

# The Official Rules of the Game of Pétanque

Applicable to all National Federations who are members of the FIPJP  
(English translation)

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

### Article 1 Composition of teams

Pétanque is a sport in which:

- 3 players play against 3 players (triples).

It can also be played by:

- 2 players against 2 players (doubles).

- 1 player against 1 player (singles).

In triples, each player uses 2 boules.

In doubles and singles, each player uses 3 boules.

No other version of the game is allowed.

### Article 2a – Characteristics of Approved boules

Pétanque is played with boules approved by the F.I.P.J.P. and which conform to the following criteria.

- 1) To be made of metal.
- 2) To have a diameter between 7.05cm (minimum) and 8cm (maximum).
- 3) To have a weight of between 650 grams (minimum) and 800 grams (maximum). The trade mark of the manufacturer and the weight must be imprinted on the boules and must always be legible.  
For competitions reserved for players who are 11 years of age or less, they may use boules that weigh 600 grams and are 65mm in diameter providing they are made by an approved manufacturer.
- 4) They must not be lead or sand filled. As a general rule, the boules must not be tampered with in any way, nor altered or modified after machining by the approved manufacturer. Importantly, re-tempering of the boules in order to modify the hardness applied by the manufacturer is forbidden.

However, the player's name and forename or initials may be engraved on them, as well as various logos, initials and acronyms, conforming to the manufacturer's specification.

### Article 2b – Penalties for irregular boules

A player guilty of breaking the above condition (4) is immediately disqualified from the competition together with his or her team mate/s.

For boules said to be "tampered with" or "re-tempered" - the player risks withdrawal of his or her licence for a period as defined in the Code of Discipline, without prejudicing any other penalties imposed on the guilty player by the Federal Commission of Discipline of the Federation to which he/she belongs.

If the boules have been borrowed and the owner is identified, the latter will see a period of suspension inflicted upon him/her, the duration of which is fixed by the Disciplinary Committee of the guilty player's Federation.

If a boule not "tampered with" but worn, or of defective manufacture, does not pass the official examination successfully, or does not comply with the norms set out in paragraphs (1), (2) and (3) above, the player must change it. He or she may also change the set.

Complaints relating to these three paragraphs and made by players are admissible only before the start of a game. It is in the interests of the latter, therefore, to ensure that their boules and those of their opponents comply with the above rules.

Complaints relating to (4) are admissible at any time during the game, but they must be made between ends. However, from the third end onwards, if a complaint made about the boules of an opponent is proved to be unfounded, 3 points will be added to the score of the latter.

Where boules have had to be opened, the complainant becomes responsible. Notably, he or she will be made to reimburse the owner or replace the boules if they are found to be in order. Nevertheless, under no circumstances can he or she be asked to pay damages or interest.

The Umpire or the Jury may, at any time, require examination of the boules of one or several players.

### **Article 3 – Approved jacks**

Jacks are made of wood, or of a synthetic material bearing the manufacturer's mark and having obtained the F.I.P.J.P's approval in line with the precise specification relating to the required standards.

Their diameter must be between 25mm (minimum) and 35mm (maximum).

Painted jacks – whatever their colour – are authorised.

### **Article 4 - Licences**

It must be established that any licence complies with the Administrative Rules of the Federation and, in particular, it must bear a stamped recent photograph and the signature of the owner.

Before the start of a competition, each player must present his or her licence. He or she must also present it after any request by the Umpire, or by an opponent, unless it has been retained at the Control Table.

## **PLAY**

### **Article 5 – Terrain rules**

Pétanque is played on any terrain. However, by a decision of the Organising Committee or the Umpire, the teams may be asked to play on a marked terrain. In this case, the latter must, for National Championships and International Competitions, have the following minimum dimensions: 4m wide and 15m long.

For other competitions the Federations may permit variations relative to these minima, subject to their dimensions not being below 12m x 3m.

When playing areas are placed end to end, the end lines of the lanes, which are common to both playing areas, are classed as dead ball lines.

