

Glossary of Pool and Billiards Terms and Phrases

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**For illustrations and examples of many of the terms and phrases,
see [The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards](#) and
the [Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots](#) (VEPS)**

½-ball hit: a shot where the cue ball center is aimed to pass through the outside edge of the object ball, resulting in a cut angle of 30°.

¼-ball hit: a shot where the cue ball inside edge is aimed to pass through one quarter of the object ball, resulting in a cut angle of about 49°.

10-ball: the pool game played with only the first ten balls (1-10), racked in a triangle pattern with the 10-ball in the center. The lowest numbered ball must always be hit first, and all shots must be called (i.e., slop doesn't count). The person who pockets the 10-ball wins the game.

1P: acronym for "one-pocket."

14.1: same as "straight pool."

14.1 continuous: same as "straight pool."

3-cushion billiards: see "three-cushion billiards."

3x rule: principle stating that, with a full hit (greater than a ¾-ball hit), the CB will deflect by about 3-times the cut angle.

¾-ball hit: a shot where the cue ball inside edge is aimed to pass through three quarters of the object ball, resulting in a cut angle of about 15°.

30° rule: principle stating that a rolling cue ball's path deflects by approximately 30° after impact with an object ball for a cut shot between a 1/4-ball and 3/4-ball hit.

40% rule: principle used to judge how much tip offset is required to create "gearing outside english" for a given cut angle. The tip must be offset 40% of the distance between the center of the CB and where the "line of centers" intersects the edge of the ghost ball.

45° rule: principle stating that if the CB rolls into the short rail at roughly a 45° angle, it will head fairly close to the center of the table after contacting the long rail.

50 yard line: refers to when a shot is lined up straight into a cushion close to the midpoint between two pockets, where the shot is equally difficult to either pocket.

6 pack: six consecutive racks run during a match.

7 and out: see "give the X and out."

8 and out: see "eight and out"

70% rule: principle stating that, with a thin hit (greater than ¼-ball hit), the CB will deflect by approximately 70% of the angle from the initial direction to the tangent line.

7x rule: principle stating that the CB will roll forward by about 1/7 of the distance the OB rolls forward with a straight-on roll shot.

8 and out: see “eight and out”

8-ball: a pool game, played with all 15 balls racked in a triangle pattern, where the objective is to pocket the 8-ball after pocketing all seven of your designated balls (stripes or solids).

9-ball: the pool game played with only the first nine balls (1-9), racked in a diamond pattern with the 9-ball in the center. The lowest numbered ball must always be hit first. The person who pockets the 9-ball wins the game.

9 footer: regulation size pool table.

90° rule: principle stating that the cue ball and object ball will separate at 90° after impact provided the cue ball strikes the object ball with no vertical plane spin (i.e., stun).

“A” player: a good player capable of running most racks and/or playing lock-up safeties.

ACS: American Cue-Sports Alliance pool league and tournament association.

action: term used to refer to money games (i.e., competitive wagering); also, term used to describe the quality of a hit (e.g., the cue has good “action”) or the motion of the cue ball (e.g., the english created good “action” off the rail).

address the ball: move and settle into your stance in preparation for a shot.

after-collision massé: massé shot where the cue ball curves mostly after contact with the object ball (e.g., if the object ball is close to the cue to begin with).

ahead session: a match won by being a certain number of games ahead.

aim: determine the line of the cue necessary to send the cue ball to the desired ghost-ball position to cut the object ball the required amount for the shot.

aim and pivot: method (e.g., BHE or FHE) used to compensate aim for squirt. The cue is initially aimed for a center-ball hit and is pivoted to apply the amount of english desired. This is done before the shot.

aiming line: the imaginary line through the cue ball in the direction of the intended target (e.g., the center of the ghost ball) that results in contact with a rail or the object ball at the desired contact point.

aiming point: the center of the imaginary ghost ball target resulting in contact with the object ball at the desired contact point.

aiming system: a systematic method used to aim shots.

air ball: a shot where the object ball is missed entirely.

air barrel: not having the money to pay off a loss when gambling.

air game: same as “air barrel.”

Al Bundy: a person who tends to miss and leave easy shots often.

alignment: how you position your body and head to best enable you to place and stroke the cue along the desired line.

American: used to refer to hitting the ball harder than you need to, like a banger (e.g., “Don’t put too much American on the ball”). This is a play on the use of “english” to refer to side spin (e.g., “Don’t put too much english on the ball”).

angle of incidence: same as “approach angle.”

angle of reflection: same as “rebound angle.”

angle shot: same as “cut shot.”

angle to the pocket: the angle of approach of a ball to a pocket measured relative to the pocket centerline. A straight-in shot has a 0° angle to the pocket.

APA: American Pool Players Association pool league and tournament organization.

apex: the lead ball of object balls racked in a triangle or diamond shape, usually placed on the foot spot.

approach angle (AKA “angle of incidence”): the angle at which a ball approaches a rail, measured from the rail perpendicular. A ball driven directly into (perpendicular to) a rail has an approach angle of zero.

artistic shot: same as “trick shot.”

avoidance shot: a shot where the cue ball path is controlled to avoid hitting surrounding balls.

AZBilliards: popular pool and billiards website and online discussion forum.

AZB: short for AZBilliards.

“B” player: a decent player capable of running racks and playing effective safeties periodically.

back bank: same as an “outside cut” bank.

back cut: a cut shot where the cue ball is shot well away from the target pocket (e.g., when the cue ball is much closer to the target pocket rail than the object ball). In other words, the butt of the cue passes over one of the cushions adjacent to the target pocket. The more perpendicular the cue is to that cushion, the greater the back cut. In other words, a shot into a “blind pocket.”

back-hand english (BHE): method used to compensate one’s aim for squirt. You aim the shot assuming a center-ball hit on the cue ball (i.e., no english). Then you pivot the stick with your back (grip) hand, keeping your bridge hand firmly planted, until the desired amount of cue tip offset is reached. For a certain bridge length, the pivot angle will exactly cancel the squirt angle, and the cue ball will head in the original aiming line direction.

backer: person with money willing to provide a bankroll for gambling and take a stake of the winnings in return.

backspin: same as “bottom spin.”

bad break: an unlucky chain of events (e.g., where your opponent gets a “lucky roll”).

bad hit: not hitting an object ball first, resulting in a foul; also, a shot exhibiting “cling.”

bad roll: unfortunate roll of the ball (e.g., bad position due to roll-off); or, just bad luck.

bagel: a score of zero.

baize: traditional term for weaved, woolen table cloth, a term used mostly in Snooker and for gaming-table cloth.

balance point: the center of gravity of the cue.

balkline: a carom game where the table is subdivided into regions (e.g., 9) separated by straight lines. There are restrictions on the number of points can be scored (e.g., 2) when both object balls stay within the same region after a carom.

ball banger: see “banger.”

ball grouping. two or more balls of the same type (“stripes” or “solid”) in the same general area of the table.

ball-compression deflection angle: slight change in the object ball’s direction due to the slight amount of compression of the cue ball and object ball during impact.

ball-hit fraction: for a cut shot, the fraction of the object ball covered by the projected cue ball. For a square hit (0° cut angle), the ball-hit fraction is 1. For a half-ball hit, the ball-hit fraction is 1/2. For a glancing hit (close to a 90° cut angle), the ball fraction is close to 0.

ball in hand: situation when the cue ball can be placed anywhere on the table as a result of a foul or scratch by your opponent.

ball in motion: any ball still moving or spinning in place (e.g., you are not allowed to shot the next shot with any balls still in motion).

ball turn: very slight curve of the path of a ball with sidespin, caused by cloth friction.

banger: derogatory term for a novice player who hits the balls harder than necessary and doesn’t try to play for position.

bank pool: game where points are scored for pocketing bank shots only.

bank shot: a shot in which the object ball is bounced off one or more rails before being pocketed.

bankroll: total money you have available for gambling.

banks: same as “bank pool.”

bar box: small (3 1/2’ by 7’) coin-operated tables often found in bars.

bar rules: sometimes arbitrary and often different rules by which novices play pool in bars.

barking: same as “woofing.”

barrels: number of payoff units available in your bankroll or in a ring game.

BB: bar box.

BCA: Billiard Congress of America pool trade association and tournament

BD: Billiards Digest.

bed: the playing surface of the table.

belly up to the table like a man: quit “woofing” and play for “action” without expecting an unjustified “handicap” or “spot.”

bending a shot: using massé spin to curve a ball’s trajectory (e.g., with a massé shot or with an angled kick shot with draw or follow).

BEF: Billiard Education Foundation.

bear down: really focus and give it your all.

behind the eight-ball: snookered by your opponent with the cue ball behind the 8-ball; also, a general phrase used to indicate you are in a tough spot.

behind the head string: same as “in the kitchen,” where the cue ball must be placed in the upper portion of the table between the “head cushion” and “head string.”

BHE: back-hand english.

big ball: an oversized cue ball (e.g., used in some older bar boxes); or an obstacle ball close to a rail or other balls blocking shot paths; or an object ball close to a rail that is easy to hit with a kick shot.

big balls: same as “stripes.”

big fish: a “fish” with lots of money.

big pocket: a pocket with a wide margin for error for a specific shot (e.g., if the object ball is very close to the pocket and/or if there are nearby balls that provide ample carom opportunities).

billiard: same as “billiard shot.”

billiard shot (AKA “billiard”): a shot where the cue ball is kissed or caromed off an object ball (e.g., to pocket another object ball).

billiards: term for all cue games including pool (pocket billiards), snooker, and carom games.

Billiard University (BU): online organization offering instruction, assessment tools, a rating system, and learning resources to support pool instructors and players. The BU officially acknowledges excellence through the awarding of diplomas (Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate of pool).

Black Ball: British version of 8-ball, usually played on small pub tables, where the stripes and solids are replaced by sets of yellow and red balls, and the 8-ball is replaced by a black ball.

blank: a dull or unsuspecting player or gambler.

blind draw: random placement of players in a tournament “bracket.”

blind pocket: a target pocket for a cut shot with a line of aim away from the pocket (i.e., you are not looking toward the pocket).

blocker: obstacle ball that blocks the desired path of the cue ball.

body english: contorting your body in a feeble attempt to change the path of balls in motion.

