

Chapter 1

Welcome to the Wonderful World of Bowling

In This Chapter

- ▶ Reviewing the finer points of bowling
 - ▶ Enjoying the social benefits of the sport
 - ▶ Looking at bowling as a form of cardiovascular and strength-training exercise
-

Every year, millions of people go bowling and have a great time with their family and friends. Bowling is a sport that just about anyone can play, you can enjoy it year-round, it's easy to learn (not to mention affordable), and you can get started right away without having to buy any special equipment. All you have to do is walk into your local center, rent some shoes, borrow a ball, and you're ready to go.

Consider this chapter your introduction to the sport of bowling. In it we give you an overview of the various aspects of the game and highlight its mental and physical benefits.

Figuring Out How the Game Works

Several types of bowling exist, including duckpin, five pin, and candlepin. In this book, however, we focus on ten-pin bowling because that's the most popular version of the sport in the United States.

Ten-pin bowling involves knocking down bowling pins with a bowling ball. The pins are set up in a triangle at the end of a lane that's 60 feet long. Your task is to stand behind what's called the foul line (if you cross it, you don't get any points), throw the ball down the lane, and try to knock down all the pins. You earn points for each pin you knock down, plus bonus points if you throw well enough to knock down all the pins with one shot. At the end of the game, the person with the highest score wins.

In the following sections, we cover the basics of bowling so you can be ready to head to the lanes tonight.

Seeing what equipment you need

One of the best things about bowling is that you don't have to invest hundreds of dollars in equipment in order to start playing. In fact, you don't have to buy any equipment at all. The center has bowling shoes that you can rent and bowling balls that you can borrow (flip to Chapter 3 to read all about bowling shoes and house balls). All you have to do is pay for your shoe rental, the number of games that you bowl, and any snacks or drinks that you consume.

Exploring the different types of bowling

This book focuses on traditional ten-pin bowling, but if you travel around North America, you'll find bowlers who participate in other forms of bowling, such as the following:

✔ **Candlepin bowling:** Candlepin bowling is popular in the northeast portion of the United States and in parts of Canada. The major difference between candlepin and ten-pin bowling is the size of the pins and the bowling ball. Candlepins are much thinner and a bit taller than traditional bowling pins, and the ball is smaller and lacks finger holes. In fact, a candlepin ball weighs slightly less than a single pin, making candlepin bowling more difficult than other forms of bowling. You get three tries per frame as opposed to two, but after each throw, the fallen pins aren't cleared away from the lane, increasing the game's difficulty. Because of these differences, strikes are rare in candlepin bowling.

Another difference between candlepin and ten-pin bowling is the *lob line*, a heavy black line located 10 feet down the lane from the foul line. The ball must be in contact with the lane prior to reaching this line, or else the pins struck by that throw don't count toward your score.

✔ **Duckpin bowling:** You can think of duckpin bowling almost like a miniature version of ten-pin bowling. Duckpin bowling balls weigh only 2 to 4 pounds, and the pins are shorter and fatter than the pins used in ten-pin bowling. Another difference between duckpin and ten-pin bowling is that you get three chances per frame to knock down all ten pins. If you knock down all ten pins with your three shots, that's called "getting a ten."

✔ **Five-pin bowling:** Popular in Canada, five-pin bowling is actually the result of complaints. According to the Canadian 5 Pin Bowlers' Association, ten-pin bowling came to Canada in the 1880s, but customers complained about the size and weight of the bowling balls and thought that the game was too strenuous. A bowling center owner had his father reduce the size of five of the standard pins down to approximately three-quarters of their original size. The owner then took the five smaller pins, spaced them out equally on the 36-inch ten-pin triangle, and rolled a hand-sized hard rubber ball (approximately 5 inches in diameter and 3½ pounds in weight) down the ten-pin lane at the five pins, inventing the new game of five-pin bowling. In this version of bowling, you get three chances to knock down all five pins.



Street shoes and bare feet are a no-no on the lanes, so you must wear bowling shoes. These shoes are designed to protect the lanes and allow you to slide properly when you're releasing the ball. If you try to get away with wearing anything but bowling shoes while bowling, you may wind up damaging the lanes and injuring yourself or other bowlers.

