

# BECOME A CROQUET ENGLAND CLUB-LEVEL COACH COURSE BOOKLET

## Part 1: PRELIMINARIES

Club-Level Coaches hold a key position at the very heart of the game, training and encouraging new players, and raising standards of play. They

- **Introduce newcomers** to the game, offering introductory courses, refresher sessions, and informal guidance on particular points as appropriate.
- **Support developing players**, by encouraging those in the earlier stages of their croquet journey to continue to develop their technique and tactics.
- **Promote participation and enjoyment**, by being warm, positive, enthusiastic, and an encouraging presence within the Club.

In addition, Club-Level Coaches

- **Model good croquet etiquette and behaviour** – living into action croquet's code of conduct, friendliness and honour at all times.
- **Know the Laws and Rules** – know the Basic Laws and Basic Rules confidently enough to offer guidance to other Club members when appropriate, and know where to find a copy of the full Laws and full Rules when needed.
- **Encourage competitive play** – encourage Club members to take the leap into tournaments and leagues, at their own Club and beyond, so as to broaden their understanding of the game and help them become fully part of the croquet community.

This course and booklet are to help you become the best coach you can be. Good luck – and enjoy your coaching!

## BECOMING A CLUB-LEVEL COACH

**Core documents**, all available for free download from the CqE website:

- Introducing Association Croquet: Manual for Coaches (2022. v2 is in preparation)
- Golf Croquet Coaching Manual (revised 2015. Again, v2 is in preparation)
- Basic Laws of Association Croquet (2010)
- Basic Rules of Golf Croquet (2024)

**Formal assessment** at this course:

- Indoor presentation by each candidate to the group (5 minutes plus Q&A)
- Outdoor presentation by each candidate to a group (10-12 minutes including Q&A)
- Laws and Rules test (25 minutes, 'open book')

**Follow-up coaching sessions:**

- Five sessions, typically of 1½ hours, at your own Club, on a variety of topics, in your chosen code or codes. Most or all of this must be to a group. The five sessions should be completed as soon as practicable after the course, and in any case within 18 months to ensure all sessions are covered by Croquet England insurance (see below).

- You are asked to write up each session in the form of a log, record sheet or notes. The format is up to you, but please include four elements in each:
  - *basic information* – date, location, number in group, and level of group members e.g. handicaps;
  - *the plan for the session* – what you covered and how you covered it;
  - *the progress made by students* – what they learned/could do by the end of the session that they couldn't at the start;
  - *your reflections on the session* – what went well and why, what did not go so well and your thoughts on that, key learning for the coach from this session.
- Your five write-ups then need to be countersigned by a graded coach or Club official and sent (ideally electronically) to the Chair of the CqE Coaching Committee. These will be used to help confirm that this last part of the course has been successfully undertaken and that standards of coaching are being maintained within CqE.
- You need to pass all sections of the course to be approved as a Club-Level Coach – indoor coaching assessment, outdoor coaching assessment, Laws and Rules test, and your five coaching sessions. Successful candidates will then be entered into the CqE register of Club-Level Coaches and will receive a yellow CqE Club-Level Coach badge.

## **THE CROQUET ENGLAND COACHING STRUCTURE**

Club-Level Coaches are the foundation of the Croquet England coaching structure, introducing new players to croquet and raising standards among high bisquers keen to develop their game. The full Croquet England coaching structure is as follows:

<b>Club-Level Coach – Yellow badge</b> <b>Accredited to coach AC and GC to beginners and high-handicap players within their own Clubs</b>	
<b>Grade 1 AC Coach – Blue badge</b> CqE Coach qualified to coach AC up to Bronze level	<b>Grade 1 GC Coach – White badge</b> CqE Coach qualified to coach GC up to C-class level
<b>Grade 2 AC Coach – Green badge</b> CqE Coach qualified to coach AC up to Silver-Gilt level	<b>Grade 2 GC Coach – Black badge</b> CqE Coach qualified to coach GC up to B-class level
<b>Grade 3 AC Coach – Red badge</b> CqE Coach qualified to coach AC up to Gold level (triple peel) and above	<b>Grade 3 GC Coach – Carmine badge</b> CqE Coach qualified to coach GC up to A-class level and above
<b>AC Examining Coach</b>	<b>GC Examining Coach</b>

- Qualifying as a Graded Coach involves having an appropriate handicap and experience, and either being successful in a Coach Qualification Course approved by Croquet England or following one of the other routes set out in the Croquet England website.
- Examining Coaches are authorised by Croquet England to assess candidates impartially. For details see the Examining Coach page on the Croquet England website.

# Framework for Croquet England coaching qualifications

## Framework for Croquet England coaching qualifications



The qualities and experience below are intended to offer a general picture of what makes an ideal croquet coach. Qualifications at Grades 1, 2 and 3 are for either AC or GC coaching; the criteria below are therefore to be understood as qualities and experience in AC or GC as appropriate, and are to be read cumulatively, left to right. Some coaches may not fulfil all these criteria but may nevertheless make excellent coaches. Only Croquet England members can be entered into the Croquet England register of approved coaches.

