

Coaching Drills (MTBCA Document)

(Last updated May 17, 2019)

Pendulum Swing Drill 1

Can be done anywhere (on the approach, on the concourse, even at home).

Need a bowling ball.

Standing balanced with ball in both hands in normal setup. Do not take any steps.

Push ball out slightly, and “let it drop” into the swing.

Complete the swing, and “catch” the ball in front of you in both hands.

The idea is to let the ball swing, both backward and forward, with no muscle.

Get the “feeling” of the pendulum swing.

Can have the bowler close their eyes during this too, to help them focus on the feel of a pendulum swing.

Pendulum Swing Drill 2

Done at the foul line.

Two versions: No-step, and one-step delivery

In either case, the idea is to get the bowler to practice/experience a “free” pendulum swing.

Either version helps the bowler to focus only on the swing (without bringing the complexities/distractions of the entire approach into the picture).

No-step: Have the bowler stand in their finishing position, and swing the ball back and forward, letting the ball go onto the lane, without much regard to direction, speed, etc. Just want them to practice/experience a fluid, non-muscled, arm swing.

One-step: Same as above, except it’s done with a one-step delivery.

Accuracy Drill 1 (one-target system)

Put a “sticky” post-it note on the lanes, at about 12 feet from the foul line (say, at the arrows), with the non-sticky side sticking up so it’s clearly visible.

Have the bowler attempt to roll their ball over that target. They will be able to clearly see/tell if they hit the target.

Move the target around periodically so the bowler practices different lines.

Accuracy Drill 2 (two-target system)

Use two targets – one at the arrows, and one farther down the lane. Ask the bowler to roll the ball over both of them. Start off with the two targets on the same board, and maybe 10 feet apart. Change these periodically, so the bowler has to go down a different area of the lane.

More advanced: Move the targets so they are on different boards, so that the bowler will have to throw the ball “at an angle” (rather than just “down the board”).

More advanced: Move the targets farther apart, so that eventually the target further down the lane will be approximately at the bowler’s break point.

Finishing Position Drill

Use a one-step delivery.

Show the bowler the desired (classic) finishing position and have them simulate it (static)

Have the bowler try a one-step delivery, without a ball, and end up in that finishing position.

After they can do that, try the one-step delivery with a ball, and end up in that finishing position.

You’re looking for a solid finishing position, with good balance.

Eventually, get them to do this using a full approach/delivery.

Push-away Drill

By and large, the biggest trouble spot of most bowlers' strokes comes at the very start. A solid push-away is essential for a good release and good timing. You can perform this one-step drill anywhere – even in your living room. You can improve your bowling approach by matching the first movement of your bowling ball with the first movement of your foot (in a 4-step delivery).

Take your first step and push the ball forward at the same time.

By performing this drill repeatedly, you can build it into your muscle memory.

Although this is the “standard” timing for the pushaway, there are other timings. Work with what you have, or what is best for the bowler.

Note: the “push-away” can also be a “drop-down” or “hinge” motion.

Accuracy Drill 1 (for spares)

It starts by hitting the 2-pin without hitting the head pin. Then hit the 3-pin without hitting the head pin. Then hit the 4-pin without hitting the 2-pin. Then hit the 6-pin without hitting the 4-pin. Then hit the 7-pin without hitting the 4-pin. Then hit the 10-pin without hitting the 6-pin. Once you are able to perform each of these, you are well on your way to making most every spare.

Accuracy Drill 2 (for spares)

Start by hitting the 2-pin without hitting the head pin. Then make the spare that is left.

Then hit the 3-pin without hitting the head pin. Then make whatever spare is left.

Release Drill 1

Can be done on the concourse, or on the approach.

Bowler kneels with right knee down (for right-hander), and left foot flat in front (with 90-degree knee bend), and directly in front of the knee.

Bowler takes two “swings”, release the ball on the 2nd swing forward.

Objective is to teach the bowler the “when” of releasing the thumb (at the knee/ankle), and keeping the fingers bent with some “pressure” felt, and the wrist firm, and the “feel” of the release. Thumb and finger positions are emphasized.

Release Drill 2

This is done on the approach, just behind the foul line.

Bowler kneels with right knee down (for right-hander), and left foot flat in front (with 90-degree knee bend), and directly in front of the knee.

Bowler takes two “swings”, release the ball on the 2nd swing forward. Coach “catches” the ball.

Emphasize that the athlete should feel the fingers coming out of the ball last. It is important to not worry about what happens on the lane but to watch the rotation of the ball going down the lane.

Approach Drill

The purpose is to make the bowler aware of their “normal” approach direction, looking for “drift”, and consistency of the drift.

Ask the bowler to note where their sliding foot is at the start of their approach (what board it is on in their stance), and then what board it is on after they release the ball at the foul line.

For the purpose of this drill, have the bowler try to target “down the boards” (for example, the 10-board).

If the bowler is consistent in their finishing position, then the amount of drift (if any) becomes a piece of information that is useful when deciding where to stand, for different targets.

Spine Tilt Drill

Video is most helpful for this (to “prove” to the bowler what position they are in).

Objective is to have the ball “under” the head throughout the entire swing. Makes room to keep the swing in the “slot”.

In stance, have the bowler tilt to the right (for right-handers), until their head is directly over the ball (when looking from the back). Then, they are to maintain that degree of spine tilt throughout the approach/swing, so that the head stays above the ball during the entire swing.

Lay-Down (Loft) Drill

Explain the three zones for lay-down (where, why). Then lay out tape on the lanes to mark the three zones, and then have the athlete throw shots with the lay-down point within specific zones. This will help teach them loft and give them the opportunity to see the different ball reactions when using different lay-down zones.

Spare-Shooting Drill – Low-B all

This is a challenge – a game – to get the lowest score possible in 10 frames. The rules are that you must hit at least one pin on every shot. And you count the number of pins that you’ve knocked down (plus any spares/strikes that you get along the way). If your ball fails to hit any pins on your first ball, you count that as a strike for that frame. Should your ball fail to hit any pins on your second ball, you count that as a spare for that frame.

Spare-Shooting Drill – Across the Rack

This is another challenge – a game – to get as many points as possible during a set time period (e.g. 30 minutes). To get a point you must hit each pin, in order, from left to right (10-pin, 6-pin, 9, 3, 5, 1, 2, 9, 4, and the 7-pin). If you miss any pin, you must start over with the 10-pin again. Once you get the 7-pin, you must then hit, pin by pin, going in the other direction. If you miss a pin going back to the right, you have to start over with the 7-pin. Once you have successfully gone “across the rack” both ways, you earn a point. See how many points you can get.

Spare-Shooting Drill – 4-7, 6-10 Drill

This is a game to get as many points as possible during a set time period (e.g. 20 minutes). To get a point, you must hit the 6-10 with your first ball (without touching the 3-pin), and then the 4-7 with your second ball (without touching the 2-pin). If you fail on either one, you do not get a point.

Spare-Shooting Drill – 2-4-7, 3-6-10 Drill

This is a game to get as many points as possible during a set time period (e.g. 20 minutes). To get a point, you must hit the 3-6-10 with your first ball (without touching the head-pin), and then the 2-4-7 with your second ball (without touching the head-pin). If you fail on either one, you do not get a point.

We’re always looking for more drills. Coaches, please submit any suggestions to Ken Burns.

Other Potential Topics?:

Two-Handed Drills

Line Adjustment Drills

Ball speed adjustment drills