

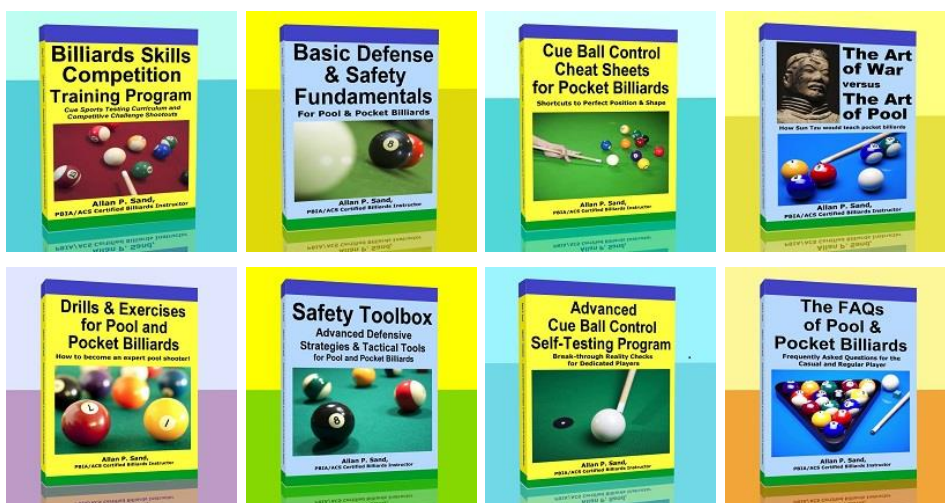
## **Samples – FAQs of Pool & Pocket Billiards For Pool & Pocket Billiards**

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*[Allan P. Sand, Author](#)*

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# The FAQs of Pool & Pocket Billiards

These are sample pages from the book. This book is a compilation of articles about different parts of the Green Game. A one-time read of this book will make you sound like an experienced and competent player.

## Laws of Pool

*These apply to just about everyone. It is nearly impossible to avoid these laws and their consequence. They don't apply every time, but when they do, it is a personal intervention from the hands of any one of the many billiard gods.*

- The more balls you make in an inning, the easier it is to miss an easy shot.
- On a 9 Ball hill-hill game, if you make the 9 ball, the cue ball will scratch.
- The better you play, the easier you can be beaten by a lesser player.
- The better you get, the worse your luck.
- If the game is very competitive, the louder the music will be playing.
- The longer you have to wait before your match, the greater the chance of losing.
- If the planned cue ball path goes within 6 inches of a pocket, it will scratch in perfect center pocket.
- If you make a difficult shot and the next one is easy, if there is any place on the table where you will not be able to make it, the cue ball will go there.
- If you make a successful bank shot, your next shot will also be a bank shot and it will not be successful.
- If you have others, add them to this topic.
- If you get perfect position on a shot, the chances of missing go up immensely. And, even if you make the shot, your next shot will be out of position.
- The importance of making the shot indicates the greater chances of a miscue or doing something stupid.

- The more difficult the successful shot is, the fewer people there are congratulate you on your success. On the other hand, when you miss the easiest shot with money or pride on the line, there will be dozens of witnesses.

## **How can your game go wrong?**

When your game goes off-line and your shooting results begin to deviate from your intentions, something gets out of kilter – usually your fundamentals. The problem is – how long does it take before you notice that something is wrong and take corrective action? Generally, by the time you do wake up, the game count is tough. You might recover – but the struggle to win becomes a low probability proposition.

This article identifies some of the most common situations that create a handicap you could do without. If you can train yourself to recognize when one of these situations occurs, you can more quickly take corrective action. Here are the common problems.

### **Suddenly Stupid**

You make an intelligent shooting decision and get down on the shot. Suddenly, with no conscious intention, the cue ball is moving. Shocked, you watch the table layout change – usually for the worse. Probably, your hind brain took over, or your evil twin surfaced and used this opportunity to mess you up.

At the wrong moment in time, your intelligence and sanity jointly agree to go on holiday. This can be costly in a money competition. Of course, your opponent could be so surprised that he couldn't take advantage of the momentary disintegration of your focus.

When it does happen, all you can do is shake your head in disbelief as your opponent takes over the table. This generally happens because your brain was multi-tasking while shooting. In other words, you weren't focusing on the game in general and the shot in specific. Don't obsess about it (which can further distract you). You can recover if you can immediately go back to your pre-shot routine and start manually performing each step.

### **Casual Laziness**

You begin the competition with all necessary awareness and intentions. Your first few dozen shots are all perfect examples of focus and attention. Your very success and the pride you feel in making the cue ball do what you want becomes your downfall. You relax your intentions (or drink one too many beers). The initial success goes to your head and you (incorrectly) assume you are at the top of your game. After all, recent history has proven your unstoppable skills. Arrogant trust in your competence becomes your new attitude.

For an observant opponent, the next few missed shots demonstrate a weakness in your game. He starts saying things like, "So close" and "You almost had that". You go along with the idea and agree that the misses are simple bad billiard god luck. He snaps up several quick wins.

### **Bumbling Imagination**

This is another way to help your opponent win. All that is needed is an uncontrollable imagination. It occurs most often when you are doing your doing practice strokes. An alternative option bursts upon your consciousness. Instead of stomping on the idea or getting up to reconsider playing options, you change your bridge height and position and go for the new shot. You look at the table results and aren't even ashamed of yourself. Your opponent loves you and considers congratulating you on your decreased skills.

### **Body Distractions**

Another reason to justify reduced attention on the game is bodily interference. There is a close correlation between the operational condition of the body and the ability of the brain to function. Your body has many ways to interrupt your attention. Among these are hunger pangs, headaches, an injury, or excessive flatulence.

Your body can also run out of energy. This physical weakness causes the brain to stop functioning properly. This can result from poor nutrition, weak muscle tone, or even limited stamina. Any of these reduce your ability to play well.

### **Competitive Distractions**

This is a self-inflicted problem. For some reason, your mind doesn't want to concentrate on the game. Any kind of influence in the area demands attention. This can be environmental – music, conversation, an attractive person of the opposite (or same) sex, and others. Even sounds that previously never affected you – affect you, such as clinking ice cubes in a glass. Itemizing these are too many to list here. Basically, your brain will seize upon anything to justify your lack of focus and screw up your game.

### **Outside Distractions**

There are times when personal problems aggressively intrude into your game. Instead of being able to use the Green Game to take a break from your worries, you carry them right along with you. They keep you company as you attempt to be competitive. If your opponent notices this, he can ensure victory by simply slowing down his routine – extending the time that you are waiting (and worrying). Either put your head into the game or go home.

## **What are some good excuses for missing?**

Everyone misses shots, even easy ones. When you need excuses, it is a good idea to have a selection of available excuses ready to use.

