

1. Striking the ball

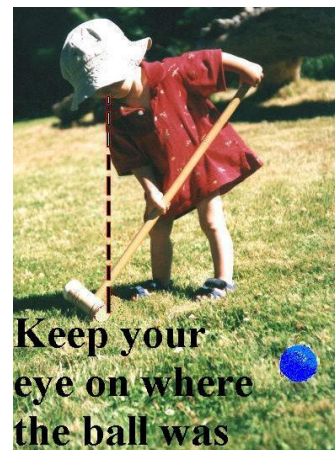
The following things are important for almost any shot, whether you are attempting to run a hoop, hit another ball away or just place your ball in a favourable position:

- Correct body alignment
- Swinging the mallet in a straight line
- Keeping your eye on the ball
- Following through

Correct body alignment. Your body should be aligned so that if you swing your arms and mallet loosely, like a pendulum, the line of swing of the mallet is through both the striker ball and your target. The best way to align your body correctly is to “stalk the ball”, i.e. approach the striker ball from a few yards away and along a line such that the ball is directly between you and your target. If you like, you can check your alignment by casting over the ball, i.e. by doing a few of the loose pendulum-like swings described above, making sure you don’t accidentally hit your ball in the process.

Swinging the mallet in a straight line. Whilst keeping your eyes focussed on the ball, start with a smooth backswing that takes the mallet head directly away from the target. This is not easy to do. There is a common tendency to pull the mallet to one side at the start of the backswing and then swing it around in an arc. Keeping the elbows in can help maintain a straight backswing. The further you want to hit the ball, the bigger the backswing should be. Let gravity do most of the work. A smooth stroke where the weight of the mallet provides most of the force will help you keep the mallet in a straight line throughout the entire stroke. Using too much muscle power or being too jerky will push the mallet off line.

Keeping your eye on the ball. This is very important. Looking directly at the point you want to hit will make it much more likely that you will hit that point with the centre of the face of the mallet. Keep looking at that point until well after the ball is no longer there. If you look up to see where the ball has gone, your shoulders will actually start to move before you’ve struck the ball and this will cause you to miss hit the ball. So, keep your eyes on the ball, keep your head down and your shoulders still. It’s hardest to keep your eye on the ball when you are doing a crucial shot, but if you want to succeed, you must not look up. It has even been said that you should not *see* your ball going through a hoop, you should *hear* it going through.



Following through. A good follow through helps to insure that the mallet maintains the correct line. Reach forward with the arms to keep the mallet head parallel to the ground for longer.

Key points

1. Regardless of what you try to do with your arms, the ball will go where your body is facing.
2. Keep your entire swing in a straight line through your ball and the target.
3. Keep your eyes focussed on the point on the ball that you want to hit with the mallet. Keep your eyes focussed at that point in space until *after* the ball has gone.