



24 Target Games

... keep playing steady and build on the momentum, anything can happen.

Mike Weir

Professional golfer and first Canadian to win a professional major championship

Two target games—bowling and golf—are among the most popular sporting activities chosen by Canadian adolescents aged 12-19. Other well-known target games include curling, archery, billiards, bocce, croquet, darts, horseshoe pitching, shuffleboard, and lawn bowling.

In all target games, players score points by projecting an object with accuracy towards a target (rolling a bowling ball towards bowling pins). Out of the four game categories, target games have the least simultaneously occurring action. Players can often focus on making their shots without having to worry about interference by opponents (as in invasion games) or having to collect or return a moving object (as in net/wall and striking/fielding games).

This is not to say that target games are easy to play. Anyone who has played or watched golf knows that it is not easy to hit a golf ball so that it avoids obstacles (trees, water, and sand traps), and eventually ends up in a hole that measures just under 11 cm.

Target games have been, and continue to be, popular among people of all ages. Not only do they require a high degree of skill, but they also challenge players to make good decisions when planning their shots. Many skills learned by playing target games can also be useful in other sports.

Target Games

The target games covered in this chapter are:

- Curling
- Golf



Basic Skills and Tactics

Target games require players to send an object away with a high degree of accuracy. Players can do so with their hand (deliver a curling rock, roll a bocce ball) or with an implement (hit the cue ball with a pool cue, strike a ball with a croquet mallet). Sometimes, this involves a clear shot at the target, such as in five-pin bowling or darts.

Other times, it might mean having to take an indirect pathway so that the object either bounces off another object (hitting the cue ball off the side rail in billiards) or making the object curl around an obstacle by putting some spin on it (an in- or out-turn in curling).

In target games, the athletic focus is on players mastering the best stance to send the object away effectively. Target games can still work well as team sports—players must combine their efforts to achieve victory.

In some target games, such as golf, bowling, and darts, players do not attempt to prevent their opponents from scoring. In others, such as curling, lawn bowling, and shuffleboard, strategic play is important. Players can prevent the other team from scoring by either setting up guards that protect previous shots that are in scoring positions, or by knocking away their opponent's objects that are close to the target.



Golf is one of the most popular target games.



Curling

Curling is a game of finesse, extreme precision, and strategic thinking—it has rightly been called “chess on ice.” The game is played by sliding large granite stones down a sheet of ice. When given a clockwise or counter-clockwise rotation, the projectile follows a reasonably predictable curving or “curling” trajectory, and this has led to the game’s unique name.

History

Who invented curling? Was it the Scots, or immigrants from Continental Europe? Evidence can be presented to prove the case for either lineage. The Scots first formalized the rules and created the game’s traditions, including much of its lingo. By the eighteenth century, Scotland had become a hotbed for the chilly game. Scottish immigrants brought their curling fanaticism with them to the New World, especially to snow-bound Canada.

The first Canadian curling club opened in Montreal, in 1807, and became the first organized sporting club in North America. Today, curling clubs are important social institutions in many Canadian communities, especially in Western Canada.



How the Game is Played

Eight “ends,” or rounds, of curling constitute a match. Each team has four players—the lead, the second, the third, and the skip.

Each curling lane, or “sheet,” is 44.5 m (146 feet) from back line to back line. In Canada, its width is 4.3 m (14 feet, 2 inches) whereas international sheets are 4.7 m (15 feet, 7 inches) wide. The centre line runs the length of the surface and acts as a reference for “reading ice” and predicting the curl of the rocks.

There is also a “hog line,” a “side line,” and a “back line.” In order for a rock to be in play, it must be completely over the hog line, not touching a sideline and not completely over the back line. The small footholds—or “hacks”—at each end of the rink is where the rock thrower pushes with his or her foot to begin the shot.

At the scoring end of the rink, the “tee” line crosses the width of the ice and passes through the centre point of the four painted circles, also known as the “house,” which is the scoring area. The tee itself is a small hole in the centre of the house. When the distance between two opposing rocks and the centre of the house is too close to determine by sight, a “measure” is inserted in the tee to make the call.

