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A Beginner's Guide to Billiards

By Reno Charlton

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Billiards is a universally popular indoor game that is enjoyed by people of all ages and both sexes. Traditionally, billiards is played in bars, clubs, pubs, and specials pool or billiard halls. However, more and more people are realizing the benefits and entertainment value of having a billiards table and games room within their very own home. This makes a great addition to any home, adding a touch of relaxation and atmosphere where any member of the family can escape the trials of everyday life for a short while. And with so many different billiards games to play, you can enjoy this entertainment year in and year out.

There are a number of different billiards games to choose from, but before you play these you need the necessary equipment. Apart from getting a good quality pool table that you can enjoy for many years to come, you will need the billiards balls and a good pool cue. You need to be able to use the correct movements and hone your skills to master billiards, so it may take a lot of practise before you become adept at this game - however, you can have great fun with billiards even when learning to play and practising the shots.

A Brief History

Billiards is a hugely popular indoor game today, with countless fans that either go out to establishments to play these games or those that have their own billiards tables and pool rooms within the home. The game actually became popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in England. Gaming establishments known as pool rooms began to incorporate one or two of these billiards tables but they became so popular that soon they became the main feature of these pool rooms, and they became known as pool tables.

Pocket Billiards

Pocket billiards is played on a pool table with holes known as 'pockets' in which to shoot the billiards balls. There is a pocket on each corner of the table and then one on each side, making six pockets in all. In all pockets billiards games, the object of the game is to shoot the balls into the pockets, although

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how and where you shoot the balls can vary from game to game. Below is a rundown of some of the most popular pocket billiards games:

8 BALL

This is one of the most basic and popular types of pool games, and is played by old and young, male and female, all across the world. With 8 ball fifteen balls are used, each of which is numbered. Player one is assigned balls one through to seven and player two is assigned balls nine through to fifteen. The object of the game is for each player to try and pot all of his assigned balls. The first player to pot all of his balls can then try and pot the 8-ball. If he manages to do this without also potting the cue ball (the ball with which he is potting the other balls) then he wins the game.

9 BALL

This is another very simple form of billiards, and is an excellent starter game and ideal for those learning or practising their billiards skills. With this game there are just nine numbered billiards balls along with the cue ball. Each player has to shoot at the lowest ball in order to try and pot it, and as each lowest number gets potted the players move to the next one until the final ball, number nine, has been pocketed.

SNOOKER

This is a hugely popular game in England, where pool first originated. This particular variation of the game originated in the British Forces. Snooker is played with 21 coloured balls and one cue ball. The majority of the 21 balls used in snooker are red - fifteen in all. The remaining six balls are each of a different colour, including one pink ball, one brown ball, one blue ball, one green ball, one yellow ball and one black ball. Each ball represents a different score when it is pocketed, with the lowest score going to the reds at one point each. The other ball scores range from 2-7, the highest being the black ball. Players must pocket a red ball before going on to pocket the coloured balls, and all coloured balls must be pocketed in order of value, so the black ball is always potted last.

STRAIGHT POOL

In this variation of the game, you use fifteen numbered balls and a cue ball. In this game the balls can be potted in any order. However, there is a twist...the player must specify which ball he is going to pot and which pocket he is going to shoot the ball into. Once fourteen of the balls have been pocketed and only one is left, the fourteen potted balls are placed back on the table. The player then has to pot the final ball whilst breaking apart the racked up fourteen balls.

ONE POCKET

Like straight pool, this game is played with fifteen numbered balls and a cue ball. With this game one of the player's must select a corner pocket from the foot of the table. The second player is given the remaining pocket from the foot of the table, and both players have to aim to shoot into their own pockets. Points are awarded for each ball that you pot into your own pocket, and points are deducted for potting a ball into your opponent's pocket or for potting the cue ball.

ENGLISH BILLIARDS

This game is played with just three balls, and scored can be notched up in three different ways. The

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first way is by deflecting your ball off another ball and into a pocket. The second way is by hitting the ball and striking the other two balls. And the third way is by hitting the ball and knocking one of the other balls into a pocket.

