

## Shmanners 450: Bowling

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[theme song plays]

**Travis:** Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:** And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy!

**Travis:** And you're listening to *Shmanners*!

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** I'm well. I'm much better than last week.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah.

**Teresa:** My voice has returned.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Still a little... a little stuffed up, as is—

**Travis:** But not like smoky jazz, like you were before.

**Teresa:** [bubbling laughter] As is the custom here in Ohio. [short pause, then laughter grows]

**Travis:** The custom. Yes, [posh voice] "When— when we have visitors here in Ohio, we encourage them..."

**Teresa:** [laughing]

**Travis:** [accent somewhat falls] "... to have allergies in sinuses, and whatnot."

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** "Thanks to the Ohio River Valley."

**Teresa:** Indeed. [laughs]

**Travis:** My voice— my accent there shifted.

**Teresa:** Yeah, I don't know where you were from.

**Travis:** I don't know where I was from. That's the problem. I can't maintain...

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** ... an accent.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Not even my own Appalachian accent.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** So, today. Today, we're talking about something I know Teresa loves: bowling!

**Teresa:** [laughs] I think that's a joke, right there, because I don't really love bowling. Here's the thing about me...

**Travis:** Oh, yeah, please.

**Teresa:** ... and bowling. I like the idea of bowling, *because—*

**Travis:** You like a bowling alley.

**Teresa:** I do like a bowling alley.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Because it is a sport that one gets to sit in between one's turns.

**Travis:** But the only thing that would make it better for you is if you never had to get up and bowl.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Yes. If the sitting... were to extend throughout the entire...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... thing...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... perhaps if you'd just watch other people bowl.

**Teresa:** Well, here's— here it is. Here's the truth of it. I am really good at bowling for, like, two frames.

**Travis:** Well, yeah.

**Teresa:** And then I start to get tired, and I get bad at it. [laughs]

**Travis:** I think—

**Teresa:** It gets progressively worse [breaking into laughter] increm—

**Travis:** I think that that is probably— I don't know any professional bowlers. That might surprise you.

**Teresa:** I don't, either.

**Travis:** But I am willing to bet that along with the skill of, like, you know, rolling the ball down, and hitting the pins the way that you want them to, I bet that endurance is a much-unappreciated part of it. Because you *are* swinging, you know, seven to 12-pound - whatever - a big rock at the end of your arm, repeatedly.

**Teresa:** Indeed. Yes.

**Travis:** And I have seen some professional bowling competitions, and they don't let you put the bumpers up.

**Teresa:** Mm-mm.

**Travis:** They're really strict about that kind of thing.

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** Which I feel is unfair.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I wouldn't mind having bumpers up now. I'm 41 years old. I'd take bumpers. I'm not a proud man.

**Teresa:** When was the last time you went bowling?

**Travis:** Uh... Ooh, it's been a while. I think since before Bebe was born, at least. Or maybe, like, when Bebe was a baby.

**Teresa:** I think I remember going when Bebe was a baby. She was never, like... Loud noises never bothered her.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** She was always pretty chill with loud noises, so we didn't feel bad taking her to a bowling alley, but that's like, what, 2018? Something like that. Maybe even less.

**Travis:** This is my— I like bowling. In theory.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** My problem is, is when I hit that point of, like, “Oh, I’m not doing well.” And you can’t just stop then.

**Teresa:** Yeah, you have to finish the game!

**Travis:** You get— yeah. You can’t just like, “Oh, I don’t like this anymore.”

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And then sit down, and be like, “Someone else do it for me.”

**Teresa:** [growing laughter]

**Travis:** That doesn’t work. I used to— man...

**Teresa:** I’m *done*.

**Travis:** I’m done! To put it in the words of our five-year-old doing anything she doesn’t wanna do. “I’m done.” No, I’m done. I used to go bowling. Bowling parties were a big thing...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... for kids, when I was a kid.

**Teresa:** Bowling parties, and skating parties.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** We had those, too.

**Travis:** Eternal. Well, I mean, not now, though. Bebe doesn’t get invited— I don’t know of any kids having a bowling party.

**Teresa:** She's been to a skating party.

**Travis:** Skating party, yeah. Bowling party, I don't know.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** But we're talking about bowling.

