
Polish Horseshoes

Brookline Rules

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Polish Horseshoes is an outdoor disc game where opponents make alternating attempts to hit and defend an empty beer bottle perched on a pole to score points, all while holding a beverage in one hand. The game seems to have come about sometime during the early 2000's, and is now known by a variety of alternate names such as Beersbee, Frisbeener, and Spanish Horseshoes, among others.¹ Many variations exist for the rules, and although they are broadly similar on the main points, most descriptions found online are quite broad or over-simplified. A game this good needs and deserves a solid, common set of rules.

We first came across Polish Horseshoes late in 2010 via a friend and were immediately hooked. *Brookline Rules* is our variation of Polish Horseshoes which we developed and fine-tuned over the next two years in Brookline, Massachusetts and have greatly enjoyed elsewhere in the time since. It is a staple of picnics, cookouts, and other outdoor events whenever the weather is agreeable, and occasionally even when it is not. Described here are our official rules, recommendations for building your own set, and suggestions for playing safely. We hope you enjoy the game as much as we have!



Source: aerobie.com

Equipment

Only a few bits are needed to play, most of which are common and easy to find. Here is the summary of what you will need.

Disc: Almost any disc will work in a pinch, but the Aerobie® Superdisc™ is the disc of choice.² Light discs tend to be cheap and difficult to control, and very heavy discs are prone to destroying bottles very quickly. Even the larger Aerobie® Superdisc™ Ultra, which weighs 162 g but retains the softer edge, will have you picking up glass shards very often.

Empty bottles (2): Use standard 355 mL (12 U.S. fluid ounces) bottles, and keep spares in case one breaks during play. Empty bottles filled with expanding polyurethane foam are far less likely to shatter and have a negligible increase in weight. Foam-filled bottles are highly advised for play in public areas.

Plastic cups (2): 16 oz. plastic cups work well and are easy to find. These wear out frequently so keep extras on hand or patch with packaging tape.

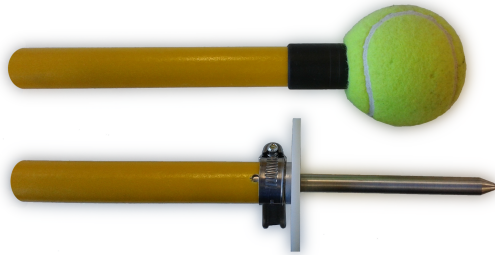
Poles (2): These are the most difficult pieces to source, and may require some creativity. Poles should be 1.2 m (48") with one capped end to balance a bottle upon and one pointy end to stab into the ground. Ski poles work well if a set is available, but poles can otherwise be fashioned from 19 mm (5/8") diameter wooden dowels, PVC pipe, or fiberglass rods.

Tennis balls with a pole-sized hole drilled through the side make excellent caps. The pointy end is

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_horseshoes

² <http://www.aerobie.com/products/superdisc.htm>

more difficult. Dowels can simply be sharpened, but PVC and fiberglass tubes will require manufactured spikes that match their inner diameter. If using a tube, cut a small slot on the end and secure the spike with a hose clamp.



Tasty beverages: All players will need a tasty beverage of their choice, or something equivalent to occupy one hand during play. Glass cups and bottles are at risk of shattering if hit so aluminum cans are the best container. Plastic cups work as well but are more prone to spillage.³ Either way, you will be thankful every time the cup in your hand does not explode into many tiny high-speed shards of glass.

Court

The court is a long, narrow clearing with a pole zone on either end, as shown in figure 1. One pole is set within each pole zone, and players stand behind their pole, facing the opposing team. The pole is set by planting it into the ground, followed by a cap (if needed), inverted plastic cup, and empty bottle balanced on top as in figure 2. The cup is considered to be part of the pole. The *bottle plane* is an imaginary plane extending vertically from the ground through the bottle and perpendicular to the long axis of the court.⁴

Edges of the court may or may not be marked by physical boundaries (fences, walls, windows, etc).

³ Another option is to make a *can cup* by using a can opener on an empty beer or soda can. Can openers with finer teeth work best. Japanese cans tend to be superior as they have thicker walls. Look for Oi Ocha tea or get yourself a 22 oz. Sapporo.

⁴ If you want to be really anal, the *bp* should extend through the part of the bottle closest to half court.

Regions on or beyond the court boundary deemed highly undesirable for the disc, such as windows or difficult to access areas, are *traps*. *Breakers* such as rocks or other hard objects may be located along the edges of player areas but should not be in the court.

Gameplay

1 Starting up

- 1.1 All players must have a tasty beverage or equivalent in one hand during play.
- 1.2 Games are *singles* (1v1) or *doubles* (2v2).
- 1.3 The winner of a fair toss chooses to have first throw or preferred side.
- 1.4 Both teams start with 0 points and 10 HP.