### **Here is your standard excuse list:**

- You were sharking me.
- The music is too loud. How can anyone think with this noise?
- I don't want my opponent to see my real skill.
- That good looking girl (or guy) distracted me.
- I not really interested in winning anyway.
- I'm trying to keep my handicap.
- There's a roll-off on the table.
- Whoops. Forgot to chalk.
- I've got to hit the can.
- A piece of chalk threw the ball off line.
- I shouldn't have had that last beer.
- I shouldn't be talking when I'm shooting.
- The ball skidded and went off line.
- The ball doesn't roll right. I want a replacement.
- I had a brain fart.
- There are only so many bad shots in me today. That was one of them.
- I like to help my friends win once in a while.
- The balls don't roll straight.
- Oops. I'm using the wrong cue.
- Can't seem to get anything right today.

### **For old geezers:**

- I just had hip surgery and can't get down on the shot.
- Anybody know where I put my glasses?
- I forgot what I was trying to do.
- I 'd rather be lucky than good.
- I should have made that. Can't figure out why.

- I can't see that far.

Add to this list anything else you need. You get extra social points when you have a humorous excuse. There is no shame in stealing someone else's line, as long as you don't use it the night you first heard it.

## **Can a guy mix family life with pool?**

A lot is going to depend on the expectations of your spouse. If there is not an active and outright hatred of your playing pool, there is plenty of room for negotiation. Basically, this is a situation requiring careful negotiation. How well you can do this is usually related to the number of years you have been married. This can require good bargaining skills.

Initially, there will be a significant amount of horse trading. You offer a certain quantity or quality of favors in exchange for pool playing opportunities. The more sacrifices you are willing to make, the more chances you have of playing pool and for longer periods of time. For example, a good trade is offering to go shopping together Saturday mornings for a chance to get to the pool hall one evening during the week. Or, you can offer to pick up the kids on Thursday and Friday for the chance to play Sunday afternoon.

Keep the trades well balanced. Try this as a guideline - so many of your hours doing the favors to be traded for an equivalent number of hours around the table. Whatever you do, do not get into a situation where you are offering more home hours for fewer table hours. Let that happen one time and you will never get things back in balance until you enter your retirement years.

If there is some resistance to your playing evenings, you will have to be a harder negotiator. It never hurts to throw in a measured dose of whining and begging. Not too much of the kowtowing, but enough to at least tickle the fair play button. Where possible, offer an equivalency trade. You go out one or two nights a week, your spouse goes out the same number of times.

If possible, you can get a 7 footer installed in an appropriate room in your home, even if some shots will be a little cramped. You can use it to keep in stroke and for the occasional party entertainment. When not in use, it can become a clothes folding table, short-term storage area. The space under the table can become longer-term storage. With practice you can clear the table for play in minutes, and when done, restore it to its previous condition.

As the kids get a little older (usually 9+), you can take them to a family-friendly pool hall (one that serves pizza is good). Before eating, rent a table and get them started. The first few times you will need to



work with them on acceptable stroke or stance. Play games where they can position the cue ball for each shot and make it easier for them to make balls. Once they have the basics down, you can leave them unattended while you go off to a grudge match on a nearby table. Assuming they stay relatively well-behaved, you might find yourself training up a budding junior state champion.

If there is outright antagonism against your playing, you are in trouble. What chances you get to play are going to have to be on the sly. And, when you do go out to play, you will have to be very careful to remove all evidences of chalk on hands and clothes. You may have to hide your sticks at a friend's house too. And, you'll put more effort in sneaking out than if you were cheating. When you get caught (and you will), grovel appropriately. Learn how to become a pretty good actor. Over time, use gentle persuasion and courteous proposals, and you will eventually gain sufficient freedom to play on a regular and ongoing basis.

If worse comes to worse and you find yourself having to give up playing, remind yourself that the Green Game will always be there, ready when you are. Your youngsters will grow up faster than you can believe. Eventually, you will retire and the many senior centers all have one or more pool tables.

## **How does age affect skills?**

When you love the Green Game as a young shooter full of vim and vigor, it will be almost impossible to get enough playing time. As you enter maturity, a few other things (such as family, kids, making a living, etc.) intrude on your pool playing time. These intrusions might even interfere enough to cause you to give up playing for a decade or two.

Then comes the big 5-0 (or 6-0 or retirement) and life outside the pool hall settles down. That is a good time to renew your love of the game and its intricacies. After all, you now have the time to make pool a major part of your life again. With new maturity, you are more capable of seeing pool more of a thinking man's game with actions and consequences to be properly considered.

But that maturity in thinking also includes the consequences of aging. Your body doesn't quite work as smoothly and easily as it used to do in your memories. You might be overweight or out of shape. Pool does require some physical fitness. As such, there are only so many shots that you can shoot in any one time. Once that limit is exceeded, your game goes downhill.

One affect of realizing you are on the second half of your life expectancy is the understanding that you will not become the professional player of your youthful dreams. But you can settle down

to become one of the top shooting old geezers at your local pool room. You have the time to regularly work on your game. Practice times are more productive as you focus on fine-tuning your skills.

Another benefit of being a regular is that you are now looked up to by the younger crowd - at least the ones that have any brains. These are the ones that show some respect for your age and wisdom. A few of them even ask for advice. With proper presentation, you can become the go-to guy when a shot has to be watched for legality or there is a question about the rules.

There are always a few youngsters who think they can beat up on you. They think that it will improve the rep - or they are just desperate to find someone to play. You should be able to make life difficult for such individuals. Generally, if you have half their pocketing skill, they should be easy meat. (Age & wisdom beats youth and energy.)

Basically, you get comfortable with your abilities, competence, and skills. You may not be able to play more than a few hours at a time, but your place in the hierarchy of the pool room and within those of your age group are assured. It's a good life.

There will be some loss of physical capability over the years affecting your game. Longer shots may be more difficult to consistently make, sharper cuts are harder to see. That can be offset by applying the tricks and traps learned over the years. There is always something you can do to gum up your opponent's opportunities.

There will also be plenty of players to compete against. In addition to other regulars in your home pool hall, other pool rooms will have their own collection of geezer shooters to compete against. The pool rooms of senior centers across the world contain plenty of competition. Plus, there are always those young shooters who need a lesson in respect for senior citizens.

## **You are addicted to pool if**

How do you know when your passion for pool has taken over your life? Here are a few indicators:

- The wife said, "Pool or me." You miss her once in a while.
- There are only two times a week when you think about pool. Weekdays and weekends.
- You tear down the garage and build a bigger one to hold the pool table.
- At work, you spend more than an hour a day looking at forums and drooling over equipment.

