

GAME RULES

SECTION 3

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

It is impossible to cover every situation with rules. *Common sense must prevail.* Play within the Spirit of the Rules, as well as the written rule. Teams that try to gain an advantage by creating their own interpretation of rules are subject to sportsmanship violations. *Win at the table and not from the chair.*

8-Ball is played with a cue ball and a rack of 15 object balls. The primary purpose of this game is for one player to pocket the solid balls numbered from 1 to 7 or the striped balls numbered from 9 to 15, and then pocket the 8-ball before their opponent. Each player's category of balls is determined when the first player legally pockets a ball. For example, if the first ball pocketed in the game is the 3-ball, then that player must pocket the rest of the balls numbered 1 to 7 while the opposing player attempts to pocket all the balls numbered 9 to 15. The turn passes from one player to the next whenever the shooter fails to pocket a ball of their category or fouls. A player legally pocketing a ball of their category must continue to shoot. The player who pockets their entire category of balls first, then legally pockets the 8-ball, is the winner of the game. In League play, the 8-ball must be pocketed in a marked pocket.

NOTE: In Masters Divisions, the 8-ball pocket can be called instead of marked.

9-Ball is played with a cue ball and nine object balls numbered 1 through 9. It is a rotation game, meaning the balls are shot in numerical order. The shooter must strike the cue ball into the lowest numbered ball on the table first. The game is over when the 9-ball is legally pocketed. A player retains their turn at the table as long as they strike the lowest numbered ball first, and legally pocket a ball. The shooter need not pocket the lowest numbered ball to continue shooting. For example, the shooter may strike the 1-ball into the 4-ball (a combination shot) thus pocketing the 4-ball and continue their turn at the table with the understanding that the 1-ball must be struck first on the next shot. If the shooter shoots the lowest numbered ball into the 9-ball and pockets the 9-ball, the game is over. In League play, balls 1 through 8 are worth one point each and the 9-ball is worth two points.

NOTE: In Masters Divisions, 9-Ball is not played by ball count/points. Each individual game is won when the shooter legally pockets the 9-ball.

1. LAGGING

Players lag to see who wins the first break. The ball that stops closest to the head rail wins. It is permissible to strike the head rail. If the lagged balls make contact with each other, both players fail to strike the foot rail during the lag, or a ball stops in the jaw of a pocket, re-lag. Failure to strike the foot rail, or striking a side rail or any pocket, results in loss of lag. Players are discouraged from using the cue ball during the lag. Insisting upon lagging with the cue ball is considered a sportsmanship violation and should be reported to Local League Management. The winner of the lag breaks in the first game; from that point on, the winner of each rack breaks in the next game. Please note the following:

- In Masters Divisions, the winner of the lag will have choice of format or the break. Once the format has been chosen, the entire set of that format must be completed before moving to the other format.
 - In Doubles Divisions, the lag does not count as part of the player rotation.
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2. RACKING

All balls should be frozen (touching) as tightly as possible. Balls are racked with the head (front) ball on the foot spot. The breaking player may request and receive a rerack. The loser of the lag, and/or the loser of any subsequent game, racks for the opponent. In each format, the ball placement in the rack is as follows:

- **8-Ball** - All 15 balls are racked in a triangle, with the 8-ball in the center. The rest of the object balls are placed randomly in the rack.
- **9-Ball** - The balls numbered 1 through 9 are racked in a diamond shape. The 1-ball is at the front of the rack, the 9-ball is in the center and the remaining object balls are randomly placed. When using coin-operated tables, teams have the option to substitute any unused balls (10-ball to 15-ball) for pocketed balls following a short game; this will save both teams money during League night. The breaker can ask for the lowest available nine balls to be used in each game.

Example: If the 3-ball and 9-ball are made on the break (because a 9-on-the-Snap is a win, unless you scratch), you can use the 10-ball and 11-ball in the next rack. The object ball sequence in the next game would

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be 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11. The 11-ball, in effect, is the “9-ball” (last ball) in this game. Do not use the 10-ball to replace the 3-ball, as this can be confusing. Shoot the balls in numerical order.