**Teresa:** I did bowling at— bowling— what is this? Like... It was part of summer school. Summer gym.

**Travis:** Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah?

**Teresa:** I took summer gym, because I didn't like the idea of doing gym during the day...

**Travis:** No one does.

**Teresa:** ... and being all gross and sweaty at school.

**Travis:** Gross. Yeah.

**Teresa:** Especially since gym was usually first period. [whispering] Why, guys, why? Make it last.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Anyway.

**Travis:** Or no period.

**Teresa:** [joking laugh] So I did summer gym, and bowling was one of the activities that we got to do.

**Travis:** I did individual duel sports, which was gym for nerds, and it was like, ping-pong, and archery, and bowling...

**Teresa:** Mm!

**Travis:** And I loved it. Oh, walking on a treadmill was part of it... [laughs]

**Teresa:** Really?

**Travis:** ... at one point.

**Teresa:** We just did running. Most of the time, it was just running, and then, uh...

**Travis:** Gross.

**Teresa:** Then badminton. And... uh, the last like three weeks of it were swimming and bowling.

**Travis:** The last thing I'll say about bowling is it fits into a category of activities for me, personally, that uh...

**Teresa:** Oh, and dodge ball. There was lots of dodge ball in there, too.

**Travis:** Also, and there was like, billiards.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Darts.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Bowling.

**Teresa:** The gentlemanly pursuits.

**Travis:** No, that's not the category I mean.

**Teresa:** No?

**Travis:** For me, it's things that I just assume I'm good at...

**Teresa:** Oh.

**Travis:** ... between doing them. And then I do them again, and I'm like, "Oh, right, I haven't practiced this..."

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** "... or perfected this in any way." But then, if at least like a week has passed since the last time I've done it, I'm like, "I remember being pretty good at this." Bob from *Bob's Burgers* really epitomizes that kind of mindset...

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** ... of like, "I'm actually pretty good at this," and then he starts doing it, and can't do it.

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** It's that mindset that I try to live up to every day. My hero, Bob Belcher. So, let's talk about bowling.

**Teresa:** Okay. Bowling.

**Travis:** I bet it's older than I think it is. Cavemen?

**Teresa:** [wheezing laughter]

**Travis:** I know that Fred Flintstone *loved* bowling.

**Teresa:** [laughs] I do remember seeing that a lot in...

**Travis:** That guy *loved* bowling.

**Teresa:** ... in *The Flintstones*. Um, but it's not quite cave man. But it is pretty far; you're not wrong.



**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The ancient Egyptians.

**Travis:** Yeah. That was gonna be my second guess. Those— those folks, they did a lot of stuff.

**Teresa:** Well, we have— we have *evidence* that they enjoyed bowling. Um, because... renowned—

**Travis:** Aliens.

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Renowned British Egyptologist, Sir Flinders Petrie, uh...

**Travis:** What!? That's not a name!

**Teresa:** But it is.

**Travis:** That's a D&D character. "Sir Flinders Petrie." Okay.

**Teresa:** I don't know what to tell you.

... discovered a collection of objects in a child's tomb that looked as though they were used for a crude form of bowling, an early form. Um, so what they found were... [sighs] I mean, they called them toys. Because it was in the child's tomb.

A group of stone balls, and then a group of [unsure, trying different pronunciations] vase— "vases"? "Vases"?

**Travis:** Either one works.

**Teresa:** Anyway.

**Travis:** [emphatic French accent] Vases!

**Teresa:** [laughs] But they wouldn't stand up any other way except, like, straight up, because they had been flattened on the bottom.

**Travis:** You know, it's the kind of thing where like, I never really thought about it, but it does— it seems like one of those things where it's like, "Roll this ball to knock those things down..."

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... is such a— I don't wanna say "rudimentary," right, but it seems like such a, like... "I see some things standing up over there, and I have this ball, and I'm gonna roll 'em at it." So it just doesn't seem like a thing you would need to *teach* someone.

**Teresa:** It seems pretty intrinsic, as far as a game goes, right?

**Travis:** Yeah. No, that's not to say, like, "I could've come up—" 'cause I mean, when I think of bowling now, there's a lot more to it as far as, like, the structure of it, the rules of it, stuff like that.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** But I just mean this idea of, like, "Knock those things down with this thing," I think that makes sense.

**Teresa:** I mean, it's—

**Travis:** Like, you would see it in a child's...

**Teresa:** It's in the way of target practice...

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** ... right? That's always been around. Um, and so there were the nine vase-shaped figures, and then the ball, and they did find some

drawings in another tomb that depicted this game with stone balls dating all the way back to 3200 BCE.