- You have a pool table at home, and get upset because your wife wants to use it to fold clothes.
- When traveling, you pick hotels/motels next to a pool hall.
- You arrange your get-togethers with relatives only when there are tournaments in the area.
- You schedule family nights out with the kids when you don't have league nights.
- If your wife makes you baby sit, you pack the kids up and take them to a pool hall.
- When you started playing pool, your wife made you promise you will play only one night a week. You solemnly promised with fingers crossed.
- You convince the wife that a second floor is needed on the house for a pool room so that you won't interfere with her TV watching schedule.
- The only time you don't play five nights a week is when you are sicker than a dog, and your friends won't let you into the pool hall.
- You make friends with the only three people in town with home tables, so that you can go play with them two times a week - each.
- You play all night, three times a week.
- Your life can be summed up as - All pool, all the time.
- You deny being addicted to pool.
- Your only friends play pool.
- You are relieved that the medical field does not believe that pool is addictive - which you bring up constantly to prove you aren't addicted.

## **Should you gamble?**

There are a considerations built into this question. When something of value is at risk, the pressure to play well goes up. It gets worse if the amount lost impacts your lifestyle (the rent money, etc.). Basically, the decision to bet (and how much) on your skill depends on how the loss would affect you.

If you don't get all hyperactive (fast breathing, high heart rate, copious perspiration) when you place a bet on your competence, you need not worry about the outcome, positive or negative. A comfortable amount, wagered on your abilities against a similarly skilled opponent would be OK. The thrills and chills of a competition make the Green Game more interesting.

Some people can only play their best under this kind of pressure. Others, when exposed to this type of challenge, literally see their game fall apart. They just crash and burn.

If you find the thrill fascinating and can afford to lose, try it out. Just keep the bets within reason. And, be aware that there are predators out there that will make sure you lose AND lose more than you can afford. Among buddies, some friendly bets can be used as an ongoing scorecard.

Weekly tournaments are probably the most common form of gambling. You pay your entry fee (usually a small amount) and are assigned opponents that test you in ways that does not occur in day-to-day pool hall games.

Tournaments are an excellent way to identify weaknesses in your game against individuals of similar skill levels. From those experiences, you can develop practicing programs to strengthen those areas. Over time these contests are your gauge on how well your game is improving.

If you do decide to gamble, here are some general rules:

- Don't carry into the pool hall more than can afford to lose.
- Learn how to match up against your opponent so that it will be a fair challenge - i.e., ask for or give an appropriate handicap (number of balls, number of games, etc.)
- Don't put down a large bet against someone you've never played before.
- You will not get rich gambling, so don't expect that winning or losing will change your life.
- If you lose, consider it entertainment. If you win, buy a good dinner.

## **What is a comfortable way to handle gambling?**

CRITICAL & IMPORTANT - never bet more than you can afford to lose. Trite - yup and I'm pretty sure you've heard it before. A few points are assumed here:

- You are not addicted to gambling.
- You don't make your living gambling.
- You aren't a hustler or a wannabe.
- You have no family members that can get upset if you lose.

- You don't get greedy.
- You don't let any wins make you stupid.
- You don't go crazy about making up losses.
- You are an ordinary nice person.
- You love pool more than gambling.
- Play only people you know.
- From the beginning, agree to the rules that apply to your playing session.
- Sets stay the same (race to 5, etc. or per game, etc.)
- Bets cannot increase (but can decrease on agreement).
- Payoffs are after each set or game.
- Anyone can quit any time.
- Limit the time or number of sets. That and no more, win or lose, everyone goes home.

#### **Things that are suspicious**

- You win one or two sets and your opponent wants to raise the bet. This is the trigger to take your winnings and go home, regardless.
- They change the game or the rules. Refuse emphatically.
- Your opponent doesn't immediately pay off, or put up the required money for the game or session. Solution - quit.
- Your opponent wants to quit, but suggests you play someone else. Go home immediately.

#### **Key points**

- Any winnings are "your" money, not his. It belongs to you. Treat it as your personal hard-earned money.
- Any losses should not make you "desperate". Keep your cool. If you do lose, lose under your control.
- If you are ahead, you are under no obligation to give anyone any chances to win it back.

Mainly, you want to enjoy the experience, even if you lose some. There are always lessons to be learned from your adventures. At the very least, you want the costs of learning to be cheap enough to afford and the rewards to be larger than the costs.

## **What can you expect in a handicapped league?**

A handicapped league is a group of teams each with several players that compete on a regular basis (usually weekly). Each team will have players with different skill levels. Each player is assigned a certain skill level. When individuals with different levels compete, the adjustments are made to their scoring requirements. A new player will start at an initial skill level. As matches are played, the skill level is adjusted as appropriate.

These handicap systems are not perfect and there will always be some conversations about whether someone should be a higher or lower number. Usually those comments arise when an opposing team member complains – most commonly when they lose.

There is always talk about individuals who sandbag their skills - appearing to be lesser skilled than they really are. Then, when there is some actual money to be won, they open their bag of tricks and reveal their true speed. To watch out for this, a number of observers/referees watch everyone. There have been teams who were disqualified from wins because they were caught trying to be a smaller number than they really are.

There are advantages for an individual to participate in these team competitions. A lesser player can get a lot of support from the better shooters on the team. Over time, this assistance helps keep up interest.

For a better player, there are a couple disadvantages. There is usually a cap on the handicap numbers for the entire team that shoots that night. A higher skilled shooter may often find that he is unable to play. That limitation can be somewhat difficult to handle for someone who likes to compete.

Being on a league team and playing regularly among different players also maintains a standard of sportsmanship and etiquette. For new players, league play provides an example of expected behavior. Of course, there are always a few assholes who make it their lifelong purpose to spread irritation. At least their existence teaches the young and impressionable players why good sportsmanship is necessary.

The social benefits are useful for many players. They get an evening out with similar minded individuals, enjoying a pleasant activity that is relatively inexpensive. There is more emphasis on having fun than on winning at all costs - although some experience personal pain for a loss they weren't expecting.

## **Why do you play badly against a lesser skilled opponent?**

As you are participating in the enjoyment of your passion for pocket billiards, you will find yourself playing opponents who are further back on the road to pool mastery than you are. You have long ago traveled past the point where his game is now.

Playing players far below your skill level is mainly a matter of having anyone to play with. In other words, anyone is better than no one. As the games begin, your opponent bangs away at his best speed, and you start out playing at your regular speed.

Then, something subtle happens to your game. For some reason, your results are less than you are used to. You miss easy shots, simple patterns become near impossible, and you find yourself less than satisfied. Even if you are winning most of the games, you are struggling to do so.

Part of what is happening is your sense of fair play kicks in. You (consciously or unconsciously) crank back your abilities to keep the game somewhat competitive. There is no big challenge involved and nothing to speed up your heartbeat. You relax your standards. Before you know it, you are struggling to keep up and even losing a few games.

