

HOW TO THROW A BOULE FOR POINTING AND SHOOTING

The act of throwing a boule is a sequence of simple activities, or steps. After mastering these fundamentals, each player can then go on to adapt them to different situations, and to evolve his/her own personal style.

What follows may seem overly complicated at first glance, but is actually quite straightforward and simple. I wish I would have adopted this method sooner (which I now realize is used by all great Petanquers); I would have saved myself countless hours of futile and frustrating practice.

I now follow every single suggestion below, and it has helped improve my Petanquing.

What follows is simply the most effective Petanque advice I have ever run across.

The absolute essential are underlined.

THE 7+3 STEPS FOR BOULE THROWING-- FOR POINTING AND SHOOTING.

- 7 Steps covers the **“Physical game of throwing a boule”** – Seven activities involved in physically throwing a boule.
 - **Physical Step 1 Feet**
 - **Physical Step 2 Hand**
 - **Physical Step 3 Wrist**
 - **Physical Step 4 Curl**
 - **Physical Step 5 Back**
 - **Physical Step 6 Snap**
 - **Physical Step 7 Follow-Through**
- 3 Steps covers the **“Mental game of throwing a boule”** – Three mental activities performed as part of the throwing process.
 - **Mental Step 1 Plan**
 - **Mental Step 2 Pick**
 - **Mental Step 3 Observe**
 -

In this discussion, it is assumed that you throw with your right hand. If you're left-handed, just reverse the words “right” and “left” where ever you see them.

THE PHYSICAL STEPS TO EXCELLENT BOULE THROWING

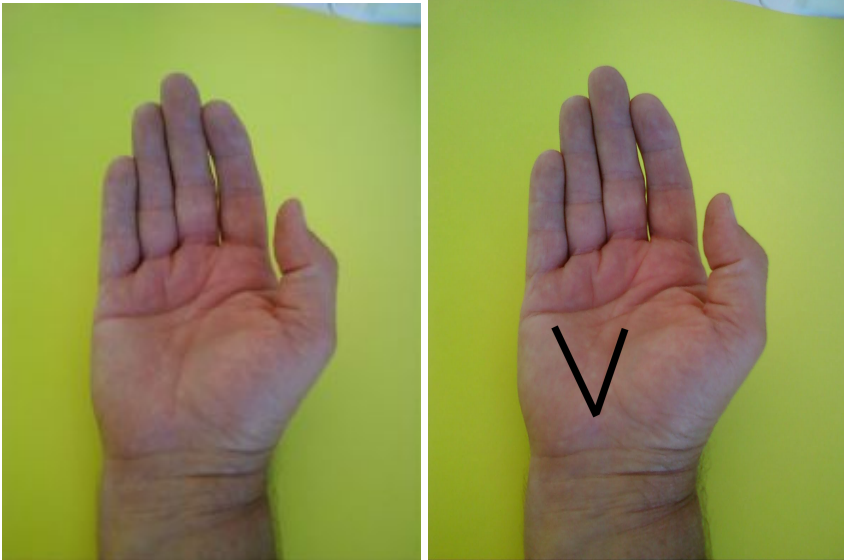
Physical Step 1: FEET

- Stand in the circle.
- Place your right foot so that it points toward the spot where you want the boule to land. Usually, this means pointing your foot at the jack.
- Your left foot should be a comfortable distance from your right foot and a bit behind it, either parallel with the right foot or with a slightly open stance.



Physical Step 2 HANDS

- Open your throwing hand, palm up.
- Extend your fingers. Keep them straight, parallel, and together.
- Extend the thumb to the side.
- Think of your hand as being V-shaped, with the point of the V pointing toward your wrist. The point of the V is where your “life line” ends at the base of your hand.



- Place the boule in the palm of your hand so it fits into the V.



- Curl your fingers over the boule.
- At this point you should be holding the boule so that your fingers are straight, together, and folded directly over the boule so that they are holding the boule wedged into the V.
- Relax your thumb so that it comes forward and lightly touches the side of your first finger.

but does not touch the boule.



Here is one way NOT to hold the boule. The boule is not wedged into the V. Instead, it is held against the base of the thumb. The little and ring fingers are displaced to the left, so that instead of curving across the top of the boule, they are wrapped around its side.



Here is another way NOT to hold the boule — the “claw” grip. The fingers are spread apart and the thumb is grabbing the boule.

You often see children holding their boules this way because they are playing with adult boules that are too big for their hands. If this is the only way that you can securely hold your boules, consider playing with smaller-sized boules.

Physical Step 3 WRIST

- Turn your hand over, so that you’re looking at the back of your hand.
- Don’t rotate your forearm, but flex your wrist from side to side until your hand forms a straight line with your forearm.