**Travis:** That's a long time ago.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Yeah. I— listen. I'm no mathemagician, but that's a *long* time ago. [pause] Almost as old as the Earth itself.

**Teresa:** No. [laughs] Uh, we don't— we don't know exactly how they played that game, though. There aren't like, directions or whatever to tell us. And so there are lots of different kind of iterations of the same game. As you would think, like we said, it seems pretty intrinsic...

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** ... that you would do it. And we also don't know— especially the artifacts from the tomb, I mean, they were all buried together, right, so we *assume* that they worked together. But you know, they also found dice, and combs, and necklaces, so maybe they played pretty, pretty princess, too.

**Travis:** [gasps excitedly] Oh, don't! That's all I want!

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** I— I talked about this on I don't remember on what social media, but when a Super Bowl was coming up, and I was talking about, like, "I think it's messed up that they just get rings, even if they win multiple times." And they should start doing... Like, you got the ring...

**Teresa:** And they should start collecting other things, like pretty, pretty princess!

**Travis:** You get a necklace, you get the crown, and then it's like, if you lose, you get the black ring, and you can't be pretty, pretty princess until someone else has to take the black ring. You know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** This is what I'm saying. And if you wanna make Teresa and I feel like pretty, pretty princesses...

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** ... then consider becoming a Max Fun member.

**Teresa:** [singing] Segue!

**Travis:** [singing] Segue!

[spoken] It's as easy as going to [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join), and choosing the level that works for you. And listen, in *this* economy, I know that it doesn't work for everyone, right? So there's no, uh, guilt or hard sell happening here. All I'll say is that the whole way that Max Fun works is that it requires support from members who are able to support.

And when you become a member, you— say I can do \$5 dollars a month, I can do \$10 dollars a month, I can do \$20 dollars a month. And then I think it's like 30% of that goes to Max Fun to pay the employees who are also the owners, because Max Fun is a co-op. And to, you know, keep their lights on, support the network, and the rest is split between the shows you listen to.

And you are directly supporting not just with, you know, listens and sharing the show with other people, but with your dollars. And it is a very, very unique situation...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... where it's the only network I know of that works this way. And *Shmanners* would not exist if it weren't for the support of Max Fun members. You know, we have Alex, our researcher, without whom we could not make the show, and Rachel, our editor, without whom we could not make the show. And that is thanks to you, and your support.

**Teresa:** And you also— you don't get nothing for somethi— something for nothing.

**Travis:** No, you don't get nothing for something.

**Teresa:** That's right.

**Travis:** Right, because you're giving something.

**Teresa:** You are giving something. And in return, as a thank you, you *do* get things. There's the bonus content, right?

**Travis:** And is there a *little* bit of it, Teresa?

**Teresa:** No.

**Travis:** Is there a *little* bonus content?

**Teresa:** No, there is a *lot* of bonus con—

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** A plethora. Several days, maybe weeks... nay years...

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** [wheezing laugh] ... worth of material to listen to. There's also super cute pins, right? Our pin is a monster truck.

**Travis:** For \$10 dollars a month, you get your choice of pins. One from any one of the Max Fun shows. They're all different, different designs. The *Shmanners* one is a monster cup with a tea cup and flower design that I think is very cute.

**Teresa:** It's so cute.

**Travis:** And our *Shmanners* bonus episode this year is all about genies. The history of them, making your wishes, all that kind of stuff.

I will also say, because of hitting bonus goals throughout the MaxFunDrive, there's a video on there from *My Brother, My Brother and Me* where we recorded a *Hot Ones* audition, and it was audio only at first, where we ate hot wings, and asked each other personal questions. And then we put the video up, and you can see me eat... I believe it was a Carolina Reaper hot sauce, and sweat and cry, having to wipe my brow, and it hurt me physically.

**Teresa:** Oh, dear.

**Travis:** And you can enjoy that! Yay!

**Teresa:** Enjoy. Do enjoy.

**Travis:** And this is the last day proper; I mean, you can still join. Usually, we do kind of an amnesty weekend on Saturday and Sunday, so if you're listening to this then, then that's fine. But this is the last *Shmanners* episode of the MaxFunDrive 2025.

So if you're considering, go, become a new member, or you can upgrade your membership. Maybe you've been a \$5 dollar member for a long time, you're ready to move up to \$10, or \$10 to \$20, or what-have-you, or you can even just boost if you're not quite ready to move up to the next level.

