

General Info re Billiards/Pool

Governing Organizations

The major organization governing billiards/pool games (sometimes referred to herein simply as “pool”) is the World Pool-Billiard Association (WPA) which is associated with the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In the USA, the WPA is represented by the Billiard Congress of America (BCA) which was founded in 1948. The WPA and BCA have established *General Rules of Pocket Billiards* and specific *World Standardized Rules* for 8-Ball, 9-Ball, and several other games. Other organizations that abide by these world standardized rules include the Women’s Professional Billiard Association (WPBA) and the United States Pool Players Association (USPPA).

The United States Professional Poolplayers Association (UPA) follows the BCA rules with a few exceptions. The American Pool Players Association (APA) — an amateur franchise league — also follows the BCA rules, but with several exceptions mostly designed to speed up the games. Refereed tournaments often have rules of their own that sometimes differ from the *World Standardized Rules*.

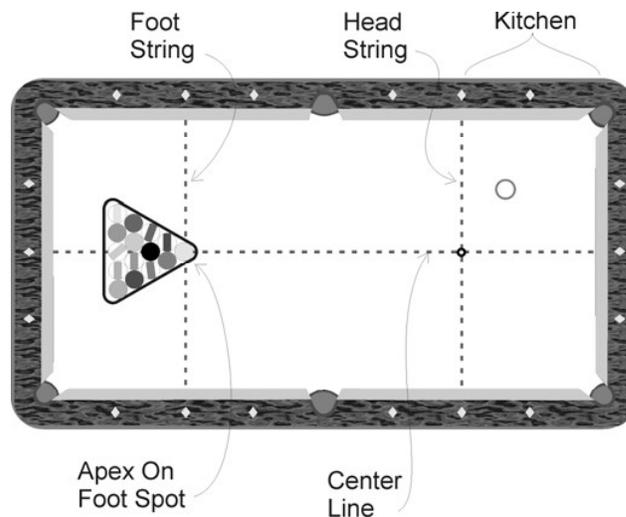
The rules given in the following pages have been selected from numerous sources as the rules most likely to be useful in home/social situations. They have been edited to conserve space and arranged for easy referencing. Nevertheless, the rules given for 8-Ball and 9-Ball are in agreement with the *World Standardized Rules*.

Anyone playing on a league or in a tournament should familiarize themselves with the official rules of the appropriate governing body. Here are Web sites for obtaining official rules.

- ◆ BCA [Billiard Congress of America] www.bca-pool.com
- ◆ APA [American Pool Players Association] <http://www.poolplayers.com/>
- ◆ UPA [United States Professional Poolplayers Association] <http://upatour.com/>
- ◆ WPBA [Women’s Professional Billiard Association] <http://www.wpba.com/>

- ◆ USPPA [United States Pool Players Association] <http://www.usppa.com/>

General Rules & Etiquette



Taking Turns

All billiard games begin with some number of balls placed in specified positions, usually determined by a triangular rack. The first person to shoot breaks the racked balls by hitting the cue ball into them from behind the head string (that is, the area between the spot at the end opposite the rack and the head rail).

Who goes first is typically determined by having opponents each simultaneously shoot a ball from behind the head string towards the opposite rail (i.e. the foot rail). The player whose ball bounces off of the foot rail and ends up closest to the head rail wins the break. This method is called “to lag for break.” Alternatively, players may simply use any agreed-upon method to determine who goes first.

Each player’s turn is called an “inning.” A player’s inning ends when she either fails to make a legal shot or commits a foul. When an inning ends without a foul, the incoming opponent begins play without changing the position of any ball. This is known as accepting the table “in position.”

The Non-Shooter(s)

During the time that it is not a player's turn to shoot, he and/or she should:

- o refrain from addressing comments to the shooter, or about the shot, or making any loud or sudden sound that could distract the shooter.
- o stand back from the table and make no movements within the shooter's field of vision.
- o watch the shooter and the shot closely enough to detect a foul and correct any improper ball movement, if desired.

Fouls

A foul occurs when a player takes an action or causes an event that is not allowed and that results in the end of the player's inning. Repeated fouls may result in forfeiture of the game. If multiple fouls are committed by one player in the same inning, only the one with the most severe penalty is counted.

Unless otherwise specified, a foul gives the opponent ball in hand anywhere on the table.

The following are fouls by the shooter in all games, unless the rules for that game specifically state otherwise.

- o Not keeping one foot touching the floor during a shot.
- o Touching any ball by any means other than (1) striking the cue ball with the tip of the cue, and (2) placing and aligning the cue ball when having ball in hand. This includes touching with any part of the cue other than the tip, with the player's clothing, the chalk, the bridge, etc.

Despite this rule, in non-refereed games it is usual to play "cue-ball fouls only." This means that moving an object ball is not a foul unless it moves another ball or gives the shooter an advantage. If a ball is inadvertently moved in such a game, the shooter must ask her opponent to choose whether the moved ball should be allowed to maintain its new position or be returned (as close as possible) to its original position.

Failure to follow the opponent's wishes before taking another shot constitutes a foul.

- o Altering the course of a ball after the shot has been initiated.
- o Failing to cause the cue ball to make contact with a legal object ball prior to contacting any other ball.
- o Failing either to pocket a legal object ball or to cause either the object ball or the cue ball to contact a rail after the object ball has been hit by the cue ball.
- o Pocketing the cue ball. This is a "scratch."
- o Causing any ball to jump from, and remain off of, the bed of the table.
- o Attempting to jump or loft the cue ball over another ball by placing the cue tip at the base of the cue ball and lifting it sharply. (For a jump to be legal, it must be made by forcing the cue ball downward so that it rebounds upward from the table bed. Amateurs should not attempt this.)
- o During a single shot, striking the cue ball more than once, or maintaining contact between the cue and the cue ball after the cue ball contacts an object ball, or pushing the cue ball rather than striking it.
- o Using anything other than a cue stick (held in the hand) to aid in aligning, measuring, or marking the table. (For example, placing a chalk on a rail to aid in aligning a bank shot.)

Legal Shots

Other than on the break, for a shot to be legal it must contact one of the player's object balls and then cause one of the player's object balls to be pocketed or hit a rail, or cause the cue ball to hit a rail after contacting the object ball. (Banking the cue ball off of a rail prior to hitting the object ball does not, of itself, make the shot legal.) If a shot does not meet these requirements, it is a foul and opponent has cue ball in hand.

If a shot meets all of these requirements except that none of the shooter's object balls is pocketed, then there is no foul, but the inning is over and it is the opponent's turn to shoot. ■