

Petanque Libre

Rules for the game of Petanque Libre
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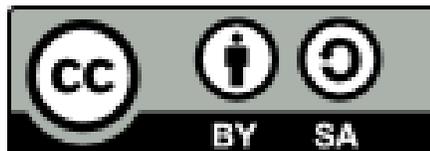
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Rules of the game of Petanque Libre

Overview

- (1) **Petanque** is a game of skill in which two teams compete. Each team consists of 1, 2, or 3 players. All players on a team play with the same number of metal balls called **boules**: 2 boules for each player on a triples team; 3 boules for each player on a doubles team; 4 boules for each player on a singles team.
- (2) The area where a game of petanque is played is called **the terrain**. If the terrain has no boundaries, it is called **an open terrain**. If the terrain has boundaries, it is called **a bounded terrain**. There are supplemental rules, in addition to the basic rules of the game, for a game played on a bounded terrain.
- (3) A game consists of a series of rounds. Each round is called **a mene**. A game consists of as many menes as are necessary for one of the teams to reach the winning score of 13 points.
- (4) Each mene begins with a player drawing or placing a circle on the ground. The player then stands in the circle and throws out a small wooden target ball called **the jack**.
- (5) After the jack has been thrown, the players throw or roll their boules, attempting to get their boules closer to the jack than the opposing team's boules, or to hit the opposing team's boules away from the jack, or to hit their own team's boules closer to the jack, or to hit and move the jack. Each player, while throwing a boule, must stand inside the circle with both feet on the ground.
- (6) After a boule is played, the team with the boule closest to the jack is said **to have the point**. The team that does not have the point plays the next boule.
- (7) The mene continues as long as the jack is alive and at least one team has an unplayed boule.
- (8) At the end of the mene, if the jack is alive, the team with the boule closest to the jack wins the mene and scores one point for each of its boules that is closer to the jack than the opposing team's closest boule. The other team does not score any points. There are special scoring rules for a mene that ends because the jack has become dead, or for other unusual situations.
- (9) There are no rules about the type of surface upon which petanque may be played. Traditionally, petanque is played on a flat, level surface of hard-packed dirt.

Game objects

- (10) There are three kinds of **game objects** in petanque: the boules, the jack, and the terrain.
- (11) **The boules** are metal balls that conform to FIPJP regulations for the size and weight of petanque boules. **FIPJP** is the *Fédération Internationale de Pétanque et Jeu Provençal*. Except for the effects of normal wear, the playing characteristics of the boules should not have been changed since the time they left the factory. Boules may be painted or marked to help in the identification of a set, as long as that painting or marking does not change the playing characteristics of the boules.
- (12) **The jack** is a wooden ball that conforms to FIPJP regulations for the size and weight of jacks.
- (13) **The terrain** is the ground (that is, the surface) upon which the game is played. The terrain also includes things in or on that ground (e.g. stones, leaves, tree roots, lamp posts, walls), and things above that ground (e.g. ceilings, light fixtures, tree limbs).
- (14) **A playing area** is an area that contains one or several terrains. When a game is being played on a specific terrain in the playing area, that terrain is the **home terrain** of the game.

- (15) **The throwing circle** (or simply **the circle**) is a circular figure drawn on the ground, or a circular object placed on the ground, to indicate the place from which the jack and the boules are thrown during a mene. A drawn circle is said to be **active** during the mene for which it was drawn. At the end of the mene it becomes **inactive** and it may be erased.
- (16) The inside diameter of a physical circle is 50cm. The diameter of a drawn circle is approximately 50cm. A drawn circle may be accepted as drawn, or may be challenged and re-drawn by agreement of the teams.
- (17) A measurement from the circle to another object is made from the inside edge of the circle.

Legal events, illegal events, and undoing illegal events

- (18) We say that a game object (a boule or a jack or a part of the terrain) was **moved** if it was stationary and its location was changed, or it was moving and its speed or direction was changed.
- (19) There are two ways in which a game object may be **legally moved** between the time that the circle is placed on the ground and the time that the points are agreed. [1] A player may throw the jack or a boule in conformity with the rules. [2] A game object may hit or be hit by another game object.
- (20) **An illegal event** is an event in which the location of a stationary game object is illegally changed, or the speed or direction of a moving game object is illegally changed.
- (21) It is illegal for an object that is not part of the game to move game objects. Such **foreign objects** include human beings, the wind, and objects from outside the game (e.g. an animal, a football, a boule from another game).
- (22) **Undoing** an illegal event means that the two teams agree to restore illegally-moved stationary game objects as nearly as possible to the places where they were located before they were moved, or agree to place a moving game object where it would have gone if its speed or direction had not illegally been changed.
- (23) If it is possible for the two teams to undo an illegal event, the teams will undo it. If they cannot undo an illegal event, they will leave all of the game objects where they are and continue with the game.
- (24) If a player accidentally moves a boule or jack while measuring, or if a stationary boule or jack is picked up or moved before the points have been agreed, it is restored to its original location by agreement of the teams. A stationary jack or a boule that is bumped and rocks slightly in place is not considered to have been moved.
- (25) If the throwing circle is illegally moved, it is restored to its original location by agreement of the teams.

