

English Billiards

RULES OF THE ENGLISH BILLIARDS

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SECTION 1. EQUIPMENT

Measurements in parentheses state the metric equivalent to the nearest millimeter

1. The Standard Table

Dimensions

- (a) The playing area within the cushion faces shall measure 11ft 8½in x 5 ft 10in (3569mm x 1778mm) with a tolerance on both dimensions of +/- ½in (+/- 13mm).

Height

- (b) The height of the table from the floor to the top of the cushion rail shall be from 2ft 9½in to 2ft 10½in (851mm to 876mm).

Pocket Openings

- (c) (i) There shall be pockets at the corners (two at the Spot end known as the top pockets and two at the Baulk end known as the bottom pockets) and one each at the middle of the longer sides (known as the centre pockets).
 (ii) The pocket openings shall conform to the templates authorised by the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA).

Baulk-line and Baulk

- (d) A straight line drawn 29in (737mm) from the face of the bottom cushion and parallel to it is called the Baulk-line, and that line and the intervening space is termed the Baulk.

The “D”

(e) The “D” is a semi-circle described in Baulk with its centre at the middle of the Baulk-line and with a radius of 11½in (292mm).

Spots

(f) Four spots are marked on the centre longitudinal line of the table:

- (i) the Spot, 12¾in (324mm) from a point perpendicularly below the face of the top cushion.
- (ii) the Centre Spot, located midway between the faces of the top and bottom cushions.
- (iii) the Pyramid Spot, located midway between the Centre Spot and the face of the top cushion.
- (iv) the Middle of the Baulk-line.

2. Balls

The balls shall be of an approved composition and shall each have a diameter of 52.5mm with a tolerance of +/- 0.05mm and:

- (a) a set of balls may be either red, spot white (with two or more black spots for identification) and a white or red, yellow and white;
- (b) they shall be of equal weight within a tolerance of 0.5g per set
- (c) a set of balls may be changed by agreement between the players or on a decision by the referee.

3. Cue

A cue shall be not less than 3ft (914mm) in length and shall show no substantial departure from the traditional and generally accepted shape and form.

4. Ancillary

Various cue rests, long cues (called butts and half-butts according to length), extensions and adaptors may be used by players faced with difficult positions for cueing. These may form part of the equipment normally found at the table but also include equipment introduced by either player or the referee (see also Section 3 Rule 18). All extensions, adaptors and other devices to aid cueing must be of a design approved by the WPBSA.

SECTION 2 DEFINITIONS

1. Game

A game is the period of play from the opening stroke until it is completed by

- (a) concession by any player during his turn,
- (b) reaching the end of a specified period of time,
- (c) either side reaching the number of points specified, or
- (d) being awarded by the referee under Section 4 Rule 2.

2. Match

A match is an agreed or stipulated number of games.

3. Balls

- (a) The cue-ball is the ball of the striker
- (b) The non-striker's ball and the red are object balls.

4. Stringing

Stringing is when both players (or one from each side) play together from the Baulk-line on either side of the “D” to the top cushion and back, with the object of having the ball played come to rest on the bed of the table and closer to the Baulk cushion than the ball played by the opponent. Contact with any side cushion, or impinging into the opponent's ‘half of the table’, shall give the opponent the options.

5. Striker and Turn

The person about to play or in play is the striker and remains so until the final stroke, or foul, of his turn is complete and the referee is satisfied that he has finally left the table. If a non-striker comes to the table, out of turn, he shall be considered as the striker for any foul he may commit before leaving the table. When the referee is satisfied that the above conditions have been met, the incoming striker's turn begins. His turn, and his right to play another stroke, ends when

- (a) he fails to score from a stroke; or
- (b) he commits a foul.

6. Stroke

- (a) A stroke is made when the striker strikes the cue-ball with the tip of the cue in the direction of cue alignment.
- (b) A stroke is fair when no infringement of Rule is made.
- (c) A stroke is not completed until:

- (i) all balls have come to rest;
 - (ii) the striker has stood up, in readiness for a succeeding stroke, or leaving the table;
 - (iii) any equipment being used by the striker has been removed from a hazardous position; and
 - (iv) the referee has called any score relevant to the stroke.
- (d) A stroke may be made directly or indirectly, thus:
- (i) a stroke is direct when the cue-ball strikes an object ball without first striking a cushion;
 - (ii) a stroke is indirect when the cue-ball strikes one or more cushions before striking the first, or second object ball.

7. Pot

A pot is when an object ball, after contact with another ball and without any infringement of these Rules, enters a pocket. Causing a ball to be potted is known as potting. A pot is also known as a winning hazard.

