

Stick Curling

People with physical problems that prevent them from using a normal slide curling delivery can continue curling by using a delivery device, commonly called a stick. The Ontario Curling Association has a special category for stick curling but does not allow stick delivery in most competitive categories.

There are few documents describing the stick curling delivery, but many of the accepted techniques for normal curling deliveries can also be used for a stick delivery.

Delivery is started with the same foot in the hack as in a standard delivery. The stick should point toward the skips broom with the rock in line with the skips broom. The delivery stick is held in one (or both) hands at a comfortable angle with a slight bend at the elbow of the main delivery arm. Some delivery sticks have a length adjustment that allows the angle of the stick to be adjusted.

The curler will start walking on a direct line towards the skips broom and gradually increase walking speed until an optimum speed is obtained.

In most cases for a draw or guard shot the curler can walk fast enough so that an arm extension is not necessary. For takeout shots an arm extension is usually necessary to get the necessary speed.

The turn on the rock is applied in the same way as standard delivery with the rock started with the handle set at the 10 or 2 o'clock position and gently turned to the 12 o'clock position when released (Some users suggest that 11 or 1 o'clock provide better control). Follow-through on the delivery is important for a smooth delivery. The extended "arm length" also increases the possibility of a hog line violation.

As well as solving the physical problems that prevent a slide delivery, using a stick significantly improves the stability of the curler while delivering a rock, which means that their shots are more consistent. Many curlers also find that they can now generate the necessary speed for takeout shots, so that their overall ability to make shots has improved.

So why aren't stick curlers perfect?

It is difficult to judge the proper speed for soft takeout or raise shots. The delivery stick has the effect of making the "delivery arm" at least twice as long so the errors on line of delivery are significantly worse than with a slide delivery. With most of the delivery stick designs it is not possible to slow the rock speed without losing contact with the rock. Finally release at the 12 o'clock position is more critical with stick curling because the "long arm" magnifies the pushing error. Because it is so critical to release at the 12 o'clock position there is a danger of throwing a rock with no turn.