When the terrains of play are enclosed by solid barriers, these must be beyond the dead ball line and at a minimum distance of 30 cm from the latter. The dead ball line will encircle the exterior of the playing area at a maximum distance of 4 metres.

These arrangements are, of course, applicable to the "Carrés d'Honneur".

Games are played to 13 points, with the possibility of leagues and qualifying heats being played to 11 points.

### **Article 6 – Start of play – Rules regarding the circle**

The players must toss up to decide which team will choose the terrain and be the first to throw the jack.

If the terrain has been designated by the organisers, the jack must be thrown on that terrain. The teams concerned must not go to a different terrain without the Umpire's permission.

Any member of the team winning the toss chooses the starting point and traces a circle on the ground such that the feet of the players may be placed entirely inside it. However, it may not measure less than 35cm or more than 50cm in diameter.

Where a prefabricated circle is used, it must have an internal diameter of 50cms.

The throwing circle, valid for the three consecutive throws allowed to a team, must be drawn or placed at least a metre from any obstacle, or from an out of bounds area and, for competitions on open terrains, at least 2 metres from another throwing circle in use.

The team that throws the jack must erase all throwing circles near the one it is going to use.

The interior of the circle can be completely cleared of grit/pebbles etc. during the end but must be put back in good order at the end of the latter or, at the latest, before the throwing of the jack at the following end.

The circle is not considered to be an out of bounds area.

The feet must be entirely on the inside of the circle, not encroach on its perimeter and they must not leave it or be lifted completely off the ground until the thrown boule has touched the ground. No part of the body may touch the ground outside the circle. As an exception, those who are disabled in a lower limb are authorised to place only one foot inside the circle.

For players throwing from a wheelchair, at least one wheel (that on the side of the throwing arm) must rest inside the circle.

The throwing of the jack by one member of the team does not imply that he or she is obliged to be the first to play.

### **Article 7 – Valid distances for the thrown jack**

For the thrown jack to be valid, the following conditions apply:

- 1) That the distance separating it from the nearest edge of the circle may be between:  
4 metres minimum and 8 metres maximum for Minors.  
5 metres minimum and 9 metres maximum for Cadets.  
6 metres minimum and 10 metres maximum for Juniors and Seniors.
- 2) That the throwing circle may be a minimum of 1 metre from any obstacle and from the limit of an out-of-bounds area.
- 3) That the jack must be a minimum of 1 metre from any obstacle and from the nearest limit of an out-of-bounds area.
- 4) That the jack must be visible to the player whose feet are placed astride the extreme limits of the interior of the circle and whose body is absolutely upright. In case of dispute on this point, the Umpire decides, without appeal, if the jack is visible.

At the following end the jack is thrown from a circle drawn around the point where it finished at the previous end, except in the following cases:

- The circle would be less than 1 metre from an obstacle or the limit of an out-of-bounds area.
- The throwing of the jack could not be made to all regulation distances.

In the first case the player draws the circle at the regulation distance from the obstacle or the out-of-bounds area.

In the second case, the player may step back, in line with the previous end's line of play, until he or she is able to throw the jack any valid distance up to the maximum authorised distance, and not beyond. This opportunity is offered only if the jack cannot be thrown to the maximum distance in any other direction.

If after 3 consecutive throws by the same team, the jack has not been thrown in accordance with the rules defined above, it is passed back to the opposing team who also has the right to 3 tries and who may move the circle back as described in the preceding paragraph. In this case, the circle may not be changed if this team does not succeed in its 3 throws.

In any case, the team who lost the jack after the first three tries maintains the right to play the first boule.

### **Article 8 – For the thrown jack to be valid**

If the thrown jack is stopped by the Umpire, a player, a spectator, an animal or any moving object, it is not valid and must be thrown again without being included in the three throws to which the team or the player is entitled.

If after the throwing of the jack, a first boule is played, the opponent still has the right to contest the validity of its position. If the objection is recognised as valid, the jack is thrown again and the boule replayed.

For the jack to be rethrown both teams must have recognised that the throw was not valid or the Umpire must have decided it to be so. If any team proceeds differently, it loses the benefit of the throwing of the jack.

