



Pétanque (“pay tonk”) is a cousin of both horseshoes and the

Italian game bocce. **Unlike** bocce, pétanque does **not** require a groomed court; rather, it can be played on almost any reasonably flat terrain (hard grass, dirt, gravel, etc). Playable by nearly anyone, regardless of age or limited mobility issues, it takes **minutes** to learn and years to master. The rough terrain and gentle clanking of boules creates an atmosphere in which cultural and political differences yield to friendly competition and animated conversation, perhaps enhanced by a beverage of choice...

(Click these links for brief videos on Youtube: [Pétanque in the USA](#) and [Introduction to Pétanque in London](#)).

Basics: A sport for 2-6 players, 13 points to win, or shorter if you prefer. You need 12 boules and a 30mm target jack (a.k.a. cochonnet “ko show nay”). A tape measure is useful. A plastic circle to throw from (called the “rond”) is also useful, or a simple circle of 50 cm (20 inches) diameter can be drawn in the terrain with the toe of a shoe or a stick.

To Start a Game: 1) Pick teams 2) Flip a coin 3) The winning team places the rond, tosses the jack and throws first.

Repeat These Five Steps Every End (every round):

1. A member of the winning team steps into the rond and throws the jack. If it doesn't land between **6 m to 10 m (~20-33 ft) from the rond's edge and at least 1 m (~3 ft) from any obstacle (tree, bench, fountain, etc.)** the opposite team must drop the jack at any legal distance and location of their choice. Nonetheless, the winning team from the previous end always makes the first throw.
2. A player from the winning team places both feet completely in the rond and throws a boule attempting to make it stop near the target jack. That team is now **“holding the point”**, because their boule is closest to the jack.
3. A player from the other team steps into the rond and throws, attempting to hold the point.
4. The team **not holding the point** continues to throw until they are holding the point or have thrown all of their boules.
5. When all 12 boules have been thrown the end is complete and points are allocated.

Scoring: Only one team scores at the completion of each end. The team with the closest boule to the jack is awarded one point for every boule which is closer than the opponent's

best boule. One to six points are allocated. In relatively rare situations, i.e. (equidistant best boules or out-of-bounds jack) an end is declared “null” and no points are awarded.

Winning the Game: Play additional ends until one team has 13 points. (For shorter games, predetermine the number of ends to play or set a time limit). The team which won the previous end drops the rond around the jack’s current location. **Play now resumes at Step 1.**

Four Ways to Hold the Point: Throw a boule that ...

1. stops closer to the target jack than the opponent’s best boule
2. strikes the opponent’s best boule driving it away; leaving one of your boules closest to the jack
3. strikes a teammate’s boule moving it closest to the jack
4. hits the target jack and moves it closer to one of your team’s boules

Teams, Number of Boules and Throwing Order:

- Pétanque is played with 12 boules = 6 per team. In doubles (2 players=team) each player throws three boules; in triples (3 players=team) each player throws two boules. In competition singles (1 person=team) each throws three boules. (In *casual* singles play, 4-6 boules per person can be more fun than 3 each).
- There is no predefined throwing order. Any player on the team which is not holding the point may throw; however, each player may only throw their allocated number of boules (either 2 or 3). Skill levels and strategy often guide the decision as to which team member should throw next.

Pétanque is played casually and competitively, in backyards and parks, on open terrain and in purpose-built courts, and in organized clubs all over the U.S.A. and all over the world. It is a French word meaning “planted feet”. The thrower stands or squats (player preference) in the rond; a portion of both feet must remain on the ground (i.e. planted) until the thrown boule hits the terrain. Ideally, terrain is 15m x 4m (~50ft x 13ft) or more.

Buy equipment at: [Petanque America](#)

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Acknowledgement to Palm Springs Pétanque Club for the original version. I have revised and added images.

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