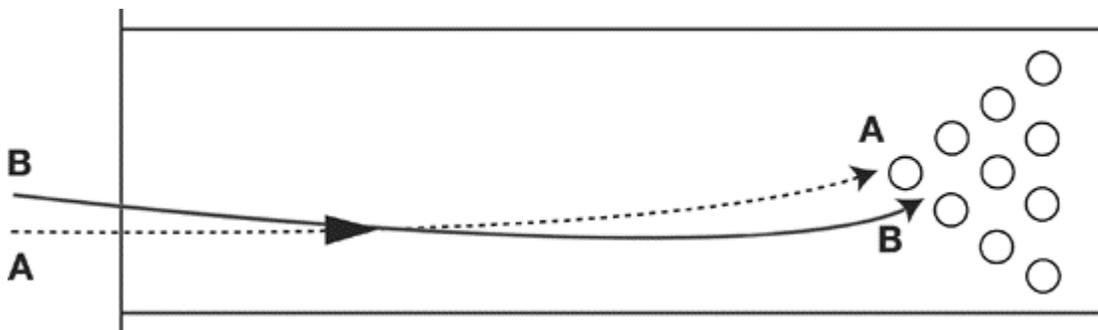
Figure 2: (Light hit. Source, USBC Coaching Bronze manual, Chapter 8.)

Make angular and parallel adjustments

Lane conditions change as bowling balls repeatedly travel down the lane. With each shot, the ball absorbs some of the oil and moves oil further down on the lane. Changes in the oil distribution will affect ball path and reaction. As lane conditions change, there are two types of adjustments you can make to keep your ball in the pocket: angular moves and parallel moves.

Angular adjustments, as illustrated in Figure 1, are the most common moves bowlers use to adapt to changing lane conditions. For example, you may start your league session standing on board No. 20 and aiming at the second arrow (which is on board No. 10). As the lanes start to hook more, you might move your starting position one board inside but keep your target the same, on the second arrow (or board 10). This is a slight angular adjustment.

Fig. 1

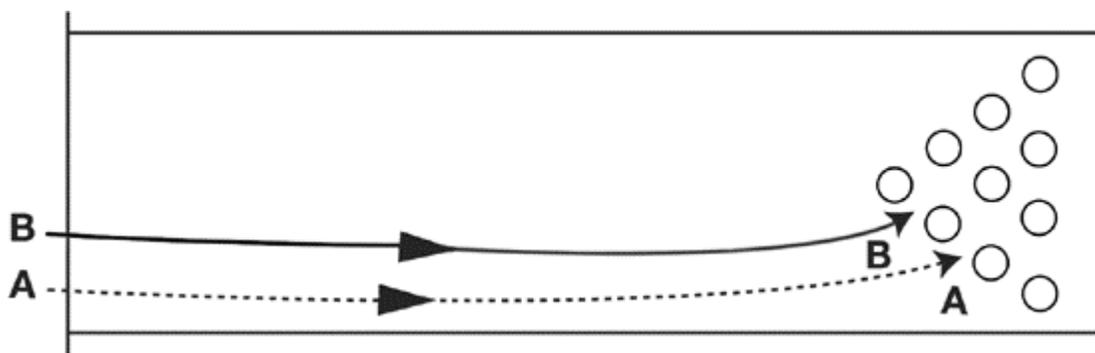


The 2-to-1 guideline for making angular adjustments means that for every two boards you move with your feet, you move your target one board in the same direction. Using the starting point example above, a 2-to-1 adjustment would have you stand on board 22 and aim at board No. 11. Moving even more, by the end of the league session you may end up standing on board 26 and aiming at board 13.

Practice this by rolling a shot to hit the pocket. Then make a 2-to-1 adjustment. Watch the ball reaction – it will probably be very light in the pocket. Make another 2-to-1 adjustment and it should miss the pocket completely. The goal of this practice is to focus on standing where you need to stand and hitting the target you intend. When lane conditions demand this versatility, you will have the skill to adapt.

Parallel adjustments, as shown in Figure 2, are made when both your target on the lane and your starting position foot placement move the same amount and in the same direction. If you move right two boards with your feet, move right two boards with your target as well. If you move left with your feet, move left with your target.

Fig. 2



Use a straighter second release for difficult lane conditions

Varying lane conditions can make it tricky to find the right line. Rolling a straighter second ball will help you on both oily and dry lanes. A lot of oil on the lanes will cause the ball to roll straighter no matter how you throw it. Dry lanes can make the ball hook too much.

Throwing a straight ball increases the forward rotation on the ball and reduces the side roll, which decreases the tendency of the ball to hook.

Try these techniques to throw a straighter ball:

- Point your forearm at your target line through the back and forward swings and release.
- Point your ring finger at your lane target at the point of release.

These tips will help keep your hand behind the ball instead of on the side at the release point.

