

The Official  
**APA**  
**8-Ball & 9-Ball**  
**Game Rules**  
**Booklet**

For League Years  
2006/2007 & 2007/2008



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## APA 8-Ball Game Rules

**General Description** - 8-Ball is played with a cue ball and normal rack of fifteen (15) object balls. The 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 marking and pocketing the 8-ball before his opponent. Choice of balls to be pocketed is made by the player legally pocketing the first ball of the game.

- 1. Lag** - Method used to start a match. Players simultaneously shoot a ball from behind the head string, banking it off the foot rail and back to the head of the table. Striking the side rails or any pocket results in loss of the lag. The closest ball to the head rail wins. It is permissible to strike the head rail. If the lagged balls make contact during the lag, lag over.
- 2. Racking** - All balls should be frozen (touching) as tightly as possible. Balls are racked with the front ball on the foot spot and the 8-ball in the center. The breaking player may request and receive a rerack.
- 3. Breaking** - To be a legal break, players must break from behind the head string, the head ball or second ball must be struck first and at least four object balls must be driven to the rails or a ball must be pocketed. The cue ball may not be shot into a rail before the rack. If the break does **not** qualify as legal, the balls are reracked and rebroken by the same player. If the break does **not** qualify as legal and results in a scratch, the balls are reracked and broken by the opposite player.

THE RACK MUST BE STRUCK BEFORE A FOUL CAN OCCUR. Breaking *safe* or *soft* is not allowed. The League Operator may make judgments and 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. Remember, break as hard as you can with control.

**4. After the Break** - Various circumstances can occur upon completion of the break. They are:

- a. A foul on a legal break results in *ball-in-hand* behind the head string and the incoming player may shoot any ball outside the head string (see diagram of table in Team Manual for explanation). A ball that's dead center or "out" is playable. If it is "in", the ball is not playable. It is up to the opponent to call the cue ball "in" before it is shot. (See Team Manual for a more complete explanation.)
- b. No balls are pocketed and it is the other player's turn.
- c. The 8-ball is pocketed. This is a win, unless the player scratches, in which case he loses.
- d. One ball is pocketed; it is still the breaker's turn and he continues shooting the category of balls he just made.
- e. One ball of each category is pocketed. The breaker has his choice of balls. He may shoot any ball,

except the 8-ball (which would be a foul), and each pocketed ball counts. If he makes one of each category on his second shot, he still has an "open table." If he misses or fouls on his second shot, his opponent has an "open table." "Open table" means a player can shoot a combination involving a stripe and a solid and whichever he makes, without committing a foul, would be his category.

- f. If two balls of one category and one ball of the other category are pocketed, it is the shooter's choice just as in "e" above.
- g. Occasionally it occurs that a player mistakenly starts shooting the wrong category of balls. Although it is sportsmanlike for the sitting player to remind the shooting player that he is about to foul by shooting the wrong category of balls, it is not a requirement for him to do so. Once the shooter has hit the wrong category of balls, the foul has occurred whether the ball is pocketed or not. If the ball is pocketed, it is permissible, though not recommended, that the sitting player allow the shooting player to continue shooting his balls in until he feels inclined to call the foul. The shooting player can escape penalty by quietly realizing his error and returning to shoot the correct category of balls and legally contacting one of them before his opponent calls foul, or by finishing off the wrong category of balls and legally contacting the 8-ball prior to his opponent calling a foul. In other words, the sitting player must call the foul before the shooter returns to the

correct category and legally contacts one or before the shooter pockets the remaining balls of the wrong category and legally contacts the 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 pocketing the 8-ball. Before any foul has occurred, the shooter also may avoid penalty by asking the sitting player which category of balls he has. The sitting player must tell him the truth.

**5. Combination Shots** - Combination shots are legal, but striking the correct ball first is required except in an "open table" situation. **The 8-ball is not neutral.** A player is credited with all balls he legally pockets. When a player does not pocket one of his balls but pockets an opponent's ball, he loses his turn. The opponent gets credit for the pocketed ball. No pocketed ball is ever spotted.

