

# Instructional League Curriculum

Developed by the Dakota Curling Club  
Burnsville, MN

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## WEEK ONE

Full two-hour Learn to Curl class

## WEEK TWO

Sliding on the Line of Delivery

Place two plastic cups on the tee-line of the near house about two feet apart and off two one side. Have curlers practice sliding on the line of delivery between the two cups, without moving either cup. Periodically move the cups to one side or the other.

**Teaching tip:** Explain how to line up the body towards the line of delivery by placing the toe into the hack so that the toe and knee are pointing directly at the broom, then squaring the hips and the shoulders both to the line of delivery. Have them start with the rock in front of their knee rather than to their side. The rock and the sliding foot should travel along an imaginary line from your toe to the broom, one behind the other.

## WEEK THREE

Releasing the Rock at 12 o'clock

Slip an empty paper toilet roll tube over the handle of each rock. The curlers should grip the handle gently so that they do not crush the toilet roll tube. The rock can now only be released cleanly from the 12 o'clock position, by letting the toilet roll tube slide off the handle and keeping in the hand.

**Teaching tip:** Explain that a smooth release directly at the 12 o'clock position is critical to aiming the rock directly at the broom. If you over rotate the rock, it will be spinning too quickly and will not curl, or it will be "pushed out" and will curl much too far. This exercise should help curlers develop a feel for a clean release.

## WEEK FOUR

Maintaining Center of Gravity

Place a rock about 12 inches behind the hack so that the heel of the sliding foot just touches the rock at the backmost point of the draw-back motion. The aim is for the curler to maintain their sliding foot below their center of gravity and not kick the sliding leg out behind them.

**Teaching tip** Explain that the best delivery involves the smallest number of moving parts, moving on the fewest planes possible. The sliding foot should remain with the full sole on the ice and the sliding leg should remain directly under your center of gravity at all times, therefore prepared to take the weight of your body smoothly with a minimum of wobble. Also watch for and correct curlers who move their foot in an arc rather than straight back, as this path does not follow the body's center of gravity.

## WEEK FIVE

### Sweeping Techniques

This lesson is conducted partially using a white board or sheet of paper off ice and partially on ice.

#### OFF ICE:

Engage the group in a discussion of sweeping, covering the following points:

- Remind why we sweep: to make the rock travel further and travel straighter
- Use the sweepers: It is usually better to throw a little on the light side because sweepers can make the rock travel further – nothing can slow a rock down!
- Sweepers should start alongside the rock as it is thrown – they should not wait at the hog line or halfway down the sheet for the rock to reach them. Many rocks need to be swept the moment they are released from the thrower's hand.
- Review when sweeping is allowed:
  - All four players may sweep their own team's rock, but only one after the rock crosses the tee line.
  - Discourage skips from coming out of the house to sweep unless absolutely necessary as it is impossible to call line if he or she leaves the house
  - Sweep the opponent's rock only when the front edge of the rock reaches the tee line. No warming up the ice early!
- Cover the rules concerning a touched rock:
  - The stone must be allowed to run its course after the touch
  - The non-offending skip may choose to accept the outcome OR replace the rocks in their original positions. If the rocks are replaced, the touched stone may either be removed or left in place, at the preference of the non-offending skip
  - This rule underwent a recent change (2006) to prevent teams from intentionally fouling a rock in order to avoid a non-desirable outcome.
- Explain how sweeping early versus sweeping late changes the path of the rock. Sweeping before the rock reaches the apex of its curl will pull the rock wider and can help make up for a rock thrown inside. Sweeping after the rock begins to break (slow down substantially) will help the rock "finish" with a little extra curl and can help line up a rock behind a guard.
- Don't give up sweeping before the rock has come to a stop or is **actually** lost. Don't try to predict that a rock **will be** lost, since vigorous sweeping can sometimes cause a rock to "just squeak by".
- Sweepers should learn to judge the speed of the rock and communicate it to the skip. Methods of communication include phrases such as "top four" or "better than tee", or could use a numbering system to divide the playing area into zones.
- In the event that there are contradictory sweeping instructions while a rock is in motion, **always follow the instructions of the skip in the house**. This player has the best position to judge line, and may have shifted to a "plan b" shot which you are not aware of.

#### ON ICE:

Review the fact that effective sweeping relies on SPEED and PRESSURE. Get the curlers to lean over the head of the broom and get their body weight into the sweeping motion. The instructor should circulate, reaching down to lift the head of the broom. If the sweeper is applying enough pressure it should not be possible to do so.

## WEEK SIX

### Strategy and Team Communication

This lesson is mostly discussion and is best conducted off the ice using a strategy board with magnets. If a strategy board is not available, you can also give this lesson on ice using actual rocks in the house.

Engage the group in a discussion concerning strategy and team communication, covering the following points.