Even if you realized what is happening and attempt to restore your standard skills, there is no incentive to maintain your focus. Your game, if possible, gets worse. You attempt to console yourself that any time on a table is far better than no time on a table. You could quit in self-disgust with only your innate sportsmanship maintaining your courtesy and good manners.

Instead of writing off the time as unworthy of wasting, change the rules. Give your opponent weight - a lot of weight. For example, if playing 9 Ball, give the 5 and up. He makes any of those balls, he wins the game. For 8 Ball, you must bank the 8 into the last pocket.

With these handicaps, if you want to him take the game seriously; offer a buck every time he beats you. All of sudden, playing every game with all of your attention becomes much more important.

There is a major difference if you are playing with someone who is your student. In this situation, the purpose is not whether there is any actual competition, but is geared towards teaching in a game environment. The net result of the games played is not a matter of who won or lost, but how much improvement was made. And, if your "student" beat you more times, that strengthens his enthusiasm for the game.

## **How can you get over a slump?**

Just like baseball players fall into slumps that last for games, you will have similar experiences in pool. Your game disintegrates and you make playing decisions that would be embarrassing for a beginner. These times can be depressing, leading to thoughts of giving up the game – a true tragedy.

When you are shooting below acceptable levels, you have to take some steps to shorten up the amount of time you spend in pool playing hell. Here are a couple of different ways to make the transition from the swamps into the light.

When you come to the practice table, rather than immediately start banging balls around, do some stretching exercises as if preparing for a physical competition, such as tennis or a track & field event. Do about 10 each of different stretches for your arms, back, neck, torso, etc. Then prepare to shoot some balls. Throw out a rack of balls on the table and just shoot them in, randomly and without thought. Keep your mind a blank. Do two or three more racks. Shooting in 40 or 50 balls while your muscles are loose, allows your back brain to take over control of your stroke.

Now is when you can set up some specific shots to work on. Maintain the loose stroke you have been using and use only stun for cue ball control. After about a dozen successful shots, use draw for a set, then use follow for a set. By this time, you should have recovered your routine skill level. You may even notice some improvements.

Another option is to simply give up the game for a week or two. Do something else that takes up your attention and time. Here are a few ideas: read a book or two, go to some movies, watch some good PBS shows, get some classic movies. When you do come back to the table, at first only work on easy shots, then slowly increase the difficulty factor. You will find that the slump has passed, and like above, may experience some improvements.

## **How can you handicap 9 Ball with a friend?**

Assuming you are the better player, add extra opportunities for your friend to win. Here are some suggestions. Whichever one your buddy chooses, you have to follow one or more of these restrictions:

- He wins when the 6, 7, 8, or 9 ball is made on a legal shot.
- Last pocket - you win only if you sink the 9 ball in the pocket where you made the previous lower sequence ball.



- When you are on the 9 ball for the first time, your buddy picks the pocket for the 9 ball that you must put it in order to win.
- Friend picks 2 or 3 pockets on the table that you cannot sink balls in. If you do, the ball stays down, but you give up ball in hand.
- Bank the nine one or more rails to win.
- Friend gets ball in hand for every shot (or every other shot).

As the games progress, the rules can be modified to get the best equalization of skills. Using this type of handicapping (even when weighted against you), forces you to treat the game with proper attention.

Without this handicapping, you would not take the game seriously and thereby begin to play casually - not a good thing to do.

## **How can you handicap 8 Ball with a friend?**

Here are some suggestions where the weaker player can still bang away at his best speed, and the stronger player (in this example is you) has to follow one or more of these restrictions. Playing straight up is too lopsided and the fun of playing quickly fades.

- Last pocket - you must pocket the 8 ball in the pocket where you made your last ball, he plays normally.
- Your friend picks the pocket for the 8 ball, after you sink your last ball, he plays normally.
- Your friend picks 2 or 3 pockets on the table where you cannot pocket object balls. If you do, the ball stays down, but he gets ball in hand.
- You must bank the 8 ball one or more rails to the called pocket to win, he plays it normally.
- You play where the cue ball lies, he gets ball in hand for every shot (or every other shot).
- You must shoot your balls in rotation, he can play his balls in any order.
- You must call every shot, he can play slop.

As the games progress, the two of you modify the rules until you both have some kind of agreement that equalizes your skill levels. These are also good rules to use when you are playing a girlfriend/boyfriend (so that you are able to maintain good relations).

## **Do you play the opponent or play the table?**

When you are in a competitive match; a few of the pros, when asked, recommend concentrating on playing the table. Their rationale is based on the fact that since you are on the table, and your opponent isn't, so just run out the balls and win the game. If you are not at that level where running the table is a common experience, then that advice is less than useful.

Leaving the rarified atmosphere of professionals, let's put some reality in the question. Yes, you do play the table when you are shooting, but you play the opponent when you have to let him play. When this occurs, knowing how skilled your opponent is helps you make cue ball placement decisions. And if you miss and your opponent has problem balls on the table, you know that another opportunity to shoot will come your way.

When competing, always take the game as far as possible. When you are stopped by a bad position, a tough shot, or tied up balls; playing a safety is a good idea. That is when you need to know what your opponent can and cannot do.

The capabilities of your opponent are a major consideration on your next shooting decision. If he is an average shooter, you can play a number of shots to leave him nothing easy to play with. If he is above average, your choices are more limited and require more care to set up and execute. Either way, you want to set up your opponent to hand back the table to you.

In essence, when the table layout favors you, take the best advantage you can. When there is no generosity from the billiard gods, play the shot that leaves your opponent with little or no opportunities.

## **What is sharking?**

These are techniques used by unscrupulous and unsportsmanlike opponents that distract you from playing at your normal or better level. Most individuals who are intent on sharking you are quite obvious in their actions.

Here are some of the distractions they like to use:

- Carry on a conversation with you while you are shooting.
- Drop anything that makes a loud noise just as you get set to commit.
- Move into your line of sight and make motions to grab your attention.

- Have loud conversations with friends (including distracting laughter).
- Wear loud and flashy clothing.
- Making jingling sounds with their keys and coins.
- Make jokes to get you laughing.
- Have friends do the above while you are shooting.

Some sharking efforts are more subtle and are not obvious. For example:

- Carry the table chalk back to their seat when their turn is over. Leave it there on the next turn, grab that chalk and bring back to their seat. This is a good distraction as long as you don't carry your own chalk with you.
- Anytime they fall into your line of sight, they slowly move their cue stick side to side while you are concentrating on the shot.
- Being extra complimentary when you make a tough shot.
- Being extra sympathetic when you miss a tough shot..
- Moving around within your peripheral vision.