The surface of the ice itself is pebbled, and its purpose is to reduce the amount of the sliding surface of the rock that is in contact with the ice. If the ice were not pebbled, it would be much harder to get a stone from one end of the ice to the other.

So how do you “throw” these rocks? First, step into the hack and squat down. Using your curling broom as a balance, push your stone slightly forward on the ice, and then pull the rock back towards you in a backswing. Now, bring the stone forward and use your foot to push off from the hack—you will end up sliding down the ice with your broom in one hand and a rock in the other.

The last part of the delivery is the release of the stone, which can be quite tricky. The type of turn that is placed on the handle is directed by the skip. The turn will influence the direction in which the stone will curl. Once the stone is released, two teammates will use their brooms to sweep the stone’s path, gliding along and sweeping the ice with their brooms. This makes the rock travel farther and/or makes it curl. Good sweepers can affect the stone’s eventual positioning on the ice.

Scoring

Players throw two rocks in each end, alternating with the player on the other team who is playing the same position, until all players have thrown their rocks. Points are scored by getting more of your stones closer to the centre of the rings than those of your opponent. For example, if the two rocks closest to the centre are yours, you score two points. If the closest rock to the centre is your opponents’ and yours is the next closest, they score one point.

Only one team can score points in an end; if no rocks finish up in the house, no points are awarded.



Curling is growing in popularity amongst Canadian youth.

Curling Equipment

To curl, the participant needs specialized equipment. For example, shoes are usually insulated to keep players' feet warm. Curlers will wear one shoe with a slippery sole surface (for sliding down the ice) and the other with a grip on the sole (for propelling down the ice).

Curling brooms are generally made of synthetic material, or hog or horse hair, and are usually called push brooms, or brushes. In the past, straw brooms (or corn brooms) were used but most clubs have banned them due to the debris they can leave on the ice. Some players stick to the Scottish tradition and use corn brooms for delivery, but most agree that push brooms are easier to use and more effective.

The curling stone is made from granite and has a top weight of 19.96 kilograms (44 pounds). A plastic handle is attached to the top of the stone. These handles can be engraved with numbers so that each stone can be identified.

Curling: Key Terms and Basic Skills

- **Bonspiel.** A curling competition usually played over a weekend.
- **Brick.** A slang term for the curling stone.
- **Burned stone.** A stone in motion which has been touched by a member of either team.
- **Button.** The one-foot circle at the centre of the house.
- **Chip.** To hit only a small portion of a stone.
- **Counter.** Any stone within or touching the rings, which is closer to the centre of the rings than any of the opposition's stones.
- **Dead handle.** A stone that is released with little or no rotation of the handle.
- **End.** A portion of a curling game that is completed when each team has thrown eight stones and the score has been decided. A game usually consists of 8 or 10 ends.
- **Flipped out.** A stone that is released with poor technique, causing it to be wide of the skip's broom.
- **Guard.** A stone that is placed in a position so that it may potentially protect another stone.
- **Hacks.** The footholds at each end of the ice from which the stone is delivered.
- **Hard, hurry hard, harder.** A skip's commands to tell the sweepers to sweep vigorously.
- **Pebble.** A fine spray of water applied to a sheet of curling ice before play.
- **Reading ice.** The skill by which the skip anticipates the amount a stone will curl, according to ice conditions.
- **Rink.** A team. Also the building in which the game is played.

Getting Involved

If ever there was a sport that lets you ease your way in gently, curling is it. The Canadian Curling Association's website has a "learn to curl" flash demonstration (www.curling.ca). It is also well equipped with sections on youth curling, school curling, and, of course, plenty of news-worthy curling updates for the curling fanatic.

The good thing about curling is that you can start at any age, and continue to play for many years after. You can locate the provincial affiliate on the Canadian Curling Association's website, which will lead you to clubs in your area.



