
Petanque World | Game Rules of Pétanque

In a Nutshell

Prerequisites

- **Two teams** of one, two (doubles), or three players (triples)
- **Three balls** for each player, or **two** when playing in triples
- A little wooden target ball called the *cochonnet* or **jack**
- A flat, open area to play on — ideally with a hard surface (e.g. thin gravel)

Starting a Round

- A **coin toss** decides which team starts the first round
- A player from the starting team draws a **circle** on the ground, thereby delimiting the zone from which players can throw their balls
- The player that drew the circle steps into the circle and **throws the jack**
- A player from the starting team then throws the **first ball**, as close as possible to the jack



A jack and pétanque ball

Principle

- The ball **nearest to the jack** is said to be **holding the point**
- The players in the team that is not *holding the point* throw their balls until they place a ball closer to the jack
- The round continues in this fashion until one of the teams has **run out of balls**
- The other team then **ends the round** by throwing their remaining balls

Scoring System

- The team whose best ball is closest to the jack at the end of the round, **wins the round**
- The winning team gets **one point for each of their balls** that is closer to the jack than the losing team's closest ball
- The losing team doesn't score any points

Next round

- A game of pétanque constitutes **multiple rounds**
- A player from the team that won the previous round, throws the jack from a new circle drawn around the jack's last position — thereby starting a new round
- The winner of the game is the first team to reach **13 points**

The Finer Details

Over the years, a broad consensus has formed around the finer details of pétanque's rules. What follows is based on the official game rules – as specified by the FIPJP .

The pétanque set and its official dimensions

Pétanque is played with **hollow metal balls** that have a **diameter** between 7.05 cm (2.78 inches) and 8 cm (3.15 inches), and a **weight** between 650 grams (22.93 ounces) and 800 grams (28.22 ounces).

Jacks are made of wood or an FIPJP-approved synthetic material. Their **diameter** should be 30 mm (1.19 inches), and their **weight** between 10 grams (0.35 ounces) and 18 grams (0.67 ounces). Unlike the balls, it should be impossible to pick up the jack with a magnet.

Terrain

Although pétanque can be played on any surface, it usually takes place on a **designated terrain** – typically marked with nails and string. This terrain should measure at least 12 meters (13.12 yards) long and 3 meters (3.28 yards) wide.

A ball or jack that ends up outside the terrain boundary is considered **out-of-bounds and dead**.

Team composition

Pétanque is a sport in which **2 teams** play against each other. It should be played in triples, doubles or singles.

- ***Triples***
3 players against 3 players | **2 balls** per player
- ***Doubles***
2 players against 2 players | **3 balls** per player
- ***Singles***
1 player against 1 player | **3 balls** per player

Multiple rounds

There are **multiple rounds** in a game of pétanque. In each round, the winner of that round earns points. A game is won by the first team that gathers **13 points**.

Starting the first round

The players must draw lots (toss a coin) to decide which team will be the first to throw the jack. A member of the team that won the toss chooses the **starting point** and places or draws a circle on the ground. This circle delimits the zone from which players can throw the jack and balls.

Throwing zone



A drawn circle should have a diameter between 35 cm (13.78 inches) and 50 cm (19.69 inches). A **prefabricated circle** must be rigid and have an internal diameter of 50 cm (19.69 inches). The circle must be drawn or placed more than 1 meter (1.09 yards) from any obstacle.

The **players' feet** must be entirely inside the circle and they must not leave it or be lifted completely off the ground until the thrown ball has touched the ground.

Throwing the jack

The team that won the toss will have **one attempt** to throw the jack. If this jack is not valid, it is handed to the opponent, who must place — not throw — it on the terrain at a valid position.

For the jack to be in a **valid position**, it must be:

at a distance between 6 meters (6.56 yards) and 10 meters (10.94 yards) from the internal edge of the circle

at a distance of minimum 50 cm (19.69 inches) from any obstacle

- visible to an upright standing player from within the circle

Throwing the balls

Once the jack is in a valid position, a member of the team that won the toss throws the **first ball** as close as possible to the jack. There are no rules governing the throwing (or rolling) technique.

If the first ball goes **out-of-bounds**, the other team gets a chance to throw the first ball and vice versa, until a team manages to get a ball on the designated terrain. This ball is now the only ball on the terrain, and therefore nearest to the jack.

From this point on, the ball nearest to the jack is said to be **holding the point**. The team that is not *holding the point* throw their balls until they place a ball closer to the jack, thereby triggering the other team to throw their balls until they are again *holding the point*, and so on.

When one of the teams has thrown all its balls, the other team **ends the round** by throwing its remaining balls. The team whose best ball is closest to the jack at the end of the round, **wins the round**.

Measuring the points



The team that won the round gets **one point for each** of their balls that is positioned closer to the jack than the losing team's closest ball. The distance between the balls and the jack must be measured with appropriate instruments.

The **measuring of points** is the responsibility of the team that threw the last ball of the round. The other team has the right to double-check these measurements.

Next rounds

A game of pétanque is ended and won by the **first team that gathers at least 13 points** over a series of rounds.

In the rounds succeeding the first one, the **circle** delimiting the throwing zone is placed or drawn around the point **where the jack finished** at the previous round. The jack and the first ball are thrown by the team that was the last to score points — as if they won the toss in the first round.

Exceptional situations

Dead jack

The jack is dead when it is displaced outside of the designated terrain. Or if it's not visible from within the circle — with the exception of it being masked by a ball. A dead jack marks the **end of the round**.

If the jack is dead, and only one team has balls left to play, that team scores as many points as balls that remain to be played. Otherwise the round is invalid and restarted.

No team holds the point

This situation can occur when there are no balls left on the designated terrain. Or when the two closest balls to the jack belong to the opposing teams, and are at an equal distance from it.

If at this moment **both teams still have balls**, then both teams — starting with the team that played last — must take turns in throwing balls until one of them holds the point.

If only **one team has balls** left to play, they just play them. If **no team has balls** left to play, and no team holds the point, the round is invalid and restarted.