

Training Course

Introduction and Getting you Started

Lesson 1

1. Etiquette, just common sense rules

- a. Never throw a boule if a player or spectator is in front
- b. Quiet & Still when someone is in the Playing Circle (Think Golf)
- c. Observe the game adjacent to the Jack (2 meters away), not behind the circle.
- e. Don't walk across other games

Petanque is a remarkably safe sport

2. The Game - Basic Rules

- a) The first team throws out the jack between 6 to 10 meters and then throw a boule towards the jack.
- b) The second team tries to place a boule nearer to the jack.
If they succeed, the first team has to throw again.
If they fail, they have to continue to play until they succeed or until they have no boules left.
- c) When a team has no boules left, their opponents play the remaining boules.
- d) When all the boules have been played, a team scores as many points as it has boules closer to the jack than the best boule of the opposing side.
- e) Each team totals the points scored, the winning team being the first to reach 13.

3 . Basic Guidelines

- a. Playing distances
- b. Size of jack and throwing circle
- c. Different weight and size of boule

a. Playing distances

For the thrown jack to be valid the distance from it to the nearest edge of the throwing circle must be between: 6 meters minimum and 10 meters maximum for Juniors and Seniors.

b. Size of jack and throwing circle

Jacks are made of wood or of synthetic material. Their diameter must be between 25 mm (minimum) and 35mm (maximum).

The throwing circle must be large enough for any player to stand with both feet fully inside it. However, it must not measure less than 35cm or more than 50cm in diameter. It must be drawn at least 1 meter from any obstacle, and at least 1 meter from the boundary.

c. Different weight and size of boule.

There are two types, Leisure and Competition, both similar in appearance. The important difference is that competition boules are intended for competition play, made to a higher specification, vary in diameter, weight, hardness and pattern, with unique identifying marks. Diameters are from 70.5 to 80mm and the weight must be between 650 and 800 grams.

4. Choice of Boules

In time you will need your own set of boules, but don't be in too much of a hurry to buy them yet, you may well regret your hastiness if you buy the wrong boule.

- a. Correct weight
- b. Correct Size
- c. Try other boules before buying

a. Correct weight

On a gravel surface a smaller and heavier boule will take a straighter and more consistent path through the variations of the surface. A heavy boule may cause problems in throwing to 10 meters, but the boule can roll some of the way. A shooter will often need to throw the full length to strike boule to boule. The weight is critical, 680 grams to 700 grams are usually preferred and the bigger the better.

b. Correct Size

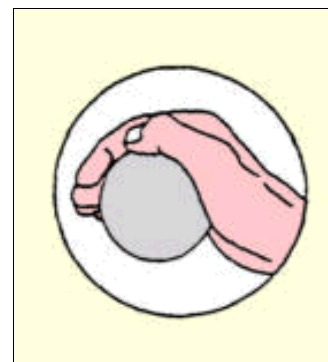
Try holding the boule palm down at arms length with little or no help from your thumb, your fingers should wrap just over halfway round the boule and the boule should not slip from your grasp. If it is slipping it is too big, and if it is too small it will not release cleanly from the fingers and will in both cases affect the direction and distance the boule travels. Start with a small boule and work up until the boule feels too big and then step down a size.

c. Try other boules before buying

With such a choice, buying your first set of boules can be a daunting task. Do not buy any until you have tried various weights and diameters and have found a size that feels comfortable.




5. Holding the boule

- Palm on top
- Fingers close together - Thumb hardly used



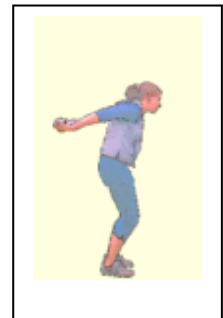
6. Stance: A stable stance is vital for throwing a boule, find out which positions are most comfortable.

- a. Comfortable b. Balanced c. Aligned

		
a. Feet together in line with the game.	b. Feet touching but one behind the other in line with the game. Forward Foot corresponding to throwing arm.	c. Feet apart. Forward foot corresponding to throwing arm.

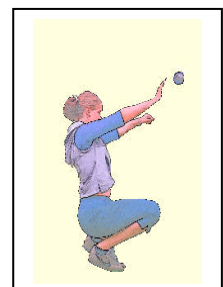
Standing

- a. Comfortable: The feet are quite flat within the circle.
- b. Balanced: The body is upright for pointing high, bent slightly forward for pointing medium-high and bent well forward for the other points.
- c. Aligned: The shoulders and the whole of the body face into the game. The eyes are fixed on the jack.



