

World Eight Ball Pool Rules - Referees (Umpires) Guidance

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The English Pool Association, in association with the English Pool Referees Association, issues the following guidance.

It is intended to be both guidance to the rules of the World Eight Ball Pool Federation and the English Pool Association, and guidance to refereeing the game of Eight Ball Pool.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the W.E.P.F. Rules and the E.P.R.A. Calling Procedure.

Should any guidance contained herein conflict with the instructions of a Senior Referee, the instructions of the Senior Referee shall take precedence.

1. Equipment (rule B)

Players may not use equipment or accessory items for purposes, or in a manner, other than for which the items were intended.

A rest should be provided as part of in house equipment. Most venues will also supply other forms of mechanical bridge (for example spider, swan neck) however, if these are not available no allowances should be made.

2. Definitions (rule C)

The word 'Striking' means making contact between the cue tip and a ball.

3. Playing from baulk (rule E)

Although it is the duty of the Referee to recover the cue ball following an "in off", a player will not be penalised for performing this duty. If the player recovers the cue ball, or the player is preventing the Referee from recovering the cue ball, timing will commence from the point the cue ball reaches the trough. At this point call "Time running".

When a player commits a foul with the cue ball in hand:

- If the foul is made before the cue ball is placed on the table, the opponent has two visits, ball in hand.
- If the foul has been made after the ball has been placed on the table then the opponent must play from where the cue ball lies (whether in or out of baulk), unless foul snookered.

It is not a foul for a player to use the cue to reposition the cue ball in baulk, when the cue ball is in hand. However if the tip of the cue touches the cue ball during such a manoeuvre a standard foul will be called, for failing to perform a legal shot. However, if this happens prior to the break a foul break will be called, thereby allowing the opponent to reposition the cue ball.

4. The Break (rule F)

The Time Allowed rule applies to the break shot see section 8. Note for the purposes of Player In Control, the frame is not deemed started until the Cue Ball is struck on the Break Shot. However if the Break Shot is not played within The Time Allowed then a non-standard time foul will be awarded.

The Referee should ensure that both Players are present. Should the Breaking Player wish to check the rack, they must do so before the Referee hands the Cue Ball and calls Time Running. Once 'Time Running' has been called a Time Out will not normally be granted.

4.1 Lag for break

If competition or tournament rules require a lag for break then the following procedure should be used:

Each player should use balls of equal size and weight. These would preferably be the only two balls on the table.

With the balls in baulk, one player to the left and one to the right of the table, the balls are struck simultaneously to

the foot cushion and back to the baulk end of the table. The player whose ball is the closest to the innermost edge of the baulk cushion wins the lag. The lagged ball must contact the foot cushion at least once. Other cushion contacts are immaterial, except as prohibited below.

It is an automatic loss of the lag if:

- (1) the ball crosses into the opponent's half of the table,
- (2) the ball fails to contact the foot cushion,
- (3) the ball drops into a pocket,
- (4) the ball jumps the table,
- (5) the ball touches the long cushion,
- (6) the ball rests within the corner pocket and past the nose of the head cushion, or
- (7) the ball contacts the foot cushion more than once.

If both players violate automatic-loss lag rules, or if the referee is unable to determine which ball is closer, the lag is a tie and is replayed.

If one player strikes the ball, the other player has to strike his ball before the opponent's ball reaches the foot cushion in order to have a simultaneous lag. If this is not the case and the referee feels that the player who played second wanted to get an advantage out of that, then the lag has to be replayed.

4.2 Restarted Frame

A restarted frame caused by a stalemate will be replayed with the player who made the legal break in that frame breaking again. The player will break with one visit, even if the player originally started with two visits.

The exception to this is when a frame is re-racked because of a Void Break.

4.3 Void Break

A void break does not result in a restart as defined above. When the 8-Ball is potted from the break shot all aspects of the break are ignored (except if a serious foul or breach of the 'Spirit of the Game' occurred) and the break will be taken again with no penalty.

As soon as the black ball falls the referee will call "Void break" and both the object balls and the cue ball may be gathered for the re-rack. There is no need to wait for all balls to stop moving.

If the player broke with two visits, again the player will break with two visits.

5. Legal Shot (rule G)

If a player plays a shot that causes a ball to enter a pocket and jump out, without making contact with a cushion, then no penalty for failing to hit a cushion will apply. For the purposes of the Legal Shot rule (determining if a ball has hit a cushion), the back of the pocket will count as a cushion.

If a player plays into a ball touching a cushion, and that ball comes away from the cushion and returns to the same cushion, without touching another object ball, then the shot is a foul. However, if that ball comes away from the cushion, hits another object ball, and returns to the original cushion, then the shot is legal.

Simultaneous initial contact between a 'ball on', and a 'ball not on', is NOT a foul.