NEWFOUNDLANDERS ARE FIRST ON THE PODIUM AND IN PROVINCE'S HEART

Brad Gushue Playing to Win (and to Have Fun)

The Canadian men's curling team had been playing well throughout the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy. The five men, led by 25-year-old Brad Gushue, had made it to the gold medal match and were leading by one point when the game was suddenly blown wide open in the sixth end. Gushue's team scored an impressive six points, giving it a seven-point lead over Finland. The game continued on until the eighth end when Finland conceded the match, realizing the deficit would be too great to overcome.

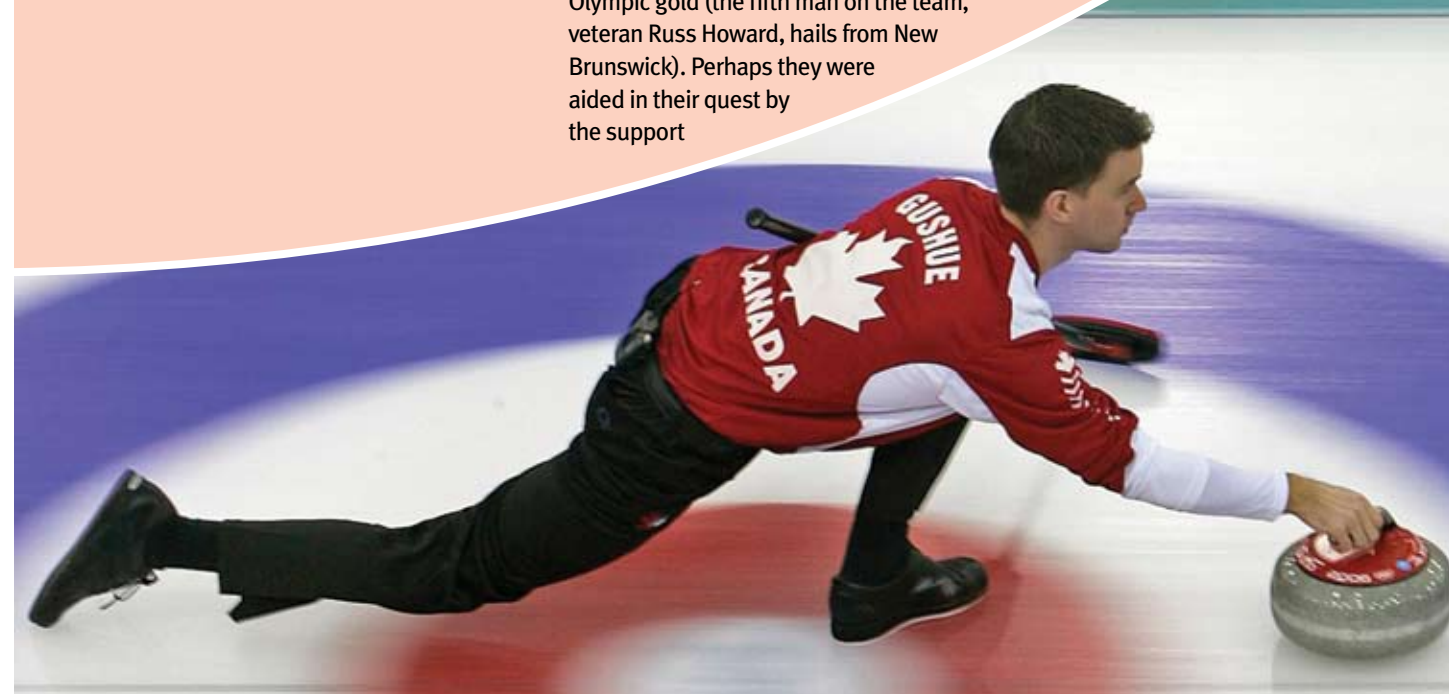
It was an emotional day for Gushue who called his mother Maureen only moments after the team's victory. She had been unable to attend the games in Turin as she had recently undergone chemotherapy back in Gushue's hometown of St. John's, Newfoundland.