Squatting

- a. The soles of the feet are not fully on the ground: The heels are raised.
- b. Balanced: The trunk is almost upright, just slightly leaning forward.
- c. Aligned: The shoulders are at right angles to the proposed trajectory and the elbow of the balancing arm is raised. The eyes are fixed on the jack.



7. The Throw

- Aim
- Smooth backswing
- Follow through
- Correct release

The Throwing Action

The movement of the arm should be smooth and should be without any stiffness. Full extension without elbow interference. The only movement is at the shoulder and the wrist.

To aim, the throwing arm is extended towards the target.

The backswing begins as the arm swings back, elbow next to the body, and the hand holding the boule pivots cocking the wrist.

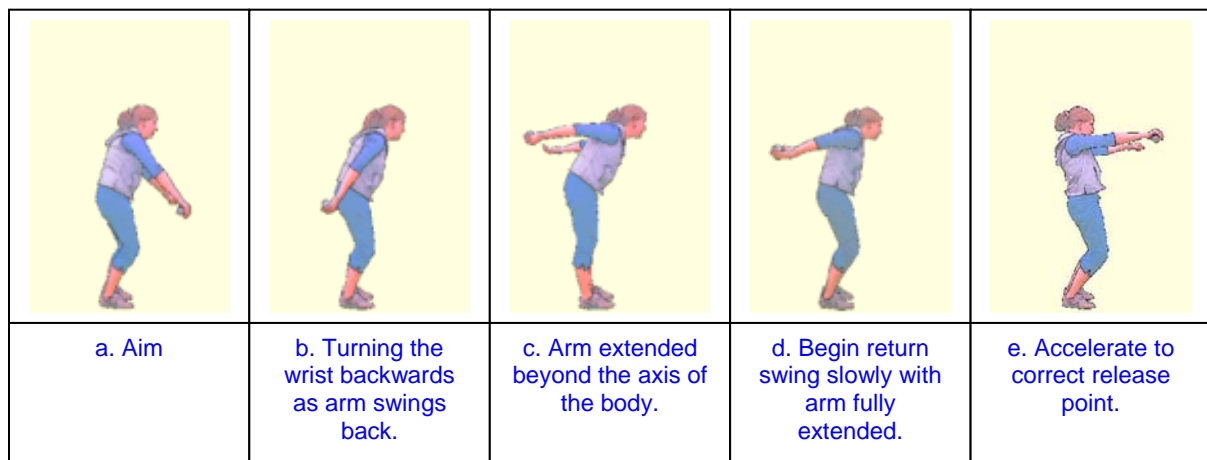
The forward swing, or follow-through commences slowly...accelerating to the point of releasing the boule as in the manner of a hammer swinging at a nail. During this forward swing the arm remains straight and without any stiffness. As it returns forward, the wrist remains cocked all the way to the base of the swing. The fulcrum of this arc path is past the leg before the arm begins its upward scoop towards the point of release. The wrist begins un-cocking here. The hand should pass near the leg which acts as a guide; hence the importance of placing the feet correctly in the throwing circle.

The other arm should take the part of the counterbalance, helping the player to keep balance.

Having reached the height of the beginning aim position, the hand now opens in a single snap-like release as the ball leaves the hand from the fingertips, not as if it were being dropped. Gradually releasing the finger's pressure on the ball will cause you to "drop" the ball.

The eyes are kept fixed on the object or the place aimed at.

The legs are involved in the movement - the knees can bend - but the heels do not leave the ground.



8. Clothing & Footwear

- a. Comfortable, loose ... not bulky
- b. Comfortable, casual, flat-soled shoes

Training Course

Technique & Tactics

Lesson 2

1. Pointing

The aim of the game of Pétanque is simple, playing pétanque is placing your boule nearer to the jack and keeping your opponents boule away. To start, pointing should be the focus of your beginning lessons. Shooting skills are usually developed after you've mastered your pointing skills.

- Getting closer to the jack
- "Read" the Terrain

Getting nearer to the jack can be achieved in various ways:

- a) A boule can be thrown to it.
- b) The jack can be moved closer to one of your own boules.
- c) The opponent's boule nearest the jack can be moved further away by playing your own onto it.

