

8-Ball & 9-Ball Rules of the Masters

HOW TO GET STARTED

Team Captains flip a coin to decide who must declare the first player. Winner of the toss has the choice of declaring first or having the opposing Team Captain choose first. Whoever chooses first for the first match chooses second for the second match, and first for the third match!

Players lag, with the winner of the lag having choice of format (8-Ball or 9-Ball) or the break. Once the format has been chosen, the entire set of that format must be completed before moving to the next format.

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.

9-Ball Game Rules

Many of the rules concerning 9-Ball are similar to those used in 8 Ball. When this is the case, it will be so indicated. The rest of the details concerning 9-Ball follow.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

9-Ball is played with a cue ball and nine object balls numbered 1 through 9. 9-Ball is a rotation game, meaning the balls are shot in numerical order. The shooter must strike the lowest numbered ball on the table first. The game is over when the 9-ball is pocketed. A player retains his turn at the table as long as he strikes the lowest numbered ball first and legally pockets a ball. He need not pocket the lowest numbered ball to continue shooting. He may, for example, shoot the 1-ball into the 4-ball thus pocketing the 4. He would continue shooting and must, once again, strike the 1 ball first. **If the shooter shoots the 1-ball into the 9-ball and the 9-ball is pocketed, the game is over.**

RACKING

Nine balls are used and are racked in a diamond shape. **The 1-ball is at the front of the rack and on the foot spot. The 9-ball is in the center** and the rest of the object balls can be placed in any numerical order.

BREAKING

To be a legal break, players must break from behind the head string. The head ball 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. 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 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* anywhere on the table for the breaker's opponent. Pocketed balls, if any, stay down (are not spotted), except the 9-ball.
2. No balls are pocketed and it is the other player's turn.
3. The 9-ball is pocketed. This is a win unless the player scratches, in which case the 9-ball is spotted and the turn passes to his opponent.
4. A ball or a number of balls are pocketed. It is still the breaker's turn and he shoots at the lowest numbered ball on the table.
5. Occasionally it occurs that a player mistakenly shoots the wrong ball. Although it is sportsmanlike for the sitting player to remind the shooting player he is about to foul by shooting the wrong ball, he is not required to do so. Once the shooter has hit the wrong ball, 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 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 ball and striking it first on a shot prior to his opponent calling the foul. In other words, the sitting player must call the foul before the shooter has shot the correct ball.
6. On the shot immediately following a legal break, the shooter may play a **PUSH-OUT** shot. **PUSH-OUT:** The push-out was developed to take some of the luck out of pool. A player could *protect* his turn with a push-out. Push-outs can only be used immediately after the break by the breaker if he pocketed a ball on the break or by the incoming player if no balls were pocketed on the break. A player can elect to push-out if he doesn't like the shot he is faced with. The Push-out involves **announcing the intent to**

push-out before the shot, or the shot is considered to be a normal shot, and then shooting the cue ball to a new position. The shooter doesn't need to satisfy the *legal shot* rule (driving a ball to a rail after a legal hit). Any ball(s) pocketed on a push-out does not count and are spotted. The shooter's opponent then has the option to shoot from the new position or tell the shooter to take the shot. Normal game rules apply from that point on.

COMBINATION SHOTS

Combination shots are legal and extremely common in 9-Ball. **Just make sure to hit the lowest numbered ball on the table first.**

BALLS ON FLOOR

Knocking the cue ball off the playing surface is a foul. **Knocking an object ball on the floor is not a foul.** Object balls that get knocked off the playing surface will be **immediately** 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. Spotted balls are 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, the ball(s) is spotted and the player continues shooting until he 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.

Note: 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.

SPOTTING BALLS

Other than the circumstances described in **BALLS ON THE FLOOR** and the **Push-Out** rule, the only ball that would ever be spotted would be the 9-ball when the shooter has pocketed the 9 ball and scratched or otherwise fouled. If the shooter makes the 9 ball on the break and fouls or scratches, the 9-ball (and only the 9-ball) is spotted. If the shooter is shooting at the object ball and plays it into the 9-ball and pockets the 9-ball, but scratches or otherwise fouls in the process, the 9 ball is spotted. The incoming player has *ball-in-hand* and will be shooting at the lowest numbered ball on the table.

Note: 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.

FOULS

The same as 8-Ball except as follows:

1. The exception concerning scratching on the break does not apply to 9-Ball. Scratching on the break is *ball-in-hand* anywhere just as other fouls.
2. The foul concerning striking the correct ball first applies, but ignore the reference to stripes or solids.
3. The foul concerning illegal aid still applies, but ignore the reference to reminding a player to call the 8-ball. The 9-ball does not have to be called; therefore, the pocket the 9-ball is going to be pocketed in does not have to be called.

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.

PLEASE NOTE:

1. **Coaching and timeouts are not permitted in this league.**
2. **The “three consecutive foul” rule will not be used in this league.**
3. **Jump cues will be allowed in this league. It is also permissible to break down a cue or switch cues to make a jump shot.**