8. In-off

An in-off is when the cue-ball, after contacting an object ball and without any infringement of these Rules, enters a pocket. If both object balls are contacted by the cue-ball, it is held to have gone in-off the first object ball contacted. An in-off is also known as a losing hazard.

9. Hazard

A hazard is any scoring stroke that does not include a cannon, being any of

- (a) a pot,
- (b) an in-off,
- (c) two pots,
- (d) a pot and an in-off, or
- (e) two pots and an in-off.

10. Cannon

A cannon is when, without any infringement of these Rules, the cue-ball makes contact with both object balls during a stroke. Only one cannon can be scored in a stroke.

11. Break

A break is a number of scoring strokes in succession made in any one turn by the striker.

12. In-hand

- (a) A player's ball is in-hand
 - (i) before the start of each game,
 - (ii) when it has entered a pocket,
 - (iii) when it has been forced off the table, or
 - (iv) after balls are spotted under Section 3, Rule 13(a).
- (b) It remains in-hand until
 - (i) it is played fairly from in-hand,
 - (ii) a foul is committed whilst the ball is on the table, or
 - (iii) it is spotted under Section 3 Rules 10(c) or 15(c) (ii).
- (c) The striker is said to be in-hand when the cue-ball is in-hand as above.

13. Ball in Play

- (a) A player's ball is in play when it is not in-hand.
- (b) The red is in play when spotted and remains so until pocketed or forced off the table.

14. Ball in Baulk

A ball is in Baulk when it rests on the Baulk-line or between that line and the bottom cushion.

15. Forced off the table

A ball is forced off the table if it comes to rest other than on the bed of the table or in a pocket, or if it is picked up by the striker whilst it is in play.

16. Miss

A miss is when the cue-ball fails to contact either object ball when both object balls are in baulk.

17. Running a coup

Running a coup is when the striker, when in hand, directly pockets his cue-ball when no ball(s) are out of Baulk. It is not deemed running a coup if the ball first makes contact with the flat of a cushion and then (indirectly) enters a pocket.

18. Foul

A foul is any infringement of these Rules.

19. Spot Occupied

A spot is said to be occupied if a ball cannot be placed on it without that ball touching another ball.

20. Push Stroke

A push stroke is made when the tip of the cue remains in contact with the cue-ball

(a) after the cue-ball has commenced its forward motion, or

(b) as the cue-ball makes contact with an object ball except, where the cue-ball and an object ball are almost touching, it shall not be deemed a push stroke if the cue-ball hits a very fine edge of the object ball.

21. Jump shot

A jump shot is made when the cue-ball passes over any part of an object ball, whether touching it in the process or not, except:

(a) when the cue-ball first strikes one object ball and then jumps over the other ball.

(b) when the cue-ball jumps and strikes an object ball, but does not land on the far side of that ball.

(c) When, after striking a ball lawfully, the cue-ball jumps over that ball after hitting a cushion or another ball.

SECTION 3 THE GAME

1. Description

English Billiards is played by two persons or sides and the game can be summarised as follows:

(a) Three balls are used: a plain white by one side, a yellow or spot white (if the latter, with two or more black spots for identification) by the other side, and a red.

(b) Scoring strokes in a player's turn are made by pots, in-offs and cannons singly or in combination.

(c) Points awarded for scoring strokes are added to the score of the striker.

(d) Penalty points from fouls and misses are added to the opponent's score.

(e) A tactic employed at any time during a game is to leave both object balls in Baulk when the next player is in-hand such that any attempt at disturbing the balls must be by means of an indirect stroke.

(f) The winner of a game is the player or side

(i) who has scored most points in the agreed or stipulated time,

(ii) who first reaches the agreed or stipulated number of points,

(iii) to whom the game is awarded under Section 4 Rule 2, or

(iv) to whom the game is conceded.

(g) The winner of a match is the player or side winning most games or, where aggregate points are relevant, with the greatest total.

2. Start of Game

The choice of white ball and which side is to play first shall be decided by stringing or any mutually agreed manner, the winner having both options unless all players mutually agree on these options.

(a) The order of play thus determined must remain unaltered throughout the game.

(b) The red is placed on the Spot and the first player plays from in-hand, the game commencing when the cue-ball has been placed on the table and contacted with the tip of the cue, either

(i) as a stroke is made, or

(ii) while addressing the cue-ball

(c) If the wrong white ball is used for the opening stroke, that stroke is void and the game must be started with the correct ball. Once the game has started, it is the responsibility of the striker to ensure that he plays with the correct white ball even if the wrong white ball is passed to him by the referee.

