



**U**NITED STATES

**P**ROFESSIONAL POOLPLAYERS

**A**SSOCIATION

The Evolution of Pool™

# Official UPA Rulebook for 9-Ball

**2021 Edition**

**US Professional Poolplayers Association**

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Welcome to the official 9-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 ensure a simple yet highly effective ruling system that is sure to challenge you as a player while evolving your level of play.

Please note that due to issues of television, timed matches, and professional match play some rules may somewhat differ from the actual professional tour. The following rules have been slightly amended by our Touring Pros and are intended for amateur use in pool rooms across the nation. These rules are utilized by the UPA Amateur League of Champions™ without exception across the nation. UPA League Operators are obligated to utilize these rules in conjunction with licensing rights.

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

The United States Professional Poolplayers Association (UPA) is dedicated to the evolution of the entire sport of pocket billiards, so you can enjoy years of game play and continue to grow personally from your experience in the game. The official motto of the UPA brand is The Evolution of Pool™ as we are committed to every aspect of the sport and the vitality of it.

Feel free to contact the UPA if you have any 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

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## 1.0 OBJECT OF THE GAME

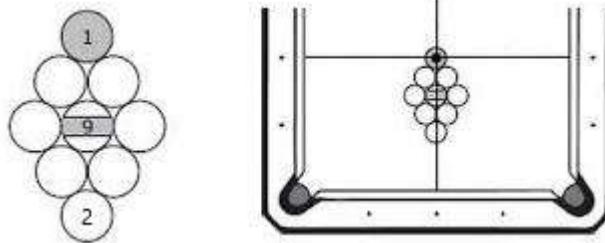
The object of 9-ball is to win by legally pocketing the 9-ball.

The cue ball must strike the lowest numbered ball first for a legal hit to occur. After the lowest ball is struck, either the cue ball or any numbered ball may hit the 9-ball into any pocket for the win. If the shooting player pockets the lowest numbered ball or any other numbered ball after a legal hit, the shooting player continues. If no ball is pocketed, either the cue ball or any numbered ball must touch a rail after the cue ball contacts the lowest numbered ball for the shot to be legal.

**NOTE:** If the 9-ball is pocketed illegally, then it is to be spotted on the foot spot with the incoming player having ball in hand.

## 2.0 LAG FOR BREAK

The player with the lowest Speed (Rating) shall break first with an alternating break format thereafter. In the event that two players with equal Speeds play, a “Lag for Break” shall determine who breaks first with an alternating break format thereafter. Winner of lag is the player whose ball is closer to head of the rail.



## 2.1 How to Rack

The balls are racked in a diamond shape with the 1-ball on the foot spot at the top of the diamond, the 9-ball in the center of the diamond, the 2-ball at the bottom of the diamond, and the rest of the balls randomly dispersed throughout the rack.

**NOTE:** Tables may have flaws that do not allow for acceptable racks directly upon the foot spot. In these cases, players are allowed to rack within a dime’s radius of the direct foot spot to achieve a desired rack. Touching or positioning of balls after the rack has been removed is never permitted (exception magic rack) Player must re-rack if this occurs (see 8.5, Ball Tapping).

**2.2 Rack Your Own** When there is no official available, each breaking player shall be responsible for providing themselves a legal and solid rack.

### **3.0 LEGAL BREAK SHOT**

For the break shot to be legal, the breaker (with the base of the cue ball placed anywhere behind the head string) must either pocket a number ball or drive at least three (3) number balls to one or more rails. If the breaker fails to make the legal break requirement, the balls will be re-racked and the opponent shall have the option of breaking, or requesting the offending player to break again.

**NOTE:** If the cue ball is touched by the cue tip and does not meet the legal break requirement, it is considered an “illegal break.”

A Legal Break with a Foul committed:

If the breaker makes a legal break, however, commits a foul on the legal break the game is to continue with the opponent having ball in hand.

Break fouls include the following:

1. If the 1-ball was not struck first.
2. If the cue ball is pocketed or driven off the table.
3. If any numbered ball leaves the table or comes to rest on top of a rail.

**NOTE:** A foul on a legal break counts toward the three fouls in the “Three Consecutive Fouls” loss of game rule (see 8.2).