Like, let's say you're a \$5 dollar member. Throw in an extra buck, now you're a \$6 dollar a month member, and every little bit helps. It means the world to us. [Maximumfun.org/join](https://Maximumfun.org/join). Now, let's pick up the spare and get back to bowling.

**Teresa:** Oh, that was great.

**Travis:** Thank you!

**Teresa:** Good job. Um, so what we have to thank for bowling today...

**Travis:** Is middle-aged white men in the 50s.

**Teresa:** N— I mean, yes. But—

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** Before that.

**Travis:** Oh, okay.

**Teresa:** The rules that were set down started in Rome about 2,000 years ago.

**Travis:** Okay. I was gonna guess 1600s England.

**Teresa:** Oh, no, there are— there is a *long* history of bowling coming in and out of fashion, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** But the rules that started it all that we have definitively...

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** ... are more like bocce ball, right?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So it's like, rolling a stone ball close to other stone objects, and then— once we get to 300 Common Era...

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** ... in Germany, that is where the International Bowling Museum *and* the Professional Bowling Association point to recognizing that the ancient world could've played bowling as it is now.

**Travis:** Do you know why it's so hard to plan a visit to the International Bowling Museum?

**Teresa:** Why?

**Travis:** 'Cause you never know when the employees are on strike.

**Teresa:** [amused] Ah!

**Travis:** 'Cause the— bowling—

**Teresa:** Yeah, I get it.

**Travis:** 'Cause it means something in bowling, too.

**Teresa:** [quietly] I get it.

**Travis:** Teresa, do you get it?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** 'Cause "strike" is when employees refuse to work...

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** ... but it also...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... can be a term in bowling...

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** ... for when you knock all the pins down on the first try.

**Teresa:** Yes. This game of bowling had a religious element—

**Travis:** I feel like you don't get it, so let me... one more time. ... I love you. Please go on.



**Teresa:** [laughs] This game of bowling had a religious element, where if you knock over the pins, you would be considered of good character, but if you couldn't, then you had to perform a penance of some kind.

**Travis:** What!?

**Teresa:** I know.

**Travis:** *What!?*

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I wonder if— this is such a stretch of logic, but do you think that has something to do with why bowling pins have little collars on them?

**Teresa:** Hmm.

**Travis:** That they made it look like priests

**Teresa:** Huh. No, but...

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** ... that's cute. I like it. Um, there was a bowling craze in 1300s England where King Edward III allegedly outlawed the game at some point, because the military was so consumed by their bowling tournaments at point that they would become utterly unfocused at any other training exercise.

**Travis:** Oh, that's kind of like when my school, when I was a kid, wouldn't let us play Pogs anymore.

**Teresa:** Mm.

**Travis:** Kind of the same thing. Yeah.

**Teresa:** And then, much later, we've got another outlaw attempt in 1841 in Connecticut, because nine pin lanes were connected to gambling.

**Travis:** Yeah. Protestants!

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** And Puritan— sorry, Puritans. I mean, Protestants, too. I don't know.

**Teresa:** Yeah. I mean, everything that was fun. Had to go, all the time. So there were different rules from the 18th and 19th Century, but there's always been, like, the idea that the best strikers get the best prizes, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Usually in the form of grocery items, or a turkey. Do you know what a turkey is, in bowling?

**Travis:** A turkey in bowling is when you get three strikes in a row.

**Teresa:** That's row. And that is because in the United States, especially during Thanksgiving, if you won the bowling tournament with the three strikes in a row...

**Travis:** You would get a turkey!?

**Teresa:** ... you would get a turkey.

**Travis:** Get out of the town. It was literally from a turkey.

**Teresa:** Literally from a turkey.

**Travis:** I have *never* questioned it. I have just been like, "Yeah, a turkey, that's fine." [whispering] I have *never* thought about it!

**Teresa:** Yeah. Today, we have nice, shiny, like, pine board lanes...

**Travis:** Uh-huh.

**Teresa:** ... and, like, automatic pinsetters...

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And, you know, the shoes you can use, or whatever. But it wasn't always like that, obviously. There were hardly any regulations to begin with. It was often found that games were rigged...