3. Mode of Play

The players play alternately, or in turn, unless a score is made, in which case the striker continues the break playing from the position left or, after an in-off or if touching another ball as provided for in Section 3 Rule 13, from in-hand. When the striker fails to score, his turn ends and the next player plays from the position then left, this being from in-hand if his cue-ball is off the table or touching another ball as provided for in Section 3 Rule 13. After a foul the next player has the additional option of playing from in-hand with both object balls spotted as provided for in Section 3 Rule 15 (c) (ii).

4. Scoring

Points are awarded as follows:

(a) A cannon, pot white and in-off white shall each score two.

(b) A pot red and an in-off red shall each score three.

(c) If more than one hazard or a combination of hazard/s and cannon are made in the same stroke, all are scored.

(d) When an in-off is combined with a cannon, the in-off shall score (additionally to the cannon)

(i) three points if the red was struck first by the cue-ball,

(ii) two points if the object white was struck first, or

(iii) two points if both object balls were struck simultaneously.

5. End of Session and Game

(a) At the end of the period of time set for any session, the referee shall call TIME. Any stroke that has been made shall be allowed to finish and any points scored shall be added to the appropriate side. If other sessions are to follow, the position of all balls shall be measured and noted by the referee

so that the next session may commence from the point of interruption.

(b) The end of the final session as above is the end of a game in a time format.

(c) In a game or match played to a time limit, it is possible that the scores could be level at the end of the period of time allowed and the rules setting the period of time should include any provision for any necessary tie-break.

(d) When playing to an agreed or stipulated number of points, the end of the game is reached when a player first reaches or passes the required number. Only the points required are counted, though the player shall be credited with a break that includes all points scored.

6. Playing from In-hand

To play from in-hand, the cue-ball must be struck from a position on or within the lines of the “D”, and

(a) the referee will state, if asked, whether the cue-ball is properly placed (that is, not outside the lines of the “D”);

(b) if the tip of the cue should touch the cue-ball while positioning it, and the referee is satisfied that the striker was not preparing or attempting to play a stroke, then the cue-ball is not in play;

(c) the cue-ball must be played out of Baulk. If it contacts an object ball that is out of Baulk, the cue-ball is held to have been played out of Baulk even though it may not physically cross the Baulk-line;

(d) the cue-ball must contact a cushion or ball out of Baulk before re-entering and coming to rest in Baulk, or before hitting a ball in Baulk;

(e) the cue-ball may be played against a cushion in Baulk before hitting a ball out of Baulk;

(f) if an object ball is in Baulk, no part of its surface may be played on directly from in-hand, even if that part of its surface is physically out of Baulk.

7. Ball on Baulk-line

The referee shall state, if asked at any time, whether a ball on or near the Baulk-line is in Baulk or out of Baulk.

8. Spotting Object Balls

(a) If the red is pocketed or forced off the table, it is placed on the Spot, or:

(i) if the Spot is occupied, it shall be placed on the Pyramid Spot;

(ii) if both the Spot and the Pyramid Spot are occupied, it shall be placed on the Centre Spot.

(b) If the red is potted twice, or more by mistake, in consecutive strokes in one break, either from the Spot or from the Pyramid Spot, not in conjunction with another score, it shall be placed on the Centre Spot, except:

(i) if the Centre Spot is occupied, it shall be placed on the Pyramid Spot;

(ii) if both the Centre Spot and the Pyramid Spot are occupied, it shall again be placed on the Spot but shall not then be considered as part of a sequence of pots from the Spot for the purpose of this Rule.

(c) For continued pots of the red, not in conjunction with another score, it shall be placed on the Spot twice, then the Centre Spot once, in sequence while those spots are not occupied.

(d) The referee shall inform the striker upon request how many consecutive pots have been made off the same spot.

(e) A ball is not considered to be on any spot unless it was placed there by hand.

(f) If another ball should touch any ball that has been placed by hand on a spot, that ball is no longer considered to be on that spot, even though it may not have moved.

(g) A player shall not be held responsible for any mistake by the referee in failing to spot correctly any object ball.

9. Limitation of Cannons

Consecutive cannons, not in conjunction with a hazard, are limited to seventy-five.

(a) After seventy such cannons, the referee shall state SEVENTY CANNONS. If the referee should fail to announce when seventy cannons have been made, the striker shall be entitled to make five more such cannons after the referee does announce SEVENTY CANNONS.

(b) The referee shall inform the striker upon request how many consecutive strokes of cannons have been made.

10. Limitation of Hazards

Consecutive hazards, not in conjunction with a cannon, are limited to fifteen strokes.

