

# **OFFICIAL U.P.A. RULEBOOK**

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**United States Professional  
Poolplayers Association**

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# UPA OFFICIAL 8-BALL RULES

## INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the official 8-ball rules of the UPA. The rules you are about to read and understand are the collaboration of years of deliberation from our Touring Professionals; both foreign and domestic. Our professionals have come together to insure a simple yet highly effective ruling system that is sure to challenge you as a player while also raising your level play.

Please note that due to issues of television, timed matches, and professional match play some rules may slightly differ from the actual professional tour. The following rules have been slightly amended by our Touring Pro's and are intended for amateur use in pool rooms across the nation. This rules are utilized our UPA Amateur "League of Champions."

It is our hope that your desire is to truly raise your level of play and standard of sportsmanship. Going forward take time to know and understand these rules so that you can also instruct and encourage your fellow players. Furthering the education of our professional standards will result in nationwide consistency that will overall help the vitality of the sport of pocket billiards in the United States of America.

The United States Professional Poolplayers Association is dedicated to your advancement in the sport of pocket billiards so that you can enjoy years of game play and continue to grow personally from your experience in the game. Please be sure to let us know if you have further questions or comments so that we may be able to further assist you. Also be sure to join our "League of Champions" and watch your game rise to professional standards.

Thank you and God bless,

*Frank Alvarez III*

Frank Alvarez III  
UPA President

# UPA OFFICIAL 8-BALL RULES

## 1. OBJECT OF THE GAME

8 Ball is played with a cue ball, an 8-ball, and fifteen object balls, numbered 1 through 15. Balls 1-7 are solid colors and commonly referred to as “low balls”, and balls 9-15 are striped and commonly referred to as “high balls.” One player must pocket balls of solid colors, while the other player the striped ones. The player pocketing their entire group and then legally pocketing the 8-ball wins the game.

## 2. LAG FOR BREAK

The player with the lowest official UPA speed (rating) shall break first with an alternating break format taking place thereafter. In the event that two players with equal speeds play a coin toss shall take place to determine who breaks first with an alternating break format taking place thereafter.

- a. **HOW TO RACK:** To begin the game of 8 ball, the colored balls are placed randomly in a triangle, called a “rack”. The base of the rack is parallel to the short end of the pool table and is positioned so the ball in the tip of the rack is located on the foot spot. The balls in the rack are pressed into contact with the foot ball, and remain in contact after the rack is removed. Within the rack, the 8-ball is centered while the two corners are occupied by two opposite groups with one being a solid ball and one stripe ball. The game begins with the cue ball in hand anywhere behind the head string. (That is, the quarter of the billiard table farthest from the rack), an area also commonly referred to as the “kitchen.” NOTE: The UPA acknowledges that tables may have flaws which do not allow for acceptable racks directly upon the foot spot. In this case players are allowed to rack within a nickel’s radius of the direct foot spot to achieve a desired rack.
- b. **RACK YOUR OWN:** When there is no official available each breaking player shall be responsible for providing himself/herself a legal and solid rack.

## 3. LEGAL BREAK SHOT

For the break shot to be legal, the breaker, with the cue ball behind the head string, must either pocket a ball, or drive at least four numbered balls to the rail. When the breaker fails to make a legal break, it is a foul. When a foul occurs, the incoming player has the option of accepting the table in position and shooting, or requesting the balls be re-racked and having the offending player to re-break. If the breaker pockets a ball, it is still the same player’s inning.

Break fouls include:

- a. If the cue ball is touched by the cue tip and does not meet the legal break requirement, it is a foul and gives the non breaker an option of accepting the table in position and shooting, or requesting the offending player to re-break.
- b. If the cue ball is pocketed or driven off the table it is a foul and the non-breaking player has cue ball in hand behind the head string or from the “kitchen.”

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- c. If any numbered ball leaves the table or comes to rest on top of a rail, it is a foul and the non-breaking player has cue ball in hand.

### 4. 8-BALL POCKETED ON BREAK:

Legally pocketing the 8-ball on the break wins the game for the breaker; assuming no other foul has been committed.

8-ball break losses:

- a. When the 8-ball is pocketed on the break and the break did not meet all legal break requirements it results in a loss of game for the breaker.

### 5. OPEN TABLE

The table is always open immediately after the break shot. The player's designated group (solids or stripes) will not be determined until a player legally pockets a called object ball.

