

2 PERSON STICK CURLING STRATEGY

Decision Making process

Starts before the game and continues throughout the game

- a) Each team should have a approach/strategy to start the game
- b) Your teams 4th rock in an end is often critical in making the decision to continue with your original strategy or to change strategies (time to bail out)
- c) Goal should be to make your team's last shot as simple as possible

Information process

Your team's skills, your opponent's skills, stage of the game and ice conditions will dictate play

- a) Watch or video 2 Person Stick Curling games
- b) Watch the rocks until stop (both your teams and the oppositions)
 - a. Attempt to use both sides of the sheet early in the game to assist in mapping the curl, path and weight across the sheet
 - b. Pay attention to rock rotation, amount of curl, weight and rock's path
 - c. When playing a guard, try to block the path to the rock (not the actual rock)
 - d. when asking your partner to throw a draw, place your broom on the tee-line as this will provide you with consistent reference for future draws

Execution

Routine, Preparation, Communication, Shot Selection

Additional things to consider

Your team's skills, your opponent's skills, stage of the game and ice conditions will dictate play. In the following video, Tyler Tardi discusses strategies for recreational curling suggesting teams play to their strengths/abilities. The video can be viewed here:

www.youtube.com/shorts/MIMP GyyleeQ

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL APPROACH

Approach each end as a separate game and play shots appropriate for your skill level. Ensure you and your partner are using the same approach (communicate).

The first three rocks delivered in each end are critical to establish the style of play for that end. The 2 Person Stick Free Guard Zone includes all areas between the backline and the hog line from which rocks may not be removed until the 4th rock of the end.

You can employ a conservative (defensive) approach or an aggressive (offensive) approach. This will depend on several factors including:

- a) The skill level of you and your partner as well as the other team;
- b) Whether you have the hammer or you don't have the hammer;
- c) The score in the game;
- d) Ice conditions; and
- e) Which end you are playing.

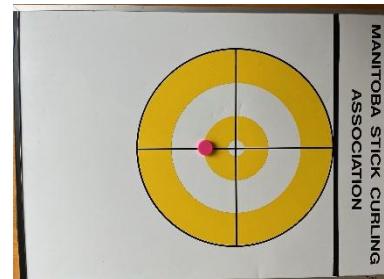
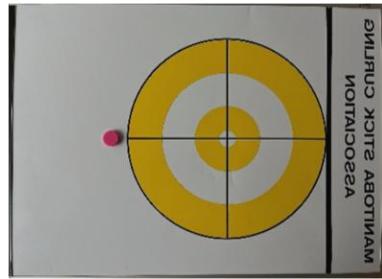
If you do not have the hammer your goal should be to either steal one or more points or force your opponent to take a single point. You can do this by shrinking the scoring area and drawing your first rock to the button or at least a tight centre line guard.

A Common Approach

Without hammer-Draw play to the 4 foot

With Hammer-Draw play away from the 4 foot, keep the 4 foot open

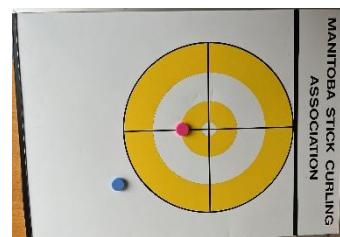
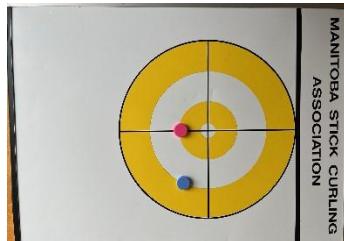
Possible 1st rock positions



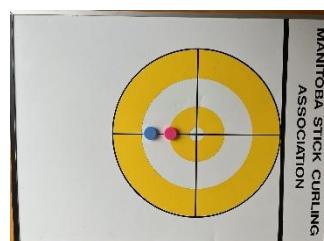
Second shot of the end

When you have the hammer, you will deliver the 2nd rock (blue) of the end and your goal should be to score two or more points or blank the end to retain hammer.

