01 / ICE READING

Ice Reading for Club Curlers

A practical guide for club teams and skips

Read the shot before you explain the miss

Ice reading means learning how stones travel on the paths you are actually using. You are trying to answer two practical questions: How much weight does this shot need? Where should we aim?

Build your answer from several comparable shots. One surprising finish is a reason to pay attention, not proof that the ice changed or a stone is bad.

Give every observation a location

- Name the sheet and direction of play, such as “Sheet C, scoreboard to windows.”
- Name the path: the starting line, the brush position and the intended finish. “The left side” alone is too vague.
- Record the turn as clockwise or counterclockwise, viewed from above. Looking in the direction of travel, clockwise normally curls right and counterclockwise normally curls left. [1]
- Record the called weight and what was actually delivered. A draw and a firm takeout are different tests of a path.
- Note the stone number, handle colour, player, release, rotation and sweeping.

“In-turn” and “out-turn” depend on the delivering hand. Clockwise and counterclockwise make a shared notebook easier to read. If you use in/out, also record right- or left-handed delivery. [2]

Keep line and length separate

Line is the route the stone takes. Length is how far it travels. A stone can finish on the correct line but too deep, or at the correct depth but too wide.

Watch where the stone starts to bend and what it does near the finish. Do not copy a draw's brush position directly onto a takeout. Different weight changes the shot you are trying to read. Likewise, a different release or rotation makes a comparison less clean. [3], [4]

Treat the return direction and the other turn as new observations. A useful working note is “this draw curled more on that path today,” rather than “this sheet always curls four feet.”

Independent educational guide. Follow your club's safety guidance and the rules adopted by your event. Sources checked 10 October 2026.

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Watch first and label the uncertainty

Watch your team's shots and the opposition's shots from a permitted position without distracting anyone. Note the aim, weight and result; keep pace with the game. Curling Canada's skipping advice treats this as an ongoing learning habit. [5]

Use this quick review after an unexpected shot. These are questions to check, not diagnoses.

What you saw	What to check next
The stone was narrow immediately	Was the slide or release inside the intended line?
It finished deeper than expected	Was more weight delivered? Was the path or sweeping different?
It bent sooner or finished farther sideways	Compare weight, release, rotation, path and sweeping before changing the ice call.
It slowed or changed direction abruptly	Record a possible pick or other unusual event. Do not diagnose the cause from the finish alone.
Several comparable shots changed together	A path change is more plausible. Make a cautious adjustment and keep watching.
One numbered stone repeatedly differs	Start a separate stone comparison; do not label the entire sheet from that stone.

Separate the observation from the explanation

Observation: “Two unswept draws through that lane finished behind the tee.”

Possible explanation: “That lane may be getting keener.”

Next check: “Did their delivery speed and release look comparable to our earlier draws?”

Pebble condition, use of a path and frost can affect how ice plays. Changes need not be the same across the sheet or follow the same pattern every game. Record what is happening now. [3], [6]

Choose useful words

- “Observed once” means a clue to revisit.
- “Repeated under similar conditions” means a stronger working read.
- “Mixed evidence” means there is no clear pattern yet.
- “Different conditions” means do not combine the result with the earlier test.

These are HouseCall notebook labels, not statistical confidence levels. A missed delivery is still useful feedback; just keep it out of an ice-only comparison.

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03 / ICE READING

A purposeful practice session

This is an original HouseCall practice plan. Use a booked practice session and work within the available time. You do not have to test the whole sheet at once.

1. Choose one question. For example: “Do our draws through this lane still finish where we expect?”
2. Choose a familiar stone or provisional reference pair. Keep one player on the comparison series where practical.
3. Agree on direction, turn, brush position, intended weight, usual release and a sweeping plan. Begin with unswept comparisons when safe and practical.
4. Deliver a short series. After each shot, record the actual finish and whether line, weight or release made it unsuitable for comparison.
5. Repeat the useful shots. An initial three comparable attempts is a manageable practice target, not a rule that proves anything.
6. Change one question at a time. Try another turn, path or direction as a separately labelled series.
7. Revisit the original path. If your reference shots have shifted too, your earlier comparison may be out of date.
8. Finish with one team sentence: “For this path and weight, our current read is ___; we still need to check ___.”

The comparison principle is well established in coaching: line, release speed and rotation need to be similar, and repeated results matter. Human deliveries are never perfectly identical. [4]

Using a stopwatch is optional

Back-line-to-near-hog timing measures a short part of the delivery. It can help a team compare a player's shots, but a push, pull-back or different release after the timing interval can change the result.

Hog-to-hog timing measures travel from the delivery-end hog line to the playing-end hog line. To use it for draw-ice comparisons, also record where the stone stopped, its path and sweeping. Equal times with different finishes are not equal tests of “ice speed.” [6]

For either interval, agree on one convention. For this worksheet, start and stop when the front edge of the stone first reaches each named line's near edge in its direction of travel. Use the same timer and convention where possible. Write the interval name with the number.

Manual timing has reaction error. A tiny difference on a watch does not settle the cause of a miss. There is no universal draw split for every player, stone, path and rink. Keep watching and calling weight. [6]

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04 / FICTIONAL TEACHING EXAMPLE

Worked example

FICTIONAL OBSERVATIONS. This is an original teaching example, not a real club report or a target-time chart.

Practice question: Has one draw path changed?

Setup: Sheet C; scoreboard to windows; red stone 2; one right-handed player; clockwise draws toward the button; the same brush position; no sweeping; about four observed rotations from release to stop. Timing was not used. “About four” describes this example only, not a recommended rotation count.

