



Curling 101

Curling seems simple: two teams take turns sliding stones down a curling sheet to a target at the other end. Sweepers help the rocks on their way, and the team with the most stones close to the center of the target wins. The sport emphasizes strategy, communication, and good sportsmanship.

The Team

A curling team consists of four players: lead, second, vice-skip (or third) and skip (team captain). Each member of the team delivers two rocks. Two other team members may sweep (or brush) in front of the rock.

The skip calls the shots, using a broom as a target, and calls the direction. When the skip throws, the vice-skip holds the broom and is in charge of line calls. Communication between the sweepers and the person calling is vital.

The Ice

A curling sheet is approximately 150' long and 15' wide. The ice is pebbled before each game by sprinkling water droplets onto the ice.

At each end of the ice is the house, a target made of concentric circles that are 12', 8', and 4' in diameter. The center of the house is the button.

Running the length of the sheet are side lines (sheet boundaries) and a center line. Running across the sheet are tee lines (through the center of the button), back lines (6' behind the tee line, tangent to the back of the houses), and hog lines (21' in front of the tee line).

Six feet behind the back line of each house are hacks, or toeholds (like sprinters use in a starting block). When delivering a rock, a curler must release the stone before crossing the near hog line. Rocks that do not completely cross the far hog line or that completely cross the far back line are removed from play.

Ice varies from facility to facility, from sheet to sheet in the same rink, and on a sheet as a game progresses. Players read the ice to know how hard to throw a rock or how much ice to give for a shot.

Rocks

Curling rocks, or stones, are made of granite and weigh 38 – 44 pounds. They are about 6 inches tall and 11 inches in diameter. The bottom of a rock has a cavity about 6 inches wide. Rocks slide on the outside edge of the cavity, known as the running surface.

Rocks might curl as much as 8 feet. A rock rotating clockwise will curl from left to right, and a rock rotating counterclockwise will curl from right to left. Anticipating this curl (reading the ice) is perhaps the most important part of the game.

Brooms

Curling brooms (brushes) are used to sweep and to help players keep their balance when delivering a rock. If a rock has begun to curl, sweeping will make it travel straighter and farther.

Shoes

Players wear specially designed shoes. The sole of one foot has a Teflon® layer, allowing the curler to slide. The sole of the foot placed in the hack is made of rubber to provide traction. When sweeping, many curlers place a gripper over their slide foot for additional traction.

Play of the Game

Curling games begin and end with hand-shakes among all participants. Games are played in ends, during which each player throws two stones.

After the first end, the team that scored in the previous end throws the first rock in the next end. Throwing the last rock in an end, called having the hammer, is advantageous. After all 16 rocks have been delivered, the vice-skips agree on the score for that end.

Curlers throw two basic types of shots: draws and hits. Draws guard other rocks, hide behind other rocks, or freeze other rocks. Hits may remove a rock from play or move a rock a few inches or few feet.

Scoring

Only rocks in the house may score. A rock is in the house if any part of it, when viewed from directly above the rock, is touching the house. All rocks from one team closer to the button than any of the opponent's rocks score one point each. It is possible to blank an end, i.e., neither team scores.

If the score is tied at the end of a game, extra ends are played to determine the winner.

A team may concede a game. Typically, this happens in the last end when a team no longer has enough rocks left to tie the game or believes that winning is highly improbable.

Thank you for your support of Howard Center's 2019 Curling Challenge!