

Anyone for skittles?

By CLIFFORD B. HICKS

FOR CENTURIES, Englishmen have gathered in pubs to play skittles—a miniature sort of bowling game. The object is to send the top spinning through the "rooms," knocking down skittles (pins) as it goes. Point values in the "rooms" can shave 10 points off your score or boost it by 100. The game may be played for a predetermined number of turns or simply with each player taking a turn to see who gets the highest score. You needn't go to England to try it—it's easy to make your own board.

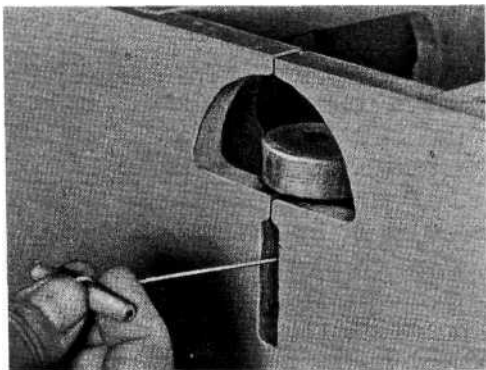
A 4 x 4-ft. sheet of 1/2-in. plywood will provide adequate material. After cutting the base and

walls, mark and cut the dadoes; if your shop lacks a power saw, simple butt joints may be used.

An optional step is to cement a scrap of plastic laminate or tempered hardboard to the inner face of the end wall, where the hole for the top will be cut. Without this protection, the top will eventually wear away a cradle to brake its spin.

After cutting all doorways—a job you can speed by careful stacking of the blanks—sand edges smooth. A coat of shellac thinned 50 percent with alcohol, followed with two coats of enamel makes a durable finish. Brushing is easier if you prefinish the parts before you glue and nail them together.

The smoother the finish on the floor, the longer the top will spin, so give it extra care and attention. Sand carefully between each coat of shellac



To spin the top, wind the cord around its stem, then feed the free end down through the slits as you lower the top into the position shown above. Hold the top snugly against the end wall with your left hand, releasing it at the same moment you give a sharp, smooth tug to pull the cord out through the slot

and enamel; then apply a paste wax and buff it to a hard finish before assembly.

If you have a lathe, turning the skittles will present no problem. The alternative is to use straight sections of dowel. These have a greater tendency to block doorways than do the turned pins, but they are usable. So are toy bowling pins.

If you don't have a lathe but do have a portable drill, you can make a true-spinning top by driving a 1/4-in. dowel in a tight-fitting hole in a hardwood disk and then chucking it in the drill to true the disk with a sharp wood chisel. It's important that the top be made of hardwood since it takes quite a battering as it bounces off the walls. Strong black thread makes a good cord and should be about 12 in. long with a pull handle tied at the end. Happy skittling!