Miscellaneous terminology

- (26) The jack is **visible from the circle** if a player can see the jack while standing upright (or, for a player in a wheelchair, sitting) in the circle. If the only thing blocking a player's view of the jack is a boule, the jack is considered to be visible from the circle.
- (27) **A throwing obstacle** is an object or condition of the ground that makes it dangerous for a player to throw while standing in the circle, or makes it difficult for a player to throw with his normal throwing form.
- (28) **A pointing obstacle** is an object or condition of the ground that makes it impossible to point a boule to every location on the terrain within a meter of the jack.
- (29) Before the start of a game, the teams use a random procedure (**a draw**) to determine which team plays first.
- (30) **The scoring team** is the team that last scored a point. Before the first point is scored, the team that won the draw is considered to be the scoring team.
- (31) A team **has the point** if at least one of its boules is closer to the jack than any of the opposing team's boules.

- (32) If one of the teams has the point, we say that the point is **decided**. If neither team has the point, we say that the point is **undecided**.
- (33) If the boules closest to the jack belong to different teams and are at the same distance from the jack, this is called **an equidistant boules** situation. In an equidistant boules situation the point is undecided.
- (34) If there are no boules on the terrain, the point is undecided.
- (35) At the end of the mene, if the jack is alive but the point is undecided, neither team scores any points. When neither team scores any points, we say that the mene is **scoreless**.

Dead ground and the death of a boule or jack

- (36) Before the start of a game, the teams agree on which part of the playing area will be **live ground** for the game. Any area outside of that live ground is **dead ground** for the game.
- (37) Between menes the teams may agree to designate additional areas of the playing area (e.g. puddles of rain water) as dead ground.
- (38) Saying that a boule or a jack is **dead** means that it is no longer considered to be a game object.
- (39) If a jack or a boule comes onto, or crosses, dead ground, the jack or boule becomes dead immediately. The entire jack or boule must be above dead ground in order for it to be considered dead. A jack or boule that is partially above live ground is not dead.
- (40) A boule that becomes dead during a mene stays dead until the completion of the agreement of points for the mene.
- (41) The jack is dead in any of the following circumstances.
 - [1] The jack comes onto, or crosses, dead ground.
 - [2] There is dead ground between the jack and any part of the circle.
 - [3] The jack is not visible from the circle when there is at least one boule still to be played.
 - [4] The jack is displaced to a location that is more than 20 meters from the circle.
 - [5] The jack is displaced to a location that is less than 3 meters from the circle.
 - [6] The location of the jack is unknown (that is, the jack is lost).
 - [7] The jack has no fixed location (e.g. because it is floating in water).

Forbidden and permitted changes to the terrain

- (42) It is forbidden for players to remove, press down, crush, or move any part of the terrain at any time during the game. The terrain may not be raked or groomed at any time during the game. A player may not place or leave any object on the terrain that might interfere with the game or the movement of the game objects.
- (43) **A hole** is an impact crater in the surface of the terrain that was created by a boule striking the terrain earlier in the game or during an earlier game.
- (44) During the game it is forbidden for players to make marks on, or to erase marks from, or to make changes to, the terrain, except in the following cases—
 - [1] At the beginning of a mene, before the jack is thrown, the active circle should be drawn or marked. At the same time any player may erase the marks of circles that are no longer active.

[2] If the nature of the surface of the terrain makes it impossible to draw or mark the circle, the team that draws or places the circle may clear an area in the surface of the terrain to create a circular area that will act as the throwing circle; at the end of the mène that area must be filled in and the surface of the terrain must be restored to its original condition.

[3] A team may mark the location of the jack or a boule; later such marks may be erased.

[4] A team may mark the location of an object to be removed in order to permit measurement; after completion of the measurement the object should be restored to its original location and such marks may be erased.

[5] A team that is about to play the jack or a boule may repair one hole in the terrain. The repair must be limited to restoring the surface of the terrain to its condition before the hole was created.

[6] A player may not smooth out or tamp down any part of the surface of the terrain that is not part of a hole. Specifically a player may not smooth out a track left on the ground by a rolling boule.

