



ONTARIO CURLING ASSOCIATION

1400 Bayly St. Office Mall 2, #2B, Pickering, ON L1W 3R2
Ph: 905-831-1757 Toll Free: 1-877-668-2875 Fax: 905-831-1083 E-mail: information@ontcurl.com

Is Your Club "Turning People On" To Curling Or "Turning Them Off" ?

The following are 25 areas to consider, and to help YOU decide.

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION:

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A clean, neat, tidy curling facility with well-organized and clear signage along with updated bulletin boards gives the impression that the club's leaders are in control and running it like a business. The opposite can create the idea that nobody is in charge and worse still, that they don't care.

It should be every member's responsibility to help the club create a good impression for its members, potential members and the community. This should include both the inside and the outside of the club, twelve months of the year.

ORIENTATION

Every new member of a curling club needs to be given an orientation to the club. All of the club's policies, procedures, rules, objectives, challenges, communication systems and other relevant information must be shared in order to make the integration of every new member into the club as efficient and effective as possible. Having a club "Buddy Program" is a good way to integrate new members.

SAFE AND SECURE

Everyone needs to feel that both they and their belongings are safe and secure. The club must ensure that they keep the outside area of the club, including the parking lot, well lit and that someone is available to walk members to their cars at night if needed. Where possible, club locker rooms must be accessible only to members.

Every club must also ensure that they have a clearly defined Health & Safety Policy and a Harassment Policy and that both are communicated to the members.

ICE CONDITIONS

Poor curling ice, especially slow and inconsistent ice, can be extremely frustrating for many curlers. While facility, equipment and environmental factors may make having good curling ice difficult, there are a number of excellent resources and learning opportunities available through Curl Ontario, the Ontario Recreation Facilities Association and the Ontario Curling Association's Ice Team to assist the club's Ice Technician.

Curling club leaders should encourage and assist their Ice Technician to take advantage of all of these learning opportunities and resources.



TEMPERATURE

It should be cool to curl, not cold. Some people don't want to curl because it is uncomfortable, so it is in the club's best interest to do as much as financially possible to make it comfortable in the curling rink.

Often experienced members of the club may have tips on how to deal with a cooler club that they can share with new members.

PRACTICE ICE

A lack of time available for curlers to practice can be a problem in some clubs. Practice time is a potential benefit of membership that needs to be maximized.

Don't assume that members know when practice ice is available and under what conditions. Club Boards should work with the Ice Technician to establish a reasonable practice schedule and communicate it to their members along with the procedures for utilizing practice times.

SECTION 2 – MEMBERSHIP:

MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE

Having to pay a full membership fee without the opportunity to fully utilize it can be a “turn off” for curlers.

Clubs must periodically review their membership structure to ensure that it is creative and offers fair access without compromising the financial integrity of the club. The number of members of the club and the ice available will be influencing factors in determining solutions.

MEMBER INPUT

One of the benefits of being a member of a curling club is the opportunity to have input into the operation of the club and to be informed of the decisions made by the Board of Directors. Providing curlers with an opportunity to share their comments, both positive and negative, is critical in order for the Board and/or league Chairs to respond accordingly. Information should be gathered as early in the season as possible so that any changes can be considered in a timely fashion. All too often clubs wait until the end of the season, which is TOO LATE.

The Board of Directors must provide as many methods as possible for information to be shared amongst all club members.

FUNDRAISING

Too many fundraisers can turn off some curlers, even if they are for a worthwhile cause. All fundraising initiatives by the club should be well planned and co-ordinated to ensure that members aren't being asked every week to “dip into their pocket”.

INSTRUCTION

Every new curler must receive proper ongoing instruction. A quick one-time lesson isn't going to be enough. Throughout the season, qualified Instructors should conduct curling clinics or short 10 to 15 minute lessons on various topics including proper brushing, etiquette, strategy, rules, etc.

It is the club's responsibility to ensure that this service is provided. The club should encourage existing members to take a Curl Ontario Instructor's course and consider subsidizing the cost for those who are willing to assist with member skill development.



CLIQUES

To avoid cliques, ensure that each curler and/or curling team is provided with the opportunity to play with and against as many other curlers as possible. This should include curlers at different skill levels.

Plan off-ice activities that “mix people up”, so that over the course of a season everyone has a chance to interact.

Make it a priority of your club to properly integrate new members into the club, and make it an expectation of every member to actively participate in this endeavour.

PERSONALITY CONFLICTS

To ensure that there is a positive relationship amongst club members, it may be necessary to assign a committee or individual the responsibility of dealing with club members who treat other members inappropriately. To support a positive atmosphere, the club should have clearly defined rules for ethics and etiquette.

SECTION 3 – SOCIAL:

FOOD SERVICE

The food available at a curling club must be of good quality, meet members' needs and generate a profit. This service must be well planned and take into account input from club members regarding their expectations.