2 Basic play and terminology

- 2.1 Teams alternate throwing the disc towards their opponent's bottle. In a *doubles* match, teams and teammates must alternate throws.
- 2.2 The disc is *live* at the point of release and *dead* upon contacting any object afterwards.
- 2.3 Catching, blocking, or deflecting a live disc before it breaks the *bp* is *goaltending*.
- 2.4 A dead disc may be caught, blocked, or deflected before it crosses the *bp*.
- 2.5 The disc is *catchable* if it crosses the *bp* (i) between the defender's knees and hairline, and (ii) within 1 m of the bottle.
 - a) The disc is not catchable if it is within one diameter of an obstacle when it crosses the bottle plane (safety exception).
 - b) The disc is not catchable if it lands within 1 m of the *bp* (steep toss exception).
 - c) If catchability is contested, the benefit of doubt usually goes to the defender or independent third party.

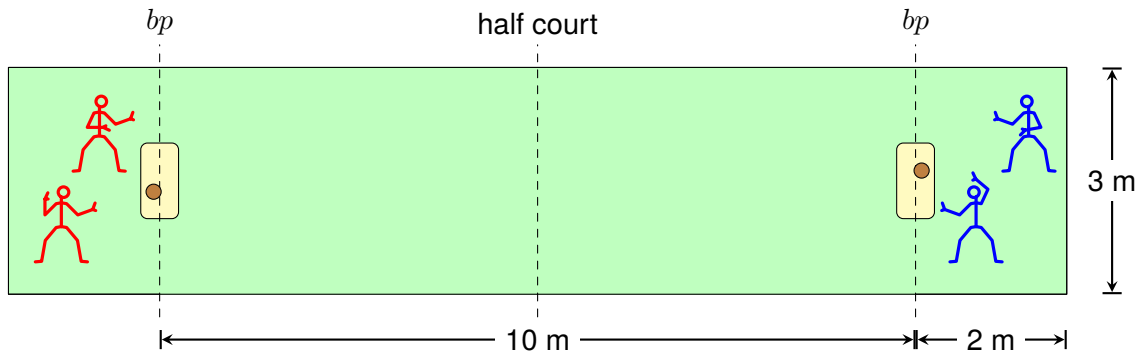


Figure 1: Top-down schematic of the court. Poles (brown dots) can be placed anywhere within the pole zones (yellow regions). *bp* indicates the *bottle planes*. Players stand behind the *bp* on their respective side.

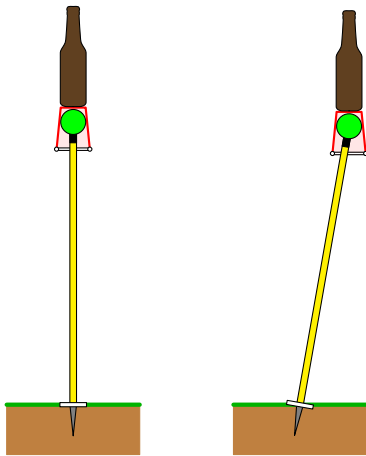


Figure 2: Pole setup. Pointy end in the ground. The inverted plastic cup covers the cap and supports an empty bottle. A round cap makes it easier to balance the bottle when the pole is not vertical.

2.6 The disc is *short* if it does not cross the *bp*.

- a) If the disc is short, the next thrower may choose to throw from the position where the disc comes to rest. Note that getting hit by the disc while returning from a short position may qualify as goaltending.

2.7 The disc *hits* if it makes contact with the opponent's pole or bottle, otherwise it *misses*.

- a) A hit is *direct* if the disc is not dead before contacting the pole or bottle.
- b) A hit is *grazing* if it does not cause the bottle to fall off of the pole.

3 Scoring

- 3.1 Offense is awarded one point for a live catchable disc that misses but is uncaught (*dropped*). In *doubles* play the point is also awarded for live hits if the disc is uncaught.
- 3.2 No points are awarded for a grazing hit.
- 3.3 Offense is awarded two points for a pole or bottle hit, but these are negated if Defense prevents the bottle from touching the ground.
- 3.4 Offense is awarded an additional point for a bottle hit, even if the bottle is caught.
- 3.5 Defense gets one point if the disc and bottle are caught by the same player after a hit, with neither touching the ground (*stalwart defense*).
- 3.6 If a throw is goaltended, the offense is awarded points corresponding to the most likely hit.
 - a) If the goaltender does not have both feet behind the *bp*, the offense is awarded a minimum of two points.
- 3.7 All rules and penalties stack.

4 Winning the game

- 4.1 Play goes to eleven points, win by two for a *singles* game and twenty-one points, win by two for a *doubles* game.
- 4.2 A team requiring only one point to win is at *game point*. If play extends beyond eleven

points teams are tied (*deuce*) or one leads by a single point (*advantage*).

4.3 A team at game point is not awarded points for dropped discs, hitting the bottle, or performing a stalwart defense, i.e. rules 3.1, 3.4, and 3.5 are suspended for that team.