- Explain the Free Guard Zone rule. Demonstrate on the board or on the ice what portion of the playing field is subject to the rule. Explain when the rule expires. Go through several scenarios for what to do when a free guard is hit.
- Discuss two alternate strategies depending on whether you have the hammer or not.
  - Teams **without** the hammer should attempt to play to the center line, taking control of the four foot and guarding the button
  - Teams **with** the hammer should play to the outsides, leaving the center line free for a draw to the button
- Discuss when and why to sit against a rock rather than take it out
  - The rock you are sitting against is just behind the tee line
  - Your team has the hammer and you are trying to generate a second point. (if you take it out, your rock is left unprotected and if they take you out in turn you will only score one.)
  - You are way down in score and you need to ensure that every rock possible stays in play in order to generate points
- Discuss what it means to “manage the score board”
  - Attempt to score two each time you have the hammer and give one each time you do not.
  - Know what you need out of every end. For example, is it better to force the other team to steal one in the seventh in order to give your team the hammer in the eighth end?
  - If you are way up in points, you only need to maintain the lead in order to win. Your objective shifts to preventing the other team from scoring, rather than scoring yourself. In this scenario, guards of either color are not your friends and should be removed.
  - Sometimes it is better to “blank” the end rather than score one and lose the hammer.
- Teams should develop some sort of system to communicate shot called and sweeping instructions as the rock is running. A system of hand signals and single words is most effective. Give examples of several hand signals to indicate various shots.
- As a skip, if you are playing with a new team or a new player take a few minutes to discuss your communication system and your strategy before the game begins.
- All players, including the thrower and **both** sweepers should understand what shot is called before the rock is thrown. Throwers – wait for the skip to call the shot before you get positioned in the hack!

**Make sure you conclude the Week Six lesson by informing the group that the next week’s lesson will arrive by email and that they should watch for it. Have handouts available with the Week Seven lesson written out for those who do not have email.**

## **WEEK SEVEN**

### Speed of Play

This lesson takes place entirely before the session begins and should either be sent by email 2 or 3 days before the game or given as a handout at the conclusion of week six. The goal of this lesson is to get the group to understand that games should be played in a timely fashion and that it is poor etiquette to play slowly. As a reward, all teams which complete a full eight ends in a two hour game slot get their individual names entered into a drawing for a prize, such as a piece of curling equipment.

The following email can be sent to players, giving tips and instruction on how to achieve a two-hour eight-end game.

Well folks, the last game of your instructional league takes place this Sunday! I can't tell you how excited Paul and I are to see the fantastic progress you all have made in 6 short weeks.

The lesson this week will be on **Speed of Play**. As you know, we've been playing 6 end games each week to leave plenty of time for instruction to be mixed in while you are playing. On your last game, however, we will be playing **a full eight-end game** so that you can get a better sense of how a game runs in a non-instructional league.

As a fun incentive, all players who manage to play all eight-ends in the two-hour game slot will get their names entered in a drawing for a new **Performance Brush!** These are great, light-weight brooms with swivel heads. Here's a link for some background information: <http://www.stevescurling.com/performancepage.htm>

**IMPORTANT: There will be NO INSTRUCTION SECTION at the beginning of the league on Sunday. Your game will start promptly at 5:30.**

### **Top 10 Things You Need To Know About Speed of Play**

Obviously I can't give this instruction at the beginning of the league since it would cut into your playing time, so here is your weekly lesson in advance by email!

1. **ARRIVE ON TIME / START ON TIME.** You should be on the ice, waiting at your assigned hack, 5 minutes before your scheduled start time to flip a coin and shake hands.
2. Pay attention to the order of play. Known when your turn to throw is coming up!
3. When it is your turn to throw, get ready (put on your slider, pull out your rock, grab a stabilizer) while the person in front you is throwing their rock. As soon as the rock in front you has left the hack, you can get yourself situated and ready to throw. Aim to be ready to throw your rock before the rock in front of you has stopped moving.
4. Keep track of your slider! If you are using a slip-on slider, wear it on your arm or carry it in a pocket when not in use, rather than setting it on the ice.
5. The leads and seconds especially should play fairly quickly. Usually their shots are straightforward and don't require a lot of strategy consideration. This leaves a bit more time to think about the potentially more difficult shots being called in the second half of the end.
6. Watch the clock. You should be playing one end approximately every 15 minutes.
7. **SKIPS:** think about and plan your next shot while the opposing skip has control of the house. When you take control of the house, pick a shot and call it decisively.
8. Resetting the rocks between ends takes a lot of time. It is not critical that they be lined up neatly in numerical order! If you are a team that likes to play this way, the leads should **NOT HELP** organize rocks. They should be getting ready to throw! There is much time wasted between ends on this activity and it really adds up.
9. **SKIPS:** make sure you call a mix of draws and takeouts, as appropriate to the strategic development of the end. If you call all draws all the time, your game will run slower than normal since draws take longer to travel down the ice than takeouts. This may not seem like it could make a big enough difference, but believe me it can!
10. Keep in mind that it is the Skip's job to call the game. It is not necessary (and often considered bad etiquette) for all four players to congregate in the house to discuss every shot. Most Skips will engage their Thirds in strategy discussion at key points in the game, and every team should develop a communication style that works for them. Teams that fall into the habit of "strategy by full team consensus" are often known as slow playing teams since it takes a long time for all four players to be in agreement!