

Lesson 3: Indoor vs Outdoor Coaching

EBCS Level 2 CPD – Advanced Technical Coaching

Learning Objectives (for the coach)

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand the main differences between indoor and outdoor playing conditions.
- Adapt coaching points for players transitioning between surfaces.
- Design drills that simulate surface and pace variations.
- Support players in managing psychological adjustments when switching formats.
- Help players build confidence and tactical awareness across both environments.

Background (why this matters)

Indoor and outdoor bowls present different technical and tactical demands:

- Indoor surfaces: smoother, consistent, faster pace, controlled environment.
- Outdoor surfaces: variable pace, weather-affected (wind, moisture, temperature).

Implications for coaching:

- Line: outdoor greens often require narrower lines due to a slower pace.
- Length: indoor rinks demand fine pace control; outdoor rinks require adaptability.
- Tactics: outdoor play often rewards patience and adjustment; indoor play may reward precision and risk-taking.
- Psychology: players may struggle with confidence when conditions change dramatically.
The coach must prepare players to adapt quickly, both technically and mentally.

Practical Activities

Session Options:

Option 1 — 90-minute CPD Workshop:

- 1) Indoor vs Outdoor comparison briefing (10 min)
- 2) Baseline skill tests on one surface (15 min)
- 3) Transition drills simulating change in pace/line (30 min)
- 4) Tactical head-building exercise (20 min)
- 5) Reflection and discussion (15 min)

Option 2 — 70-minute On-Rink Player Session:

- 1) Baseline deliveries (10 min)
- 2) Line adaptation drills (20 min)
- 3) Length control drills under varied pace (20 min)
- 4) Transition challenge game (15 min)
- 5) Review and homework (5 min)

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Example Transition Drills:

- Line Adaptation Grid: Mark zones for narrow, medium, and wide lines. Players must deliver bowls into each zone, adjusting technique as if moving from indoor to outdoor.
- Length Ladder: Place jacks or markers at different lengths (short, medium, long). Players deliver in sequence, simulating variable pace conditions.
- Surface Simulation: On an indoor rink, use mats, carpets, or cones to slow sections of the rink, mimicking outdoor variability.
- Indoor-to-Outdoor Head Setup: Create a head scenario (e.g., jack at 25m, wind/slow side simulated by target markers). Ask players to choose shots appropriate for outdoor play.
- Pressure Transition Game: Start with indoor-style precision (tight target), then immediately switch to outdoor-style adaptation (larger margin of error, longer distance).

Questioning Prompts

- 'What did you notice about the difference in pace between surfaces?'
- 'How did your aiming point change when moving from indoor to outdoor conditions?'
- 'Which part of your delivery was hardest to adapt under new conditions?'
- 'What tactics worked indoors that might fail outdoors, and vice versa?'
- 'What is your go-to adjustment when greens feel slower or faster than expected?'

Coach Notes (ethics, inclusivity, safety)

- Ensure drills account for different age groups and physical abilities (e.g., some players may struggle on heavy outdoor greens).
- Avoid overwhelming players with too many technical changes at once.
- Create inclusive drills that allow all players to experience success in both environments.
- Emphasise safety when using props (cones, mats) to simulate pace changes.
- Encourage players to value both formats equally, avoiding bias or preference that discourages participation.

Reflection (self + peer)

Coach self-reflection:

- Did I clearly explain the differences between indoor and outdoor conditions?
- Which drills helped players adapt most effectively?
- Did I manage to balance technical corrections with building confidence?
- How did players respond tactically and psychologically?



Peer feedback:

- 'I saw you... (specific adaptation). This helped when... (evidence). Next time, you could... (suggestion).'

Player homework:

- After a session, write down one technical adjustment and one tactical adjustment for each surface.
- Practise adjusting aiming points by 0.5–1m wider or narrower, depending on surface speed.
- Develop a personal 'transition checklist' for moving between indoor and outdoor play.

Outcomes (what you should achieve)

- Understand and explain the main differences between indoor and outdoor bowls.
- Design and deliver drills that help players adjust line and length across surfaces.
- Coach players to develop confidence when transitioning between formats.
- Teach tactical adaptability to suit both indoor and outdoor play.
- Maintain safe, inclusive, and supportive coaching practice throughout.



Appendix A

Transition Drill: Line Adaptation Grid (Narrow, Medium, Wide Line Practice)

Objective:

To train players to adapt their aiming line according to green speed and conditions. This simulates moving from fast indoor greens (wide draw) to heavier outdoor surfaces (narrower draw), and helps players become flexible in shot-making.

Setup:

1. On the rink, mark **three line zones** (using chalk lines, flat markers, or small cones) at a chosen length, jack:
 - **Narrow line zone** – close to the centre line (simulates a slow, heavy green).
 - **Medium line zone** – a balanced aiming shoulder.
 - **Wide line zone** – further out (simulates a fast, swinging green).
2. Place the jack at a consistent length (e.g., $\frac{3}{4}$ length to start).
3. Clearly explain to the player: *“Each delivery should aim to finish in the assigned zone, not just reach the jack.”*

Method:

1. Player delivers a set of 6 bowls, 2 to each line zone (narrow, medium, wide).
2. After each bowl, discuss how the aiming point and feel of delivery changed.
3. Observe whether the player adjusts their technique (stance, aiming point, weight) appropriately for each zone.