**6. Balls on the Floor** - If the 8-ball is knocked on the floor, it is loss of game. Object balls knocked on the floor are spotted. If the spot is taken, the ball is placed on a line directly behind the spot as close as possible. Knocking a ball other than the cue ball on the floor is not a foul. It might occur that a player pockets his ball while simultaneously knocking another ball on the floor. In this situation, it is still his turn and the ball is not spotted until he misses. If the ball on the floor is one of the shooter's balls, it is spotted when the shooter has pocketed all of his other balls or misses.

**7. Pocketed Balls** - Balls must remain in a pocket to be legal. If a ball goes in a pocket, but bounces back onto

the playing surface, it is not considered pocketed. If it is the 8-ball, it is not considered either a win or loss. If it is the cue ball, it is not considered a scratch.

**8. One Foot on the Floor** - While shooting, at least one foot must be on the floor at all times if a bridge is available. There is no foul—simply stop the shooter and hand him the bridge. League Management cannot guarantee the presence of bridges and some Host Locations may not have them.

Exception: Players shooting from a wheelchair must remain seated in their wheelchair while shooting.

**9. Fouls** - If any of the following fouls are committed, the penalty is *ball-in-hand* for the incoming player. Make certain you have *ball-in-hand* before you touch the cue ball by confirming with your opponent. *Ball-in-hand* means you are allowed to place the cue ball anywhere on the table (with the exception of a scratch on the break which results in *ball-in-hand* behind the head string) and shoot any of your balls (or the 8, if all of your category of balls have been pocketed). Even after having addressed the cue ball, a player may, if not satisfied with the placement, make further adjustments with the hand, cue stick or any other reasonable piece of equipment. A foul may be called only if the player fouls while actually stroking the cue ball, meaning a double hit of the cue ball (sometimes called double clutching). The *ball-in-hand* rule penalizes a player for an error. Without this rule, a player could benefit by accidentally or purposely scratching or otherwise fouling.

**ONLY THE PLAYER OR THE COACH MAY OFFICIALLY CALL A FOUL** although anyone may suggest to the player or the coach that a foul should be called.

## THESE ARE THE ONLY FOULS RESULTING IN BALL-IN-HAND:

- a. Anytime the cue ball goes in a pocket, on the floor, or otherwise ends up off the playing surface.
- b. Failure to hit your object ball first. (A player who is shooting stripes must hit a striped ball first.) **The 8-ball is not neutral.** The shooter has the advantage in these situations unless his opponent has asked an outside party to watch the hit. Protect yourself. If you think your opponent is attempting a shot that could result in a bad hit, get someone to watch the shot before he starts shooting. Teams involved in repeatedly calling bad hits without outside party verification may be subject to penalty points for disruptive unsportsmanlike behavior.
- c. Failure to hit a rail after contact. A sentence that should answer many questions is: "Any ball (including the cue ball) must go to a rail AFTER LEGAL contact." A pocketed ball counts as a rail.
- d. The object ball is frozen to a rail and the player is contemplating playing a "safety." In order for the "frozen ball" rule to be in effect, the opponent must declare the ball frozen and the player should verify. Once it is agreed the ball is frozen the player must drive the object ball to another rail (of course, it could hit another ball, which in turn hits a rail) or drive the cue ball to a rail after it touches the object ball. If the latter method of safety is chosen the player should be sure to obviously strike the object ball first. If the cue ball strikes

the rail first or appears to hit both the rail and ball simultaneously, it is a foul unless either the cue ball or object ball went to some other rail.