Less aggressive Approach



More Aggressive Approach

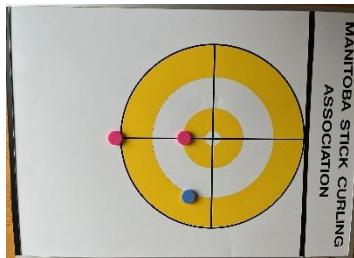


Third shot of the end

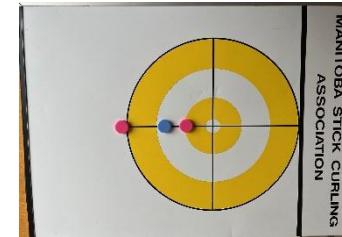
Since neither rock can be removed, you should either guard your first rock or draw around it with your 2nd shot.

Desirable 3rd rock (red) positions (depending on opponent's strategy)

Less aggressive Opponent



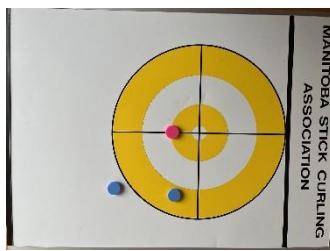
More Aggressive Opponent



At this point in the end, the team with the hammer can attempt to remove rocks. The actual position of the rocks, ice conditions, score and player's comfort level will influence strategy.

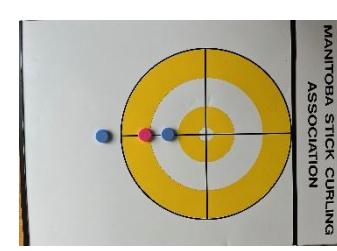
4th shot of the end (blue, hit the guard and roll)

Less aggressive Opponent



(blue, hit the guard on the nose)

More Aggressive Opponent



Often the shots that are missed either by yourself or by your opponent will influence your strategy and you may want to switch your approach from one to the other during any end of the game.

In the last end of a tie game you will only need to score one point to win. You may want to do this by expanding the scoring area and keeping the 4 foot area open for your last rock (Less Aggressive Approach). Your approach or strategy will be guided by the scoreboard.

Generally to improve your chances of winning, you should learn how to read the ice, learn how rocks react when they contact other stones and develop a consistent delivery/release.

SCENARIOS WHERE YOU MIGHT ADOPT A CONSERVATIVE APPROACH

- a) In the first 2 ends of the game while you learn to read the curl and pace of the ice and while the score is still tied/close;
- b) In the last end when you have the hammer and the score is tied; or
- c) At any point in the game when you have a lead of 2 or more points.

How to play this strategy

Without Hammer

- a) Play your first 2 rocks of the end into the button or 4 foot area,
- b) Try to never leave any of your rocks short of the house so they can be used as guards by the opposition;
- c) Remove any opponents rocks as soon as allowed by the rules rather than playing draws or guards;
- d) Try to not leave any rocks behind the tee line that can be used by the opposition to freeze to;
- e) If you have a comfortable lead, throw your rocks through the house rather than playing draw shots.

With Hammer

- a) Try to take play away from the 4 foot area by playing your first rock to either open side of the house;
- b) Try to keep all draw shots in front of the tee line but not short of the rings;
- c) If you have a comfortable lead throw your rocks through the house rather than playing draw shots;
- d) Remove all opposition rocks, especially guards, from play as soon as allowed by the rules;
- e) When removing rocks from behind the tee line try to have your delivered rock roll out of play also;
- f) With the last rock of the end hit and roll out of play to blank the end and retain the hammer or hit and stay to win the game.

SCENARIOS WHERE YOU MIGHT ADOPT AN AGGRESSIVE APPROACH

- a) Whenever you need to steal 1 or more points during the game;
- b) In the fifth end if you want to force the opposition to take 1 point so you can have the hammer in the last end; or
- c) Whenever you have the hammer and you need to score 2 or more points.

How to play this strategy

Without Hammer

- a) Play your first 2 rocks of the end into the button or 4 foot area or short of the house on the centre line as tight guards;
- b) Utilize all guards when available;
- c) Keep your draw shots in front of the tee line, especially when drawing around guards;
- d) Tap your opponent's rocks to the back of the house;
- e) Freeze to opponent's rocks behind the tee line or if in the 4 foot and behind guards.

With Hammer

- a) Play your first rock of the end to either open side of the house to expand the scoring area;
- b) When drawing to an open house, spread your rocks across the rings to prevent possible double take outs;
- c) Position your rocks in front of the tee line or even as corner guards;
- d) Utilize all guards available, especially corner guards;
- e) When drawing around longer guards on the centre line and the 4 foot area is open, try to leave your rocks in the front portion of the house;
- f) If the 4 foot area is not clear, freeze to any opponents rocks behind the tee line.