### **4.0 9-BALL POCKETED ON THE BREAK**

Legally pocketing the 9-ball on the break wins the game for the breaker.

### **5.0 PUSH OUT**

Only on the shot immediately following the break, the shooting player may elect to call a “Push.” On a “Push Out,” (roll-out) the shooter is required to hit the cue ball, but the cue ball is not required to touch another ball or a rail. The shooting player must declare their intention to push either to his opponent or to the referee, or the shot is considered a normal shot. Any ball pocketed on a “Push” stays down except the 9-ball, which would be spotted on the foot spot immediately following the “Push.” Following a legal “Push” shot, the incoming player has the option to take the shot from the new position(s) or to pass the shot back to the player who Pushed Out. No matter who shoots next, on the shot immediately following the “Push Out,” the normal course of play continues.

### **6.0 CONTINUING PLAY**

On the shot immediately following a legal break and/or a Push Out, the shooting player must contact the lowest numbered ball on the table or it is a foul. The player continues to shoot until they miss, foul, or win. If the player misses or fouls, the other player begins the inning and shoots until missing, committing a foul, or winning. The game ends when the 9-Ball is pocketed on a legal shot or game is forfeited by either player.

## 7.0 BALL IN HAND FOUL PENALTIES

When a player commits a ball in hand foul, they must relinquish their turn at the table. The incoming player may now place the cue ball anywhere on the table to start their inning. If a player commits more than one foul on one shot, only one foul will be called.

### 7.1 Cue Ball Fouls Only

- a) **Touching the cue ball:** Hitting the cue ball and any other ball simultaneously, or previously is a foul. Touching or causing even the slightest movement of the cue ball (other than a normal shot), even accidentally, is a foul. A player may use the ferrule or shaft of the cue to position the 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 or allowing a moving ball to hit a foreign object is a ball in hand foul. If the accidental movement of a ball(s) results in the disturbed ball(s) being struck by any moving balls in play, it results in a ball in hand foul.
- c) **Touching a still object ball:** Any still object ball moved can only be moved back to its original position with the permission of the opponent. The opponent may exercise the option of keeping disturbed ball(s) in new position if they so choose. Only after receiving consent from the opponent, the player who has committed the error may move the disturbed object ball(s) back to original position. If the player who has committed the infraction touches any of the disturbed balls without consent of the opponent, it will result in a ball in hand foul to the opponent.

**NOTE:** If the 9-ball was pocketed by a player’s hand or cue, it is a ball in hand foul to the opponent, and the opponent has the option of placing the 9-ball back to its original position or having it placed on the foot spot. Opponent shall continue with ball in hand.

### 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 the lowest numbered ball in the remaining order, it is a ball in hand foul.

### 7.4 No Rail

If after the cue ball 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. A “Frozen” (touching) object ball to the rail does not meet this requirement by virtue of it not “hitting” a rail.

**NOTE:** Players are encouraged to mutually acknowledge when the object ball is “Frozen” (touching) to the rail.

### **7.5 Balls Off the Table**

Causing any ball to come to rest off the pool table is a foul and any such ball(s) are pocketed. 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 ball in hand. If a player knocks a ball off the table and the ball returns to the playing surface after hitting a person or an object, it is a foul (the ball remains on surface). If no object or person was contacted, then normal rules of play apply once the ball returns to the playing surface.

**NOTE:** If a player removes the 9-ball from the playing surface, it results in a foul and the 9-ball is placed on the foot spot.

### **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 is a ball in hand 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. In order to avoid a double hit, the cue ball must be struck at a minimum of a 45° angle whenever in contact with or riskily close (1/2 inch or closer) to the intended object ball.

**NOTE:** Calling a referee to watch “the hit” is always preferable. The referee shall assume that a foul has been committed if the 45° rule was not utilized by the shooter.

### **7.10 Head String**

The base of the cue ball must be behind 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 a ball in hand foul.



### **7.12 Interference**

While the shooting player is at the table, the non-shooting player (including teammates), cannot disturb, make noises, move around, cause distraction (shark) in any way. All players must conduct themselves in a respectful manner consistent with that of a professional, or it may result in an “Official Warning” by a UPA representative or tournament official followed by the calling of a foul (ball in hand) for interference.