**Travis:** What? Get out of town.

**Teresa:** Yeah, much like at carnivals, and things like that, where they would...

**Travis:** What? Carnival games were rigged!? Oh, my God.

**Teresa:** I'm sorry to tell you this. Yes.

**Travis:** But they seem so honest.

**Teresa:** Uh, where they would add weights to the bottom of the pins, or make the balls, uh, weighted unevenly, or even make the lanes uneven on purpose.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah. And so they started making appearances in literature as part of, like, the rigged nature of it. We point to "Rip Van Winkle," right, in 1819.

**Travis:** Oh, sure. Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** And then by 1895, there was a—

**Travis:** For those who don't know, I'm pretty sure in "Rip Van Winkle," he bowls against some elves, or something, and they put him to sleep, right? They put him to sleep 'cause he wins, or something like that?

**Teresa:** Something like that.

**Travis:** Bowling is a *big* part of "Rip Van Winkle."

**Teresa:** I don't think it's elves. I think it's like, mountain trolls or something, right? Yeah, some sort of, uh... unworldly beings.

**Travis:** The fae creatures, yeah.

**Teresa:** Yes. Um, by 1895, there was a national organization formed to create standardized rules, and take care of national competitions, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** And this is where we get the regulation lanes we have today, and the 10-pin setup.

**Travis:** Yeah. Absolutely. And the hot dogs. Every bowling alley has to have hot dogs...

**Teresa:** Nachos.

**Travis:** ... nachos...

**Teresa:** Beer.

**Travis:** ... and a crane game, and that one, like, *Jurassic Park* game that you sit in, and you're driving around, and shooting dinosaurs for some reason.

**Teresa:** Mine didn't have that.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** No. It had, like, a pinball machine.

**Travis:** So yours wasn't a legal one?

**Teresa:** [laughs] I guess not.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I guess not. And you know, it has been very popular ever since. We've got lots of cultural touchstones. President Truman had a bowling alley installed in the White House.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** It's not there, specifically, anymore. It still does exist; it's just not in the White House anymore. And there's also pictures of, like, movie stars doing it. There's a really great picture of Groucho Marx at a American Cancer Society, like, charity bowl game, or whatever, where he's still got his cigar. [chuckles]

**Travis:** And, I mean, listen. Movies that I can think of, not limited to like *Kingpin*...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... which was a Farrelly brothers movie. And, of course, *The Big Lebowski*, uh...

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** ... very prominently features bowling in it, as well.

**Teresa:** Today, over 120 million people in over 90 countries love to bowl, and 70 million of those—

**Travis:** And then over 70 million kind of like it. [laughs]

**Teresa:** No. [laughs] 70 million of those people are just in the US. Um, 1.2 million people in the United States report belonging to a regular bowling league, and kids as young as three can be taught at local bowling alleys all over the country. Um, so you know, it's here to stay. The craze is here to stay.

**Travis:** Well, it makes complete sense when you think about it, because like, if you go into a bowling alley these days, even smallish ones, right, will have like eight lanes, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And let's say on each one, you have six people bowling. Right? As opposed to, like, a tennis court, where it's like you have four people max playing at one time, and you have to wait. Or maybe you have four tennis court— like, so many people can bowl at any one time.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And as you said, right, it's not like a constant string. So it's a really good social experience where only one person is actively bowling at any one time, and everybody else can talk. *And*, a lot of people can do it at one time without having to, like, wait their turn.

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** So it makes sense as, like, a social gathering kind of thing. The only downside being like, it's not like a pool table or dart board or something that you can have in your own home. Right, you do need to go somewhere specific. Like, a bar isn't gonna be like, "You know, we should put a bowling alley in here."

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** Like, that's not gonna happen.

**Teresa:** But there is now virtual bowling...

**Travis:** That's true.

**Teresa:** ... that you can do at a lot of places.

**Travis:** And duckpin bowling is picking up. There was— there's a place here where it's much more mechanical, so instead of like separate pins, they're

on a string. So you knock 'em down, and then the strings tighten to lift them back up, right?

**Teresa:** Oh, so it resets faster.

**Travis:** And it's much smaller, because you're bowling with something the size of like a bocce ball instead of a bowling ball, so it's a much more condensed kind of thing where you can fit it into a space easier. There's a place here in Cincinnati that I don't know if it's pronounced "Foh-ling," or "Fow-ling," 'cause it's spelled F-O-W-L-I-N-G, but I think it's you throw footballs to knock down...

**Teresa:** Football bowling?

**Travis:** Yeah, I... Before we get into etiquette...

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** You know what's really good etiquette?