Use a tournament preparation checklist

The tournament entry fees have been sent, tickets and reservations have been made and you are ready for the competition to begin. Well, not quite yet. These ideas from USBC Coaching can help your game even before you roll your first ball at the tournament.

Before you go:

Choose your arsenal. Select the bowling balls you'd like to bring. Talk to others who have already bowled in the tournament or are familiar with the lane conditions to help you determine which ones will be right for you. Some tournaments limit the number of balls per bowler to six.

Check your equipment. Look for chips and cracks on the surface of each ball. Replace worn finger inserts as necessary.

Prepare your accessory bag. Make sure you bring a rosin bag, clean towel and plenty of tape. Find a USBC certified coach. A USBC coach can help you find a way to knock down a few more pins each game. Click [here](#) to find a USBC coach in your area.

When you get there:

Pay attention to what is happening around you. If other bowlers are starting to miss right or left, the lane condition may be changing slightly. Be alert and make adjustments.

Relax and have fun. You'll have a harder time making your shots if you are nervous, worried or concerned. To decrease tension, take a deep breath and exhale before each shot.

Get back to basics. Tournaments are exciting and in such an atmosphere, bowlers have a tendency to get overanxious and forget about fundamentals. Focus on the basics to ensure your best performance.

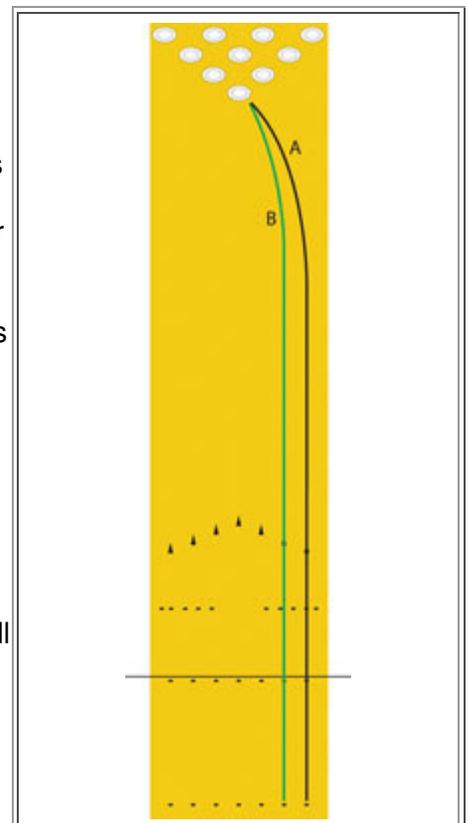
Preparing for a tournament

When competing in a bowling tournament, often the lane conditions call for playing a different line on the lane than you normally use. The best way to prepare for playing different lines is to practice. You can play different lines at your home center even though the lane conditions are different than what you'll encounter at a tournament.

The following practice routine can help prepare you for the various lines that you may need to use. Start by using the first arrow as a target. Find the proper starting point to stand so that you hit the first arrow and get the ball to roll into the pocket. Once you've determined your proper starting position, roll that shot several times. Then move to the second, third and fourth arrows and repeat the process.

Watch others to learn what works

Arrive for your tournament squad earlier than needed. Not only will the check-in lines be shorter, but you can watch how others are playing the lanes. Pick someone who has a similar style to yours and watch the way they play the lane. What kind of line is he or she playing? Is it working? Use your observations to assess your strategy for the tournament.



Prepare for tournaments by playing different lines during practice sessions. For example, find the starting position so that you hit the first arrow and roll the ball into the pocket (line A). Then repeat the process with the second arrow as your target (line B).

Adjust your target backward and forward

At your skill level, you have a good handle on starting position, lay down point and using the arrows as targets. You can fine tune the shape of your ball path by using different targets to accomplish different goals.

For example, if you want the ball to rev up earlier, you may want to aim closer to the foul line in front of the arrows. If you want the bowling ball to rev up later, choose a target farther down the lane which will get you to extend through the shot and delay the balls roll to some degree.

Develop a line in your mind and play connect the dots by picking a spot at the arrows as well as a spot farther down the lane (i.e. a dark board or lane marking) and attempt to roll the ball over both reference points.

You may get frustrated when you think you hit your target and the ball didnt hit the pocket. Before the next shot, you will have to determine:

- Did you roll the ball faster or slower?
- Did you rev it up more or less?
- Did you roll the ball over the target on the same angle as before when you struck?
- Are the lanes changing?

Keep your arm swing in the groove

Arm swing direction is important because it allows you to hit your target consistently and project to your bowling balls break point. Professionals and top amateurs keep their arm swing in what is known as the pro groove.

USBC Coaching advocates keeping the swing in line with the shoulder joint of your bowling arm, varying left or right by at most only four inches.

Top players will consistently keep the ball in the groove. They may tuck their arm swing in slightly when coming forward from their backswing. This allows them to have stronger leverage and hand position at the point of release.