

Billiard Room Etiquette

Whether playing socially or in competition, all players need to be aware of billiard room etiquette that is employed and expected almost everywhere that cue sports are played.

As far back as 1875 it was written that "*Every person, before entering a billiard-room, should either look through the holes cut in the door, for the purpose of seeing when a stroke is about to be made, or listen at the door, so as to enter the room when no player is aiming or making a stroke.*"

Such a rule will always apply during competition play, but for the sake of everyone's enjoyment even during social play, the key word is *consideration* and that it should always be shown to other players in the room, even to those playing on another table.

1. Drinks and food
2. Scoreboard management
3. Sportsmanship
4. Cue and equipment handling
5. Table care
6. Hygiene and cleanliness
7. Peaceful and quiet enjoyment
8. Personal equipment and valuables

1. Drinks and Food

Generally, food should never be taken into a billiard room and most clubs will prohibit it. Drinks may be taken into a billiard room but they should always be kept away from the billiard table. The main problem caused by food and drinks being consumed near billiard tables is that despite one thinking that their hands are clean, sticky drink substances and grease can be left on the balls and around the table, even on the table cloth, and also on equipment like rests and jiggers that everyone else handles.

Whether consuming drinks or not it is always wise to wash your hands as often as possible.

2. Scoreboard Management

Whether playing socially or in competition it is best that everyone adopt the same procedures so that everyone knows what is going on at the time and how to compensate if an error is made. For example, unless a referee is provided:

- Each player should adjust their own score only (including points for fouls), unless adding points for foul to their opponent's score;
- Such adjustments should be made at the end of a player's break, and not incremented as each ball is potted.

If a referee is provided then the referee (or his scorer) will be the only person permitted to adjust the scores, and such scores must remain on the scoreboard until any relative paperwork associated with that frame/match has been updated.

3. Cue and Equipment Handling

During social play one can have friends around the table and during competition there will at least be an opponent and possibly a referee following you around to re-spot balls when needed. But none of these people want be skewered or lose an eye by walking into your cue. So how you carry and use your cue is most important and it is strongly recommended to develop the habit of always carrying it in an upright position while walking around the table and *only level it* as part of your approach to the table when lining up a shot. After playing the shot, step back while sliding the cue back into an upright position by your side.

Not enough importance can be placed in this simple safety precaution and it can be most obvious which players were properly coached and which ones were not.

4. Sportsmanship

The following behaviour is generally unwelcome in social games and will be a breach of the rules in almost all competition matches:

- Attempting to distract any player who is in the process of making a shot by:
 - (i) making any noises while your opponent is shooting such as, stirring the ice in your drink, chewing loudly, singing, whistling, humming, dropping things, clearing your throat, tapping your fingers, or making any other obnoxious or distracting noises.
 - (ii) standing at the table while the opponent is shooting, specially standing beside or behind the targeted pocket or walking across it.
 - (iii) chalking your cue or making deliberate movements while in the player's view.
 - (iv) offering unsolicited advice or coaching tips.

At all times, the non-striking player should make an effort to stay out of the line of sight of the player at the table, and they should move out of sight before that player approaches the table and NOT during their shot.