(a) After ten such strokes of hazards, the referee shall state TEN HAZARDS. If the referee should fail to announce when ten hazards have been made, the striker shall be entitled to make five more such hazards after the referee does announce TEN HAZARDS.

(b) The referee shall inform the striker upon request how many consecutive strokes of hazards have been made.

(c) (c) If the non-striker's ball is off the table as a result of the final stroke of the non-striker's last turn, it shall after the fifteenth hazard, be placed on the Middle of the Baulk-line or, if that is occupied, on the right-hand corner of the “D”, viewed from the Baulk end of the table.

11. Ball on Edge of Pocket

When a ball falls into a pocket without being hit by another ball or any outside agency:

(a) Being no part of any stroke in progress, it shall be replaced and any points scored shall count.

(b) If it would have been hit by any ball involved in a stroke:

(i) with no infringement of these Rules (including cases where an infringement would have occurred but for the ball falling into a pocket), all balls will be replaced and the same stroke played again, or a different stroke may be played by the same striker at his discretion;

(ii) if a foul is committed all balls will be replaced and the next player has the prescribed options after a foul.

(c) If it balances momentarily on the edge of a pocket and then falls in, it shall count as in the pocket and not be replaced.

12. Ball Moved by Other than Striker

If a ball, stationary or moving, is disturbed other than by the player at the table, it shall be re-positioned by the referee to the place he judges the ball was, or would have finished, without penalty.

(a) This Rule shall include cases where another occurrence or person, other than the striker's partner, causes the striker to move a ball, but will not apply in cases where a ball moves due to any defect in the table surface, except in the case where a spotted ball moves before the next stroke has been made.

(b) No player shall be penalised for any disturbance of balls by the referee.

13. Touching Ball

- (a) When the striker's ball remains touching another ball, the referee shall state TOUCHING BALL and, following the agreement of both players, red shall be placed on the Spot, the non-striker's ball, if on the table, shall be placed on the Centre Spot, and the striker shall play from in-hand.
- (b) If a stationary object ball, not touching the cue-ball when examined by the referee, is later seen to be in contact with the cue-ball before a stroke has been made, the balls shall be re-positioned by the referee to his satisfaction.
- (c) The striker is entitled to be told upon request whether the object balls are touching.

14. Fouls

The following acts are fouls:

- (a) striking a ball other than the cue-ball;
- (b) striking the cue-ball more than once during a stroke;
- (c) striking when any ball is not at rest;
- (d) striking when both feet are off the floor;
- (e) playing out of turn;
- (f) playing improperly from in-hand, including at the opening stroke;
- (g) playing the cue-ball directly into a pocket, or off a shoulder of the pocket, when in-hand with no object ball out of Baulk (Running a Coup);
- (h) playing a jump shot;
- (i) making a push stroke;
- (j) causing a ball to be forced off the table;
- (k) making more than fifteen consecutive hazards;
- (l) making more than seventy-five consecutive cannons;
- (m) touching a ball or ball marker in play, other than in the lawful execution of a stroke;
- (n) striking before the referee has completed the spotting of a ball;
- (o) causing the cue-ball to miss all object balls, other than as provided for in Section 3 Rule 16;
- (p) conferring with a partner contrary to Section 3 Rule 17(b);
- (q) playing with a non-standard cue;
- (r) using a ball off the table for any purpose; and
- (s) using any object to measure gaps or distance.

15. Action after a Foul

When a foul is committed, the referee shall immediately call FOUL.

- (a) If the striker has not made a stroke, his right to play a stroke ends immediately. If he should, in the opinion of the referee, intentionally play a stroke after being called for a foul, he shall be deemed to have committed a further foul for playing out of turn and shall be further penalised.
- (b) All points scored in a break before a foul is awarded are allowed but the striker shall not score any points in a stroke called foul.
- (c) All fouls will incur a penalty of two points but not more than two points shall be forfeited in any one stroke. Additionally, the next player shall have the option of playing:
 - (i) from where the balls have come to rest, the red if off the table being first correctly spotted; or
 - (ii) from in-hand with the red placed on the Spot and the object white/yellow placed on the Centre Spot. After a request to have the balls so spotted has been made, it cannot be withdrawn.
- (d) If the foul is neither awarded by the referee, nor successfully claimed by the non-striker before the next stroke is made, it is condoned.

16. Action after a Miss

If a miss is made, by other than a stroke made directly into a pocket or off a shoulder of a pocket when the striker is in-hand with no object ball out of Baulk the referee shall call MISS. A penalty of two points is incurred, which is added to the opponent's score. Any other miss is a foul.

