

## OFFICIAL RULES OF THE GAME OF PETANQUE

As adopted by the British Pétanque Association on 1 January 1985  
and by  
the Fédération Internationale de Pétanque et Jeu Provençal  
at Rotterdam, September 1984.  
(amended at Grenoble on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2002)

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### Official Rules of the Game of Pétanque

#### General

##### **Article 1 – Composition of Teams**

Pétanque is a sport in which:

- 3 players play against 3 players (triples)

It can also be played by:

- 2 players against 2 players (doubles)

- 1 player against 1 player (singles)

In triples each player uses two boules.

In doubles and in singles each player uses three boules.

No other version of the game is allowed.

##### **Article 2a – Characteristics of Approved Boules**

Pétanque is played with boules which are approved by the F.I.P.J.P. and which conform to the following criteria:

(i) To be made of metal.

(ii) To have a diameter between 7.05cm (minimum) and 8cm (maximum).

(iii) To have a weight between 650 grams (minimum) and 800 grams (maximum). The trade mark of the manufacturer and the weight must be imprinted on the boules and must always be legible.

(iv) They must not be weighted or sand filled. As a general rule, the boules must not be tampered with in any way, nor altered or modified after machining by the approved manufacturer.

Re-tempering the boules in order to modify the hardness applied by the manufacturer is forbidden.

Nevertheless, the player's name and forename or initials may be engraved on them, as well as various logos, initials and acronyms in accordance with the manufacturer's specification

**Article 2b – Penalties for Non-conforming Boules**

A player guilty of breaking the above condition (iv) is immediately disqualified from the competition together with his or her team mate/s.

For boules said to be “tampered with” or “re-tempered” - the player risks withdrawal of his or her licence for a period as defined in the Code of Discipline, together with any other penalties imposed by his or her Association’s Disciplinary Committee.

If the boules have been borrowed and the owner is identified, the latter will be suspended for a period as determined by the Disciplinary Committee of the guilty player’s Association.

If a boule is not “tampered with” but worn, or defective in manufacture and is not passed by the controlling body or does not comply with the conditions in paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) above, the player must change it. He or she may also change the complete set.

Complaints relating to (i), (ii) or (iii) made by either team must be made before the game starts. All players should therefore ensure that their boules, and those of their opponents, comply with the above conditions.

Complaints relating to (iv) may be made between two ends at any time during the game. However, from the third end onwards, if a complaint made about the boules of an opponent is proved to be unfounded, the team or the player complaining will be penalised 3 points which will be added to the opponents score.

Where boules have had to be opened, the complainant becomes responsible. Notably, he or she will be made to reimburse the owner or replace the boules if they are found to be in order. Nevertheless under no circumstances can he or she be asked to pay damages or interest.

The Umpire or the Jury may, at any time, examine the boules of any player.

**Article 2c – Approved Jacks**

Jacks are made of wood, or of synthetic material which carry the maker's mark and have secured confirmation by the F.I.P.J.P. that they comply exactly with the relevant specification.

Their diameter must be between 25mm (minimum) and 35mm (maximum).

Jacks may be painted any colour.

**Article 3 - Licences**

A licence must comply with the Administrative Rules of the F.I.P.J.P. and, in particular, it must bear a recent stamped photograph and the signature of the owner.

Before the start of a competition, each player must produce his or her licence. He or she must also produce it upon request by the Umpire, or by an opponent, unless it has been retained at registration.

**Article 4 – Changing a Jack or Boule**

It is forbidden for players to change a jack or boule during a game, except in the following cases:

- (i) It cannot be found after a search time limited to 5 minutes.
- (ii) It breaks, in which case the largest piece marks the position. If there are boules yet to be played it is immediately replaced, after measuring if necessary, by a boule or jack of diameter identical or similar to the broken one. From the following end, the player concerned may use a complete new set.

## **Play**

### **Article 5 – Terrain Regulations**

The game of Pétanque is played on any ground. However, by a decision of the organising committee or the Umpire, the teams may be asked to play on a marked terrain. In this case, for National Championships and International Competitions, the minimum dimensions must be 4m wide and 15m long.

For other competitions the Associations may allow variations down to 12m x 3m.

If the terrain is surrounded by solid barriers these must be a minimum of 30 cm outside the dead ball line. The dead ball line will encircle the exterior of the terrain at a maximum distance of 4 metres.

These arrangements also apply to the area on which the finals are played.

The game is played up to 13 points, though leagues and qualifying heats may be played to 11 points.

### **Article 6 – Start of Play – Rules Regarding the Circle**

The players must toss up to decide which team will choose the terrain and throw the jack.