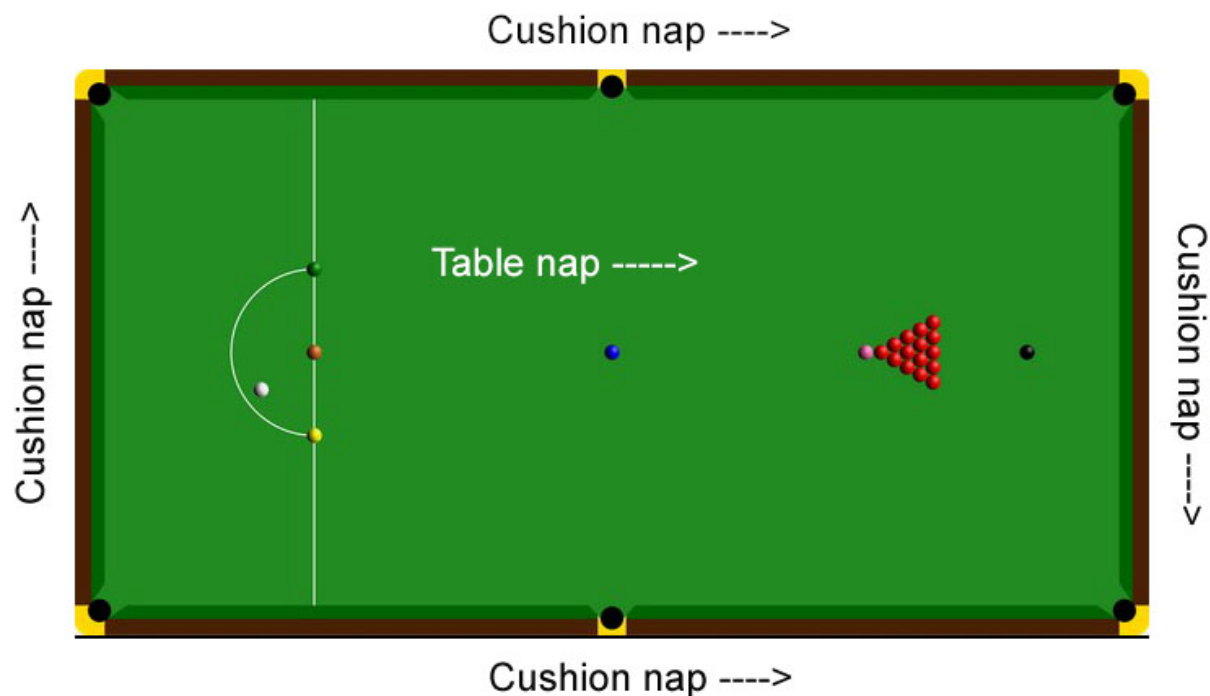
- Making excuses for any shots that you are unsuccessful at making.
- Criticising the game and skill of other players.
- Comments from the peanut gallery are not recommended and should not be tolerated.

Whether playing socially or in competition, the players on the other tables deserve the same consideration and above all, the right to peaceful enjoyment of their game. So if you want to gas-bag, take it elsewhere like at the bar where such distractions will be more welcome.

5. Table Care

Most clubs replace the table-cloth every two (2) years to provide acceptable playing conditions for the use of ordinary club members. However table-cloths used for competition play, especially those used for National and State ranked tournaments, may be replaced annually and everyone should take care to preserve their condition at all times:

1. **Preserve the nap:** table-cloths are brushed from baulk to the top of the table so that the nap always runs in the same direction. So when walking into your stance and when leaving it, you should not slide your hand across the cloth, but rather place it gently and lift afterwards in an upwards movement.
2. **Setting the rack:** the balls should never be dropped into the triangle, but rather should be gathered by hand and the triangle placed around them. When positioning the triangle, do not drag the triangle over the cloth but rather reduce its weight by hovering and use the triangle to herd the balls into position.
3. **Re-spotting balls:** When replacing colours on their spots, start by placing the ball near its spot and then rolling the ball onto the spot. Never hit a spot with the ball in the hope of improving its stability.
4. **Ball jumping:** when a ball leaves the cloth it is usually as the result of a mis-cue. Otherwise the jumping of balls is an illegal shot in all billiard and snooker games and any repeated practice to be blatant abuse of facilities that should be reported to club management immediately.
5. **Rest placement:** while not many players or referees do practice the method of placing the rests in the direction of the side cushion nap, it is most recommended for all because it can save time and confusion. See the image below for clarification.



6. Hygiene and Cleanliness

Hygiene should always be considered when in the company of others... especially in cue sports where your opponent may need to step into the same space that you occupied while making your shot.

While keeping your hands and equipment clean for efficiency makes sense, one needs to realize that such cleanliness can also prevent illness and infection. At best the jiggers and table-sides might get cleaned a couple of times a week and the table-cloths might get brushed in the process. But the balls rarely get cleaned and they are handled by everyone.

So the next time you rub your eyes or feel like scratching an itch on your face, have a think about what you could be rubbing into your sensitive parts.

Prevention is always better than cure and a good practice is to wash your hands as often as possible. Please note that during competition, with the exception of one-frame knockouts, visits to the wash-room are not permitted each frame unless a medical condition exists.

7. Peaceful and Quiet Enjoyment

If one can hear the conversation of players at another table or that of other persons in the room, then most will consider that an invasion of the peace and enjoyment that they seek. They did not come to the Billiard Room to listen to the problems of others, nor did they come to listen to anything other than what is pertinent to their own game.

8. Personal Equipment and Valuables

Always keep your cue and playing equipment in plain sight or stored somewhere that cannot be reached without being seen by others. Clubs can be populated by members but not everyone will be a member and not everyone is honest. Also, it is very easy to make mistakes and someone can easily pick up your equipment mistaking it for their own.

If you want to lose friends and make enemies, leave your wallet on a side table... if it goes missing you will more than likely suspect the wrong person.