Of course, just because you don't *have* to buy equipment to bowl doesn't mean you can't decide to buy your own bowling ball if you really like the sport. When you're ready to invest in your own equipment, head to Chapter 4; it contains everything you need to know about buying a bowling ball, shoes, and other accessories.

Bowling in a nutshell

Bowling is probably one of the easiest sports to learn how to play because you don't need to memorize a bunch of complicated rules (although if you want to know the basic rules of the game, you can refer to Chapter 2). You just need to become familiar with the main concepts of the sport. Here they are:

- ✔ A game of bowling consists of ten frames. In each frame, you get two chances to knock down all ten pins.
- ✔ You throw a specially weighted ball, which ranges in weight from 4 to 16 pounds, down the lane to try and knock down the pins.
- ✔ As you bowl, you move your arms, legs, hands, and wrist in certain ways to make the ball go where you want it to. (When you're ready to tackle the specifics of form and throw, take a look at the chapters in Part II.)
- ✔ If you knock down all the pins with your first throw, your turn ends and the other bowlers, if there are any, take their turn until that frame is over.
- ✔ If you don't knock down all the pins with your first throw, you get a second try. After you throw the ball a maximum of twice in one frame, your turn is complete.
- ✔ The tenth frame works like a bonus frame. If you knock down all ten pins on your first try, you get two bonus throws. If you knock down all ten pins with two throws, you get one bonus throw.

Looking at scoring

Scoring a game of bowling is pretty easy because each pin you knock down is worth 1 point. However, it becomes slightly more complex when you start throwing *strikes* (when you knock down all ten pins on your first throw)

and *saves* (when you knock down all ten pins with two throws). Strikes are automatically worth 10 points, plus whatever you get on your next two throws. Saves count for 10 points plus the number of points you get on your next throw. (We show you how to throw strikes in Chapter 10 and saves in Chapter 11.)

Nowadays, most bowling centers have automated scoring machines, so you don't need to fuss with all the adding when you just want to bowl. Yet even with automatic scoring, it's good to know how to keep score in case the computer messes up. We delve into the details of scoring in Chapter 2.

Surveying the Main Benefits of Bowling

Bowling provides two main kinds of benefits: the mental ones and the physical ones. On the mental front, bowling is a great way to socialize with other bowlers and have fun with family and friends. On the physical side of things, bowling is an activity that gets you up off the couch and moving your body, which can lead to improved health in the long run. We delve deeper into the details of these benefits in the sections that follow.

Providing a social outlet

Sure, you can bowl alone, but bowling is even more fun when you do it with others. It can even be a way to meet new people if you've moved to a new area. Whether you're just bowling casually with friends or you have a competitive game going, bowling is a social sport. When you play it, you have the opportunity to share laughs, conversation, and good times with family, friends, co-workers . . . the list goes on and on.

Bowling centers offer many opportunities for you to expand your social circle, either as an individual or with a group of friends or family. Here are just a few of them:

- ✔ **Leagues:** Leagues are a great way to socialize and compete with other bowlers. You can find all kinds of leagues, including ones for beginners, advanced bowlers, and children, that fit into just about any schedule. You can even choose a league based on how long it lasts. For instance, if you're looking for a long-term commitment, sign up for a league that runs from September through April. Want a shorter-term commitment? Join a summer or short-season league that lasts anywhere from 12 to 16 weeks. Turn to Chapter 18 for more information about leagues and ask your local center for a list of its leagues to find one that's right for you.

- ✔ **Tournaments:** Tournaments offer another opportunity to engage in friendly bowling competition with others. Some tournaments raise funds for charities; others are just about competing for fun and prizes, including cash. Whatever the purpose, you can find a tournament that sounds fun to you by checking with your center. (For insight into how to sign up for a tournament, see Chapter 18.)
- ✔ **Charity bowling events:** You can meet other bowling do-gooders through charity bowling events, such as bowl-a-thons. Sign up to help out the charity and meet others while having fun for a good cause.
- ✔ **Other social groups:** Bowling centers host bowl-and-mingle events for singles and other groups all the time. Coauthor A.J.'s centers have worked with local online dating sites to host their speed-dating events. Ask the folks at your center what events are coming up.



