



Billiards

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About the Tutorial

Billiards is a game that can be compared to the game of carom. In this game cue is used as a striker and balls are to be put into the pockets. The tutorial lets you know about the game, its rules, and the method of playing.

Audience

Anyone who wants to learn about billiards can go through this tutorial, as this tutorial deals with various aspects of the game and will give a lot of information regarding the game.

Prerequisite

Before proceeding with this tutorial, you are required to have a passion for this game and an eagerness to acquire knowledge on the same.

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1. Billiards – Overview

Billiards is a cue sport that has its origins in UK. It is played on a board with six pockets. The balls are cannoned into the pockets with a cue stick.

Billiards was introduced as a game in 18th century. It was popular in some European countries especially, France, that brought first changes to the game by including a red ball. This was soon adopted in United Kingdom too. By end of 19th century, English Billiards Association was formed. Later, Billiards Association and Control Council were organized by mid-20th century.

John Roberts, Sr. was the first champion known to public and he reigned for nearly two decades.



Objective

All the red balls are arranged in a formation. It is broken with a stroke using cue stick. The players cannon the balls into the pockets. The player who pockets black ball in the end and ends with highest score is declared winner. The game is played as a team and individuals.

Team Size

Billiards is an indoor sport played on a board. As a professional sport, Billiards is either played individually or by a team of two; representing a nation. Otherwise, the sport is played by more than two in a team for fun in clubs.

2. Billiards – Participating Countries

Asian Countries Participating in Billiards

Though a little late, Asian countries picked up the game fast and produced some world champion players. India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, and Chinese Taipei are a few from the list of 33-member countries that play professional English Billiards. Below is a table of all the 33 nations.

Asian Confederation of Billiard Sports was formed to organize all the Billiard and Snooker events across Asia.

Afghanistan	India	Thailand	Sri Lanka
Bahrain	Indonesia	Lebanon	Syria
Bangladesh	Iran	Mongolia	UAE
Brunei	Iraq	Myanmar	Vietnam
Singapore	Japan	Nepal	Yemen
China-Hong Kong	Jordan	Pakistan	Malaysia
China-Macau	South Korea	Palestine	
China	Saudi Arabia	Philippines	
Chinese Taipei	Kuwait	Qatar	

Non-Asian Countries Participating in Billiards

As the game took birth in United Kingdom, European and South American countries played this sport since. France introduced a separate table for the game and gradually, Billiards on French Table came into limelight. We will discuss the differences of English and French Tables later in this tutorial. Here is another table with list of Non-Asian countries participating in Billiards.

Egypt	Canada	Albania	Germany
Lesotho	United States	Austria	Great Britain (UK)
Libya	Argentina	Belarus	Greece
Malawi	Aruba	Belgium	Hungary

Mauritius	Bolivia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ireland
Morocco	Brazil	Bulgaria	Israel
Namibia	Chile	Croatia	Italy
Nigeria	Colombia	Cyprus	Liechtenstein
Reunion	Costa Rica	Czech Republic	Luxembourg
South Africa	Ecuador	Denmark	Macedonia
Swaziland	Honduras	Estonia	Montenegro
Tanzania	Mexico	Finland	Netherlands
Uganda	Netherlands Antilles	France	North Cyprus
Zambia	Nicaragua	Norway	
	Panama	Poland	
	Peru	Portugal	
	Puerto Rico	Russia	
	Uruguay	Serbia	
	Venezuela	Slovakia	
		Slovenia	
		Spain	
		Sweden	
		Switzerland	
		Turkey	
		Ukraine	

3. Billiards – Playing Environment

Billiards Board Design

Billiards is played on board that is riveted to a table. Unlike Carom or any other board game, this is the only game where the board is part of the table. The Billiards board is huge than any other boards. Similar to Carom board, Billiards board also has four pockets in the corner and two on the side bars. The playing surface of the board is top quality cloth material that is fixed firmly to the board. Such a surface helps the balls to roll easily around the board and pocket them.



Dimensions of the Board

The playing surface measures 11ft 8^{1/2} in x 5ft 10in x 2ft 10^{1/2} in. At a distance of 29in from the bottom cushion, a parallel line is drawn called **baulk line**.

Another mandatory marking on the board is 'D'. It is drawn with mid-point of baulk line as centre. The radius of the D is 11^{1/2} in.

Including the centre of the D, there are four more spots on the playing surface. One spot is called pyramid spot that is exactly mid-way between centre spot and face of top cushion. The third point is perpendicular to the face of cushion. It is 12^{3/4} in thickness. The fourth spot is centre spot that is mid-way between both sides of the cushion.

The pockets in the corner and middle of longest sides comply with the standards of World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (WPBSA).