If the terrain has been designated by the organisers the jack must be thrown on that terrain. The team must not play on a different terrain without the Umpire's permission.

Any member of the team winning the toss chooses the starting point and traces a circle large enough for any player to stand with both feet fully inside it. However, it may not measure less than 35cm or more than 50cm in diameter. It must be drawn at least 1m from all obstacles, and at least 1m from the boundary of an out of bounds area and, for competitions on open terrains, at least 2m from another throwing circle in use

The team that throws the jack must wipe out all throwing circles near the one in use.

The area within the circle may be completely cleared during the end but it must be restored when the end is finished or, at the latest, before the start of the next end.

The circle is not considered to be out of bounds.

The feet must be entirely on the inside of the circle without touching it, and they must not leave the circle or be lifted completely off the ground until the thrown boule has touched the ground. No other part of the body may touch the ground outside the circle. The exception is that those

who are disabled in a lower limb are allowed to place only one foot inside the circle.

A player throwing from a wheelchair must place it so that the circle is in the middle of the wheels with the foot-rest above the edge of the circle.

The throwing of the jack by one member of the team does not imply that he or she must play the first boule.

#### **Article 7 – Valid Distances for the Thrown Jack.**

For the thrown jack to be valid, the following conditions apply:

- (i) The distance from it to the nearest edge of the circle must be between –
  - 4m min. and 8m max. for Minors.
  - 5m min. and 9m max. for Cadets.
  - 6m min. and 10m max. for Juniors and Seniors.
- (ii) The throwing circle must be a minimum of 1m from any obstacle and from the boundary of the playing area.
- (iii) The jack must be a minimum of 1m from any obstacle and from the nearest boundary of the playing area.
- (iv) The jack must be visible to the player whose feet are entirely inside the circle and who is standing absolutely upright. In cases of dispute, the Umpire will decide if the jack is visible and there can be no appeal.

At the following end, the jack is thrown from a circle drawn around the point where it finished at the previous end, except in the following cases:

The circle would be less than 1m from an obstacle or the boundary of the playing area.

The throwing of the jack could not be made to all regulation distances.

In the first case the player will draw the circle in the nearest valid position from the obstacle or the boundary.

In the second case, the player may step back, in line with the previous end's line of play, until he or she is able to throw the jack any valid distance up to the maximum distance allowed, and not beyond. This may only be done if the jack cannot be thrown in any other direction to the maximum distance.

If after 3 consecutive throws by the same team, the jack has not been thrown correctly, it is then passed to the opposing team who also has 3 tries and who may move the circle back as described above.

After this, the circle cannot be moved again even if this team has not succeeded with its three

throws.

In any case, the team who lost the jack after the first three tries keeps the right to play the first boule.

### **Article 8 – For the Thrown Jack to be Valid**

If the thrown jack is stopped by the Umpire, a player, a spectator, an animal or any moving object, it is not valid and must be thrown again without being included in the three throws to which the player or the team is entitled.

After the throwing of the jack and the first boule, an opponent still has the right to contest the validity of the jack's position. If the objection is valid, both the jack and the boule are replayed.

If the opponent has also played a boule, the jack is deemed valid and no objection can be accepted.

For the jack to be thrown anew both teams must have accepted the throw as being invalid or the Umpire must have declared it so. Any team continuing otherwise would lose the benefit of throwing the jack.

### **Article 9 – Dead Jack**

The jack is deemed dead in the following six cases:

- (i) When, after having been thrown, it is not within the limits as defined in Article 7.
- (ii) When, during an end, it is moved outside the boundary of the playing area, even if it comes back onto the playing area. A jack on the line of the boundary is valid. It only becomes dead after having completely crossed the boundary that is to say, when it lies entirely beyond the boundary when viewed from directly above. A puddle on which a jack floats freely is considered to be out of bounds.
- (iii) When, still on the terrain, the moved jack is not visible from the circle, as defined in Article 7. However, a jack hidden by a boule is not dead. The Umpire may temporarily remove a boule to declare whether the jack is visible or not.
- (iv) When the jack is displaced to more than 20m for Seniors and Juniors, or 15m for Cadets and Minors, or less than 3m from the throwing circle.
- (v) When the moved jack cannot be found after a 5 minute maximum search time.
- (vi) When there is an out-of-bounds area between the jack and the throwing circle.

### **Article 10 – Removal of Obstacles – Penalties**

It is strictly forbidden for any player to remove, move or crush any obstacle whatever, found on the playing area. However, the player about to throw the jack is allowed to test a landing point by tapping it no more than 3 times with one of his or her boules. Furthermore, the player who is about to play or one of his partners may fill in the hole which was made by the last boule thrown.

