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Mythbusters

The USBC Rules department busts some of the most common myths about rules and their interpretations.

Have a doubt about bowling rules? Submit questions to: Rules@bowl.com, Subject: Mythbusters.

MYTH: Any handicap used by a league equalizes competition.

BUSTED: According to a four-year study of handicap leagues (mixed, all-women and all-men) the handicap percentages 75%, 80% and 90% do *not* fully equalize competition:

Handicap Percent	Championships won by team with average below median in the league	Championships won by team with average above median in the league
70	0 out of 100	100 out of 100
75	0 out of 100	100 out of 100
80	0 out of 100	100 out of 100
85	6 out of 100	94 out of 100
90	11 out of 100	89 out of 100
95	24 out of 100	76 out of 100
100	30 out of 100	70 out of 100

MYTH: If a bowler shows up too late for league, he or she is not allowed to bowl.

BUSTED: A bowler is never too late to bowl according to USBC Rule 109c. Rule 109c allows the bowler to enter the game in the frame being bowled upon arrival. One-tenth of the league absentee score is used for all frames missed and the game cannot be used to calculate the bowler's average.

The exception is when the league adopts a rule stating a bowler cannot enter the game after a specified frame.

MYTH: At 100% handicap every team has a 50-50 chance of winning.

BUSTED: Even at 100% handicap, as the chart above shows, the higher-average teams or bowlers still have a decided edge. Seventy out of 100 championships still are won by the higher-average team when 100% handicap is used. An exact 50-50 distribution of league championships would result only if a 116% handicap was used.

MYTH: It is harder for a higher-average team to win because the lower-average team gets so many pins handicap.

BUSTED: As shown below, when both teams bowl their exact averages, the higher-average team always wins unless the handicap is 100%; then the teams tie.

You must always look at the difference in averages as well as handicap. In the table the higher-average team total is 73% or 223 pins higher than the lower-average team.

BASE 200	BASE 200
TEAM A	TEAM B

	Average	80%	90%	100%
Linda	120	64	72	80
Dick	115	68	76	85
Kathy	95	84	94	105
Jeff	135	52	58	65
Sandi	142	46	52	58
	607	314	352	393
Average + 80% = 921				
Average + 90% = 959				
Average + 100% = 1000				

	Average	80%	90%	100%
Dave	150	40	45	50
Patti	167	26	29	33
Scott	185	12	13	15
Terri	188	9	10	12
Lisa	140	48	54	60
	830	135	151	170
Average + 80% = 965				
Average + 90% = 981				
Average + 100% = 1000				

MYTH: If the 10 pin is left and the 7 pin slides from position and rests in the 8 pin position, it is not considered a 7-10 split.

BUSTED: Splits are determined by the pin position before delivery, not by where they end up after delivery. If this spare is made, the bowler would be issued the 7-10 Split award.

MYTH: If a team does not bowl at its regularly scheduled league time, its scores do not have to be shared with the team it was supposed to bowl against.

BUSTED: Once scores are bowled, they are a matter of public record and can be seen unless the league rules or policy and procedures prohibit the sharing of scores. Any such policies should be added to the league rules.

MYTH: USBC rules require bowling shoes to be worn during USBC competition.

BUSTED: USBC’s only rule relating to shoes is Rule 12, “Approaches Must Not Be Defaced.” Rule 12 prohibits soft rubber soles and heels that rub off the approach. Today, many bowlers are wearing a tennis shoe on the push-away foot to give more momentum and keep from sliding. Tennis shoes that do not leave a residue on the approach may be worn. Bowling centers, leagues and tournaments may have their own rules regarding the use of bowling shoes.

MYTH: League rules supersede USBC rules

BUSTED: USBC rules are the foundation of the game of American Tenpins. Leagues may adopt rules as long as they do not conflict with USBC rules. Many USBC rules allow leagues to adopt options and in this instance adopted league rules would take precedence; otherwise, USBC rules are the default. The USBC General Playing Rules (Rules 1-18) are examples of rules that relate to the basics of the game and cannot be changed.

MYTH: A foul is committed any time a bowler crosses the foul line.

BUSTED: A delivery takes place when a ball is released into fair territory, according to Rule 4a. Crossing the indefinite line including walls, flooring, posts and ball returns before a bowler is in position for the next delivery constitutes a foul. Conversely, a bowler who never releases the ball does not commit a foul. For example, if during the delivery, the bowler loses balance and steps into the lane but does not release the ball, no foul has been committed.

MYTH: USBC Rules are only guidelines.

BUSTED: USBC Rules define the game. Rules 1 through 18 of the General Playing Rules have no options and cannot be changed by a league or tournament. However, there are many USBC [League Rules](#) and [Tournament Rules](#) that allow changes. [Rule 100a](#) allows leagues to adopt [league rules](#) that do not conflict with USBC Rules.

MYTH: A team or individual can prebowl for the first league session.

CONFIRMED: USBC Rules do not prohibit prebowl prior to the first session of the league. When teams or individuals are [granted permission](#) to prebowl, the bowlers must pay for membership prior to completion of the first series as stated in [Rule 101a](#). Therefore, arrangements should be made with the league secretary for bowlers to purchase membership prior to completing the prebowl.

MYTH: Youth can compete in tournaments using bowling balls with beer logos.

BUSTED: Beer logo bowling balls are USBC approved; however, [legislation](#) was recently passed to eliminate the use of bowling balls depicting alcohol in any USBC Youth tournaments. Other restrictions in USBC Youth tournament play are no equipment or apparel depicting tobacco, illegal substances, or inappropriate language or gestures.

MYTH: USBC provides receipts for payment of membership dues.

CONFIRMED: It is the perforated section on the right side of the membership application card. Complete this section and make sure the league secretary signs the receipt. This is especially important for those members that bowl in multiple USBC leagues and participate in tournaments. Without the receipt, you can expect a league secretary or tournament manager to ask for payment of membership dues.

Anyone that bowls in a USBC league must complete a membership application card for each league and purchase membership or show proof membership. A bowler cannot wait to pay membership dues "next time"; dues must be paid prior to the completion of the first series bowled in a USBC league according to [Rule 101](#).

There are some instances where a league is in another local or state association. Dues must be paid in each state and local association a member participates in. The receipt will verify payment of national dues in this case.