**NOTE:** It is understood that the match is between the two players and teammates are not permitted to instruct unless called upon by the shooting player for a Rules Clarification or Time Out (see 8.6, Coaching Assistance).

### **7.13 Marking the Table**

Marking the table in any way that 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 Playing Out of Turn**

If/when a player shoots out of turn and it is brought to the attention of the offending shooter, the rightful player is to return to the table and continue without any penalties/fouls. It is the responsibility of both players to assume control of the table on their proper inning.

## **8.0 LOSS OF GAME**

### **8.1 Opponent Wins**

The opponent legally pockets the 9-ball.

### **8.2 Three Consecutive Fouls**

If a shooter commits a foul three times in a row without making an intervening legal shot, the result is a loss of game. The three consecutive fouls must occur in the same game. After the 2nd foul has been committed, the opponent must verbally warn the shooter that they have committed their 2nd foul. A 3rd foul will result in a loss of game.

**NOTE:** If the shooter is not warned after the 2nd foul and commits a 3rd, it will not be a loss of game. The opponent must again warn the shooter that the next foul committed will result in a loss of game.

### **8.3 Conceding a Game**

Concession of a game or games in tournament play is never encouraged. The shooting player must finish their inning, or the result shall be a loss of game(s) for the conceding player. Any concession of game, for any reason, is considered a loss for the offending player.

### **8.4 Concession of a Match**

Unscrewing any cues during the last game, putting on a jacket, leaving the room, or undertaking any other actions which would indicate that the match is over, is considered a forfeiture of the match (consult UPA representative or tournament official).

### **8.5 Ball Tapping**

Tapping balls is not permitted. After an “Official Warning” by a UPA representative or tournament official has been granted to the offender, the penalty for ball tapping shall be the loss of the current game. Only tournament officials may tap in balls when warranted.

### **8.6 Coaching Assistance**

During their inning and only once per game, only the shooting player may call a “Time Out” that shall last no more than a two (2) minute period. During this time the player may receive instruction from an available teammate. Otherwise a player who receives advice (anytime) shall grant a ball in hand foul to the opponent. And on the second (2nd) infraction shall grant the current game in favor of the opponent by a forfeit.

**Calling a Time Out:** When the shooting player calls a “Time Out” they are to select an available team member to immediately assist them without conferring with other parties.

### **8.7 Forfeits**

Players are allotted fifteen (15) minutes to begin their match, or the match is considered forfeited.

**NOTE:** Once a match is scheduled to start and a fifteen (15) minute count is desired, the opponent is to notify a tournament official, or UPA representative for an official count.

## **9.0 GENERAL POOL RULES**

### **9.1 Shot Clock**

Shot Clock implementation is at the sole discretion of the UPA, its representatives or tournament officials. When a shot clock is utilized it shall be used for both players competing in the following manner:

Each shooting player is allotted one (1) minute per shot, or a “ball in hand” foul shall be granted to the opponent. The shot clock begins when all balls come to rest. The time keeper (designated by UPA) shall call out “Ten Seconds” once the fifty (50) second mark has been reached, unless the shooter is down on the shot in preparation to shoot. Once one (1) minute has been reached on the shot clock, the shooter must either be stroking or have shot. If the shooter rises (gets off the shot) without execution after the one (1) minute mark has been reached, it shall result in a “ball in hand” foul to the opponent.

## **9.2 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.

## **9.3 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 9-ball, it is not a win. If it is the cue ball, it is not a scratch. Clearing pockets which are full or nearly full of balls is the responsibility of the shooting player.

## **9.4 Hanging Ball**

If any ball hangs in a pocket and drops within 5 seconds after coming to complete rest, the ball is considered to be pocketed. If a hanging ball drops in the pocket after being at rest for more than 5 seconds, the ball is returned to the original position on the edge, and the incoming player may begin. Both players will have the opportunity to argue their case. The referee's decision is final.

## **9.5 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 pocketed balls, it is considered pocketed if the removal of the supporting ball(s) would cause the supported/suspended ball(s) to fall into the pocket. Tournament officials are the sole judges of whether this rule applies to any situation.

## **9.6 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 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.

## **9.7 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, forcing 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 UPA.