<b>Club-Level Coach</b>	<b>Grade 1 AC Coach / Grade 1 GC Coach</b>	<b>Grade 2 AC Coach / Grade 2 GC Coach</b>
Wishes to develop her/his coaching skills at GC, AC or both to coach in the 'home' club	Has a successful track record as a Club-Level Coach and is keen to progress	Has a strong track record as a Grade 1 coach; can mentor Club-Level and Grade 1 Coaches
Has a welcoming personality, empathy, good interpersonal skills and genuine interest in supporting and helping others	In addition, has the group management skills and presence to build trust and confidence in students	In addition, is recognised as an experienced and authoritative coach who makes a significant difference
Trained to coach beginners and high handicap players within her/his own Club	Able to coach in the appropriate code outside her/his own Club with credibility up to and including AC Bronze level or GC C-level	Has the skill, experience and credibility to coach in the appropriate code up to and including AC Silver level or GC B-level
Has appropriate experience of croquet, both friendly and competitive	Has, or has held, a handicap in the appropriate code of AC 12 or GC 6 or below	Has, or has held, a handicap in the appropriate code of AC 6 or GC 3 or below
Trained to coach an introductory course in sessions of typically an hour and a half	Able to construct and deliver a successful coaching course of half a day or a day	Able to write and successfully deliver a range of coaching courses of one or two full days
Trained to make effective use of the appropriate Croquet England coaching manual for AC or GC	Able to combine relevant aspects of technique and tactics into a coherent coaching sequence in the appropriate code	Able to take an aspect of the game such as the AC break or GC five-shot thinking, and use it as the central thread in a coaching course
Able to direct beginners and high handicappers to appropriate sources of simple practice routines	Able to produce relevant coaching materials to accompany her/his own coaching courses	Able to produce substantial coaching materials of high quality to accompany her/his coaching days
Can coach basic shots, including both when and how to use them in set situations	Can analyse technique in all standard shots in the appropriate code and help students develop accuracy and consistency	Can offer a range of suggested ways in which students might improve both their technique and the mindset aspects of the game
Can coach elementary tactics, including considering simple alternative choices for the next shot	Able to encourage players to think ahead and play the next shot with a view to what will happen with the subsequent shot or shots	Able to encourage players to develop their game strategy combining tactics, technique, the mental approach, and implications of <u>Laws/Rules</u>
Knows the Basic Laws of AC and the Basic Rules of GC well enough to deal with common questions from beginners and high handicappers	Knows the full Laws or full Rules well enough to be able to resolve finer points, referring to the Laws or Rules themselves if needed	Is secure enough in knowing the full Laws or full Rules to be able to resolve discussions and adjudicate disputes on the spot

**Grade 3 coaches** fulfil all the above; are able to coach to any level; will generally have a minus handicap; and are appointed by the Croquet England Coaching Committee by invitation. **Examining Coaches** are, likewise, appointed by the Croquet England Coaching Committee by invitation.

*Croquet England Coaching Committee, revised February 2025*

**I hear and I forget...**  
**I see and I remember...**  
**I do and I understand**

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING FOR COACHES

***If an Under 18 is to be coached, lead coaches must, as well as holding a coaching qualification, be registered as a Licenced Coach.*** This is done through the CqE office. For the full requirements, visit the CqE website → Coaching → Coaching Under 18s.

You do **not** need a Licence if you are working with and under a Licenced Coach. In this case you are a Coaching Assistant, and, despite holding your own coaching qualification, will need to follow the instructions of the Licenced Coach. For the full details of this Coaching Assistant role, visit the Croquet England website → Coaching → Coaching Under 18s.

To meet their child safeguarding responsibilities, all coaches should:

- Recognise that any under 18-year-old (U18) is legally considered a child and must therefore be afforded the protections in the CqE Child Safeguarding Policy.
- Be aware of the safeguarding risks to children (as listed on the CqE website), as well as to themselves.
- Co-ordinate with their Club Safeguarding Officer, keeping him/her aware of all activities involving U18s and seeking advice when necessary.
- Ensure parents are fully engaged, obtaining the required permissions and personal details of the U18 from them. This includes requiring parentally approved nominated "Responsible Adults" to be present when parents are not available.
- Apply the special considerations for U18s in any tournaments or events.
- Avoid encouraging U18s to smoke / consume alcohol.
- Ensure there are always 2 adults present when U18s coaching is taking place.
- Ensure U18s are not left at risk (e.g. not left alone at club 'to lock up').
- Avoid inappropriate physical contact with U18s. Best practice is to avoid touching an U18 when demonstrating strokes, etc.
- Ensure any changing facilities used are appropriate, avoiding mixing adult and U18s, as well as genders.
- Raise awareness among all members.
- Meet the legal requirements for DBS checks, when they are involved in coaching U18s regularly, intensely or in an activity requiring an overnight stay.
- Confidentially report any safeguarding concerns to the Club Safeguarding Officer.