For not observing the above rules, the players incur the following penalties:

- (i) Warning.
- (ii) Disqualification of the boule played or about to be played.
- (iii) Exclusion of the guilty player for one end.
- (iv) Exclusion of the guilty player for the game.
- (v) Disqualification of the guilty team.
- (vi) Disqualification of both teams in the case of complicity.

#### **Article 11 – Jack Obscured or Moved**

If, during an end, the jack is accidentally masked by a leaf or a piece of paper, these objects are removed.

If the stationary jack is moved by the wind or slope of the terrain for example, it is put back in its place on condition that it had been marked.

The same applies if the jack is moved accidentally by the Umpire, a player, a spectator, a boule or jack from another game, an animal or any moving object.

If the jack is moved by a boule played in this game it is valid.

To avoid any argument, the players must mark the jack's position. No claim can be accepted regarding boules or jack whose positions have not been marked.

#### **Article 12 – Jack Moved into Another Game**

If, during an end, the jack is moved into an area where another game is in progress, either on a marked or unmarked terrain, the jack is valid subject to Article 9.

If necessary, the players using this jack will wait, if there is room, for the players in the other game to finish their end before completing their own.

The players concerned must show patience and courtesy.

At the following end the teams continue on the terrain allotted to them.

#### **Article 13 – Actions to Take if the Jack is Dead**

If, during an end, the jack becomes dead, one of three cases can apply:

- (i) If both teams have boules to play, the end is void.
- (ii) If only one team has boules left to play, then this team scores as many points as it has boules to play.
- (iii) If neither team has boules to play, the end is void.

#### **Article 14 – Positioning the Jack after it has been Stopped**

- (a) If the jack, having been hit, is stopped by a spectator or by the Umpire, it remains where it stops.
- (b) If the jack, having been hit, is stopped by a player, his opponent has the choice of:
  - (i) leaving the jack in its new position.
  - (ii) putting it back in its original position.
  - (iii) placing it anywhere on the extension of a line from its original position to where it is found up to a maximum distance of 20m (15m for Cadets and Minors) and such that it is visible.

Paragraphs (ii) and (iii) can only be applied if the position of the jack was previously marked. If it was not marked, the jack will remain where it lies.

If after having been struck, the jack travels into an out-of-bounds area before returning, finally, on to the playing area it is classed as dead and the rules defined in Article 13 apply.

#### **Article 15 – Throwing the Jack after it is moved outside the designated playing area.**

If, during an end, the jack is moved outside the designated playing area, the next end is started at the point from which it was displaced providing (see Article 7):

- (a) The circle can be drawn 1m from any obstacle and from the boundary of the playing area.
- (b) The jack can be thrown to all valid distances.

### **Boules**

#### **Article 16 – Throwing of the First and Following Boules**

The first boule of an end is thrown by a player belonging to the team that has won the toss or the last scoring end. Following boules are played by the team not holding the point.

The player must not use any object or draw a line on the ground to give aid in playing a boule or mark the point of landing. Whilst playing his or her last boule, he or she must not carry another boule in the other hand.

The boules must be played one at a time.

Once thrown a boule must not be replayed. However, it must be replayed if it has been stopped or deviated accidentally from its course between the throwing circle and the jack by a boule or jack coming from another game, or by an animal or any moving object (football, etc.) and in the case defined in Article 8, second paragraph.

It is forbidden to moisten the boules or jack.

If the first boule played goes out of play, the opponent plays and so on alternately while there

are no boules on the designated playing area.

If after shooting or pointing no boules are left on the designated playing area, the rules concerning a stalemate position defined in Article 29 apply.

### **Article 17 – Behaviour of Players and Spectators during a Game**

During the regulation time allowed for a player to throw a boule the spectators and the other players must observe total silence.

The opponents must not walk, gesticulate or do anything that could disturb the player about to play. Only his or her team-mate/s may stand between the throwing circle and the jack.

The opponents must remain beyond the jack or behind the player and, in both cases, to the side of the line of play and at a distance of at least 2 metres the one from the other.

The players who do not observe these rules could be banned from the competition if, after a warning from the Umpire, they persist in their conduct.

### **Article 18 – Throwing of the Boules and Boules going outside the terrain**

No one is allowed a practice throw during a game. Players who do not observe this rule could incur the penalties as defined in Article 10

During an end, boules going outside the marked terrain are valid (except as in Article 19).

### **Article 19 – Dead Boules**

Any boule is dead from the moment it passes into an out-of-bounds area. A boule straddling the boundary is valid. It only becomes dead after having completely crossed the boundary of the authorised terrain or dead ball line that is to say, when it is placed entirely beyond this boundary when viewed from directly above.