Bonus Ball: a game played with nine balls involving a combination of snooker, 8-ball, 9-ball, one-pocket, and straight pool elements.

bottle: container used to shake small numbered balls (AKA “pills” or “peas”) used in some games.

bottom: below-center hit on the cue ball.

bottom cushion: the cushion on the “bottom rail.”

bottom rail: the “end rail” at the bottom of the table, closest to the foot spot.

bottom spin (AKA “backspin” or “draw english”): reverse rotation of the cue ball resulting from a below-center hit on the cue ball (see draw shot).

bowliards: pool game or drill played with ten balls. Bowling-like scoring is used. After the break, you get ball in hand. If you pocket all ten balls without a miss, you get a “strike.” After the first miss, if you pocket the remaining balls without a miss, you get a “spare.”

bracket: diagram showing pairings of players in each match of a tournament.

break: the first shot of a pool game where the cue ball is hit from behind the head string (i.e., in the “kitchen”) into the racked balls.

break and run: a victory where you pocket a ball on the break and clear the remaining balls without giving your opponent an inning at the table.

break box: square 2-diamond-by-2-diamond area in the “kitchen” centered between the side rails between the head string and head rail. Some tournaments require breaking from within this area to prevent an often easier and more effective side-rail break (e.g., in 9-ball).

break cloth: piece of cloth used under the CB during breaks to prevent damage to the table cloth.

break down cue: take a 2-piece cue apart by unscrewing the joint.

break of serve: losing a game as the breaker in an alternating-break match (analogous to losing a service game in a tennis match).

break-out shot: a shot where the cue ball is directed, after striking an object ball, to strike a ball cluster to scatter the balls into more favorable positions.

break pad: same as “break cloth.”

break shot: the “break”; or in “straight pool,” the shot at the last ball of a rack, with the other 14 balls racked.

break-up shot: same as “break-out shot.”

bridge: the support for the shaft end of the cue during a shot stroke, either the left hand (for a right-handed player) or an implement (see “mechanical bridge”).

bridge distance: same as “bridge length.”

bridge length: the distance between the bridge and the cue ball.

broken down: mentally defeated before the end of a match.

BU: Billiard University.

bumper: rubber cushion on the end of the butt of a cue.

bumper pool: game with two opposing pockets and multiple obstacle bumper pegs off which balls can be rebounded. The goal is for each player to make all of their balls into their designated (opposite) pocket with the fewest number of strokes.

bumps: bank pool.

burn mark: discoloration of the cloth (usually white) caused by friction between the ball and cloth during fast speed and/or strong impact shots (e.g., break or jump shots).

burnish: to vigorously rub the cue (e.g., with leather) to seal the pores and smooth the surface; or to rub the sides of the tip with a rigid tool to make it flush with the ferrule and to harden it to help prevent mushrooming.

busted: refers to a gambler who has lost all of his or her money.

butt: the handle or grip end of the cue.

bye: a tournament term used to designate when a player has no opponent and automatically advances to the next round.

“C” player: an average player who doesn’t run racks very often and doesn’t have much of a safety game.

C note: \$100 (see also: dime, fin, nickel, Sawbuck).

cabbage: money.

Calcutta: a tournament gambling arrangement where spectators bid on the player they think will win the tournament. The winning bidder(s) get a percentage of the betting pool.

call shot game: a pool game where the intended ball and pocket must be declared before each shot.

called shot: a shot for which you specify the intended ball and pocket (e.g., "9-ball in the corner pocket").

cannon: snooker or British term for a "carom."

carabao: a term used mostly in reference to Philippine players in the past to refer to a "swoop" stroke.

carom: cue ball deflection off one object ball into another.

carom shot (AKA "billiard" or "CB kiss shot"): a shot where the cue ball is deflected off one object ball and into another to pocket the second ball.

carombole: a game based on carom shots (e.g., three-cushion billiards).

case game: the deciding (final) game of a match (e.g., when a match is "hill-hill"). The last game before the cue goes back in the "case."

case money: reserve cash kept in the cue "case" used only in times of desperation (e.g., to continue gambling).

catch a gear: start playing really well during a match and keep it going (as if a "gear" were shifted).

CB: cue ball.

CCB: "Cue Chalk Board" online discussion forum maintained on Billiards Digest's website.

center ball: when aim at the dead center of the cue ball.

center of percussion (COP): technical term used to describe the "natural roll impact height."

center spot: the exact center of the table playing surface.

center-to-edge: see "CTE."

chalk: the dry, abrasive substance applied to the cue tip to help prevent slipping by increasing friction between the tip and the cue ball.

cheat the pocket: aim an object ball away from the center of a pocket to alter the path of the cue ball.

check english: same as "reverse english."

cheese: money ball; or, the money being played for in a gambling or tournament match.

cherry: same as "hanger."

chicken bone: a "choke."

choice of group: the assignment of "stripes" or "solids" in the game of 8-ball, based on who legally pockets a called shot.

choke: miss a shot due to nervousness under pressure; also, same as "shorten."

choke up: move the grip hand up on the cue.

chop the pot: the two players in a tournament finals match splitting the total winnings regardless of the outcome of the final match.

cinch: an easy shot.

cinch a shot: just focus on pocketing a ball without worrying about cue ball position after the shot.

circular draw shot: a cut shot with draw close to a rail, where the CB comes off the rail before most of the draw action occurs, causing the CB to curve around an obstacle ball.

CIE: cut-induced english.

CIS: cut-induced spin.

CIT: cut-induced throw.

civilians: non gamblers or non hustlers.

clean: when a ball is pocketed without touching any other balls.

clear the table: same as “run the table.”

cling: excessive friction and throw caused by non-ideal surface conditions at the point of contact between two balls (e.g., a chalk smudge).

clock system: a system that uses hour positions on an analog clock to understand the effects of different tip positions on the cue ball.

close the angle: same as “shorten the angle.”

close to your work: a phrase used to indicate that the cue ball is too close to the target object ball, making a cut shot more difficult.

closed bridge: hand bridge where the index finger is curved over the cue providing solid support.

cloth (AKA “felt”): wool or wool-nylon blend material covering the table’s playing surface.

cluster: two or more balls close together or touching.

coefficient of friction (COF): technical term used to describe how much tangential friction force is generated between sliding surfaces (e.g., a ball sliding on the table cloth, or two balls colliding with spin or a cut angle), as a percentage of the normal force between the surfaces.

coefficient of restitution (COR): technical term used to quantify the “rail rebound efficiency” or the impact efficiency between two balls.

COF: “coefficient of friction.”

collision-induced english: same as “cut-induced spin.”

collision-induced spin: same as “cut-induced spin.”

collision-induced throw: same as “cut-induced throw.”

combination on: same as “dead combination.”

combination shot: a shot where the cue ball hits an object ball into another to pocket the second ball.

combo: same as a “combination shot.”

come into the line of a shot: have the CB approach the OB along the aiming line, offering the largest margin for error with position.

come up dry: fail to pocket a ball on a break (analogous to coming up dry in an exploratory oil well).

connect the dots: a “roadmap” layout; or the run-out of a “roadmap” pattern.

contact point: the point of contact between the cue ball and the object ball at impact.

contact time: the duration of a collision between the cue tip and CB or between the CB and OB.

containing safety: a simple, straightforward, non-aggressive “safety” with little risk of “selling out.”

COP: “center of percussion.”

COR: “coefficient of restitution.”

Coriolis: famous French mathematician and physicist who wrote a book on billiards physics.

Corner-5 System: a formula-based diamond system for aiming three-rail kick shots.

corner hooked: when the cue ball is left in the jaws of a pocket with the path to an object ball blocked by one of the pocket points.

corner pocket: pocket at a corner of the table between a short rail and long rail.

corporation: two or more people who pool their money together in betting on a person in a match or Calcutta.

cosmo: a “roadmap” layout.

count: the number of balls pocketed during a player’s inning at the table.

counterman: pool-hall worker who rents tables and sometimes serves as a “middle man” to set up gambling matches.

crawfish: To back away or backtrack quickly when approached or revealed, like a crayfish when startled (e.g., when a “nit” backs away from a bet after his wager gets called; or when a person tries to quickly “fill a hole” he has already “dug” for himself).

cross corner: a bank shot off a long rail into a corner pocket, where the cue ball crosses the line of the shot.

cross side: a bank shot off a long rail into a side pocket, where the cue ball crosses the line of the shot.

crutch: slang term for “mechanical bridge.”

CTE: center-to-edge, referring to the line of aim going through the center of the cue ball and the edge of the object ball, which creates a ½-ball hit. This line of aim is used as a reference or point-of-departure in some aiming and alignment systems.

cue: the implement used to strike the cue ball.

cue ball: the white ball struck by the cue.

cue ball angle error: the angle between the actual cue ball aiming line and the desired aiming line.

cue ball control: ability to leave the cue where you want after each shot.

cue ball deflection: same as “squirt;” also sometimes used to describe the net effect of squirt and swerve (AKA “squerve” or “effective squirt” or “net cue ball deflection”).

cue ball foul: a foul specific to the cue ball (for example, touching a ball with the CB during ball in hand, double-hitting the CB, or accidentally touching the CB).

cue ball in hand: when the cue ball can be placed anywhere you want on the table or in the “kitchen” (e.g., after an opponent foul).

cue ball “on a string”: having complete control over CB position after each shot, as if you were moving the CB around by hanging it from a string.

cue efficiency: a percentage measure of how much energy is retained (not lost) during cue impact with the cue ball.

cue elevation: the angle above level or horizontal that the butt of the cue is held higher than the tip.

cueist: a player of cue sports.

cue stick: same as “cue.”

cue tip: the shaped, component (usually leather) on the end of the cue that comes in contact with the cue ball.

curve shot: a shot using a slightly elevated cue and bottom-side english to create massé (swerve) action to curve the cue ball a small amount around an obstacle ball.

cushion (AKA rail): the cloth covered triangular-cross-section strip of rubber bordering the playing surface, off which the balls rebound.

cushion compression shot: a shot where the CB or OB is driven into a cushion with enough force to deform the cushion enough to create clearance past on obstacle ball or into a pocket.

customer: one’s own private “mark” who will often lose and keep coming back.

cut angle: the angle between the cue ball aiming line and the object ball impact line for a cut shot.

cut shot: a shot where the cue ball impacts the object ball at an angle to the impact line (i.e., the shot is not “straight-in”).

cut-induced english (CIE): sidespin picked up by the cue ball during a cut shot, caused by sliding friction between the cue ball and the object ball.

cut-induced spin (CIS): sidespin imparted to the object ball during a cut shot, caused by sliding friction between the cue ball and the object ball.

cut-induced throw (CIT): throw caused by sliding friction between the cue ball and the object ball as a result of a cut angle.

cut-throat: a casual pool game played with three people. Each person is assigned five balls to protect (1 through 5, 6 through 10, or 11 through 15). The objective of the game is to pocket your opponents’ balls. The last person with one or more balls remaining on the table wins the game.