Despite making changes to his team shortly before the Olympic trials in 2005, everything fell into place in Turin and Gushue, along with Jamie Korab, Mark Nichols, and alternate Mike Adam, became the first Newfoundlanders ever to win Olympic gold (the fifth man on the team, veteran Russ Howard, hails from New Brunswick). Perhaps they were aided in their quest by the support

of the incredibly enthusiastic Newfoundlanders back home where the Provincial Government allowed schools to close one hour before the final game was due to be shown on television.

The Canadian men did well in the qualifying round, finishing the round robin in a tie for second place. They had another big end in their semifinal match against the U.S. when they were able to turn a one point lead into a six point lead with five points scored in the ninth end.

The Olympic triumph may have been a first for both the team and for Newfoundland, but Gushue was certainly no stranger to victory; between 1995 and 2001, Gushue won six provincial junior curling titles as well as the national championship. It's no surprise that he was later able to represent Canada at the Olympics and make his country proud.



Golf

Even the most devoted golf enthusiast will tell you that golf can be a very frustrating game. It is sometimes referred to as “a long walk, spoiled.” Golf is a game that requires intense concentration, great eye-hand coordination, and a steady swing. To be good, you must be able to do all three consistently.

History

The origins of golf go back a long way. It originated in Scotland and has been played there since the late seventeenth century. The game quickly spread from Scotland through Europe and into the Americas, and has continued to be popular ever since.

The Royal Montreal Golf Club was founded in 1873, making it not only the oldest course in Canada but also the oldest course in North America.

Golf was recognized as an Olympic sport in 1900, and has even been played in outer space. In 1971, astronaut Alan Shephard hit a golf ball on the moon. His action was televised to an audience of millions around the world.

How the Game is Played

A full round of golf consists of 18 holes. Players begin each hole from the “teeing ground” by placing their ball on a wooden or plastic tee which elevates it and makes it easier to hit. Players aim for the area around the hole, which is called the “green,” while trying to avoid hitting their ball into thick grass (the “rough”), trees, sand, or water.

“Par” is the number of shots that a skilled player should take to put the ball in the hole. Par is usually determined by the distance from the tee to the green—the farther the distance, the greater the par. Finishing a hole one stroke under par is called a “birdie,” two strokes under is called an “eagle.” Finishing one shot over par is called a “bogey,” two shots over is a “double bogey,” and so on. In golf, the lower your score, the better.

Each golfer begins play on the first hole and is allowed any number of practice swings. During the game, the ball must be played where and as it lies. As a courtesy, players should attempt to repair any damage to the course caused by their clubs and balls, and rake their footprints from sand traps.

The ball that lies furthest from the hole is played first. Every player must put his or her ball into the hole. The player with the least number of strokes on each hole tees off first for the next hole.

Two main types of hazards wait on the course to thwart a golfer’s perfect game—sand and water. A “bunker” is a hazard consisting of a depression that has been filled with sand. They are most commonly found near the green, but can also show up in or alongside fairways (the area between the tee and the green). A water hazard can be a pond, the ocean, or any other body of water. If you hit your ball into one, you may play it (and risk getting soaked), or you can opt to stay dry and play a new ball, with a one-stroke penalty.

The Clubs

There are three main types of golf clubs. The angle of each club head determines the loft and distance of the shot—the higher the number, the higher the loft.

- **Woods.** The wood is the longest club and is used to hit the ball the longest distances. It is broad from front to back with a bulbous head made of wood or metal. The number one wood, the driver, delivers the longest distance of any club in the bag.
- **Irons.** These have narrow heads and come in the greatest variety—low-numbered irons hit almost as far as woods, while high-numbered irons often are used for more precise shots. Wedges are a type of iron used in the sand or rough to lift the ball high out of the hazard with a little spin so that it does not roll much when it lands.
- **Putter.** This is a light metal club designed to guide the golfer’s aim during short, precise shots on the green.



The lighter coloured grass (where the hole is located) is called the “green,” the rest is the “fairway.”



