

Vicarage Rules Croquet (Beta Version 02)

Vicarage Rules Croquet is similar to English Association Croquet, or more so 'Garden Croquet Rules' as laid down by the 'Croquet Association', but is more akin to throwing a rugby ball about on the village green than to playing Rugby Union on a Saturday afternoon.

Vicarage Rules Croquet is based on the genteel games of croquet played on countless vicarage lawns on sunny afternoons. If you believe that these games are genteel then you have never played croquet with the vicar!

It is played on lawns of any size and shape. Even though the basic idea does follow Garden Croquet rules these may not be recognised by an 'Association Croquet' player.

First etiquette and terminology:

Bad language – Words like “Association”, “Hurlingham” and “Wimbledon” are not allowed on the court. “Garden Croquet Rules” may be whispered in times of great stress.

Court or Pitch – the area where the game is to be played – see rules below.

Foot on ball – See 'Croquet' below. In Association Croquet this is not allowed and in Garden Rules Croquet it is considered very bad form. In Vicarage Rules Croquet it is considered an essential part of play and encouraged.

Mallet on foot – serves you right for doing 'Foot on Ball'!!

Pegging out early – if a player pegs out before the end of the game then play should continue around them. Similar should apply if someone is overcome by the consumption of alcohol etc. You may have to consider moving a hoop or the peg.

Hole in one – wrong game, or reflects the state of the lawn.

Fore – wrong game or someone counting or someone has got carried away with the mallet. (NB: this sometimes refers to play).

The basic rules are as follows, and should be agreed and/or adapted before each match:

The game is always played with four balls, two balls against the other two balls. Unlike in Association rules the colours are not specified as players often like to 'mix and match'. It can be played with just two players where each player has two balls. This is often called singles. The game can also be played with four players making two teams, where the players have a ball each. This is called doubles. It is also possible to have one team of two with a ball each, playing a single with two balls. This is called confusing.

The purpose of the game is to get both balls through all the prescribed hoops in the correct order and direction, then finishing by hitting the peg (pegging out) before both the other two balls manage it. If the standard layout is followed then either a short game can be played where the hoops are passed through once before 'pegging out', or the standard game where the hoops are passed in one direction, then in the reverse direction before pegging out (see diag...). It is preferable to agree which game you are playing before you start, but it is not unheard of for the game to be changed after an hour or so when the leader has not quite made it to the fifth or sixth hoop!

The Court (or Pitch)

The layout should mimic the diagram, adjusted to fit the size and shape of lawn. If necessary it can encompass flower beds, ponds, paths, streams and other natural hazards. There are variations on court layout including a nine hoop game not considered here, but the same principles apply.

The grass (including daisies, dandelions, clover etc) should be kept below 6 inches (15 cm) otherwise you can lose your balls.

Area of play is usually anywhere on the grass, wherever it is, but can include footpaths that cross the court. Some might say that if the court is in a large field then the area of play should be limited, but this can spoil the spirit of the game, and should only be implemented if time is of essence.

Even though the game is sometimes called 'Hill Croquet' the court should be reasonably level. If balls run downhill of their own accord for the full length or width of the court then it may be considered too steep. Short slopes are quite acceptable.

Natural hazards like mole hills, pot holes or ruts etc are the same for everyone! The game should be played around or through them.

The Play

As the colours are not specified we will call the balls 1, 2, 3 and 4. Balls 1 and 3 play balls 2 and 4.

Starting

Each ball starts from about one mallet's length from the first hoop. This spot can be marked with something if preferred, and can vary according to the standard of the court or players (or both).

If a ball does not pass through the hoop then it is removed from play until it's next turn.

The balls are played in strict order (1,2,3,4) until both balls are in play, after which the teams take it in turn and either ball (eg 1 or 3) can be played.

When (if) a ball passes through the first hoop it is considered in play and a clearance (extra) shot is taken (see below).

It is possible for one team to have both balls in play and be permitted to choose which ball to play on each turn, whilst the other team has only one or no balls in play and has to continue to play it's balls in order until both are in play.

Scoring (or Clearing) a Hoop

A ball is not considered to have passed through a hoop until it has completely cleared the other side of the hoop. If a ball has completely cleared a hoop and runs back through or into the hoop then it is considered scored and the extra (clearance) shot is taken from where the ball stops (see below).

The Croquet

If the played ball hits another ball (whether or not it was meant) then this is a croquet. Croquets must be taken (subject to 'Ball Out of Play' below). A ball is permitted to croquet each other ball once between each hoop scored until it has scored/cleared the final hoop.

The played ball is placed touching the ball that has been croqueted (which should not be moved) and a shot taken which should then move both balls (see also 'Foot on Ball'). The direction and (hoped) final position of both balls should be to the advantage the team taking the shot.

When a ball has 'scored' the last/final hoop (6th or 12th depending on which game you think you are playing) then the ball becomes a 'Rover' and is permitted to croquet each other ball on each turn.

An extra (clearance) shot (see below) is taken after the croquet has been completed, and another croquet may be taken if scored and permitted.

If a played ball bounces off a hit ball into a second ball then the second ball does not count as a croquet.

It is not considered (by some) fair play to aim at a ball that you cannot croquet - huh!

Foot on Ball – The player places his foot on his ball when taking the croquet thus keeping it in position when propelling the other ball great distances. (See etiquette and terminology above).

Clearance/Extra Shots

After a ball has cleared a hoop, or completed a croquet, then an extra/clearance shot is taken unless a foul has been committed, or the played ball has gone out of play.

Extra shots cannot be accumulated or carried forward past the next hoop. (Eg: if a ball clears a hoop and croquets a ball on the other side then there is only one extra shot after the croquet has been taken. Similarly if a ball clears a hoop from bouncing of a croqueted ball then there is only one extra shot after the croquet is taken).

Balls Out of Play

If a ball is knocked or otherwise goes out of the playing area then it should be returned to play as follows:

Balls should be returned to the court up to one mallets length in from the boundary at the point where it left the court, subject to below.

If the player taking the shot knocks his/her own ball out of play it must be immediately returned to the court as above. The player's turn is ended and the next team/player takes their turn.

If a player has his/her ball knocked out of play by another player then he/she may delay returning the ball to the court until any chosen time up to his/her turn.

Foul

Difficult to define in Vicarage Rules Croquet. Basically if someone cheats or uses the wrong ball, or deliberately and illegally moves another player's, or their own ball etc, it could be considered a foul. Not to be confused with hiding a ball behind a mallet or heckling when someone is about to take a shot etc, providing that such behaviour is carried out in the spirit of the game!

(To be continued)

