

Basic Tips for Playing Consistent Billiards

Too often we have the tendency to over-analyze our shortcomings at the pool table, and we overlook the simple, basic helpful hints that can help us play the game on a more consistent basis, and to avoid playing the game out of control.

Here are some critical hints, as simple as they are, which still bear repeating

1. Decide on how the shot should be made, and stick to your decision. - Shots are often missed because an alternative method is still in the mind, and this can interrupt or cloud your concentration on the shot ahead.
2. Fix your eyes (most likely your dominant eye) on the point of the object ball, and address only that spot. - Some players have the habit of moving the cue in some other line, and then shifting at the time they deliver the stroke. With this habit, you only increase your chances of failure, because you are allowing too many variables to come into play. Your cue should only move forward and back in a straight line. Don't stroke any shot harder than is really necessary to produce the desired result, hitting the object ball where you intend in order to pocket it, and to bring the cue ball and other object balls into position for your next shot. General hard stroking is sometimes followed by good position, but it is very often luck. Remember that it is much more difficult to strike the cue ball accurately when you use a hard stroke.
3. Always chalk the cue before attempting any shot. - Since the cue's leather tip is curved, and the surface of the cue ball is curved, it is only logical that you use some kind of abrasive dust (like chalk) to create a little more friction to help avoid miscues. It also helps tremendously to keep your cue tip flush with the ferrule with the ferrule along the sides, and to keep a tip with a arc or curvature of a nickel, rounded to give more consistent play and better control.
4. Keep your bridge hand perfectly rigid and hold the cue lightly in the fingers of your power hand (gripping hand), slightly back of the balance point of the cue. - Close the forefinger loop around the cue (on the bridge hand) so that it rubs slightly, so that the cue ball may be struck without the danger of the cue slipping and causing a miscue or a miss. If you can reduce as many variables as possible in your bridge, as well as other facets of the mechanical fundamentals, you will increase your own enjoyment through better and more consistent play.
5. Let the weight of the cue do the work, and don't forget to "follow-through" on your stroke. - A forced, rigid poke at the ball only adds to the number of variables, and can frustrate you before you can see your successes.
6. Don't swing the cue sideways in imparting "english". - Keep the line of the cue's movement parallel to the line of aim, and please remember that a raised or elevated cue butt, especially in strokes which require english, will impart a masse effect which will curve the path of the cue ball, and likely cause you to miss your shot. Keep the cue stick level, and you'll increase your accuracy.
7. Practice the strokes of which you are uncertain. - Just set the balls in place on the table, and play each shot over and over again, until you have mastered the shot itself, and the variations of that shot. You should also strive to control the cue ball and object ball positions as well during this practice, after you have made the desired shot.

8. Advanced masse shots, complicated jump shots, and challenging draw shots should be learned from a competent instructor. It is often too easy to try to do it yourself, and end up only rehearsing your mistakes. Practice does not make perfect, but rather perfect practice makes perfect. Allow yourself plenty of time for practice drills, and techniques of each part of the game, including the all-important break shots. All deserve your undivided attention.
9. Take the pool games seriously, study them all carefully, and find out all you can about each game, its mathematics, its equipment, and its rules. Then its value as a recreation will be greater to you, and your appreciation of the skills required for consistent success will grow. A careless player not only does not improve, but also gets very little enjoyment out of it, except as a means of wasting time.

Yes, there is an element of chance in pool just as there is in all affairs of life, but if you are a player who depends on luck you will seldom improve your game. Rather you should try hard to control as many of the variables of each shot as possible.

Remember that chance (luck) is the common enemy of all champions, and is the alibi for a loser's deficiency of execution. These are but a few helpful hints which you should keep in mind as you practice, and for your tournament events at any level. They should be added to the fundamentals you already learned from the basic books about pool playing. While this list may never be complete as your game grows and becomes more technical, it is a very good foundation for the growth of your game, and will help you improve and appreciate the game more each time. Now your own pleasant and positive attitude will help you approach the game situations better, and will help make it easier to share the joys of this great game. Cue it up, and share this great game with your friends!