General rules of the game

Most pocket billiards games involve a certain set of rules, although these should be checked against the regulations of each individual game. Some of the generalised rules include the following:

Racking balls: This must be done using a triangle, with the apex ball at the foot spot. All other balls should be racked behind the apex and should be tightly packed so that they are within the triangle and touching one another in a perfect triangle formation.

Striking the ball: The cue ball should be struck using the tip of the cue, otherwise the shot can be classed as a foul.

Pocketing the ball: If you do not pocket the ball then you are not allowed another shot and the next shot goes to your opponent until he also fails to pocket a ball, at which point it is your turn again.

Pocketed balls: A pocketed ball is that which is shot from the table bed into a hole (pocket) on the table and remains there. If it rebounds back on to the table it cannot be classed as a pocketed ball.

Ball positioning: The center (base) of the ball is what determines its final position.

Foot placement: In order to shoot a ball without fouling, the player must have one or both feet in contact with the floor. The footwear must also be taken into consideration and must be standard in size, shape and height.

Moving balls: A player cannot shoot a ball that is in motion without it being classed as a foul. This includes the cue ball and the object ball. A stroke cannot be counted until all balls have stopped moving.

Cue ball: If the player pots the cue ball, this is counted as a foul. Also, if the cue ball hits a ball that has already been pocketed, this is also classed as a foul.

Contact with balls: Any contact with object balls with anything other than the cue ball is a foul. Also, any contact with the cue ball with anything other than the cue tip is classed as a foul. This can include contact through hands, clothes, elbow or any other object or body part.

Jumping the ball: If a player intentionally strikes the cue ball below the center and causes it to jump in order to clear another ball, this is classed as a foul. Striking upwards and causing the cue ball to jump from the table bed is also considered a foul in most games.

Reno Charlton is an experienced freelance copywriter and an award-winning children's author from the United Kingdom. You can read more of her informative articles on pool tables and billiard accessories at <http://www.pool-and-billiards.com>.

Billiards

By Jennifer Brown

Billiards is an age-old game and to some, a serious sport. While your idea of fun might involve a casual game of snooker or eight ball, you should also possess a general knowledge of the grand old game of billiards.

The rules of billiards are quite simple, and not too unlike the barroom sport you're more inclined to play.

* In billiards, all of the balls within the racking triangle must be touching. If you take the break shot, strike the cue ball with your cue stick to initiate play of the game. Anything other than a direct strike of the cue ball can result in your disqualification.

* In regulation billiards, it is essential to call every shot. If you are playing under these rules, you must call the shot out loud before the stroke of the cue stick, indicating the ball you are shooting for and the pocket or combination you are attempting to hit. If you do not pocket your shot, your turn comes to an end. Any extra balls that are pocketed however, are credited to you.

* A billiards ball is only considered pocketed when it falls into the pocket and stays there. This includes balls that may fall through the pocket onto the floor. If the billiards ball bounces out of the pocket and back onto the table, it is not considered pocketed and the ball is still in play.

* Each of your shots must be made with both feet set firmly on the ground. Any billiards shot that you make with one foot raised off the ground, even slightly, is cause for disqualification.

* As the shooter, you can also be disqualified from the billiards game if you make a shot while one or more balls are still in motion. Billiards players must wait for all of the balls to come to a complete stop before taking the next shot.

* At any time, if the cue ball is pocketed on a shot, that player's turn is over.

* If a billiards ball jumps off of the playing surface as a result of a shot, that shot is considered foul. The ball can jump, but not leave the playing surface (rail or floor) without penalty. If your ball lands on the floor or rail, it is considered foul and must be replaced after all other billiards balls from the shot have stopped moving.

You never know when a new opponent might challenge you to a game of billiards. If you know the rules you'll be ready to join in the fun. Besides, having an understanding of proper billiards might just help you to become a better pool or snooker player.

Jennifer Brown contributes to several web sites, such as

and



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