Have an idea for a group that doesn't exist at your local center yet? Let the managers at the center know about it. They're always looking for great ideas to get bowlers in the door, and some of the best ideas come from bowlers like you.



If you want to bowl by yourself during *open bowling* (when the lanes are open to the public and aren't being used for tournaments and leagues) but you still want to enjoy some camaraderie, ask the staff person at the front desk whether he can put you on the lane next to a solo bowler or a group of people so you can strike up a conversation.

Improving your health

Contrary to what some people may believe, bowling is a good form of exercise because it moves your entire body. It's a great low-impact sport that combines fun with an activity that keeps your joints and muscles in action, making it great for people who've had minor joint surgery and other operations where mild activity is recommended during healing. (*Low-impact sports* cause minimal wear and tear to your weight-bearing joints, which include your feet, knees, and hips.)

When you bowl, your muscles and joints flex, turn, and swing. This movement helps keep your muscles and joints moving and flexible. As a result, it also helps your body burn calories. If you're the type of person who likes the couch more than the treadmill yet you're looking to get out and be a little more active, then bowling is a perfect activity for you.

Bowling also improves your hand-eye coordination, flexibility, and balance. When you bowl, you need to be able to hold the ball, focus on your target,

swing the ball back, walk to the foul line, bend down, and release the ball. (We show you how to do all of this in one quick, graceful motion in Chapters 6 and 7.) These actions require you to maintain your coordination, stay limber, and keep from falling down. The more you practice bowling with the proper form, the more your coordination, flexibility, and balance will improve.

The next sections explain how bowling can be both a cardiovascular and strength-training activity.

Bowling as cardiovascular activity

From a heart-healthy standpoint, bowling isn't going to give you the same cardiac workout as, say, skiing or aerobics would because you typically don't build up a consistent cardiac-intense workout while bowling. The sport does, however, keep you moving, and any kind of movement and activity helps your heart.



Want to burn more calories or get your heart beating faster for a better cardiovascular workout? Try to avoid bowling with four people or more on one lane. When you have too many people on a lane, you get too much rest in between frames, and your heart doesn't really have time to become active to the point where bowling can be considered a cardiovascular activity. Instead, bowl a few games on your own or with a partner, or bowl with no more than four bowlers spread out between two lanes. Because of the smaller number of participants, you'll get up and down to bowl more frequently, which will get your heart pumping more.

Bowling as strength training

Whether you're carrying a 6-pound ball or a 16-pound one, your arms and joints are still working to carry that extra weight every frame (and sometimes twice a frame) for several games. If you bowl fairly regularly, your upper body strength will increase, and your shoulders, arms, and legs will improve in muscle tone, strength, and power.



The first few times you bowl, you're bound to experience some muscle soreness. That's normal if you're using muscles you've never used before. Pain, however, is something else. If any part of your body starts to hurt when you're bowling, you may be using a ball that's too heavy or you may have thrown incorrectly at some point and injured yourself. Stop bowling immediately and check with your doctor.

If you're concerned about injuring yourself while bowling, turn to Chapter 14, where we show you some warm-up exercises and tell you what to do if you pull a muscle or suffer another injury while at the center. Have a bad back? You can still bowl. Just follow the advice we include in Chapter 16.

Bowling on the big and small screens

Even Hollywood gets in on the bowling action. Feature films such as the Coen brothers' *The Big Lebowski* use bowling in key scenes. Probably one of the silliest movies featuring a bowling storyline is *Kingpin*, directed by the Farrelly brothers and starring Woody Harrelson and Randy Quaid.

Over the years, the characters of many hit television sitcoms have gone bowling too. One of the most popular sitcom duos ever, Laverne and Shirley, not only bowled competitively on the show, but Laverne's father owned the local pizza and bowling hangout. Ralph Kramden and

Ed Norton from *The Honeymooners* is another pair of famous sitcom bowlers. Speaking of sitcoms, the show *Ed* revolved around Ed Stevens, a big-time lawyer who moved to his hometown and bought a rundown bowling alley after getting fired from his job. Shows such as *Roseanne*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, *The Simpsons*, *According to Jim*, and *Glee* have featured bowling scenes too. And who can forget cartoon legend Fred Flintstone's twinkle toes bowling performance or his granite bowling ball as it literally splits in half going down the lane in order to hit all the pins? Classic!

