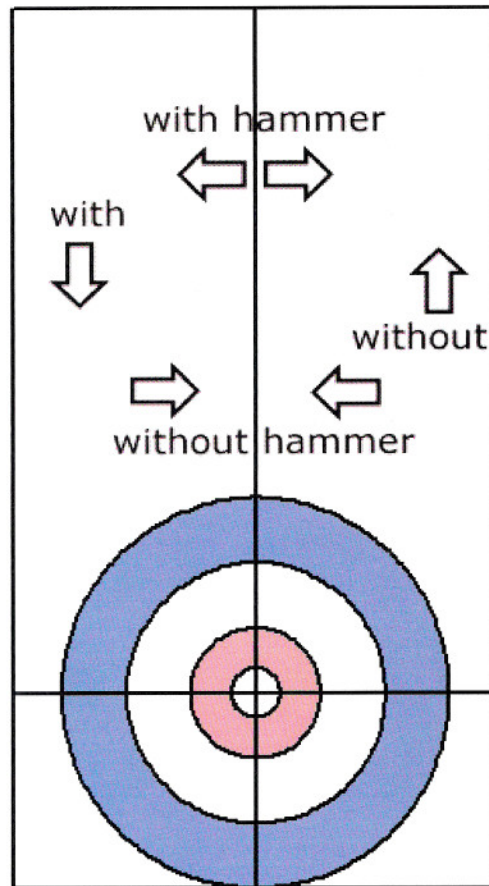


Basic Curling Strategy

What is the “best” curling strategy? The answer is:
It Depends!



With last rock (hammer) — play to sides and keep the four foot open for skip’s last rock. Goal is to score two (or more).

Without last rock — play to center to try to steal points or to keep the team with last rock advantage to only scoring one. Block your opponents access to the four foot.

If you’re behind in score — place guards to generate scoring opportunities to count multiple points.

If you’re ahead in score — when you’re up in score, the guards are not! Keep play clean to reduce risk of allowing a big end to be scored against you. Don’t give them any rocks to hide behind.



Basic Strategy p. 2

Play the ice conditions—tricky ice conditions such as runs or falls (negative ice), will dictate what shots you call. Is the ice slow and straight? Play tap backs; you can't curl around guards. Is the ice fast and swingy? Hits will be hard (especially for beginners); play draws and come-arounds. Don't fight the ice—go with it!

Play your team—understand what shots each player has the best chance of executing and choose those shots first. Try more difficult shots only when it's appropriate. Make your players successful—they will have more fun!

How do you remember all that? **"Hi Sea"**

Hammer—Do you or don't you have last rock?

Ice—What are the ice conditions and what strategy or shots better suits them?

Score—Are you up in score, or down? Do you need to play offense (draws) or defense (hits)?

End—What end are you in? Is it better for you to keep the hammer, blank, steal, give up one?

Abilities—What shots do your players have the best chance of executing? What about your opposition's players?

Good shot-making is important but sound strategy is equally as important.

- a team that makes most of its shots but employs poor strategy will lose a lot.
- a team that employs good strategy but misses lots or shots won't win many games.
- good teams need good shot-making and good strategy.

How do you learn sound strategy? Play, observe, ask questions of people who know—and listen to the answers. Study brochures, books, internet information. Attend clinics, experiment, and get experience.

Things to Remember / Consider

- Fully understand the Free Guard Zone rule
- With Hammer—score 2 or more or blank.
- Without Hammer—steal or force them to take 1
- Control the top of the house and the path to the 4 foot
- Be patient. You don't need to make up a deficit all in one end.
- Have a game plan and stick to it unless you get far ahead or far behind.
- Play high percentage shots suited to your team's strength.
- Be sure that everyone on the team knows what shot is being played
- Support your teammates
- Remember the "Spirit of the Game". Be courteous and a good sport.



Beyond Beginner Strategy (Stay ahead of your students!)

Aggressive/Offensive Style Geared to stealing a point(s) or scoring two or more with the hammer. Lots of rocks in play, center guards (without the hammer), raises, finesse shots, fewer takeouts.

Conservative/Defensive Style Used when scoring a big end is not the objective. Your desire is to blank the end, score one, or maybe even give up one. You just don't want to give up two or more. Use this style of play early in the game to learn the ice and let players get comfortable, when trying to get the hammer for the next end, or when trying to protect a lead late in the game. Few guards, lots of take outs. With the hammer, keep an open path to the four foot for your final shot, if needed.

Top Do's and Don'ts

- Call the higher percentage shot
- Always consider "risk" vs. "reward"
- Play to your team's strengths
- If you are up, the guards are not
- Guard a guard straight on when attempting a steal
- Rarely draw through a port
- Rarely peel a double corner guard
- Never "bump" on a come around freeze

More Things to Remember / Consider:

- Know before the shot is thrown what is desired, what is acceptable ("pro" miss), and what is unacceptable ("amateur" miss).
- Never play to miss, but always error on the "pro" side.
- Plan several shot ahead (and ends ahead if you can).
- Divide game into early, middle, and late ends. Know when to be aggressive and when to be defensive.
- Late in the game—score in even ends (play to have hammer in the last end).
- Decide which rocks are "friends", which ones are "enemies", and which ones are neutral.
- Opponent's stones behind the tee may be your friend, especially if you have the hammer.
- When faced with multiple opponent stones in the house & playing a hit, take out the "higher" stone (except with the hammer).
- Make the other team throw hard shots.
- Don't do the other teams "dirty work" for them. In other words, don't try risky shots potentially changing the end to your opponents favor. Example—taking the opponent's stone off the front of the house—potentially "jamming" it into your own shot stone and changing the end. Ouch!
- Front end—be ready to shoot: clock management.
- The best strategy is to call a good shot and then to make it!
- Skips call the game but others may occasionally suggest options. The skip ultimately decides.
- Forget shots & ends already played. The most important shot of the game is your next one. Play in the present, not in the past.

Strategy Resource: http://www.curling.ca/learn_and_play/rules_of_the_game/4rockstrat.pdf or do a word search "free guard zone". 42 page Canadian Curling Association strategy paper.