3. BREAKING

The rack must be struck before a foul can occur.

A player must break from behind the head string for the break to be considered legal; in addition, at least four object balls must be driven to the rails or a ball must be pocketed. The cue ball may not be shot into a rail before hitting the rack.

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NOTE: A player who is physically unable to break due to a medical condition may pass the break to the opponent, but only with prior approval from Local League Management. Such occurrences should be marked as a Defensive Shot and an inning where appropriate. Players are not allowed to have a teammate break for them.

The cue ball's point of contact with the table is used to determine if it is behind the head string, also referred to as **in**. To make this determination simply compare the head string, an imaginary line connecting the second diamonds from the head rail (see Table Diagram, pg 84), to the cue ball's point of contact. A ball that is dead-center on the head string is considered **out**, or not behind the head string.

The cue ball must make contact with the rack as follows:

- **8-Ball** - The head ball or the second row of balls must be struck first. Failure to strike the head ball or second row of balls does not result in a foul.
- **9-Ball** - The 1-ball must be struck first. Failure to strike the 1-ball first does not result in a foul.

If the rack is struck, but the break does not qualify as legal, the balls are reracked and rebroken by the same player.

If the rack is struck, but the break does not qualify as legal **and results in a scratch**, the balls are reracked and broken by the opposite player.

Breaking safe or soft is not allowed. Make a note on the scoresheet if you observe a player breaking safe or soft. Local League Management may issue penalties to

teams and players who are not breaking hard. Breaking just hard enough to comply with this rule is not a guarantee against penalties. Break as hard as you can while maintaining control.

4. AFTER THE BREAK

Various circumstances can occur upon completion of the break. They are:

- A foul on a legal break will result in ball-in-hand for the opponent.
- No balls are pocketed; it is the opponent's turn.
- An object ball is pocketed; it is still the breaker's turn.

8-Ball

- a. If a scratch occurs on the break, the opponent receives ball-in-hand, which must be executed from behind the head string, shooting at a ball that is outside the head string. If an object ball is dead-center on the head string, or **out**, then it is playable. If it is **in**, the ball is not playable. If the two players cannot agree on whether an object ball is **in** or **out**, then a third party should be consulted. If a third party is consulted, their call is final. If no third party is available or agreed upon, then a coin flip will decide the issue. To intentionally shoot at a ball that is **in** is a sportsmanship violation to be reported to Local League Management.

NOTE: The cue ball must be **in** as noted above before play can begin. This is not a foul; no penalty may be assessed. It is up to the opponent to check to be sure the cue ball is **in** before it is shot. If the cue ball is **out**, the shooter must readjust the cue ball to a position behind the head string.

- b. If the 8-ball is pocketed on the break, it is a win unless the player fouls the cue ball, in which case it is a loss.
- c. If a ball of each category is pocketed on the break, it is still an open table. The breaker has the option to shoot any ball except the 8-ball (which would be a foul); any ball pocketed without fouling counts. If the shooter makes one ball of each category on their second shot, the table remains open; a miss or foul on the second shot results in an open table for the opponent. If the opponent then pockets a ball and fouls, it is still an open table.
- d. If on the break two balls of one category and one ball of the other category are pocketed (for example, two solids and one striped) it is still an open table. It is still the shooter's choice.

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NOTE: During an open table, a player can shoot a combination involving stripes and solids; the legally pocketed ball will determine their category of balls for the remainder of the game. The 8-ball may not be used as the first ball in a combination shot.

9-Ball

- a. A foul on a legal break will result in ball-in-hand for the opponent anywhere on the table. Pocketed balls, if any, stay down (are not spotted), except the 9-ball. The pocketed balls are marked as dead balls.
- b. If the 9-ball is pocketed on the break, this is a win unless the player scratches, in which case the 9-ball (any other available high numbered ball is adequate) is spotted and the turn passes to the opponent. If the foot spot is occupied by another ball, the 9-ball is placed directly behind that ball and as close to the foot spot as possible.
- c. If one or more balls are pocketed on the break, it is still the breaker's turn.

