



# Rules of Play

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## Beginning Play

### Opponent Selection

Since this league is based upon *individual* competition instead of *team* competition, there is no predetermined schedule of play. Upon arrival, each player must notify the scorekeeper that they intend to play that Match. You must notify the scorekeeper, and pay the Match fee, no later than 15 minutes prior to the stated time of the Match. Preparation for playing the Match is predicated on knowing *exactly* how many players will be in the Match. Therefore, if you know you are going to be arriving late, you need to call someone to have your name entered on the roster.

15 minutes prior to the stated Match time, pairings will be made to determine the contestants in each of the Match's Games.

If a player has called to have their name placed on the roster, the league fee for that player is expected to be paid, even if the player subsequently fails to show up for the Match. If the player has not arrived by the time their name is called for their second Game, then they must forfeit their first Game at a score of 10-0. If the player has not arrived by the time they are called to play their third Game, then they will forfeit their second Game at a score of 10-0, and so on.

It takes a minimum of six (6) players to have a Match. In the unlikely event that fewer than six (6) players show up, that Match will be postponed until the next scheduled Match date, and the Session will be extended to get the fifteen (15) Matches of play for the Session.

If there is an odd number of players for the Match, one of the players will receive a BYE for one of their Games. That BYE Game will be scored as a 10-point win, however the score will not be calculated into the player's handicap.

### Determining the Break

The two players for any given Game may choose the method to determine who breaks. While a "flip of the coin" should suffice in nearly all situations, the two players may elect to "lag" for the break. In any regard, consideration should be given to the time it takes to determine who breaks.

## Coaching

### Selecting A Coach

Each player may select a coach before play begins. That coach may be anyone the player chooses, except someone who is already acting as coach or who is in process of playing in another Game in the Match. Care should be given in the selection of the coach so as not to keep a player from being ready to play in another Game, or otherwise disrupt the flow of the Match.

### **Coaching During Play**

Each player is entitled to two (2) time outs per Game. In this league, it is the individual players who control the Game. Therefore, the coach cannot speak to the player when they are shooting, in any fashion, unless the player calls for a time out. Remarks such as "Do you want to talk about it?", or "Do you want a time out?" are not allowed. Should it happen, there can be one warning from the opponent. The next infraction will be considered a foul, and the opponent shall have cue ball-in-hand.

Likewise, the players cannot speak to anyone concerning the Game, except their chosen coach, while they are shooting. Should this happen, the opponent must give one warning. The next infraction shall be considered a foul and the opponent shall have cue ball-in-hand anywhere on the table.

## **Racking & Breaking the Balls**

While most players should know what constitutes a valid rack, let's state simply that the fifteen object balls must be racked in a triangular shape, with the 8-ball in the center of the rack. There must be a "solid" ball in one corner and a "striped" ball in another corner. The object ball at the top of the rack must be positioned over the foot spot of the table. The player breaking the rack may request a re-rack if there is a detected variation from the above rack description.

### **The Break Shot**

The player breaking the rack may place the cue ball anywhere behind the head string. This means that the point at which the cue ball contacts the table must be behind the head string. The cue ball must be driven into the rack with sufficient force as to cause at least four (4) balls to hit a rail. The cue ball is included in this count of four (4) balls.

Any attempt to break that causes the cue ball to cross the head string, without contacting the rack with sufficient force to cause four (4) balls to hit a rail, shall be considered a foul. Any attempt to divert the cue ball with the cue stick (such as in a miscue situation) shall also be considered a foul. In either of these situations, the player attempting that break shall re-rack and the opponent will become the player to break the rack.

If any object balls, other than the 8-ball, leave the table during the break, those balls stay down. However, this is a foul and the opponent gets the cue ball-in-hand behind the head string.

If the 8-ball leaves the table during the break, it is loss of Game.

If the cue ball is pocketed or leaves the table during the break, it is a foul, and the opponent gets the cue ball-in-hand behind the head string.

If the 8-ball is pocketed during the break, and the cue ball does not leave the table nor is pocketed, the player breaking the rack shall receive three (3) bonus points, even if other object balls are driven off the table. The opponent shall re-rack and the same player breaks again. The Game will then continue as normal.

On the other hand, if the 8-ball is pocketed on the break, and the cue ball leaves the table or is pocketed, it is treated as an 8-on-the-break for the opponent. The opponent is credited with one (1) 8-on-the-break and the player that fouled must rack the balls and the opponent then has the break.

