



# THE RULES OF SNOOKER

## THE GAME

### Description

Snooker may be played by two or more players, either independently or as sides. The game can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Each player uses the same White cue-ball and there are twenty- one object balls - fifteen Reds each valued 1, and six colours: Yellow valued 2, Green 3, Brown 4, Blue 5, Pink 6 and Black 7.
- (b) Scoring strokes in a player's turn are made by potting Reds and colours alternately until all the Reds are off the table and then the colours in the ascending order of their value.
- (c) Points awarded for scoring strokes are added to the score of the striker.
- (d) Penalty points from fouls are added to the opponent's score.
- (e) A tactic employed at any time during a frame is to leave the cue- ball behind a ball not on such that it is snookered for the next player. If a player or side is more points behind than are available from the balls left on the table, then the laying of snookers in the hope of gaining points from fouls becomes most important.
- (f) The winner of a frame is the player or side
  - (i) making the highest score,
  - (ii) to whom the frame is conceded, or
  - (iii) to whom it is awarded under Section 3 Rule 14(c) or Section 4 Rule 2.
- (g) The winner of a game is the player or side
  - (i) winning most, or the required number of frames
  - (ii) making the greatest total where aggregate points are relevant, or
  - (iii) to whom the game is awarded under Section 4 Rule 2.
- (h) The winner of a match is the player or side winning most games or, aggregate points are relevant, with the greatest total.

### Position of Balls

- (a) At the start of each frame the cue-ball is in-hand and the object balls are positioned on the table as follows:
  - (i) the Reds in the form of a tightly-packed equilateral triangle, with the Red at the apex standing on the centre line of the table, above the Pyramid Spot such that it will be as close to the Pink as possible without touching it, and the base of the triangle nearest to, and parallel with, the top cushion.



- (ii) Yellow on the right-hand corner of the "D"
  - (iii) Green on the left-hand corner of the "D"
  - (iv) Brown on the Middle of the Baulk-line,
  - (v) Blue on the Centre Spot,
  - (vi) Pink on the Pyramid Spot, and
  - (vii) Black on the Spot.
- (b) After a frame has started, a ball in play may only be cleaned by the referee upon reasonable request by the striker and
- (i) the position of the ball, if not spotted, shall be marked by a suitable device prior to the ball being lifted for cleaning,
  - (ii) the device used to mark the position of a ball being cleaned shall be regarded as and acquire the value of the ball until such time as the ball has been cleaned and replaced. If any player other than the striker should touch or disturb the device, he shall be penalised as if he were the striker, without affecting the order of play. The referee shall return the device or ball being cleaned to its position, if necessary, to his satisfaction, even if it was picked up.

### **Mode of Play**

The players shall determine the order of play by lot or in any mutually agreed manner.

- (a) The order of play thus determined must remain unaltered throughout the frame, except a player may be asked by the next player to play again after any foul.
- (b) The player or side to strike first must alternate for each frame during a game.
- (c) The first player plays from in-hand, the frame commencing when the cue-ball has been placed on the table and contacted by the tip of the cue, either
  - (i) as a stroke is made, or
  - (ii) while addressing the cue-ball.
- (d) For a stroke to be fair, none of the infringements described below in Rule 12, Penalties, must occur.
- (e) For the first stroke of each turn, until all Reds are off the table, Red or a free ball nominated as a Red is the ball on, and the value of each Red and any free ball nominated as a Red, potted in the same stroke, is scored.
- (f) (i) If a Red, or a free ball nominated as a Red, is potted, the same player plays the next stroke and the next ball on is a colour of the striker's choice which, if potted, is scored and the colour is then spotted.
  - (ii) The break is continued by potting Reds and colours alternately until all the Reds are off the table and, where applicable, a colour has been played at following the potting of the last Red.



(iii) The colours then become on in the ascending order of their value as per Section 3 Rule 1(a) and when next potted remain off the table, except as provided for in Rule 4 below, and the striker plays the next stroke at the next colour on.

(g) Reds are not replaced on the table once potted or forced off the table regardless of the fact that a player may thus benefit from a foul. Exceptions to this concept are provided for in Section 3 Rules 2(b)(ii), 9, 14(f), 14(h) and 15.

(h) If the striker fails to score or commits a foul, his turn ends and the next player plays from where the cue-ball comes to rest, or from in-hand if the cue-ball is off the table.

### **End of Frame, Game or Match**

(a) When only the Black is left, the first score or foul ends the frame excepting only if the following conditions both apply:

- (i) the scores are then equal, and
- (ii) aggregate scores are not relevant.

(b) When both conditions in (a) above apply

- (i) the Black is spotted,
- (ii) the players draw lots for choice of playing
- (iii) the next player plays from in-hand, and
- (iv) the next score or foul ends the frame.

