

World Pool Association

Official Blackball Rules



1. BLACKBALL

The Game shall be known as blackball. Play blackball in a sportsmanlike manner.

The referee is the sole judge of what is fair and unfair play and shall take whatever action is necessary to ensure rules are observed.

2. EQUIPMENT AND TABLE LAYOUT

The game is played on a six pocket rectangular table with six cushions.

Equipment permitted

- A white ball called the 'cue ball'.
- Two groups of object balls consisting of seven red (or blue) and seven yellow. Alternatively use balls numbered 1 to 7 and 9 to 15.
- A black ball (the 8 ball).
- Spider rest, goose-neck rest, cross rest.
- Prescribed cues.

No other equipment permitted unless ratified by the WPA.

The playing surface is the flat part of the table bordered by the cushions.

The surface should be marked with a black spot at the intersection of two imaginary diagonal lines joining the centre and corner pockets.

The cloth is marked with a **baulk line**. A straight line drawn from cushion to cushion 1/5th of the length of the table parallel to the face of the cushion which lies at the greatest distance from the black spot.

Baulk is the rectangular area bordered by the baulk line and three cushions.

3. OBJECT OF THE GAME

The player or team pocketing their group of object balls first in any order and then legally potting the black ball wins the game.

4. COMMENCEMENT OF THE GAME OR A RE-START

The opening break shot is determined by lag. The player winning the lag decides who breaks. Opening breaks alternate in subsequent frames.

The exception being re-racks for slow or negative play as described in rule 8g.

LAGGING PROCEDURE Balls should be of equal size and weight.

Ideally use cue balls, but when unavailable use two object balls.

With 'ball in hand' behind the baulk line, one player to the left and the other to the right of the table, balls are struck simultaneously towards the top cushion to return as close as possible to the baulk cushion. The player whose ball comes to rest closest to the edge of the baulk cushion wins the lag.

It is automatic loss of lag if a ball

- Crosses into the opponent's ball of the table
- Falls to contact the top cushion.
- Draps into a pocket. (d) Jumps from the table.
- Touches a side cushion.
- Comes to rest within that area of a corner pocket taking it past the nose of the baulk cushion.

Players will lag again if both players fall victim to automatic loss of lag rules or the referee is unable to determine which ball is closer.

4a THE RACK Arrange the balls as shown with the black ball on the black spot.

4b THE BREAK The first shot of a frame is the break.

To 'break', the cue ball is played from baulk at the triangle of object balls.

The frame commences the instant the player's cue tip contacts the cue ball.

- The break will be deemed legal if at least one ball is potted, OR at least two object balls fully pass an imaginary line joining the middle of the centre pockets.
- If the break is not legal the opponent is awarded one free shot plus one visit and may play the cue ball from : where it lies, OR from baulk, OR choose a re-rack.

4c PLAYING FROM BAULK

(a) The centre point of the cue ball must be in baulk when a shot is played.

If the centre of the cue ball is on the baulk line this is deemed as being in baulk.

(b) The cue ball can be moved only by hand. Not with the shaft of the cue.

The player may continue to adjust the position of the cue ball by hand until a shot is played.

If the cue ball is touched with the tip of the cue a shot is deemed to have been played and it is a foul if it does not meet the requirements of a legal shot. Rule 5d.

(c) The cue ball may be played in any direction. After a foul, if the player decides to play from baulk, position the cue ball without touching any other ball.

It is a foul, if during placement, the cue ball touches another other ball.

4d BLACK BALL POTTED ON THE BREAK or on a re-rack the balls are re-racked and the same player breaks again. No penalty is incurred. This still applies if any other balls are pocketed, or leave the playing surface.

4e DECIDING GROUPS ON AN OPEN TABLE

Groups are NOT decided and the table remains open in these circumstances ...

- On a break shot.
- On a foul shot.
- If taking a 'free' shot after a foul.
- In a 'combination' shot in which balls from both groups are potted.

After the break the table is open and players may play balls from either group.

The black ball cannot be used as an 'on' ball to pot an object ball, unless a foul has been committed and it is a free shot.

Given the exceptions above, if a player pots a ball or balls from a single group the player is then 'on' that group for the duration of the frame.

The opposing player is designated the opposite group.

4f DECIDING GROUPS AFTER A FOUL SHOT

If a foul is committed on an open table and one or more object balls are pocketed, then those balls are ignored in determining groups.

The oncoming player then faces an open table and has a free shot playable from where the cue ball came to rest on the table OR from baulk.