The great majority of players do not necessarily have "evil" intentions, although that does not stop them from having "naughty" intentions. Their distractions are in the context of friendly competition with a dose of buddy-busting. They are there to have fun during an enjoyable evening. Watch for the ones who do these tricks all the time. When money is on the line, these unsportsmanlike players are very obvious.

## **What if your opponent is an ass?**

You do not want to do is be responsible for a physical altercation in the pool hall. That can get you kicked out or even banned from playing. In an elevated confrontation, there are always nearby buddies of your opponent ready to helpfully make their muscles available.

Upon finding yourself face to face with such a person, maintain a facade of disinterested courtesy. Hold tight onto your temper. Keep the communication down to a minimum, and do not make any comments outside the game table that could be construed as goading.

In other words, if there is going to be any accusations of poor sportsmanship or a related incident flying around, let it be very obvious that the other person was responsible. If the person does start attempting to shark you with comments, noises, distractions, etc., you can use the techniques in "How can you stop someone sharking?"

At a certain point, you may have to take additional action. In a league match, ask the team captains to do something. If the two captains cannot settle the problem, then simply refuse to continue the match. At this point, it is not your problem anymore. The next day file a formal complaint to the league operator/manager. Provide as much detail as possible and copy the information to both team captains.

In some circumstances, you could appeal to the pool hall manager. At the least do not say or do such things that could escalate the situation.

## **How can you get more practice time in?**

Unless you have our own home table (or a relative who owns a pool hall), one of the problems you face is finding the time to practice. It takes more time to get your stuff together and drive back and forth to your local playing environment (pool hall, senior center, lodge) than actually practicing. A dedicated practice trip will take 20-30 minutes to get there for a practice time of a half hour, and then the trip back. BTW, playing with friends is NOT practicing, so get that idea out of your head. Practice is practice. Use your playing friends to demonstrate your new skills.

But all is not lost. You don't actually need a pool table to practice. You can actually fit in a multiple groups of several minutes of practice time right at home. The kitchen table works just as well. A standard kitchen table is the same height as a pool table. On the kitchen table, you can work on:

- Bridge hand setup
- Butt stick grip
- Feet placement
- Waist and knee positioning
- Head position
- Arm positioning and alignment
- Body balance

When you bend over, inspect yourself to make sure everything falls into position. You can test your balance, alignment (head, arms, and grip lined up aligned).

Work on repetitive strokes. These are related to the practice strokes before hitting the cue ball. Concentrate on making sure the stick doesn't wander side to side during the stroke. Practice this with short strokes and longer strokes. Basically, the cue tip will betray any stroke action that is not true back and forth. Make adjustments accordingly.

## *Samples – FAQs of Pool & Pocket Billiards*

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The stroke is the critical part of playing. It is what propels the cue ball to do wonderful things. And make sure your back elbow is over the stick and doesn't move up and down. Just let the forearm hang from your elbow and swing back and forth like a pendulum. Subdue any wavering and make the movement consistent. You will make a lot more balls more easily with this control.

You can make a practice table out of your kitchen table. And, best of all, no table charges. All you need is the following equipment:

- Kitchen table
- Blanket
- Any cheap stick from any sporting goods store
- A few old tennis balls (or small oranges)
- Small can of vegetables (16 oz or so)

Here is what to do. A good regime is two or three 10-15 minute sessions per day.

- Drape the blanket over the table.
- Roll-up the edges to act as a barrier to prevent the balls from falling off the table.
- Set up a tennis ball and practice shooting it at the can of vegetables.
- Shoot over and over and over until the tennis ball rolls straight.
- Then set up another ball and shoot the "cue ball" into the "object ball" which must hit the can of vegetables.

Later, buy the cheapest set of balls you can find (check the internet or a local sports store). Use these to learn how to hit balls on your kitchen table. A thick blanket requires more speed; a thin blanket requires slower speeds. Because the balls are heavier than tennis balls, make the rolled up sides of the table taller. Practice with both thick and thin blankets. Learn speed control (so that you don't have to pick up fallen balls from the kitchen floor).

The best part of "practicing" at home is that you can work on something for five minutes, make yourself a snack, another five minutes, check the grass growing in the front yard, another five minutes and do this throughout the day. You only have to actually clear the table for meals.

Just a month or two of this practice routine will save you five or more years of flailing around trying to learn during matches or competitions. You will dominate your friends very quickly.

## **Will exercise help improve your game?**

Anyone who says that pool players don't do much exercise and aren't in good shape hasn't really played much pool. If you know a scofflaw, challenge that person to 100 shots, within one hour. If they're not in good physical condition, they'll be huffing and puffing and dripping up sweat like its 120 degrees.

The better your physical conditioning, the longer you can play pool. How's that for an incentive?

If you are not a regular gym attendee, start your physical development with long walks. Carry a 24-32 oz plastic water bottle in each hand. While on your long walks, swing the stick hand (and the bottle you are holding) up to your shoulder as hard and fast as you can. This strengthens your arm for the break. As your stamina increases, stop about every 100 yards (m) and do five deep knee bends.

If you are a regular gym attendee, you want to concentrate on machines and routines that improve muscle tone and stamina. At no time do you want to physically exhaust yourself. (Pool is not an extreme sport.)

If weights are a part of your program, it's not a good idea to increase your arm dimensions. If you focus on building muscle mass, you tend to lose your ability to control the very fine movements necessary for slow rolling shots at precise distances. Games you should have won will be lost because of this lose of fine motor control. For example, a shot you could consistently roll exactly two diamonds suddenly goes four and half diamonds in distance.

Suddenly increasing stomach muscle strength changes how you hold your body in position on a shot. Yes, stronger stomach muscles does mean you can shoot more shots without getting back pains, but it also changes how far you bend over for the shot. Even a half inch different in your head height (up or down) over the stick changes how you see the lines and angles.

When you are developing a workout routine, follow these basic guidelines:

- Exercise no more than 3 times a week.
- Perform a maximum of six routines in one exercise session.
- Only make one weight increase in a single routine during the entire week.
- Only make one repetition increase in a single routine during the

entire week.

- Be consistent week by week with the schedule.
- Plan on taking a long time to tone your muscles.

Follow your regular exercise routine, except when you enter an important competition. For the week before, cut back weights and reps by 10%. Stop exercise sessions two or three days before the competition.

## **How do you find a good instructor?**

It is surprising, but the vast majority of pool players have never taken the time to take a lesson from a qualified instructor. They will spend hundreds of dollars on a cool cue stick, but not willing to part \$20, \$50, or \$100 for lessons. They are perfectly happy to go on for years and years (and years) believing they are just too intelligent to need an instructor. If they are focused on improving, they'll watch dozens of hours of online video between pros and think that the couple of scraps of insight they can actually understand are all they need to soon become pros themselves.