**Teresa:** What?

**Travis:** Becoming a Max Fun member!

**Teresa:** [imitates air horn] [giggles]

**Travis:** What does Max Fun member support mean to you, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Well, it means that we get to do this as a job, which means that we get to put a lot of effort into every episode, instead of having it be something that we do, catch as catch can, right?

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Which, I mean, I am definitely a fan of, because if you're gonna do something, you should do it to the best of your ability, and that's what Max Fun members really let us do, let us allow our creativity to be displayed at

the best of our ability, because we get support. And we don't have to get other jobs, which is great.

**Travis:** And, you know, across not just *Shmanners*, but across like McElroy Family stuff, the support that we get from members, you can directly see in the things that we have been able to do. Um, you know, more YouTube stuff...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... up doing like *Clubhouse* things. We just put out the hiking video with me, Justin, and Griffin. And that's because we were able to get Tom in there. And Tom's our video guy who we pay for his work, because you should pay people for their work, and the merch that we're able to put up and sell, live shows that we're able to do...

All of these things, if you enjoy seeing our things popping up on TikTok and Instagram, those are people that we've been able to hire to do that stuff. And I promise you, we're not just hoarding this wealth away like big dragons.

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** We're using it to make more stuff, and improve the stuff that we make so that we can give that kind of content back to the people who support us. I think it's the thing I like most about the Max Fun kind of membership setup, is it feels like a very reciprocal kind of thing, right, where we make the thing, people like the thing, they support us, and that lets us make more thing that people like.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And feel very connected to our audience, and feel like we're not just making this to impress advertisers, or just focus on inflating numbers, so that advertisers will give us more money. We're focusing on making things for the people who like the show, you know?

**Teresa:** Yeah.



**Travis:** Like, *Shmanners* in a lot of ways is a very niche interest thing. Where it's like, "Do you like hearing about the history of etiquette, or like biographies of people you've never heard of who have a big impact on culture?" Like, we're talking about the history and etiquette of bowling, right? That's what—

**Teresa:** Last week, we talked about *Bridgerton*.

**Travis:** Right. So it's that kind of thing where it's like, we're not trying to make *Shmanners* into, like, "Listen, how do we get more people in? How do we—" We're making the show for people who like the show.

**Teresa:** Exactly.

**Travis:** And we wouldn't be able to do that without Max Fun members. So if you wanna become a new member of [maximumfun.org/join](https://maximumfun.org/join), if you wanna upgrade your membership to the next level, [maximumfun.org/join](https://maximumfun.org/join). If you wanna boost your membership, you're not ready to go to— what you should do is go to [maximumfun.org/join](https://maximumfun.org/join)...

**Teresa:** [giggles]

**Travis:** ... right now, while you're thinking of it. Don't wait.

Let's talk about etiquette.

**Teresa:** Yes. Um, you guys...

**Travis:** Yeah?

**Teresa:** ... you gotta wear the shows.

**Travis:** You *gotta* wear the shoes!

**Teresa:** You *have* to wear the shoes!

**Travis:** Who goes bowling, and is like— doesn't wanna wear the shoes? It's part of it!

**Teresa:** The shoes are specifically designed to give you enough arch support and traction that you need both to safely bowl and be properly supported while you're doing it, right?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So you gotta wear your shoes. You should know your shoe size before you go. You should wear socks, okay?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** You don't wanna be raw-dogging it...

**Travis:** No.

**Teresa:** ... in somebody else's shoes.

**Travis:** Oh, God no. For so many reasons. God, no.

**Teresa:** [laughs] So many reasons. Wear your socks. Know your size. Keep your shoes out of the way, right? Usually, the lanes have seats. You can tuck your shoes under the seats, or sometimes they'll have cubbies or lockers. I've even been to a lane where you exchange your shoes.

**Travis:** Mm.

**Teresa:** That was at a place where they actually had a separate, lockable room for the shoes. I wouldn't do that at *every* single place.

**Travis:** A shoe prison, if you will.

**Teresa:** Sure. Just like a cubby room. Like a coat check.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? So you would exchange your shoes, and get your shoes, and then you turn back in your shoes, because I know when I was in high school, it was pretty cool to have bowling shoes. And so sometimes, people wore their worst shoes, and took the bowling shoes home.

**Travis:** Oh, boy. Don't steal shoes.

**Teresa:** Don't steal shoes, guys.

**Travis:** I mean, unless they're really cool.

**Teresa:** No...

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Don't steal shoes.