The player may play any ball on this free shot after which the table remains open.

4g CONTINUING PLAY

In the course of play, if balls are potted and a legal shot is played then players are entitled to an additional shot.

This continues until a player either ...

- Falls to pocket one or more of the allotted balls OR
- Commits a foul.

4h CUE BALL IN HAND With 'cue ball in hand', play from any position within baulk in any direction. Legal placement is described in rule 4c.

4i TOUCHING BALLS

Play the cue ball away from any touching balls.

If the touching ball is an 'on' ball. The player is deemed to have played that ball. To play a legal shot, the player need only pot a ball from his/her own group OR cause any ball, including the cue ball, to strike a cushion.

If the touching ball is not 'on'. The player must play away and meet all of the normal requirements of a legal shot. See rule 5d.

On playing away from two or more touching balls. All the requirements of a legal shot must be met. If this is not possible the game is a stalemate. See rule 4r. Should a touching ball move while 'playing away' then this is a foul.

4j COMBINATION SHOTS

Two or more object balls can be potted without penalty in a single 'skill shot'. In such shots the potted balls may drop into pockets in any order.

In combination shots you may ...

- Contact a ball from your group first and then pot balls from both groups.
- Play a shot to pot your last remaining group ball(s) and the black to win a frame provided initial contact is with a ball of your group and all balls are potted.
- Play the black ball (when the black ball is a ball 'on') onto an opponent's object ball and pot both balls to win the frame.

In combination shots following a foul, use a free shot to make initial contact with any ball. For example you may play an opponent's ball onto the black ball to pocket the black and win the frame, provided you are 'on' the black ball. In this instance is not necessary to pot the opponent's ball (see rule 6b).

4k BALLS OFF THE TABLE

It is a foul if a ball leaves the playing surface, does not return by its own means and so remains off the playing surface (other than when potted).

Balls are returned to the table as follows ...

- If a cue ball, it is played from baulk.
- Object balls are re-spotted.

If a ball returns to the table 'by its own means' then

- It is not a foul if a ball leaves the playing surface runs along a cushion and drops back onto the surface before coming to rest or falling into a pocket (provided other requirements of a legal shot are fulfilled).
- It is a foul if a ball leaves the playing surface and contacts a person, or an object that is not part of the table, and then returns to the surface. So, if a ball leaves the surface, contacts a block of chalk and returns to the table, it is a foul.

4m RE-SPOTTING AND RETURNING BALLS TO THE TABLE

If a cue ball, it is returned to the table and played from baulk.

An object ball is re-spotted with its centre point on the black spot or as near as possible to that spot in a direct line between the spot and the centre point of the cushion which lies furthest from the baulk line.

Object balls are re-spotted in the following order

- Black ball.
- Red (or blue or solid 1-7) balls.
- Yellow (or striped 9-15) balls.

Return balls as close as possible to other balls but without touching.

4n INTERFERENCE AND MARKING A TABLE

There is NO penalty if balls are moved in these circumstances

- By persons other than the players taking part in the frame OR
- As a result of players being bumped OR
- Events deemed out with a player's control.

The referee will return balls as closely as possible to their original positions.

A player may not use chalk or other object as a marker.

It is not a foul to place chalk on the table while in control but it should be removed before an opponent addresses the table.

Intentional marking, such as leaving chalk in a position to aid a shot, is a foul.

4p BALL FALLING INTO A POCKET WITHOUT BEING HIT

(a) If a ball falls into a pocket without being hit by another ball, after having been motionless for five seconds or longer, and being no part of any stroke in progress, it is replaced and play continues.

(b) If a ball falls into a pocket 'by itself' during a shot, so that it would have been hit by another ball were it still there, then it is replaced and all other balls that moved during the shot are returned to their former positions prior to the next shot.

The player then plays the same shot OR chooses a different shot if so wished.

(c) If a ball balances momentarily on the edge of a pocket and then falls it counts as in the pocket and will not be replaced.

4q OBJECT BALL FROZEN TO, THAT IS TOUCHING, A CUSHION

When the cue ball makes first contact with an 'on' object ball which is 'frozen' to a cushion it is a foul if the shot does not subsequently result in

- A ball being potted OR
- The cue ball contacting a cushion OR
- The frozen ball contacting a cushion attached to a 'separate' rail OR
- Any other object ball contacting a cushion with which it was not already in contact before the shot was played.