“D” player: a novice player who makes many mistakes, can’t run even an easy rack, and never even considers playing safe.

DAM: “Dave’s Aiming Method,” Dr. Dave’s “aiming system.”

dart stroke: a stroke, similar to the throwing motion for a dart, used to execute a jump shot, usually with a shorter, lighter cue.

dead: term used to indicate that a carom or combination shot is lined up perfectly (i.e., you can’t miss).

dead ball: no sidespin (e.g., a “dead ball” kick shot).

dead bank: a bank shot where the CB is on the natural aiming line to shoot for a square hit on the OB.

dead combination: a combination shot where the balls are lined up straight to a pocket offering an easy shot.

dead nuts: even more of a sure thing than the “nuts.”

dead punch: same as “dead stroke.”

dead rail: a rail that has lost its resiliency and rebound capabilities (i.e., it has a very low COR).

dead stroke: when you are in a state (“in the zone”) where you can make no mistake and your play seems effortless, automatic, and confident.

defensive shot: a shot where you try to pocket a ball; but if you the shot, you try to leave the cue ball or object ball in a difficult position for your opponent.

deflection (AKA “squirt”): short for “cue-ball deflection.”

deliberate foul: same as “intentional foul.”

detective: someone who knows everything about local players and can give advice to a “road player” looking for “action,” sometimes for percentage of the winnings.

deuce: gambling term for \$2.

diamonds (AKA “spots”): inlays or markings adjacent to the table cushions (on the top surface of the table rails) used as target or reference points. There are three diamonds equally spaced between each pocket.

Diamond System: a multiple-rail kick and bank shot method that uses the diamonds as aiming targets.

dime: \$1000 (see also: C note, fin, nickel, Sawbuck).

dirty pool: unsportsmanlike conduct or play.

disturbed ball: an OB accidentally touched or moved by a player during a shot with the cue or a part of their body.

dog a shot: miss a shot as a result of a “choke.”

dogged it: missed a shot badly due to pressure.

dominant eye: An eye (left or right) that helps provide stronger visual perception for things like aiming.

donut: a shutout, where your opponents wins zero games in a match (see also: “white donut”).

double: snooker or British term for a kick or bank shot.

double dip: beat a player twice in a row (e.g., in a double-elimination tournament, where the loser’s bracket winner beats the undefeated player twice in the finals for victory).

double elimination: a tournament in which a player must lose twice to be eliminated.

double hit: an illegal shot where the cue hits the cue ball twice during a stroke (e.g., when the cue ball bounces back from a nearby object ball during the stroke).

double kiss: double hit of the cue ball and object ball during a bank shot of an object ball frozen or close to a rail.

double shimmed: pockets with two sets of shims in the pockets to make them tighter (i.e., smaller pocket opening) and tougher.

double steer: “steer” a gambler into a game while actually being in with the other player, usually for a cut of the winnings.

double-the-distance aiming method: aiming system where the aim point is twice as far from the OB center as the desired contact point.

double the rail: use reverse english at a shallow angle to a rail to cause the CB to return to the same rail after hitting the adjacent rail.

doubles: game or tournament format where two players on a team alternate from one inning to the next (see also: “Scotch doubles”).

down table: towards the foot rail.

drag draw: a drag shot where the CB only has a small amount of backspin remaining at OB impact, resulting in only a small amount of draw.

drag follow: a drag shot where the CB has developed roll before OB impact, resulting in a follow shot.

drag shot: shot where bottom spin is used to slow the CB on the way to the object ball, resulting in the desired amount of draw, stun, or follow at the OB. Because the CB is moving faster (before slowing), table roll-off will be less of an issue. When sidespin is used, the drag action intensifies the effect of the sidespin.

draw: bottom spin (backspin) put on the cue ball by a draw shot.

draw shot: a shot in which the cue ball is struck below center to impart bottom spin to the cue ball, causing the cue ball to pull back from the object ball, after impact, farther than it would otherwise.

drill: a designed shot or routine used for practice.

drive-through shot: a “carom shot” where you clear and follow past blockers to hit another ball into a pocket.

drop pockets: type of table pockets with no automatic ball return. The balls must be retrieved manually from each pocket.

dry break: a break where no ball is pocketed.

duck (n): slang term for a ball sitting close to a pocket that is virtually impossible to miss (i.e., a “sitting duck”).

duck (vb): to play safe, usually by hiding the CB behind an obstacle ball.

duck behind a ball: play a safety by snookering your opponent.

ducking: playing a safety.

dump: to intentionally lose a game or match to help another player or as part of a scam (e.g., to cheat a “backer” or “stakehorse”).

Dutch double: male/female team that alternates shots.

effective end-mass: same as “end mass.”

effective pivot point: the cue “pivot point” that provides BHE/FHE compensation for both squirt and swerve. The effective pivot length can be different for every shot based on shot speed and distance, table conditions, and cue elevation.

effective pocket center (AKA “target center”): the target line to a pocket that has the same margin of error on both sides. For a straight-on shot, the effective pocket center goes through the center of the pocket opening.

effective pocket size (AKA “target size”): the total margin of error left and right of the pocket center that still results in pocketing a ball.

effective squirt (AKA “squerve”): same as “net cue ball deflection.”

effective tip offset: the distance between the center of the cue ball and a line through the contact point on the cue ball that is parallel to the direction of cue ball motion. This is different than the actual “tip offset” due to squirt and/or swoop.

eight-ball: see “8-ball.”

eight and out: the run 8 balls in your pocket for a one-pocket victory.

EIT: english-induced throw (same as “spin-induced throw”).

elbow drop: the result of a non-pendulum stroke (e.g., with a “piston stroke” follow-through).

electric chair: the proverbial chair you are sitting in when your opponent continues to run multiple racks.

elevated bridge: a hand V-bridge where the heel (base) of the hand is lifted off the table to raise the cue (e.g., to clear an obstacle ball close to the cue ball).

elevated cue: when the butt of the cue is held higher than the tip (as with most shots). The higher the butt is raised, the more the cue is elevated (e.g., with a jump or massé shot).

end mass: the amount of mass in the tip end of the cue shaft that contributes to squirt. A low-squirt cue has a small effective end-mass. For a stiffer shaft, more length (measured from the tip) will contribute to the effective end-mass.

end rail: a short rail between two corner pockets.

end cushion: the cushion on an “end rail.”

English: alternative form of “english.”

english: term usually used to refer to sidespin applied to the cue ball, but can also be used to refer to any type of spin applied to the cue ball (e.g., with draw and follow shots).

English Billiards: game played with three balls (a cue ball for each player and a shared object ball) on a table with pockets. Points are awarded for a cannon (caroming the cue ball off one ball into another), a winning hazard (pocketing a ball with the cue ball), or a losing hazard (pocketing the cue ball with a carom off another ball).

english-induced throw: same as “spin-induced throw.”

english transfer: same as “spin transfer.”

Equal Offense: variation of straight pool which can be played solo (e.g., for practice) or against an opponent. Each person gets a certain number innings (e.g., 10) at the table, starting with a new rack each inning. After the break, the player gets ball in hand with the goal of running as many balls as possible, usually up to a limit (e.g., 20). The total score is the sum of the scores for each inning.

equator: the horizontal diameter of the cue ball.

ERO: Eight-ball (or earned) run out, where the table is run starting with all 15 balls on the table (i.e., a “break and run”, or a “table run” after a dry break).

extension: a device used to add length to the butt of a cue for shots requiring longer reach; or a request for extra time in a match with a “shot clock.”

eye pattern: how you move your eyes before and during a shot (e.g., consistently look at CB during the forward warm-up strokes, and at the OB during the backstrokes).

facing: see “pocket walls.”

Fargo: a practice and rating drill developed by Mike Page using a combination of straight pool and rotation.

fast cloth: cloth with very low rolling resistance (i.e., the CB travels far before slowing).

fat: when a ball is undercut, it is hit too “fat.”

feather shot: a very thin cut shot.

felt: the cloth that covers the table surface.

ferrule: the sleeve, usually plastic, on the end of the cue shaft to which the cue tip is attached (with adhesive).

FHE: front-hand english.

fin or **finiski:** \$5 (see also: C note, dime, nickel, Sawbuck).

finger pool: a game or trick shot where you use your fingers, and not the cue, to propel the cue ball. Large amounts of spin can be imparted with a snapping action of the fingers (e.g., with the cue ball held between the thumb and middle finger).

finish: “follow through” and “freeze”

fish: a player who is not very good and is willing to wager with people of better skill.

flash: show a potential “mark” you money roll seemingly unintentionally.

flat-spot: the extremely small circular contact patch that forms between two balls when they collide, and compress slightly, at the point of contact.

flat-spot squeeze: same as “ball-compression deflection-angle.”

fluke: a lucky shot with an unplanned positive outcome.

flush: to have a lot of money (e.g., for gambling; or as a result of gambling).

flyer: a difficult shot.

follow: topspin put on the cue ball by a follow shot.

follow shot: a shot in which the cue ball is struck above center to impart topspin to the cue ball, causing the cue ball to roll forward, after impact, more than it would otherwise.

follow-through: the movement of the cue through the cue ball position during the end of your stroke in the direction of the aiming line, after making contact with the cue ball.

foot rail: the “short rail” at the bottom of the table where the balls are racked.

foot spot: the point on the table surface over which the lead ball of a rack is centered. It lies at the intersection of “center line” and “foot string.”

foot string: the imaginary line passing through the second diamonds closest to the bottom end of the long rails.

force follow: maximum topspin follow shot hit with speed. This term is used mostly when referring to a firm, nearly straight-in (small cut angle) follow shot.

forced error: a shot miss or mistake after your opponent left you with a tough shot or safety.

fouetté shot (pronounced “fwet-TAY”): a shot that uses tip offset (i.e., english) and cue deflection to avoid a double-hit when there is a small gap between the cue ball and object ball. A fast, full stroke is used so the cue deflects away while the cue ball clears.

foul: a violation of the rules of the game.

fractional-ball aiming: using ball-hit fraction as a method to gauge the required amount of cut angle required.

fram it: smack it or hit it hard (e.g., “fram the ball into the pocket”).

fram the rack: one-pocket term referring to a shot that scatters the rack, intentionally or not.

frame: snooker term for an entire game.

free shot: a shot that doesn't hurt a player if missed (e.g., a "two-way shot").

freeze: the practice of staying down and not moving anything after following through on a shot.

freewheel: to play freely, instinctively, and at a fast and consistent pace, not over-thinking or second-guessing oneself.

front-hand english (FHE): same as back-hand english (BHE), except the front (bridge) hand is moved to pivot the stick. FHE is more appropriate for low-squirt cues, where the amount of squirt and required pivoting can be small. BHE would require too large of a bridge length.

frozen ball: a ball in contact with (touching) another ball or a cushion.

frozen cue ball shot: a shot where the CB is frozen to a legal OB, where the CB can be struck at any angle (even toward the OB) with a legal stroke.

full-ball hit: a direct hit with no cut angle.

full hit: same as "thick hit."

fundamentals: the basic or essentials skills (e.g., good stance, grip, bridge, and stroke) required to be a good player.

furniture: slang term for the balls on the table (e.g., "He really rearranged the furniture with that wild shot").

game: unit of play, from break to a win or loss, that makes up a match.

game ball: ball required to win a particular game (e.g., the 8-ball in the game of eight-ball).

games on the wire: "spot" or "handicap" where a player is given a number of free games in a "race" to a certain number of games.

gap: small distance between two balls or between a ball and rail.

