



THE OFFICIAL APA/CPA  
**GAME RULES  
BOOKLET**

League Years '26/27, '27/28 & '28/29

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# GAME RULES

## 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, and 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, players have the option of calling, rather than marking, the 8-ball pocket.

**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. On their next shot, the 1-ball must again be struck first. 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 when pocketed 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.

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## 1. LAGGING

Players lag from behind the head string at approximately the same time 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 choose the 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 by the non-breaking player, 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 remaining balls can be placed in any order.
- **9-Ball** - The balls numbered 1 through 9 are racked in a diamond shape. The 1-ball is placed at the front of the diamond, the 9-ball in the center. The remaining object balls can be placed in any order. 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 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.

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## 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 an object ball must be pocketed. The cue ball may not be shot into a rail before hitting the rack.

**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 being **in**. To make this determination simply compare the head string, an imaginary line connecting the two diamonds that are second from the head rail, 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 to be considered legal:

- **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 by the non-breaking player and rebroken by the same breaking 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.

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## 4. AFTER THE BREAK

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

- A foul on a legal break results in ball-in-hand for the opponent, to be placed behind the head string in 8-Ball or anywhere on the table in 9-Ball.
- 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. A foul on a legal break requires the ball-in-hand to be **executed from behind the head string** and contact made with an object ball 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, the third party's call is final. If no agreed upon third party is available, 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 previously noted 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 one or more object balls from one category are pocketed on the break, that becomes the shooter's category of balls.
- d. If balls from each category are pocketed on the break (for example, two solids and one stripe), 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.

**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, as it is never neutral.

## 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. Pocketed balls are marked as dead balls on the scoresheet.
- 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 will foul by mistakenly shooting 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 takes a subsequent shot, and makes legal contact with a ball of their actual category (in 8-Ball) or the lowest numbered object ball on the table (in 9-Ball), it is too late to call the foul. In addition, the following rules will then apply depending on the format:

- **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, except the 9-ball, which will be spotted.

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## 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 after striking the lowest numbered ball on the table.

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## 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. The shooter does not need to designate their intended ball or pocket during the shot, except when they are legally shooting the 8-ball.

**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 wedged in the jaw of the pocket and are leaning off the edge of the slate, they are deemed pocketed. Drop them in the pocket and resume playing unless doing so ends the game.

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## 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/are 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 other balls. If it is the 8-ball that is knocked on the floor, the shooter loses the game.
- **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.

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## 9. ACCIDENTALLY MOVED BALLS

Accidentally moved balls must be replaced, unless any of the accidentally moved balls make contact with the cue ball. If accidentally moved balls make contact with the cue ball, it is a ball-in-hand foul, and no balls get replaced.

- If the accidental movement occurs between shots, the ball must be replaced by the opponent before the shot is taken.
- If the accidental movement occurs during a shot, all balls accidentally moved 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, pocket marker, 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 a fair manner, as close as possible to its original position.

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## 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, the third party's 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 may have points deducted 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

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 a sportsmanship violation. 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.

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## 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 unfelted hard surface of the rail.

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## 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 player that had the break at the start of the stalemated game breaks again. A game shall be considered a stalemate when both players or teams agree. There is no minimum number of turns that must occur before a game is stalemated.

To score a stalemated game in:

- **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 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** - To make a legal shot, after contacting a ball that is frozen to a rail, the shooter must either:

- Drive the cue ball to any rail after the cue ball touches the frozen ball.
- Drive the frozen ball to another rail or into a pocket.
- Drive the frozen ball away from the rail and into another ball which, in turn, causes the frozen ball to hit any rail or go into a pocket, or causes the other ball to hit any rail or go into a pocket.

To make a legal shot, after simultaneous contact between a frozen ball and the rail it is frozen to, the shooter must either:

- Drive the cue ball to another rail.
- Drive the frozen ball to another rail or into a pocket.

- Drive the cue ball off the rail and into another ball which, in turn, causes the cue ball to hit any rail, or causes the other ball to hit any rail or go into a pocket.
- Drive the frozen ball off the rail and into another ball which, in turn, causes the frozen ball to hit any rail, or causes the other ball to hit any rail or go into a pocket.

**Cue ball frozen to your own object ball (8-Ball) / lowest ball in the rotation (9-Ball)** - Shooting the cue ball towards, or partly into the frozen ball, thereby making the ball move by such a shot, constitutes legal contact. Shooting the cue ball away from the frozen ball does not constitute legal contact. To make **legal contact**, after shooting away from the frozen ball, the cue ball must:

- 8-Ball - After separating from the frozen ball, contact another object ball of the shooter's category first, or come back and contact the previously frozen ball first.
- 9-Ball - After separating from the frozen ball, come back and contact the previously frozen ball first.

**NOTE:** If the cue ball is shot away from your own frozen object ball (8-Ball) / frozen lowest ball in the rotation (9-Ball), and the frozen ball moves slightly due to breaking contact with the cue ball, it does not constitute legal contact.

**Cue ball frozen to your opponent's object ball (8-Ball) / non-lowest ball in the rotation (9-Ball)**

- You must shoot away from the opponent's frozen object ball (8-Ball), or the frozen non-lowest ball in the rotation (9-Ball). If the shooter shoots towards, or partly

into the frozen ball, thereby making the frozen ball move by such a shot, it constitutes illegal contact and it is a foul.

**NOTE:** If the cue ball is shot away from your opponent's frozen object ball (8-Ball) / non-lowest frozen ball in the rotation (9-Ball), and the frozen ball moves slightly due to breaking contact with the cue ball, it does not constitute illegal contact, and is not 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, whereupon 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 an object 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.

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 contacts the object ball. If the ball bounces back onto the playing surface, it is considered to have struck a rail.
- d.** If, after contacting a ball that is frozen to a rail, the shooter fails to:
  - Drive the cue ball to any rail after the cue ball touches the frozen ball.
  - Drive the frozen ball to another rail or into a pocket.
  - Drive the frozen ball away from the rail and into another ball which, in turn, causes the frozen ball to hit any rail or go into a pocket, or causes the other ball to hit any rail or go into a pocket.

If, after making simultaneous contact between a frozen ball and the rail it is frozen to, the shooter fails to:

- Drive the cue ball to another rail.
- Drive the frozen ball to another rail or into a pocket.
- Drive the cue ball off the rail and into another ball which, in turn, causes the cue ball to hit any rail, or causes the other ball to hit any rail or go into a pocket.

- Drive the frozen ball off the rail and into another ball which, in turn, causes the frozen ball to hit any rail, or causes the other ball to hit any rail or go into a pocket.
- e. Intentionally scooping the cue ball over another ball.
- f. Receiving advice from a fellow player, other than your designated coach, during a time-out.
- g. Touching or causing the cue ball to move, outside of a ball-in-hand situation.
- 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, with the cue ball or the hand holding 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.

If the foul occurs on a shot that ends the game, it must be called before the next game begins; however, if the shot ends the match, the foul must be called before the scoresheet is signed.

- **8-Ball** - If the 8-ball is pocketed during the shot, it is loss of game.
- **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 the 8-ball 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. If you pocket the

8-ball at the same time you pocket the last ball of your category, you lose the game.

### **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:** Contacting a pocket marker with the 8-ball is not a foul and the shot stands.

### **9-BALL**

You legally pocket the 9-ball.



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