



**U**NITED STATES

**P**ROFESSIONAL POOLPLAYERS

**A**SSOCIATION

The Evolution of Pool™

# Official UPA Rulebook for Amateur 8-Ball

**2019 Edition**

**US Professional Poolplayers Association**

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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 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 differ somewhat 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**

8-Ball is played with a cue 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 must pocket the striped balls. The player who pockets their entire group and then legally pockets the 8-ball wins the game.

## **2.0 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 “Lag for Break” shall determine who breaks first with an alternating break format taking place thereafter. Winner of lag is the player whose ball is closer to head of the rail.

### **2.1 How to Rack**

To begin the game of 8-ball, the 15 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 center of the foot spot. The balls in the rack are pressed together tightly to acquire a solid rack, and remain in contact after the rack is removed. Within the rack, the 8-ball is centered while the two corners are occupied by the two opposite groups (one solid ball and one striped ball). The game begins with the cue ball in hand placed anywhere behind the head string. The head string is the quarter of the billiard table farthest from the rack, or an area also commonly referred to as the “kitchen.”

**NOTE:** The UPA acknowledges that tables may have flaws that do not allow for acceptable racks directly upon the foot spot. In these cases, players are permitted to rack within a dime’s radius of the direct foot spot to achieve a solid rack.

**NOTE:** Touching or positioning of balls after the rack has been removed is never permitted. Player must re-rack if this occurs (see 9.5, Ball Tapping).

### **2.2 Rack Your Own**

When there is no official available, each breaking player shall be responsible for providing himself/herself a legal and solid rack.

## **3.0 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 four (4) number balls to one or more rails. No ball is called, and the cue ball is not required to hit any particular object ball first. 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.”

Game play after a Legal Break:

When any numbered ball is pocketed on a legal break the breaking player is to continue their inning (see 5.0, Open Table). If the breaker makes a legal break, however, commits a foul on the legal break by pocketing the cue-ball and/or sending any balls off the table, the game is to continue with the opponent having ball in hand anywhere behind the head-string, however must shoot an object ball beyond the head-string (outside of the “kitchen”) or it is a ball in handfoul.

## **4.0 8-BALL POCKETED ON THE BREAK**

### **4.1 Game Win**

Legally pocketing the 8-ball on the break (no foul committed) wins the game for the breaker.

### **4.2 Game Loss**

The following situations result in the loss of the game for the breaker:

- 8-ball is pocketed on the break and a foul simultaneously occurs
- 8-ball comes to rest off of the pool table

## **5.0 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 may be utilized in a combination as long as it is not struck first; this action would result in a foul.

## **6.0 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 a 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 of a called shot will remain pocketed, regardless of the group (stripe or solid).
- c) The break shot is never considered a “called shot.”
- d) A ball must hit a rail, or go into a pocket after contact with the cue ball (see 7.4, No Rail).

## 7.0 BALL IN HAND FOUL PENALTIES

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

### 7.1 Cue Ball Fouls Only

- 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/her cue to line up 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. However 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 opponent, it will result in a loss of turn with ball in hand to the opponent.

**NOTE:** If the 8-ball was pocketed the result shall be a loss of game (see 4.2, Game Loss).

### 7.2 Scratch

Pocketing the cue ball or driving it off the table is a ball in hand foul. If a scratch occurs while shooting the 8-ball, but the 8-ball was not pocketed or removed from the table, the game continues with ball in hand to the opponent (scratching on the 8-ball is not a loss of game as long as the 8-ball is still in play).

### 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. I.E. player’s established group are Solid balls, however they shoot and the cue ball makes a contact with a stripped ball first.

**NOTE:** If the shooter has no remaining balls from his/her group in play, the 8-ball effectively becomes the shooter’s object ball, respectively.

### 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 of 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 cue 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 8-ball from the pool table, it results in a loss of game (see 4.2, Game Loss).

### **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 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**

Touching 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, as well as their teammates, cannot disturb, make noises, move around, cause distraction (sharking) in any way. All players



must conduct themselves in a respectful manner or a 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:** During amateur league play 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 9.6, 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 his/her proper inning.

## **8.0 SAFETY PLAY**

For strategic reasons, a player may choose to pocket an object ball and 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, he/she 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.

