



## *Five tips for lower-average bowlers*

If you want to improve your bowling scores this summer, bowlers with averages less than 150 will do well to practice the basic ball delivery mechanics of bowling. For instance, if your ball falls into the channel or strays on the lane, you have a flawed delivery and will not be able to hit your target consistently.

There are four fundamental bowling areas for you to improve to bowl better (and add 20 pins to your present average in the process). The areas include developing a free, straight armswing, acquiring more consistent approach steps to match your ball swing, changing your ball roll to a hook release with a straight follow-through over your target, and learning to hit a spot (target) or releasing the ball over a predetermined target line on the lane.

With minimum effort and practice in these areas using the five tips that follow, you will soon see higher scores and find more fun and enjoyment in your bowling.

**1. Roll a hook ball.** Let's start with your ball roll. If you are not rolling a hook ball, change to one for more pin action (no straight balls or backup balls, please—straight balls deflect out of the strike pocket, and backup balls often move away from the pocket with less hitting power).

For an effective strike ball, simply position and fix your hand in the ball with your thumb pointed at 11 o'clock on a clock face and your ring finger at 5 o'clock and middle finger at 4 o'clock. This will produce a three-quarter roll, the easiest and best strike ball you can attain today.

*Errors to avoid:* When delivering the strike ball, keep your fingers and thumb locked in the set position throughout the release—do not let your hand turn counterclockwise for hook. The pull of gravity will cause the thumb to naturally come out of the ball at the sliding heel, and the upward movement of the fingers and hand, without turning the ball, will produce all the side turn and hook you

need. If you turn the hand and bowling thumb to the right, your hand will rotate under the ball, and the ball will go right.

Turning your hand more and the thumb past 2 o'clock will result in a backup ball. Keeping the thumb pointed up throughout the delivery, with the fingers fixed between 3 and 6 o'clock throughout the release, will produce the three-quarter hook roll for the desired pin action needed for a strike.

**2. Develop a free, pendulum swing.** Next, work on a straight armswing, pushing the ball straight out from the bowling shoulder. Let the weight of the ball develop a free, pendulum swing, which is the basic element of the bowling game. Your steps will match up and follow the armswing.

Perfecting a straight, pendulum armswing will allow your approach steps to automatically match the ball swing (never attempt to match the ball swing to the steps). A good repeatable swing will keep the feet moving and synchronized with a gravity-dependable and constant swing.

*Errors to avoid:* For a right-hander, if your arm swings across your body to the left and not straight ahead, the ball will go left. If you swing right of your target, your ball will go to the right of your target.

Another error to avoid is dropping your bowling shoulder. This will cause the swing to be late, and the ball will go to the right with a loss of leverage and inconsistent thumb releases. Maintain your shoulder in an up and level position throughout the delivery for a straighter armswing, better accuracy, and leverage during the ball release.

**3. Square up the arms, shoulders, and hips for balance and accuracy.** In the beginning of your stance, be sure the shoulders and hips are squared at a 90-degree angle to the target line and parallel to each other. Finish the delivery with the shoulders and hips still squared and parallel at the ball release and follow

through. If the shoulders turn to the left, your ball will go left; if they turn right, the ball will go right.

**4. Follow through.** The ball goes in the same direction as the armswing. If you miss the target or target line, your armswing is not straight and your timing is faulty. As you follow through, pretend to take a drink of water or touch your right ear. This will pre-signal your bowling arm to follow through in a straight line to your target.

**5. Hit your target spot.** After you have acquired a squared body in your stance at the start of your pushaway, followed by a free, pendulum swing and a fairly straight walk, you have the necessary bowling ingredients to bowl well.

As your final test of how well you have progressed, go to the bowling lanes and practice hitting a lane target with a squared body and a straight swing. *Do not be concerned with your score*—only be interested in your ability to square up to a line and hit a target with a straight swing.

Select a target at the dots seven or eight feet out on the lane. Call the target spot by its board number or by sight. Bring this spot straight back to your stance and align your bowling shoulder directly over this line or board, which is a straight line to the target. Square the center of your bowling shoulder over this line and bowl. Keep your eyes on the target spot; *do not look at the pins.*

Did the ball go over the target?

If not, there is a fault in your armswing, approach, body alignment, or ball release. Do the drill several times and follow the ball with your eyes over the spot (but no further down the lane).

Next, use two spots on the lane as your target line: Use the one spot at the dots and add another spot at the arrows. Bowl down this line and over the two spots. Shift your eyes from the first spot to the second spot as you deliver the ball over the line.

Do the drills many times to perfect your ability to line up and hit your target or target line.

Good bowling!

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