If a player plays into a ball touching a cushion, and the cue ball simultaneously contacts the 'ball on' and the cushion, a legal shot has NOT been completed.

6. Total Snooker (Legal Shot rule G 3 b)

The definition of a snooker does not apply to a total snooker.

If a shot is not preceded by a foul, and a player asks the Referee for a snooker, the Referee should interpret this as if the player were asking for a total snooker. The call, if awarded, should be "Total Snooker", to make it clear that a total snooker has been awarded.

7. Deciding Colours (rule H)

During an Open Table the 8-Ball cannot be used as a ball 'on', unless nominated after a foul snooker.

A Referee should not request nomination from a player as this could be interpreted as coaching.

Players are normally advised of playing groups once and then afterwards only if asked directly by the player in control.

8. Time Allowed (rule I)

Players have 30 seconds, to play their shot, from the 30 seconds indication. This includes the break shot.

8.1 "Time Out"

If a player plays a shot while "Time Out" has been called (for example when a Referee is away from the table getting a rest) it is a Standard Foul penalised under K4 Playing out of Turn.

8.2 Granting a "Time Out"

"Time out" may be called at the Referees discretion. For example:

Player requesting a rest (which is not immediately available)

Something obstructing the player

Player needs to leave the playing area very urgently

Referee making a close snooker, total snooker or touching ball decision

Player lost a contact lens

Player fastening shoe laces

8.3 Refusing a "Time Out"

The following are examples of when "Time out" should not be called:

Any telephone call

Player needs to visit WC (player can go before or after a frame with the permission of the Referee)

Fetching a drink from an area away from the table

Looking for a cigarette or lighter away from the table

Searching for chalk

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10. Standard Fouls

10.1 Playing out of turn (Rule K4)

A player who plays a shot immediately after playing a foul or immediately after the referee has called a foul on that player, has played out of turn.

In other circumstances, the player should be penalised for K10 'Touching the table when not in control of the frame' before a shot is played. Should the referee miss this call and a shot is played, then K4 will apply. [Exception see 11 Breaching the Spirit of the Game.]

Playing a shot when a 'Timeout' is in force, [see 8.1 "Timeout"]

10.2 Cigarettes or Beverages (Rule K9)

For the purposes of this rule the word 'Cigarette' should be considered generic, encompassing Cigars, Cheroots, e-cigarettes and Pipes.

A cigarette contained in a packet, which protrudes from a (breast) pocket, does not constitute a foul.

A cigarette placed behind the ear will constitute a foul if entering the space above the table.

10.3 Touching the Table (Rule K10)

If a player touches the table in appreciation or frustration of a good shot and it is obvious the player's opponent is about to lose control of the table, i.e. the balls are almost at rest and nothing will be pocketed, a foul should not be called. However, the referee should remind players to stay away from the table until all balls have come to rest.

10.4 Coaching (Rule K12)

For any event administered by the EPA, the following 'First and Final Warning' will be given at the commencement of a days play as a block warning to all players and spectators:

" Good morning / afternoon / evening Ladies and Gentleman, my name is ... and I am the Senior Referee for this event. In accordance with the rules this is the first and final warning for coaching. Any word or action deemed as coaching by a referee will be penalised by a Standard foul, two visits. This includes using a mobile phone whilst in the arena."

Coaching of any sort (even coaching that prevented a loss of frame foul being committed) can only be penalised via a standard foul, and then only if the warning has been issued.

In doubles, talking between partners is allowed from the point balls stop moving at the end of a partner's turn (throughout the opponent's turn), and until the cue ball is struck at the beginning of the other partner's turn. However, only the player whose turn it is, is allowed to touch the table (rule K10).

10.5 Jump Shot (Rule K22)

The cue ball leaving the bed of the table and making first contact with the reverse side of an object ball, that it would have struck had it not left the table on an otherwise identical shot, is not a jump shot.

If the cue ball leaves the bed of the table, jumps over an object ball, hits the cushion, and returns to make first contact with that object ball, then a jump shot has been played.

11. Loss of Frame Fouls (rule M)

M5 Deliberately causing any ball or balls to be moved in a manner other than that which may result from playing a normal shot. A player picking the cue ball off the surface of the table before dropping into a pocket was guilty of a serious foul, it is now Loss of Frame

M6 Deliberately striking the Cue Ball with other than the tip of the cue. In the situation where a player taps the cue ball with the shaft of the cue or ferrule in order to give a foul without moving the Cue Ball was guilty of a serious foul, it is now Loss of Frame.

M7 Deliberately interfering, by word or action, so as to disrupt an opponent's play was guilty of a serious foul, it is now Loss of Frame.

