

8-Ball Game Rules

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

8-Ball is played with a cue ball and a normal rack of fifteen (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 marking and pocketing the 8-ball before his opponent. Choice of balls to be pocketed is made by the player legally pocketing the first ball of the game.

RACKING

All balls should be frozen (touching) as tightly as possible. Balls are racked with the front ball on the foot spot and the 8-ball in the center of the triangle. The breaking player may request and receive a re-rack.

BREAKING

To be a legal break, players must break from behind the head string. The head ball or the second row of balls must be struck first and 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 the rack. If the rack is struck, but the break does *not* qualify as legal, the balls are re-racked and re-broken 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 re-racked and broken by the opposite player. **THE RACK MUST BE STRUCK BEFORE A FOUL CAN OCCUR.** *Breaking safe or soft* is not allowed. The League Operator may make judgments and 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. Remember; break as hard as you can with control.

AFTER THE BREAK

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

1. A foul on a legal break will result in **ball-in-hand** behind the head string and the incoming player has an open table as defined in "5". The incoming player may then shoot at any ball that is outside the head string. Outside the head string is determined by aligning the middle or base of the ball with the imaginary line (head string) between the centers of the two appropriate diamonds.
 - a. 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 an object ball being **in** or **out**, then a third party is consulted for an opinion. If a third party is consulted, his opinion is final. To shoot at a ball that is **in** could be considered a sportsmanship violation to be reported to the League Office.
 - b. The cue ball must be **in** as described above before play can begin. It is up to the opponent to check to be sure the cue ball is **in** before it is shot. This is not a foul; no penalty may be assessed. If the cue ball is **out**, the shooter must place the cue ball behind the head string. To refuse and shoot anyway would be considered a sportsmanship violation to be reported to the League Office.
2. No balls are pocketed and it is the other player's turn.
3. The 8-ball is pocketed. This is a win unless the player scratches, in which case he loses.
4. A ball is pocketed (example: the 3-ball); now it is still the breaker's turn and he is shooting low balls (*solids*).
5. A ball of each category is pocketed (example: the 6 ball and the 12-ball). Now the breaker has his choice. He may shoot at either category of balls. He may shoot any ball except the 8-ball (which would be a foul); if he does not foul, anything that goes in counts. If he were to make one of each on his second shot, he would still have an **open table** and the same choice as after the break. If he were to miss or foul on his second shot, his opponent would have an **open table**. If the opponent then shoots and makes a ball, but also fouls on the shot, it is still an **open table**. **Open table** means a player can shoot a combination involving a stripe and a solid and whichever he makes, without committing a foul, would be his category.
6. If two balls of one category and one ball of the other category are pocketed (example: 3, 6, and 10-ball) it is the shooter's choice just as in "5" above.

7. Occasionally, a player mistakenly starts shooting the wrong category of balls. Although it is sportsmanlike for the sitting player to remind the shooting player that he is about to foul by shooting the wrong category of balls, it is not a requirement for him to do so. Once the shooter has hit the wrong category of balls, the foul has occurred whether the ball is pocketed or not. If the ball is pocketed, it is permissible, though not recommended, that the sitting player allow the shooting player to continue shooting his balls in until he feels inclined to call the foul. The shooting player can escape penalty by quietly realizing his error and returning to shoot the correct category of balls and legally contacting one of them before his opponent calls foul, or by finishing off the wrong category of balls and legally contacting the 8-ball prior to his opponent calling a foul. In other words, the sitting player must call the foul before the shooter returns to the correct category and legally contacts one, or before the shooter pockets the remaining balls of the wrong category and legally contacts the 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 his opponent's turn ends, and subsequently contacts the wrong category himself, both players will assume the new category of balls for the remainder of the game. Before any foul has occurred, the shooter also may avoid penalty by asking the sitting player which category of balls he has. The sitting player must tell him the truth.