Pointing is the part of the game in which you try to bring your boule as close as possible to the jack. In general the squatting position is for playing short and the standing position is used for pointing long.

Pointing wins games. To the beginner it is an element of luck. To the expert it is a test of skill and is often used defensively. It's important to remember that you only have to get closer to the jack than your opponents, not necessarily close to it.

"Read" the terrain as a golfer reads the line of a putt. Predict the path of the ball from where it first will touch the ground (la donnée) to where you want it to stop. The terrain will show you which type of pointing method to use.

2. Pointing Styles

There are three main pointing throws in Pétanque.

- a. The Rolling Point (la roulette)
- b. The Half Lob (la demi-portée)
- c. The High Lob (la portée sometimes la plombée)

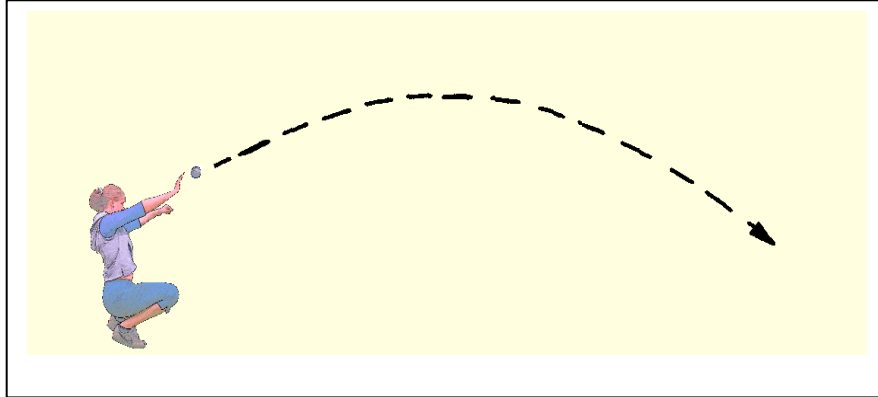
a. The Rolling Point

The last of the pointing throws is the rolling throw, as the name implies your boule is rolled all the way from your circle to the jack. We've said that there are two styles of pointing. Well there is a variation of the standing style where you bend forward from your waist and release the boule close to your feet.

Note: Whether you stand, bend forward or squat to make a throw depends largely on the type of terrain you are using. As a general rule for pointing, you need to be higher off the ground on a terrain that is rough and closer to the ground when the terrain is smooth.

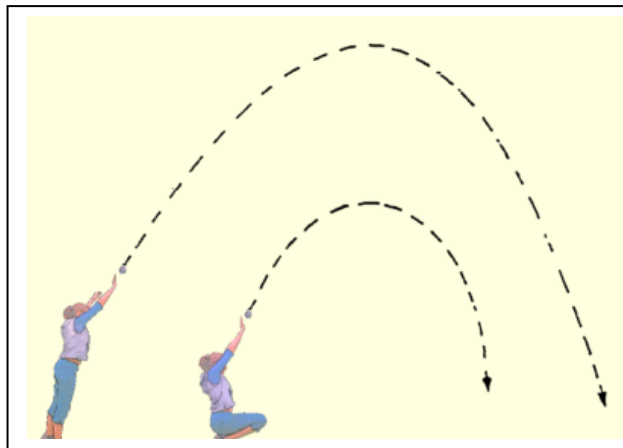
b. The Half Lob (demi-portée)

The most frequent and common way of pointing is the "half lob". Most players adopt this as their standard form for throwing their boule. The half lob is throwing your boule so that it lands between the circle where you are standing and the target, allowing the boule to run along the terrain for the rest of the way to the target. The terrain needs to be reasonably smooth, to allow the boule to roll forward in a line directly to the target. You will pay particular attention to where your ball lands so that you can adjust your next throw as necessary.



b. The High Lob (portée)

The "high lob" is the most difficult of the three pointing throws, and requires a great deal of height and a lot of backspin to prevent the boule rolling forward too much. The idea is to throw the boule up and landing as close to the jack as possible, then stopping without moving forward too much. At times the throw is executed so well that the boule stops dead where it lands. The throw is difficult to master but a very effective one when carried out correctly. This throw is particularly useful on rough and uneven terrains.