### **After the Break**

If the player pockets a ball on the break, the table is considered "open", and the player may shoot at either category of balls. All balls are considered neutral on an open table, except the 8-ball, which is never neutral. This means that any neutral ball may be struck to make the called ball in the called pocket.

This rule applies also for the opponent should they have opportunity to shoot on an open table. In either situation, once a player legally pockets a ball, that category of balls belongs to that player for the remainder of the Game.

As play continues, both players must call the ball/pocket combination. Once the player shoots, the cue ball must first contact a ball in the category belonging to that player. Once that contact is made, any ball on the table must contact a rail. A ball pocketed on the shot counts as a hit on the rail.

If the player fails to hit their category of balls first, pockets the cue ball, any ball (including the cue ball) fails to hit a rail or no ball is pocketed, it is considered a foul and the opponent has the cue ball-in-hand anywhere on the table.

If the player fails to pocket the called ball in the called pocket, play passes to the opponent, with the cue ball staying where it stopped.

If the player pockets their called ball, in the called pocket, and hits another ball with sufficient force so as to cause it to leave the table, it is considered a good shot. The ball that leaves the table is left down (not spotted).

Any time the 8-ball is pocketed out of turn, caused to leave the table, or the cue ball is pocketed during a legal shot at the 8-ball, it is loss of Game. The score for this Game will be calculated as if the opponent had just legitimately made the 8-ball. In other words, the opponent wins the Game and receives ten (10) points, plus one (1) point for each of the other player's balls left on the table. The player that committed the error will receive a point for each of their balls that has been dropped (no longer on the table).

## **Safety Shots**

A player must announce their intent to shoot a safety shot. The player must hit one of their balls first when shooting a safety, and as always, a ball must hit a rail. Any ball that goes to a pocket during execution of a safety stays down. After the safety shot, play goes to the opponent where the cue ball rests, unless a foul was committed during the safety shot, in which case the opponent has the cue ball-in-hand anywhere on the table.

## **Frozen Balls**

A frozen ball is an object ball that has come to full rest and remains in contact with the rail. Once the shot is called, the opponent must declare the object ball frozen to the rail. Once declared frozen, the shooter must do one of the following, after a legal hit:

- The cue ball must strike any rail after striking the object ball.
- The object ball must strike another rail after being hit.
- Any other ball must be driven to a rail.

## **Fouls**

Any time a foul is committed, the opponent is given cue ball-in-hand. Following is a list of fouls, and a brief explanation of each.

### **Foot Foul**

Unless physically impaired, the players must have at least one foot on the floor when shooting. Otherwise, it is a foul and the opponent shall have cue ball-in-hand.

### **Bad Hit**

If the player does not first strike their category of balls when shooting, it is considered a foul and the opponent shall have cue ball-in-hand.

### **Scratch**

If a player pockets the cue ball, or causes it to leave the table, it is a foul. If the cue ball leaves the playing surface, such as along the top of the rail or above the pockets, but returns to, and comes to rest on the playing surface of its own accord, then a foul is not committed. If the table is open and the player does not pocket a ball nor cause a ball to hit a rail, it is a foul. In either case, the opponent shall have cue ball-in-hand.

### **Push Shot**

When the cue ball and the object ball are very close, or frozen, the player must elevate their cue stick, or shoot at an angle of at least 45 degrees, to prevent a double-hit or shoveling of the shot. Failure to do so is a foul, and the opponent shall have cue ball-in-hand.

If it is suspected that some controversy may arise, the opponent (non-shooting player) should ask someone to watch the shot, and it will be that person's responsibility to call the shot. In the absence of an observer, the call will go to the shooter.

### **Split Hits**

During a shot, if the cue ball strikes the shooter's ball and the opponent's ball at the same time, it does not constitute a foul. If it is suspected that some controversy may arise, the opponent (non-shooting player) should ask someone to watch the shot, and it will be that person's responsibility to call the shot. In the absence of an observer, the call will go to the shooter.

### **Accidental Movement of Balls**

If the shooter moves the cue ball prior to the shot, it is a foul and the opponent shall have cue ball-in-hand. If a player accidentally moves or touches any ball that is at rest, other than the cue ball, it is not considered a foul. The opponent decides to either move the ball back to its original position, or leave it where it lies.