**Travis:** Okay...

**Teresa:** And then do not run, or horseplay in the bowling alley, because number one, those shoes, not so good for running, okay? And the floors are very slippery.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And people are holding various heavy balls around, right? So it's not like a... like a fun-time field playing kind of game. Right? So remind your children that they're to sit and play the games, and not to run around.

**Travis:** Now, but I want to talk— these are good rules.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** But I wanna talk about, like, how to be polite to other *bowlers*...

**Teresa:** Oh, of course.

**Travis:** Bowling etiquette, that kind of thing.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So the general etiquette...

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** ... is that whoever approached a lane first bowls first, right? So we're assuming that we've got several lanes going, full teams, everybody's ready to go. Whoever gets up there first goes first, and it is not appropriate for you to roll your ball at the same time as the person next to you.

**Travis:** Yeah, stay back.

**Teresa:** Right. So you wanna take turns, and when in doubt, the bowler to the right is given priority.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** If everyone steps up first, you defer to the person to the right. Just like the rules of the road here in the US. Don't stand on the approach, if you are not bowling, right?

If you haven't been to a bowling alley, there is the alley that you're bowling down, and then there's usually a console that helps you keep track of the score. Either they do it electronically, or you put it in yourself. And then there is kind of like a horseshoe of seats where the people who are playing play. Stay in that little holding area...

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** ... until it's your turn. Don't go up and get your ball, and just wait...

**Travis:** 'Cause you might get hit!

**Teresa:** ... on the lane. Of course, right? You might get hit, and also it contributes to the "Who's going next?" and "Is it you, or is it me?" or "Did they step up first?" It just makes it a lot easier to keep the game moving, and have less confusion.

**Travis:** I would also say - and this is probably on your list, but - don't bowl with someone else's ball, right?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** I've seen people, they'll bowl, and then they don't wanna wait for the ball return, so they'll just grab another ball that works for them. Don't do that.

**Teresa:** 'Cause it might be, like, right next to the person— that's actually their ball.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** You should always ask. If you need to use a different ball, and you want to use one that's already there instead of, like, maybe they might not have any more to choose from. You need to talk to the person; don't just take their ball.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** It could be their *own* ball. Some people have their own bowling balls!

**Travis:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Teresa:** It is allowed that, once you bowl, you are allowed to stand on the approach to watch your bowl complete its mission, right?

**Travis:** I like that phrasing. "Now, listen, ball."

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "This is very important. Here's what I need from you: kill those pins."

**Teresa:** [laughs] And oftentimes, people will do a little kind of like, [as if watching results] "Ohh, lean. Oh, this way. Oh, no, do— ohh!" Right? They might try and... subtly...

**Travis:** Psychically move the ball.

**Teresa:** ... influence [laughs] the ball.

**Travis:** Yeah. Makes complete sense. It works every time.

**Teresa:** [laughs] That's okay to do a little bit of. But, you know, don't flail around and be distracting, right? I have sometimes seen, like... You know, you picture in movies and TV that the granny-style bowling...

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** ... the people who like launch it from between their legs or whatever, and then kind of stand on the approach, and do a little touchdown dance or whatever, right, that's not really— that's not *really* good etiquette.

**Travis:** But here's what I will say, along those lines. I think it's important with stuff like this, right, to remember that people enjoy it to different degrees, and in different ways.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** By which I mean in both directions, right? Like, if you're someone who takes it really seriously, and you really care about it, no good ever comes from judging someone who's just having fun with friends, or isn't good at it, or being silly, right? And vice versa, if you're someone who is having fun and being silly, keep in mind that some people might take it more seriously than you, and kind of not respecting that they're taking it seriously...

**Teresa:** Sure.

**Travis:** ... is also not cool. So try to find a balance to, like, have fun the way that you want to, without it impeding someone else's experience of the thing.

**Teresa:** In that same vein, try not to yell, scream, swear, shout, those sorts of things, if you have a bad roll.

**Travis:** Well, no, because the other side of when you go to the bowling alley, like we're always talking about there being multiple lanes, full of people. It is as much a shared activity as a personal one, right?

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Because when you're standing up there, it's just you bowling by yourself. But everybody in that room is sharing the same space, so while I highly encourage people to like have fun with friends, and make the experience their own, right, just because you and your friends have fun kind of yelling at each other, and trying to distract each other, and being silly about it, doesn't necessarily mean that the people in the lane right next to you are sharing that experience.

