

CPD LEVEL 2 – TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL COACHING

The Role of the Skip – Leadership, Strategy, and Game Control

This module focuses on the Skip, the tactical leader and decision-maker in a bowls team.

The skip manages the head, directs shot selection, motivates teammates, and adapts strategy under pressure.

Participants will develop the ability to coach and assess the skip's performance across technical, tactical, communication, and leadership domains.

Session Aims

- To understand the tactical and leadership responsibilities of the skip.
- To analyse effective communication and decision-making within team play.
- To explore head reading, risk assessment, and shot selection under pressure.
- To provide coaches with methods to train and evaluate skip performance.
- To align the skip's tactical strategy with the team's overall objectives.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this CPD, coaches will be able to:

1. Explain the tactical importance and leadership expectations of the skip.
2. Coach effective communication and teamwork during play.
3. Analyse complex heads and guide players in selecting percentage shots.
4. Design purposeful practices to develop decision-making and composure.
5. Reflect on leadership style and its effect on team performance.

1. Understanding the Skip's Role

The Skip is both strategist and leader. They must combine technical excellence, tactical awareness, and emotional intelligence to guide the team through each end.

The skip's role is to:

- Read the head and identify percentage shots.
- Direct teammates clearly and confidently.
- Control the rhythm and atmosphere of the team.
- Anticipate opposition strategies and respond effectively.
- Deliver crucial bowls under pressure with precision and calmness.

Primary Duties

1. Strategic Leadership – Determine the tactical plan and adapt it as the game develops.
2. Communication – Give clear instructions, encouragement, and corrections.
3. Head Reading – Evaluate risk versus reward in every situation.
4. Shot Execution – Deliver decisive bowls when the head demands skill or courage.
5. Team Management – Maintain morale, focus, and confidence across all ends.



2. Attributes and Hallmarks of a Good Skip

Technical Attributes	Leadership Attributes
Consistent draw, yard-on, and controlled drive shots	Calm, assertive, positive communicator
Excellent line and length judgement	Inspires confidence under pressure
Ability to visualise outcomes	Decisive and adaptable thinker
Efficient reading of green pace and bias	Builds unity and supports teammates
Smooth, repeatable delivery	Keeps composure in high-stress moments

Hallmarks of a Good Skip

- Confidence without arrogance.
- Composure under pressure.
- Strategic foresight.
- Constructive communication.
- Analytical mind and adaptability.

“A great skip doesn’t just call shots — they read minds, manage moments, and lead with presence.”

3. How to Become a Good Skip

Developing a skip requires a combination of technical precision, strategic learning, and emotional control. Coaching should focus on both decision-making under pressure and consistent shot execution.

Stage 1 – Build Technical Proficiency

- Maintain draw and yard-on consistency under match conditions.
- Practise converting heads: turning shots in, trailing the jack, and removing shot bowls.
- Deliver every bowl with purpose — even practice bowls have intent.

Stage 2 – Develop Tactical Thinking

- Practise reading complex heads and predicting likely outcomes.
- Simulate heads requiring alternative shot options (draw, trail, run, drive).
- Discuss risk percentage before each bowl to develop analytical decision-making.

Stage 3 – Communication and Leadership

- Use confident yet calm voice projection.
- Practise giving feedback to teammates that is supportive, not corrective.
- Use inclusive language: “We’ll hold,” “Let’s change the hand,” “Good effort — cover behind.”

Stage 4 – Match Management

- Control pace of play; use timeouts strategically.

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Berkshire Bowls Coaching Scheme



- Observe opposition tendencies and anticipate their adjustments.
- Maintain the team's focus even after losing an end.

Stage 5 – Reflection and Review

- What went well tactically?
- Did I communicate clearly and positively?
- How did my leadership affect the team's energy?
- Did I maintain composure in every situation?

4. Tactical Awareness and Head Reading

The skip must understand how each bowl affects the evolving head.

Key tactical priorities include percentage shots, building a head, timing, adaptation, and end control.

Common Tactical Scenarios

Situation	Preferred Skip Strategy
Opposition holding two close shots	Play controlled weight to remove or trail.
Your team holding shot but unprotected	Draw behind or add positional cover.
Jack displaced to ditch or side	Play through weight or side trail.
Momentum shifting to opposition	Shorten or lengthen jack to reset tempo.
Partner struggling for line	Offer reassurance; adjust tactical focus to simplify their task.

5. Coaching Exercises for Skip Development

Exercise	Objective	Setup and Method	Coaching Focus
Head Reading Challenge	Improve tactical decision-making.	Create complex head; skip must choose and justify shot.	Encourage rationale and risk assessment.
Conversion Drill	Develop ability to turn heads to advantage.	Place short bowl in front of jack; skip aims to trail or displace it.	Weight control and follow-through.
Pressure Bowl Scenario	Build mental resilience under pressure.	One bowl to save or win end with observers present.	Composure, routine, execution.
Communication Exercise	Enhance team communication.	Skip directs pairs or triples in simulated ends.	Clarity of message and positive language.
Tactical Rotation Game	Encourage decision variation.	Each end, skip must change plan (hand, length, tempo).	Adaptability and reflection.

6. Discussion and Reflection

Discussion Points:

- How does the skip influence the team's emotional tone?

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- What defines a “percentage shot”?
- When should a skip attack versus defend?
- How does the skip maintain authority without discouraging teammates?

Reflective Questions:

- What type of leader am I — directive, supportive, or collaborative?
- How do I respond to pressure moments?
- How can I help my team recover after a lost end?
- What habits do I need to refine to become a more consistent skip?

7. Summary – The Skip’s Mindset

“The skip isn’t just the final bowler — they are the architect of the team’s performance.”

A strong skip:

- Thinks ahead, not behind.
- Leads with clarity, not volume.
- Builds confidence through calm control.
- Plays for the team, not the scoreboard.

Assessment Task

Design a 30-minute skip development session including a tactical head-reading exercise, one communication or leadership activity, and a pressure bowl scenario. Include how you would measure tactical understanding and composure.

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Head Reading	Analysing the position of bowls and potential outcomes.
Conversion Shot	Turning a losing head into a winning one through weight or angle.
Percentage Shot	The safest or most rewarding tactical option.
Cover Bowl	A positional bowl protecting shot or jack movement.
Drive	A fast, high-weight shot aimed to remove bowls or jack.
Tempo	The rhythm and flow of play controlled by the skip.

End of Module Summary

This CPD module develops the tactical, technical, and leadership capabilities required to coach and perform effectively as a skip.

It integrates analytical, communicative, and practical skills to build confident, adaptable team leaders.