- e. It is a foul to jump a cue ball over another ball by purposely miscuing it up in the air. Accidental miscuing is not a foul unless other rules in this section are violated.
- f. Receiving illegal aid (coaching from person(s) other than the coach) during your turn at the table. It is not considered illegal aid to remind a player to mark the pocket when shooting the 8-ball, or to tell a player a foul has occurred. Anyone may do so.
- g. Causing movement of the cue ball, even accidentally, is a foul. It is not a foul to accidentally move any other balls (including the 8-ball) unless, during his turn at the table, a player moves a ball and it in turn strikes the cue ball. Even dropping the chalk on the cue ball is a foul. Any balls moved accidentally during a shot must be replaced by the opponent after the shot is over and all balls have stopped rolling. If it occurs before the shot, it must be replaced by the opponent before the shot is taken. Exception: If an accidentally moved ball comes in contact with the cue ball, creating a foul, no object ball will be replaced.
- h. If, during the course of a shot, the cue ball does not touch anything.

- i. Use caution when picking up or placing the cue ball in a *ball-in-hand* situation. The cue ball is always alive. If the cue ball, or the hand holding it or moving it, touches another ball it is a cue ball foul and your opponent has *ball-in-hand*. Be especially careful when picking up or placing the cue ball in a tight spot.
- j. The player or his coach (during a coaching timeout) **may** place the cue ball in a *ball-in-hand* situation. The same rule regarding placing the cue ball applies to the coach as applies to the player. If the player, or coach fouls in the process of placing the cue ball, it will be *ball-in-hand* for the opponent. Therefore, it should be the player's choice if he wishes to place the cue ball or allow his coach to do so.

10. There are various ways to lose:

- a. Your opponent pockets his numerical group and legally pockets the 8-ball.
- b. You pocket the 8-ball out of turn or knock it on the floor.
- c. You pocket the 8-ball in the wrong pocket or fail to properly mark the pocket.
- d. You foul the cue ball and then pocket the 8-ball.
- e. When playing the 8-ball, you scratch.

Note: A player attempting to shoot the 8-ball but missing it has fouled, resulting in *ball-in-hand* for his opponent. This is **NOT** loss of game.

- f. A game is forfeited if you alter the course of the 8-ball or the cue ball in a game losing situation.

**11. How to Win** - A player has won the game when all the balls of his numerical group have been pocketed and he has legally pocketed the 8-ball in a properly marked pocket without scratching. To properly mark the pocket, a coaster or some other reasonable object (to avoid confusion, we do not recommend marking the pocket with chalk), must be placed next to the pocket the 8-ball is intended to enter. Both teams may use the same marker. Only one marker should be on the table. If the marker is already at the intended pocket from a previous attempt or game, it is not necessary for the shooter to touch it, pick it up or reposition it.

Note: You cannot play the 8-ball while simultaneously playing the last ball of your category. The 8-ball must be a separate shot.

# APA 9-Ball Game Rules

9-Ball for everyone! Here's your chance to play the same game the pros play and have a great chance at winning.

**General Description** - 9-Ball is played with a cue ball and nine object balls numbered 1 through 9. 9-Ball is a rotation game, meaning the balls are shot in numerical order. The shooter must strike the lowest numbered ball on the table first. The game is over when the 9-ball is legally pocketed. A player retains his turn at the table as long as he strikes the lowest numbered ball first and legally pockets a ball. He need not pocket the lowest numbered ball to continue shooting. He may, for example, shoot the 1-ball into the 4-ball thus pocketing the 4. He will continue shooting and must, once again, strike the 1-ball first. If the shooter shoots the 1-ball into the 9-ball and the 9-ball is pocketed without committing a foul, the game is over.

**1. Lag** - Method used to start a match. Players simultaneously shoot a ball from behind the head string, banking it off the foot rail and back to the head of the table. Striking the side rails or any pocket results in loss of the lag. The closest ball to the head rail wins. It is permissible to strike the head rail. If the lagged balls make contact during the lag, lag over.

**2. Racking** - Nine balls are used and are racked in a diamond shape. The 1-ball is at the front of the rack and on the foot spot. The 9-ball is in the center and the rest of the object balls can be placed in any numerical

order. All balls should be frozen (touching) as tightly as possible. The breaking player may request and receive a rerack.