Coaching Points:

- Reinforce the principle: **faster greens = wider line, slower greens = narrower line.**
- Encourage players to see the line early (fix eyes on an external marker shoulder).
- Ask reflective questions: *“What did you change to get the bowl into the wide zone?”*
- Remind them that weight and line are linked — faster weight reduces draw (narrower line), slower weight increases draw (wider line).

Progression:

- Vary jack length (short, medium, long) while maintaining the three zones.
- Add scoring: 1 point for landing in the correct zone, 2 points if also within 1 metre of the jack.



Berkshire Bowls Coaching Scheme



- For advanced players: create a tactical scenario (e.g., narrow line to rest, wide line to draw around a short bowl).
- Run as a group drill with players rotating through the zones.

Outcome:

- Builds awareness of how to adapt the line to different conditions.
- Improves flexibility when moving between indoor and outdoor play.
- Reinforces connection between **green pace, line choice, and delivery feel**.
- Prepares players for match play on unfamiliar greens.

Transition Drill: Length Ladder (Short, Medium & Long Length Practice)

Objective:

To improve adaptability and weight control by requiring players to deliver bowls at varying lengths in sequence, simulating changing green speeds or conditions.

Setup:

1. Place **three jacks or markers** at different distances along the centre line:
 - **Short** (minimum length, ~23m)
 - **Medium** ($\frac{3}{4}$ length, ~27m)
 - **Long** (full length, ~31–32m)
2. Ensure all players understand the sequence (short → medium → long, then repeat).

Method:

1. Player delivers first bowl to the **short jack**, second to the **medium**, third to the **long**, and repeats the cycle.
2. After each delivery, the player should reflect on the adjustment made to weight and rhythm.
3. Continue until all bowls have been played.

Coaching Points:

- Emphasise smooth tempo and controlled backswing for each distance.
- Highlight how **longer lengths require greater arm speed and follow-through**, while shorter ones require restraint and feel.
- Ask reflective questions: *“What did you change in your delivery when moving from short to long?”*

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Berkshire Bowls Coaching Scheme



- Stress consistency of stance and line — only weight should vary.

Progression:

- Reverse the order (long → medium → short) to test adaptability.
- Add scoring: 1 point if within 1m, 2 points if within 60cm.
- For advanced players: randomise the call — coach (or teammate) calls “short, medium, or long” before each bowl.
- Use cones or chalk circles around each jack to make the target zones smaller as players improve.

Outcome:

- Sharpens **weight control** across all lengths.
- Builds confidence in switching between different pace conditions.
- Prepares players for **indoor vs outdoor transition**, where jack length and pace may differ dramatically.
- Reinforces mental adaptability — not just “finding one length,” but adjusting bowl by bowl.

Transition Drill: Surface Simulation (Mimicking Outdoor Variability Indoors)

Objective:

To help players adapt to variable green conditions by simulating patches of heavy or uneven outdoor surfaces while practising on a smooth indoor rink.

Setup:

1. Choose an indoor rink lane and place **obstacles** to alter the bowl’s running surface:
 - **Small mats or carpet squares** to create slower, heavier patches.
 - **Cones or flat markers** to act as “deflection zones” that the player must avoid or bowl around.
 - Ensure obstacles are placed safely, not causing damage to bowls or the green.
2. Position the jack at a chosen length.
3. Explain to players that the altered areas mimic outdoor variability (e.g., heavier patches, uneven runs, or tricky shoulders).

Method:

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Berkshire Bowls Coaching Scheme



1. Player delivers bowls, aiming to reach the jack while adjusting for the slowed or deflected sections.
2. If the bowl runs over a mat/carpet, it will lose pace earlier, forcing the player to adapt their weight and line.
3. Encourage experimentation: deliver a bowl through the altered zone, then try an alternative line around it.
4. Repeat across different jack lengths and mat placements.

Coaching Points:

- Highlight the importance of **observation and adaptability** — what happened when the bowl crossed the patch?
- Reinforce that on outdoor greens, conditions can change end-to-end or across the rink — players must be flexible.
- Ask reflective questions: *“What adjustment helped you get past the heavy patch?”* or *“How did you alter your aiming point?”*
- Emphasise **decision-making**: sometimes the best option is to avoid the patch, sometimes to use it.

Progression:

- Add multiple slowed/blocked zones to increase complexity.
- Move obstacles between ends to simulate changing outdoor conditions.
- Run it as a group exercise: one bowler plays the “safe line,” another is tasked with finding a way through/around the tricky patch.
- Introduce scoring: points for reaching the jack while navigating the variability.