- a) Points which would have been awarded instead deduct from the opponent's HP.
- b) HP do not regenerate.
- c) HP are not deducted from a team unless claimed by the opposing team.
- d) The game ends if either team reaches 0 HP (*get it over with already* exception).

4.4 Play does not end upon loss of a point (see sections 5.1 and 5.2 for scenarios), even if the conditions in rule 4.1 are met. The penalized team may become doubly disadvantaged or worse under these circumstances.

4.5 If a bottle cracks or breaks, the owning team loses immediately.

- a) If a bottle has only one crack which does not extend below the shoulder, it may be replaced but not defended for the remainder of the game (*ghost bottle* exception).
- b) A cracked ghost bottle cannot be replaced (*no more continues* exception).

5 Special scenarios

5.1 Clumsiness and carelessness

5.1.1 If a player steps over the *bp* while throwing, no points are awarded (*line fault*). If this throw results in a broken bottle, the bottle is replaced.

5.1.2 A player whose tasty beverage is hit by a live disc loses one point.

5.1.3 Dropping one's tasty beverage results in the loss of a point.

5.1.4 Grabbing an undisturbed bottle results in the loss of a point.

5.1.5 Bumping one's own pole or bottle awards the opposing team two points for a pole bump or three points for a bottle bump, unless the bottle is caught. This does not include bottles dropped when resetting.

5.1.6 If a team throws with an unset bottle, they must reset the bottle before the next throw or else are penalized one point.

5.1.7 No points or penalties are given for acts of god, such as the wind blowing the bottle off of the pole.

5.2 Traps and redemption shots

5.2.1 Throwing the disc in a trap results in the loss of a point.

5.2.2 The thrower is responsible for retrieving the disc from any traps where retrieval is difficult.

5.2.3 If the trap does not have a direct line to the opponent's pole, the thrower may opt to throw the disc back into the court from the trap (*redemption shot*).

- a) If the redemption shot knocks the opponent's bottle to the ground, the lost point is regained.
- b) Redemption shots cannot be defended.
- c) If the disc lands in any trap, the thrower loses another point.
- d) Only one redemption shot is allowed per trapped throw.

5.3 On fire

5.3.1 A player who executes three consecutive direct hits is *on fire*. The player is *heating up* after the second hit.

5.3.2 When a player is on fire normal play stops. The fire player throws until failing to make a direct hit, at which point fire is lost and the player's fire count returns to zero.

5.3.3 Fire throws cannot be defended, the bottle may not be caught, and points are awarded as if in normal play.

- 5.3.4 Consecutive hit count for a player is reset to zero if the opposing team scores bottle points or makes a stalwart defense.
- 5.3.5 Consecutive hit count for a player is reset to zero if the player's tasty beverage suffers a direct hit.
- 5.3.6 Goaltending does not affect any player's count.
- 5.3.7 Ambiguities in *fire* rules may be settled by an appeal to NBA Jam.

5.4 Extreme scenarios and beverage debts

- 5.4.1 A *shutout* occurs when the losing team does not have a positive score at the end of a game.
 - a) All losers of a shutout must drink an agreed upon *nasty beverage*.
 - b) An additional drink is owed for each point the *losing team's* score is below zero.
- 5.4.2 *Shooting the moon* occurs when the winning team does not have a positive score at the end of a game (by breaking the opponents bottle).
 - a) All losers of a moon shot must drink an agreed upon *nasty beverage*.
 - b) The loser owes a nasty beverage for each point the *winner's* score is below zero.
- 5.4.3 *Mutual shame* occurs if neither team has a positive score at the end of a game.
 - a) All victims of mutual shame must drink a nasty beverage.
 - b) The nasty beverage must be chosen from the default list.
 - c) Beverage debts from mutual shame may not be wagered, forgiven, canceled, or transferred.
- 5.4.4 A *photo-finish* occurs when both teams are tied at the end of a game.
- 5.4.5 The nasty beverage should be chosen before the game begins.

- a) The choice of nasty beverage may be agreed upon or changed at any time if the players involved agree on the new choice.
- b) If players cannot come to an agreement, the default beverage choices are Bud Light with Lime, Smirnoff Margarita, or PBR with a fresh squeezed lime.
- c) In the case of a player shooting the moon, moon shots may be taken to pay beverage debts.

5.4.6 Beverage debts do not have to be repaid immediately.

5.4.7 Beverage debts may be wagered, forgiven, canceled, or transferred (by trickery if necessary). Debts from mutual shame are an exception.

5.4.8 Beverage debts may be reduced if paid in bulk, at the discretion of the parties owed.

6 Series and tournament play

- 6.1 In a series, team sides and first throw alternate after each game.
- 6.2 A set is composed of an odd number of games, typically three.
- 6.3 A match is composed of an odd number of sets, typically one (equivalent in this case).
- 6.4 Each team must use the same bottle for the duration of a match.
 - a) A broken bottle is replaced for the next game. Replacements must be used for the rest of the match or until they break.

Back Matter

Credits

Many thanks to everybody who helped with game development and codifying the rules (in alphabetical order):

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