The table is considered an "open" table when the choice of groups (solid or stripes) has not yet been determined. When the table is open, it is legal to hit one group of balls in order to pocket another ball from the opposite group. NOTE: The 8-ball can never be struck first; this action would result in a foul.

### 6. CALL POCKET

In Call Pocket, it is encouraged that all balls be specified along with their intended pocket. However obvious balls and their respective pockets do not have to be specified. Any bank shot (object ball to rail), kick shot (rail(s) to object ball), or combinations (2 or more balls from either group) must be called to their designated pocket or they are considered a miss.

When a player successfully pockets his/her designated object balls they continue their inning until either a miss or foul occurs.

Call pocket notes:

- a. It is never necessary to specify details such as the number of banks, kisses, caroms, rails, etc.
- b. Any balls pocketed, legally or illegally, as a result from a called shot will remain pocketed, regardless of group (stripe or solid).
- c. The break shot is never considered a "called shot."

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### 7. BALL IN HAND FOUL PENALTIES

When a player commits a ball in hand foul, he must relinquish his turn at the table. The incoming player may now place the cue ball anywhere on the table to start his inning. If a player commits more than one foul on one shot, only one foul will be called. A player must make sure he has ball in hand before touching the cue ball. The following are cue ball in hand fouls:

#### 7.1 FOUL ON ALL BALLS:

- a. Touching the cue ball: Touching or causing even the slightest movement of the cue ball (other than a normal shot), even accidentally, is a foul. However a player may use the ferrule or shaft of his cue to line up his cue ball when a “cue ball in hand” is in play (using the tip is a foul, and ball in hand will be given to the other player).
- b. Touching a moving object ball: Touching a moving object ball is a foul as is allowing a moving ball to hit a foreign object.
- c. Touching a still object ball: Any ball moved accidentally can only be replaced by the opponent. However the opponent may exercise the option of keeping disturbed ball(s) in new position if they so choose. The player who has committed the foul may move the fouled object ball back to original position only after receiving consent from the opponent. If the player who has fouled touches any of the disturbed balls without consent of opponent it will result in a loss of turn with ball in hand to the opponent.

**7.2 SCRATCH:** Pocketing the cue ball or driving it off the table is a ball in hand foul.

**7.3 BAD HIT:** If the first object ball contacted by the cue ball is not a numbered ball from the shooter’s established group, it is a ball in hand foul. NOTE: If the shooter has no remaining balls from his/her group in play, the 8-ball may then be contacted first.

**7.4 NO RAIL:** If, after the cue ball first strikes a legal ball, and neither the cue ball nor any other ball hits a rail or is pocketed, it is a ball in hand foul.

**7.5 BALLS OFF THE TABLE:** Except for a legal shot, causing any ball to come to rest off the playing surface is a foul. This includes any accidental movement of a ball which results in a ball falling into a pocket. The ball accidentally pocketed is not brought back into play, and the incoming player has cue ball in hand.

If a player knocks a ball off the table, it does not return to play and it is a foul. If the ball returns to the playing surface after hitting a person or an object, it is a foul and the ball is to be removed from play (pocketed). NOTE: If a player removes the 8-ball from the playing surface it results in a loss of game.

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**7.6 FOOT ON THE FLOOR:** Failure to have at least one foot on the floor at the moment the cue tip strikes the cue ball is a ball in hand foul.

**7.7 JUMP SHOT:** Any miscue on a jump shot is a ball in hand foul. A legal jump shot must be executed by stroking down through the cue ball (no scooping or miscues).

**7.8 MOVING BALL:** Shooting while any ball is moving or spinning is a foul.

**7.9 DOUBLE HIT:** If the cue tip strikes the cue ball twice on the same stroke it is a ball in hand foul.

**7.10 HEAD STRING:** The base of the cue ball must be inside the head string on the break or it is a ball in hand foul.

**7.11 BALL IN HAND PLACEMENT:** To touch an object ball in any way while placing the cue ball is also a foul.

**7.12 INTERFERENCE:** Not remaining seated while the shooting player is at the table may result in a tournament official calling a foul for interference. The non-shooting player may check a table briefly in order to determine whether or not a referee should be called, however must be seated again after determination. If a player shoots out of turn, or moves any ball except during his inning, it is interference.

Talking, making noises, moving around, causing distraction (sharking) in some way or conduct unbecoming that of a professional while the shooting player is at the table may also result in a tournament official calling a foul for interference.

