

# Tactile Boccia Grid



Boccia is a fun and rewarding strategic game, that also can be played without vision through use of the simple, yet sophisticated Tactile Boccia Grid.

The grid allows the player to feel the game and the position of the balls through sensing with his or her fingertips.

Except for the grid, Boccia without vision is played just like ordinary boccia.

## The Tactile Boccia Grid consists of:

- 1 One Boccia Grid of solid rubber, scaling the court in 1-40.
- 2 15 plastic pegs to insert in the Grid.

The pegs have different shapes for the red and blue team – and for the peg, which indicate the white jack:

- 1 large red peg indicates the red player
- 6 red pegs to indicate the 6 red balls
- 1 large blue peg indicate the blue player
- 6 blue pegs to indicate the 6 blue balls
- 1 white longer peg, to indicate the white jack



## The Tactile Boccia Grid can function in two ways:

### 1 To include a visually impaired boccia player in a boccia game played together with sighted people

#### Inclusion of visually impaired boccia players

- The visually impaired player is seated right on the court in the appropriate place; the large pegs are placed on the grid to indicate the players' actual position.
- After each shot, the assistant places the pegs into the grid and gives the grid to the player, who feels or "reads" how the game is developing and where the balls have landed.
- The player has access to the grid that is placed next to the player or in the player's lap.
- The assistant or referee may make a sound (clapping or tapping) by the jack ball to indicate the right direction.



### 2 To play a game of its own – Blind Boccia - where all players are nonsighted

#### Blind Boccia – Boccia played without sight

- All players wear a mask to ensure that everyone is on an equal footing. Both the visually impaired and the normally sighted can participate.
- The referee or assistant(s) places the pegs in the grids after each shot.
- The masks must remain in place at all times during the game.
- It is preferable that each player has a grid, but it is also possible that a team shares one.



## General rules for Blind Boccia:

- 1 Ideally, the boccia court is 6 x 10 m, but a smaller court may also work.
- 2 Each player wears a blindfold to make everyone equal. Each player has a boccia grid.
- 3 The player with red balls throws the white jack ball into the court – the assistant inserts the white peg into the grids according to its position on the court. The referee or the players' assistant inserts the pegs after each Red & Blue ball is thrown.
- 4 The red player throws the first red ball, aiming to get as close to the white jack ball as possible.
- 5 The blue player throws the first blue ball, aiming to get as close to the target ball as possible.
- 6 The player with the longest distance to the target ball continues to play.
- 7 On their turn players should be allowed to walk out to the jack as well as reading the grid.
- 8 The game continues like this until all balls are thrown.
- 9 If the white jack is thrown out of the legal area, it is placed on the cross.
- 10 The score: one point for each ball that is closer to the jack than the opponent's closest ball.
- 11 A match of Blind Boccia only comprises of 2 rounds.

#### Alternative rules:

In order to make a faster game, players can just take turns: red throws, blue throws, red throws etc.

## How to get started:

When introducing a visually impaired athlete to boccia, it is important to help the athlete get an overall idea about the court and the game. The following is recommended:

- 1 Walk the players around the circumference of the court, starting from their playing position to give them an impression about the size and shape of the playing area. Point out to them the throwing line, the v-line, the cross, and their seating position.
- 2 Repeat this process with the grid, making the players feel with their fingers around the outline and other markings of the grid. Pay particular attention to the players' peg position. Let the players feel the tactile differences between the red, blue and white pegs.
- 3 Make it clear that the scale of the grid in relation to the court is 1 to 40. Each square on the Grid equals  $1\text{m}^2$ . Encourage the players to count the squares with their fingers.
- 4 Position the chairs so they are in perfect line with the court.
- 5 The player should sit in a straight position in the chair in order to be able to throw in the right direction.
- 6 The grid should be placed in line on the player's lap. It is fine if the player prefers to hold the grid by hand.
- 7 Additional support to give the player further understanding of the grid and the court:
  - a) Let the player choose a number from 1-10 meters. Let the player count this number on the grid with his or her finger, then walk to this distance with the player. Repeat a few times if required.
  - b) Let the player throw a ball. The assistant places a peg into the grid in the relevant position, and then let the player feel the peg and count the squares. Then walk with the player to the ball and return to the seat. This will help give the player an understanding of how much power is needed to throw at different distances.
  - c) Practicing how to throw the ball at different angles and directions: The coach/assistant places himself at the back line and asks the player to throw the ball close to his position. The assistants may clap his hand or make another noise. The noise will help the visually impaired to get an idea of the size and position of the court.

Sighted players playing Blind Boccia find that it is a very demanding game, requiring full attention, concentration and awareness. After 2 rounds they are worn out! That is why there are only 2 rounds to a match.



Blind person playing boccia for the first time checks the position of the balls.



## Benefits:

- Through the Tactile Boccia Grid both the visually impaired and the sighted players get unique practice in how to combine tactile skills with acting in a space with distance, direction, length, and power.
- Playing Blind Boccia is really fun and a completely new challenge – also for sighted people!
- Blind Boccia is also an excellent teambuilding experience.
- The grid is ideal for coaching boccia strategies in general.
- Using the Tactile Boccia Grid gives a unique practice of mind, brain, sense of touch, balance, space orientation and body control!

## History:

The Tactile Boccia Grid was invented in 2006 by inclusive Multi Sports Coach Mark Beeby in collaboration with visually impaired student, Amy Smith, who loved the boccia game. By use of the grid, Amy was finally able to perform boccia on a high level, and compete with sighted people.

Mark Beeby owns all rights to the product design, and will be pleased to give advice on the use of the grid:  
[markbeeby@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:markbeeby@hotmail.co.uk)

The Tactile Boccia Grid was designed by specialist in inclusive sport designs, George Torrens, Loughborough University, who generously supported the development of the Boccia Grid.

The organization Boccia England has largely contributed to the development of Boccia for the Visually Impaired by introducing a full version of the game "VI Boccia". Boccia England carries out training courses, workshops, competitions etc. For more information, visit [www.bocciaengland.org](http://www.bocciaengland.org) or contact by email: [info@bocciaengland.org.uk](mailto:info@bocciaengland.org.uk)

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**Note:** Do not let small children play with the pegs – due to choking hazard.

**Cleaning:** Use a damp cloth to clean the grid and pegs do not use corrosive liquids or similar on the grid or pegs.



*The medallists at the National Championships.*



*From left to right: George Torrens and Mark Beeby.*