## **9.0 LOSS OF GAME**

### **9.1 Opponent Wins**

The opponent legally pockets the 8-ball.

### **9.2 8-Ball Foul**

An 8-ball foul occurs when the 8-ball comes to rest off of the pool table, when the 8-ball is pocketed in the wrong pocket or out of sequence, or when the 8-ball is pocketed while a foul occurred (i.e., shooting player pockets the 8-ball and simultaneously scratches). The game continues if the 8-ball has not been pocketed.

### **9.3 Conceding a Game**

Concession of a game or games in tournament play is never encouraged. The shooting player must finish his/her 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.

#### **9.4 Concession of a 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 (consult UPA representative or tournament official).

#### **9.5 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.

#### **9.6 Coaching Assistance**

During their inning and only once per game, only the shooting player is allotted 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 shall grant a ball in hand foul to the opponent. And on the second (2<sup>nd</sup>) infraction shall grant the current game in favor of the opponent by a forfeit.

**Calling a Time Out:** When calling a “Time Out,” the player is to select an available team member to immediately assist them without conferring with other parties.

### **10.0 STALEMATE**

If in 3 consecutive innings by each player, the players 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.

### **11.0 GENERAL POOL RULES**

#### **11.1 Wrong Balls Pocketed**

When it is discovered that the shooting player has been shooting the opponent’s designated ball(s) as if it were their own, the shooter shall relinquish the table with a ball in hand foul to the opponent (see 7.3, Bad Hit).

#### **11.2 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.

### **11.3 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 and in the following manner:

Each shooting player is allotted one (1) minute for each shot, or a “ball in hand” foul shall be granted to the opponent. The shot clock is to be started once 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.

### **11.4 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.

### **11.5 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 scratch. Clearing pockets that are full or nearly full of balls is the responsibility of the shooting player.

### **11.6 Hanging Ball**

If any ball hangs in a pocket and drops in 5 seconds or less after coming to complete rest by the hole, 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 his/her inning. Both players will have the opportunity to argue their case. The referee’s decision is final.

### **11.7 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.

### **11.8 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.

### **11.9 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 UPA.

### **11.10 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.

## **12.0 TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR/REFEREES**

### **12.1 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.

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

## **12.2 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 cannot be found within a reasonable time frame, a spectator may sub as an official referee when agreed upon by both players.

## **12.3 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.

## **12.4 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 (3<sup>rd</sup>) party to watch the hit before the opponent is shooting. 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/she is 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 (3<sup>rd</sup>) party was not utilized, “the call” shall be left to the shooter without further discussion.

## **12.5 Scoring**

Players are encouraged to score their own matches to ensure accuracy, however a third (3<sup>rd</sup>) party may be permitted by the League Operator. 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. I.E. If it is believed a player is purposely calling a pocket, however actually plays a safe, then a safety (S) shall be recorded. Likewise if a player calls a “safety” however fouls, then a foul (F) is recorded. A player always has the right to consult the Scorecard with the scorekeeper. Any disagreements shall be determined by the League Operator or an official UPA representative.

## **12.6 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 specific rule to the best of his/her ability. 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.

### **12.7 Prompting Warnings**

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

### **12.8 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 (see 12.3, Playing Without a Referee).

### **12.9 Protesting Fouls**

If a player believes that the referee has failed to call a foul, he/she 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 to have not occurred.

### **12.10 Restoring Position**

When it becomes necessary, the referee will restore disturbed balls to their original positions to the best of his/her ability. If the referee is not sure of original positions, he/she may solicit information for this purpose. 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, 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.

### **12.11 Verification**

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

### **12.12 Replay of Game**

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

- A Stalemate has occurred (see 10.0, Stalemate)
- Table Failure; torn cloth, balls stuck in pocket, etc.

### **12.13 Resolving Disputes**

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

## **13.0 SPECIAL RULINGS**

Any rule or situation not covered in this text shall be decided in an expedient manner by the League Operator, his/her appointed representative 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 its' Touring Professionals before further instruction or implementation of the matter is finalized.

## **13.1 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.

## **13.2 Addendums**

From time to time there may be addendums issued by the UPA to the Official UPA Rulebook, and it is each individual player's responsibility to keep current.