Tiger Proof

The evolution of Tiger Woods from child prodigy to the game's brightest star in the late 1990s not only nudged golf to the front of the sports sections, it dramatically changed the future of golf course design.

Woods combined fantastic driving with uncanny accuracy and made a shambles out of some of the world's best and most prestigious golf courses.

Course architects responded by lengthening holes, narrowing fairways, adding extra hazards, and making a variety of other changes designed to create more challenging courses. The media dubbed this process "Tiger-proofing."

Golf: Key Terms and Basic Skills

- **Driving.** A drive is the first shot. The object is to hit the ball a great distance with accuracy. Good golfers visualize the golf club travelling through the ball, not at it.
- **Pitching.** This is a relatively short, lofted shot designed for the ball to land softly and not roll much. This is often used when trying to shoot over a sand trap. With a proper follow-through, the ball will be carried out with a spray of sand.
- **Putting.** Accomplished players line the ball up directly under their eyes, feet shoulder-width apart or wider, and in line with the hole. The ball does not leave the ground, and should have lost most of its momentum by the time it reaches the hole.

Golf Lingo—Talk like a Pro!

- **Back nine.** The last 9 holes of an 18-hole golf course
- **Caddy.** Someone who carries a player's bag of clubs and/or advises a player with the details of the course
- **Hacker.** An unskilled golfer whose technique often results in large divots being left on the fairway
- **Divot.** A portion of turf that is ripped out of the ground by the head of the club during a swing
- **Fairway.** The closely mown area between the tee and the green
- **Follow-through.** The continuation of a golf stroke after contact is made with the ball
- **Fore!** Yelled loudly to warn other golfers of an incoming ball
- **Front nine.** The first 9 holes of an 18-hole golf course
- **Gallery.** A group of spectators at any golf event
- **Grip.** The handle of, and method of holding, a golf club
- **Handicap.** The average difference between a player's scores and a set standard, as calculated by a specified formula
- **Hole in one.** A score of 1 on any hole
- **Sweet spot.** The centre of mass of the club, indicated by the solid spot on the clubface

Getting Involved

Getting involved in golf used to be more difficult than it is today. With the rise of public courses, golf has changed, and now the vast majority of players do not need to be members of any particular club.

Think about caddying to learn from the pros, or, if you can get your hands on some golf clubs, you can practise shooting balls on your own. Check out www.rcga.org for more tips.



Mike Weir Playing to Win (and to Have Fun)

Born and raised in Bright's Grove—a small Ontario town near Sarnia—Mike Weir started swinging a golf club at age 11. By age 16, he won the Canadian Juvenile Championship and by 18, he won the Canadian Junior Championship.

Weir soon moved into the adult ranks, winning competitions both nationally and internationally, and setting new Canadian records along the way. He rose to the top with unstoppable force until he was struck with a disappointing year in 2002, finishing forty-second in the world rankings. True to his determined nature, Weir bounced back and started off his 2003 year with a bang, placing ninth at the Phoenix Open and first at the Bob Hope Classic—placements that let him walk away with \$922,000.

It looked as though everything was in place for Weir, until his competition finishes started showing reflections of his disappointing 2002 year. Leading up to the Masters—golf's biggest event—Weir had four disastrous finishes. Yet, Weir pulled it together in the end. His performance at the 2003 Master's Competition threw him into sports history as he became both the first Canadian and the first left-handed player ever to win the Master's.

With all of the emotional ups and downs and uncertainty, the strength of character that lives within Mike Weir certainly shone brightly that day.

Weir has lived in the U.S.A. since attending university in Utah; he now lives there with his wife and two daughters. However, despite the governor of Utah having declared May 12 (Weir's birthday) "Mike Weir Day," Weir identifies himself as Canadian, just as his Canadian fans do.

When he launched his own line of golf accessories, he chose to do so in Toronto. Weir has been called an inspiration to Canadians and to young people. Check out the website of one of his biggest fans (www.mikeweir.ca) as Mike has been known to stop by there himself.