A ball which is touching a cushion at the start of a shot and is forced into the same cushion is not considered to have been driven to that cushion unless it leaves the cushion, strikes another ball, and then contacts the cushion again.

An object ball is not considered frozen to a cushion unless examined and announced as such by a referee or a player prior to a shot being played shot.

4r STALEMATE If a situation arises in which no legal shot is playable (see rule 5d) whether by accident or design, the frame shall be re-started.

If a re-rack is caused by accident, the original 'breaking' player breaks again.

If due to slow or negative play, or by design, players lag to see who breaks.

Re-racks may involve a reduced number of balls. See rule 8g.

4s COMPLETION OF A FRAME OR GAME

A frame is over when the black is potted during a legal shot (rule 5d) and all balls come to rest OR in a prescribed 'loss of frame' situation (rule 7).

After a frame is over, the referee waits for the balls to stop moving and announces that the frame, game or match is awarded to a specific player or team.

If the referee has not made this announcement and the balls are still moving, then a player will be penalized by loss of frame if a further shot is played OR the player interferes with the remaining balls.

5. FOULS WILL BE CALLED IN THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES

5a Potting the cue ball 'in-off'.

This includes the break shot.

Following an 'in-off' shot the player or referee may recover the cue ball from the basket (see rule 7e - catching or preventing a ball going in-off).

5b Playing outside baulk when obliged to play from within baulk.

5c Potting an opponent's ball without potting a ball from your own group (or the black if it is the 'on' ball) except when the table is open.

5d Failing to perform a legal shot.

LEGAL SHOT DEFINED :

To play a legal shot the player must cause the cue ball's initial contact to be with an 'on' ball and THEN must either

- Pot any 'on' ball or balls (see rule 6b) OR
- Cause the cue ball or any other ball to contact a cushion (see rule 5g snookers).

5e JUMP SHOTS in which the cue ball jumps over another ball.

If the cue ball leaves the bed of the table and does not strike an object ball that would have been struck had the cue ball not left the table on an otherwise identical shot then the cue ball is deemed to have jumped over that ball and it is a foul.

5f PUSH STROKES Defined as the tip of the cue remaining in contact with the cue ball once it has commenced forward motion.

5g Failure to escape from a SNOOKER by striking an 'on' ball.

A player is considered snookered when it is deemed impossible to hit any part of a ball 'on' by way of a straight line shot.

In escaping from a snooker the player need only cause the cue ball to contact an 'on' ball. It is NOT necessary to pot a ball OR to cause any ball to contact a cushion AFTER having escaped a snooker.

Players should seek confirmation of the snooker from an opponent, referee or official before playing a shot.

5h Striking the cue ball with any other part of the cue than the tip.

5i Playing before balls have come to rest from the previous shot.

5j Playing before balls that require re-spotting are re-spotted.

5k Playing out of turn.

5m DOUBLE HITS in which the cue tip contacts the cue ball more than once in the same shot.

If the tip of the cue strikes the cue ball twice and the referee is able to clearly see or hear each contact, then it is a foul.

5n Playing a shot while not having at least one foot on the floor.

The exception is where there is physical disability or other special needs.

5p Touching a ball. A player's body, clothing, jewellery or accessory, or any part of a cue, with the exception of the tip in a legal shot, touches a ball.

A tip falling off a cue, or chalk dropped, is a player's responsibility. Should these contact any ball on the table it is a foul. A player is responsible for equipment brought to the table but not that supplied at the tournament.

If the end falls off a rest that has been provided for a tournament and it contacts a ball this is not a foul. This is 'supplied' equipment.

Only if it is a player's own equipment is it a foul.

6. PENALTY AFTER A FOUL

6a Loss of control of table. After any foul the offending player loses his or her next visit to the table and the opponent has a free shot plus one visit.

6b ON A FREE SHOT AFTER A FOUL

The table is deemed 'OPEN' and the oncoming player may take a free shot without nomination. On the first shot only, play the cue ball onto any ball without penalty.

On a free shot a player may ...

- Play or pot any of the opponent's balls.
- Play combination shots by playing directly onto an opponent's balls and thereby pot his/her own group of balls OR play onto his/her own group balls and by that means pot any of the opponent's balls.
- Play the black ball onto, and pot, the opponent's balls OR play the black ball onto, and pot, any balls from his/her own group.
- Play the black ball, but not pot it, unless it is the ball 'on'. The black can also be potted in combination shots as described under rule 4j.