GB: ghost ball.

GC: "Gold Crown" ... a popular pool table model made by Brunswick.

gearing outside english: the amount of outside english that results in no sliding between the CB and OB during contact. Instead, during contact, the CB rolls on the OB like two meshing gears. The result is no throw.

gearing spin: CB and OB sidespin in opposite directions during contact with no relative sliding motion between the ball surfaces (like two meshing gears).

George: a "hustlers" name for a good player (e.g., he is "George").

get an angle: same as "leave an angle."

get back in line: go from being "out of line" to back "in line."

getting down: agreeing to a big money match.

ghost: your opponent in "playing the ghost" drills.

ghost ball: imaginary aiming target where the cue ball needs to impact the object ball so the line through their centers (the impact line) is in the direction of the desired object ball path.

give the X: When playing 9-ball, if you “give” your opponent the X-ball (e.g., the 7-ball), then the opponent wins by pocketing the X-ball (e.g., the 7-ball) or the 9-ball. This is a form of “weight.”

give the X and out: When playing 9-ball, if you “give” your opponent the X-ball (e.g., the 7-ball), then the opponent wins by pocketing the X-ball or any higher-number ball (e.g., the 7-ball, 8-ball, or 9-ball). This is a form of “weight.”

glove: slick fabric covering the hand, or a portion of the hand, to allow the cue to slide more easily and consistently in the bridge hand.

go off: to lose lots or all of one’s money gambling.

goalie: a player that never scores, but does whatever he or she can to prevent others from scoring.

GOE: gearing outside english.

golden break: 9-ball break where the 9-ball is pocketed (on the “snap”) for the win.

golf: pool game or drill where the goal is to pocket a single object ball in each pocket with the fewest number of “strokes.” The cue ball is placed on the head spot and the object ball is placed on the foot spot before each “hole.” Three rounds to each of the six pockets in order (e.g., clockwise starting at the bottom-left corner pocket) comprise a full “18-hole” game.

good hit: a legal shot where the cue ball hits the object ball first.

goose egg: slang for zero (e.g., when no games are won against an opponent in a match).

grand: \$1000.

green: the table cloth; or money.

[grip](#): the clutch of the right hand (for a right-handed player) on the butt of the cue, used to support and impart force to the cue during a stroke.

group: set of seven balls (stripes or solids) one must pocket first in a game of eight-ball.

grinder: a deliberate, straightforward, uncreative, but dedicated player.

gulley table: a table with an automatic ball-return system, where all pocketed balls end up in a collection bin at the foot of the table.

gutter: same as “rail groove.”

half-ball hit: see “½-ball hit.”

halves: European term for “stripes.” See also: “wholes.”

HAMB: “Hit a Million Balls,” referring to what some people think is required to get good at aiming (i.e., “HAMB” is the only reliable “aiming system”).

[hand bridge](#): the sliding support created with your hand to guide the cue.

handicap: modified rules or scoring or wagering designed to allow players of different skill levels to compete more equally in a league, tournament, or gambling match.

hanger: an object ball sitting in the jaws or hanging over the lip of a pocket.

HAPS: “How to Aim Pool Shots” instructional DVD series.

head cushion: the cushion on the “head rail.”

head rail: the short rail at the end of the table from where you break.

head spot: the spot (sometimes marked) in the middle of the head string.

head string: the imaginary line at the head of the table, behind which you must break.

heart: will to win, mental toughness, and ability to overcome pressure.

heart of the pocket: dead center of the pocket.

heat: competitive pressure.

helping english: same as "outside english" since it reduces throw away from the pocket (and can even throw the ball toward the pocket). The phrase "helping english" is also sometimes used to refer to CB english that transfers sidespin to the OB in an attempt to help the ball enter a pocket off a point or wall (e.g., using right english to transfer left sidespin to an OB so it will be more like to go in when it hits the right point or wall of a pocket).

high balls: same as stripes.

high roller: a gambler who likes to play for large stakes.

high run: the highest number of consecutive balls made by a player in a game of straight pool.

high-speed video (HSV): video clip shot with a special high-frame-rate video camera that can be played back in super slow motion.

hill: term used to indicate that a player is one game away from winning a match.

hill-hill: when both players in a match only need to win one game to win the match.

hit: the action of one ball contacting another (usually the CB into an OB).

hold-up english: same as "reverse english."

hold shot: cut shot where you use SIT and/or draw to limit cue ball motion.

hook: hide a ball behind another ball or point of a pocket; or same as "fish."

hooked: same as "snookered."

Hopkins Q Skills: a practice and rating drill developed by Allen Hopkins using a combination of straight pool and rotation.

horizontal plane: the imaginary plane parallel to the table surface passing through the cue ball. Adjusting the cue position left and right of the cue ball center, in the horizontal plane, creates sidespin.

horse: player on which a person has money betted.

hot seat: position at the end of the winner bracket in a double-elimination tournament, waiting to face the winner of the loser's bracket in the finals.

hot seat match: the match in which the winner goes to the "hot seat" and the loser goes to the finals of the loser's bracket.

house cue: a cue (often of poor quality and in bad condition) available for play at a bar or pool hall.

house pro: designated top player (usually a professional) who gives lessons and/or runs tournaments at a pool hall.

house rules: set of rules at a particular establishment by which you are expected to play.

HSV: see “high-speed video.”

hug the rail: when a ball rolls along a rail cushion.

hustle: con an opponent into to gambling on a losing proposition.

hustler: a pool player who deceives potential suckers into gambling and losing money (i.e., one who hustles). The deception usually involves concealing one’s true ability.

IE: inside english.

iggy: an ignorant gambler.

illegal: involving a “foul.”

illegal marking: using chalk, powder, moisture, or any other means to mark a spot on the table cloth or rails as an aiming aid. This is not allowed.

immediate roll impact height: same as “natural roll impact height.”

impact height: the height of the part of the rail cushion that contacts a rebounding ball.

impact line: the imaginary line through the cue ball and object ball centers at impact (i.e., the line through the centers of the ghost-ball and object ball). The object ball moves along this line after impact (unless there is throw).

impact point: the point of contact between the cue ball and object ball during impact.

in hand: when the cue ball can be placed anywhere you want on the table or in the “kitchen.”

in jail: see “jail.”

in line: not “out of line.”

in stroke: in the zone, or in good form, playing successfully with little apparent effort.

in-and-safe: a special safety shot in the game of 8-ball, where you declare “safety” before the shot, and you return control of the table to your opponent after your shot, even if you legally pocket one of your object balls. The purpose is to leave the cue ball in a difficult position for your opponent.

in off: pocket a ball off another (i.e., a kiss or carom shot).

in the drink: same as “in the pocket;” or, in case of the CB, a scratch (e.g., “That ball is wired to go in the drink.”).

in the kitchen: same as “behind the head string.”

in the zone: playing a peak level with little apparent effort and no or few mistakes.

infraction: same as “foul.”

inlay: decorative inset in the butt of the cue.

inning: a player’s turn at the table, which ends with a miss, foul, or win.

inside cut: term used to describe a bank shot where the cue ball hits the object ball on the side toward the bank direction, relative to the aiming line. The cue ball imparts natural (running) cut-induced spin to the object ball.

inside english (IE): sidespin created by hitting the cue ball on the side towards the direction of the shot (i.e. on the “inside” of the cue ball). For example, when the cue ball strikes an object ball on the left side, creating a cut shot to the right, right sidespin would be called “inside english.”

insurance ball: An easily pocketed ball (e.g., a ball in the jaws of a pocket) that you leave untouched until you need it to get out of trouble (e.g., when you create poor position after a shot, or when hitting a break-out shot).

intentional foul: a deliberate foul used to give you a strategic advantage.

interference: any outside action that inappropriately affects or disrupts a player or the balls on the table before or during a shot.

IPT: International Pool Tour.

"J" stroke: pendulum (pinned elbow) motion before CB contact, elbow-drop piston (straight-line) motion after CB contact. If you trace the path of the grip hand, it looks like a "J" turned sideways. The curved part is from the pendulum motion, and the flat part is from the straight follow-through.

jab stroke: a short punch-like stroke.

jack up: elevate the butt end of the cue.

jacked up: slang phrase used to refer to an elevated cue.

jackson: double sawbuck (\$20).

jail: “in jail” is the same as “snookered.”

jam up: when a player is shooting very well.

jaw a ball: miss by rattling the ball in the jaws of the a pocket.

jaws: the inside walls of a pocket.

jellyroll: a very favorable roll of the cue ball (e.g., when it “rolls off” or takes an extra fraction of a roll at the end of travel) to create perfect position for the next shot. Also, payment to somebody who helps you win money (e.g., in a gambling set-up, or in arranging a match).

joint: the mechanical connection (usually threaded) between the butt and shaft ends of a two-piece cue.

juice: slang for lots of speed or spin (e.g., I really “juiced” that one up with spin); or, a payment (e.g., to a backer).

jump cue: shorter, lighter cue with a hard tip designed to make jump shots easier.

jump draw: a jump shot with bottom spin causing the CB to draw off the OB.

jump massé: a jump shot hit off center causing the CB to curve after landing.

jump shot (legal): a shot in which the cue ball is bounced off the table surface, with a downward stroke, to jump over an obstacle ball.

jump shot (illegal; AKA “scoop shot”): an illegal shot in which the cue ball is lifted off the table surface to jump over an obstacle ball by hitting the cue ball well below center.

jump stick: a special cue, usually shorter and lighter, designed specifically for shooting jump shots.

jumped ball: a ball that has gone airborne and remained off the playing surface.

jumping up: the opposite of “staying down.”