The above practices should be read in the context of the CqE Safeguarding Policy, available on the CqE website. Applying these practices helps to 'Keep Our Children Safe', as well as mitigating the risks to coaches themselves and to the reputation of the game. Remember that similar guidelines apply to vulnerable adults – i.e. adults with carers.

### Key points

Avoid being alone with anyone U18; avoid touching them  
Keep parents/carers fully informed  
If there are any concerns – receive, record and report onwards

### Most importantly...

Know Croquet England's and your Club's safeguarding policy and practice – and follow it

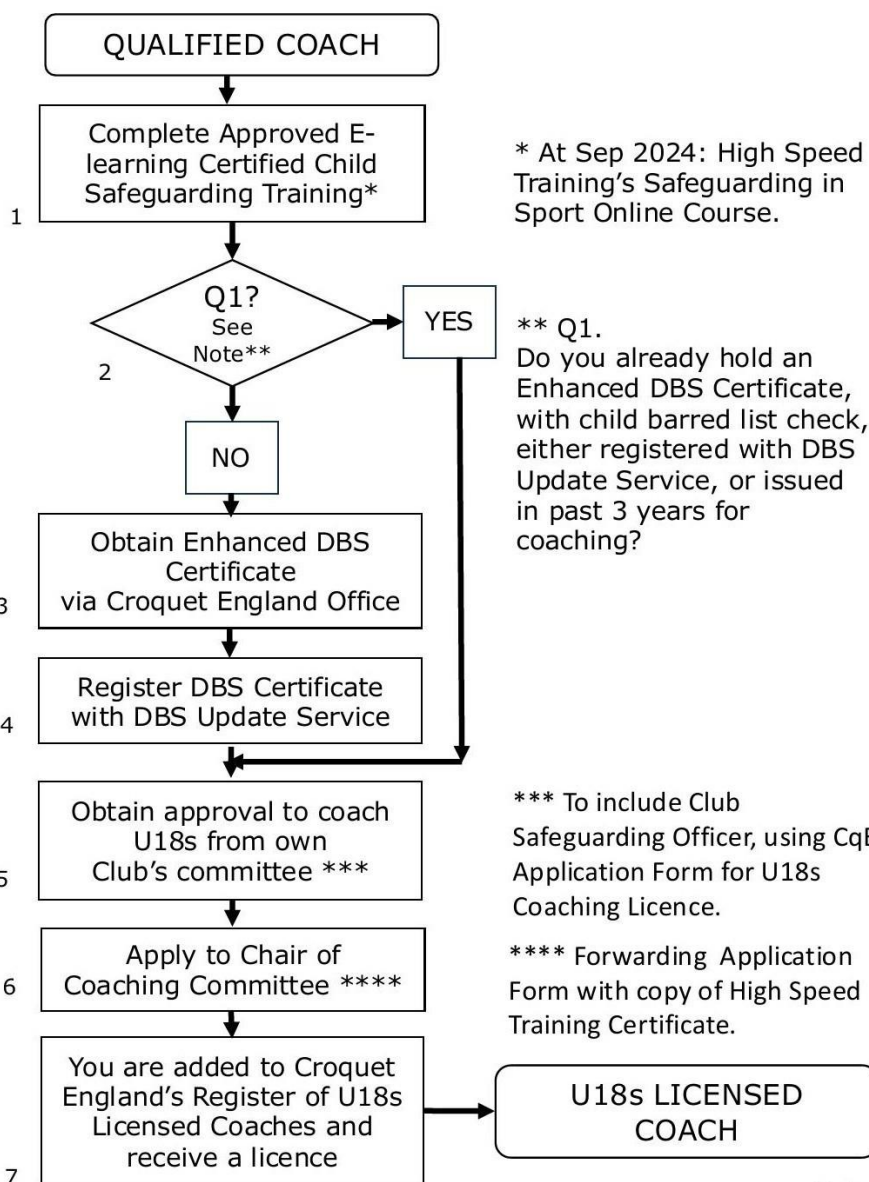
## Croquet England How to Become an U18s Licensed Coach



A player wishing to **lead** coaching sessions with Under 18s will need three things:

- a certificate showing completion of an approved, free on-line safeguarding course;
- a DBS certificate with child-barred list check;
- and a Croquet England Coaching Licence.

The procedure for obtaining a Licence is as follows (*right*):



\* At Sep 2024: High Speed Training's Safeguarding in Sport Online Course.

\*\* Q1. Do you already hold an Enhanced DBS Certificate, with child barred list check, either registered with DBS Update Service, or issued in past 3 years for coaching?

\*\*\* To include Club Safeguarding Officer, using CqE Application Form for U18s Coaching Licence.

\*\*\*\* Forwarding Application Form with copy of High Speed Training Certificate.