## **9.8 Use of Equipment**

All equipment that is generally accepted throughout the industry is permitted. However, using any equipment in a non-customary manner is never allowed and constitutes a foul. It is the responsibility of the shooting player to know what the intended use of each piece of equipment is: the bridge, jump cues, extensions, etc.

**NOTE:** The use of headphones and other devices are not permitted. The use of racks and balls not provided by the venue must be agreed upon by both players.

## **10.0 TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR/REFEREES**

### **10.1 Player Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of each member to be aware of all rules, regulations, and schedules relating to 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.

**NOTE:** Players may always call for rule clarifications during league play. This is not considered a “Time Out.”

### **10.2 Referees**

The League Operator (or representatives) will perform the duties of a referee in the event that referees are busy or not utilized. If the Tournament Director, their assistants, or a referee cannot be found within a reasonable time frame, a spectator may sub as an official referee when agreed upon by both players and in accordance with UPA rules.

### **10.3 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/calling fouls (including on themselves), and insuring adherence to UPA rules of competition. Both players may agree on an audience member (familiar with UPA rules) to stand in and perform any duty of a tournament official.

### **10.4 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 or agreed upon third (3rd) party 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, they are responsible for seeking immediate clarification from league officials or the rulebook before play continues. After play continues, it is unlikely that a problem can be remedied.

**NOTE:** If a tournament official or third (3rd) party was not utilized, “the call” shall be left to the shooter without further discussion.

### **10.5 Scoring**

“Calling your shots” is strictly for the purpose of (scoring) as 9-ball is not a “call pocket” game. Players are encouraged to score their own matches to ensure accuracy, however a third (3rd) party is permitted. The scorer is charged to accurately record what actually took place on the pool table and may clarify with the shooter what the intention was whenever needed. A player always has the right to consult the Scorecard with the scorekeeper. Any disagreements shall be determined by a UPA representative.

**NOTE:** If it is believed a player is purposely calling a pocket, however actually playing a safe, then a safety (S) shall be recorded.

### **10.6 Advice vs. Rules Clarification**

The referee must never give advice nor offer an opinion on points of play. Only when asked for clarification of a rule will the referee then explain that specific rule. Any incorrect statement made 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.

### **10.7 Prompting Official Warnings**

If either player has the opinion that the referee is failing to issue a mandatory “Official Warning,” they may remind the referee that such a warning is necessary.

### **10.8 Calling Fouls**

The referee will call all fouls as soon as they occur and will inform the incoming player that they have ball in hand.

### **10.9 Protesting Fouls**

If a player believes that the referee has failed to call a foul, he must protest to the referee before their opponent takes the next shot. If the player fails to do so, the foul is considered to have not occurred.

### **10.10 Restoring Position**

When it becomes necessary, the referee will restore disturbed balls to their original positions to the best of their ability. If the referee is not sure of original positions, they may solicit information for this purpose. If the balls were disturbed by a player in the match, the opponent has the option of preventing restoration. If the balls were disturbed by someone else, it is mandatory for the referee to restore the balls. In this case, if the outside interference had an effect on the outcome of the shot, the referee may instruct the shooter to replay the shot after restoration. If not, the referee will instruct the shooter to continue play after restoration.

### **10.11 Verification**

The referee may use any means to gather needed information in order to make a decision concerning a disputed play or game situation.

### **10.12 Replay of Game**

A replay of game is only warranted under the following unique circumstance;

- Table Failure; torn cloth, balls stuck in pocket, etc.

### **10.13 Resolving Disputes**

Any disagreement between the two players will be resolved by the League Operator or appointed representatives, or any administrative member of the UPA.

## **11.0 SPECIAL RULINGS**

Any rule or situation not covered in this text shall be decided in an expedient manner by the League Operator, appointed representatives or any administrative member of the UPA in accordance with UPA ideals and guidelines for the purposes of league play to continue. Such expedient rulings shall then be made known to the administration of the UPA Corporate Office and it's Touring Professionals before further instruction or implementation of the matter is finalized.

### **11.1 Bylaws**

These rules are consistent nationwide and are not to be altered in any way, shape, or form. The implementation of any "Bylaws," or any other document, is strictly prohibited by UPA Corporate Office.

## 11.2 Addendum

From time to time there may be an addendum issued by the UPA to the UPA Official Rule Book, and it is each Member's and individual player's responsibility to keep current.