(c) When aggregate scores determine the winner of a game or match, and the aggregate scores are equal at the end of the last frame, the players in that frame shall follow the procedure for a re-spotted Black set out in (b) above.

### **Playing from In-hand**

To play from in-hand, the cue-ball must be struck from a position on or within the lines of the "D", but it may be played in any direction.

(a) The referee will state, if asked, whether the cue-ball is properly placed (that is, not outside the lines of the "D").

(b) If the tip of the cue should touch the cue-ball while positioning it, and the referee is satisfied that the striker was not attempting to play a stroke, then the cue-ball is not in play.

### **Hitting Two Balls Simultaneously**

Two balls, other than two Reds or a free ball and a ball on, must not be struck simultaneously by the first impact of the cue-ball.

### **Spotting Colours**

Any colour potted or forced off the table shall be spotted before the next stroke is made, until finally potted under Section 3 Rule 3(f).

(a) A player shall not be held responsible for any mistake by the



referee in failing to spot correctly any ball.

(b) If a colour is spotted in error after being potted in ascending order as per Section 3 Rule 3(f)(iii), it shall be removed from the table without penalty when the error is discovered and play shall continue.

(c) If a stroke is made with a ball or balls not correctly spotted, they will be considered to be correctly spotted for subsequent strokes. Any colour incorrectly missing from the table will be spotted:

(i) without penalty when discovered if missing due to previous oversight,

(ii) subject to penalty if the striker/player before the referee was able to effect the spotting.

(d) If a colour has to be spotted and its own spot is occupied, it shall be placed on the highest value spot available.

(e) If there is more than one colour to be spotted and their own spots are occupied, the highest value ball shall take precedence in order of spotting.

(f) If all spots are occupied, the colour shall be placed as near its own spot as possible, between that spot and the nearest part of the top cushion.

(g) In the case of Pink and Black, if all spots are occupied and there is no available space between the relevant spot and the nearest part of the top cushion, the colour shall be placed as near to its own spot as possible on the centre line of the table below the spot.

(h) In all cases, the colour when spotted must not be touching another ball.

(i) A colour, to be properly spotted, must be placed by hand on the spot designated in these Rules.

### **Touching Ball**

(a) If the cue-ball comes to rest touching another ball or balls that are, or could be, on, the referee shall state TOUCHING BALL and indicate which ball or balls on the cue-ball is touching.

(b) When a touching ball has been called, the striker must play the cue-ball away from that ball without moving it or it is a push stroke.

(c) Providing the striker does not cause the object ball to move, there shall be no penalty if:

(i) the ball is on,

(ii) the ball could be on and the striker declares he is on it, or

(iii) the ball could be on and the striker declares, and first hits, another ball that could be on.

(d) If the cue-ball comes to rest touching or nearly touching a ball that is not on, the referee, if asked whether it is touching, will answer YES or NO. The striker must play away without disturbing it as above but must first hit a ball that is on.



- (e) When the cue-ball is touching both a ball on and a ball not on, the referee shall only indicate the ball on as touching. If the striker should ask the referee whether the cue-ball is also touching the ball not on, he is entitled to be told.
- (f) If the referee is satisfied that any movement of a touching ball at the moment of striking was not caused by the striker, he will not call a foul.
- (g) If a stationary object ball, not touching the cue-ball when examined by the referee, is later seen to be in contact with the cue- ball before a stroke has been made, the balls shall be repositioned by the referee to his satisfaction.

### **Ball on Edge of Pocket**

- (a) If a ball falls into a pocket without being hit by another ball, and being no part of any stroke in progress, it shall be replaced and any points scored shall count.
- (b) If it would have been hit by any ball involved in a stroke:
  - (i) with no infringement of these Rules, all balls will be replaced and the same stroke played again, or a different stroke may be played at his discretion, by the same striker.
  - (ii) if a foul is committed, the striker incurs the penalty prescribed, all balls will be replaced and the next player has the usual options after a foul.
- (c) If a ball balances momentarily on the edge of a pocket and then falls in, it shall count as in the pocket and not be replaced.

### **Snookered After a Foul**

After a foul, if the cue-ball is snookered, the referee shall state FREE BALL (see Section 2, Rule 16).

- (a) If the player next in turn elects to play the next stroke,
  - (i) he may nominate any ball as the ball on, and
  - (ii) any nominated ball shall be regarded as, and acquire the value of, the ball on except that, if potted, is shall then be spotted.
- (b) It is a foul if the cue-ball should
  - (i) fail to hit the nominated ball first, or first simultaneously with the ball on, or
  - (ii) be snookered on all Reds, or the ball on, by the free ball thus nominated, except when the Pink and Black are the only object balls remaining on the table.
- (c) If the free ball is potted, it is spotted and the value of the ball on is scored.
- (d) If a ball on is potted, after the cue-ball struck the nominated ball first, or simultaneously with a ball on, the ball on is scored and remains off the table.