Trial	What happened	What the team records
1	Finished near the tee, slightly left of the target	First reference; release appeared on line
2	Finished about one stone-width behind the tee	Player reported adding weight; exclude from ice comparison
3	Finished near the tee, close to trial 1	Second comparable reference
Later 1	Finished about one stone-width behind the tee	Release looked similar; a clue, not a conclusion
Later 2	Finished behind the tee again	Repeated change; delivery-speed uncertainty remains

Working read: “Our later draws on this path carried farther. The lane may be keener, but we have not proved why. Try a small weight adjustment and check the result.”

Avoid: “Red 2 is fast” or “the whole sheet got faster.” Neither claim was tested.

Share information the team can use

Before the shot, agree on the target, turn, weight and acceptable miss. During the shot, sweepers report expected finishing depth and update it; the person in the house calls line. The thrower promptly reports a noticeable delivery or release difference. [3]

Useful example calls:

- “Top four weight. Updating: tee-line now.”
- “It was inside the brush at release.”
- “Same path as the last draw, other stone.”
- “That was swept from halfway. Don't compare it to the unswept one.”

Sweeping affects travel and trajectory. Learn technique with a qualified instructor and follow the applicable equipment and sweeping rules. World Curling's 2026 policy prohibits techniques intended to slow a stone. There is no one-side-fits-all sweeping recipe in this guide. [7]

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05 / REUSABLE PRACTICE RECORD

Ice reading practice record

Date _____ Club _____ Sheet _____ Session/end _____

Direction of play _____ Player _____

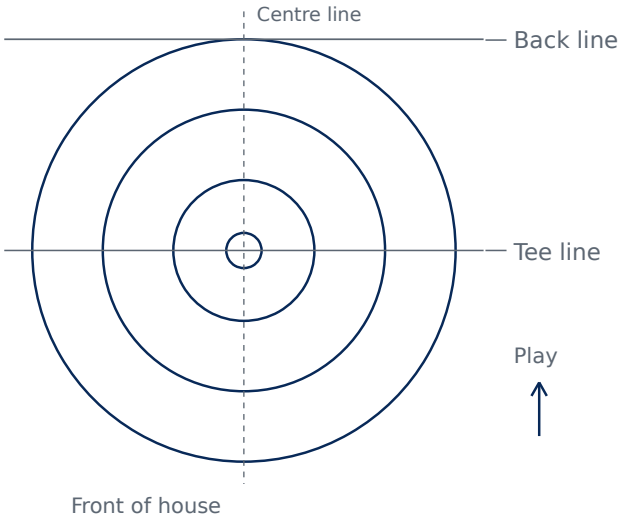
Stone number/handle colour _____ Turn: clockwise / counterclockwise

Question for this series _____

Brush position and target _____

Called weight _____ Sweeping plan _____ Rotation note _____

Timing interval, if used _____ Edge convention _____



DRAW YOUR SHOTS

Rings are 12, 8 and 4 feet across.
Mark each stone with its trial number.

Target / path

Draw the brush position, intended path and numbered finishes. Left and right are viewed from the delivery end toward the target.

Trial / stone	Time, if used	Delivery / rotation	Sweeping	Actual finish	Use / recheck

What repeated? _____

What else could explain it? _____

Our next adjustment or check _____

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Keep beside your practice notes

Before changing the ice call, ask: Same path? Same direction? Same turn? Similar weight and release? Similar rotation? Same stone? Comparable sweeping? More than one useful observation?

You do not need a perfect explanation to make the next sensible shot. Make a small, stated adjustment, watch the result and update the team.

Sources and further reading

The exercises, worksheet and fictional example are original HouseCall teaching materials. The sources below support the coaching principles and rules; they do not endorse this guide.

1. USA Curling, Intro to Curling. Rotation direction and the basic purpose of sweeping. https://www.usacurling.org/intro-to-curling

2. World Curling, The Rules of Curling, effective 1 September 2026, October revision. Glossary entry for in-turn; R4 for player positions. https://worldcurling.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/Rules-2026_Clean.pdf

3. Curling Canada and World Curling Federation, Discover Curling (2015), printed pp. 5-6, 45 and 49-52. Ice, stones, weight judgment and team communication. This guide does not adopt that manual's example timing tables or fixed rotation advice. https://www.curling.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Discover-Curling-Manual-1-1.pdf

4. Bill Tschirhart, Matching Stones 101 (10 February 2014). Primary coaching explanation of controlled comparisons and uncertainty. https://truenorthbill.blogspot.com/2014/02/matching-stones-101.html

5. Curling Canada, House Call: Don't skip out on skipping (28 January 2015). Observing aim, weight, outcomes and changes while keeping play moving. https://www.curling.ca/blog/2015/01/28/house-call-dont-skip-out-on-skipping/

6. CurlTech, Timing Rocks. Timing intervals, player-specific delivery differences, path changes and limits of timing alone. Numeric examples on that page are not universal targets. https://www.curltech.com/curling-training/timing-rocks

7. World Curling, Sweeping Technique Policy (6 January 2026), and current rules R8. https://worldcurling.org/2026/01/sweeping-technique-policy/

For the curious: Jensen and Shegelski's experimental study recorded shots over varied translational and rotational speeds on two ice surfaces. Its physical model is not a universal club-ice prediction tool. The practical task here is observation, not diagnosing the microscopic cause of curl. https://arxiv.org/abs/2112.09835

Sources checked 10 October 2026. Recheck event rules before competition.

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