Then of course, there are the "intelligent" shooters, who don't hold such superior self-opinions and will look to a qualified instructor to fix something that is holding them back. Generally, an hour or two of lessons with a bit of follow-up is all that is needed. Six months later, that player is kicking his friends' butts who previously humiliated him. (What a sweet revenge.)

The process of getting an instructor to help seems to begin with the dim awareness that something needs to be done and an instructor seems like a good idea. After percolating around in their head for two or three years, they finally decide to do something about it. This is the level where you are at.

Here are some guidelines to help select which of several instructors can help you:

- Remember, anyone can say they are an instructor. So it helps to first look for any certifications, i.e., PBIA, ACS. These groups have a code of conduct and because these are national organizations, you have some assurance of their qualifications.
- What kind of experience does the instructor have? Consider how many years playing, handicap levels in any local leagues, etc..
- How is their reputation? Talk with individuals who have past experience as students.

- Talk with each instructor one on one. What teaching tools are used, i.e., handouts, video tape, etc. Do they ask questions about what you want?
- Take an initial half hour lesson to review style and presentation.

An instructor should also ask questions about you. Here is a sampling:

- How long have you been playing?
- What is your skill level?
- What do you want to achieve, short term?
- How much time do you practice?
- Have you bought any books or had other instructors?

In order to get the best and maximum benefits from an instructor, expect to put some hard work into learning what you are taught. You have to be willing to actually practice regularly. Ask however many questions are necessary for you to actually perform what you are learning. Your instructor can teach you a lot of short cut learning tricks, but you are going to have to work on them – if for nothing else but to make sure you get value you're your money.

## **How do you video tape yourself?**

There are times in your self-imposed intention to become a better player that you want an outside eyeball looking at you and seeing if there something that you are unable to spot. For best results, you should work with an instructor who can observe what is happening. He can tell exactly where the adjustments need to be made (usually the feet).

However, there may not be an instructor around, and you certainly don't want to depend on the opinions of friends. However well-intentioned they may be, they do not know what to look for and what needs fixing. Between both extremes is something that can work for your – videotaping yourself. If you don't have a video camera yourself, certainly one or more of your friends will. And, as soon as you finish, connect up a couple of cables and bang – there you are on TV.

Before you begin, know what you are trying to capture. It is a waste of time to simply setup a random videotaping without knowing what to look for. You aren't doing this just to prove to your relatives what a cools shooter you are. You want to have a reason for the taping. Choices for recording include:

- Stroke mechanics.
- Drill activity.
- Game routines.



This article assumes you don't have any friends who are serious enough to help you by running the camera without commentary. You do need a decent quality video camera and a camera tripod. Tripods are available in different sizes anyplace that cameras are sold. There are these cute little tripods that cost a few bucks. Set it up on a chair pointing in the right direction and you are ready to go.

### **Stroke mechanics**

To video yourself on your stroke mechanics, you want two angles, one directly from the front and one from behind slightly to the same side as your stick arm.

*TABLE:* All balls on the side, ready to grab, place and stroke into the far corner pocket. Use a donut to mark the position for each ball.

*CAMERA:* Place the camera height about a foot above the table and about 3-4 feet away from the table. Focus the camera in at the cue ball and zoom the screen so that the top of the little view finder is about two feet above the table. Tape a couple of setup shots to ensure you have everything lined up. (Rewind the tape when done.)

*ACTION:* Use the same stance. As needed, empty the pocket.

1st set - 12:00 hit, soft roll.

2nd set - 12:00 hit, medium roll.

3rd set - 12:00 hit, hard roll.

Repeat as needed.

*BACK ANGLE:* Set the camera height at the same as for the front shot. set the tripod about eight feet behind you and four feet on the same side as your stick arm. Focus the camera in at the elbow with the top of the view finder about 1/2 foot above the elbow when in your stance. Tape a couple of setup shots to ensure you have everything lined up. (Rewind the tape when done.)

### **Drills**

To video yourself while doing drills, you want to select a drill where you are shooting balls into the same pocket. You don't want to be continuously crossing in front of the camera to make shots.

*TABLE:* All balls set up for the drill. As needed, use a donut for any ball that has to be constantly replaced.

*CAMERA:* Place the camera height about two feet above the table and about 8-10 feet away from the table. Focus the camera in at the cue ball and zoom the screen so that the top of the little view finder is about two feet above the table. Tape a couple of setup shots to ensure you have everything lined up. (Rewind the tape when done.)

*ACTION:* Begin the drill, and run through it. Reset and reshoot missed shots. As needed, empty the pocket.  
Record three sets.

*ANOTHER ANGLE:* On some drills, you may want to record a set from your stick arm side, to check the arm action.

### **General shooting**

This is going to be a general free for all. You can record yourself shooting racks of 8 Ball and 9 Ball. You can also video yourself and a buddy shooting.

*TABLE:* All balls racked for the selected game.

*CAMERA:* Set the camera height as high as possible, and angled from one corner to get a view of the entire table. Focus the camera on the center of the table, and zoom out enough to show all pockets. (Don't worry if there is a bit too much floor space covered. It is more important to get the table in the frame. Make some test shots as needed.

*ACTION:* Start the tape and begin with breaking the rack. When the last ball goes in, stop the tape.

### **When done videotaping**

After you have finished, you can hook up the camera to the TV. If you consider the details worthwhile keeping, save the details as a movie for a DVD or to play on your electronic device, such as an iPod, iPhone, Blackberry, etc.

## **How do people abuse pool equipment?**

Wherever you find a pool table, you will find that someone at some time has abused the pool equipment to some degree. The vast majority of this is caused by ignorant people using the equipment for things and activities they were not designed to accomplish.

There is not much you can do about past abuse, except use the evidence to point them out to any beginners in your presence and how the damage affects the game for people using the equipment. When you do happen to observe actual abuse, raise your voice in protest (unless you happen to observe the abuse in a biker bar or other area equally dangerous to your life time.)

### **Cue damage:**

- Tapping the shaft against the table edge to knock off excess chalk from the cue tip (that they applied by digging and grinding into the chalk cube).
- Using the sticks for sword play by kids (and child-like adults).

- Placing the stick across the shoulders behind the head and then placing full weight of the arms at each end, which warps the stick.
- Grimy and greasy from players who were eating fried food.
- Left outside in the weather.

**Table damage:**

- Talc powder in the form of dozens of palm and finger prints.
- Loose cushions from people sitting on the rails.
- Loose or broken side panels caused when people tried to "lift" the table to see how heavy it was.
- Inexpertly applied nails to loose pockets which tear the skin when a hand is inserted.
- Cracked slates sometimes caused by kids jumping up and down on the table. (Once known to occur when a bowling ball fell on top.)
- Cloth tears and rips.
- Tables not leveled by inattention and sometimes by kids stealing the shims.