**Teresa:** Certainly.

**Travis:** So that's usually, like, if I was gonna bring a bunch of kids for like a bowling party...

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** ... I would say, like, "Could we have some lanes... separate away from, make it a bowling league practice?"

**Teresa:** Or "Can we be by the wall?" or whatever, right.

**Travis:** Exactly.

**Teresa:** Um, don't bring food into the approach, right? I talked about the kind of like horseshoe. Usually, there's tables between chairs where you can

put your nachos, or your beer, or whatever. But don't bring it up with you. That's a mess. Um...

**Travis:** I'm saying, clean your hands. Man, if you've got nacho cheese in your hands...

**Teresa:** Yeah! That makes sense.

**Travis:** ... don't grab a ball. Come on...

**Teresa:** Be ready to take your turn, and take it promptly. If you do need to go to the restroom, or go get a beer or whatever, do it right after your turn, so you have the most possible time in order to do it, so that people aren't waiting for you.

**Travis:** Or—

**Teresa:** 'Cause it goes kind of in a circular turn.

**Travis:** I would also say, if it's not a serious thing, serious like league game or something, designate to a friend, like, "Hey, if I'm not back, can you take my turn for me?" to keep things moving.

**Teresa:** Sure. Or you could even talk with your friends, and take an intermission.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** You know, sometimes bowling - depending upon how full your lane is, and how quick the ball return is - it can take a long time. So maybe after the fifth or sixth frame, you can take a break.

**Travis:** Especially since I've been to bowling alleys before where instead of a number of games, you get the space for— you get the lane for, like, an hour and a half, two hours.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.



**Travis:** And if you— just because *you* don't care how many games, if you're there with like six other people, and they're like, "I love this! We all love this," right? They can get antsy that it's like, "We're gonna run out of time, and not have time for a third game." Once again, shared experience...

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** ... it's not just as an individual experience. Try to keep that in mind.

**Teresa:** Speaking of time. Like I said, it can take a while for the machinery to set the pins up again, but do make sure that you don't take your turn until the machinery is out of the way, and the pins are set, right? It can really mess things up if you get your balls stuck in, like, the mechanism or whatever.

**Travis:** Same thing, man. A lot of these bowling alleys are... they *knew*, you know what I mean? The machinery is fairly complicated and old at the same time. So be patient if there's issues, 'cause it's not like they have a team of technicians working on the bowling alley. It's like four people, max.

So if there's an issue, right, be patient while they try to fix it. It's fairly complicated, and I doubt very much that there is a years-long procedure for training these people on how to work the mechanism. They're doing their best; be patient.

**Teresa:** And lastly, don't step over the foul line, which is usually a red line that indicates "Don't go any further," right? Um, not only is it dangerous, because the lane is quite slippery past that point.

Also, you can do *literally* whatever you want to get the ball onto the lane. You can do granny-style, you can— which is the two hands, with the pushing it between your legs. Either hand. [holding back laughter] I wouldn't recommend an overhand...

**Travis:** No. In fact, don't do that.

**Teresa:** Don't do that. It's kind of... kind of, uh, [chuckles] dangerous.

**Travis:** Well, you can dent the floor, which makes it bad for future bowlers, and a thing they have to worry about.

**Teresa:** Yeah. But you can do whatever kind of style, put whatever spin in front of it that you want, but you cannot step over the foul line, or you...

**Travis:** It's a foul.

**Teresa:** ... it's a foul. [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah, there you go. But you know what is a foul?

**Teresa:** What?

**Travis:** Supporting *Shmanners* in the MaxFunDrive. One more time - I'm not gonna do an extended break - go to [maximumfun.org/join](http://maximumfun.org/join) while you're thinking about it.

Thank you so much. We really appreciate all the support. Thank you to Alex, our researcher, without whom we could not make the show. Thank you to Rachel, our editor, without whom we could not make the show. Thank you to listening, and your support. We couldn't do it without you.

**Teresa:** Thank you to Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found.

Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography, for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group. If *you* love to give and get great advice from other listeners, join our Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners! We're always taking topic submissions; we're always taking questions, and idioms, and all sorts of things. Send those to [shmannerscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerscast@gmail.com), and say hi to Alex, because she reads every single one.

**Travis:** And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

**Teresa:** No RSVP required.

**Travis:** You've been listening to *Shmanners*.

**Teresa:** Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it?

[theme song plays]

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