If the opponent has also played a boule, the jack is definitely deemed valid and no objection is admissible.

## **Article 9 – Jack dead**

The jack is dead in the following six cases:

- 1) When the jack is displaced into an out-of-bounds area, even if it comes back on to the authorised playing area, a jack straddling the boundary of an authorised terrain is valid. It becomes dead only after having completely crossed the boundary of the authorised terrain or the dead ball line, that is to say, when it lies entirely beyond the boundary when viewed from directly above. A puddle on which a jack floats freely is considered to be out-of-bounds.
- 2) When, still on the authorised terrain, the moved jack is not visible from the circle, as defined in Article 7. However, a jack masked by a boule is not dead. The Umpire is authorised to temporarily remove a boule to declare whether the jack is visible.
- 3) When the jack is displaced to more than 20 metres (for Juniors and Seniors) or 15 metres (for Cadets and Minors), or less than 3 metres from the throwing circle
- 4) When on marked out playing areas, the jack crosses more than one lane immediately to the side of the lane in use.
- 5) When the displaced jack cannot be found, the search time being limited to 5 minutes.
- 6) When an out-of-bounds area is situated between the jack and the throwing circle.

## **Article 10 – Displacement of obstacles**

It is strictly forbidden for players to press down, displace or crush any obstacle whatever on the playing area. However, the player about to throw the jack is authorised to test the landing point with one of his or her boules by striking the ground no more than three times. Furthermore, the player who is about to play, or one of his partners, may fill in the hole which would have been made by the last boule thrown.

For non-observation of the rules above, the players incur the penalties outlined in the chapter "Discipline", article 34

## **Article 10 a – Changing of jack or boule**

Players are forbidden to change the jack or a boule during a game except in the following cases:

- 1) The one or the other cannot be found, the search time being limited to 5 minutes.
- 2) The one or the other is broken: in this case the largest part is taken into consideration. If boules remain to be played, the aforementioned is immediately replaced, after measuring, if necessary, by a boule or a jack of identical or similar diameter. At the next end the player concerned can take a new complete set.

## **JACK**

## **Article 11 – Jack masked or displaced**

If, during an end, the jack is accidentally masked by a leaf or a piece of paper these objects are removed.

If the stationary jack is displaced, by reason of the wind or the slope of the terrain for example, it is put back in its original place, on condition that it had been marked.

The same applies if the jack is accidentally displaced by the Umpire, a player, a spectator, a boule or jack coming from another game, an animal or any moving object.

To avoid any argument, the players must mark the jack's position. No claim can be accepted regarding boules or jack whose positions have not been marked.

If the jack is moved by a boule played in this game it is valid.

## **Article 12 – Jack moved into another game**

If, during an end, the jack is displaced onto another terrain of play, marked out or not, the jack is valid subject to the conditions outlined in Article 9.

The players using this jack will wait, if there is room, for the players in the other game to complete their end, before completing their own.

The players concerned by the application of this rule must show patience and courtesy.

At the following end the teams continue on the terrain which had been allotted to them and the jack is thrown again from the place it occupied when it was displaced, subject to the conditions of Article 7.

### **Article 13 – Actions to take if the jack is dead**

If, during an end, the jack is dead, one of three cases can apply:

- 1) Both teams have boules to play, the end is void.
- 2) Only one team has boules left to play, this team scores as many points as boules that remain to be played.
- 3) The two teams have no more boules in hand, the end is void.

### **Article 14 – Positioning the jack after it has been stopped**

- 1) If the jack, having been hit, is stopped by a spectator or by the Umpire, it remains in this position.
- 2) If the jack, having been hit, is stopped by a player, his opponent has the choice of:
  - a) leaving the jack in its new position;
  - b) putting it back in its original position;
  - c) placing it anywhere on the extension of a line going from its original position to the place that it is found, up to a maximum distance of 20 metres (15 metres for Cadets and Minors) and such it that may be visible.

Paragraphs b) and c) can only be applied if the position of the jack was previously marked. If this was not the case, the jack will remain where it is found.