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These arrangements may be subject to further development. For full current details see <https://www.croquet.org.uk/?p=games/coaching/u18>

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COACHES

Anyone within Croquet England who is providing coaching should:

- Encourage participation in croquet.
- Be open, honest, respectful and trustworthy.
- Behave appropriately.
- All qualified coaches should maintain their qualification.
- Check that they are insured. See Insurance - Guidance for Coaches (croquet.org.uk)

All players aspiring to become coaches approved by Croquet England are deemed to have accepted this straightforward, uncontroversial Code of Conduct. It is based on UK Coaching's Code of Practice for Sports Coaches, which provides fuller details of what is expected.

## INSURANCE

Knowing you are insured when coaching is an important benefit of qualifying as a Club-Level Coach. Through the Croquet England Club Insurance Policy, Club-Level Coaches accredited by Croquet England are covered both for public liability and for professional indemnity, provided:

- they retain their personal membership of Croquet England;
- they do not charge for their services;
- their coaching activity is on the 'home' Club site, not off it, and is part of the Club's agreed coaching programme;
- if coaching Under 18s, they follow the protocol – if acting as lead coach, they acquire Croquet England Licenced Coach accreditation;
- they follow Croquet England and Club guidelines and policies.

These simple, common-sense conditions are likely to cover all your activities as a Club-Level Coach. If for any reason you need to step outside these conditions, you are advised to take out your own professional indemnity insurance. This is normally reasonably inexpensive.

The Croquet England Club Insurance Policy allows Club-Level Coaches a grace period of 18 months from the start of their training within which to undertake their five post-course coaching sessions and complete their coaching qualification.



<p><b>Good coaching IS NOT...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>... always demonstrating</li><li>... always lecturing</li><li>... always finding fault</li><li>... always focusing on the Laws/Rules</li></ul>	<p><b>Good coaching IS...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>... giving plenty of time for play</li><li>... listening</li><li>... encouraging and supporting</li><li>... letting the Laws/Rules emerge as they crop up</li></ul>
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## Part 2: COACHING

### COACHING ESSENTIALS – TEN TOP TIPS

*Leading a group is a skilled role: the most effective teachers and coaches spend a lifetime developing and improving their craft. These ten tips are at the very core of good coaching and are reprinted here from the Pre-Course Study Pack. Some points are covered in more detail below.*

**Prepare** – know your material well. Be early: have the lawns and all equipment ready. Know who you are going to be working with and greet each one warmly and personally. Show confidence and assurance: your students will then willingly entrust themselves to you.

**Position** – place your students where you can make good eye contact with each and where each can hear you clearly. For general exposition outdoors, stand students along the boundary and place yourself 4-5 yards in. To demonstrate shots, turn sideways so that students can see the detail. For hoops, place students where they can see your teaching point: the best position will depend on the key learning at that moment, and may, for example, be with all students on the far side of the hoop, or to one side.

**Voice** – before speaking, wait until the *full* group has assembled and *all* are ready to receive. Speak rather more slowly than in normal conversation. Consciously use a firm, clear voice that will carry well to the furthest student. Be expressive!

**'Chunk' the learning** – the material will be very familiar to us; for group members it is all new, and may seem confusing. Make it simple. Break each piece of new learning into small chunks and ensure that each chunk is fully understood. A typical learning sequence will be exposition → demonstration → individual practice → recap, with the whole sequence being a maximum of a few minutes long. With children, keep instructions particularly short: focus instead on fun.

**Learning by doing** – some learn by hearing, some by looking, some by reading, some by making connections with prior learning. But to fully grasp something new in croquet, everyone needs to *do* it for themselves. "I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand."

**Repeat and recap** – what has become very familiar to an experienced player is new to a beginner. Even the simple sequence of Blue → Red → Black → Yellow, or roquet → ball in hand → croquet shot → continuation shot will need regular reinforcement and repetition. Repeat and recap regularly and unashamedly.

**Question and answer** – use Q&A to vary the voice, to bring students into the learning, and to check understanding. Use open as well as closed questions. Take more than one answer. Try asking a question; pausing some seconds to give students good thinking time; drawing everyone in by gently asking an individual for their thoughts; asking another student and comparing the answers.

**Circulate** – give all students equal time. Get round all students in a continuous circuit, offering focused reinforcement, brief individual guidance, praise, and moving briskly on. Everybody in the group needs and deserves your attention!

**Praise, praise, praise** – recognise progress enthusiastically. Praise what they are doing right: a shot may be too short, but praise its direction; a hoop may be blobbed, but praise the stalking, the grip, the concentration. Reinforce the good as well as supporting each student in his or her development: students will blossom with regular encouragement and praise.

### **Most importantly...**

**Play, play, play** – croquet is about playing the game. Throughout the course, get them playing as much as possible. Above all, make sure they enjoy it. Keep it moving, keep it light, keep it positive, make it fun. Be enthusiastic about croquet and let them catch your enthusiasm: it's the single most effective way of getting students hooked. Help them experience for themselves the pleasures, rewards and delights of the game. If your sessions are enjoyable, they'll hopefully come back for more.