*Note 1: When using coin-operated tables, save some money by using all the balls in the event of a short game. Example: If the 3 and 9 are made on the break, the balls are reracked (because a 9-on-the-break is a winner) using the 10 and 11 balls. The sequence in the next game is 1,2,4,5,6,7,8,10,11. The 11, in effect, is the "9-ball" (last ball) in this game. Do not say the 10 replaces the 3; it is too confusing. Shoot the balls in numerical order.*

*Note 2: The breaker can demand that the lowest available nine balls be used each game.*

**3. Breaking** - To be a legal break, players must break from behind the head string, the head ball must be struck first and at least four object balls must be driven to the rails or a ball must be pocketed. The cue ball may not be shot into a rail before the rack. Failure to strike the 1-ball first does not result in a foul. If the break does **not** qualify as legal, the balls are reracked and broken by the same player. If the break does **not** qualify as legal and results in a scratch, the balls are reracked and broken by the opposite player. **THE RACK MUST BE STRUCK BEFORE A FOUL CAN OCCUR.** Breaking *safe* or *soft* is not allowed. The League Operator may make judgments and 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. Remember, break as hard as you can with control.

**4. After the Break** - Various circumstances can occur upon completion of the break. They are:

- a. A foul on a legal break will result in *ball-in-hand* anywhere on the table for the breaker's opponent. Pocketed balls, if any, stay down (are not spotted), except the 9-ball.
- b. No balls are pocketed and it is the other player's turn.
- c. The 9-ball is pocketed. 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 with *ball-in-hand* anywhere on the table.
- d. One ball or a number of balls are pocketed. It is still the breaker's turn and he shoots at the lowest numbered ball on the table.
- e. Occasionally it occurs that a player mistakenly shoots the wrong ball. Although it is sportsmanlike for the sitting player to remind the shooting player he is about to foul by shooting the wrong ball, he is not required to do so. Once the shooter has hit the wrong ball, the foul has occurred whether the ball is pocketed or not. If the ball is pocketed, it is permissible, though not recommended, that the sitting player allow the shooting player to continue shooting until he feels inclined to call the foul. The shooting player can escape penalty by quietly realizing his error and

returning to shoot the correct ball and striking it first on a shot prior to his opponent calling the foul. In other words, the sitting player must call the foul before the shooter has shot the correct ball.

*Note: Push-outs are fairly standard in pro events and in the U.S. Amateur (conducted by the APA); however, APA rules for all handicapped competition does not allow push-outs.*

**5. Combination Shots** - Combination shots are legal and extremely common in 9-Ball. Just make sure to hit the lowest numbered ball on the table first.

**6. Balls on the Floor** - Knocking the cue ball off the playing surface is covered under fouls. Object balls that get knocked off the playing surface will be immediately spotted on the foot spot. If the foot spot is taken, the ball will be placed on a line directly behind the foot spot as close to the foot spot as possible. If two balls are knocked on the floor, they are placed in numerical order with the lowest numbered ball closest to the foot spot. Spotted balls will be frozen to one another. Knocking an object ball on the floor is not a foul. It might occur that a player legally pockets a ball while simultaneously knocking some other ball(s) on the floor. In this situation, the ball(s) is spotted and the player continues shooting until he misses.

**7. Pocketed Balls** - Balls must remain in a pocket to be legal. If a ball goes in a pocket but bounces back onto the playing surface, it is not considered pocketed.

Note: It occasionally happens on tables with small pockets that two balls become jammed in a pocket and are leaning over the edge of the slate to some degree. They are off the playing surface and are pocketed. Drop them in and resume playing the game unless the pocketing ends the game.

**8. Spotting Balls** - Other than the circumstances described in "Balls on the Floor," the only ball that will ever be spotted will be the 9-ball when the shooter has pocketed the 9-ball and scratched or otherwise fouled. If the shooter makes the 9-ball on the break and fouls or scratches, the 9-ball (and only the 9-ball) is spotted. If the shooter is shooting at the object ball and plays it into the 9-ball and pockets the 9-ball, but scratches or otherwise fouls in the process, the 9-ball is spotted. The incoming player has *ball-in-hand* and will be shooting at the lowest numbered ball on the table.