The picture on the left shows what your wrist should look like. It is straight, so that the hand is in line with the forearm. The picture on the right shows a natural, but incorrect, posture — the wrist is turned to the right, so the hand is not in line with the forearm.

Correct:



Incorrect;



At this point, you can check your form by swinging your arm from your shoulder, like a pendulum. When you swing your arm up, be sure to keep your arm and elbow straight. You should see that you are swinging exactly in the direction where you want the boule to go.

Physical Step 4 CURL

- Extend your right arm out in front of you.
- Straighten your elbow, so your arm is straight.
- Remember, your hand is turned over, palm down.
- Curl your wrist forward, and under, as far as you can — as if you're trying to touch the underside of your forearm with the boule.

Here is what your hand, arm, and wrist should look like.



Physical Step 5.1 LEFT ARM BACK FOR BALANCE

Keep your left arm straight. Swing it back, comfortably behind your torso, and hold it there. Keep it there, behind you, while you swing your right arm and throw the boule, which we will describe in the next step.

When your left arm is up and back, it gives you balance. You can lean a bit forward, and bring your right arm forward as you throw the boule, and you will not lose your balance or fall forward.

If you find yourself almost losing your balance, and leaning forward or almost falling forward when you throw your boule, that is a sign that you aren't keeping your left arm up and back and using it as a balance. Similarly, if you find yourself lifting your left foot off of the ground behind you when you throw, that's a sign that you aren't using your left arm properly, and you're raising your left leg to try to provide the balance that your left arm should be providing.



Physical Step 5.2 BACKSWING

Keeping your left arm behind you, swing your right arm from the shoulder, backward and forward, like a pendulum. Keep your right arm straight — it really should move like a pendulum. This is the motion that you will use for the backswing and the throw. Don't start your swing with your right arm pointing down toward the ground. Have your

right arm raised high comfortably behind you — parallel to the ground if you can. You want a nice high backswing so that gravity will help you pull the boule through your swing.

- As you do this, lean forward slightly. This will make it easier to get your right hand a bit higher behind you.
- If it feels natural, bend your right knee slightly.
- As your right arm goes up behind you, your left arm will naturally lift a bit, to balance and compensate.
- Remember to keep your wrist fully cocked.

Pointers tend to have a more moderate backswing. You may even see experienced pointers who have no backswing at all— “It’s all in the wrist,” they’ll tell you.

Nevertheless, this is the form you want to learn and practice. It gives you a solid foundation to build on. When you eventually start shooting, this is the form you will want to have. In the meantime, as a pointer, you can reduce the size of your backswing. But don’t reduce it so much that you have no follow-through. And don’t stop curling and snapping your wrist.



Physical Step 6 FINAL ARM PENDULUM SWING AND SNAP

(This is the swing part of the throw.)

- Swing your right arm and hand forward.
- Swing from your shoulder, like a pendulum. Keep your arm and elbow straight, and your right wrist curled.
- Your left arm and hand stay more or less up and back, behind you. Just let them move naturally.
- When you release the boule, snap your curled wrist upward and open your fingers to let the boule fly.

The trick here is

- 1 to keep your throwing arm straight — **don’t** bend your elbow, and
- 2 don’t gradually uncurl your wrist during the swing. Keep it cocked during most of the swing. Then snap your wrist at the last moment before you release the boule.

This is how you get backspin on the boule — by unwinding your curled wrist, so it goes

FROM THIS



When you release the boule, you should feel like you're shooting your boule at a definite target. You can see this in the form of advanced players [such as Marco Foyot](#). You see the torso twist. The right shoulder comes forward and you can almost see him effortlessly *pushing* the boule with shoulder, arm, and heel of the hand.

TO THIS



Marco Foyot, one of the world's greatest living pétanque players, demonstrates great form.

Physical Step 7 FOLLOW THROUGH

- After you release the boule, let your hand and arm keep moving upward in a natural finish to your swing.
- At the end of your follow-through, your hand and arm should be in front of you — or more precisely, in front of your shoulder — pointing in the direction that you wanted the boule to go. Your fingers should be pointing in the same direction as your arm, and either pointing straight out or straight up.



The follow-through may be the most important of the seven steps. This might seem surprising. How can something you do after the boule has left your hand affect where the boule goes? But think about it. If your hand is aimed at the landing spot when you follow through, then you can be sure that your hand was aimed at the landing spot when you released the boule.

And if your fingers are pointing straight up, then you weren't accidentally putting unwanted left or right spin on the boule.