Practice the action of pointing on smooth ground and uneven terrain while both squatting and standing:

- Reading the terrain and choosing the best landing point (la donnée) for the boule to land.
- Plan ahead of your throw: how hard the boule is to be sent, how high it is to go and the distance it has to cover.
- Keeping the eye on the jack, the field of vision which should extend from between where the boule lands and the jack.
- Loose arm-swing which governs the success of the throw.
- Releasing the boule correctly.

3. Shooting

- Why and When
- Shooting Styles

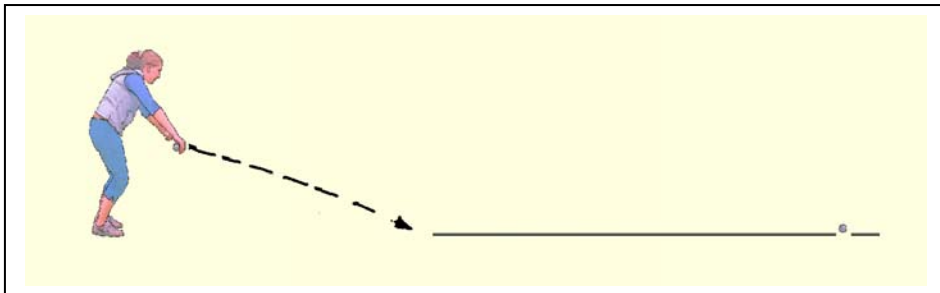
Shooting is the act of hitting an opponent's boules out of the way. Shooting is an option if your opponent's ball is difficult to out-point which would otherwise cause your team to waste balls in trying. In this way, shooting will clear the path enabling your team to point close to the bouchon. Shooting also increases the ball advantage for your team and pressures your opponent to try to point close again. Shooting also removes opponent's boules to increase your teams score. Shooting the jack out of play is sometimes necessary to start the hand anew.

Shooting Styles include shooting along smooth ground to remove boules and shooting in the air to remove boules. Shooting through the air is used both when the ground is smooth or when the terrain is rough. Both are effective for different reasons and depend on your own abilities and strengths. Every good shooter, to be fully effective, should have both techniques available, depending on the circumstances.

Shooting along smooth ground (a la raffe)

Usually, shooting on the ground is the beginning style most people start with. Shooting along smooth ground is to throw a boule with controlled force to hit the ground first and then the target ball or balls. It is thrown a few meters in front of the target boule(s), or the jack.

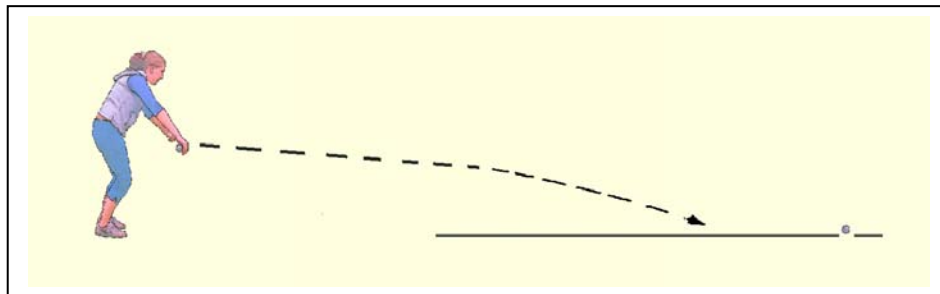
The arm-swing is forceful and rapid and the boule leaves the hand by the fingertips. On touching the ground there should be a slight backspin. The boule moves rapidly along the ground until it makes contact.



The One Bounce Shot

This method is differentiated from the previous one because it uses less force and greater precision.

The boule is thrown to land about one to two meters in front of the object to be shot and is often deadly because your ball often stays around within the area.



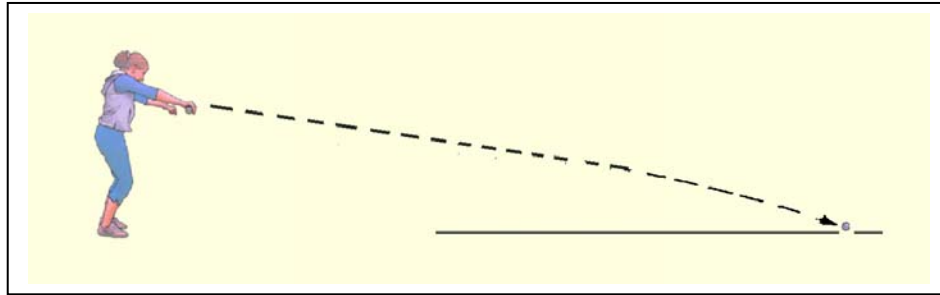
Shooting through the air (au fer)

The shooting form and stance is essentially the same as in pointing with the only difference being that you are applying more power to hit the boule directly. This is a precision shot.