M8 Points that will be classified as "Breaching the Spirit of the Game" are:

- Foul language
- Player throwing cue around
- Arguing with an opponent, spectator or Referee
- Continuously disagreeing with the Referees decision and/or ruling
- Repeatedly marking the table (rule U2)
- Knowingly and intentionally playing out of turn

- Player (or players partner in doubles) breaking down, or putting away, cue. [This does not apply to putting away a Breaking Cue]

12. Snooker's (rule O)

It is important to remember that a snooker is completely different to a total snooker, in both definition and application. The definition of a snooker is only applicable following a foul.

When assessing a snooker the distance between object ball and cue ball is important. When the cue ball and object ball are a table length apart, the points of finest cut are almost the extreme sides of the object ball. As the distance between the balls decrease, the points of finest cut become closer together. When the two balls are touching the two points of finest contact are the same point. Hence a player cannot be snookered on a touching ball.

13. Foul Snooker (rule P)

If a player has been awarded a Foul Snooker, and the player picks up the ball, it is a standard foul (see K21; the Referee must retrieve the cue ball). The opponent comes to the table with cue ball in hand.

14.1 Assessing a Snooker in baulk (rule E)

All positions for the cue ball in baulk must be examined. This includes being able to place the cue ball in the jaws of a pocket (but not touching a ball 'on'), or being able to place the cue ball in the middle of a cluster of balls. A Referee should not attempt to place the cue ball into such positions; the fact that it could be done is enough to deny a snooker.

14.2 Nomination of free ball (rule P)

Consider the following: A player is on yellows, and has been awarded a foul snooker. The player nominates a ball by pointing at a group of red and yellow balls. While the Referee is trying to figure out which ball was nominated the player gets down and plays a shot at that group of balls that results in the cue ball hitting a red ball on the first impact.

In this situation the player should have waited for the Referee to confirm the nomination, by pointing to the nominated ball. The player has committed a standard foul.

15. Touching balls (rule R)

When the cue ball is touching two or more object balls, and at least one is a 'ball on', so long as the player plays away from at least one 'ball on', the player may play into any of the other touching balls without penalty.

This also applies to an open table, where both sets of coloured object balls are on. For example, if the cue ball is touching a red and the 8-Ball, the player may play away from the red and into the 8-Ball.

16. Balls falling without being hit (rule T)

The instant that the Referee has determined that a shot is over, time will be started. Any subsequent ball falling, no matter how close to time starting, will be treated as falling without being hit, and it shall be replaced where it was prior to falling. Only the fallen ball will be replaced even if other balls were moving. Exception, if it is absolutely clear a moving ball would have struck the ball that fell, the fallen ball is replaced also all other balls are restored to the positions before the shot was played. The same player will then play again without penalty. The Player may decide to play a different shot.

If a ball falls in without being hit timing shall be restarted when the ball(s) have been replaced.

17. Interference (rule U)

17.1 Replacing balls (rule U 1)

The decision where to replace balls lies only with the Referee. In some circumstances the Referee may choose to ask advice regarding the position of balls, but the final decision must lie with the Referee.

No matter how widely balls are scattered the Referee will still replace them, to the satisfaction of the referee. There is no provision for a re-rack because of outside interference.

17.2 Chalk on the table (rule U 2)

The Referee should always ensure that chalk is removed.

It is only if the Referee believes that chalk, or other foreign matter, is being used to mark the table that the Referee shall issue a verbal warning. Three warnings in the same frame will result in loss of frame.

18. Basic Duties of the Referee

18.1 Objective

The Referee should ensure the game is played according to the rules, and to announce shots in accordance with the calling procedure, for the benefit of both the players and the spectators.

The Referee will take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the rules are observed. The referee may, as appropriate, issue warnings, call on a Senior Referee, abandon the game, or in extreme circumstances award frame or game away.

18.2 Positioning of the Referee

The Referee will be in such a position that a clear view of the table and player is available, without obstruction or distraction to the player, also bearing spectators in mind.

Most occasions will allow a referee to change position after every shot. This opportunity should be taken, and will have three benefits:

- the best view possible
- will not obstruct the view of the same spectators
- continual movement will increase the alertness of a Referee

18.3 Duties and positioning of the timekeeper

In most cases a separate timekeeper will be static, and be in such a position that a clear view of the table is available. It may be necessary to move, particularly if 60 seconds is approaching and the view is obstructed by the player in control or by the other Referee.

In most situations timing will commence from when the timekeeper sees all the balls stop moving. However, following an 'In off' time starts when the other Referee calls "Time Running"

Most stopwatches require three clicks, the first to stop, the second to reset and the third to start. Timing can be more accurate if the first two clicks are performed while the balls are still moving. As soon as the balls stop moving only the last click need be performed.

