

---

## Croquet, a game worthy of a second look



A twinkle of gleeful malice glints in the eye of a 9-year-old as he secures his foot atop his croquet ball which, by good fortune and skill, is resting in direct contact with the yellow and white striped ball belonging to his sister. Held secure, he swings his mallet and hits his ball. A satisfying crack sees his ball left in place while his sibling's ball rockets off the course, a position that will take multiple moves to recover. And best of all, he earned a bonus swing for his efforts! Despite its sedate appearance, croquet can be a spirited and challenging game enjoyed by all ages, but maybe especially competitive siblings.

Classified in the category of lawn billiards games, croquet has similarities to its cousins golf and pool. However, it's far easier to bring croquet to the backyard than either of those popular pastimes. An entire croquet set takes up less room in the garage than a golf bag, runs a fraction of the cost, and can be setup or taken down in minutes. A croquet course can be scaled to fit lawns of any size, or even shape for those who wish to get creative with the game, which only makes it more fun.

For those unfamiliar, croquet is a lawn game where mallets are used to knock heavy colored balls through a course of metal arches — known as wickets — and stakes in a set pattern. It can be played by as few as two people, or as many as six. It can also be played individually or in teams.

### Rules For Following or Breaking

The United States Croquet Association has set parameters for official course setup and rules, but for a backyard game setting your own rules is half the fun. In general, the game can be played based on points or as a timed event. When based on points alone, a player gets one point for every wicket they pass through in the correct order and two points when they hit the stakes on either end of the course. A game is won when a player has scored 14 wicket points and struck the stake on both ends of the course with all their balls (the game can be played with one ball per player or multiple). In a timed game, whoever has the most points when the time expires wins the game.

Players alternate turns with each player getting one stroke per turn. However, players earn bonus strokes for each wicket they go through, two strokes for hitting a stake, and two strokes for striking another player's ball. The accepted rule is no more than three strokes may be taken per turn, but when making your own rules that can be ignored giving a player a chance to run the entire course without the other player ever taking a swing.

In traditional play course boundaries are set so that if a ball is hit far afield it can be brought back

---

and played from the edge. When making your own rules you may opt to not create any boundaries, making the play more challenging and more satisfying for those using a foot shot (as described earlier) to intentionally launch a competitor's ball off the course.

## **A Game For All Lawns**

For ideal playability, croquet favors a nice level lawn with the balls getting more movement the shorter the grass is trimmed, much like golf. Once again, though, creativity can make the play more interesting and challenging. Feel free to set the course up on a sloping lawn — leaving the grass a bit longer may be necessary to prevent runaway balls in this situation — or on bumpy, mixed terrain. Or, set up an unorthodox course, maybe even one that takes players on an adventure to every nook and cranny of the yard like a custom game of mini golf. Maybe assign bonus points or swings for maneuvering particularly difficult obstacles. The sky is the limit—literally, as croquet balls usually remain firmly on the ground. But take that as a challenge if you prefer.

Changing up the rules and the field can keep croquet a bit of fresh fun all summer long. Use it to occupy the kids on long summer afternoons, to challenge party guests, as an activity at a group event, or as a refreshing change up to the standard golf fundraiser. As compared to golf, croquet is easier to be observed by a crowd for an event and may be a bit more inclusive for players of all levels of skill.

When it comes to ways to make use of outdoor space, few yard games equal the fun and flexibility of croquet. So dust off the old set or buy a new one and introduce a new generation to an old favorite with a fresh twist.

### **Helpful links:**

[X300 Select Series Lawn Tractors](#)

[Residential Z500 ZTrak™ Mowers](#)