(e) If both the nominated ball and a ball on are potted, only the ball on is scored unless it was a Red, when each ball potted is scored. The free ball is then spotted and the ball on remains off the table.

(f) If the offender is asked to play again, the free ball call becomes void.

### **Fouls**

If a foul is committed, the referee shall immediately state FOUL.

(a) If the striker has not made a stroke, his turn ends immediately and the referee shall announce the penalty.

(b) If a stroke has been made, the referee will wait until completion of the stroke before announcing the penalty.

(c) If a foul is neither awarded by the referee, nor successfully claimed by the non-striker before the next stroke is made, it is condoned.

(d) Any colour not correctly spotted shall remain where positioned except that if off the table it shall be correctly spotted.

(e) All points scored in a break before a foul is awarded are allowed but the striker shall not score any points for any ball pocketed in a stroke called foul.

(f) The next stroke is played from where the cue-ball comes to rest or, if the cue-ball is off the table, from in-hand.

(g) If more than one foul is committed in the same stroke, the highest value penalty shall be incurred.

(h) The player who committed the foul

(i) incurs the penalty prescribed in Rule 12 below, and

(ii) has to play the next stroke if requested by the next player.

### **Penalties**

All fouls will incur a penalty of four points unless a higher one is indicated in paragraph (a) to (d) below. Penalties are:

(a) value of the ball on by

(i) striking the cue-ball more than once,

(ii) striking when both feet are off the floor,

(iii) playing out of turn,

(iv) playing improperly from in-hand, including at the opening stroke,

(v) causing the cue-ball to miss all object balls,

(vi) causing the cue-ball to enter a pocket,

(vii) playing a snooker behind a free ball,

(viii) playing a jump shot,

(ix) playing with a non-standard cue, or

(x) conferring with a partner contrary to Section 3 Rule 17(e).

(b) value of the ball on or ball concerned, whichever is higher, by

(i) striking when any ball is not at rest,



- (ii) striking before the referee has completed the spotting of a colour,
  - (iii) causing a ball not on to enter a pocket,
  - (iv) causing the cue-ball to first hit a ball not on,
  - (v) making a push stroke
  - (vi) touching a ball in play, other than the cue-ball with the tip of the cue as a stroke is made, or
  - (vii) causing a ball to be forced off the table.
- (c) value of the ball on or higher value of the two balls concerned by causing the cue-ball to first hit simultaneously two balls, other than two Reds or a free ball and a ball on.
- (d) A penalty of seven points is incurred if the striker
- (i) uses a ball off the table for any purpose,
  - (ii) uses any object to measure gaps or distance,
  - (iii) plays at Reds, or a free ball followed by a Red, in successive strokes,
  - (iv) uses any ball other than White as the cue-ball for any stroke once the frame has started,
  - (v) fails to declare which ball he is on when requested to do so by the referee, or
  - (vi) after potting a Red or free ball nominated as a Red, commits a foul before nominating a colour.

### **Play Again**

Once a player has requested an opponent to play again after a foul, such request cannot be withdrawn. The offended, having been asked to play again, is entitled to

- (a) change his mind as to
  - (i) which stroke he will play, and
  - (ii) which ball on he will attempt to hit.
- (b) score points for any ball or balls he may pot.

### **Foul and a Miss**

The striker shall, to the best of his ability, endeavour to hit the ball on. If the referee considers the Rule infringed, he shall call FOUL AND A MISS unless only the Black remains on the table, or a situation exists where it is impossible to hit the ball on. In the latter case it must be assumed the striker is attempting to hit the ball on provided that he plays, directly or indirectly, in the direction of the ball on with sufficient strength, in the referee's opinion, to have reached the ball on but the obstructing ball or balls.

- (a) After a foul and a miss has been called, the next player may request the offender to play again from the position left or, at his discretion, from the original position, in which latter case the ball on shall be the same as it was prior to the last stroke made, namely:



