

[Summary of Bowling Solitaire, Neil Thomson, BoardGameGeek, April 29, 2014](#)

Game Type - Solitaire Card Game

Play Time: 5-10 minutes

Number of Players: 1

Mechanics - Memory, Math Calculations, Card Management

Difficulty - Pick-up & Play (Can be learned in under 10 minutes)

Components - Not Applicable

Designer - [Sid Sackson](#) ([Acquire](#), [Bazaar](#), [BuyWord](#), [I'm the Boss](#), [Sleuth](#) and many more...)

[Overview and Theme](#)

Every now and again in this hobby I am lucky enough to come across game design genius. Now I don't mean that as a 'negative comment' (as in most things are rubbish) about our hobby, as I like most of you, are astounded by the great ideas that abound on a daily basis.

What I'm talking about here though is pure genius...the kind that was born of a great mind, largely without the benefit of a million other ideas that can be drawn upon and tinkered with until something semi-new is created.

Here I'm talking about [Sid Sackson](#) and his twist on regular [Solitaire](#), ... which successfully creates a 10-Pin Bowling themed Solitaire variant.

It is pure genius and has traveled all the way from the mind of Sackson way back in 1969 when it was published in his book, [A Gamut of Games](#).

This was a time when we didn't have over 1,000 games being released every year. Is it simple? Sure, but it is also very clever....

[Why Bowling Solitaire Works!](#)

If you have found this review there is every chance you have a reasonable sized collection...that come with wonderful components, imaginative themes and are fun to play. So why in the world would anyone consider a game that makes use of 20 simple playing cards?

Well I sit in the 700+ game category and I love the heck out of this. Here's Why -

Thematic - ...The pin removal rules beautifully replicate the nuances of bowling a ball down your local alley. It is difficult to hit the back pins in isolation...so they are not up for grabs on the first shot. It is all but impossible to remove the central most pin by itself with all pins in play, so that too is not allowed.

The final element that makes the game feel 'real' is the ability to remove up to 3 pins at a time but further turns must knock down at least one pin that is adjacent to those that have already been removed.

This elegantly simulates the path that a ball could take, despite the fact that several turns can be used to replicate the bowling of 2 balls.

It's great stuff and something I would never have thought possible.

Strategic Decision Making - Whilst the game can have some luck in its play (which I always prefer in my games), there is an undeniable amount of strategy and forward planning that can be employed.

First there is the nature of the deck to consider. With only two of each value in the deck a player can begin to consider how many cards of a certain value are already in play and how many more are still available (essentially card counting). But like regular solitaire a player cannot be certain of what order the hidden cards are in, or indeed in which pile certain cards reside. That is the beauty of the 3 Ball Pile design.

A player can also consider what possible totals can be made (and the options can be many) in order to try and keep their options as open as possible. Then there is the consideration of the pin positions and which ones to knock down with each turn in order to keep totals alive that may be on other Ball Pile cards and also to keep the pins in a formation to help avoid the creation of single pins (as these can be hard to remove).

Then there is the management of the Ball Piles themselves. Having three options is always better than two so it is in a player's best interest to use cards from the left-most pile if possible, but it won't always be the best option.

In truth I have played many a light game with far less going on in them. Well played Sid...well played.

Educational Merit – Another feather in the game's cap is that it is great for helping students make use of basic counting skills and number fact knowledge such as 'doubles facts', 'tens facts' and 'adding 9' (as well as basic mental addition and computation). It also reinforces place value concepts and the game is effectively open ended in how children can go about creating totals and removing cards. These are all excellent educational concepts and I will be teaching my students the game as well as my staff at an upcoming professional development day.

Sports Simulation - The final thing I really like about the game is that it allows me to simulate a sport in a card game - which is neat. I have always found sports sims quite enjoyable in various forms so for me this is just another neat discovery that I enjoy. In particular I think it is the scoring that I like. Most games that can play solo and use scoring as the only way to measure success come across as rather dull. But here for some reason it is really engaging. Earning a strike or a spare can be quite tricky but when you pull one off it is quite rewarding.

And don't forget this is easily playable by more than one person at a time and can even be played alongside them at the same time.

[The Final Word](#)

This review will probably gain very little attention due to the title (although [Sid Sackson](#) in there might help) but I don't really care about that.

...Personally I feel like this game has opened my eyes to a new genre (perhaps sub-genre?) that I really didn't know much about and before now had never really shown an interest in. For me it has expanded my view of this wonderful hobby of ours just that little bit more.

I find this as enjoyable a 20 minutes as many other light/filler card or dice games and I'm glad to have written a review for something so unique compared to the mainstream titles that are usually covered.

Till next we meet may you continue to Shake, Rattle and Bowl!