In principle, it is easier to shoot a boule away on rough terrain than it is to point a boule close to the jack.

In this diagram there is no arc shown for the direct hit Shot. This is fundamentally wrong and this picture depicts perfectly the mistake most beginning shooters make. This style of shot takes twice the energy to perform and is unpredictably disruptive to balls you don't wish to disturb.

The ideal arc depends entirely on the distance the target ball is from you. The longer the shot...the higher the arc you will need.



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Practice Skills & Tactics

Lesson 3

Pointing and Shooting Skills

- Pointing 6, 8, 10m
- Shooting 6, 8, 10m

1. Skills Pointing Practice– Rolling Point, Half Lob, and High Lob

From the drawn throwing circle, place a jack 6 meters away and draw another circle around the jack about the same size as the throwing circle. Practice pointing boules into that circle with the jack.

Practice all three styles, Rolling-Half Lob-High Lob, separately with landing spots that correspond to each style.

Repeat this exercise at 8 meters and then at 10 meters.

The donnée for the rolling point is selected by choosing a flat and smooth spot just in front of the throwing circle. The medium arc point is thrown to a landing spot roughly half the distance from the throwing circle and the jack. The high arc point is a very special technique in which the boule is thrown high so that after it lands, it only has a very short distance to roll.

2. Skills Shooting Practice – Shooting along the Ground, The One Bounce Shot, and Shooting through the air

Shooting practice is the same as pointing practice except that you will place a single target ball near the jack at 6,8, and 10 meters. Practice all three styles of shooting separately at each of these distances. Both styles are very similar. The main difference is the point of release.

For a more focused practice, place extra boules that represent your team's boules next to the jack. Avoid hitting your team's boules.

Tactics

- Evaluate position
- Your team's/opponents' strengths/weaknesses
- Decide on a shot
- Position the jack
- Long/short
- Smooth or rough

General Tactics of a Game of Petanque

In the game of petanque the teams do not play simultaneously but one after the other. The team which starts the game has, an initial disadvantage, since the opponent has one more boule in hand than they have. It follows that the team that throws second has the advantage until they miss. Keeping track of this ball advantage is key to winning and determines when you should point and when you should shoot.

This advantage can be worth one point for every boule held, in real life this is rarely attained.

When your team has the ball advantage you must decide whether to point or shoot. When there is a choice between shooting and pointing, use the method which looks most likely to succeed.

In petanque, shooting is not necessarily attacking and pointing is not necessarily defending.

Shooting to defend a point or pointing to attack will enable you to regain the advantage.

Even if you have the advantage, you should point if the opponents' most recent boule is poor and easy to outpoint. Be sure that the nature of the surface or the skill of the opponents does not leave you open to attack. There are many elements which have to be taken into account including your own skill when you adapt your tactics.

Consider shooting to reduce the opponents' score or break up the game, send the jack out, scattering the boules even if the opponents have one or more boules more than you.

Nobody is immune from making an error of play, though this is usually a case of failing to carry out an attempted throw.

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Advanced Pointing & Shooting Plus Exercises

Lesson 4

1. Pointing

- Offensive Pointing
- Defensive Pointing
- Promoting a boule
- Moving the jack
- Spinning around an obstacle

Offensive pointing

When your opponents have pointed a good ball but it's determined that it is not worth shooting out, ALWAYS point in the direction of the opponents ball with the intention of coming to rest right against their ball. The result is that the opponents will not shoot your ball when their ball behind it will also get shot out. If you did not earn the point out-right, do the same thing again with the intention of *gently* touching your ball to *gently* bump their ball away

Defensive Pointing

Defensive pointing means to block the opponents pointing lanes especially late in the hand. Here, you are trying to reduce your opponent's opportunities to easily point right to the jack. Every defensive point is thrown short to close the middle line and then either/both the right side or the left depending on your opponents throwing styles, i.e. is one of them left handed?