## **USING SIMPLE VISUAL AIDS: TWELVE STARTER IDEAS**

The best visual aids are those that are always to hand – mallets, bisque sticks, boundary lines, corner flags, hoops, spare balls. Some of the ideas below lend themselves to group discussion; others can be turned into simple contests.

### **Flags**

In GC – when discussing possible next moves in a coaching game, ask students to insert flags of the appropriate colour in turn to help them visualise what might happen in the four subsequent turns. Repeat from the same starting point with a different set of moves.



In AC – when discussing opening moves, gather all the flags you can find. Ask students to insert them, one at a time, into viable opening positions. Which areas are crowded – why? Which have no flags – why? Show some other opening moves – how might these work?



### **Mallets**

In GC – hit balls from Corner 4 with a view to running hoop 1 with the next turn. Use the mallet to measure how far away from the hoop centre line the ball has landed. Score 1 for each yard and aim for the lowest score.

In AC – hoop 1 has just been run and Red is preparing to send the reception ball as a pioneer to hoop 3. Ask students to walk over to hoop 3

and place their mallets in what they consider the ideal position for the pioneer. Discuss.



### **Bisque sticks**

In GC – lay bisque sticks out before a hoop in a funnel shape to show how, the closer to the hoop, accuracy in ball placing



becomes more and more critical. Use more bisque sticks to help students visualise possible paths for a ball being positioned to run the hoop.

In AC – lay out bisque sticks when coaching croquet shots to show the direction of travel of, first, the croqueted ball; secondly, the striker’s ball; finally, the swing.



### **Spare balls**

In GC – when clearing a ball at an angle, temporarily place a white ball touching it on the line of aim to help students visualise the direction of swing.

In AC – add a neutral white ball to a beginners’ coaching game to help them build breaks more easily. Allow them to move it at the start of their turn to any helpful position, for example to set up a useful rush.



### **Hoops**



In GC – students hit a ball hard through hoop 1 or hoop 4. Score 1 point if the ball comes to rest between that hoop and hoop 5; 2 points between hoop 5 and peg; 3 points between peg and hoop 6; 4 points between hoop 6 and hoops 2-3; 5 points for going beyond.

In AC – set up a croquet shot on the boundary opposite hoop 5. Discuss the placing needed to send the croqueted ball towards hoop 1 and the striker’s ball towards hoop 5. What is the line of aim? Reverse the geometry, aiming for hoops 4 and 5.

### **Boundary line**

In GC – promotion practice. Place two balls on the boundary a foot apart. Rush the far ball along the boundary for as far as possible before it deviates. Use a bisque stick to mark the furthest point.

In AC – to show the effect of different strike angles in a croquet shot, place two balls in contact side by side on the line. Ask beginners in turn to predict where they think each ball will finish up when the striker’s ball is played at a given strike angle.



*What other ways can you think of to help your coaching and students’ learning through using these very simple visual aids?*

## ETIQUETTE AND BEHAVIOUR

An important part of the role of coach is to encourage good etiquette – and to model it.

### *At all times*

- **What to wear** – Always wear flat-soled footwear. White or light coloured clothing is encouraged for tournaments.
- **Before the game** – By convention, the player with the lowest handicap tosses up, and is also responsible for setting up any bisques.
- **In play** – In AC, wait until your opponent's turn has ended before moving onto the lawn. In GC games particularly, try to avoid the hoop area to minimise wear unless you are taking a shot.
- **Play with despatch** – Try to decide before your opponent has finished his or her turn what you are going to do next to avoid wasting time. In doubles matches, do not carry out unnecessarily long discussions with your partner when it is your side's turn to play.
- **If a fault seems possible**, call a referee by raising your mallet vertically (with the head uppermost) before you make the stroke. If no independent referee is available, ask your opponent to watch. If you are aiming to hit a ball which is in the jaws of a hoop, have someone watch it to ensure that proper contact is made.
- **Do not accept advice (or offer it)**, but query any point of law, if uncertain. The only person allowed to give advice to you during a game is your partner in a doubles match.
- **Do not distract your opponent** by walking about, talking loudly, catching his or her eye, etc. Do not stand directly behind the striker watching the shot, or directly in front, or on the line of aim.
- **Be sensitive to your opponent** during matches with respect to conversation. Some players do not welcome remarks during a game. For the same reason, talk to any other out-players only if they clearly welcome a chat.
- **While out of play** and off the lawn, be aware of other games taking place. Stand still if you are in the line of play on another lawn, or near a player about to make a shot
- **After play**. The winner normally clears the balls from the lawn, removes the clips from the hoops, and carries the bisques back to the Clubhouse.

### *When Double-Banking*

- Be continuously aware of the other game. Make sure you do not impede it. Avoid walking across the line of aim of the other game.
- Always let the other game through if a break is being played.
- Ask the other game if you can mark and lift any of their balls that may be at risk from your play. Always err on the cautious side before you strike your ball, even if you are playing well. It is annoying to the other game to have to guess where a critical ball was.
- If you do mark and lift a ball, make certain that the player in play in the other game realises that you have done so, particularly if another player is now in play. Let them know when its position is restored.
- When retrieving a ball that has gone off, keep your mallet off the playing area.