If, after having been struck, the jack travels into an out-of-bounds area before returning, finally, on to the playing area, it is classed as dead and the actions defined in Article 13 apply.

## **BOULES**

### **Article 15 – Throwing of the first and following boules**

The first boule of an end is thrown by a player belonging to the team that has won the toss or has been the last to score. After that, it is the team that does not hold the point that plays.

The player must not use any object or draw a line on the ground to help him/her in playing a boule or mark its landing point. Whilst playing his or her last boule, it is forbidden to carry a boule in the other hand.

The boules must be played one at a time.

Any boule thrown cannot be replayed. However, boules must be replayed if they have been stopped or deviated accidentally from their course between the throwing circle and the jack by a boule or jack coming from another game, or by an animal or any moving object (football, etc.) and in the case defined in Article 8, second paragraph.

It is forbidden to moisten the boules or jack.

Before throwing his boule, the player must remove from it any trace of mud or whatever deposit, under threat of penalties outlined in Article 34.

If the first boule played goes out-of-bounds, it is for the opponent to play first then alternately so long as there are no boules on the designated terrain.

If after shooting or pointing no boules are left on the designated playing area, the arrangements concerning a dead end as defined in Article 28 apply.

### **Article 16 – Behaviour of players and spectators during a game**

During the regulation time allowed for a player to throw a boule the spectators and the other players must observe total silence.

The opponents must not walk, nor gesticulate nor do anything that could disturb the player about to play. Only his or her team-mate/s may remain between the throwing circle and the jack.

The opponents must remain beyond the jack or behind the player and, in both cases, to the side with regard to the direction of play and at a distance of at least 2 metres the one from the other.

The players who do not observe these regulations could be excluded from the competition if, after a warning from the Umpire, they persist in their conduct.

### **Article 17 – Throwing of the boules and boules going outside the terrain**

Absolutely no-one may, as a test, throw his/her boule during the game. Players who do not observe this rule will be penalised as set out in the chapter "Discipline", Article 34

During the course of an end, boules going outside the marked terrain are valid (except as in the application of Article 18).

### **Article 18 – Dead boules**

The boule is dead, having completely crossed the boundary of the allotted playing area, or the dead ball line, that is to say, when it is situated entirely beyond the boundary when viewed from directly above. The same applies when, on marked terrains, the boule completely crosses more than one of the lanes alongside the lane in use.

If the boule then comes back into the playing area, either because of the slope of the ground or by having rebounded from an obstacle, moving or stationary, it is immediately taken out of the game and anything that it has displaced after its passage into an out-of-bounds area is put back in place.

Any dead boule must immediately be removed from the game. By default it will be considered to be live the moment another boule is played by the opposing team.

### **Article 19 – Stopped boules**

Any boule played that is stopped by a spectator or the Umpire, will remain where it comes to rest.

Any boule played, that is stopped by a player to whose team it belongs, is dead.

Any boule pointed that is stopped by an opponent, can, according to the wishes of the player, be replayed or left where it comes to rest.

If a boule shot, or hit is stopped by a player, the opponent of the player who committed the fault may:

- 1) leave it where it stopped;
- 2) place it on the extension of a line which starts from the original position it occupied to the place it is found, but only on the playable area and only on condition that it had been marked.

The player purposely stopping a moving boule is immediately disqualified, along with his or her team, for the game in progress.

### **Article 20 – Time allowed to play**

Once the jack is thrown each player has the maximum duration of one minute to play his or her boule. This short period starts from the moment when the previous boule or jack stops or, if a point has to be measured, from the moment the latter has been effected.

The same prescriptions apply to the throwing of the jack after each end.

The player not respecting this rule, incurs penalties outlined in the chapter "Discipline", Article 34

### **Article 21 – Displaced boules**

If a stationary boule is moved by the wind or slope of the ground, for example, it is put back in its place. The same applies to any boule accidentally displaced by a player, an Umpire, a spectator, an animal or any moving object.