NOTE: Push-outs are fairly standard in pro events and in the U.S. Amateur Championship®; however, they are not allowed in APA handicapped competition. Masters Divisions are non-handicapped and follow U.S. Amateur Championship® rules; therefore, the push-out is allowed, and any balls pocketed on a push-out will be spotted.

5. SHOOTING THE WRONG BALLS

Occasionally, a player mistakenly shoots the wrong category of balls (in 8-Ball) or the wrong numbered ball (in 9-Ball). The shooter may avoid a foul by asking the opponent which ball or category of balls they should be shooting. If asked, the opponent must answer honestly. If the shooter hits the wrong ball, a foul occurs as soon as the wrong ball is struck, regardless of whether the ball is pocketed or not.

NOTE: If a foul is not called before the shooter makes legal contact with a ball of their actual category, it is too late to call the foul.

- **8-Ball** - Once a player makes legal contact with the 8-ball, the player assumes control of that category of wrongly pocketed balls and can win the game by legally pocketing the 8-ball. In addition, if the sitting player does not call a foul before the opponent's turn ends, and subsequently contacts the wrong ball during their turn, both players will assume the new category of balls for the remainder of the game.
- **9-Ball** - Any balls pocketed prior to the foul being called will be marked as dead balls.

6. COMBINATION SHOTS

Combination shots are legal, but striking the correct ball first is required.

- **8-Ball** - The 8-ball may not be contacted first. If a player does not pocket one of their balls, but pockets an opponent's ball, they lose their turn. No pocketed ball is spotted.
- **9-Ball** - The lowest numbered ball on the table must be struck first. A player is credited with all balls they legally pocket.

7. POCKETED BALLS

Balls must remain in a pocket to be legal. If any ball, including the cue ball, goes in a pocket, but bounces back onto the playing surface, it is not considered pocketed and must be played from where it lies.

NOTE 1: Once a ball has stopped all motion, it cannot move again without outside forces affecting it. Therefore, if a ball which has been hanging in a pocket for more than a few seconds suddenly drops, it is to be placed back on the table where it was originally sitting.

NOTE 2: If two balls become jammed in a pocket and are leaning off the edge of the slate to some degree, they are deemed pocketed. Drop them in the pocket and resume playing unless doing so ends the game.

8. BALLS ON THE FLOOR

Object balls that get knocked off the playing surface will be spotted on the foot spot. If the foot spot is taken, the ball will be placed directly behind the foot spot, as close to the foot spot as possible. If two or more balls are knocked on the floor, they are placed in numerical order with the lowest numbered ball closest to the foot spot. Spotted balls are placed frozen to one another.

- **8-Ball** - It might occur that a player legally pockets a ball while simultaneously knocking some other ball(s) on the floor. In this situation, it is still their turn and the ball(s) is not spotted until their turn ends. If the ball on the floor is one of the shooter's balls, then it is spotted when the shooter has pocketed all of their remaining balls. If the 8-ball is knocked on the floor, the shooter loses the game.

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- **9-Ball** - Balls that get knocked off the playing surface will be **immediately** spotted on the foot spot. The 9-ball is spotted:
 - a. Anytime it is knocked off the table other than when it is pocketed.
 - b. Anytime it is pocketed and the shooter scratches or otherwise fouls.

9. ACCIDENTALLY MOVED BALLS

Accidentally moved balls must be replaced, unless any of the accidentally moved balls make contact with the cue ball, thereby creating a ball-in-hand foul, in which case nothing gets replaced.

- If the accidental movement occurs between shots the ball must be replaced by the opponent before the shot is taken.
- Any balls moved accidentally during a shot must be replaced by the opponent after the shot is over and all balls have stopped rolling.

NOTE: An object ball that is in motion and makes accidental contact with a bridge, cue stick, etc., is not replaced.

If, during the course of the shot, another ball stops in the position previously occupied by the accidentally moved ball, the opponent must place the accidentally moved ball, in an fair manner, as close as possible to its original position.