Katy bar the door: old-fashioned phrase indicating there is trouble ahead.

key ball: the ball before the final or critical ball of the game, used to get position on the final or critical shot.

key shot: a shot that moves balls or creates good position for clearing the remainder of the balls.

kick: cue ball rebound off a cushion. It is also a snooker or British term used to describe cling, and sometimes CB hop.

kick shot: a shot in which the cue ball bounces off one or more rails before contacting the object ball.

kill shot: a shot where you use draw or reverse english to limit the cue ball's motion after object ball or rail contact. (see also: "hold shot")

kiss (AKA carom): contact between balls.

kiss-back shot: a shot using a "double kiss" to bounce the cue ball straight back from an object ball close or frozen to a rail, leaving the object ball close to its original positions (e.g., for a safety).

kiss shot (or "OB kiss shot"): a shot where an object ball is deflected off another and then into a pocket.

kitchen: slang term for the area behind the head string from where the cue ball is shot during a break.

knock: when a player declines a money game because a 3rd party convinces the player he or she can't win.

knocker: a person who warns players about the "speed" of a gambler so the players won't enter money games, which they would probably lose.

knuckle: the tip of a rail cushion bordering a pocket opening (i.e., pocket "point").

lady's aide: old phrase for a "mechanical bridge."

lag shot: a skill shot used where each player must shoot a ball from behind the head string and return it as close as possible to the head rail after bouncing off the foot rail.

lag for break: use a "lag shot" to determine who breaks first.

lamb: same as "fish."

lamb killer: a gambler known for beating less skillful players for money.

large: gambling term for \$1,000 (e.g., 5 large = \$5,000).

last-pocket 8-ball: a variation of 8-ball where you are required to pocket the 8-ball in the same pocket as the last ball in your group.

layered tip: cue tip punched from a stack of many thin sheets of leather glued and pressed together.

laying down: when a player appears to throw a game or match on purpose, usually when it benefits the player financially (e.g., through some hustle or behind-the-scenes betting arrangement).

league: organized and regular competition among a group of teams.

league rules: the set of rules governing play for a specific league, usually based on the World Standardized Rules.

leaner: same as "hanger."

leave: the position of the balls after a player's shot. A "good" leave is one in which the ball positions for the next shot are desirable.

leave an angle: control cue ball position after a shot so there is a cut angle on the next target object ball, creating more opportunities for controlling cue ball position for the follow-on shot.

left english: clockwise sidespin imparted to the cue ball by striking it to the left of center.

left spin: same as “left english.”

legal shot: shot in which there is no foul and the cue ball strikes a legal object ball first and either an object ball is pocketed or some ball hits a rail after contact with the object ball.

legal stroke: a forward motion of the cue causing the tip (and only the tip) to hit the CB with a non-prolonged contact.

lemon: a weaker player conned into believing that he or she might be better than a gambling opponent (i.e., a player that is not as good as they think they are).

lemonading: conning a “lemon” by not playing to your ability.

life line: an opportunity given (usually by accident) to an opponent who is down.

lights out: phrase use to describe someone playing at the top of his or her game.

line: a report on how well a stranger plays.

line of action: same as the “impact line.”

line of aim: same as “aiming line.”

line of centers: the imaginary line through the centers of the ghost-ball and the object ball (i.e., the “impact line”).

lip: the edge of the pocket hole.

little balls: same as “solids.”

little white donut: see “white donut.”

LOA: “line of aim.”

lock: same as “nuts.”

locksmith: a player known for gambling only when he or she is the clear favorite.

long: when a ball rolls too far, or when a shot misses beyond the target.

long bank: a bank shot off a short rail to the opposite end of the table.

long rail: same as “side rail.”

long string: imaginary line through the “head spot,” “center spot,” and “foot spot.”

loop bridge: same as “closed bridge.”

loser’s bracket: the portion of the chart or bracket you go to when you lose a match in a double-elimination tournament.

losing hazard: English billiards terms for pocketing the cue ball by caroming off another ball.

loss of turn: when a player commits a foul and turns over play to the opponent.

lounge lizard: same as “railbird.”

lot: non-skill procedure (e.g., coin flip or number draw) used to determine starting player and/or playing order.

low balls: same as “solids.”

LD: low-deflection (e.g., a LD shaft).

lengthen the angle: use slow speed roll or running english to increase the rebound angle of a bank or kick shot, so the ball goes “longer” than normal.

low-deflection cue: same as “low-squirt cue.”

low-deflection shaft: same as “low-squirt shaft.”

low-squirt cue: a cue with a low-squirt shaft.

low-squirt shaft: a shaft that causes less squirt than typical shafts.

lucky roll: situation where a ball rolls just the right amount or in just the right direction to get perfect position, usually when not planned (e.g., where “table roll off” makes a ball curve just the right amount to a player’s advantage).

makable region: same as “shape zone.”

margin for error: same as “margin of error.”

margin of error: a measure of how much angle, tip position, or speed error you can have, while still pocketing the object ball and getting position for the next shot.

mark: a hustler’s victim.

married: same as “frozen” (e.g., he got married to a ball).

marshmallow break: slang for “soft break.”

massé: significant cue ball curve caused by a downward off-center hit with an elevated cue.

massé cue (pronounced mah-SAY): shorter, heavier, and stiffer cue some people use for massé shots.

massé shot: a shot where the cue ball’s path curves significantly (see “massé”).

massé, after-collision: see “after-collision massé.”

massé spin: spin about an axis in the direction of a ball’s motion (e.g., like the body-roll of an airplane or an Eskimo-roll of a kayak). This type of spin causes the ball’s path to curve (e.g., with a massé shot).

match: set of games (e.g., against an opponent in a tournament).

matching up: negotiating before a money game.

mechanical bridge (AKA “crutch,” “rake,” or simply “bridge”): a special stick with an end attachment that helps guide the cue, in place of a hand bridge. A mechanical bridge is used when the cue ball cannot be reached comfortably with a hand bridge.

middle: snooker or British term for a “side pocket.”

milk dud tip: cue tip made by soaking a “solid tip” in milk then compressing it to a desired hardness.

miscue: a stroke in which the cue tip does not establish good contact with the cue ball, resulting in poor transmission of force and an unpredictable cue ball path.

miss: failure to pocket the intended ball.

miss on the pro side: Novice players often hit cut shots too full and hit bank shots too short. When you hit a cut shot too thin or bank a ball long (which many would bank short), you are said to have missed on the “pro” side because a professional player tries to compensate for effects a novice player might not know about. See also: “pro side of the pocket.”

MOFUDAT: the “MOst Famous and Useful Drill of All Time” involving shooting the CB straight up and down the table to verify center-ball alignment, accurate aim, and a consistent stroke.

money added: a tournament where the host contributes money to the prize pool.

money ball: a ball, which when legally pocketed, results in victory.

money game: a game played for money.

money match: a match played for money.

money shot: a key shot in a game that, if pocketed, will usually result in a victory.

money table: table at a pool hall reserved for serious gamblers and usually kept in good condition.

monster: very strong player that everybody is afraid to play or gamble with.

Mosconi Cup: annual international pool competition between selected teams of pros from Europe and the United States.

mud ball: heavy cue ball used in an old “bar box.”

mud rack: a bad rack of balls that does not disperse very well.

mushroomed tip: a cue tip smashed out on the sides.

nameplate: label on the center of the foot rail indicating the manufacturer of the table.

nap: cloth fibers and fuzz that rise above the playing surface and have directional properties.

napped cloth: an old-style, thick, and fuzzy table cloth that often has directional properties.

natural: a shot easy to execute with a normal stroke, requiring no english.

natural angle: the cue ball direction predicted by the 30° rule; also, bank shot requiring no cut angle (i.e., it is “lined up” perfectly).

natural english: same as “running english;” or, the amount of running english that results in no change in spin, and no lengthening or shortening of the angle, after rebound.

natural outside english: same as “gearing outside english.”

natural pivot length: the distance from the cue ball to the bridge that will result in squirt canceling the cue pivot angle (e.g., when using back-hand english). If your bridge is at the natural pivot point of the cue and you are lined up for a center ball hit, the cue ball will still go straight even if you pivot the cue to apply sidespin (intentionally or unintentionally).

natural pivot point: same as “pivot point.”

natural position: “shape” that results from a slow, natural-roll shot with no english.

natural roll: rolling motion of a ball where there is no sliding between the ball and the table cloth.

natural roll impact height (AKA “center of percussion” or “immediate roll impact height”): the height at which you can strike the cue ball so it rolls without slipping (i.e., it has natural roll) immediately. This height is at 7/10 of the cue ball’s diameter above the table surface.

near point: the pocket rail cushion point closest to the object ball.

near rail: the rail cushion adjacent to a pocket along which the object ball is approaching.

net cue ball deflection (AKA “squerve” or “effective squirt”): the net effect of “squirt” and “swerve” (i.e., the cue ball deflection off the aiming line at object ball impact).

nickel: \$500 (see also: C note, dime, fin, Sawbuck).

nip draw: short, jabbed draw stroke used to avoid a double-hit of the cue ball when the object ball is close.

nip stroke: a stroke with little or no follow through.

nine-ball: see “9-ball.”

nit: person who wants too much of a handicap, or complains about the fairness of a wager. A nit is usually a better “talker” than a “player.”

NOE: natural outside english.

normal roll: same as “natural roll.”

[normal video \(NV\)](#): video clip shot with a digital video camera played back at regular speed.

NPL: natural pivot length.

NPR: non-pool related, used to label online discussion forums on pool websites covering non-pool topics.

nurse: a delicate shot where the balls are hit and kept close to a cushion.

nuts: game or situation where you have no chance of losing.

nut artist: same as “locksmith.”

[NV](#): see “normal video.”

OB: object ball.

object ball: the ball to be legally struck by the cue ball, or the ball to be pocketed.

object ball angle error: the angle between the actual object ball impact line (path) and the desired target line direction.

object ball swerve: very slight change in OB angle caused by masse spin transferred from the CB in a draw or follow shot.

object balls: the balls other than the cue ball.