[7] It is specifically forbidden for players to make any mark on, or make any change to, the ground in order to guide a boule or to mark a target location on the ground.

Starting a game

(45) The team that won the draw chooses the game's home terrain and starts the first mène.

Starting a mène

(46) A mène begins with the scoring team drawing or placing the circle on the ground. Then the jack is put onto the terrain. Finally, to start the mène, the scoring team throws the first boule.

Drawing or placing the circle

(47) The scoring team starts a mène by drawing or placing the throwing circle.

[1] The circle must be on the game's home terrain (if the game has a home terrain).

[2] The circle must be at least 1 meter from any throwing obstacle.

[3] The circle must be at least 2 meters from any other active circle.

(48) After the first mène, the scoring team positions the throwing circle on the terrain using this procedure.

[1] The circle is placed around the jack's location at the end of the previous mène. If the jack was alive but outside of the home lane, then the circle is placed on the home lane as close as possible to the jack's last location. If the jack was hit across a dead-ball line, then the circle is placed on the home lane as close as possible to the place where the jack crossed the dead-ball line.

Then, before each attempt to throw the jack—

[2] If the circle is in a location from which the jack cannot be thrown to the maximum legal distance (10 meters), the scoring team may optionally move the circle in a direction away from the circle's location in the previous mène, up to but not beyond the point where it is possible to throw the jack to the maximum legal distance in the direction of the circle's location in the previous mène.

[3] If the circle is located less than 1 meter from a throwing obstacle, or less than 2 meters from another game's active circle, the circle is moved to avoid those problems.

(49) The team that places a physical circle should mark the circle's location. The circle's location is marked in order to assist in restoring the circle to its original location if it is accidentally moved or picked up.

Putting the jack onto the terrain

- (50) The location of a thrown or placed jack is **valid** under the following conditions.
- [1] The jack is located on the game's home terrain (if the game has a home terrain).
 - [2] The distance between the circle and the jack is at least 6 meters and at most 10 meters.
 - [3] The jack is at least 1 meter from any pointing obstacle.
 - [4] The jack is at least 1 meter from any dead ground.
 - [5] The jack is not dead. (See "Dead ground and death of a boule or jack".)
 - [6] The jack is not in a location that might cause the game to interfere with or be affected by some nearby activity.
- (51) The jack is put onto the terrain using the following procedure. The scoring team attempts to throw a valid jack. If after one minute or three attempts the team has not thrown the jack to a valid location, it gives the jack to the opposing team. If it is not possible to place the jack at the maximum legal distance from the circle, the opposing team may optionally move the circle, as described earlier. The opposing team then places the jack on the terrain by hand, in a location that both teams agree is valid.
- (52) After the jack is thrown, both teams have the right to challenge the jack. To **challenge the jack** is to request that measurement be made in order to verify that all of the validity conditions for the jack have been met. A team loses its right to challenge the jack when it throws its first boule or when measurement shows that the jack is in a valid location.
- (53) A challenge to the distance of a thrown jack is resolved by measuring the distance between the circle and the jack. If the jack was pushed by the first boule and the jack's original location was marked, the challenge is resolved by measuring the distance between the circle and the mark. If the jack's original location was not marked, the challenge is resolved by measuring the distance between the circle and the jack.
- (54) After the jack has been thrown, if the opposing team picks up the jack without the agreement of the team that threw it, the jack is restored to its original location. The opposing team may then challenge the jack.

Playing the first boule

- (55) The first boule of a mene is played by a member of the scoring team. The player that plays the first boule is not required to be the same player that threw the jack.
- (56) If the first boule played goes onto dead ground, the teams play alternately, starting with the opposing team, which throws its first boule. The teams play alternately until there is a boule on the terrain or the teams have played all of their boules.

Deciding which team plays next

- (57) We say that it is one team's **turn to play** when that team should play the next boule.
- (58) This is the procedure for determining which team should play the next boule.
- [1] If only one team has unplayed boules, then that team plays its remaining boules.
 - [2] If both teams have unplayed boules and the point is decided, then the next boule is played by the team that does not have the point.

[3] If both teams have unplayed boules and the point is not decided, the teams play alternately, starting with the team that played the boule that created the undecided point. The teams play alternately until the point is decided or one team has played all of its boules.

