

A Guide to Choosing your Bowls

Selecting a lawn bowl is a very personal thing and there are a number of factors to consider when choosing a bowl. There are now over 30 different models of bowl available in the UK, each with a different bias, in nine sizes (0000-6), four weights (medium, medium heavy, heavy and extra heavy), with at least six different types of grip, not to mention the vast array of colours.

Cost

A set of Bowls will cost anything from £40 on EBay, second hand to £350 new. We have two Bowls shops in our area, Wey Valley Indoor Bowls Club or Egham Indoor Bowls. If you want a set of coloured bowls you will need to add another £50 on the normal black/brown bowls.

As long as the bowls are not more than 15 years old (you can determine the age of a bowl by examining the oval or rectangular stamp on the side of the bowl – the manufacturer's 10-year guarantee stamp) and no serious scrapes or gouges (minor surface scratches will not affect the performance of the bowl) they will suit your purpose. And should you subsequently decide to change your bowls, a second-hand set of bowls will only lose a fraction of its original cost when you come to sell them on. Any bowls stamped after 1985 will qualify you for playing in National Competitions.

LOCAL BOWLS SHOPS

Chris Young Bowls

Bowlsweat Direct
Wey Valley Indoor Bowling Club
Lido road
Guildford
Surrey GU1 1HB
Club: 01483 536337
Tel: - Mob: Chris - 07787 515939 or Pete - 07715 973214

Opening Times

Monday to Friday - 10.00am to 4.00pm
Saturday - 10.00am to 2.30pm
Closed Sunday and Bank Holidays.
Please phone for Easter and Christmas Opening times.

EGHAM BOWLS SHOP

Egham Indoor Bowling Club
Manor croft Road
Egham
Surrey TW20 9LX
Tel: 01784 439329

Opening Times

Thursday - 10:00am - 8:00pm
Friday to Sunday - 10:00am - 3:00pm

PLEASE CHECK ON OPENING HOURS AS THEY MAY CHANGE
BETWEEN INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SEASONS

Brand

In all honesty the brand of a bowl is the least important factor when buying a set of bowls, as all bowls manufacturers produce good quality products which conform to standards laid down by World Bowls. Each manufacturer offers a wide range of bowls and the majority of bowlers will be able to find the right bowl from one of them. Most established bowlers will have a personal preference which often comes about by trying out different bowls either by having a go with the club bowls or at your local bowls retailer. In the end, most bowls are chosen on price and availability.

There are several manufacturers of lawn bowls in the UK. The models are shown in brackets.

- Taylor Bowls (Lazer, Vector VS, Blaze, Ace, International, Legacy SL, Lignoid)
- Henselite (Dreamline, Tiger II, Classic II, Tiger, Classic)
- Drakes Pride (Advantage, Fineline, Professional, Jazz)
- Almark (Sterling Gold, Sterling Slim-Line, Arrow)

Size of Bowl to use

Bowls Sizes & Weights Guide									
Size	0000	000	00	0	1	2	3	4	5
Diameter (mm)	112	114	116	118	121	122.5	124	125.5	127
Diameter (inches)	4 3/8	4 1/2	4 9/16	4 11/16	4 3/4	4 13/16	4 7/8	4 15/16	5
Medium Weight (grams)	1020	1120	1190	1220	1300	1350	1400	1460	1520
Medium Weight (lbs-ozs)	2-03	2-05	2-09	2-11	2-13 1/4	2-15 3/4	3-1 1/2	3-3 3/4	3-5 3/4
Heavy Weight (grams)	1075	1175	1215	1280	1350	1400	1460	1520	1580
Heavy Weight (lbs-ozs)	2.5	2.7	2.10 1/2	2.13 3/4	2.15 3/4	3.1 1/2	3.3 1/2	3.5 1/4	3.7 1/4

Sizing your bowl is perhaps the most important aspect of selecting a lawn bowl. Get it wrong and you'll either be hitting the opposite banking with a thud or dropping it at your feet. As a guide, most men will play with a bowl between the sizes of 3 and 5, with 3 being the smaller bowl of the two. Ladies will usually play with bowls between 0000 and 2 in size, again with 0000 being the smaller of the two. As we get older and lose our strength it becomes more difficult to grip the bowl and a lot of bowlers will choose to go down in bowl size.