IN SUMMARY, IMPROVING YOUR CHANCES OF WINNING

- a) Learn to read the ice with respect to weight and path
- b) Understand angles and how rocks react when using various take out weights
- c) Hitting the broom consistently
- d) Consistent release and rotation
- e) Ask a friend/partner to watch/video your game and provide feedback
- f) Look to continue improving in all facets of the game

Some other specific scenario suggestions

Up 1 or more starting the sixth end, with the hammer

- i) The conservative play is to throw your first rock through the house possibly using a new path and observing rock behaviour
- ii) A more risky play is to attempt to move the opponent's first rock to a more preferable location. For example, if the opponent's rock is near the centre line in front of the house, a tick shot to move the opponents rock away from the centre line is a possibility.
- iii) Your second and subsequent shots should be to remove opponent's rocks from play.

Down 1 or more starting the sixth end, with the hammer

- i) The more conservative play is to play away from the opponent's first rock regardless of its location. Alternatives a) in the case of the opponent's rock being in front of the house, is to draw behind the opponent's rock or b) in the case of the opponent's rock being in the house, is to draw down to the opponent's rock.
- ii) Your second and subsequent shots should be moving or removing opponent's rocks in an effort to score two. Rocks (both yours and your opponent's) behind the tee line are often beneficial in attempting to score two. Rocks (both yours and your opponent's) near the centre line and in front of the house will often raise the level of difficulty in your final shots of the end.
- iii) The goal should be to make your final shot of the end as simple as possible and results in you scoring two or more.

Up 1 or more starting the sixth end, with out the hammer

- i) The conservative play is to throw your first rock through the house possibly using a new path and observing rock behaviour.
- ii) A slightly more risky play is to draw to the top of the four foot circle.
- iii) Your second shot will depend on the location of your opponent's first shot and the score. If you are up two or more, drawing away from your first rock or towards your opponent's rock are options.
- iv) Subsequent shots should attempt to make your opponent's last shot either impossible or very difficult to score one or more.

Down 1 or more starting the sixth end, with out the hammer

- i) Your first rock should be near the centre line in front of the house, setting up your second shot as a draw to the top of the four foot circle. Major risk with this start sees your opponent's first shot being a draw to the top of the four foot. An alternative is to draw to the top of the four foot with your first rock with your second shot being a guard for your first shot. Major risk with this start sees the opponent drawing/freezing to your first shot, significantly cutting down the scoring area/opportunity.
 - a. Subsequent shots should attempt create an opportunity to steal sufficient points to tie or win the game. Guarding the path(s) of your rocks in the house is a common approach
- ii) The goal should be to make your opponent's last shot(s) as difficult as possible to prevent you from scoring to tie or win the game.

Blanking an end

- i) Early in the game (e.g., first three ends), if you are unable to score more than one when you have the hammer and it is possible, a blank end is a good strategy.
- ii) If the score is close, the fourth end provides an opportunity to control scoring in the final ends (fifth and sixth). If the score is close and you have the hammer in the fourth end, a conservative approach to playing the fourth end may give you the opportunity to score two or more, however if the fourth end does not provide an opportunity to score two or more, a blank end is viable option. Setting up an attempt to score two or more in the fifth end, leaving your opponent with one end to "catch up". Similarly blanking the fifth end remains a viable option if you are unable to score two or more.

Key take aways

Know your shot making capabilities, assess your opponents shot making capabilities, attempt to make your shots as easy as possible, attempt to make your opponent's shots as difficult as possible.

Indirectly, the video addresses the Degree of Difficulty (DOD) associated with a selection of shots. Not definitive, but a suggested DOD (taken from Skipping 101 video) for various shots includes:

Draw Shot	DOD	Take Out Shot	DOD
Stone in play	1	Contact & remove	3
Guards	4	Contact & stay	4
To 8 foot	5	Board weight take out	5
To 4 foot	6	Hit and roll	6
Come around	7	Partially covered	7
To button	9	Angle run back	9
Perfect freeze	10	Straight run back	10

A video developed by the Nova Scotia Curling Association (Skipping101) discusses several aspects of skipping/calling ice in the 2 Person Stick game and includes decisions based on game situation, rock location, shot objective, shot type and turn/ice. The video can be viewed here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFUBcZF3W00

