Troubleshooting

Common Mistakes

**Mistake Number One:** Never let the facts get in the way of a bad decision. Ok, so you always play second arrow in this house! But it’s not working tonight, is it? Like in real life, bowling puts us in the position to make a choice between playing the odds and creating new odds, it’s a risk vs. reward situation. You may even try a different line or a different ball that you’d normally wouldn’t use. You might obtain higher scores than before! Don’t be afraid of changes.

**Mistake Number Two:** The number of rational hypotheses that can explain any given phenomenon is infinite. If you find yourself standing at the foul line with your hands on your hips and a disgusted look on your face, you may indeed be thinking too much. The best thing to do is examine the last few moves you made and/or the ball choices you have tried. Select the one that was the closest to getting you into the pocket. Try it again with a clear head and an relaxed mind. Analyze the results after executing the shot carefully. Always accept the results you get and keep in mind that not every night is going to be “your night”.

**Mistake Number Three:** Have you ever considered you might be a part of the problem when you are bowling badly? You can repeatedly miss the pocket or blow a 10-pin spare if your plan of attack is flawed or your mechanics don’t work so well. So be honest with yourself and make a good assessment of how you are bowling. Always ask yourself these questions:

- What am I doing wrong?
- Is my hand position correct?
- Are my knees bent?
- Am I staying focused on my targets?
- Is my armswing staying in plane?
- Is it my pushaway that is messing up my timing?
A Troubleshooting Guide for Your Game

Many bowlers encounter the same type of problems but, in many cases, the best solution is not necessarily the most obvious. When a bowler observes a problem in his/her game, the natural reaction is to fix it. Finding the correct solution is sometimes the greatest challenge. The correct answer may not be the most obvious one, because there is usually more than one answer for the same question. The trick is to find the correct answer for your own problem or situation!

Let's see now what are the common bowling problems.

- the ball or lane hooks too much
- the ball or lane hooks too little
- dropping the ball
- inconsistency to the target.

We’ll first discuss each problem and then try to provide a troubleshooting guide for each of these problems. Of course, the list is not a comprehensive one, so you may want to work with your coach on identifying the problem and finding the answer.

**Problem No. 1: The ball or the lane hooks too much**

Ask yourself: "Where does it hook too much?" This is the first thing to identify, because the answer depends on it. There are several items to be checked in this situation. The first is where you are playing on the lane. In order to find this, divide the lane into three sections: the heads (about the first 18 feet), the pines (the middle portion of the lane, front to back), and the back ends (about the last 15 to 20 feet). There is more oil as you move in toward the center of the lane, so if the ball hooks too early from where you're playing, you may want to move to a line farther inside.

Even when you move more toward the center of the lane, the ball still hooks too early, so the next item to check is your ball choice because the cover of the bowling ball is the major factor in ball reaction. A too aggressive cover will lead to causing you problems: you will not be able to get the ball down the lane before it starts to hook . You may want to consider changing the ball to a less aggressive one.
You have many other option for controlling the hook in case the lane hooks all the way down. For example, you may want a less aggressive core and a milder layout. Ask for the advice of a pro shop operator for further suggestions.

The lane will seem shorter if you decide to loft the ball out. So, if you're setting the ball down onto the lane 18 inches over the foul line, you could make the lane hook less for you by lofting the ball farther down the lane. But for this, you will need to learn to get the ball six to 10 feet out on the lane. So hang on to the ball a little longer near the release point and you’ll see that the ball will go farther down the lane before it hooks.

You can also use more ball speed, so that the ball gets farther down the lane before it hooks. What is the best way to generate more ball speed? Try making your overall motion to the foul line faster. Your mechanics should remain the same, but your motion will be more aggressive, and being more aggressive with your body motion will generate more ball speed at the release.

In addition, you might feel the need to decrease the strength of your release, because if your hand and wrist are in very strong positions you’ll find it difficult to get the ball down a hooking lane. By relaxing your wrist and uncocking your hand in your stance, you can get the ball down the lane much more easily. These adjustments for hooking lanes can really make a difference in how successful you are.