**Ball damage:**

- Chips caused by bouncing the balls on cement.
- Chips caused by someone hitting it with a hammer to see if it would break.
- 20+ years of use and the table owner won't replace them.
- Balls used by kids to play catch.

If you are considering buying the table (maybe it's an antique), have a table mechanic check to see if the damage can be repaired and how much it will cost. You can use this as a bargaining point to further knock down the price.

If you know the owner, beg & plead to have at least some of the things fixed.

If the owner is an apartment manager, you will need to get a petition signed by 90% of the residents in order to either repair or replace the table. (If you take up this task, consider it a good way to get introduced to neighbors and possible new friends.) In the worst case where nothing can be done, accept the problems and get on with your games. Any table is better than no table.

## **Should you own your own set of pool balls?**

If you are a casual player who goes down to the pool hall as a once a week league player, or you go to the senior center four times a week to play, or if you are an avid bar table player - nope, don't consider owning your set of pool balls. There is no reason to waste your money, simply because you would never have any place to use them.

On the other hand, if you frequent a pool hall several days a week, or spend more than four hours a week playing pool on decent tables, or study and practice drills from instruction books, you should have your own set of pool balls. And, you should have the best set that you can afford to buy. You want to buy a set that at least matches the quality of balls used in well-maintained pool halls around the world. For the cue ball, get the measles ball with the 6 red spots.

When you do get your own set, you can keep them in their original box as long as the box condition holds up. There are carrying cases of various qualities from the most basic box with handles to tooled leather plush cases with padded cradles.

Keep these balls in the trunk of your car. If you live in an area with below freezing conditions in the winter or above 110 degrees in the summer, it is a good idea to bring them into the house. Otherwise, you can keep them there out of sight but ready to pull out on a moment's notice.

The reasons to have your balls are many:

- Sometimes you are at a pool hall where they don't take good care of the sets. You pick up the house set and place them under the table, then use your own balls.
- Many people have home tables, but for one reason or another, got the cheap set of balls. Bring yours in and you might convince your friend to get a good set.
- Many places such as senior centers, YMCAs, kids camps, hotels, apartments, condos, etc. have tables but the balls are in terrible condition.
- Sometimes you can find a table, but no balls.

Don't forget the simple pride of ownership you get when you bring in a good set to use instead of whatever was there. And there also are the sounds of appreciation and admiration from friends. Your own set of balls in the car is proof of your dedication to playing at your best.

## **How do you take care of a pool table?**

When you assume or take responsibility for maintaining a pool table, there are a number of upkeep jobs that need to be done on a regular basis. If you don't do these, the quality of play on the table will slowly deteriorate until it becomes uncomfortable to play on it.

Several things affect the cloth of the table. One is the spray of chalk that flies off the tip of the cue every time someone strokes the cue ball. Another thing is the constant contact of hands on the cloth which leaves small residues of oils. Another minor factor is dust that settles onto the table after floating around in the air.

Some individuals use a hand held vacuum cleaner to suck up any loose material that has settled into the cloth. Make sure it is on vacuum only and does not use a beater brush which can damage the cloth.

Others like to use the table brush. This is best done after each session that the table is used. Brush from one end of the table to the other, with all strokes in the same direction. Sweep any particles and debris into the pockets. You will need to brush under the cushions. Following that, use a damp rag to pick up loose dust particles.

For the rails, wipe them down to remove fingerprints and skin oils. For plastic cover rails, clean with a cloth sprayed with a counter cleaner. If wood, use a good lemon-based wood cleaner.

### **NEVERS**

- NEVER let anyone near the table with any kind of drink in their hand.
- NEVER let anyone near the table with a lit cigarette or cigar.
- NEVER let anyone play who is eating any kind of chips, snacks, or other finger food. In fact, eating does NOT mix with pool playing. Do not allow people to play in between bites of food.

### **ALSOs** (regularly)

- Wash and clean the set of balls used on the table.
- Clean the inside of the rack.
- Brush down the table at least once a week.

## **What are the different pool table sizes?**

Pocket billiard tables are rectangular in shape, twice as long as wide. Table sizes are usually measured by the playing space inside the cushions. Most table sizes are:

- 3 x 6 - hard to find at a professional quality level (can be custom ordered). Usually made of cheap material for use by younger children (6 to 12). Occasionally, they pop up as antiques. This size was never popular.
- 3.5 x 7 (38" x 76") - the common "bar room" table, because this size is mostly found in bars as coin operated tables. Because space is generally limited, these tables can usually replace a couple of tables and chairs. In bars, these provide a relatively good gross sales per square foot. They can also be found in homes with smaller square foot rooms or in single car garage spaces.
- 4 x 8 home (44" x 88") - this size sells the most of all the sizes. It fits in almost all homes that have a recreation room or a basement.
- 4 x 8 pro (46" x 92") - this size is an excellent compromise between the home size and professional size.
- 4.5 x 9 (50" x 100") - used in professional tournament and pool halls, a long-time serious player who finally gets a home table will only settle for this size.
- 5 x 10 - also known as "monster" tables, this size is hard to find and usually only found as an antique, although they can be custom-ordered new. Learning how to make long shots on this size, makes a 9 footer feel like an 8, and an 8 like a 7. This size is most commonly available as a billiards table (no pockets).

There are also pool tables made in novelty forms, such as circular, square, and hexagonal, even a zig-zag table. Another common table is the bumper pool table, usually found as part of a "combination" table the offers a playing surface for poker, bumper pool, and chess/checkers.

## **Why should you own your own table?**

Note: only a table with a real slate bed and good supporting cross-beams should be considered by any player, regardless of skill.

### **Advantages:**

More practice time. Just step into the pool room, grab a stick and a piece of chalk, throw some balls on the table and away you go.

Cheaper per hour of use. You don't need to pay pool hall rates while using your own table. You can take breaks (take out the garbage, check the mail, etc.), come back a half hour later and pick up where you left off.

All night pool parties with friends. (spouse permitting) Get your buddies together, charge them a case of beer to get into the room, and party hearty.

**Disadvantages:**

**Room use limitations.** Once converted to a pool room, there usually isn't much room left for other activities such as foosball, ping pong, even table games (Monopoly, Risk, etc.).

**Environmental and table condition differences between home and competitive locations.** Unless you purchase a pool hall quality, name brand table (Brunswick, Diamond, Connelly, etc.), your table won't play the same as the pool hall. You can develop awesome banking skills on your table which will not translate to the pool hall. There will be some differences in table roll also.

**Less competition available.** Unless you have three or four immediate neighbors who are just as dedicated to the Green Game, it will not be easy to locate and schedule gaming times. Not everyone in the world lives to your schedule.

**Table burnout.** Over time, the table might get less and less use and finally end up being a laundry folding table. When that happens it won't be very long before your spouse will be demanding that you get rid of that silly space hog.