Promoting a boule

Promoting your teams' ball is a powerful play. Here, you play hard enough in the direction of your teams' ball in order to push it into owning the point. Play only hard enough to bump your ball into winning the point and soft enough that if you miss the bump, you will still earn the point. It moves it only a short distance, generally taking its place if it is another boule; or, if it is the jack, moving it only a little way.

Moving the jack

This too is a powerful play. It is a low percentage play owing to the small size of the jack. The same principles in promoting your boule apply to moving the jack. Don't waste your boule by throwing too hard in an all out effort. Play softly enough to drag the jack back to your team's boules behind the jack but still keeping your ball in the game.

Spinning around an obstacle

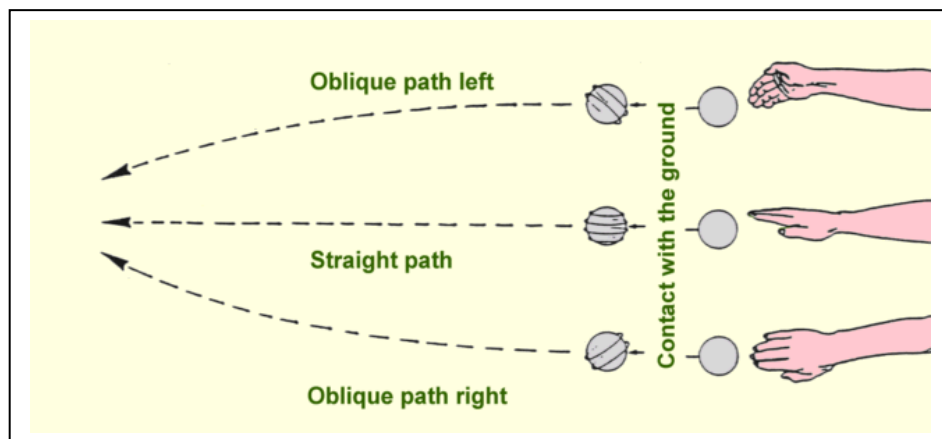
It is possible to reach the jack by curling around previously played boules where a bump is determined to be too dangerous or otherwise unavailable.

In order to increase the curl on the boule, spin must be applied to the ball before it reaches the ground. To give the boule this rotating movement as you release the boule keep the fingers slightly flexed as it leaves the hand.

Also the foot corresponding to the throwing arm no longer faces into the game, it is turned very slightly to the left for a left curl and to the right for a right curl.

For a right-handed player:

To 'curl' a boule, the general rule is not to have the palm of the hand facing the ground, but to rotate it slightly to the right - to go to the right - or rotated to the left, to go to the left. At the moment of releasing the boule, the thumb will be facing the ground to curve a boule to the right and the thumb will be pointing to the sky to curve the ball to the left.



1. Pointing Exercises

Various exercises to perfect Shooting skills. This section introduces some very elaborate techniques and how to proceed in difficult situations which arise during a game with exercises to practice these shots.

- Playing First Ball – Your Boule in Front
- Boule in Front
- Boules in your Line
- Pointing for more Points
- Bumping

Exercise 1. Playing First Ball – Your Boule in Front

There is no more important ball played than the first. It sets the stage for the rest of the game. Most beginning and intermediate players try to throw the first ball right to the jack. More often than not, this ball goes behind the jack and leaves the front door open for the opponents to take control of the game. Look for a small rock, a leaf, or any other thing you can point to about 12 inches in front of the jack. The result is that your ball now blocks the opponents pointing lane. Often, your ball will roll past your chosen spot and get very close to the jack. This is okay but not ideal because now your opponents will shoot or it will give them a backstop to point against.

Exercise 2. Opponents Boule in Front of Jack

Place a boule 12 inches in front of the Jack at 8-10 meters. Often this ball is shot before pointing to beat it. A good pointer will throw directly in the direction of this ball and not intentionally try to slide his ball past. When his ball hits either side of this trouble ball, at least 50% of the time his will gently glance off and roll forward to win the point. Also, this trouble ball will have moved slightly to the side creating a clearer line to the jack. Even if his point hits the trouble ball directly on and moves it closer to the jack it is still to his advantage. Why? Because now his ball blocks the same line to the jack and the opponents will have to deal with his ball that now blocks the line. Now your team can shoot the trouble ball and own the point outright.

Exercise 3. Boules in your Line

You can add spin to your ball to help you in this situation. Scatter some boules on your pointing line between the circle and the jack. Now look for any smooth *donnée* where you can land your ball which will get you closer to the jack than your opponents balls.

