

The Art of Skittling

If you play for a top team then you've probably mastered this art already but if, like the rest of us, you have room for improvement then the following observations may come in handy and just might make you better at the art of skittling.

A lot of players just walk on the alley and throw the ball in the direction of the pins, now there is nothing wrong with this as it works for many players. You are already relaxed and not really worried what you hit, but with the second and third balls there are less pins to hit and this is where a bit of experience is called for, unless you are one of the lucky naturally gifted players who make all this look easy.

Regular players know that hitting what you aim for is key, now you can get 6 off the quarter but you were probably aiming for the front and missed it by about 12 inches, whereas a better player may miss by millimetres and end putting three balls through, that's skittles for you !

Posture and Swing – One Step Approach

Start by standing on the alley in a comfortable position with a ball in your hand, your feet should be about a foot apart. Standing square on to the alley swing your arm and take one pace forward as your arm swings down release the ball at the lowest point. Practice this with just the front pin and both front quarters up and see if you can hit the front pin. Your movement needs to be natural not jerky or erratic. Don't worry about hitting it at first just concentrate on posture and swing and try not to fall over, I've seen this happen a few times. Remember feet slightly apart, a natural arm swing then release. Speed & accuracy can be introduced later.

Position & Delivery

Most players will stand in the centre of the alley well behind the throwing line. Remember your ball must hit the alley behind this line and you must not advance beyond this line when throwing. However standing centrally will present the gaps between the pins 'parallel on' so some players prefer to throw 'across' the alley. If you are right handed stand at the right hand side and aim at the front pin with the ball travelling right to left across the alley and hopefully glancing the front pin scattering pins and ball in all directions. Left hand side for left handed players.

Aim & Focus

You now have a comfortable stance, your swing is straight and your delivery is good. Next is aim & focus. You may see some players lifting the ball up to eye level before they swing others may toss the ball a few times, all this is done to aid focus, they are now in the 'zone' as they say and ready to throw. These few seconds pausing to focus are very important you may even see some players exhale just before their swing releasing all the tension in their chest and body. All this will come with time and practice but for now remember just to steady yourself before you throw and you should be OK.

Note: Keeping you aim while moving forward is hard, so when stepping forward to throw, try to step along the line of aim.

Confidence & Belief

Whatever you do in life confidence and belief is a must, you can't 'get lucky' all the time. All top players have this; you must believe you are the best. It's a good feeling when you hit a spare, and it's OK to 'strut', however a word of caution, only strut after you have hit with your third ball, I've seen many a player throw their third ball through and that can be so deflating.

Practice makes Perfect

Remember different alleys have different surfaces and even different size balls, a good skittler will recognise this and may adjust their method slightly. However when you are regularly hitting what you aim for then you have mastered the Art of Skittling.

Good Luck or should I say Great Skill.