

## LAWN GAMES ON MACKINAC ISLAND

# HOW TO PLAY BOCCE BALL



Mackinac Island in many ways looks just as it did in the late 1800s. Just as there were no automobiles then, there are no cars on Mackinac Island now. Just as soldiers manned Fort Mackinac then, costumed interpreters manage the historic stronghold now. And just as guests enjoyed leisurely lawn games at Mackinac Island's Grand Hotel then, they spend relaxing afternoons playing those same games on the lawn at the stately resort now.

One classic lawn game that was popular in the late 19th century and remains a favorite pastime of Mackinac Island visitors today is bocce ball. While bocce at the highest levels is played on regulation courts with specific dimensions, the open spaces of grass outside Grand Hotel and Mission Point Resort are ideal for casual games.

Bocce is a great game for a laid-back afternoon because you don't have to be an amazing athlete or furious competitor to be successful and have fun. Bocce is a team game that can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. It's no wonder that forms of bocce have been played for thousands of years!

In fact, there's evidence that bocce was played in ancient Egypt and that it later became popular in the Roman Empire. Bocce as it is played today was formalized in Italy and brought to America by Italian immigrants in the 19th century, around the time that Mackinac Island was evolving into a tourist destination.

## Now that you have a little bocce background, here's a rundown on how to play the game:

*Bocce games involve two teams of one to four players each. That means as many as eight people can play at once. Perfect for a fun afternoon with friends and family!*

**Each team** gets four colored balls that are about 4 inches in diameter. The goal of the game is to score points by tossing the larger colored balls underhanded at a smaller white ball on the ground.

**One team** starts the game by tossing the smaller white ball called a pallino, or jack, out into the lawn. That team then bowls its first ball, rolling or bouncing it toward the jack. Then the other team bowls its first ball. All tosses must be underhanded.

**At this point**, whichever team's ball is the "out ball," or the one not nearest the jack, goes next. That order continues until each team has bowled all four of its balls. It's possible that one team bowls all four of its balls before the other team bowls its second ball.

**An interesting wrinkle to bocce strategy** is that it's okay to bowl a ball in such a way that it knocks the opposing team's balls farther away from the jack. It's also okay to knock the jack itself into a new position.

**Once each team has bowled all four of its balls**, the round, or frame, is over. The team with the "in ball" nearest the jack is the only team to win any points in the frame. That team gets one point for the "in ball" and additional points for any other balls that also are nearer the jack than the opposing team's nearest ball. It's possible to win as many as four points in a frame if all four of one team's balls are nearer the jack than any of the other team's balls. (In some versions of bocce, a team also wins a bonus point at the end of a frame for a "kiss," which is when a ball is touching the jack.)

**After one frame is completed**, the team that just scored tosses the jack elsewhere on the lawn to start another frame and the process starts over. The game ends when either team accumulates a pre-determined number of points, usually 12 or 16.

*The next time you visit Mackinac Island, stroll on over to the Grand Hotel Tea Garden or the manicured game lawn at Mission Point Resort and give bocce ball a try. Resort guests enjoy complimentary equipment on a first-come, first-served basis while non-guests may play for a small fee.*