4. Billiards – Equipment

The Billiards table was covered in earlier chapter hence, the remaining playing equipment will be covered in this chapter.

Balls

The balls used for Billiards should fulfil requirements of WPBSA in shape, size, and material used for manufacture. Each ball should have 52.5 mm diameter with very minimum tolerance. These balls are sets to be placed in specific positions on the table and each set differs from other.

The set of balls are either colored red, spotted white and clear white. Alternately, they can also colored red, white, and yellow. All the balls should be of same weight and any change of ball during the game is done based on mutual consent between players or it is referee's decision.

Cue

The length of a cue should not be less than 3ft. The cue should be of regular shape and form as per WPBSA standards and should not deviate in any way.



Ancillary

At times the cue moves in to a tough position to play it straight with cue and requires a subsidiary or assist to play. These could be cues longer than usual, also called as half butts or butts based on their length. All these aids taken by players should be of approved shape, length, and all other standards set by WPBSA.

5. Billiards – Terms

Game – It is the period of play from when the striker breaks the formation of balls and either:

- Finishes the game in concession
- Total time of the game has elapsed
- Either side scoring the required number of points
- Close of play called by referee

Match – A match comprises of stipulated number of games.

Balls – A striker uses the cue ball to pocket object balls like red, yellow balls.

Stringing – Stringing is a way of deciding which player first gets options to strike. It is similar to toss in any other match. In Billiards, both players play the cue ball towards the opposite cushion and ensure it comes back to baulk cushion. Whosoever manages to keep the ball closer to the baulk cushion shall give options to opponents. The strikers have to ensure that cue doesn't hit side cushions or intrude into opponent's half.

Striker and turn – The person who breaks the formation of balls at the start or someone in play is called striker. If the striker commits a foul or finishes his turn then, opposite player gets to play out of turn. The referee should be satisfied that striker has finished the turn and moves away from the table for opponent to play.

Stroke – Striker hits cue-ball with tip of cue in alignment and ensures to apply rules of the game then, it is called a stroke. A stroke is complete after:

- All the balls in motion have to come to halt.
- A striker moves away from the table or stands in readiness to play next stroke.
- Move out any equipment of the game from hazardous position.
- The umpire or referee gives a score for the stroke.

Direct stroke – Striker hits the object-ball with cue-ball directly without hitting cushion of the table.

Indirect stroke – Striker hits the cue-ball to cushion for an angle and hit the object-ball is called indirect stroke.

Pot – Striker hits the object ball with cue-ball giving it direction into a pocket. The object ball falling in pocket when it comes in contact with cue-ball or another object ball is called a pot.

In-off – In-off is a condition where the cue-ball hits object ball and goes into a pocket without violation of rules. If the cue-ball contacts more than one object ball then, it is said to have gone in-off of the first object ball contacted.

Hazard – A scoring stroke excluding cannon like a pot, an in-off, a pot and an in-off, etc. are all hazards.

Cannon – A stroke where the cue-ball makes contact with two object balls. Only one cannon can be scored in a single stroke.

Break – In a single turn, break is the number of scoring strokes made in succession.

In-hand – The instances when it is called player's ball in-hand are:

- Before the start of each game
- When a ball forced out of the table
- After a player's ball is spotted touching the non-striker's ball
- When a player's ball has entered the pocket

Until the stroke is played fairly, the player's in-hand stays active. The other two situations when it remains player's ball in-hand are:

A foul is committed whilst it is on the table and the other is when the striker makes a foul and loses points while passing the turn to next player.

If the cue-ball is in-hand, then the striker is in-hand.

Ball in Play – A ball is in play until it is in neither pocketed nor in-hand. It should also be not forced off the table.

Ball in Baulk – A ball is said to be in baulk when it is located centrally on the baulk-line or in the region between bottom cushion and baulk-line.

Forced off the table – A ball is forced off the table when it comes to rest outside the playing surface or has been picked by the striker when in play.

Miss – A striker misses to make contact with object ball using the cue-ball while the other object balls are on the baulk-line.

Running a coup – A striker pockets the cue-ball when no ball is outside the baulk-line. The cue-ball should also not contact the cushion but enter pocket directly.

Foul – Any violation of WPBSA rules is considered as foul.

Spot Occupied – A ball in-hand is not placed in its original position because some other ball is occupying the spot or is too close to be placed as without touching it.

Push Stroke – Push stroke can called in two occasions:

- When the striker hits the cue-ball and the cue is in contact while cue-ball is in motion.
- The cue is still in contact as the cue-ball makes contact with object ball except when it just grazes the ball.