- (59) After a boule has been played, either team may **challenge the point**, that is, request that play be suspended so that measurements can be made to determine which team should play next.
- (60) It is the responsibility of both teams to reach an agreement about which team has the point and which team should play the next boule. If both teams agree on which team should play the next boule, and that team plays the next boule, the boule is considered to have been played legally.
- (61) Each team is responsible for knowing how many unplayed boules it has, and for supplying that information to the opposing team on request.
- (62) **A boule played out of turn** is a boule that was played when a team mistakenly believed that it was their turn to play. A boule played out of turn is left where it is. It should not be undone.
- (63) **A forgotten boule** is a boule that was not played because a team mistakenly believed that they had thrown all of their boules. If a forgotten boule is discovered after the opposing team has played a boule, or after the points have been agreed for the mene, the forgotten boule is dead and may not be played.

Measuring

- (64) **Measuring** means measuring the shortest distance between the surface of a boule and the surface of the jack.
- (65) The team that last played a boule is responsible for measuring to determine which team should play next. After that measurement, the opposing team may also measure.
- (66) After the teams have agreed about which team should play next, the team that plays next may measure in order to assist them in deciding how to play their next boule. Time used in such **tactical measurement** counts against the one minute allowed for the team to play its next boule.
- (67) If a boule (or any movable object on the terrain) makes measurement difficult, the boule may be temporarily removed. The boule's location is marked before it is removed. After measurement is completed, the boule is restored to its original location and the marks may be erased.

General rules about throwing

- (68) Starting from the time that a team knows that it is their turn to throw the jack, the team has a maximum of one minute in which to place the circle and throw the jack. Starting from the time that a team knows that it is their turn to play the next boule, the team has a maximum of one minute to play the next boule.
- (69) A player may play a boule only while standing in the active circle. From the time that a thrown boule leaves the player's hand until the time that it hits the ground, both of the player's feet must be touching the ground, and no part of the player's feet may touch or be above the circle. During this time, no part of the player's body except his feet may touch the ground.
- (70) A player who is not able to stand with both feet inside the circle may throw with only one foot inside the circle. A player who uses a support object may play with only one side of the support object inside the circle. This should be the side of the support object (e.g. the wheel of the wheelchair) that is closest to the player's throwing arm.
- (71) A player in the circle may play only one boule at a time, and must allow all game objects on the terrain to come to rest (i.e. to become motionless) before playing his next boule.
- (72) When a player plays a boule, the boule must be clean and dry (weather permitting).

- (73) A player who violates any of these general rules about throwing deserves comments and criticism from his fellow players, but there is no other penalty.
- (74) If a player plays a boule that is not one of his own unplayed boules, the **mistakenly-thrown boule** is replaced with one of the player's unplayed boules, or (if he has no unplayed boules) with one of his team-mates' unplayed boules. If his team has no unplayed boules, the opposing team may choose to undo the illegal event, or to declare the jack to be dead (in which case they score as many points as they have unplayed boules).

Visibility of the jack

- (75) If a foreign object comes onto the terrain and makes it impossible to see the jack from the circle, remove the foreign object. If a foreign object comes onto the terrain and seriously disturbs the terrain, remove the foreign object and repair the disturbance to the terrain.
- (76) If the jack is hit and moved, then either team may **challenge the visibility of the jack**. A team may not challenge the visibility of the jack if it has no unplayed boules. A team loses the right to challenge the visibility of the jack when it verbally agrees that the jack is visible, or when it plays a boule against the moved jack.
- (77) After a challenge to the visibility of the jack, the jack is dead if either team asserts that one of its players cannot see the jack while standing (or sitting in a wheelchair) in the circle.
- (78) A moved jack is considered to be dead from the time that its visibility is successfully challenged, not from the time that it was moved.

The agreement of points

- (79) A mene is finished when both teams have played all of their boules or the jack is dead. After the end of a mene, the teams agree on which team (if any) won the mene and how many points it scored. This activity is called **the agreement of points**.
- (80) If the jack is alive and the point is decided, then the team that has the point wins the mene and scores as many points as it has boules that are closer to the jack than the opposing team's closest boule.
- (81) If the jack is alive and the point is undecided, then neither team wins the mene and neither team scores any points: the mene is **scoreless**. At the start of the next mene, the scoring team is the same team that was the scoring team at the start of the scoreless mene.
- (82) If the jack is dead and one and only one team has unplayed boules, then that team wins the mene and scores as many points as it has unplayed boules.
- (83) If the jack is dead and neither team has unplayed boules, or both teams have unplayed boules, then neither team wins the mene; the mene is **scoreless**. At the start of the next mene, the scoring team is the same team that was the scoring team at the start of the scoreless mene.

Guidelines for players

- (84) During a game, the only boules that you may hold in your hands are your own unplayed boules.
- (85) During a game, if a boule or jack is lost or broken, replace it with a similar boule or jack. If a boule or jack breaks into pieces during a mene, pick up the pieces and put a similar boule or jack in the place where the biggest broken piece was. If one of your boules breaks during a mene, after the agreement of points you may replace your entire set of boules with another set.