OE: outside english.

off the wall: a “house cue.”

offset: same as “pocket center offset.”

on serve: in an alternating break format, when a player’s score is equal to the number of times the player has broken (as with service games in a tennis match).

on the cuff: money won but not paid yet.

on the fifty yard-line: a phrase used to indicate that the cue ball is in an awkward position, where it is equally difficult to pocket the object ball in either a corner or side (or other corner) pocket (i.e., the cue ball isn't in good position for either pocket).

on the hill: when you need to win only one more game to win a match.

on the lemon: not showing your true "speed."

on the snap: making the winning ball on the break shot.

on the square: playing honestly with no devious advantage (i.e., not "hustling" or "sharking").

on the wire: already scored or awarded as a handicap (e.g., by sliding beads on the "wire").

on tilt: being upset and maybe using bad judgment due to a previous loss.

one-ball hell: situation in 8-ball where you only have one ball remaining and your opponent has many, making it very easy for your opponent to run out and/or play easy safeties against you until he or she is able to run out.

one-hole: slang for "one-pocket."

one-pocket: a pool game where each player has a designated pocket in which he or she must pocket more than half of the balls to win.

one-stroking: stroking the cue only once, without warm-up strokes, often because of nerves or over-confidence.

open break: a break shot where four or more balls must be driven to a cushion for the break to be legal.

open bridge: a hand bridge that has no finger over the top of the cue. The cue glides on a v-shape formed by the thumb and the base of the index finger.

open table: the condition in 8-ball (e.g., after the break), where no player has pocketed a called shot yet and "stripes" and "solids" are not yet assigned.

open the angle: same as "lengthen the angle."

orange crush: a gambling handicap ("weight") where you give your opponent the break and the 5 (see "give the X"), or the break and the 5-and-out (see "give the X and out"), in every game.

out: there is no doubt you will run the remaining balls (as in: "you are out"); also, a good option out of a safety (as in: "you have an out").

out of line: poor CB location resulting from poor position play on the previous shot.

out of stroke: when a player is off their game, not playing very well.

out shot: difficult shot that, if made, should result in a victory.

outside cut: term used to describe a bank shot where the cue ball hits the object ball on the side away from the bank direction, relative to the aiming line. The cue ball imparts reverse cut-induced spin on the object ball.

outside english (OE): sidespin created by hitting the cue ball on the side away from the direction of the shot (i.e. on the "outside" of the cue ball). For example, when the cue ball strikes an object ball on the left side, creating a cut shot to the right, left sidespin would be called "outside english."

over cut: hitting the object ball with too large of a cut angle, hitting the ball too thinly.

over-spin: topspin more than the natural roll amount, causing the cue ball to accelerate forward.

pack: a large group of balls close together and/or touching; or a collection of games (e.g., he ran a “six pack”).

PAF: “pocket angle factor.”

parallel english: aiming technique when using sidespin where the cue is placed parallel to the line of aim for a center-ball hit (with no sidespin) resulting in no compensation for CB deflection (e.g., for shots where swerve is expected to cancel the effects of squirt and throw, resulting in no net CB deflection, or where the amount of resulting pocket cheat is acceptable).

park the cue ball: have the cue ball stop near the center of the table after a break shot.

partners: same as “doubles.”

pause: the period of time when the cue is held motionless between the final back swing and final forward swing of a stroke, used to prevent a rushed or jerky transition.

pattern play: strategically playing the balls in a certain order based on position and groupings.

PBIA: Professional Billiard Instructors Association.

pea: same as “pill.”

pearl: cue ball.

pendulum stroke: stroke where the elbow does not drop, resulting in a pendulum-like motion of the forearm.

percentage english: a measure for specifying how much english is being used. It is relative to the maximum allowed amount of english. At tip offsets larger than this limit (about the half ball radius point), a miscue results. 100% english is at the miscue limit, 50% is half that amount of tip offset, etc.

PhD: Pool Hall Degree; Pilled Higher and Deeper; Doctorate of Philosophy.

phenolic tip: hard, synthetic cue tip used on jump cues.

pigeon: a “fish” that continues to play and lose to an opponent of known “speed.”

pill: small numbered ball drawn from a shaken bottle in some games.

pill pool: a 15-ball game played with three or more players. Each player draws a small bead (“pill”) numbered 1 through 15 from a bottle. The drawn numbers are kept secret. If you pocket your numbered ball before an opponent does, you win. As with 9-ball, the lowest numbered ball must be hit first and you remain at the table as long as you pocket balls.

pinch shot: a soft draw shot to try to “hold” the CB when there is a small cut angle; or a bank shot where sidespin is used to change the OB angle.

pinch the pocket: cheat the pocket.

pinky: slang for a male players wife or girlfriend.

pinned elbow: described a stroke with no elbow drop (e.g., a “pendulum stroke”).

piqué shot (pronounced pee-KAY): a highly elevated draw shot (i.e., a massé shot with no sidespin).

piston stroke: stroke where the elbow drops, allowing for the cue to remain along the same line during the entire stroke.

pit: small dent or depression in the cloth caused by a ball being driven down into the table.

pivot length: same as “natural pivot length.”

pivot point: the point on the cue where, if you bridge there and use back-hand or front-hand english, squirt will be cancelled by the stick pivoting motion. See “natural pivot length.”

Plan B: a backup plan used if your original plan fails.

plant: snooker or British term for a combination shot.

player: a person with good skills and a good game.

playing the ghost: phrase used to describe rating drills where your opponent is a “ghost” that doesn’t miss. As soon as you miss, the rack is over. Your score for the rack is based on how many balls you make before you miss. Multiple racks of 9-ball, with ball-in-hand after each break, is a common format to use.

PAF: “pocket shelf factor.”

Plus Two System: same as “Plus System.”

Plus System: a diamond system for aiming multiple-rail kick shots where a short rail is hit first.

pocket: opening in the corners and sides of a pool table serving as targets for the object balls.

pocket a ball: cause an object ball to go into a pocket.

pocket billiards: same as “pool.”

pocket center offset (AKA “offset”): the distance between the effective pocket center and the actual pocket center.

pocket centerline: the imaginary line through the center of the pocket in the straight-in direction.

pocket mouth: the opening between the cushion points of a pocket.

pocket shelf: the drop-off into the pocket cut out of the table slate.

pocket shim: see “shim.”

pocket angle factor (PAF): percentage measure of a pocket’s wall angles relative to a standard pocket. It is used in the calculation of the “table difficulty factor.”

pocket shelf factor (PLF): percentage measure of a pocket’s “shelf depth” relative to a standard pocket. It is used in the calculation of the “table difficulty factor.”

pocket size factor (PSF): percentage measure of a pocket’s point-to-point mouth size relative to a standard pocket. It is used in the calculation of the “table difficulty factor.”

pocket speed: the slowest you can hit a shot and still pocket an object ball. The object ball is given just enough speed to reach and drop into the pocket.

pocket walls (AKA “jaws”): the angled facings bordering a pocket opening.

point: same as “knuckle”; or, the value for a successful shot, contributing to a score; or, the same as “prong.”

pool (AKA “pocket billiards”): billiard games that use a table with pockets.

pool gods: mythical forces that control the outcomes of shot, games, or matches.

position (AKA “shape”): the placement of the balls (especially the cue ball) relative to the next planned shot.

position control: controlled and effective “position play.”

position play: using controlled cue ball speed and english to achieve good cue ball position for subsequent shots.

post up: give wagers to a third party to hold before starting a gambling match to prevent an “air barrel” (e.g., when the players don’t know or trust each other).

pot: snooker or British term used to refer to pocketing a ball.

power break: a break shot, hit with a lot of force, resulting in active scatter of the racked balls.

power draw: a draw shot where significant ball speed and spin are required (e.g., when the CB and OB are separated a long distance, and you want to draw the CB back a long distance).

power follow: same as “force follow.”

powder: talc or other fine particle substance used to reduce friction between a hand bridge and the cue.

pre-shot routine: sequence of steps you go through in preparation to aim and shoot a shot.

pro: professional.

pro side of the pocket: the side of the pocket to miss (by under-cutting or over-cutting the shot); so if you do miss, you leave the ball in a favorable position for you (or an unfavorable position for your opponent). See also: “miss on the pro side.”

problem ball: a ball that is difficult or impossible to pocket unless it or some other ball is moved first.

professional: top tournament player who plays for a living.

progressive practice: an approach to drills where the difficulty level matches the players ability and increases in difficulty with skill level.

prong: decorative, pointy triangle of wood in the butt of a cue.

proposition shot: offer of a wager on an unusual or difficult shot that a “mark” might think is unlikely to be made.

PSF: “pocket size factor.”

PSR: pre-shot routine.

push: “push out” or “push shot.”

push out: a special shot allowed after the break in 9-ball where you can hit the cue ball anywhere on the table and your opponent has the option to shoot the next shot or have you shoot instead.

push shot: a shot in which the cue tip remains in contact with the cue ball longer than is appropriate for a normal stroke and legal shot.

put your money where your mouth is: place a wager on a game instead just talking.

pyramid: same as “rack” or “triangle” or any triangular formation of racked balls.

Pyramid of Progress: the term I use to describe the pool-skills-development pyramid used to illustrate the successive levels of competencies required to become a good pool player.

pyramid spot: same as “foot spot.”

Q Skils: see “Hopkins Q skills.”

quarter-ball hit: see “1/4-ball hit.”

quick draw: cut shot draw action where the CB draws back from the tangent line as soon as possible. This is achieved with a high spin-to-speed ratio created by hitting the CB as low as possible with moderate speed.

quiet eyes: focusing on a target with still eyes for a period of time (e.g., to get a visual lock on your aim and/or tip position).

race to X: a match decided by who reaches a given number of games or points (X) first.

rack: triangle or diamond-shaped device used to position the balls prior to a break. The term can also refer to the group of balls after they have been racked.

rack of skills: the term I use to refer to the pool skills rack-of-balls illustration corresponding to the "Pyramid of Progress."

rails: the sides of the table's upper frame (usually decorative wood) that support the cushions that border the playing surface. The term "rail" is also used to refer to the cushion off which the balls rebound.

railbird: a person that watches or gambles on a game without playing.

rail bridge: a hand bridge where the cue slides on the top of the rail, with fingers used to support the stick sideways.

rail cut shot: a cut shot where the object ball is frozen or close to the rail cushion along which the ball is cut.

rail dribble: CB stall close to a rail caused by overspin resulting from a firm, small-cut-angle follow shot close to a cushion.

rail impact height: the height at which the rail cushion makes contact with a rebounding ball. This height is usually slightly lower than the "natural roll impact height."

rail-induced english: sidespin imparted to a ball by a rail when the ball approaches and rebounds off the rail at an angle.

rail rebound efficiency: the ability of the rail cushion to spring back and preserve a banked ball's speed.

rail-first shot: a shot where the cue ball is kicked off a rail in close proximity to the object ball instead of hitting the object ball directly.

rail groove: an imaginary line parallel to the rail where the base of a ball sits when it is frozen to the cushion. It is sometimes visible on a worn table.

rail shot: same as "rail cut-shot;" or a shot where the CB is frozen to, or close to, the cushion.