17. Four-handed Billiards

- (a) The side to make the first stroke is decided by the winner of the stringing, as per Section 3 Rule 2. The order of play is then determined by the next player after which the order must remain unchanged throughout the game.
- (b) Partners may confer during a game but not whilst one is the striker and has approached the table until the break has ended with a non-scoring stroke or foul. This principle shall also apply in games between individual players that form part of a team match.

18. Use of Ancillary Equipment

It is the responsibility of the striker to both place and remove any equipment he may use at the table.

- (a) The striker is responsible for all items including, but not limited to, rests and extensions that he brings to the table, whether owned by him or borrowed (except from the referee), and he will be penalised for any fouls made by him when using this equipment.
- (b) Equipment normally found at the table which has been provided by another party including the referee is not responsibility of the striker. If this equipment should prove to be faulty and thereby cause the striker to touch a ball or balls, no foul will be called. The referee will, if necessary, reposition any balls in accordance with Section 3 Rule 12 and the striker, if in a break, will be allowed to continue without penalty. If any faulty equipment should interfere with the stroke played, the striker has the option of having that stroke declared void, with all balls replaced. The striker then has the choice of playing the same, or an alternative, stroke.

19. Interpretation

- (a) Throughout these Rules and Definitions, words implying the masculine gender shall equally apply to and include the female gender.
- (b) Circumstances may necessitate adjustment in how Rules are applied for persons with disabilities. In particular and for example Section 3 Rule 14(d) cannot be applied to players in wheelchairs.
- (c) When there is no referee, such as in a social game, the opposing player will be regarded as such for the purpose of these Rules.

SECTION 4 THE PLAYERS

1. Time Wasting

If the referee considers that a player is taking an abnormal amount of time over a stroke or the selection of a stroke, he shall warn the player that he is liable to have the game awarded to his opponent.

2. Ungentlemanly Conduct

For refusing to continue a game, or for conduct which, in the opinion of the referee is wilfully or persistently unfair, including continued time wasting after being warned under Rule 1 of this Section, a player shall lose the game.

3. Penalty

When a game is forfeited under this Section

- (a) if it was to be decided on an agreed or stipulated number of points, the offender shall forfeit all points scored and the non-offender shall win the game by the agreed or stipulated number of points to nil, or
- (b) if it was over an agreed or stipulated period of time and forms part of a match, the match shall be forfeited.

4. Non-striker

The non-striker shall, when the striker is playing, sit or stand at a reasonable distance from the table and avoid making any movement or action that may interrupt the concentration of the striker.

5. Absence

In the case of his absence from the room, the non-striker may appoint a deputy to watch his interests and claim a foul if necessary. Such appointment must be made known to the referee prior to departure.

6. Conceding

A player may only concede when he is the striker. The opponent has the right to accept or refuse the concession, which becomes null and void if the opponent chooses to play on.

7. Scores

Each player is responsible for checking the accuracy of the scores recorded on the scoreboard, both for points scored in that player's turn and points awarded from an opponent's fouls and misses. In the event of any claim later in the game, the referee's decision shall be final.

SECTION 5 THE OFFICIALS

1. The Referee

- (a) The referee shall:
 - (i) be the sole judge of fair and unfair play;
 - (ii) be free to make a decision in the interests of fair play for any situation not covered adequately by these Rules;
 - (iii) be responsible for the proper conduct of the game under these Rules;
 - (iv) intervene if he sees any infringement of these Rules; and
 - (v) clean any ball upon reasonable request by a player.
- (b) The referee shall not:
 - (i) answer any question not authorised in these Rules;
 - (ii) give any indication that a player is about to make a foul stroke;
 - (iii) give any advice or opinion on points affecting play; and
 - (iv) answer any question regarding the difference in scores.
- (c) If the referee has failed to notice any incident, he may take the evidence of the marker or other officials or spectators best placed for observation, or he may view a camera or video recording of the incident to assist his decision.

2. The Marker

The marker shall keep the score on the scoreboard and assist the referee in carrying out his duties. He shall also act as recorder if necessary.

3. The Recorder

The recorder shall maintain a record of each stroke played, showing fouls, hazards and cannons where appropriate and how many points are scored by each player or side as required. He shall also make a note of break totals, and calculate average scores per turn after the completion of the game.

4. Assistance by Officials

- (a) At the striker's request, the referee or marker shall move and hold in position any lighting apparatus that interferes with the action of the striker in making a stroke.
- (b) It is permissible for the referee or marker to give necessary assistance to handicapped players according to their circumstances