- (86) If your game's jack is knocked into an area where another game is in progress, mark your jack's location, pick up the jack, and wait for the end of the game that is in progress in the other game. While waiting, show patience and courtesy. When the other game has finished its game, put the jack down in the marked location, finish your game, and return to your game's home terrain. If a boule, rather than a jack, is knocked into an area where another game is in progress, follow a similar procedure, or the owner of the boule may declare it to be dead and remove it from the game.
- (87) While an opposing player is standing in the circle, you must stand at least 2 meters from the circle, the jack, and the line of play. **The line of play** is an imaginary line extending from the circle, through the jack, and continuing on indefinitely.

Special rules for play on a bounded terrain

- (88) Petanque may be played on an open terrain or on a bounded terrain. A **bounded terrain** is a terrain that is enclosed by **natural barriers** or by **boundary lines**.
- (89) **Natural barriers** include physical objects such as curbs and sidewalks in a public park, and sideboards whose purpose is to prevent boules from leaving the terrain. Before the start of the game the teams will agree about which physical objects, if any, will be considered natural barriers for the game.
- (90) A jack or a boule that hits a natural barrier is dead.
- (91) **Boundary lines** are physical objects (e.g. strings or painted lines) installed on the playing area to create boundaries for the lanes. The outer edge of a boundary line indicates the edge of the lane.
- (92) When boundary lines divide a large playing area into smaller areas, those smaller areas are called **lanes**. Each game's home terrain is located in one of the lanes. That lane is the **home lane** of the game.
- (93) Boundary strings are not permitted to be moved during the game. If a boundary string is moved during the game (e.g. by a boule or by a player's foot), the edge of the lane is not considered to have been moved, and the boundary string is immediately restored to its original location.
- (94) The home lane is live ground for the game. Before the start of the game the teams will agree about which adjacent lanes, if any, will be included in the live ground for the game.
- (95) The boundary line between live ground and dead ground is called the **dead-ball line** for the game. Any live jack or boule that completely crosses the dead-ball line immediately becomes dead.
- (96) A **zombie boule** is a boule that goes onto dead ground and then comes back on to (or near) live ground: it is a dead boule whose location on or near the terrain makes it possible for it to physically interact with the jack or live boules on the terrain.
- (97) For the purposes of the game, a zombie boule is considered to be a feature of the terrain. If a live boule or jack hits or is hit by a zombie boule, the live boule or jack is considered to have interacted with a feature of the terrain. The interaction is not an illegal event, and the effects of the interaction should not be undone.
- (98) A zombie boule should be removed from the terrain as soon as it is safe to do so. Either team may remove a zombie boule. A dead boule should be left on the ground at least 10cm outside of the game's live ground.

The Consensus Rule

- (99) The above rules may be changed, waived, supplemented, or over-ridden by agreement of the teams or by the competition organizer.

About Petanque Libre

About the Petanque Libre project

The document titled "Official Rules for the Sport of Petanque" and published by the *Fédération Internationale de Pétanque et Jeu Provençal* (FIPJP) does not, strictly speaking, contain the rules for the game of petanque. It contains a mixture of rules of the game, alternate rules for special kinds of competitions (time-limited, juniors, etc.), rules for administering FIPJP-sanctioned competitions, and guidelines for umpires. The document is also extremely poorly written— a problem that the FIPJP handles by giving umpires maximal discretion in the interpretation of the rules and absolute authority in the enforcement of their decisions. This means that an umpire is an indispensable component of any game of petanque played by FIPJP rules.

The dependency of the FIPJP rules on the presence of an umpire means that the FIPJP rules are poorly suited for use in games played without an umpire. For such games players need a set of rules that they themselves can understand, interpret, and apply without an umpire. The goal of the Petanque Libre project is to develop such a set of rules.

The rules of Petanque Libre are not intended to replace the FIPJP rules: only the FIPJP can specify the rules of play for its own competitions. Rather, the rules of Petanque Libre are an alternate set of rules designed specifically for use in games without umpires.

The canonical version of the rules of Petanque Libre is the English-language version available on the Petanque Libre Project web site— <http://PetanqueLibre.wordpress.com>. The Creative Commons license governing that document allows translation into other languages. The Petanque Libre Project welcomes the translation of the rules into other languages and will be happy to work with you if you decide to prepare a translation.

About the Petanque Libre rules

The written rules for the game of Petanque Libre are an attempt to codify what we (the Petanque Libre Project) consider to be the true, original form of petanque. In our view, FIPJP petanque is an adapted form of a traditional game: the rules of the original, traditional game have been modified by the FIPJP in order to adapt them to competition conditions. In contrast with the FIPJP rules, the rules of Petanque Libre are designed for use in petanque games played in the traditional way: outside of an organized competition, without an umpire.