If the boule subsequently comes back into the playing area, either because of the slope of the ground or by having rebounded from an object, moving or stationary, it is immediately taken out of the game and anything that it has moved after re-entering the playing area is put back in place.

Any dead boule must immediately be removed from the game; by default, it is considered to be live the moment another boule is played by the opposing team.

### **Article 20 - Stopped Boules**

Any boule played that is stopped by a spectator or the Umpire will remain where it comes to rest.

Any boule played that is stopped by a player to whose team it belongs is dead.

Any boule pointed that is stopped by an opponent can, according to the wishes of the player, be replayed or left where it comes to rest.

If a boule shot or hit is stopped by a player, the opponent has a choice to:

(a) to leave it where it stopped, or



(b) to place it on the extension of a line which would go from the original position it occupied to the place it was found, but only on the playable area and only on condition that it had been marked.

The player purposely stopping a moving boule is immediately disqualified, along with his or her team, for the game in progress.

### **Article 21 – Time Allowed to Play**

Once the jack is thrown, each player has the maximum duration of one minute to play his or her boule. This short period starts from the moment when the previous boule or jack stops or, if a point has to be measured, from the moment the outcome has been decided.

This rule also applies to the throwing of the jack after each end.

The player not respecting this rule will incur penalties as stated in Article 10.

### **Article 22 – Moved Boules**

If a stationary boule is moved by the wind or slope of the ground, for example, it is put back in its place. The same applies to any boule accidentally moved by a player, an Umpire, a spectator, an animal or any moving object.

To avoid any disagreement, the players must mark the positions of the boules. No claim will be accepted for a boule which has not had its position marked, and the Umpire will give a decision according to the position the boules hold on the terrain.

However, if a boule is moved by a boule played in this game it is valid.

### **Article 23 – Players Throwing a Boule other than their Own**

A player who plays a boule other than his own receives a warning. The boule played is nevertheless valid but it must immediately be replaced possibly after measuring.

In the event of it occurring again during the game, the guilty player's boule is disqualified and everything it has moved is put back in place.

Before throwing a boule, the player must remove from it any trace of mud or any other substance. Penalties for this rule are as stated in Article 10.

Players must not pick up the played boules before the completion of the end.

### **Article 24 – Throwing Boules Contrary to the Rules.**

Any boule thrown contrary to the rules is dead and, if marked, everything it has moved in its travel is put back in place. The same applies to any boule played from a circle other than that from which the jack was thrown.

However, the opponent may play the advantage rule and declare it to be valid. In this case, the boule pointed or shot is valid and everything it has displaced remains in its place.

## **Points and measuring**

**Article 25 – Temporary Moving of Boules**

In order to measure a point, it is permitted to temporarily move the boules and obstacles situated between the jack and the boules to be measured, after having marked their positions. After measuring, the boules and the obstacles are put back in place. If the objects cannot be moved, the measuring is done with the aid of callipers.

**Article 26 – Measuring of Points**

The measuring of a point is done by the player who played last or by one of his or her teammates. The opponents still have the right to measure after one of these players. Whatever positions the boules may hold, and at whatever stage the end may be, the Umpire may be consulted and his or her decision is final.

Measuring must be done with appropriate equipment, which each team must possess. It is particularly forbidden to measure with one's feet. The players who do not observe these rules could be penalised by one of the sanctions provided for in Article 10 if, after a warning from the Umpire, they persist in their conduct.

**Article 27 – Boules Picked up before the Agreement of Points**

At the finish of an end, any boule picked up before the agreement of points is dead if its position was not marked. No claims can be accepted on this subject.

**Article 28 – Moving the Boules or the Jack**

The team whose player displaces the jack or one of the contested boules, while effecting a measurement, loses the point.

If, during a measurement, the Umpire disturbs or moves the jack or a boule and if, after re-measuring, the point remains with the boule which the Umpire had originally judged to be closer to the jack, the Umpire in all fairness declares it to be so. The same applies in a hypothetical case where, after a new measurement, the point no longer remains with the boule originally estimated to be holding.

**Article 29 – Boules Equidistant from the Jack**

If the two boules closest to the jack belong to opposing teams and are equidistant from it, the following 3 cases can apply:

- (a) If neither team have boules to play the end is declared void and the jack is thrown by the team winning the previous end.
- (b) If only one team has boules left to play, it plays them and scores as many points as it has boules closer to the jack than the nearest opponent's boule.
- (c) If both teams have boules to play, the team which played the last boule plays again, then the other team, and so on alternately until the point has been won by one of them. When only one team has boules left, they play them as described in the above paragraph.

