



Instructor's Corner

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I found Jesus in the curling rink. Well, at least I heard his name several times.

—Miss Enga Schatz

With the new year just around the corner, it's time to reflect on the year and how to do better next year. While most normal people are thinking about important things like family, friends, health, world peace, etc., the minds of curlers drift toward reducing their frustrations on the ice. So, for those besotted by the roaring game, here are some selected New Year's resolutions just for curlers. Pick one, or two, or the even ones, maybe the odd ones, or the whole lot. What the heck—we know you are not going to keep them anyway! 😊

- 1. Throw lighter weight hits.** Board or hack-weight hits are not just for old guys anymore. When you first learn to throw more accurate, heavy weight shots, it's easy to fall in love with them. But it's hard to keep your shooters around when throwing bombs. Learn to throw board and hack weight hits, and consider making board weight your normal takeout weight. Lighter weight hits can be better controlled with brushing to get the perfect hit and roll or nose hit, as desired. You might just make more shots. Of course you and your skip should be on the same page about what weight is being thrown.
- 2. Speed up your play.** If you are skipping a team, think about your next move *before* the opponents throw their stone. As a skip, you should already be thinking 2-3 shots ahead, and be ready to make your call. It's usually possible to know what you are going to do after a make by your opponents, and what you are going to do in the event of a miss by your opponents. If something really weird happens...well, then you are given leave to take a few extra moments to reconsider your options. Having your contingencies ready really speeds up a game. Players should be ready to deliver as soon as the sheet is clear—and that means that sweepers must hustle to the sidelines to cede the sheet to the other team. Nobody likes playing a *3-hour game*.
- 3. Learn directional sweeping.** Everything we thought we knew about sweeping was turned on its head in the 2015-2016 season. We learned that one sweeper is better than two at holding line, and that technique—both the orientation of the brush head and the sweeping angle—are critically important in altering the path of the stone. We also learned that we could not only “straighten” rocks, but we could also “push” them to make them curl more. Learning to directionally sweep might save 2-3 otherwise missed shots a game.
- 4. Show up on time.** If your draw starts at 8:00 pm, get to the rink in time to get dressed, limber up, and throw the first rock at the appointed time. Sometimes draws start late, but not always! It's not an excuse to be perpetually late. Don't be that person who has a special time zone name after them.
- 5. Communicate more.** One of the most important aspects of curling is team communication. Be more vocal during each shot. If sweeping, communicate the weight to the skip or third. (Use a zone system, or at the very least use “light,” “close,” or “heavy.” If in the house, communicate line to the sweepers, e.g. “room”, “line's good”, “yes (for line)”, “hurry (we're about to crash),” “you're by.” These little things will help your team make more shots. The “if our brooms are

moving it's light" approach is not quite the same. Successful and effective teams communicate well.

6. **Think more about getting good second rock without hammer.** You don't have to steal every end without hammer, unless you find yourself seriously behind in the game late. Forcing the other team to a single and getting the hammer back is a good strategy. One of the best ways to force is to get good second rock (e.g. a freeze to shot stone in the four foot behind a center guard) to shrink the scoring area.
7. **Volunteer.** A curling club does not run itself. Volunteer to do a job at the club. There are endless things that need to be done to make curling a great experience. If you don't know what to do, ask a board member for suggestions for how you might contribute. If you have special expertise, it might prove handy.
8. **Use more non-verbal communication.** Learn and use hand signals to call shots. This can speed up the game considerably, avoiding lots of yelling up and down the ice. You can communicate the type of shots to be thrown, and takeout weights without having to yell down the ice. Try it. You might like it.
9. **Sweep more.** Yes, really. More rocks are lost to undersweeping than oversweeping. By a LOT. Sweep early and power-clean unless you KNOW the rock is hopelessly heavy. Good sweepers are up-and-down all the way down the ice. Don't save it up for a big flourish at the end. (You will usually come up short.)
10. **Take a lesson.** Trying to teach yourself how to improve your curling is kind of like a doctor being their own patient: this situation doesn't usually turn out well. Trained instructors can spot common delivery flaws you can't see and provide you with appropriate exercises to get back on track. Best of all, it's free! (USCA certified instructors are required to do a certain amount of instruction each year to keep their certification.) Now that's a deal. You can arrange for a private lesson (email curlingschool@uticacurlingclub.org) at a mutually convenient time, or you can attend one of the specialized instructional clinics that are run from time to time (e.g. front-end clinic, new skips clinic, etc.)

So which curling New Year's resolutions are **you** going to keep? If you want to know more about these topics and more, check out the Instructor's Corner archive on the [Instruction Page](#) at the Utica Curling Club web site.

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Good curling! Have a question or suggestion for Instructor's Corner?

Send an email to curlingschool@uticacurlingclub.org