**7.13 MARKING THE TABLE:** Marking the table in any way, which could provide a player with an advantage in executing a shot, is a foul, unless the mark is removed to the satisfaction of the opponent or referee prior to shooting.

**7.14 USE OF EQUIPEMENT:** Out of play balls may not be used to measure gaps or spaces of any kind. Using any equipment in a non-customary manner may be a foul. It is the responsibility of the shooting player to ask a tournament official if he can use a piece of equipment in a certain way before doing it.

### 8. SAFETY PLAY

For reasons of strategy a player may choose to pocket an object ball and also discontinue his/her inning by declaring "safety" to the opponent prior to the shot. The player calling "safety" must be sure that the opponent is aware of the declaration otherwise would be forced to continue playing. Any ball pocketed during safety play remains pocketed.

NOTE: A safety shot still requires the normal attributes of a legal shot.

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### 9. LOSS OF GAME

- a. **OPPONENT WINS:** The opponent legally pockets the 8-ball.
- b. **8-BALL FOUL:** When the 8-ball is pocketed illegally; a scratch has occurred or the 8-ball was pocketed out of proper sequence.
- c. **CONCEDING A GAME:** Conceit of a game or games in tournament play is never encouraged. The shooting player must finish his/her inning and no matter the result shall be loss a game(s) to the conceding player.
- d. **CONCESSION OF MATCH:** Unscrewing any cues during the last game (or while the shooting player is on the hill), putting on a jacket, or undertaking any other actions which would indicate that the match is over, is considered a forfeiture of the match.
- e. **BALL TAPPING:** Tapping balls is not permitted. The penalty for ball tapping shall result in the loss of the current game after a clear warning has been granted to the offender. Only tournament officials may tap in balls when warranted.
- f. **COACHING ASSISTANCE:** A player is allotted the right to ask any team member for input or advice in planning or preparing to execute a shot once per game. Any team member who spontaneously offers advice to their respective teammates shall cause the current game to be forfeit in favor of the opponent. NOTE: When the shooting player decides to receive instruction from his/her team member, the player is to call a "Time Out." When a "Time Out" is called, the player is to name one of their team members. The team member name/called is to immediately assist the player without conferring with other members first and shall not use any cues or other "instruments" for demonstration or instruction. A Time Out shall be for a period of five (5) minutes.

### 10. STALEMATE

If in 3 consecutive innings by each player they purposefully foul or scratch because both players agree that any attempt to pocket or move an object ball would result in an immediate loss of the game, then the game is considered a stalemate. At this time the game would be re-racked and the breaker would remain the same, maintaining the integrity of the alternate break format.

### 11. GENERAL POOL RULES

- a. **SPLIT HITS:** If the cue ball strikes a legal object ball and a non-legal object ball at about the same instant, and it cannot be clearly determined which ball was hit first, the judgment will go in favor of the shooter.
- b. **BALL REBOUNDS FROM POCKET:** Balls must remain in a pocket to count as pocketed. If a ball goes into a pocket and bounces back on to the playing surface, it is not considered pocketed. If it is the 8-ball, it is not a win. If it is the cue ball, it is not a

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scratch. Clearing pockets which are full or nearly full of balls is the responsibility of the shooting player.

- c. **HANGING BALL:** If an object ball lands in a pocket, the ball is considered to be pocketed if it drops in 5 seconds or less after coming to complete rest by the hole. If a hanging ball drops in the pocket after being at rest for 5 seconds or more, the ball is returned to the original position on the edge and it is the incoming player's may begin his/her inning. Both players will have the opportunity to argue their case, and the referee's decision is final.
- d. **SUSPENDED BALLS:** If one or more balls become suspended in a pocket beyond the edge of the slate because it is partially supported by other balls, it is considered pocketed if the removal of the supporting ball(s) would cause the supported/suspended ball to fall into the pocket. Tournament officials are the sole judges of whether this rule applies to any situation.
- e. **SETTLING INTO PLACE:** A ball may settle slightly after it appears to have stopped, possibly due to slight imperfections in the cloth or table slate. Unless this causes a ball to fall into a pocket, it is considered a normal hazard of play, and the will not be moved back. If a ball falls into a pocket as a result of such settling, it is replaced as close as possible to its original position on the lip of the pocket. If a ball falls into a pocket during or just prior to a shot and it has an effect on the shot, the referee will restore the ball to its original position and the shot will be replayed. Players are not penalized for shooting while a ball is settling.
- f. **JUMP SHOTS:** It is legal to cause the cue ball to leave the surface of the table by elevating the butt of the cue and, with a downward stroke, force the cue ball to rise off the playing surface. For the shot to be legal only the cue tip may touch the cue ball – the shot must not be “scooped” by the ferrule or shaft. Any miscue on a jump shot is a ball in hand foul. A legal jump cue must be at least 40 inches in length and constructed in typical cue fashion. NOTE: Standard jump cues are accepted including phenolic tips. However cues that are not typical in appearance must be accepted and approved by the United States Professional Poolplayers Association (UPA).