10. CLOSE HITS

Potential bad hit situations are usually fairly obvious. Disputes over these situations can almost always be avoided by having a third party, agreed upon by both shooters, watch the shot. The sitting team should protect itself by stopping the game prior to the shot. The shooter is required to stop if their opponent wants the shot watched. Once an agreed upon third party is asked to watch the shot, their call will stand and cannot be disputed.

In general, the shooter has the advantage in close hit situations. If the outside party cannot determine which ball was struck first, such as a simultaneous hit, the call goes to the shooter. Teams involved in repeatedly calling bad hits without third party verification may be subject to a sportsmanship violation and possibly a loss of points at the discretion of Local League Management.

NOTE: If a third party is not asked to watch the hit, and the hit is disputed, the call will tend to favor the shooter.

11. ONE FOOT ON THE FLOOR

When a bridge is available, at least one foot must be on the floor while shooting. Failure to keep at least one foot on the floor is not a foul, but may result in sportsmanship penalties. Local League Management cannot guarantee the presence of a bridge, and some Host Locations do not have them. A team that carries their own bridge may only use it if they are willing to share it with the opposing team, since refusing to do so would provide an unfair advantage. If a bridge is not available, House Rules prevail.

- **Wheelchair players** - Players shooting from a wheelchair must remain seated in their wheelchair while shooting. If a player decides to exit the wheelchair to perform a shot, they must fully exit the chair. Players may not execute shots “half-in, half-out” of a wheelchair.

NOTE: Players who have a legitimate need to use a stool, due to their height, are allowed to use one, provided they are able to move the stool by themselves and keep both feet on the stool. Additionally, they may stand on a stool when racking or have a teammate assist them.

12. MARKING THE TABLE

No one is allowed to mark the cloth in any way, including, but not limited to, using chalk to draw a line or wetting a finger to dampen the cloth. Teams may be subject to sportsmanship violations for marking the cloth. It is permissible to set a piece of chalk on the hard surface of the rail.

13. STALEMATES

In the unlikely event that a game should become stalemated, meaning that neither player can, or wants to, make use of ball-in-hand, the balls are reracked and the same player breaks again.

- **8-Ball** - Put an “X” across the entire game box. The innings and Defensive Shots for the stalemated game do not count.
 - **9-Ball** - The game ends but the points earned stand. The innings and Defensive Shots remain and all balls left on the table are marked as dead balls.
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14. FROZEN BALLS

A frozen ball is a ball that is touching either another ball or a rail. In order for the frozen ball rule to be in effect, the ball must be declared “frozen” and verified as

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such by the shooter and their opponent. If the players in the match cannot agree, an agreed upon third party may be asked to determine if a ball is frozen.

Object ball frozen to a rail - The frozen ball must be struck first and the player must either:

- Drive the frozen ball to another rail or into a pocket.
- Drive the frozen ball into another ball which, in turn, hits a rail or goes into a pocket.
- Drive the cue ball to a rail or pocket a ball **after** the cue ball touches the frozen ball.

A simultaneous hit is a foul if you fail to drive that ball or any other ball to a different rail or pocket a ball.

Cue ball frozen to your own object ball - If the cue ball causes the object ball to move (by exerting force into the frozen ball, not by breaking contact with the frozen ball), it is considered contacted during the shot.

- **8-Ball** - If you are shooting away from the object ball the cue ball is frozen to, in order to make a legal shot, you must contact another object ball, and then drive a ball to a rail or into a pocket. If the cue ball is frozen to the last ball of your category, the cue ball must then come back and make contact with the ball it was originally frozen to and drive a ball to a rail or into a pocket.
- **9-Ball** - If you are shooting away from the object ball you are frozen to, in order to make a legal shot, you must contact the lowest numbered ball and drive a ball to a rail or pocket a ball. If the cue ball is frozen to the next ball in the rotation, the cue ball must then come back and make contact with the ball it was frozen to, and after contact, drive a ball to a rail or into a pocket.

Cue ball frozen to your opponent's ball - You must shoot away from the opponent's ball. If the cue ball causes the opponent's ball to move, other than through breaking contact with the frozen ball, it will result in a foul.

