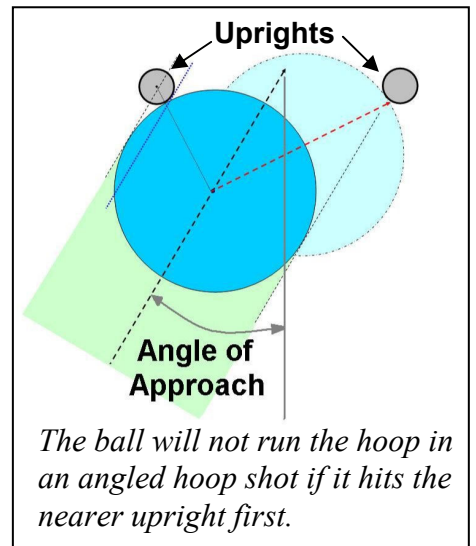
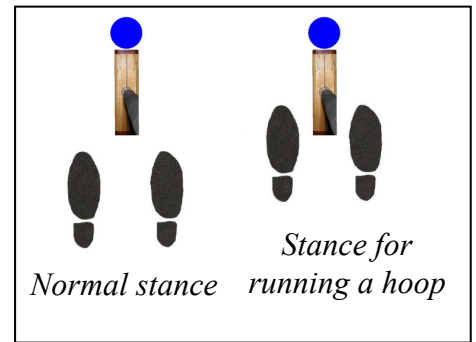


4. Running Hoops

When trying to run a hoop you should do all the important things for any stroke in croquet. That is, you should have the correct body alignment, swing the mallet in a straight line, keep your eye on the ball and follow through. Hoops are only slightly wider than the ball, so you have to be accurate. You can increase your margin for error slightly by making sure that the ball is rolling rather than skidding when it reaches the hoop. You can encourage the ball to roll by standing slightly closer to the ball as you strike it. The mallet head will then still be on the downward swing as you strike the ball. As a result, the ball will be squeezed into the ground slightly which will give it more top spin. Don't stand too close to the ball as that makes it harder to be accurate.

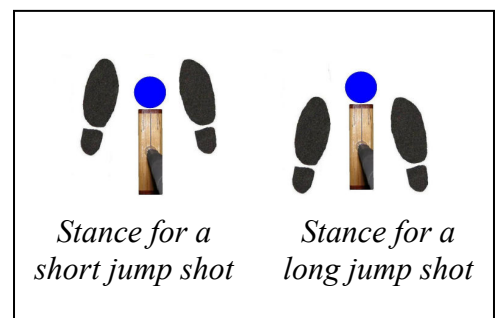
Running a hoop from an angle. If your ball is straight in front of the hoop, you can aim at the mid-point between the two uprights. If you are trying to run the hoop from an angle, however, that won't work because a ball aimed at the centre of the hoop will hit the nearer upright and then deflect away from the hoop. This is illustrated in the diagram. The angle of approach in that case is 30 degrees. From that angle it is impossible to run the hoop without hitting at least one upright. The important thing is to hit the far upright first. Then the ball may deflect through the hoop. Even if the ball bounces back onto the nearer upright after hitting the far one, it may still run the hoop, especially if the ball has enough top spin.



The ball will not run the hoop in an angled hoop shot if it hits the nearer upright first.

You must aim at a point between the centre of the hoop and the far upright. The greater the angle of approach, the closer the aim should be towards the far upright in order that the ball misses the nearer upright. When the angle of approach is so large that your aim needs to be almost directly at the far upright, then it is almost impossible to run the hoop. In that case, a jump-shot (described below) might work because of the large amount of top spin such a shot imparts on the ball. Usually, however, it would be better not to try to run the hoop at all from such a large angle. Depending on the positions of the other balls, it may be better to roll your ball gently into the jaws of the hoop or else hit an opponent's ball away (see examples 1 and 2 on the next page). The limiting angle of approach depends on the hoop width but is typically around 45 degrees.

The jump shot. The jump shot is commonly used in golf croquet to run a hoop when an opponent has lodged their ball in the jaws of the hoop. It is a powerful way of winning a hoop from an otherwise hopeless position. The jump shot can also be used to run a hoop from a sharp angle, as described above, or to jump over an obstacle in order to hit an opponent's ball away. The jump shot is achieved by angling the mallet so that it is pointing downwards at a considerable angle at the moment of impact with the striker ball. To achieve this, your feet should be well forward compared to your normal stance.



The point of impact should be about half way between the North pole and equator of the ball. The balls of your feet should be roughly level with the striker ball. Most people also have their toes pointing inwards slightly for a jump shot¹. Remember, the ball is not scooped into the air, it is actually pushed into the ground so that it bounces up into the air. The grip should be quite firm. The ball should be hit quite hard but with little follow through.

The description above is for a jump shot from about two to four feet in front of the hoop. With practice you should succeed from that distance most of the time. It is possible to do jump shots from further away, but they are very difficult. For a jump shot from two or three yards the ball does not need to rise as sharply. This can be achieved by standing slightly further back and by using a follow through rather like a normal shot. You still have to stand well forward because you have to hit down on the ball. You just don't stand as far forward as for a short jump shot.

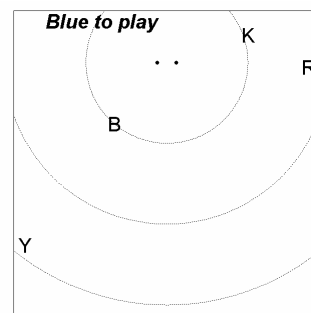
Key points

1. For a hoop shot, stand slightly closer to the ball in order to give it a bit of top spin.
2. For an angled hoop shot it is very important to miss the nearer upright.
3. A jump shot can be used (by you or your opponent) to steal an apparently lost hoop

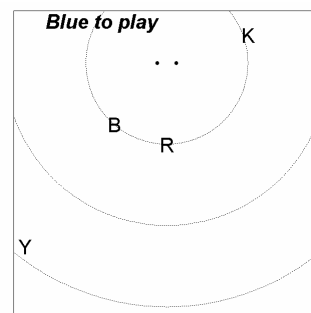
Balls and hoops are not to scale. Concentric circles indicate distances, in yards, from the hoop.

B = Blue, **R** = Red, **K** = Black, **Y** = Yellow

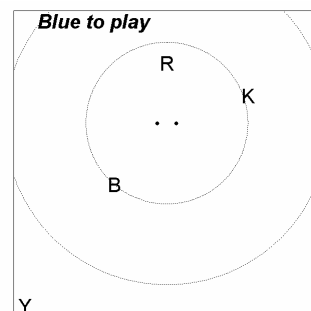
Example 1: Running the hoop from that angle with blue would be quite difficult. It is much easier to roll blue gently into the jaws of the hoop. It is safe to do so because the opposition balls are not well placed to knock it out..



Example 2: Although blue is in the same position as in the first example, red is now has an easy jump shot through the hoop over blue if blue sits in the jaws. A better shot for blue now would be to hit red away with a stun shot.



Example 3: This time red is well placed behind the hoop to knock blue away if it sits in the jaws of the hoop. Blue would be better off either attempting to run the hoop despite the severe angle of approach or else sitting in front of the hoop, slightly to the left and partly wired from red. Blue must be careful because if blue finishes near the hoop but slightly to the right of it then yellow may have an “in-off” opportunity, i.e. yellow could go through the hoop by deflecting off blue.



¹ This description of a jump shot is for a square stance. Some people use a side-on stance for jump shots even if they use a square stance for all other shots.