## 12. TOURNAMENET DIRECTOR/REFEREES

- a. **PLAYER RESPONSIBILITY:** It is the responsibility of each member to be aware of all rules, regulations, and schedules relating to his/her competition. Tournament officials will make every reasonable effort to make the information readily available to all players; however, the ultimate responsibility rests with each individual player. There is no recourse if a player does not obtain correct or complete information.
- b. **REFEREES:** The League Operator (or his/her assistants) will perform the duties of a referee in the event that referees are busy or not utilized. If the Tournament Director, his/her assistants or a referee is not to be found within a reasonable time

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frame, a spectator may sub as an official referee when agreed upon by both players.

- c. **PLAYING WITHOUT A REFEREE:** When a referee or tournament official is not available, the players in the match will be responsible for racking balls, watching for fouls, and insuring adherence to the rules of competition. Both players may agree on an audience member to stand in and perform any duty of a tournament official.
- d. **QUESTIONABLE SHOT:** If there is a shot that could be a questionable hit or foul, the seated player is responsible for calling for a tournament official to watch the hit before the opponent shoots. Once notified, the player at the table must then wait for an official to watch the shot. Likewise, if a player is uncertain whether some rule has been broken, he is responsible for seeking immediate clarification from league officials or rule book before play continues. After play continues, it is unlikely that a problem can be remedied.
- e. **ADVICE VS. RULES CLARIFICATION:** The referee must NEVER give advice nor offer an opinion on points of play. Only when asked by either player for clarification of a rule will the referee then explain that a specific rule to the best of his/her ability. Any incorrect statement by the referee will not protect a player from enforcement of the actual rule. When asked, the referee must tell either player the score, whether the cue ball is frozen to an object ball or rail, etc. If the referee sees that a foul is about to be committed by either player, he must say nothing until after the foul, since any warning before the foul would constitute “advice” from the referee.
- f. **PROMPTING WARNINGS:** When it is either player’s opinion that the referee is failing to issue a mandatory warning, he/she may remind the referee that such a warning is necessary.
- g. **CALLING FOULS:** The referee will call all fouls as soon as they occur and will inform the incoming player that he/she has ball in hand.
- h. **PROTESTING FOULS:** If a player believes that the referee has failed to call a foul, he must protest to the referee before his/her opponent takes his/her next shot. If the player fails to do so, the foul is considered not to have occurred.
- i. **RESTORING POSITION:** When it becomes necessary, the referee will restore disturbed balls to their original positions to the best of their ability. The referee may solicit information for this purpose, if he/she is not sure of original positions. If the balls were disturbed by a player in the match, his/her opponent has the option of preventing restoration. If the balls were disturbed by someone else, then it is a mandatory for the referee to restore the balls. In this case, the referee may instruct the shooter to replay the shot after restoration, if the outside interference

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had an effect on the outcome of the shot. If not, the referee will instruct the shooter to continue play after restoration.

- j. **VERIFICATION:** The referee may use any means to gather needed information to make a decision concerning a disputed play or game situation.
  - k. **REPLAY OF GAME:** If a tournament official or his/her appointed substitute, cannot make a clear determination of the facts or specific circumstances relating to a given rule or game situation, the tournament official has the option of requiring that shot be replayed or a game be restarted.
  - l. **RESOLVING DISPUTIES:** Any disagreement between the two players will be resolved by the League Operator or his/her appointed substitute, or any administrative member of the UPA.
13. **SPECIAL RULLINGS:** Any rule or situation not covered in this text shall be decided by the League Operator or his/her appointed substitute or any administrative member of the UPA in accordance with UPA ideals and guidelines in an expedient manner. Such expedient rulings shall then be considered by the administration of the UPA and its Touring Professionals before further instruction or implementation of the matter is finalized.
- a. **ANDDENDUM:** From time to time there may be addendums issued by the UPA to the UPA official Rule book and it is the individual player's responsibility to keep current.