The rules of Petanque Libre are, in broad outline, similar to the FIPJP rules. One of the goals of the rules of Petanque Libre, however, is to be better than the FIPJP rules. We want the rules themselves to be better, and we want the descriptions of the rules to be clearer. For one thing, we want the rules of Petanque Libre to provide clear and practical guidance for dealing with issues that frequently arise. That goal requires many lower-level differences between the rules of Petanque Libre and the FIPJP rules.

The most obvious difference is the essential role that Petanque Libre assigns to agreement between the teams. Agreement between the teams plays the role in Petanque Libre that the umpire plays in FIPJP petanque.

Another significant difference is that the rules of Petanque Libre assume three things that the FIPJP rules do not, and cannot, assume. First, the rules of Petanque Libre assume that all players are trying to behave in compliance with the rules; nobody is trying to cheat and violations of the rules are accidental. Second, the rules of Petanque Libre assume that the teams are on friendly terms and wish to cooperate in making a game that runs smoothly, fairly, and enjoyably for all of the players. Third, the rules of Petanque Libre assume that when a problematic situation arises the two teams can come to a solution that is reasonable and agreeable to

both. These are assumptions that the FIPJP rules cannot make, but that are realistic for the conditions under which petanque is traditionally played.

These differences can be seen most clearly in the difference between the ways that the two sets of rules handle illegal events. An illegal event is a kind of event that is not possible within the rules of the game, but that is physically possible and actually occurs in real life. (Think of a player accidentally upsetting the chessboard during a game of chess. Upsetting the board is not a legal move in chess, but it sometimes actually happens and we need to have procedures for dealing with it.) Examples of illegal events include: a player accidentally picks up a boule or the circle too soon; a player accidentally kicks the jack or a boule on the ground or stops a moving boule or jack; a player accidentally moves the jack or a boule while measuring; a boule is shot out-of-bounds and then rebounds back onto the terrain and moves the jack or other boules. There are so many ways that an illegal event can occur, and the circumstances surrounding illegal events can be so varied, that it is impossible to write cut-and-dried rules that can handle all types of illegal events in a fair way.

The best way of dealing with an illegal event is of course to undo it— to travel back in time to the instant before it occurred, and to prevent it from occurring. Petanque Libre assumes that something like that is in fact possible. A key feature of Petanque Libre is the idea that the two teams can "undo" an illegal event by agreeing to restore the game objects to their original (that is, pre-illegal event) locations. One might be tempted to say "approximately to restore" because exactly restoring a game object isn't possible. But the difference between "exactly" and "approximately" isn't a useful one, and Petanque Libre generally avoids using it. Petanque Libre holds that if the jack or a boule can be put back in a location that is acceptable to both teams, that is good enough for the purposes of the game. It is possible, of course, for an illegal event to cause damage that is too extensive to be undone. So a short summary of Petanque Libre's rule for undoing illegal events is this: *If it can be undone, undo it. If it can't be undone, there's nothing to be done. Leave everything where it is and continue with the game.* Any set of rules for a game in which illegal events are possible must find a balance between providing too much and not enough guidance to players; between providing too much and not enough flexibility. Petanque Libre assumes that the teams are on friendly terms and wish to cooperate, and gives the teams a lot of flexibility in creating a game that runs smoothly, fairly, and enjoyably for all of the players.

At this point, it is natural to raise the question: "But what if the two teams cannot agree?" Our answer is that the two teams always can and will be able to reach an agreement. In the absence of an umpire, there is no alternative to agreement except to abandon the game. And because the rules of Petanque Libre are designed for friendly games, it is reasonable to assume that, except in the most extreme circumstances, nobody will simply walk away from a game. The two teams will always be able to reach some kind of agreement.

Finally, let us note another difference. FIPJP rules require umpires to make decisions based only on marks that they can see on the ground. Petanque Libre has no such rules. If there are marks on the ground the teams will of course consider them when making a decision, but marks on the ground are not necessary for the teams to be able to agree to restore an illegally-moved game object to its original location.

Using Petanque Libre in an umpired competition

In theory, the rules of Petanque Libre can be used in an umpired competition. The competition organizer can specify Petanque Libre as the rules of the game during the competition, and can replace the Consensus Rule with a rule saying that when teams cannot come to an agreement an umpire will be called in to render a decision. Ideally there would be a separate document containing guidelines for umpires. The competition rules would say that players would play by the rules of Petanque Libre, and umpires would follow the umpire's guidelines.