Jump Shot – The striker should ensure that cue-ball jumps over an object ball and strikes the intended ball without contacting the cushion with the exception of following cases:

- The cue-ball strikes an object ball and then jumps over other ball.
- The cue-ball jumps and strikes an object-ball but not on the farther side of it.
- The cue-ball strikes an object ball as per rules and jumps over it to hit the cushion of the board.

6. Billiards – How to Play?

English Billiards is played between two people or two sides. Understanding the arrangement of balls on the board is important before how to play. Three balls are used; a white, a yellow or spotted white (with more than two black dots for identification), and a red. Player or team scores when striker pots the ball in the pocket, for in-offs, cannon, and combination of both.

The points from a penalty made by a player are given to opponent player. One of the most popular tactics used to score more points is to leave the object balls in baulk area when the next player is in-hand. Any means made to disturb the balls must be by an indirect stroke, a difficult one.

The winner of the game is declared based on player who scores maximum points or stipulated points of the game within the allotted time.

The winner of the match is decided on the highest average and total number of points.

Starting the Game

Most sports begin with a toss to decide who plays first. Stringing is the method of toss in Billiards.

The choice of cue-ball and who to play first is decided by stringing. The winner has both options provided opposite player also mutually agrees. The game is considered to have begun after the cue-ball is placed on the table and hit by tip of the cue.

It is the player's responsibility to play with correct cue-ball even if the wrong ball is passed by the referee. The players take turns alternately unless one makes a score and continues the strike.

Playing from in-hand

- The cue-ball must be struck from a position within "D" to play from in-hand
- The referee has to check whether the cue-ball is placed correctly, if asked.
- The cue-ball is not considered to be in play by the referee if the tip of the cue is not touching the cue-ball; provided attempt to play is not made.
- When in-hand, the cue-ball must be placed out of baulk. In case, it touches an object ball out of baulk, it is considered to have played out though it doesn't cross the baulk line.
- The cue-ball may be played against a cushion provided it touches a ball outside baulk. Before re-entering the baulk, the cue-ball must have contact with cushion or ball out of baulk.

- If an object ball is in baulk, no part of its surface can be played on directly from in-hand.

During the play, a player goes through certain instances that have been clearly marked by the WPBSA to handle them better. Below are some those instances with next steps.

Spotting Object Balls

Starting with red ball, if it is pocketed then, it is placed back in its spot. In case the spot is occupied, red ball is placed in pyramid spot. If the pyramid spot is also occupied then, it is placed in the centre spot.

- A ball is considered to be on spot if and only if it is placed by hand.
- A striker can check with referee for count of continuous pots of same ball.
- If a ball touches another ball on spot then, the ball is not considered to be on spot even though it hasn't moved.
- An object ball not spotted correctly by the player cannot be raised as a fault by referee in any case.

Limitations of Cannons

A maximum of 75 consecutive cannons are allowed for a striker. The referee has to call out for last five after the player reaches count of 70. In case the referee misses to make note then, the last five cannons will be counted from the moment the referee announces.

Alternately, the player can also know the number of cannons upon request.

Limitations to Hazards

Just like limitations to consecutive cannons, a player can make only 15 consecutive hazards. The player and referee rule applies here also. In case the referee misses to announce for last five hazards, the player will get additional five chances from the moment referee announces. Similarly, player can also make request to know the count of continuous hazards.

If the non-striker's ball is off the table in his last stroke of a turn, it will be placed on spot of baulk-line or right corner of D.

Ball on Edge of a Pocket

- If a ball is pocketed without being hit or doesn't touch a ball in the process is put back on the table while the striker gets score for the stroke played.
- In case, the ball is hit by another one and is pocketed while there is no faulty stroke then, all the balls are replaced and either same stroke is played or different stroke upon discretion of the player.

- In case, it happens to be a foul then also all balls are placed back and the turn moves to next player.
- If the ball balances on edge for a while and then falls off later, it is counted as pocketed and not replaced back on table.

Ball Moved by other than Striker

A ball moved by Striker's partner or any other person at the table is repositioned to most probable place that referee thinks. The same rule doesn't apply if the ball has moved due to defective table surface.

No players are penalised when balls are disturbed by referee.

Touching Ball

It is referee's responsibility to shout for a touching ball. In such situation, red is placed on the spot and not-striker's ball is placed in Centre spot.

Another instance is when a cue-ball is touching an object ball just before the striker is about to play his stroke, the referee can pause the game and adjust the ball for satisfaction.

Fouls

Given below are some of the fouls made by striker/partner/opponent player during course of the game.