rail throwback: the term I use to describe the reduction in bank rebound angle due to sideways compression of the rail, especially evident at high speed.

rail track: same as "rail groove."

railbird: a person who likes to watch pool matches (especially when gambling is involved).

rainbow crush: 9-ball gambling handicap or "weight" where your opponent gets to break and wins by pocketing any ball.

rake: slang term for "mechanical bridge."

rating: score or designation used to designate or measure a player's ability.

rattle: the multiple rail cushion collisions that can occur against the inner walls of a pocket that can prevent an object ball from being pocketed. It occurs when the object ball glances the near rail or rail point bordering the pocket.

rearrange the furniture: move many balls on the table, usually with a fast-speed “break-out shot” where you are trying to improve the layout of groups of balls that are clustered or in bad positions.

rebound angle (AKA “angle of reflection”): the angle at which a ball rebounds from a rail, measured from the perpendicular to the rail. A ball heading straight away from a rail has a rebound angle of zero.

referee: person in charge of enforcing the rules and making judgment calls during a match.

regulation size table: a standard 4 1/2’ by 9’ tournament pool table.

rerack: rack the balls again after an illegal break (or by choice in 8-ball if the 8-ball is sunk on the break).

respot: to place an object ball back on the table (e.g., after it is jumped off the table or illegally pocketed, in some games), usually on the foot spot (or directly behind balls already in the foot spot area).

rest: snooker and British term for the “mechanical bridge.”

reverse bank: same as an “outside cut” bank.

reverse english: sidespin where the cue ball slows and has a smaller rebound angle after hitting a rail (i.e., the opposite of “natural” or “running” english). The spin is in the direction opposite from the “rolling” direction along the rail during contact.

ride the cash: same as “ride the cheese.”

ride the cheese: try to pocket the money ball early in a game or with a desperate shot.

right english: counterclockwise sidespin imparted to the cue ball by striking it to the right of center.

right spin: same as “right english.”

ring balls: same as the “stripes.”

ring game: a money or point game played with more than two players who alternate innings at the table.

road player: a hustler or player who travels around playing pool for money.

roadmap: a table layout with well-placed balls, making for an easy-to-visualize and easy-to-execute run-out.

rock: the cue ball.

roll: same as “natural roll;” see also: “rolls” and “bad roll.”

roll off: change in course of a slow moving ball caused by a non-level or irregular playing surface.

roll through: same as “run through.”

rolls: good and bad “breaks” in a game.

rotation: a game where all 15 balls must be played in numerical order.

round: a level of competition in a tournament after which some players are eliminated.

round robin: a tournament or bracket in which every player plays every other player.

RSB: rec.sport.billiard online discussion group, which was one of the first online pool forums.

rules: guidelines, requirements, regulations, specifications, and procedures for how a specific game is played.

run: a series of balls pocketed in succession during one turn.

run out: make the remaining balls on the table in succession to win a game.

run the rack: same as “run the table.”

run the table: same as “break and run.”

run through: a small amount of follow created by a near stun shot with slight topspin roll at OB impact.

running english (AKA “natural english”): sidespin that causes the cue ball to speed up after bouncing off a rail, also resulting in a wider (longer) rebound angle. The spin is in the direction that results in “rolling” along the rail during contact.

safety: defensive position play shot where you leave your opponent in a difficult situation.

safety break: a defensive break where you try to leave your opponent without a shot (e.g., in straight pool).

SAM: “Supplemental Aiming Method.” An aiming method based of several fixed points of aim, recommended by many BCA instructors.

sandbag: to unethically disguise one’s level of ability, or intentionally miss shots, to help improve one’s handicap.

Sawbuck: \$10 (see also: C note, dime, fin, nickel).

scoop shot: an illegal jump shot executed by hitting very low on the cue ball.

score: the current games-won or balls-pocketed count in a game or match; or to win a lot of money.

Scotch doubles: game or tournament format where two players on a team alternate shots during each inning (see also: “doubles”).

scratch: pocketing the cue ball by accident during a shot.

scratch shot: a shot where a scratch is likely or unavoidable.

screw: snooker or British term used for a draw shot or bottom spin.

scuffer: tool used to roughen the tip.

scuffler: a not-so-successful hustler, or a gambler who hangs around bars or pool rooms looking for “suckers.”

security ball: same as “insurance ball.”

security valve: same as “insurance ball.”

seed: a player’s preliminary ranking and/or placement in a tournament.

sell the farm: same as “sell out.”

sell out: a bad shot that results in loss of a game or match.

semi-pro: solid player with enough ability to compete and do well in large tournaments.

service break: see “break of serve.”

session: collection of games or matches, usually for money.

set: a collection of games; or a snooker or British term for a frozen combo shot; also, refers to the stroke-preparation position where the cue is held still, close to the cue ball, to verify aim and the desired cue-ball contact point.

set a ball: knock down on a ball (e.g., with another ball) to create a mark and indentation in the cloth to make it easier for the ball to stay in place and be re-spotted in the same position later.

sewer: the pocket (usually used in disgust when scratching).

shaft: the bridge end of the cue, to which the ferrule and tip are attached.

shaft stiffness: a measure of how rigid a shaft is. The stiffer it is, the more force it takes to deflect the shaft at its tip.

shape: same as "position."

shape zone: the area within which you can leave the cue ball after the current shot to be able to pocket the next target ball.

shaper: an abrasive tool used to grind down the tip to a desired radius.

shark: an unscrupulous player that disguises his or her ability with the goal of making money from an unsuspecting gambler; or, the practice of distracting your opponent while he or she is shooting; or, a very good player.

shelf depth: the distance from the point-to-point mouth of a pocket to the rim of the pocket opening.

shim: thin slice of material added under the cloth of the walls of a pocket to make the pocket opening smaller for more challenging conditions.

shimmed pockets: pockets with the openings made smaller with shims for tougher playing conditions.

shooting the lights out: playing extremely well.

short: when a ball doesn't roll enough, or when a shot misses on the close side of the target.

short rack: a rack of less than 15 balls (e.g., used in the games of 9-ball and 10-ball).

short rail: same as "end rail."

short side shape: position to shoot a ball, usually close to a rail, into a more-distant pocket (i.e., not to the natural or closest pocket).

shorten: use fast speed or reverse english to reduce the rebound angle of a bank or kick shot.

shortstop: a solid player who can be beaten only by top players.

shot: the action of hitting the cue ball into an object ball with the goal of pocketing a ball.

shot clock: a timer used to limit how much time a player can use before shooting.

shot maker: a person good at making difficult shots.

shutout: to win a match without losing any games or points to your opponent.

side: snooker or British term used for english (sidespin).

side action: gambling amongst spectators.

side pocket: a pocket in the middle of the long rail.

side rail (AKA long rail): a long rail having a side pocket between two corner pockets.

sidespin: clockwise or counterclockwise horizontal plane rotation of a ball.

sighting: eye alignment and line of focus used to best visualize and achieve the desired aiming line.

single-elimination: a tournament in which a player is eliminated after a single loss.

sink: same as “pocket” a ball.

SIS: spin-induced spin.

SIT: spin-induced throw.

sitter: same as “hanger.”

six pack: six games run in a row.

skid: term used to describe the sliding motion of an object ball due to throw or cling.

skill shot: a difficult shot requiring more ability than a typical shot.

skittles: easy “roadmap” layout of balls (as if the balls were tasty candy waiting to be eaten).

skrew: see “screw.”

slate: the material (usually machined metamorphic rock slate) beneath the table cloth providing the base for the playing surface.

slick cloth: cloth with low sliding friction (i.e., the CB can slide longer before developing roll).

sliding: relative motion between the bottom of a moving ball and the cloth resulting in friction. Sliding occurs any time the ball is not rolling naturally.

slip: motion between the base of the ball and the cloth (creating sliding friction).

slip stroke: the practice of sliding the grip hand along the cue during the stroke.

slop: balls made by accident.

slop shot: a shot with no clear objective, usually hit hard in the hopes that something might go in.

slow cloth: cloth with lots of rolling resistance (i.e., the CB doesn’t travel very far before slowing).

slow-roll shot: a shot hit very softly, where the cue ball rolls almost immediately, regardless of cue tip offset. Table roll-off can be more of an issue with these shots.

slug rack: racked balls with gaps resulting in a terrible break.

small balls: same as “solids.”

snap: same as “break.”

Sneaky Pete: a high-quality cue made to look like a house cue, potentially used to hustle.

snooker: the billiards game played with 21 object balls (14 reds and 7 colors) on a 12’ table. The balls are smaller and the pockets are also smaller with a rounded opening.

snookered (AKA “hooked”): the condition when the cue ball is positioned behind an obstacle ball, usually creating the need for a kick or jump shot.

snow: the cue ball.

soft break: A 9-ball break where you use soft speed to pocket a ball (usually the 1-ball in the side pocket) and control CB position.

sold the farm: left an easy run-out for your opponents.

solids: balls numbered 1 through 7 that have no stripe.

solid tip: cue tip punched from a single piece of leather.

spear the ball: hit the ball accurately with force, often referring to the strike required for a long draw shot.

speed: slang for a player's ability; or the rate of cue or ball motion.

speed control: using the correct amount of cue ball speed to achieve good position for the next shot.

speed pool: a game where the object is to pocket a rack of balls as fast as possible.

splitting the pot: an agreement made between two players before the final match of a tournament to split the 1st and 2nd place winnings equally regardless of who wins the match.

spider: a mechanical bridge with long legs for extra height.

SPF: "Set, Pause, Finish." A stroke mantra recommended by many BCA instructors. In the "set" position, the cue should be still, close to the desired contact point on the cue ball. At this point, you should be confident and comfortable with the shot you are about to execute. You should "pause" during the transition between the final back swing and the final forward stroke. Finally, you should follow through and freeze after the stroke is complete (i.e., "finish" the stroke).