- (i) any Red, where Red was the ball on,
  - (ii) the colour on, where all Reds were off the table, or
  - (iii) a colour of the striker's choice, where the ball on was a colour after a Red had been potted.
- (b) If the striker, in making a stroke, fails to first hit a ball on when there is a clear path in a straight line from the cue-ball to any part of any ball that is or could be on, the referee shall call FOUL AND A MISS unless either player needed snookers before, or as a result of, the stroke played and the referee is satisfied that the miss was not intentional.
- (c) After a miss has been called under paragraph (b) above when there was a clear path in a straight line from the cue-ball to a ball that was on or that could have been on, such that central, full-ball, contact was available (in the case of Reds, this to be taken as a full diameter of any Red that is not obstructed by a colour), then:
- (i) a further failure to first hit a ball on in making a stroke from the same position shall be called as a FOUL AND A MISS regardless of the difference in scores, and
  - (ii) if asked to play again from the original position, the offender shall be warned by the referee that a third failure will result in the frame being awarded to his opponent.
- (d) After the cue-ball has been replaced under this Rule, when there is a clear path in a straight line from the cue-ball to any part of any ball that is or could be on, and the striker fouls any ball, including the cue- ball while preparing to play a stroke, a miss will not be called if a stroke has not been played. In this case the appropriate penalty will be imposed and
- (i) the next player may elect to play the stroke himself or ask the offender to play again from the position left, or
  - (ii) the next player may ask the referee to replace all balls moved to their original position and have the offender play again from there, and
  - (iii) if the above situation arises during a sequence of miss calls, any warning concerning the possible awarding of the frame to his opponent shall remain in effect.
- (e) All other misses will be called at the discretion of the referee.
- (f) After a miss and a request by the next player to replace the cue- ball, any object balls disturbed will remain where they are unless the referee considers the offending player would or could gain an advantage. In the latter case, any or all disturbed balls may be replaced to the referee's satisfaction and in either case, colours incorrectly off the table will be spotted or replaced as appropriate.
- (g) When any ball is being replaced after a miss, both the offender and the next player will be consulted as to its position, after which the referee's decision shall be final.



(h) During such consultation, if either player should touch any ball in play, he shall be penalised as if he were the striker, without affecting the order of play. The ball touched shall be replaced by the referee, to his satisfaction, if necessary, even if it was picked up.

(i) The next player may ask if the referee intends to replace balls other than the cue-ball in the event that he should ask for the stroke to be played from the original position, and the referee shall state his intentions.

### **Ball Moved by Other than Striker**

If a ball, stationary or moving, is disturbed other than by the striker, it shall be re-positioned by the referee to the place he judges the ball was, or would have finished, without penalty.

(a) This Rule shall include cases where another occurrence or person, other than the striker's partner, causes the striker to move a ball.

(b) No player shall be penalised for any disturbance of balls by the referee.

### **Stalemate**

If the referee thinks a position of stalemate exists, or is being approached, he shall offer the players the immediate option of re-starting the frame. If any player objects, the referee shall allow play to continue with the proviso that the situation must change within a stated period, usually after three more strokes to each side but at the referee's discretion. If the situation remains basically unchanged after the stated period has expired, the referee shall nullify all scores and re-set all balls as for the start of a frame and

(a) the same player shall again make the opening stroke,

(b) the same order of play shall be maintained.

### **Four-handed Snooker**

(a) In a four-handed game each side shall open alternate frames and the order of play shall be determined at the start of each frame and, when so determined, must be maintained throughout that frame.

(b) Players may change the order of play at the start of each new frame.

(c) If a foul is committed and a request to play again is made, the player who committed the foul plays again, even if the foul was made out of turn, and the original order of play is maintained such that the offender's partner may lose a turn.

(d) When a frame ends in a tie Section 3 Rule 4 applies. If a re-spotted Black is necessary, the pair who play the first stroke have the choice of which player will make that stroke. The order of play must then continue as in the frame.



- (e) Partners may confer during a frame but not
- (i) whilst one is the striker and at the table, nor
- (ii) after the first stroke of the striker's turn until the break ends.

### **Use of Ancillary Equipment**

It is the responsibility of the striker to both place and remove any equipment he may use at the table.

(a) The striker is responsible for all items including, but not limited to, rests and extensions that he brings to the table, whether owned by him or borrowed (except from the referee), and he will be penalised for any fouls made by him when using this equipment.

(b) Equipment normally found at the table which has been provided by another party including the referee are not the responsibility of the striker. Should this equipment prove to be faulty and thereby cause the striker to touch a ball or balls, no fouls will be called. The referee will, if necessary, reposition any balls in accordance with Rule 15 above and the striker, if in a break, will be allowed to continue without penalty.

### **Interpretation**

(a) Throughout these Rules and Definitions, words implying the masculine gender shall equally apply to and include the female gender.

(b) Circumstances may necessitate adjustment in how Rules are applied for persons with physical handicaps. In particular, and for example:

(i) Section 3 Rule 12(a)(ii) cannot be applied to players in wheelchairs, and

(ii) a player, upon request to the referee, shall be told the colour of a ball if he is unable to differentiate between colours as, for example, red and green.

(c) When there is no referee, such as in a social game, the opposing player or side will be regarded as such for the purpose of these Rules.