To avoid any dispute, the players must mark the boules. No claim will be admissible for an unmarked boule, and the Umpire will give a decision only in terms of the position the boules hold on the terrain.

However, if a boule is moved by a boule played in this game it is valid.

### **Article 22 – A player throwing a boule other than his own**

The player who plays a boule other than his own receives a warning. The boule played is nevertheless valid but it must immediately be replaced, possibly after measuring has been done.

In the event of it occurring again during the game, the guilty player's boule is disqualified and anything it displaced is put back in place.

Players are forbidden to pick up the played boules before the completion of the end.

### **Article 23 – Throwing boules contrary to the rules**

Any boule thrown contrary to the rules is dead and, if marked, anything that it has displaced in its travel is put back in place. The same applies to any boule played from a circle other than that from which the jack was thrown.

However, the opponent has the right to apply the advantage rule and declare it to be valid. In this case, the boule pointed or shot, is valid and anything it has displaced remains in its place.

## **POINTS AND MEASURING**

### **Article 24 – Temporary removal of boules**

In order to measure a point, it is permitted, after having marked their positions, to temporarily remove the boules and obstacles situated between the jack and the boules to be measured. After measuring, the boules and the obstacles which were removed are put back in place. If the objects cannot be removed, the measuring is done with the aid of callipers.

### **Article 25 – Measuring of points**

The measuring of a point is the duty of the player who last played or by one of his or her teammates. The opponents still have the right to measure after one of these players. Whatever positions the boules to be measured may hold, and at whatever stage the end may be, the Umpire can be consulted and his or her decision is final.

Measuring must be done with appropriate instruments, which each team must possess. Notably, it is forbidden to effect measurements with the feet. The players who do not observe this ruling could incur the penalties outlined in the chapter "Discipline" Article 34 if, after a warning by the Umpire, they persist in their conduct.

### **Article 26 – Boules picked up before the agreement of points**

At the completion of an end, any boule picked up before the agreement of points is dead if it was not marked. No claim is admissible on this subject.

### **Article 27 – Displacement of the boules or the jack**

The team, whose player displaces the jack or one of the contested boules, while effecting a measurement, loses the point.

If, during the measurement of a point, the Umpire disturbs or displaces the jack or a boule and if, after re-measuring, the point remains with the boule which had originally been estimated to be closest to the jack, the Umpire, in all fairness, declares it to be so. The same applies in the hypothesis that where, after a new measurement, the point does not remain with the boule originally estimated to be holding.

### **Article 28 – Boules equidistant from the jack**

When two closest boules to the jack belong to opposing teams and are at an equal distance from it, 3 cases can apply:

- 1) If the two teams have no more boules to play the end is dead and the jack belongs to the team which scored on the preceding end.
- 2) If only one team has boules at its disposition, it plays them and scores as many points as it has boules closer to the jack than the nearest opponent's boule.
- 3) If both teams have boules at their disposition, it is for the team which played the last boule to play again, then the opposing team, and so on alternately until the point has been won by one of them. When only one team possesses boules, the arrangements set out in the preceding paragraph apply.

If, after completion of the end, no boules remain within the boundary of the playing area, the end is null and void.

### **Article 29 - Foreign bodies adhering to the boules or jack**

Any foreign bodies adhering to the boules or the jack must be removed before measuring a point.

### **Article 30 - Claims**

To be admissible, any claim must be made to the Umpire. It cannot be considered when lodged after the result of the game has been established.

Each team is responsible for checking of the opposing team (licences, category/classification, terrain, boules, etc.).

## **DISCIPLINE**

### **Article 31 – Penalties for absent teams or players**

At the time of the draw and the announcement of its result, the players must be present at the control table. A quarter of an hour after the announcement of these results, the team which is absent from the terrain will be penalised one point which is awarded to their opponents.

After this quarter-hour wait, the penalty accrues by one point for each five minutes of the delay.

The same penalties apply throughout the competition, after each random draw and in the case of a re-start of games after a break for any reason whatsoever.

The team which does not present itself on the playing area within the hour of the start or restart of games is declared to be eliminated from the competition.

