

Bowling-Scoring Basics One game of bowling consists of 10 frames, with a minimum score of zero and a maximum of 300. Each frame consists of two chances to knock down ten pins. Instead of “points” in football or “runs” in baseball, we use “pins” in bowling.

Strikes and Spares Knocking down all ten pins on your first ball is called a strike, denoted by an X on the score sheet. If it takes two shots to knock down all ten pins, it’s called a spare, denoted by a /.

Open Frames If, after two shots, at least one pin is still standing, it’s called an open frame. Whereas open frames are taken at face value, strikes and spares can be worth more—but not less—than face value.

How to Score a Strike A strike is worth 10, plus the value of your next two rolls.

At minimum, your score for a frame in which you throw a strike will be 10 ($10+0+0$). At best, your next two shots will be strikes, and the frame will be worth 30 ($10+10+10$).

Say you throw a strike in the first frame. Technically, you don't have a score yet. You need to throw two more balls to figure out your total score for the frame. In the second frame, you throw a 6 on your first ball and a 2 on your second ball. Your score for the first frame will be 18 ($10+6+2$).

How to Score a Spare A spare is worth 10, plus the value of your next roll.

Say you throw a spare in your first frame. Then, in your first ball of the second frame, you throw a 7. Your score for the first frame will be 17 ($10+7$).

The maximum score for a frame in which you get a spare is 20 (a spare followed by a strike), and the minimum is 10 (a spare followed by a gutter ball).

How to Score an Open Frame If you don't get a strike or a spare in a frame, your score is the total number of pins you knock down. If you knock down five pins on your first ball and two on your second, your score for that frame is 7.

Putting Everything Together Many people understand the basics but get confused when trying to add everything up. Your total score is nothing more than the sum of each individual frame. If you treat each frame individually, it's much easier to comprehend the scoring system.

Breaking Down a Sample Score

Frame:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Result:	X	7/	7 2	9/	X	X	X	2 3	6/
Frame Score:	20	17	9	20	30	22	15	5	17
Running Total:	20	37	46	66	96	118	133	138	155

Frame-by-Frame Explanation 1. You threw a strike, which is 10 plus your next two shots. In this case, your next two shots (the second frame) resulted in a spare. $10+10=20$. 2. You threw a spare, which is 10 plus your next shot. Your next shot (from the third frame) was a 7. The value of this frame is 17 ($10+7$). Added to the first frame, you're now at 37. 3. An open frame is worth exactly the number of pins you knocked down. $7+2=9$. Added to 37, you're now at 46. 4. Another spare. Adding your next shot (from the fifth frame—a strike), you get 20 ($10+10$). Added to 46, you're at 66. 5. A strike, followed by two more strikes. $10+10+10=30$, putting you at 96. 6. A strike, followed by a strike and a 2. $10+10+2=22$. You're now at 118. 7. A strike, followed by a 2 and 3. $10+2+3=15$, putting your score at 133. 8. An open frame. $2+3=5$. You're now at 138. 9. A spare, followed by a 7 in the tenth frame. $10+7=17$, putting you at 155. 10. A spare, followed by a 3. $10+3=13$, resulting in a total score of 168.

The Tenth Frame In the sample score, three shots were thrown in the tenth frame. This is because of the bonuses awarded for strikes and spares. If you throw a strike on your first ball in the tenth frame, you need two more shots to determine the total value of the strike.

If you throw a spare on your first two balls in the tenth frame, you need one more shot to determine the total value of the spare. This is called a [fill ball](#).

If you throw an open frame in the tenth frame, you won't get a third shot. The only reason the third shot exists is to determine the full value of a strike or spare.