STEPS IN THE MENTAL GAME OF THROWING

Mental Step 1: PLANNING

Planning is the very first step. Do it before you do anything else. Do it before you do the Physical Step 1.

- Try not to go out there and throw the boule in the general direction of the jack. Have a strategy— know exactly what it is that you want to accomplish.
- This is where you make the classic petanque decision: to point or to shoot.
- As a beginner, your choice will almost always be to point. But point to where? If the field is clear, remember “*boule devant, boule d'argent*” and point in front of the jack. And of course, point where you have an opening. If there are a bunch of boules to the left of the jack, point to the right.
- This is your opportunity to walk right up to where the cochonnet and boules are and make sure you understand exactly what the situation on the ground is. Then look at the coch and boules from the throwing circle.
- Now is also the time to confer with your team-mates about strategy.

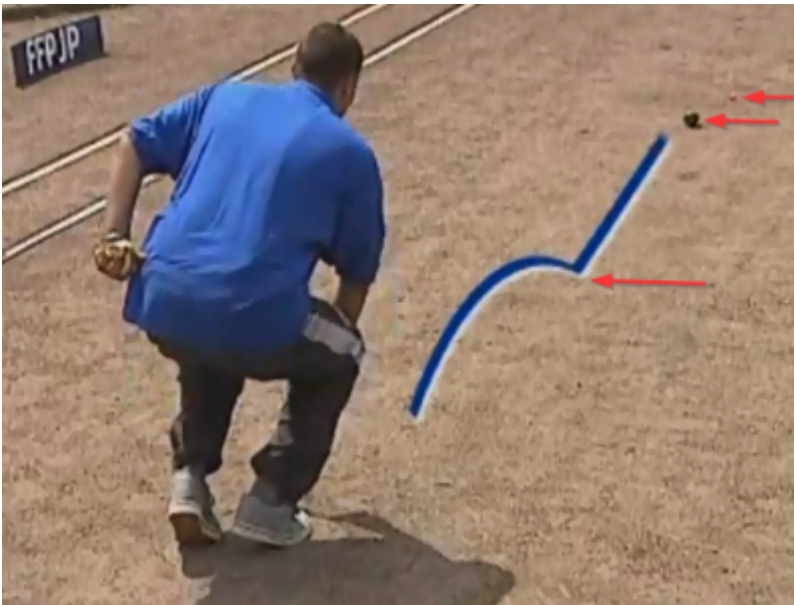
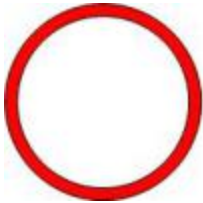
Mental Step 2: PICK

You have your plan. Your foot is pointed at the donnée or landing spot zone. The boule is nestled in your hand and your wrist is straight. Now it's time to pick the throw that you want to execute.

- Pick your throwing approach. What is the best way to accomplish your plan? A high lob?

a demi-lob? a long roll along the ground?

- Pick two spots on the terrain — (a) The “parking spot” – the exact spot where you want the boule to come to rest. (b) The “landing spot” (the *donnée*) – the exact spot where you want the boule to hit the ground.
- If you’re pointing the first boule in the end (*mène*), you want the parking spot to be in front of the jack, and the landing spot in front of that.



- Spend a couple of moments staring at the parking spot, the place where you want the boule to finally end up.
- Then concentrate on the landing spot. Don’t over-think your throw. Just look at the landing spot and allow your body’s natural physical coordination take over.
- BREATHE. Take a couple of long, slow, deep, calming, Zen-master breaths.
- Then curl your wrist, take your backswing, and throw the boule.

Mental Step 3: OBSERVE

The very last step, after the boule has left your hand, is to keep observing all that happens.

- After you throw, after the boule leaves your hand, your head will be filled with The Big Question: *What happened?* Did I knock away an opponent’s boule? Did I get close to the jack? Did I gain the point? Am I a hero... or a klutz?
- In the excitement, you actually may not see the boule hit the ground. So your goal in this last step is to control that excitement and to remain conscious — to continue to observe and to remain fully aware of where your boule hits the ground.
- After the excitement dies down, ask yourself— **Exactly where did the boule hit the ground?**

It is important to pay attention, to remain conscious, and to actually SEE and be aware of where the boule lands. There are two reasons for this. First, this information is feedback to

your brain, helping it to fine-tune your hand-eye coordination and improve your throwing accuracy. Second, this information is feedback to YOU, telling you whether your intended landing spot was actually a good choice. If your boule landed exactly on the intended *donnée*, but then stopped short or rolled too far, then you need to adjust the location of the intended landing-spot or the height or force of your throw.

Adapted from:

<https://petanque.wordpress.com/technique/how-to-throw-a-boule/>