## MORE COACHING TIPS

These amplify some of the points mentioned briefly above in the Ten Top Tips.

### *Before you start...*

#### *Plan carefully*

Give close thought to *exactly* what you want to achieve. The essential starting point is a well thought through, clear objective which then leads on to an outline plan.

#### *Vary the activities*

Even a simple coaching session needs a structure with a variety of approaches. Some obvious approaches include

**indoor work ↔ outdoor work**  
**demonstration ↔ discussion**  
**individual practice ↔ pair practice**  
**exposition ↔ question and answer**

Ensure that the outline plan offers a good balance between different activities and approaches.

#### *Prepare thoroughly*

Having established an outline plan, think through exactly how best to approach each individual section of the plan. At its simplest this might be

**Exposition → individual practice**

Better is

**Exposition → individual practice → recap**

Better again is

**Exposition → question and answer → individual practice → recap**

Better still is

**Outline → exposition → question and answer → individual practice → recap**

This five-point approach is surprisingly adaptable, but there is of course nothing prescriptive about it. The key thing is for each section of the coaching session to have its own clear structure with its own clear shape.

#### *Room layout*

Set the room out beforehand with just the right number of chairs. Arrange them so that everyone can see and hear, eg. in an arc facing the front. If tables are needed, try chairs around three sides of a wide table layout.

## ***Learning styles***

Different people learn in different ways, for example:

<p><b>Visual learners learn by seeing</b> <b>Auditory learners learn by hearing</b> <b>Kinaesthetic learners learn by doing</b> <b>Verbal learners learn by reiterating new knowledge in speech or writing</b> <b>Connective learners learn by linking with previous knowledge</b></p>
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A session combining several approaches will increase the chances of it being absorbed.

## ***Equipment out***

Know exactly what will be needed. Will the students set out the equipment? If not, have everything ready beforehand, conveniently placed to make the session run smoothly.

## ***Getting underway...***

### ***Warm welcome***

Smile, and offer a warm welcome, to put the target group at ease. If you have names, use them immediately. If you know something else about an individual, even just their handicap or where they travel in from, work it in: it is enormously reassuring to players to feel the coach has already registered something about each individual in the group.

### ***Stand them on a line***

Ask students simply to gather round, and they are likely to stand in random places with poor sight lines, too close or too far from you, even behind you. If instead you position yourself inside the playing area and ask them to stand on a boundary, they will quickly arrange themselves in something close to an ideal position for group coaching. Remember – when it is helpful for them to have a side view of a demonstration, don't ask them to move: turn 90 degrees.

### ***Be audible***

A group session is not an intimate chat; it needs a voice that carries. Group outdoor sessions require yet more volume and projection. In particular when outdoors, it is vital to face your audience. Work on a resonant tone delivered at moderate pace. Speak with confidence and clarity. There is no need for apology, hesitation or tenuousness. The group wants the session to go well and wants to be able to look to you as its figurehead and to put its trust in you.

### ***Get their full attention***

Only start when all are gathered in the place you want them, and with all eyes on you. Don't start with only some of the group as yet paying attention; wait for the right moment before beginning. They are here for a coaching session: *expect* quiet and attentiveness, and if needs be *ask* for it. Beware of distractions in the background environment, for example the group potentially watching passers by. Position them for maximum focus.

## ***As the session progresses...***

### ***Include each person in turn in discussion***

The classic advice is to ensure that each individual contributes at least once. If needs be ask a direct question that the individual is able to respond to appropriately.

### ***Link to prior learning***

The stop shot provides a simple example. Ask players to recall how angling the mallet forward makes the striker's ball travel further. They can then more easily understand and remember how, in a stop shot, to achieve the opposite – by angling the mallet back.

### ***Explore why as well as what and how***

Just as important for some people as knowing *what* do, and *how* to do it, is *why* – why something works the way it does, why the rule is in place, and so on.

## ***Question and answer***

### ***Use open questions as well as closed***

Closed questions, such as simple factual recall questions, have an important place in, for example, a recap. Open questions provoke thought: "What do you think will happen if...?" "Why do you think that happens?" "Where would you put the ball next? Why?" A powerful use of an open question is when every student is invited to give an opinion, and the coach encourages discussion to start only when all answers are in.

### ***Respond positively to answers***

Simply giving an answer – any answer – can be challenging for some people because of a fear of not getting it right. Even when the answer is clearly wrong, it's good to find a way of encouraging and affirming the individual. "You're right that the ball will travel further... are there any other suggestions as to how much further?"

## ***During individual practice...***

### ***Circulate systematically***

Get round every player in turn, missing none out. While it is tempting to spend good time with a single individual needing extra help, remember that every member of the group will want your guidance and reassurance. Circulate round systematically, even if it is only to offer brief encouragement and notice something each individual is doing right.