Comparing FIPJP rules and Petanque Libre rules

- (1) FIPJP rules about a puddle in which a jack is floating are poorly written and confusing. PL rules say that a jack is dead if it has no fixed location (e.g. because it is floating in a puddle). PL rules also allow the teams to agree to designate as dead ground any puddles that may appear on the terrain during a game.
- (2) FIPJP rules use the word "an obstacle" but never define it. PL rules explicitly define two terms: "a throwing obstacle" and "a pointing obstacle".
- (3) FIPJP rules describe conditions under which a jack is not considered to be visible from the circle, but do not specify any procedure for challenging the visibility of the jack. PL rules specify such a procedure.
- (4) Under FIPJP rules, the umpire, standing in the circle, decides whether or not the jack is visible. Under PL rules, the teams decide whether or not the jack is visible. *COMMENT: The PL procedure can be used in games without umpires. It is also fairer to wheelchair-based players, who may not be able to see a jack that a standing person can see.*
- (5) Under FIPJP rules, if the last boule knocks the jack out of sight, the jack is dead. Under PL rules, the jack cannot be declared dead because at that point no player can challenge its visibility. *COMMENT: The visibility rule exists to insure that a player is not forced to throw a boule toward a jack that he cannot see. When none of the players has a boule to throw, the question of the visibility of the jack is moot.*
- (6) Under FIPJP rules, if the scoring team throws a jack that it thinks is valid, but the opposing team (thinking that it is invalid) picks it up, the scoring team must throw the jack again. Under PL rules, the jack is restored to its original location by agreement of the teams; the opposing team may then challenge the jack if they wish. *COMMENT: FIPJP rules allow an opposing team to pick up — in effect, arbitrarily to undo — a thrown jack, and to do so with impunity.*
- (7) If a boule goes onto dead ground, becomes dead, and then comes back onto (or close to) live ground, PL rules refer to it as a **zombie boule**: it is a dead boule that may still physically interact with a live boule or jack.
 - [a] Under FIPJP rules, if the team that does not own the zombie boule throws its next boule while the zombie boule is still on live ground, the zombie boule comes back to life. Under PL rules, a zombie boule never comes back to life; it remains dead until the end of the mene. As long as it remains on live ground, it is considered to be a feature of the terrain, like a rock.
 - [b] Under FIPJP rules, if a zombie boule hits or is hit by the jack or by another boule, the proper action is to restore the jack or the boule to its original location (if possible). Under PL rules, a zombie boule is considered to be a feature of the terrain. Since it is legal for boules and the jack to interact with features of the terrain, nothing illegal has happened and everything is left where it is.
- (8) Starting with the 2016 revision of the rules, FIPJP allows a team only one attempt to throw the jack. PL allows a team the traditional three attempts to throw the jack before turning the jack over to the other team, which then places it on the ground by hand. *COMMENT: This preserves a cherished traditional feature of the game in a pragmatic and sensible way.*
- (9) Before the 2016 rules changes, FIPJP rules were never clear about when or how many times a team was allowed to move the circle while making its attempts to throw the jack. PL clearly specifies that a team may move the circle before each attempt to throw or place the jack.
- (10) FIPJP rules do not have an explicit rule about how to handle a boule played out-of-turn. PL rules do.
- (11) FIPJP rules do not have an explicit rule about how to handle a forgotten boule. PL rules do.
- (12) PL's rule about handling a mistakenly-thrown boule is more precise than FIPJP's rule.
- (13) FIPJP has a vague rule that specifies a nasty penalty for accidentally moving a boule or jack while measuring. PL has a clear, simple, and non-punitive rule.

- (14) FIPJP has vague rules that specify a nasty penalty for accidentally picking up the circle or your own team's boules before all boules have been thrown. PL has a clear, simple, and non-punitive rule.
- (15) FIPJP contains a vague rule about "a boule thrown contrary to rules". PL does not contain such a rule. **COMMENT:** *Under PL, no such rule is needed. PL has an explicit rule to cover every significant way in which a boule can be thrown improperly. PL also explicitly specifies that there is no penalty for minor infractions of the rules about throwing (see GENERAL RULES ABOUT THROWING).*
- (16) Unlike FIPJP rules, PL rules have a clean separation between the basic rules of the game and the additional rules required for a game played on a bounded terrain. **COMMENT:** *A clean separation of these two sorts of rules makes it easier to state each of them clearly.*
- (17) FIPJP rules use the expression "the end of the mene" to mean "after the agreement of points". PL rules define "the end of the mene" as the point when all boules have been played or the jack has become dead. **COMMENT:** *This definition makes the expression "the end of the mene" more useful for stating the rules.*
- (18) FIPJP rules say that in singles games (*tête-à-tête*) players play with 3 boules. PL rules say that singles players play with 4 boules. **COMMENT:** *Most players would prefer to play singles with 4 boules. PL rules contain a deliberately provocative specification (4 boules) because PL wants players to make an active decision about this matter—something that the Consensus Rule allows them to do.*
- (19) Unlike FIPJP, PL rules contain no rules for time-limited games, age-bracketed tournaments, the shape or size of bounded terrains, late-arriving players, players leaving the terrain during a game, and so on. **COMMENT:** *Rules of this sort belong in competition-level rules, not in the rules of the game.*