An incomplete team has the right to start a game without waiting for its absent player; nevertheless it does not use the boules of that player.

No player may absent him/herself from a game or leave the terrains of play without the authorisation of the Umpire. If this has not been granted, the arrangements outlined in this article and that following apply.

### **Article 32 – Late arrival of players**

If, after an end has started, the missing player arrives, he or she does not take part in this end, he or she is accepted into the game only as from the following end.

If a missing player arrives more than one hour after the start of a game, he or she loses all rights to participate in that game.

If his or her team-mates win this game, he or she will be able to participate in that which follows provided that he or she was originally registered with that team.

If the competition is played in leagues, he or she will be able to take part in the second game whatever the result of the first.

An end is considered as having started when the jack has been placed on the playing area in accordance with the Rules.

### **Article 33 – Replacement of a player**

The replacement of a player in Doubles, or of one or two players in Triples, is permitted only up to the official announcement of the commencement of the competition (gun, whistle, announcement, etc.), on condition that the replacement/s was/were not previously registered in the competition as belonging to another team.

### **Article 34 – Penalties of play**

For non-observation of the rules of the game the players incur the following penalties

- 1) Warning;
- 2) Disqualification of the boule played or to be played;
- 3) Disqualification of the boule played or to be played and the following one;
- 4) Exclusion of the guilty player responsible for the game;
- 5) Disqualification of the team responsible;
- 6) Disqualification of the two teams in case of complicity.

### **Article 35 – Inclement weather**

In the case of rain, any end started must be completed, unless a contrary decision is made by the Umpire, who alone is qualified, with the Jury, to decide on its suspension or cancellation in the case of a "force majeure".

### **Article 36 – New phase of play**

If, after the announcement of a new phase of the competition (2nd round, 3rd round, etc.....) certain games have not ended, the Umpire, after advice from the Organising Committee, may make any arrangements or decisions that he judges necessary for the good running of the competition.

### **Article 37 – Sharing of prizes**

The sharing of rewards is strictly forbidden.

The teams who contest the final games, or any other game, who show lack of sporting spirit and respect towards the public, the organisers or the Umpires, will be excluded from the competition. This exclusion can incur non-confirmation of the possible results, as also, the application of penalties set out in Article 38.

### **Article 38 – Bad behaviour**

The player who is guilty of bad behaviour, or worse, violence towards an official, an Umpire, another player or a spectator incurs one or several of the following penalties, depending on the seriousness of the offence.

- 1) Exclusion from the competition.
- 2) Withdrawal of licence.
- 3) Confiscation or restitution of expenses and prizes.

The penalty imposed on the guilty player can also be imposed on his or her team-mates.

Penalties 1) and 2) are imposed by the Umpire.

Penalty 3) is imposed by the Organising Committee which, within 48 hours, sends a report with the expenses and prizes retained to the Federation's Organisation which will decide on their destination.

In all cases, the Chairman of the Committee for the Federation concerned will make the final decision.

Decent dress is demanded of each player (bare torso and bare feet are not acceptable). Any player who does not observe these rules will be disqualified from the competition after a warning from the Umpire.

### **Article 39 Duties of the Umpires**

The Umpires designated to control the competitions are charged to be on the watch for strict application of the rules of the game and the administration rules which complete them. They have the authority to disqualify from the competition any player or any team who refuses to comply with their decision.

The spectators with valid or suspended licences, who, by their behaviour, are the origin of incidents on the terrain of play, will be the subject of an Umpire's report to the Federal executive. The latter will summon the guilty party or parties before a competent Disciplinary Committee who will decide on the penalties to apply.

### **Article 40– Composition and decisions of the Jury**

Any case not provided for in the rules is submitted to the Umpire who can refer it to the competition's Jury. This Jury comprises at least 3 people and at the most 5 people. The decisions taken by the Jury in applying this paragraph are without appeal. In the case of a split vote, the President of the Jury has the casting vote.

**Note:** The present Rules have been approved by the International Congress of the F.I.P.J.P. on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006 at GRENOBLE (France)