Once again, it's important to remember that you only have to get closer to the jack than your opponents, not necessarily close to it. After all, it's not a beauty contest. Just get your team out of the circle and the opponents back into it.

Exercise 4. Pointing for more Points

Scatter some boules in front and behind the jack with one of yours being the closest. For example, say you have the last 2 balls to be played in your hand. This exercise teaches you to ***not point onto the jack*** which will most likely cause you to lose the point that you already have on the ground. Point your balls toward your ball that has the point without hitting the jack.

Exercise 5. Bumping Your boule Closer

Place your opponents ball 12 inches in front of the jack. Now place one of your team's balls adjacent to this ball but just an inch further away from the jack. Practice bumping your ball just enough to win the point. Play only hard enough to bump your ball into winning the point and soft enough that if you miss the bump, you will still earn the point. Some advanced pointers will "push" their pointing ball with their palm which causes forward spin. Done correctly, you will push your target ball in for the point together with the ball you just threw following in for a second point. Much lower percentage play on the hard dry ground of summer.

2. Shooting Exercises

Various exercises to perfect Shooting skills. This section introduces some very elaborate techniques and how to proceed in difficult situations which arise during a game with exercises to practice these shots.

- Back boule
- Side-by-side
- Middle boule
- Three boules behind one another
- Two boules touching
- One beside the other
- Three boules one behind the other

Exercise 1. Back boule- Your Boule in Front

Shooting the boule behind when the one in front belongs to your own team. Shooting along the ground will be useless. The importance of the arm-swing is to raise the boule high enough in the air.

Place two boules 6 meters away, one behind the other, 10 to 15 cm apart and hit the boule behind without touching the one in front.

After successful hits, the target set-up is moved another meter from the throwing circle.

Exercise 2. Front Boule – Your Boule Behind

It is possible to move just the boule in front by hitting it 'on the ear'. The space between the two boules and the distance are fixed according to the experience and skill of the players.

After successful hits, the target boule is moved another meter from the throwing circle.

Exercise 3. Side-by-side

Two Boules Side by Side a millimeter between them. Hit the target boule (first the right one, then the left one) right in the centre to avoid moving the other. Shooting on the side closest to the other boule will risk moving both. Shooting on the side furthest away from the other boule, there will be a rebound. The more the shot is off centre, the more the rebound will be to the advantage of the boule you were actually trying to remove.

After successful hits, the target boule is moved another meter from the throwing circle.

Exercise 4. Middle boule Three Boules Side by Side

As for the first case, trying to shoot the middle boule without touching the others.

After successful hits, the target boule is moved another meter from the throwing circle.

Exercise 5. Three Boules Behind One Another – Opponents' Boule is in the Middle

They are 10 to 15 cm apart. To hit only the one in the middle, it must be hit from above and at the side to avoid it rebounding onto the boule behind. Shooting along the ground is, of course, clearly impossible.

After successful hits, the target boule is moved another meter from the throwing circle.

Exercise 6 . Three Boules One Behind the Other – Yours is in the Middle

They may also be a few millimeters apart. By striking the front one hard, the front one and the back one move whereas the middle one remains in place. The first will travel a greater or lesser distance according to how hard it was shot.

Exercise 7. Two Boules Touching – One Behind The Other

To remove only the boule behind, hit the first boule in the centre. To remove both, hit it 'on the ear'.

Web Sites of Interest

To view: Copy an address and paste into your web browser

See the Tiger Woods of petanque play a few hands: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQZUg2wH_vQ

Great Explanation of the Game: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/P%C3%A9tanque>

Petanque Information: <http://www.petanque.org/>

Bill Cosby - these short clips show how contagious pétanque is and often leads to a mix of serious & funny debate: <http://www.petanque.us/video/cosby/>

Peter Mayle - author of "A year in Provence", who spent many a lazy afternoon playing, concocted a very funny description of petanque and the influence of pastis on game tactics:
http://www.petanque.us/press/peter_mayle.html

Good video selections when you enter "Petanque" as the search word: <http://youtube.com/>

Honk if You Petanque *By Dave Barry* "If you can say it, it's time to play it"
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A60038-2004Jan6>

Buy Boules: <http://www.petanqueamerica.com>

Valley of the Moon Petanque Club: <http://www.vompc.org>