COMBINATION SHOTS

Combination shots are legal, but striking the correct ball first is required except in the *open table* situation. **The 8-ball is not neutral.** A player is credited with all balls he legally pockets. When a player does not pocket one of his balls, but pockets an opponent's ball, he loses his turn. The opponent gets credit for the pocketed ball. No pocketed ball is ever spotted.

BALLS ON THE FLOOR

Knocking the cue ball off the playing surface is a foul. If the 8-ball is knocked on the floor, it is loss of game. ***Knocking any other object ball on the floor is not a foul.*** 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 on a line 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; the placed balls will be frozen to one another. 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 his turn and the ball(s) is not spotted until he misses. If the ball on the floor is one of the shooter's balls, then it is spotted when the shooter has pocketed all of his other balls or misses.

POCKETED BALLS

Balls must remain in a pocket to be legal. If a ball goes in a pocket, but bounces back onto the playing surface, it is not considered pocketed. If it is the 8 ball, it is not to be considered as either a win or a loss. If it is the cue ball, it is not to be considered a scratch.

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

Note 2: It occasionally happens on tables with small pockets that two balls become jammed in a pocket and are leaning over the edge of the slate to some degree. They are ***off*** the playing surface and are pocketed. Drop them in and resume playing the game unless the pocketing ends the game (8-ball or cue ball scratch when shooting the 8-ball).

ONE FOOT ON THE FLOOR

At least one foot must be on the floor at all times while shooting if a bridge stick is present. There is no foul, simply stop the shooter and hand him the bridge.

Exception: Players shooting from a wheelchair must remain seated in the wheelchair while shooting.

FOULS

If any of the following fouls are committed, the penalty is **ball-in-hand** for the incoming player. Make certain you have **ball-in-hand** before you touch the cue ball. Confirm it with your opponent before touching the cue ball. **Ball-in-hand** means you get to put the cue ball anywhere on the table (with the exception of a scratch on the break which result in **ball-in-hand** behind the head string), and shoot any of your balls (or the 8-ball, if all of your balls have been pocketed) regardless of where that ball is. A player exercising his rights under the **ball-in-hand** rule may place the cue ball on the table anywhere he desires.

Even after having addressed the cue ball a player may, if not satisfied with the placement, make further adjustments with the hand, cue stick or any other reasonable piece of equipment. A foul may be called only if the player fouls the cue ball while actually stroking the cue ball, meaning a double hit of the cue ball (sometimes called double clutching). The **ball-in-hand** rule penalizes a player for an error. Without this rule, a person can actually benefit by accidentally or purposely scratching or otherwise fouling. In the unlikely event that a game should ever become **stalemated**, meaning that neither player wants or can make use of **ball-in-hand**, then the balls would be re-racked and the same player breaks.

The following are the only fouls resulting in ball-in-hand:

1. Anytime the cue ball goes in a pocket, on the floor, or otherwise ends up off the playing surface.
2. **Failure to hit a correct ball first:** (A player who is shooting stripes must hit a striped ball first.) **The 8-ball is not neutral.** In general, the shooter has the advantage in close hit situations unless his opponent has asked an outside party to watch the hit. Protect yourself. If you think your opponent is getting ready to shoot a shot that could possibly be a bad hit, stop him from shooting and get someone to watch the shot. Potential **bad hit** situations are usually fairly obvious and protests and disputes over these close situations can almost always be avoided if someone is asked to watch the shot. If the outside party cannot determine which ball was struck first, the call goes to the shooter.
3. **Failure to hit a rail after contact:** A rail must be hit by either the cue ball or any other ball after the cue ball and the object ball contact. A pocketed ball counts as a rail. Even if the ball bounces back onto the playing surface, it is considered to have hit a rail, as the pocket liner if part of the rail. A sentence that should answer many questions is: **ANY ball must go to a rail AFTER LEGAL contact.**
4. The object ball is **frozen** to a rail and the player is contemplating playing a safety. In order for the following **frozen ball** rule to be in effect, the opponent must declare that the ball is **frozen** and the player should verify. Once it is agreed that the ball is **frozen**, then the player must either drive the object ball to another rail (of course, it could hit another ball, which in turn hits a rail), or drive the cue ball to the rail after it touches the object ball. If the latter method of **safety** is chosen then the player should take care that he quite obviously strikes the object ball first. If the cue ball strikes the rail first or appears to hit both the rail and ball simultaneously, then it would be a foul unless either the cue ball or object ball went to some other rail.
5. It is illegal and, therefore, a foul to jump a cue ball over another ball by miscuing it up in the air (scooping) on purpose. *Accidental miscuing is not a foul unless other rules in this section are violated.*
6. **Receiving illegal aid (coaching) during your turn at the table:** It is **not** considered illegal aid to remind a player to mark the pocket when shooting the 8-ball, giving advice before the break, or telling a player a foul has occurred. Comments such as “good hit” or “nice shot” or answering a player’s question concerning rules is not considered coaching. Any comments made to a player when it is not his turn at the table are not considered coaching. Anyone may do so.
7. Causing even the slightest movement or altering the course of the cue ball, even accidentally, is a foul. It is not a foul, however, to accidentally move any other balls (including the 8-ball) unless, during his turn at the table, a player moves a ball and it in turn comes in contact with the cue ball. **Any balls moved accidentally during a shot MUST BE REPLACED BY THE OPPONENT after the shot is over and all balls have stopped rolling. If it occurs before the shot, it must be replaced by the opponent before the shot is taken.**

Exception: If an accidentally moved ball comes in contact with the cue ball, creating a foul, no object ball will be replaced.

8. If during the course of a shot, the cue ball does not touch anything.
9. Exercise caution when placing the cue ball in a **ball-in-hand** situation. The cue ball is always **alive**. If the cue ball, **or the hand holding and moving it**, touches another ball it is a cue ball foul and your opponent has ball-in-hand. Be especially careful when you are placing the cue ball in a tight spot.

THERE ARE VARIOUS WAYS TO LOSE

1. Your opponent pockets his numerical group and legally pockets the 8-ball.
2. You pocket the 8-ball out-of-turn or knock it on the floor.
3. When playing the 8-ball, you pocket the 8-ball in the wrong pocket or fail to properly mark the pocket where the 8-ball went in.
4. You foul the cue ball and then pocket the 8-ball.
5. When playing the 8-ball, you scratch. You lose whether or not you pocket the 8-ball.

Note: If you are shooting at the 8-ball and miss it altogether without scratching, you have fouled and your opponent has **ball-in-hand**, but you don't lose because of this foul.

6. A game is forfeited if you alter the course of the 8-ball or the cue ball in a game losing situation.

Example: You are shooting the 4-ball, miss the pocket, and the 4-ball hits the 8-ball. The 8-ball is going towards the pocket and you reach out and stop it and try to claim that it is only a **ball-in-hand foul**. Wrong, it is loss of game.

Example: You are shooting at the 8-ball and miss the pocket and the 8-ball is heading towards the wrong pocket or the cue ball is heading towards a pocket. You reach out and stop the ball and claims that it is only a **ball-in-hand foul**. Wrong, it is loss of game.

HOW TO WIN

You have won the game when all the balls of your numerical group have been pocketed and you have legally pocketed the 8-ball in a properly marked pocket without scratching. To properly mark the pocket, a coaster or some other reasonable marker (to avoid confusion, although it is permissible, we do not recommend marking the pocket with chalk) must be placed next to the pocket the 8-ball is intended to enter. Both teams may use the same marker. Only one marker should be on the table. However, if more than one marker is on the table, as long as you clearly mark the pocket where you intend to pocket the 8-ball you have properly marked the pocket. If the marker is already at the intended pocket from a previous attempt or game, it is not necessary for you to touch it, pick it up, or reposition it.

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

In the unlikely event that a game should ever become **stalemated**, meaning that neither player wants or can make use of **ball-in-hand**, the game shall end, and the player who broke in the **stalemated** game will break in the new game.