If, after completion of the end, no boules remain within the boundary of the playing area, the end is void.

**Article 30 – Foreign Bodies Adhering to the Boule or Jack**

Any foreign bodies adhering to the boules or the jack must be removed before measuring a

point.

### **Article 31 - Claims**

To be accepted, any claim must be made to the Umpire. Claims made after the result of the game has been established cannot be considered.

Each team is responsible for checking their opposing team (licences, classification, terrain, boules, etc.).

## **Discipline**

### **Article 32 – Penalties for Absent Teams or Players**

During the draw and the announcement of its result, the players must be present at the control table. A quarter of an hour after the result of the draw has been announced, any team which is absent from the terrain will be penalised one point which is awarded to their opponents.

After this quarter-hour wait, the penalty accrues by one point for each five minutes lateness.

The same penalties will apply during the competition, after each draw and in the case of a re-start of games after a break for any reason whatsoever.

The team which fails to present itself on the playing area within one hour of the results of the draw forfeits this game.

An incomplete team has the right to start a game without its absent partner; nevertheless it does not use the boules of that player.

### **Article 33 – Arrival of Missing Players**

If, after an end has started, the missing player arrives, he or she does not take part in that end. He or she is accepted into the game only as from the next end.

If a missing player arrives more than one hour after the game has started, he or she loses all rights to participate in that game.

If his or her partner or team-mates win this game he or she will participate in the following games provided he or she was registered with that team originally.

If the competition is played in leagues, he or she will be able to take part in the second game whatever the result of the first.

An end is considered to have started when the jack has been placed on the playing area in accordance with the rules.

### **Article 34 – Replacement of a Player**

The replacement of a player in doubles, or of one or two players in triples, is only permitted up to the official announcement of the commencement of the competition (whether vocally or by whistle, gun, etc.), and provided that the replacement/s was/were not previously registered with another team in the same competition.

**Article 35 – Inclement Weather**

In the case of rain, any end started must be completed, unless a contrary decision is made by the Umpire, who alone has the authority, with the Jury, to stop or annul it because of a “force majeure”.

If, after the announcement of a new phase of the competition, (2nd round, 3rd round, etc.), certain games have not finished, the Umpire may, after advice from the Organising Committee, make any decisions deemed necessary for the smooth running of the competition.

No player may absent himself or herself from a game or the terrain of play without the Umpire's permission. If this is not given, Articles 32 and 33 apply.

**Article 36 – Sharing of Prizes**

Any sharing of rewards or prizes is strictly forbidden.

Any teams taking part in the final stages, or any other game, who show a lack of sporting spirit or respect towards the public, officials or Umpires, will be disqualified from the competition. This disqualification may affect the relative positions obtained in the final results as well as invoke penalties as in Article 37.

**Article 37 – Incorrect Behaviour**

The player who is guilty of incorrect conduct, or worse, showing violence towards an official, an Umpire, another player or a spectator incurs one or several of the following penalties, depending on the seriousness of the offence:

- (1) Exclusion from the competition.
- (2) Withdrawal of licence.
- (3) Confiscation or restitution of rewards and prizes.

The penalty imposed on the guilty player can also be imposed on his or her team-mates.

Penalties (1) and (2) are imposed by the Umpire.

Penalty (3) is imposed by the Organising Committee which, within 48 hours, sends a report with the rewards and prizes retained to the Association's Organisation which will decide their destination.

In all cases, the Chairman of the Committee for the Association concerned will make the final decision.

**Article 38 – Duties of the Umpires**

The Umpires designated to control the competitions are charged with ensuring that the rules of the game and the administration rules are strictly adhered to. They are authorised to disqualify any player or team who refuses to obey their decision.

The spectators who hold a valid or suspended licence and who, due to their behaviour, cause an incident on the terrain, will be the subject of an Umpire's report to the National Association. The latter will summon the guilty party or parties before a qualified Disciplinary Committee who

will decide on the penalties to apply.

**Article 39 – Composition and Decisions of the Jury**

Any case not provided for in the rules is put to the Umpire who may refer it to the competition's Jury. This Jury comprises at least 3 people and at the most 5 people. The decisions taken by the Jury in applying this paragraph are without appeal. In the case of a split vote, the President of the Jury has the casting vote.

Decent dress is demanded of each player (bare torso and bare feet are not acceptable). Any player who does not observe these rules will be disqualified from the competition after a warning from the Umpire.

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**Note:** The present rules have been approved by the International Congress of the Fédération Internationale de Pétanque et Jeu Provençal held in Grenoble on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2002.

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Kindly from the [BPA](#)