6c Following any foul the cue ball may be

Placed in baulk OR played from where it lies on the bed of the table.

Proceed as in rules 6(a) and 6(b).

Moving the cue ball to and within baulk does not count as a shot or visit.

7. LOSS OF FRAME FOULS ARE AS FOLLOWS

7a Committing a foul in the shot in which the black ball is potted.

7b Potting the black . . . when any balls of the player's own group remain on the table after the shot has been played.

7c DELIBERATE FOUL A player who clearly and intentionally plays a ball not 'on' will have committed a deliberate foul resulting in loss of frame.

A player who clearly and intentionally fails to make an attempt to play a ball of his/her own group, or an 'on' ball following a foul, will lose the frame.

Failing to make a bona fide attempt to play a legal shot is a deliberate foul and will result in loss of frame.

7d Deliberately touching or picking up a ball on the surface of the table without permission results in loss of frame.

With the exception of positioning the cue ball in baulk (see rule 4c) only the referee can deliberately touch a ball on the bed of the table.

If a referee is not available a player must ask an opponent to pick up the cue ball.

7e Catching or preventing a ball going in-off.

If the cue ball is going 'in-off' and the player catches that ball, preventing it from dropping into the pocket and entering the table mechanism, then it is loss of frame.

7f Deliberately, by word or action, disrupting an opponent's play.

8. GENERAL TOURNAMENT AND LEAGUE GUIDELINES

8a TIMED SHOTS AND FOULS

Players have 60 seconds to play a shot, including the break shot or a shot with 'ball in hand'. The referee starts timing when all balls come to rest from the previous shot (but see below about recovering an 'in-off' cue balls).

If a player has not played a shot within 60 seconds it is a foul.

If 30 seconds elapse before a player has played a shot, the referee announces "thirty seconds". The call must be made the instant that time has elapsed and not postponed because a player is about to play a shot.

The referee may recover the cue ball from the basket if a player is slow in doing so. The referee will hand the ball to the player in control.

As soon as the cue ball is handed to the player, or the player recovers the ball, the referee starts timing and the player has 60 seconds to play the shot.

A 'Time Out' is called for the following reasons ...

- Player requests a rest or bridge.
- Something or someone is obstructing the player.
- There is a 'touching ball' decision.

8b UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT It may be the 'Spirit of the Game' is breached and a frame or match is then awarded to an opponent.

Unsportsmanlike conduct may be regarded as

- Foul language.
- Throwing a cue around or unscrewing it as if to concede.
- Arguing with an opponent, spectator or referee.
- Continuously disagreeing with a referee's rulings.
- Interfering while an opponent is playing a shot.
- Not moving away from the table or out of an opponent's way after a visit.

8c COACHING A player must play without advice from other persons. If, in the opinion of the referee, the result has been compromised in some way, it may be decided to award the frame to the opponent.

8d LEAVING THE PLAYING AREA If a player has to leave the playing area during a match, the player must have the referee's permission.

This should only happen under exceptional circumstances.

With no referee present players should take bathroom breaks between frames.

8e A referee may, if requested, advise on the rules of the game. The referee will explain the rule to the best of his ability. The referee must not provide any subjective opinion that would affect play, such as whether a legal shot can be played. Referees cannot be held responsible for incorrect information as it is the player's duty to be aware of the rules.

8f The referee ensures excessive time is not taken to play a shot. This will be in accordance with local competition rules and guidance and is necessary when an event doesn't apply the 'time rule' described in rule 8a.

8g RE-RACKS using nine balls following slow or negative play. Rack fifteen balls as normal. Remove the top ball and the back five.

In this situation players must lag to determine who breaks.

8h In DOUBLES when a player approaches the table, conversation with any other players, including a partner, is unsporting and dealt with under competition rules.

8i PLAYING WITHOUT A REFEREE Disputes between players should be referred to tournament officials.

Play stops to allow an official to be called, as protests must be made prior to any further shot being taken. Otherwise protests cannot be considered.

If players fail to take this action no foul is considered to have occurred.

All players must honour an opponent's request that play be halted and an official summoned. Failure to do so may result in forfeiture of a frame or match.



A concise presentation of the official World Pool Association blackball rules from the UK's family of Blackball web sites . . .

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englishblackball.com ~ nblackball.com ~ scottishblackball.com

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Blackball was introduced in 2006 and is the official rule set for 8ball pool as played in leagues, pubs and clubs throughout the United Kingdom. Email : rules@blackball.co.uk