If a player has cue ball-in-hand, they may make adjustments to the position of the cue ball with their stick prior to the shot, without penalty. After the player shoots, and while any ball is in motion, should the player move or touch any ball before the full table comes to rest, it is a foul, and the opponent shall have cue ball-in-hand.

## **Handicapping**

### **Establishment of A Handicap**

Each player joining the league for the first time will be started with a handicap of 8. Handicaps for second, and subsequent, matches for all players will be based on score average for Games played in their previous seven (7) Matches.

### **Calculation of the Handicap**

Each player's handicap will be determined by dividing their total score by the number of Games they have played. In other words, the average of their score per Game. This average will be calculated to two (2) decimal points, and be rounded up for use in the matches. The value used in the matches will be the integer (whole number, without the decimal fraction) that remains after rounding.

After a player has played seven (7) matches in this league, their handicap will be calculated on a 'rolling' 7-Match average. Said another way, the player's handicap at any given point in time will be the average of their last seven (7) Match scores.

## Use of the Handicap

The handicap value will be used in the scoring of each and every Game. The lesser-handicapped player will receive bonus points, equal to the difference in the handicaps of the two players, for each Game played. Should the difference be more than three (3) points, then one additional bonus point will be awarded to the lesser-handicapped player. If the difference is more than five (5) points, then two additional bonus points will be awarded to the lesser-handicapped player. These bonus points are NOT cumulative. The lesser-handicapped player will receive either one (1) or two (2) additional bonus points, but not three (3).

The Game is then scored in the following manner. The winner of the Game receives ten (10) points, plus the number of the opponent's balls remaining on the table. The loser receives a point for each of their balls that was pocketed. This equates to seven (7) minus the number of balls they have left on the table.

The concept is to have a situation where each player has an equal opportunity for points, regardless of the difference in skill level. At the same time, the higher-handicapped player must "stay on top of their Game" in order to keep the lesser-handicapped player from receiving more points than they do. The intent is to present a situation where every player is attempting to play at a higher level than they have previously done.

As an example, if a 12-handicap plays a 6-handicap, the difference is six (6). The 6-handicap player will automatically receive eight (8) bonus points. Let's further assume that the final score is 13-4, in favor of the 12-handicap. The end result is the winner receiving the thirteen (13) points, while the loser receives a score of twelve (12).

If the final score was 10-7, the winner (the higher-handicapped player) would receive ten (10) points and the loser would receive fifteen (15) points. Initially, this may seem unfair, yet apply this to some of the players you know and you'll realize that this last scenario will be an exception rather than the rule. Again, with the lesser-handicapped player realizing they can possibly get more points, even if they lose, and the higher-handicapped player realizing they must "play their Game" in order to receive the most points, it should make for a challenging Game of pool. Yet, in all this, it renders a fair score to everyone involved.

## Score Keeping

### Reporting The Score

Upon completion of a Game, at least one of the players must report the scores to the Scorekeeper, including any 8-on-the-break situations. The scorekeeping software automatically calculates bonus points, so report only the Score for the Game, not the Points.

Once scores are tabulated, a stat sheet will be sent to each player who provides an e-mail address. The intent is to have this stat sheet prepared and mailed within a couple of days following the Match.

## Use of the Points

### Total Points

Each player's total accumulated points at the end of the Session will be the total points of that player's twelve (12) best Matches. This is a bit different than saying the player's worst three (3) Matches are dropped, but we won't go into that detail here. Suffice it to say that each player can miss up to three (3) Matches and still be in contention for the prize money. It is understood that circumstances beyond our control do arise, and Alpha Pool League management simply wants to facilitate potential absences without penalizing the player.

The League rankings are based on each player's total points at the end of the Session. The player with the most points wins the first place money, the player with the next highest points wins the second place money, and so on.

Please consider that the Standings could change dramatically after the 13<sup>th</sup> Match. A player who shoots a very good Match in the 13<sup>th</sup> week would replace a lower point Match with the better one, and could dramatically rise in the Standings as a result. The inverse is also possible.

### Payout Eligibility

We realize a person could, conceivably, join the league late in the Session and win money without having paid in as much as other players. For this reason, to be eligible for a payout at the end of the Session, each player *must* have played a minimum of ten (10) Matches.