To find out which size of bowl is best suited to you, wrap both of your hands around the widest running surface of the bowl so that your thumbs touch at the bottom and your middle fingers touch at the top to form a circle around the bowl. If you can achieve this without too much of a gap at the top of the bowl this will probably be the correct size of bowl for you. There are two ways to grip a bowl the claw grip and the cradle grip. Get your coach to demonstrate these grips.

Secondly, holding the bowl as if about to deliver, swing your arm forward and backward. If you can maintain a firm and comfortably grip on the bowl then this is another tick in the box.

And finally, with your arm stretched out in front of you hold the bowl upside down. If after 30 seconds your arm begins to ache or shake, the bowl is probably too big for you. If however, you maintain a firm and comfortable grip on the bowl, this will confirm that this is more than likely the correct size of bowl for you.

You might even like to try the same routine with the next size of bowl to ensure that you're not playing with a bowl that is too small – you should always play with the largest and heaviest bowl that you're able to comfortably deliver and control.

If you belong to a club ask a fellow member if you can borrow their bowls so that you can test them for size. They may even allow you to have a roll-up with them to see how well you manage. Or you can always visit your local bowls retailer who will have a variety of bowls for you to try out.

Weight

In general there are two weights – medium and heavy – although some manufacturers do offer medium heavy and extra heavy as options. The weight of a bowl is indicated on the bowl by the number and letter on the side of the bowl, i.e. 3H is a size three bowl with a heavy weight, 2M is a size two bowl with a medium weight.

The difference in weight should be considered alongside the size of the bowl in terms of what happens during a bowls match. A small, medium weight bowl will get knocked around by a larger, heavier one, while a larger, heavier bowl will have more momentum and is more likely to stand its ground. If it's comfortable for the bowler we would always recommend buying a heavier bowl no matter what size of bowl they have chosen.

Bias

If you're just starting out in the game I would advise you to start with a bowl with a narrow to medium bias as you will probably be asked to play at number 1 in a Triple or number 2 in a Rink, where your primary task is to place your bowl as close to the jack as possible. Playing in these positions will also give you an opportunity to find your line and weight.

Bowls with a narrow to medium bias (best for indoor) include:

- Taylor Bowls (Lazer, Vector VS, Blaze, Ace)
- Henselite (Dreamline, Tiger II, Classic II)
- Drakes Pride (Advantage, Fineline, Professional)
- Almark (Arrow, Sterling Slimline)

Bowls with a medium to wide bias (best for outdoor) include:

- Taylor Bowls (Ace, International, Legacy SL, Lignoid)
- Henselite (Classic II, Classic, Tiger)
- Drakes Pride (Professional, Jazz)
- Almark (Sterling Slimline, Sterling Gold)

If you search Google Images using the terms *taylor bias chart*, *henselite bias chart*, *drakes pride bias chart* and *almark bias chart* you will find a chart which illustrates the bias (the lines which the bowls take) of each bowl in the manufacturer's range of bowls.

Grips

Grips are the indented rings or indentations around the sides of the bowl that offer somewhere to place your thumb and fingers when delivering the bowl. These provide a more secure grip and better control, particularly in cold and wet or hot, sweaty conditions. If you mainly bowl indoors then the grips are less important.

There are various types of grip (deep dimple, shallow dimple, progrips, crescent grooves, vertical grooves) available depending on the manufacturer and model, so I would suggest trying out bowls with different grips before reaching a decision. Again, if you belong to a bowls club ask your fellow members if you can have a roll-up with their bowls to get a better idea of what is more comfortable and suited to your style of bowling.

Colour

Originally all bowls were made from hard lignum wood and were therefore brown in colour. When composition bowls were introduced they were invariably black. Today, bowls are available in almost 50 colours, shades and patterns and although they are slightly more expensive the gap in price is narrowing. The colour of your bowls is a purely personal choice.