Outcome:

- Builds awareness of how surface changes affect bowl pace and line.
- Prepares indoor-trained players for the unpredictability of outdoor greens.
- Improves adaptability and tactical thinking when faced with variable playing conditions.
- Reinforces the principle that **outdoor bowls requires constant observation and adjustment**, not fixed habits.



Transition Drill: Indoor-to-Outdoor Head Setup (Scenario-Based Simulation)

Objective:

To prepare players for outdoor tactical and environmental challenges by setting up realistic head scenarios indoors, using markers to simulate conditions such as wind, slower green pace, or uneven lines.

Setup:

1. On an indoor rink, **set up a head** at a chosen distance — e.g., jack at **25m (3/4 length)**.
2. Use **target markers, cones, or discs** to simulate outdoor variables:
 - Place a marker on one shoulder to represent a **wind-affected side** (bowl may drift more than expected).
 - Place mats or small carpet patches to represent a **heavier/slower section**.
 - Add short bowls to simulate the cluttered, less predictable outdoor heads.
3. Brief players: *"This head represents an outdoor rink with a slow hand and a tricky shoulder. Choose the shot you would play."*

Method:

1. Ask the player to **assess the head** as if outdoors.
2. Player explains their **shot choice** (draw, yard-on, trail, cover, etc.) and why it fits the simulated conditions.
3. Player then delivers their bowl, aiming to match their declared intention.
4. Repeat with variations: different jack lengths, more complex heads, or tighter scoring situations.

Coaching Points:

- Reinforce decision-making process: *Assess → Choose → Commit → Execute*.
- Encourage players to consider both **line and weight adjustments** as they would outdoors.
- Highlight adaptability: *"What's different about this compared to an indoor draw?"*
- Ask reflective questions: *"How would wind or pace outdoors change your choice?"*

Progression:

- Make scenarios more complex (e.g., multiple opposition bowls holding shot, jack near ditch, need to trail).
- Add scoring: award points for successful execution of declared shot.



- Run as team drills: each player suggests a shot, the group discusses, then one executes.
- Rotate jack length and rink positions to mirror variety outdoors.

Outcome:

- Builds tactical awareness for outdoor play.
- Reinforces adaptability to conditions (pace, line, wind).
- Encourages confident **decision-making under outdoor scenarios**.
- Bridges the gap between indoor practice and outdoor match play.

Transition Drill: Pressure Transition Game (From Indoor Precision to Outdoor Adaptation)

Objective:

To prepare players to switch quickly between the accuracy demands of indoor play and the adaptability required outdoors. This drill builds mental flexibility, resilience, and the ability to reset delivery expectations under pressure.

Setup:

1. Mark two distinct **practice phases** on the same rink:
 - **Indoor Phase (Precision):** Small target (coin, disc, or 30 cm chalk circle).
 - **Outdoor Phase (Adaptation):** Jack at a longer distance (e.g., 30–32m) with a larger tolerance zone (1m–1.5m circle) and possible simulated variability (cones/mats to mimic outdoor challenges).
2. Explain to the player: *"We're shifting from an indoor mindset of precision to an outdoor mindset of adaptability."*

Method:

1. Player delivers 3 bowls at the **indoor precision target**, aiming for exact accuracy.
2. Without pause, switch immediately to the **outdoor phase**: player delivers 3 bowls to the longer jack with wider tolerance, adapting weight and line.
3. Repeat the cycle (indoor → outdoor) several times, alternating between phases.
4. Introduce scoring:
 - Indoor phase: 2 points for inside 30 cm, 1 point for within 60 cm.
 - Outdoor phase: 2 points for inside 1m, 1 point for within 1.5m.



Coaching Points:

- Emphasise the **contrast**: precision indoors vs adjustment outdoors.
- Reinforce mental reset: encourage players to consciously acknowledge the change of phase.
- Highlight weight adaptation — shorter, exact weight indoors vs longer, flowing weight outdoors.
- Ask reflective questions: *“What did you change in your delivery when switching?”*

Progression:

- Reduce tolerance zones in both phases as skill improves.
- Randomise phase order — coach calls “indoor” or “outdoor” before each bowl.
- Add pressure by keeping the total score across both phases (competition style).
- Use group format: players rotate through both phases, comparing scores.

Outcome:

- Trains adaptability in switching between playing environments.
- Builds mental discipline to reset expectations quickly.
- Reinforces line/weight adjustments linked to green conditions.
- Prepares players for competitive transitions (indoor leagues → outdoor season).

Appendix B – Glossary of Coaching Terms

Line Adaptation Grid: Zones marked on the rink to help players practise varying their aiming lines.

Length Ladder: Multiple jacks/markers set at different distances to train adaptability in pace control.

Surface Simulation: Artificial adjustments (mats, carpets, cones) to mimic different surface speeds indoors.

Transition Checklist: A personalised list of cues and adjustments to help players switch between formats.

Indoor-to-Outdoor Head: A tactical setup replicating outdoor-style play on an indoor surface for practice.