All alternatives of providing a food service should be considered and the merits and practicality of each should be made available to the membership.



CHILDCARE

Childcare may be a support service required by some adults and the lack of this support may keep many potential members from joining the club.

This doesn't mean that the club has to provide this service but clubs are encouraged to develop a childcare strategy, which could include a partnership with an accredited childcare facility in close proximity to the club that might be willing to look after children on a part-time basis.

VARYING POSITIONS

Too many curlers do not have the opportunity to play other positions but occasionally a change in position could benefit them, as well as the club.

One compromise is for a league to have periodic game nights where everyone on the team has the opportunity to play different positions during the game. This type of scenario, along with ongoing skill development, will help curlers make a successful transition to a new position.

BONSPIEL OPPORTUNITIES

Unfortunately, many curlers do not get the opportunity to participate in a bonspiel. It is essential that every curler who wishes to participate in a bonspiel has the chance to do so, especially if you want them to continue as satisfied members of your club.

There are several ways to ensure this can happen:

1. host a bonspiel open only to individuals
2. assign someone to help co-ordinate bonspiel teams
3. ask experienced curlers to invite curlers that are new to "bonspieling" to join their team.

Taking these steps will make bonspiels memorable for them and for you too.

SOCIALIZING

There should be more to curling than just delivering rocks and brushing for a couple of hours. Socializing with others can enhance time spent in the club. To encourage more socializing, clubs might want to consider planning a simple activity in which everyone can participate (e.g. quiz, interactive game, skill contest, cards, dessert or some other activity). Having an event every couple of weeks or every month can add excitement to a curling league or evening.

BUYING DRINKS

The tradition of socializing after the game is an essential one, and should be continued. The tradition of having a drink is also important, especially to the club's finances. However, the tradition and expectation that the game winners should purchase a drink for the losers can be a factor in some people giving up the sport.

For some people on a limited budget, having to purchase two drinks can be a concern. Some people who don't drink alcoholic beverages get tired of buying expensive drinks for others when a soft drink or coffee purchased for them is much less expensive.

If this is an issue for a significant number of the participants in your league, it may be a better option to have people purchase their own drinks rather than lose them as members.



SECTION 4 –LEAGUES:

LEAGUE ORGANIZATION

Every curling league benefits from good organization. A list of all duties required to operate the league should be prepared, and a volunteer assigned to each of them.

The process is best done prior to the start of the league, competition or season.

LEAGUE OBJECTIVES

Unclear and/or unstated objectives of a curling league can result in unnecessary problems. Every curling league should have elements of competition, skill development and fun. The degree of each will vary according to the wishes of the participants in the league.

Ensuring that all curling members are informed of the objectives will help them make an informed decision as to which league to join. It will also be extremely helpful in communicating league rules, schedules, off-ice activities and dispute resolution.

SPARES

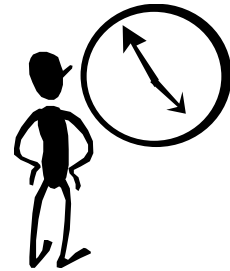
The ability to find a spare is most important, as there is nothing worse than having to default a game.

A club should make it as easy as possible for every member to find a spare. Providing members with a curling roster may not be enough help. A club may have to specifically identify eligible spares for each league, amend league rules if there are not enough spares, or assign someone the responsibility of helping curlers find spares.

LATE GAMES

In order to reduce the adverse reaction to late evening games, it is important to ensure that early evening games start and end on time.

It may also be necessary to meet with all members of the curling league to determine how to manage late evening games, such as starting early games sooner, putting a time limit on games or decreasing the number of ends.



“RATED” CURLING

It is difficult to make an objective rating system of curlers. Any time you have a minority of a group, subjectively assessing the skills and aptitude of the majority, you are asking for trouble.

Asking curlers to indicate their two preferred positions will help make a less subjective system and may help resolve situations where too many people want to play the same position. If there are not enough people who want to play a position, members of your curling league should be required to take turns playing the position, so that no one person has to play a position that they don't like all of the time.

BALANCING TEAMS

Sometimes “rated curling” leagues try so hard to “balance” teams that they create an even bigger problem, which denies some members the opportunity to play on the same team with certain other members.

It is more important to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to curl with everyone else than it is to attempt to make every game competitive.

COMPETITIVE VS. RECREATIONAL

Some curling leagues that stress the objectives of “fun” and “skill development”, find it difficult to motivate more experienced and competitive players to commit.

Influenced by their lack of time and motivation, these curlers don't want to participate but they might be willing to help support the fun and skill developmental league on an occasional basis as a coach, instructor, mentor or in some other leadership role, which then helps the league and club. This may include current members or former members who might not want to join the club but might be willing to help out as a volunteer.