**Problem No. 2: The ball/lane hooks too little**

There are several items to consider in this case. First, you should consider your physical game, specifically your timing. If your timing is too early, it seems that the ball is gone before you can do anything with it. Consequently, your release feels weak, and the ball reaction shows it. How could you correct this? Here are the necessary steps:

- check your start in order to ensure it is timed up correctly
- make sure that your armswing isn't too fast as compared to your footwork
get your body to lead the motion into the finish.

You can do several other things to respond to not getting enough hook. Check your choice of where you're going to play the lanes. There is more oil in the middle of the lane and less toward the outside part of the lane, so you will probably want to move to an outside line in order to make the ball hook more.

Sometimes, no matter how much you move to the outside part of the lane, your ball still doesn't hook enough. It's time for you to check your bowling ball, since the cover may be the major factor. Perhaps you will need to choose a ball with a more aggressive cover, core, and layout. Or you will probably need to clean or resurface your aggressive ball. Again, go to your pro shop operator to take care of this.

You should also check how you're getting the ball onto the lane. In order for the ball to hook a little more, get it down to the lane earlier. Bring the target closer to you and make sure your rear end gets low as you deliver the ball.

If you play on a slicker lane, you should use less ball speed. How do you slow down your ball? You can do this by making your overall motion to the foul line less aggressive. Your ball will hook much better with less speed.

Another good method is strengthening your wrist and hand action at the release. Your wrist should be in a more cupped position and your hand in a more cocked position. This will make the ball roll stronger and have better results on oily conditions. These adjustments for lanes that aren't hooking enough can make your outing more enjoyable.

**Problem No. 3: Dropping the ball at the foul line**

This problem has several solutions and it usually involves your physical game. So, when your timing is early and the ball gets to the finish ahead of your body, it usually gets dropped. To avoid this, check your start to make sure the timing is correct and your swing speed matches your foot tempo. Your swing will beat your footwork to the line if it is too fast. Check the height of
your backswing because if your swing is too low, it will allow the ball to beat your body to the foul line.

Furthermore, if your swinging is too deep as related to the release, you should try to correct it by keeping your swing feel a little more shallow. (back and through, not up and down). Don’t grab and pull from the top because this will accentuate your problem.

Dropping the ball may be caused by a problem with how your ball fits your hand. So it is extremely important that you collaborate with a pro shop professional in order to develop a grip that allows your hand to relax in the ball. You shouldn’t squeeze to hold on to the ball. Instead, your hold of the ball should be firm. Once you have a good ball fit, you probably should use tape to keep the thumbhole snug and to avoid dropping the ball.

**Problem No. 4: Inconsistency to the Target**

This problem is mostly a physical issue and it caused by different factors. The most common of them is a change in your timing. This can cause your direction to the target to change dramatically. Is your timing a little late? Then you are likely to throw the ball farther right (your shoulders haven’t squared to the target when your body has reached the finish). Conversely, if your timing is a little early, you will tug your shot inside of the target (your shoulders have closed past square as your body reaches the foul line).

An inconsistent swing path can also be the cause for inconsistency to the target. Suppose your swing varies. It will show up in the direction by which the ball leaves your hand and travels down the lane. You should work on letting the swing move relatively straight back on the backswing and keeping the ball close to your body on the forward swing. Furthermore, a consistent swing will definitely improve your accuracy to the target.

Your release can also affect your physical game in terms of consistency to the target. You must release the ball in the same way on each shot if you want to have accurate releases and better results. Keep your hand pressure consistent from shot to shot!
Playing on the wrong area of the lane may as well affect the consistency to the target. For example, if you're lining up in an area where the heads have very little oil or are spotty, your ball may start hooking before you can even see it. The best way to improve accuracy here is to move to a part of the lane where the heads have more oil. This way you will improve your chances of pocket shots.