## **Pool Snooker**

This game is an adaptation of American snooker rules to the pool table.

**Object**

Score the highest number of points.

**Opponents**

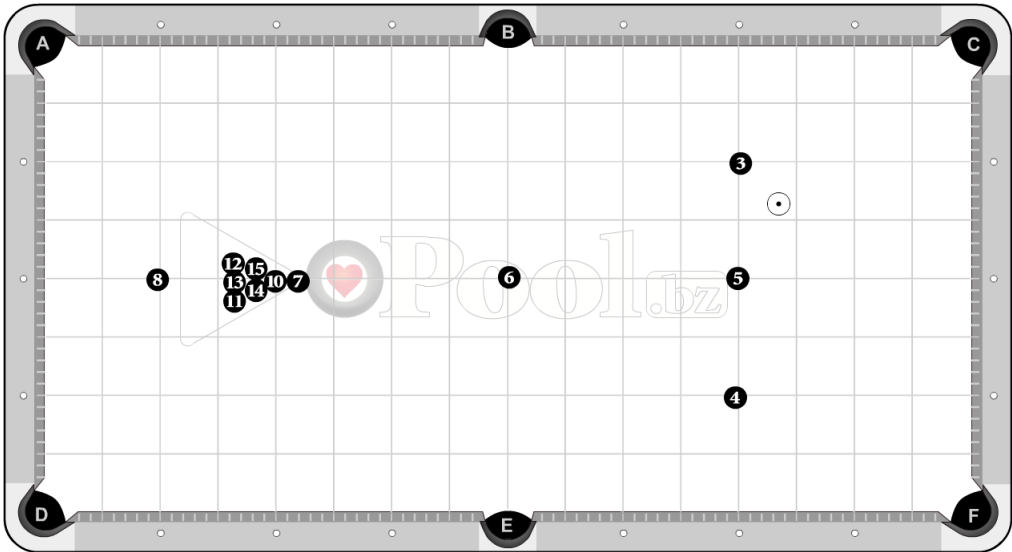
Two sides (individuals or teams)

**Balls**

3 - 8 (replaces 2-7 balls used in snooker). 10-15 are used as the red balls. Plus cue ball.

**Racking**

Following is the table setup for this game.



The "D" in snooker is replaced by the kitchen (behind the head string). See example setup for 3 ball, 4 ball, and 5 ball (head spot) placement.

The 6 is on the center spot, the 7 is placed above the foot spot, the 8 is placed one diamond up from the center diamond on the foot rail.

10-15 balls are racked in a triangle on the foot spot.

### **Break**

Breaker determined by local rules (coin, lag, card draw, etc.)

Cue ball from the kitchen. A legal break must contact a striped ball. At least one striped ball must hit a cushion or a ball is pocketed.

Pocket a striped ball, any solid (3-8) is the next target ball.

### **Scoring**

The 10-15 balls each are worth 2 points. The 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8 balls score their face value.

### **Regular play**

Combinations are legal for the stripes. No combinations with solids.

While stripes remain on table, incoming player must pocket a stripe and then a solid (immediately spotted), followed by another stripe and solid (immediately spotted), and so on until all stripes are pocketed with the related shot on a solid. Then, solids are pocketed in sequence

Optional: Call ball and pocket.

### **Fouls**



All of these include loss of turn and 3 points added to the opponent's score. Incoming player has ball in hand on the table.

- Cue ball scratch
- No legal hit
- Pocket illegal ball
- Ball off the table
- Scratch
- Illegal ball touching (optional – moved balls can be replaced with opponent's approval and play continues with no penalty)
- Uncalled balls pocketed

## **Equal Offense**

Based on *14.1 Continuous*.

### **Object**

Score a higher number of total points in a group of opponents with an agreed number of innings. Or, if playing against yourself, beat your previous best score. Generally a game is 10 innings with a 200 point maximum.

### **Balls**

Regular set of balls.

### **Racking**

Standard random rack.

### **Breaking**

Standard break. Any pocketed balls are re-spotted.

Start shooting from the kitchen.

### **Regular play**

After break, first shot is from the kitchen.

Call ball and pocket. See 14.1 rules.

### **Skill levels**

Play at the level of your skills and abilities.

Level 1 - Beginner: After the break, start with ball in hand anywhere. Three misses or fouls to end the inning. After each miss (1st and 2nd), ball in hand anywhere. Advance to the next level when your total score reaches 120.

Level 2 - Intermediate: After the break, start with ball in hand anywhere. Two misses or fouls to end the inning. After the first miss, start with ball in hand anywhere. Advance to the next level if your total score reaches 120.

Level 3 - Advanced: After the break, start with ball in hand from kitchen. One miss or foul ends the inning. Advance to the next level if your total score reaches 120.

Level 4 - Professional: After the break, start with ball in hand in the kitchen. One miss or foul ends the inning. For each inning, the goal is to reach 20 (playing through the rack like 14.1). Reaching 170 would be considered top-level.

### **Fouls**

Penalty is end of turn.

- No legal shot
- Ball off the table
- Scratch
- Illegal ball touching (optional – moved balls can be replaced with opponent's approval and play continues with no penalty)

# Translations of Other Books

These are links to descriptions for the books that have been translated to other languages:

- [Advanced Cue Ball Control](#)
- [Cue Ball Control Cheat Sheets](#)
- [Drills & Exercises](#)

All books are available on Amazon (printed) and ebook (PDF).

[Afrikaans \(Afrikaanse Taal\)](#)

[Albanian \(Gjuha shqipe\)](#)

[Belarusian \(Беларуская мова\)](#)

[Bulgarian \(български език\)](#)

[Chinese \(中国语言\)](#)

由 Gerry Chen 翻译

[Croatian \(Hrvatski jezik\)](#)

[Czech \(český jazyk\)](#)

[Danish \(Dansk sprog\)](#)

[Dutch \(Nederlandse taal\)](#)

[Filipino \(Tagalog wika\)](#)

[Finnish \(Suomen kielen\)](#)

[French \(Langue](#)

[Française\)](#)

[German \(Deutsch Sprache\)](#)

[Greek \(ελληνική γλώσσα\)](#)

Μεταφράστηκε από τον Χρήστο Μπακάλη

[Hindi \(हिन्दी भाषा\)](#)

[Hungarian \(Magyar Nyelv\)](#)

[Indonesian \(bahasa](#)

[Indonesia bahasa\)](#)

[Italian \(Lingua Italiana\)](#)

Tradotto da Carlo Volpicelli

[Japanese \(日本語\)](#)

[Korean \(한국어\)](#)

[Lithuanian \(Lietuvių Kalba\)](#)

[Malay \(Bahasa Melayu\)](#)

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