### ***Catch them doing it right***

Praise the things that members of the group are doing well. The temptation is to focus on what's going wrong and needs improvement; noticing what's right can help lay secure foundations and be a real boost to confidence. This may be something as small as a well-placed ball, good stalking, confident swing. Praise is a strong motivator: use it relentlessly. Working from the positives, noticing and reinforcing what's right, is in itself powerful coaching.

## ***Winding up...***

### ***Question and answer recap***

End sessions with a short question and answer recap to reinforce learning, assess what progress has been made, and show players how much they have achieved.

### ***Praise and encouragement***

Players want to leave with a warm feeling. Praise the progress made – encourage them to continue learning and developing – if there is a follow-up session, tell them when and what – say you've enjoyed their company – final praise and depart. It's not as corny as it may sound, and allows players to leave with a smile of satisfaction. They may even thank you!

## PRACTICE ROUTINES

The simplest routines are the best: "practise simple". Collect simple practice ideas to help both students on introductory courses and those starting to develop their game. Develop your own: most basic moves can easily be turned into a simple practice routine. Gamify by encouraging students to know their personal three-out-of-four success rate and seek to improve it to seven-out-of-eight.

### ***Two simple routines for both AC and GC***

- *Shooting* – take two sets of balls and four bisque sticks. Set the bisque sticks two yards from the boundary, four balls in between, and four facing them on the boundary itself. Shoot at each in turn with the aim of hitting accurately enough for the balls to travel straight ahead. When you are regularly successful, put a second set of bisque sticks a yard further on and go for three yard shots. Move the balls back if your aim is not yet secure, forward if you are consistently accurate.
- *Hoop running* – start by practising from dead centre, one foot in front, and gradually increase six inches at a time. Move closer if you fail to get five out of six through. Vary it by running hoops from slight angles. Know up to what distance and up to what angle you are consistently successful. Finish with easy hoops to reinforce confidence and conclude with success.

### ***Two simple AC routines***

- *Round the clock* – take two balls and any hoop. Practise hoop approaches from 1, 2 and 3 yards away, starting at 1 o'clock through to 11 o'clock.
- *Yard line to hoop* – Take two balls and a corner hoop. Put a ball on the yard line level with one of the corner hoops. Take off to in front of the hoop and run it, then roquet the yard line ball again. Repeat until it falls apart. How many can you do in a row?

For a very good PDF of more AC routines key *Basingstoke Association Croquet Practice Routines* into Google.

### ***Two simple GC routines***

- *Corner 1 to hoop 1* – try to move in one stroke from corner 1 to the centre line of hoop 1, ready to run the hoop. Score 1 for each yard (mallet length) you are away from the centre line. Repeat, moving from even to odd hoops: 2→3; 4→5, 6→7; and so on. Aim to match or beat your personal best.
- *Promotions* – place two balls a foot apart, half way from corner 1 to hoop 1. Try to promote partner ball into a perfect hoop running position. Gradually introduce three variations, one at a time: balls further apart; both balls have further to travel; partner ball needs a small cut to send it into position.

For a very good PDF of more GC routines key *Basingstoke Golf Croquet Practice Routines* into Google.



# COACHING THE MENTAL APPROACH TO CROQUET

With acknowledgements to David Openshaw

You yourself need firstly to be **convinced** of the importance of the mental side of croquet. If you are not then don't coach that aspect of croquet. Many players do not believe in its relevance to them. Many people are quite willing to believe a coach who tells them their mechanics of the swing are all wrong. But they have a hard time believing that their mechanics are all right but their mental game is not. However it is common to see players play well during coaching when the coach is there giving them confidence. But the confidence often evaporates when the coach is not there and shot making success declines.

There are three important croquet skills: shot making skills, tactical skills, and mental skills. The five key mental skills are

**Confidence**  
**Staying in the present**  
**Seeing or visualising your successful shot**  
**Developing the right kind of thoughts**  
**Controlling nerves, staying calm**

**Confidence:** To be confident, players need to recognise that they are responsible for their own level of confidence, and that they will play better if they are confident. Confidence does not need to wax and wane dependent on our last result or our last shot. Confidence is needed in times of adversity.

So stage 1 in coaching is to achieve acknowledgement of this.... Then convince the player they can learn to be more confident... And finally go on to ways of building confidence.

Here are some examples:

- Remember your successes, successful shots, successful matches.
- After each game remind yourself what you did well.
- Practise success. Most practice should be things you can do. Always finish with something you can do.
- After each practice session remember what you did well, what you learnt, and what you still need to work on.
- Pretend to be someone else. (The World Champion, the best player at your club).
- Think about things you do where you're confident. Try to create the same mental state.

**Stay in the present:** This means thinking only about the current shot, not thinking about what a good chance you have to win the game, or what a poor shot you have just played. It's very difficult to achieve. Again, work first on recognition of its importance, then go on to give some examples of how to achieve it.