Note: If a ball which has been hanging in a pocket for more than a few seconds suddenly falls in, it is to be placed back on the table where it was originally.

**9. Fouls** - If any of the following fouls are committed, the penalty is *ball-in-hand* for the incoming player. Make certain you have *ball-in-hand* before you touch the cue ball by confirming with your opponent. *Ball-in-hand* means you are allowed to place the cue ball anywhere on the table and shoot the lowest numbered ball on the table. Even after having addressed the cue ball, a player may, if not satisfied with the placement, make further adjustments with the hand, cue stick or any other reasonable piece of equipment. A foul may be called only if the player fouls while actually stroking the cue

ball, meaning a double hit of the cue ball (sometimes called double clutching).

The *ball-in-hand* rule penalizes a player for an error. Without this rule, a player could benefit by accidentally or purposely scratching or otherwise fouling.

**ONLY THE PLAYER OR THE COACH MAY OFFICIALLY CALL A FOUL**, although anyone may suggest to the player or the coach that a foul should be called.

**THESE ARE THE ONLY FOULS RESULTING IN BALL-IN-HAND:**

- a. Anytime the cue ball goes into a pocket, on the floor, or otherwise ends up off of the playing surface.
- b. Failure to hit the correct ball first. (The correct ball is always the lowest numbered ball on the table.) The shooter has the advantage in these situations unless his opponent has asked an outside party to watch the hit. Protect yourself. If you think your opponent is attempting a shot that could result in a bad hit, get someone to watch the shot before he starts shooting. Teams involved in repeatedly calling bad hits without outside party verification may be subject to penalty points for disruptive unsportsmanlike behavior.
- c. Failure to hit a rail after contact. A sentence that should answer many questions is: "Any ball (including the cue ball) must go to a rail AFTER LEGAL contact." A pocketed ball counts as a rail.

- d. The object ball is frozen to a rail and the player is contemplating playing a "safety." In order for the "frozen ball" rule to be in effect, the opponent must declare the ball frozen and the player should verify. Once it is agreed the ball is frozen the player must drive the object ball to another rail (of course, it could hit another ball, which in turn hits a rail) or drive the cue ball to a rail after it touches the object ball. If the latter method of safety is chosen the player should be sure to obviously strike the object ball first. If the cue ball strikes the rail first or appears to hit both the rail and ball simultaneously, it is a foul unless either the cue ball or object ball went to some other rail.
- e. It is a foul to jump a cue ball over another ball by purposely miscuing it up in the air. Accidental miscuing is not a foul unless other rules in this section are violated.
- f. Receiving illegal aid (coaching from person(s) other than the coach) during your turn at the table.
- g. Causing movement of the cue ball, even accidentally, is a foul. It is not a foul to accidentally move any other balls unless, during his turn at the table, a player moves a ball and it in turn strikes the cue ball. Even dropping the chalk on the cue ball is a foul. Any balls moved accidentally during a shot must be replaced by the opponent after the shot is over and all balls have stopped rolling. If it occurs before the shot, it

must be replaced by the opponent before the shot is taken.

Exception: If an accidentally moved ball comes in contact with the cue ball, creating a foul, no object ball will be replaced.

- h. If, during the course of a shot, the cue ball does not touch anything.
- i. The player or his coach (during a coaching timeout) may place the cue ball in a *ball-in-hand* situation. The same rule regarding placing the cue ball applies to the coach as applies to the player. If the player, or coach fouls in the process of placing the cue ball, it will be *ball-in-hand* for the opponent. Therefore, it should be the player's choice if he wishes to place the cue ball or allow his coach to do so.
- j. Use caution when picking up or placing the cue ball in a *ball-in-hand* situation. The cue ball is always alive. If the cue ball, or the hand holding it or moving it, touches another ball it is a cue ball foul and your opponent has *ball-in-hand*. Be especially careful when picking up or placing the cue ball in a tight spot.



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