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**Play Pool Better: Top Ten Ways to Improve your Billiards Game**

**By Reno Charlton**

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Billiards is an old and much loved game, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. This is a game that people of all ages play; even the younger kids can play now on special child-size tables that are widely available. It is also a game that, although once more popular with men, is now keenly played by both sexes. You can play pool in all sorts of environments, from restaurants and bars to halls and homes. It is also a game that can be as relaxing or competitive as you want to make it. Some people like to enjoy a friendly game over a drink after work, others like to unwind with a few games on their home pool table, and some like to join leagues and clubs and play to win.

1. Understand billiards in general

Whether you are young or old, male or female, a relaxed player or a competitive player, the chances are you want to play as well as you can. Being able to play well is all part of the fun of playing billiards, so it is important to learn the rules and strategies of the games you are interested in, and then try and improve your game on a continual basis. Improving your billiards game is particularly important if you want to play competitively; however, it is also important even if you enjoy friendly games - after all, it's not much of a challenge if you can't put up much of a fight against your opponent...plus, practicing the game is far too much fun to miss out on.

2. Practice the game

This is one of the key aspects of improving your billiards game - the importance of practice can't be stressed enough, and many pros will tell you that getting in practice is the singularly most important part of becoming adept at billiards. Some people practice for hours each day - which, of course, is not practical for everyone. However, getting in some regular practice at your local pool hall, bar, or even in the home, can be a big help.

Having easy access is the best way to enjoy practicing this game. If you have to go to the pool hall or bar, you don't always have the energy and motivation, particularly if you have been at work all day. This could mean losing out on a lot of valuable practice. However, setting up your own billiards table at

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home means that you can practice at any time in the comfort of your own home. Setting up a pool table/billiards room is relatively simple and very affordable these days, and once you have your room set up you won't have to pay for games at the bars, halls or clubs - and you can enjoy a fantastic area in which to entertain, relax - and, of course, practice.

### 3. Don't forget the cue

Your cue is a pivotal part of your billiards game - after all, you won't get far without it! You should ensure that you buy a cue that is of good quality. However, strange as it might sound, you also need to find a cue that you can relate to. Remember when Harry Potter went to get his first wand in *The Philosopher's Stone*, and he just knew when he had the right wand? Well, this is the sort of feeling you should aim for when you buy your pool cue. Hold the cue, get a feel for it, and make sure that you are

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comfortable with every aspect of the cue. Many professionals state that using the same cue for every practice and real game is a big part of their success, and if you are going to be playing with the same cue you have to make sure that it is one you are perfectly happy with.

### 4. Join a league or club

You could find that joining a pool league or billiards club or team can help to improve your game. This is not only because you will be able to get in some regular practice, but also because you will have a network of support. You can pick up tips and advice from other members of your team or club, and these can really help you to improve your game. Plus taking part in friendly competitions can help to give you that competitive streak, which in itself can help you to develop and improve your game through pure motivation.

### 5. Start simple

If you are something of a novice at pool then the trick of improving your game is to start simple and work your way up. There is no point trying to jump straight in to the most complex games. A game like 8 ball or better still 9 ball can help you to practice shooting and can help to condition your body in order to improve your game. Positioning and action is everything when playing billiards, and these simple, basic games will help you to improve both through practice.

### 6. Observe, observe, observe

We all need a mentor if we want to do something really well, and billiards is no exception to this rule. You can pick up some really useful tips simply by watching the pros and the very experienced. Whether it's the latest world champion playing on television or whether it's your best mate who's known as a real whiz with the cue, you should pay careful attention when the experts are in play. Try and study their positioning, their actions, trick shots, and the way they play.

### 7. Use training balls

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You can now get billiards training balls, and these can prove invaluable to someone just learning how to play or wishing to improve their game. These balls have a clear target to aim for, so when you are trying to pot the ball you will know exactly where to aim. Using these training balls can help to condition your mind when you are playing, and pretty soon you will be able to hit the mark without the specially marked balls, and you can enjoy potting your object ball every time.

### 8. Use online tools

There are plenty of online tools available to help you improve your billiards game, such as virtual pool. Although these games can't help with the improvement of your physical stroke, they can give you a good idea of game rules and strategies, which are things that you must familiarise yourself with in order to start improving your game - if you don't know how to play properly you can't learn how to play better.

### 9. General tips

As well as the above quite specific tips on improving your pool game, there are also some general tips that you should bear in mind when you are actually in the process of playing or practicing billiards.

Hopefully, these tips will help you to develop and improve your game so that you can play to the best of your ability. These general tips include:

- Cue Shot: Make sure that your stroke is smooth and consistent. You should place your other hand on the table, making it as stable as you can, and then allow the cue to slide through this hand as smoothly as possible - it is a good idea simply to practice the stroke before you start worrying about practicing with the billiards balls.
- Keep the cue ball in sight: When you are aiming, you should be looking at the cue ball and not the object ball. Aim to strike it just below the centre, and stay focussed on the cue ball as you shoot.
- Arm positioning: When you are playing, you should keep the arm you are shooting with close to your body, and your elbow should be bent at a ninety-degree angle. Let your shoulder do the work as you shoot - this is where the action and movement should stem from. Do not be tempted to use excessive force, as this will simply spoil your shot - simply keep it smooth and controlled.

### 10. Enjoy it!

One thing to keep in mind when trying to improve your pool game is - it is a game! Don't let yourself get stressed or frustrated; simply enjoy it and enjoy practicing it. Billiards is a great way to relax and unwind, and shouldn't be something that you get stressed about. As with many things in life, practice makes perfect. You won't become a billiard pro overnight - it can take a while to become adept at the control, concentration, and movement required to shoot pool successfully. But you can have great fun whilst you are getting there.

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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