15. FOULS

If any of the following fouls are committed, the penalty is ball-in-hand for the opposing player. Make certain you have ball-in-hand before you touch the cue ball by confirming it with your opponent. Ball-in-hand is the advantage given to

a player when their opponent scratches or otherwise fouls, wherein the player may place the cue ball anywhere on the playing surface.

EXCEPTION: In 8-Ball, a scratch on the break requires the ball-in-hand to be executed from behind the head string and contact made with a ball outside the head string.

Even after having addressed the cue ball a player may, if not satisfied with the placement, make further adjustments with their hand, cue stick or any other reasonable piece of equipment.

Only the player or the Team Captain may officially call a foul, although anyone may suggest to the player or the Team Captain that a foul should be called.

NOTE: A foul that is not called when it occurs cannot be called once the next shot has been taken.

A FOUL THAT IS NOT CALLED WHEN IT OCCURS CANNOT BE CALLED ONCE THE NEXT SHOT HAS BEEN TAKEN

These are the only fouls resulting in ball-in-hand. All other violations are sportsmanship violations. The ball-in-hand fouls are:

- a. If the cue ball goes in a pocket, on the floor, or otherwise ends up off the playing surface.
- b. Failure to hit the correct ball first.
- c. Failure to hit a rail or pocket a ball after contact. A rail must be struck by either the cue ball or any other ball after the cue ball and the object ball make contact. If the ball bounces back onto the playing surface, it is considered to have struck a rail.
- d. If, after making contact with a ball that is frozen to a rail, you fail to drive that ball or any other ball to a different rail or pocket a ball.
- e. Intentionally jumping a cue ball over another ball by scooping it into the air.
- f. Receiving advice from anyone other than your coach during a time-out.
- g. Touching or causing the cue ball to move, outside of a ball-in-hand situation.

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- h. Altering the course of a moving cue ball, including a double-hit.
- i. Anytime the cue ball makes contact with an accidentally moved ball.
- j. The cue ball does not touch any object ball during the course of a shot.
- k. Touching another ball on the table, while placing or adjusting the position of the cue ball, during a ball-in-hand.

DOUBLES ONLY - Shooting Out Of Rotation. Once a team has shot out of rotation, the foul has occurred. If the sitting team does not call the foul before the next shot is taken, they do not receive ball-in-hand and the team that shot out of rotation will assume the new rotation for the remainder of the match.

- **8-Ball** - If the 8-ball is pocketed during the shot, it is loss of game, if called.
- **9-Ball** - If the 9-ball is pocketed during the shot, the 9-ball is spotted and the opponents receive ball-in-hand.

16. HOW TO WIN A GAME

8-BALL

- a. You pocket all the balls of your category and legally pocket the 8-ball in a properly marked pocket.
- b. Your opponent pockets the 8-ball out-of-turn or knocks it on the floor.
- c. Your opponent pockets the 8-ball in the wrong pocket.
- d. Your opponent fails to properly mark the pocket where the 8-ball is pocketed, and you call loss of game.
- e. Your opponent fouls the cue ball and pockets the 8-ball.
- f. Your opponent alters the course of the 8-ball or the cue ball in an attempt to prevent a loss.
- g. Your opponent scratches or knocks the cue ball off the table when playing the 8-ball.

NOTE 1: If your opponent is shooting at the 8-ball and misses it altogether, commonly referred to as a table scratch, they have fouled and you receive ball-in-hand. You do not win because of this foul.

NOTE 2: You may not play the 8-ball at the same time you play the last ball of your category. The 8-ball must be pocketed through a separate shot.

Marking the pocket

- a. A coaster or some other reasonable marker must be placed next to the shooter's intended pocket.
- b. Marking the pocket with chalk is not recommended.
- c. Both players may use the same marker.
- d. Only one marker should remain on the table at a time.
- e. If the marker is already at the intended pocket from a previous attempt or game, it is not necessary to touch it, pick it up or reposition it.

NOTE: Making contact with a marker is not a foul. If a pocket marker is placed on the rail and accidentally interferes with the shot (either in a positive or negative way), the shot stands.

9-BALL

You legally pocket the 9-ball.