



Instructor's Corner

Roger Rowlett & Mary Jane Walsh
USCA Level II Certified Instructors

"There is nothing permanent except change."—Heraclitus

Change is a-coming! The rules of curling have changed over the years as the skills of the players have evolved. The free guard zone ("four rock rule") was established in the 2002-2003 season, as ice conditions and player skills made takeouts too easy. In the 2016-2017 season, mixed doubles adopted new rules to enhance scoring and strategic choices, by (1) moving the stationary stone farther behind the button, (2) relaxing rules on who could sweep stones, and (3) introducing the power play. Changes may be also coming to the traditional curling game, and these have been provisionally adopted for specific events. I'll review here changes in the rules of curling for the 2017-2018 season, preview some changes for 2018-2019, and discuss a fun rule used for the first time this year in an elite curling event.

2017-2018 Rules changes

Several rules have changed for the 2017-2018 season. You can find these rules on the UCC web site under Home...About Curling. Look for the WCF rules. It is anticipated that the USCA will adopt these as well.

New rules

- A player who is unable to continue to play may now re-enter the game *only at the start of an end*. It is no longer permissible to return in the middle of an end, prior to that player's turn to deliver their stones. (Rule 3.d.i)
- A new rule describes what to do if the wrong team delivers the first stone of an end. If the error is discovered after the first stone is delivered, then the end is replayed in its entirety. If the error is discovered after the 2nd stone of the end has been delivered, then play continues as if the error had not occurred. (Rule 5.l)
- Teams that have been arithmetically eliminated (from winning) may finish the current end *but no new end may be started*. If a team is arithmetically eliminated in the last end of a game, *the game should stop when this occurs and the end will not be finished*. (Rule 11.a)
- In wheelchair curling, only head assemblies used during the 2017 World Wheelchair Curling Championship will be allowed to be used during the 2017/18 season in WCF controlled wheelchair Curling events, including the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games. (Rule 13.d)
- In mixed doubles, when players are responsible for placing the stationary stones before each end, 30 seconds are added to the time between ends. (Rule C6.j.1. This rule of course only affects timed play.)

Interesting tidbits

- WCF events will no longer play tiebreaker games. Instead, ties will be broken by head-to-head records during the round robin, or draw shot challenge scores. (does not affect recreational play)

- Shorts are no longer allowed in WCF competitions. (Isn't it cold out there on the ice?)
- The "in-turn" and "out-turn" have been defined for both right-and left-handed curlers.
- The "Power play" in mixed doubles is defined in the glossary

2018-2019: Five-Rock Rule

Beginning in the 2018-2019 season, the World Curling Federation will adopt the 5-rock rule for all events. (Rule 6.b) That is, no stone in the free-guard zone may be removed from play until 5 stones have been thrown. It seems likely that most or all national curling associations will conform to the world rules. The 5-rock rule was first experimented with in the Canadian Open in 2011, and has been more widely adopted in the Grand Slams more recently. The effect of the rule is to increase the number of stones in play, encourage offense-first strategy, and fewer blank ends at the pro level. In practice, teams that fall behind have a better chance to score a big end and catch up.

The rule especially benefits the team with the last rock advantage. With the 5-rock rules, the hammer teams can set two corner guards and draw behind before the team without hammer can start peeling. The team without hammer may be able to establish a stone on the four-foot with two center guards if left unmolested. Count on your strategy focusing more on getting to the 4-foot first with so many guards in play!

For fun: "Fredericton Rule"

This season saw a novel experimental rule introduced to the game. In a made-for-TV event, many of the top curlers in Canada were invited to a marquee event with one little, but very significant rule change: any stone *completely* covering the pin was scored as 2 points. The result was some pretty high-scoring games, featuring draws for "3" when lying one with hammer, and steals of 2 when lying on the pin frozen behind guards. This simple rule completely changes strategy, as you must take care not to leave the pin open for your opponent. And woe betide you if you place a stone back-button for your opponent to freeze to! This rule is not likely to be adopted for regular curling, but may gain some popularity for specialty events. Utica will try out this rule in our Open format spiel in December 2017. Come try it: it should be fun!

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@utiacurlingclub.org