**Visualise your successful shot:** Train players to see the successful outcome of each shot in their mind just before they play the shot. Another technique is to see a line between two balls as you play a roquet, promotion or clearing shot. In a croquet shot select two very exact spots on which to land the two balls.

**Develop the right kind of thoughts:** Let unhelpful thoughts drift away; replace them with something neutral e.g. focus briefly on how wonderful the sky or nearby trees look. Then focus on the success of your next shot.

**Control nerves, stay calm:** Ensure you breathe well. Take a few deep breaths if you are particularly nervous. Again it may help to think about something neutral, or focus momentarily on past success in a previous match or in practice.

## FURTHER LEARNING FOR COACHES AND STUDENTS

### **Croquet England website [www.croquet.org.uk](http://www.croquet.org.uk)**

(This is the members' site: the outward-facing site is [www.croquetengland.org.uk](http://www.croquetengland.org.uk))

1000+ pages. Tricky to navigate so best to copy the URLs of the most useful pages.

- A good starting point is the Coaching Resources page, most quickly found by keying Croquet England Coaching Resources into Google.
- A main tab at the top of the site leads straight to the Croquet England Shop: know what is available there, and tell Club members what the discount is (CqE Standard members 2%, CqE Premium members 10%).
- Another main tab at the top of the site leads straight to the area for Subscribers (i.e. Members). Links from here worth checking out, and guiding players to use, include Welcome to New Subscribers, Player Support, and the Directory which is a secure link giving club details and contact details for other players nationally.

### **Oxford Croquet website [www.oxfordcroquet.com](http://www.oxfordcroquet.com)**

A treasure trove of 700 pages focused on AC.

- Look particularly for the section How To Play which covers a wealth of topics, including coaching ideas and whole downloadable manuals and books.
- Health warning: for the Oxford Croquet site editor, 'beginner' can sometimes mean any player with a double-digit handicap.

### **Three books for AC**

The range at the Croquet England Shop is well chosen and all earn their place. Students of Club-Level Coaches may find the following particularly helpful:

- *How to Play Croquet* (Mike Shaw) – small format, 48 pages. Covers the same ground as the introductory course, in simple colour diagrams and bite-sized text.
- *Croquet, The Skills of the Game* (Bill Lamb) – black and white, 122 pages. Clear analysis of the basics but goes on to offer much to developing players.
- *Complete Croquet* (James Hawkins) – colour, 176 pages. An attractive and comprehensive book on skills, tactics and strategy, for guidance and reference.

### **Three books for GC**

Again the best starting point is the range at the Croquet England Shop. Students of Club-Level Coaches may find the following particularly helpful:

- *A Guide to Golf Croquet* (Jennet and Mitchell) – 40 pages, black and white. A detailed guide to the basics of the game for beginners and improvers.
- *Golf Croquet Tactics* (Michael Hague) – 88 pages, colour. Starts by setting out the first principles and goes from there. A third edition is in progress.
- *Every Shot is Tactical* (Stephen Custance-Baker) – 100+ pages, ring-bound, colour, 140 illustrations. Recommended for GC players of all abilities.

### **Video resources**

Because so many videos cover whole games at advanced level, or are shorts covering a particular technical point, useful choices for the students of Club-Level Coaches are few. Try

- Ealing CC has a professionally produced 6 minute video, showing four simple GC practice routines. Key Ealing Croquet Club into Google; scroll down the club home page to find the Croquet Coaching Video link.
- Basingstoke CC has six AC and six GC videos by Ian Harrison, typically around 30 minutes each. They move at pace but provide helpful reminders for those seeking video revision. Find the links on the Basingstoke CC website.



## Appendix 1 – group work

### Planning a taster day

#### **Scenario:**

The Club Chair of your 2½ lawn club with 28 members, phones you up at the beginning of the season and says:

*"I have agreed in principle with the area Women's Institute to provide a taster day for them to introduce them to croquet. We need to pick up some new members so I want them enthused about croquet. They will pay on a per head basis, which should also help with our budget deficit. I'm told that, on past experience, they should be a committed group who will get stuck in. This will be part of their regular activity programme and will be midweek on a day that works for us as well as them. Their suggested timing is 11am to 3pm.*

*You will need to get someone to assist you. How many WI members can you take? How exactly should the day run? Can you please work out something and let me know ASAP what we are offering and how we are going to do it."*

#### **Produce your plan:**

- Aim for the course
- Any limiting factors
- **Detailed plan of the day**
- Resources required
- Admin points
- Any other points to consider

## Appendix 2 – group work

### Planning a two-hour refresher session

#### **Scenario:**

Four students who completed the Club's introductory course last year have asked you for a two-hour refresher session to reinforce the basics at the start of the new season. They all have the maximum handicap.

#### **Produce your plan:**

- Aim for the two-hour session
- Any limiting factors
- **Detailed plan of the two hours**
- Resources required
- **Admin points**
- Any other points to consider