Petanque Libre rules interpretation guidelines

- (1) The OVERVIEW section provides a broad overview of the basics of the game. Other sections may add details and nuances to, or describe exceptions to, the general statements in the OVERVIEW section.
- (2) The word "accidentally" is used for rhetorical purposes only. In practice, PL makes no distinction between accidental and non-accidental actions.
- (3) Examples of undoing an illegal event include: putting an illegally-moved boule or jack back in its original location; and putting the jack or a boule (whose motion was interfered with) at approximately the location where it would have gone if it had not been interfered with.
- (4) Examples of a foreign object coming onto the terrain include: the wind blows some leaves or trash onto the terrain; a player drops a handkerchief onto the terrain; a football rolls onto the terrain; a tree branch falls onto the ground. If such an object interferes with the visibility of the jack, it must be removed.
- (5) Either team may remove a dead boule from the terrain. However, if the dead boule is near the dead-ball line, a wise team will obtain agreement from the boule's owner before removing it, and will not remove it while another player is in the circle and ready to throw.
- (6) [Q] A boule hits a stone which hits and moves the jack. What should be done?
[A] The stone, as part of the terrain, is a game object that was legally moved by another game object (the boule). So the jack was moved legally and it should be left where it is.
- (7) [Q] A boule pushes up a pile of dirt in front of the jack, hiding the jack. Is the jack dead?
[A] Yes, assuming that one of the teams challenges the visibility of the jack. The pushed-up dirt is part of the terrain; it is a game object that was legally pushed up by another game object, the boule. The jack therefore is hidden by a feature of the terrain (just as if it had rolled behind a large stone on the terrain).
- (8) [Q] The jack was knocked behind a tree. If I stand upright while I'm in the circle I can't see it. But if I lean to the right I can see it. Is it "visible from the circle"?
[A] No. A player should be able to stand upright in the circle and see the jack; if he can't do that, the jack is not considered to be visible. As the FIPJP rules say, "the jack must be visible to a player whose feet are placed at the extreme limits of the interior of the circle and whose body is absolutely upright."
- (9) Note that PL rules allow a team to accept the visibility of a jack that they cannot actually see. There may be circumstances in which a team would prefer to play against a jack that they cannot see, rather than kill the jack.
- (10) Note that neither PL nor FIPJP requires measurement of the thrown jack. If neither team chooses to challenge the thrown jack, the teams may play against a jack thrown to any distance.
- (11) The Consensus Rule provides for local or club rules and for rule modifications by a competition organizer. Some examples:
 - [*] Local rules may specify procedures for dealing with unusual terrain conditions in a club's boudrome.
 - [*] A competition organizer may specify additional rules for time-limited games. For example: competition-level rules may specify that in time-limited games the live ground for the game includes only the home lane.
 - [*] For games played on narrow lanes, a competition organizer may specify a reduced minimum distance between a thrown jack and the dead-ball line.

General principles for applying the rules

Even a well-written set of rules may be difficult to interpret in situations that are unusual, situations involving illegal events, or situations where rules seem to conflict with each other. To deal with such situations we need some higher-level general principles, over and above the written rules.

- (1) When an illegal action has been performed, it is permissible to continue the game in any way that is agreeable to both teams. This is the Consensus Rule. Any other principle may be over-ridden by the Consensus Rule.
- (2) A team that performs an illegal action (deliberately or not) may not benefit from it.
- (3) When a player performs an illegal action, the motive or cause for the illegal action is irrelevant when considering what to do next. Players are responsible for playing carefully as well as ethically. Carelessness and clumsiness are as unacceptable as deliberate cheating.
- (4) Apply the rule that is most-closely tailored to the situation in question. In a situation that is covered by a general rule and a specific rule, the specific rule takes precedence over the general rule.
- (5) It is legitimate to reason by analogy when there is no rule that exactly applies to a particular situation.
- (6) All other things being equal, continue the game in the way that is least punitive or least disruptive of the smooth flow of the game.