18.4 Preparing a table

Brush the cushions in the direction of the nap. (This is normally from the baulk end for the side cushions and clockwise for the end cushions. However, some tables may differ. The direction of the nap can be determined by lightly brushing fingers on the cloth in both directions.)

Remove bad dust spots by gently flicking the brush in the opposite direction to the nap

Brush table in the direction of the nap

Iron the table in the direction of the nap

If no iron is available, turn the brush upside down and forcefully push brush up the table. Then brush again.

19. Further Duties of the Referee

In the event of a player refusing to accept a decision, then the Referee will abandon the game, reporting the facts to the governing body concerned (e.g. Tournament Director, Competition Organiser).

The player who wins the toss will have the choice of first break.

- i. If a player has been awarded frames at the start of a match (e.g. for late arrival) the choice of break commences from the first frame to be played; it is not back dated to the first frame on the score sheet.
- ii. In a doubles match the break will also alternate between partners. Once the order of play has been determined during the first turn of each pair, that playing order shall remain for the duration of the match.

Where the cue ball is touching any object ball and in playing away, this object ball moves by virtue of settling into a hollow or similar fault of the table, then it is not a foul. If a table is in poor condition, whenever any ball(s) are touching the cue ball, it should avoid any disagreements if it is called touching by the Referee.

20. Guidance for walkabout refereeing

- Mobility: move from table to table, watching out for tight situations.
- Know which tables are in the allocated zone and cover all the allocated tables.
- If a walkabout Referee witnesses an incorrect decision by a table Referee, the call should be overruled.
- A walkabout Referee should know the result sheet system in use, and be able to explain to competitors as required.
- Ensure the time between frames is kept to a minimum to keep the competition flowing. This is particularly important during team matches (where re-racking of balls between frames, and getting the next players to table are points that may need consideration).
- Keep Senior Referee (or Organiser) informed at all times of unusual events that may develop. For example, a match in your allocated region may be progressing slowly and an adjacent table is spare.
- Be aware of the required player dress code (if in doubt alert the Senior Referee, who will take any action necessary, normally reporting it to the Tournament Director).
- If the Senior Referee is asked for, find the Senior Referee, then advise the Senior Referee of the situation and your decision away from table, before returning to table.

21. Correcting mistakes

Do not be afraid of admitting mistakes and correcting them:

For example, a player A has two visits, and the Referee forgets to call "Second Visit" at the end of the first visit. Player A moves away from the table and player B touches the table. Player B cannot be penalised. If a Referee makes no call at the end of a visit it is reasonable for a player to assume it is also the end of the turn. The Referee has made a mistake by forgetting to call "second visit" and player A should return to the table, on "Second Visit".

22. Suggested equipment

Ball marker (two coins could be used if a ball marker is not available)

Paper and pen

Coin (with heads and tails)

Spare cue ball for assessing tight total snooker's and snooker's. (It is a good idea to remove the spare cue ball before announcing the decision, thereby preventing unnecessary questioning of the decision.)

Spare stopwatch.

23. Interpreting a players call

Some calls a player makes are not strictly correct, but it should be obvious to a Referee when taking the situation into account what the player means. This is particularly important when a language barrier exists.

24. Miscellaneous

1. A Referee should not submit to unnecessary requests for balls to be cleaned. Never attempt to lift a ball for cleaning if it is in a crucial position.
2. A Referee should never drink alcohol until stood down at the end of the day. Cigarettes should not be smoked while the Referee is on the floor.
3. Time keeping is important when returning for breaks. A Referee will normally be asked to report to the Senior Referee when relieved, or when returning from a break, or both. A 15-minute break period does not mean 15 minutes away from the table. There will always be a certain changeover time, thus reducing 15 minutes to possibly 13 minutes. Remember, if you are late back from a break, it is your colleagues that suffer.
4. A Referee should always know what time they are required for the 'start of day' briefing.
5. Some Tournament Directors will have additional rules that complement the World Eight Ball Playing rules (examples being slow play, determination of break, dress code). If such rules exist the Senior Referee will advise.

25. Final Note

This guidance should not be considered exhaustive. A Referee should not be afraid to ask a Senior Referee, no matter how trivial the question. Asking a question will install confidence in both the Referee and the Senior Referee.

26. Glossary

This guidance has been compiled using the following material:

World 8 Ball Pool Rules

World Rules Calling Procedure

Senior Referees Duties / Assistant Senior Assessment

South African Pool Association "Interpretation of the World Eight-Ball Pool Rules"

EPA directive on Coaching

Discussions held at EPRA meetings

26.2 Suggested Reading

World 8 Ball Pool Rules

World Rules Calling Procedure

26.3 Suggestions for Improvements

(Issue, January 2015)

Any suggestions for improvements in this publication should be addressed to the Chairman of the EPA Rules Revision Subcommittee.