- Striking a ball other than the cue-ball
- Striking the cue-ball more than once during a stroke
- Striking when any ball is not at rest
- Striking when both feet are off the floor
- Playing out of turn
- Playing improperly from in-hand, including the opening stroke
- Playing the cue-ball directly into a pocket, or off a shoulder of the pocket
- When in-hand with no object ball out of baulk (running a coup)
- Playing a jump shot
- Making a push stroke
- Causing a ball to be forced off the table
- Making more than fifteen consecutive hazards

- Making more than seventy-five consecutive cannons
- Touching a ball or ball marker in play
- Striking before the referee has completed the spotting of a ball
- Playing with a non-standard cue
- Using a ball off the table for any purpose
- Using any object to measure gaps or distance

Outcomes of a Foul

The referee calls a foul and the player in strike has to stop playing immediately. If the player continues to play even after the call then, the penalty is much higher.

The striker doesn't get any points in a foul even though an object ball is potted in faulty stroke. The ball is placed back on the table in its original position.

Every foul carries a penalty of two points. Suppose the referee or opponent player doesn't call for a foul then, it is forgiven.

A miss is also a type of foul where the cue-ball is pocketed directly without touching any ball on table. It may hit cushion and go into pocket as well. Two points are added to opponent's score and the next miss is called foul.

Billiards – Variants

Apart from English Billiards, the other variants are Snooker, and Pool. After knowing and have played Billiards, Snooker could be easier to understand. In Pool, the balls have stripes and dots with numbers on it. These two sports will be discussed as separate tutorials.

In a doubles game, the order of play is decided by stringing and cannot be changed during course of the game. The partners can confer during course of the game though.



Use of Ancillary Equipment

The striker owns responsibility to all the rests and additional equipment owned and used during the game unless they are taken from the referee or lying at the table.

The player is not penalised for any fouls committed due to faulty ancillary equipment provided by the referee. In such cases, the stroke made is ruled out and all the equipment involved in faulty stroke are replaced immediately.

7. Billiards – Tournaments

History of Billiards proves that it is a very old global sport. Countries like England, Singapore, India have produced some of the best players in the world. Here is a list of some important tournaments related to Billiards:

Tournament	Venue
Airpark Christchurch Open	Christchurch, NZ
Outer Limits Auckland Open	Auckland, NZ
Hamilton Pacific International	Hamilton, NZ
New Zealand Open	Hamilton, NZ
World Championship Qualifier	Northern SC, Leeds
Jim Williamson Memorial	Northern SC, Leeds
LITetask World Championship [Short]	Northern SC, Leeds
LITetask World Championship [Long]	Northern SC, Leeds
Ladies World Championship	Northern SC, Leeds
LITetask British Open	Cue Gardens, Bradford
Scottish Open	Edinburgh Corn Ex.
LITetask UK Open	Northern SC, Leeds
English Open	Cambridge SC
Irish Open	Ivy Rooms, Carlow
European Open	Ivy Rooms, Carlow
Australian Open	tbc
NSC Open	Northern SC, Leeds

8. Billiards – Champion of Champions

David Causier, Mike Russell, Peter Gilchrist top the rank charts in English Billiards; David Causier leads the current pack of players. From India, Geet Sethi, Pankaj Advani, and Ashok Shandilya are few popular players. This chapter will cover career profile and achievements of few from this list.

Peter Gilchrist (Singapore) – Peter Gilchrist, a Singaporean born in England, is a world class Billiards player with many world titles in his kitty. He has won the World Championship thrice – 1994, 2001, and 2013. He has also set the world record for highest break and the only player in Billiard’s history to have scored 1000 points more than one time. He represented Singapore in SEA Games and won Gold as well.



Mike Russell (England) – One of the legends of the game, born in 1969 in England and 11 time world champion. Adding to the tally is six amateur IBSF World Billiards Championship titles. He also created a record with more than 1000 points at IBSF Amateur World Billiards Championship in 2010. At present, he is a trainer at Qatar Billiards and Snooker Federation.



Geet Sethi (India) – Geet Sethi can be easily called the face of English Billiards in India. Born in 1961, he started his career as amateur snooker player. Geet Sethi is a six time winner at professional level and three time winner of amateur World Championship. He was at his prime in 1990s and holds two world records in English Billiards. Later, he joined with Prakash Padukone (Indian Badminton ace player) to form Gold Quest to promote sports in India at national level.



Pankaj Advani (India) – Pankaj Advani is one of youngest and rising sportsperson of India. He debuted in 2002 at Asian Billiards Championship and went on to win 10 World Champion Billiard Titles. He is currently World no. 1 in 6-red snooker. He is also the youngest to have won eight or more titles in English Billiards. Pankaj Advani has taken World Billiards by a storm with more records; only player to have won all five regional and world titles in a single season.