SPFF: same as "SPF" with "freeze" added.

spin: ball rotation. It can refer to sidespin (AKA english), top or bottom spin, or any combination of these.

spin-induced spin (SIS): object ball spin created by spin on the cue ball (e.g., right english on the cue ball induces a small amount of left spin on the object ball).

spin-induced throw (SIT): deflection of the object ball path away from the impact line resulting from cue ball sidespin. It is caused by sliding friction between the cue ball and the object ball.

spin-rate factor (SRF): the spin rate of a ball expressed as a percentage of the natural roll rate of the ball.

spin transfer: the imparting of a small amount of spin from the cue ball to the object ball due to friction between the ball surfaces during contact. For example, left english on the cue ball will transfer a small amount of right spin to the object ball.

spin the rock: apply english to the CB.

split double elimination: a modified version of a "double elimination" tournament where the winner of the losers bracket needs to defeat the winner of the winners bracket only once.

split hit: a shot where the CB contacts two object balls at or very close to the same time.

split the pocket: have an object ball enter the exact center of the pocket (i.e., hit the shot perfectly).

spot: handicap given in a wagered game; or, the foot spot on a table.

spot a ball: place an illegally sunk object ball on the foot spot. If there is no room to spot the ball directly on the foot spot without moving an obstacle ball, it is spotted as close as possible behind the foot spot on a line through the foot spot and perpendicular to the end rail.

spot shot: shot from the kitchen after a ball is spotted on the foot spot (e.g., after a scratch when playing certain games or bar rules).

spots: alternative term for "diamonds."

squat the rock: have the cue ball stop in the center of the table after a break shot.

squeeze shot: a shot where a ball needs to pass through a small gap or narrowly miss an obstacle ball.

squerve: the combined effect of "squirt" and "swerve" (AKA "effective squirt").

squirt: angular displacement of the cue ball's path away from the cue stroking direction caused by the use of sidespin.

SRF: spin-rate factor.

stack: the rack of balls (e.g., in "straight pool," the CB is sent into the stack on a break shot).

stake: money wagered on a game or match; or put up money for a player to gamble.

stake horse: same as backer.

stalemated game: a game that is restarted after there is no meaningful change in ball positions after three consecutive turns at the table by each player.

stall: intentionally play slowly or poorly.

stance: the body position and posture during a shot.

staying down: keeping your head and body still and down after a shot (i.e., resisting the urge to lift up prematurely during or after the final forward stroke).

staying in line: leaving desirable cut angles during a sequence of shots, making it easier to move the CB from one desired position to the next.

steer: give advice to a gambler concerning places or people to play, along with information concerning the "speed" of possible opponents.

steer man: someone who steers a gambler, usually for a percentage of the winnings.

steering: term used to describe a non straight follow-through where the cue is pivoted toward the object ball or target pocket away from the aiming line. Obviously, this is a bad technique – you should follow through straight.

stick: same as "cue."

sticky cloth: cloth with significant sliding friction (i.e., the CB cannot slide very far before developing roll).

stick it: hit a perfect stop shot.

stiffen: same as "shorten."

stiffness: see "shaft stiffness."

stitched: same as "hooked" or "snookered."

stone: same as "cue ball."

stop on a dime: hit a perfect stop shot where the CB stops dead in place.

stop shot: a shot where the cue ball stops immediately after hitting the object ball. It results from a straight-on stun shot.

stop shot at an angle: same as "stun shot."

straight back: a bank shot with little cut angle off a short rail into a corner pocket.

straight pool (AKA 14.1 or 14.1 continuous): a pool game in which any object ball can be pocketed at any time. A point is scored for each pocketed ball.

straight-in shot: a shot in which the cue ball is directly in-line with the object ball and the intended pocket (i.e., a shot where the cut angle is zero).

straight up: to play even, without a handicap.

strategy: plan and approach for running racks and playing defense.

stripes: balls numbered 9 through 15 that have a stripe through the number.

stroke: the cue-stick and arm motion required to execute a shot.

stroke steer: same as “steering.”

stroking plane: the imaginary vertical plane containing the cue, dominant eye, cue ball contact point, aiming line, and ghost ball target.

stuck behind the eight-ball: see “behind the eight-ball.”

stun back: a small amount of draw created by a near stun shot with slight bottom spin at OB impact.

stun line (AKA “tangent line”): the direction the CB heads with a “stun shot.”

stun run through: same as “run through.”

stun shot: a shot where the cue ball has no top or bottom spin (i.e., it is purely sliding) when hits the object ball. A stun shot is also called a “stop shot at an angle.”

stun through: same as “run through.”

sucker: a hustler’s victim, who always seems to find a way to lose his money.

sucker shot: a shot only a novice or fool would take (e.g., because it will result in a scratch or eventual loss of the game).

suit: same as “group” in 8-ball (stripes or solids).

surgeon: a player skilled at thin cut or squeeze shots.

sweat a match: be a “sweater.”

sweater or **sweator:** a “railbird” or a person watching a pool match, sometimes nervously if one is at risk of losing money.

swerve: curve of the cue ball’s path while sliding due to cue elevation and sidespin.

swoop: sideways motion of the tip, used by some to add spin during a stroke. A swoop stroke is a form of “back-hand english.”

table difficulty factor (TDF): a percentage measure of how difficult or easy a particular table plays based on table size, pocket size, pocket wall angle, and pocket shelf depth.

table size factor (TSF): percentage measure of table size relative to a standard 9’ foot table. It is used in the calculation of the “table difficulty factor.”

table lengths: a measure of a shot’s speed (e.g., “two table lengths” implies the CB would travel up and down the table, covering the length of the table twice, if it were sent straight up the table and didn’t hit any balls).

table roll: same as “roll-off.”

table run: where the non-breaking player clears the table on their first inning.

table scratch: failure to hit an object ball or a rail after object ball contact, which is a foul.

talc: powder used on the bridge hand to reduce friction on the cue.

tangent line (AKA “stun line”): the imaginary line through the center of the “ghost ball” perpendicular to (90° away from) the “line of centers.” For a stun shot, the CB moves along this line after OB impact. All cue ball paths, even with follow and draw shots, are tangent to this line. Some people use the phrase “tangent line” to refer to a line tangent to the CB and OB surfaces at the moment of impact. This line is parallel to and a half-ball width away from the more-standard “tangent line.”

TAP: The “Association of Pool” or “Pool Amateur Tour” league and tournament organization.

Tap. Tap. Tap.: Phrase used to indicate approval or congratulations. A player’s act of tapping the butt of their cut on the floor several times non-verbally congratulates an opponent or team member for making a difficult or impressive shot.

taper: the profile of shaft’s diameter (i.e., how it changes) from the tip to the joint.

target drill: various types of position control drills where the goal is to have the CB end up on or close to a target placed on the table.

target size: same as “effective pocket size.”

target center: same as “effective pocket center.”

TDF: “table difficulty factor.”

technical proof (TP): an analytical derivation of a principle using mathematics and physics.

ten-ball: see “10-ball.”

thick hit: a near full-ball hit (i.e., a cut shot with a small cut angle).

thin: when a ball is over-cut, it is hit too “thin.”

thin cut: a shot requiring a large cut angle, where only a small fraction of the cue ball glances the object ball.

thin hit: same as “thin cut.”

three-cushion billiards: billiard game played on a table with three balls and no pockets. To score a point, the cue ball must contact three rails before contacting the second object ball. The first object ball can be contacted by the cue ball at any time during the shot.

three-foul rule: a rule, usually in 9-ball, awarding you a victory if your opponent commits a foul on three successive shots.

three-quarter-ball hit: see “ $\frac{3}{4}$ -ball hit.”

through traffic: a ball passing between or around several obstacle balls.

throw: object ball motion away from the impact line (line of centers) due to relative sideways sliding motion between the cue ball and object ball caused by sidespin or a cut angle.

throw shot: a shot in which sidespin is used to alter the path of the object ball.

ticky: a rail-first carom or kiss shot where the CB or an OB is deflected off a rail and then a near-by OB before heading to its final target.

tied up: used to describe a ball snookered (hidden) by other balls (e.g., after a safety).

tight pockets: pockets with narrower openings than normal (e.g., “shimmed pockets”).

timing shot: a shot where the ball to be pocketed hits another moving ball and is redirected to the desired pocket.

tip offset: the distance between the center of the cue ball and a line through the contact point on the cue ball that is parallel to the cue direction at contact.

TIPOPAB: “The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards” (this book).

tip: same as “cue tip.”

tip the hat: blow your cover (i.e., show your true speed) when gambling or hustling.

tips of english: measure used to indicate how far off center the cue tip contacts the cue ball. “One tip of english” means the cue is offset one tip width (i.e., one shaft diameter) from the center.

tit or tittie or titty: same as pocket “knuckle” or “point.”

TOI: touch of inside.

Tom Cruise run-out: a “roadmap” run-out like those set up for Tom Cruise in the movie “The Color of Money,” where the remaining balls can be easily pocketed with simple and natural shots requiring very little skill.

top: above-center hit on the cue ball.

top cushion: the cushion on the “top rail.”

top rail: the “end rail” at the top of the table, closest to the “head string.”

topspin: forward rotation of the cue ball resulting from an above-center hit on the cue ball (see follow shot).

tough pockets: same as “tight pockets.”

TP: see “technical proof.”

TR: “table run.”

traffic: collection of obstacle balls that leave little room for the cue ball to pass.

train a table. to make indentations in the cloth (e.g. by “setting” a ball) at each racked-ball position to help hold the balls in place and touching when racked.

training template: a thin sheet of rigid material with holes in it used to train a table.

transfer of english: same as “english transfer.”

trap: situation where you are expected to lose a game.

trash: slang term used to describe balls pocketed by accident.

triangle: device used to rack all 15 balls into a triangle shape (e.g., for a game of 8-ball or straight pool).

trick shot: a set-up shot used to demonstrate creativity or skill at the table (e.g., in an exhibition), where a key to making the shot can be knowing exactly how to set up the balls.

trisect system: method used to predict CB direction with a draw shot.

TSF: “table size factor.”

tuna: a large “fish.”

turn: a player’s stay (“inning”) at the table, which continues as long as the player continues to legally pocket object balls; also, same as “twist.”

tushhog: a “bodyguard” for a hustler or serious gambler (to watch his back, or to go after an opponent for not paying up).

tweener: same as a shot “on the fifty yard line.”

twice: same as “two-rail” (e.g., twice cross-side).

twist: use spin to alter a shot (e.g., use spin-transfer to “twist” a bank in, or use SIT to “twist” a shot in).

two-piece cue: a typical playing cue with a joint in the middle allowing it to be “broken down” for easy transportation.

two-rails: bank shot hitting two opposite rails.

two times: same as “twice.”

two-way shot: a shot where you attempt to pocket a ball and, at the same time, play for a safety in case you miss the shot.

under cut: hitting the object ball with too small of a cut angle, hitting the ball too fully.

unforced error: a mistake a player would not usually make (i.e., there is no legitimate excuse). Examples include missing an easy cut shot, playing a poor safety, or leaving bad position due to poor CB control.

unintentional english: inadvertent sidespin caused by not hitting the CB on the vertical centerline.

unsportsmanlike conduct: a penalized action of a player not in accordance with generally expected and respectful behavior.

up and down: long bank shot off a short rail into a corner pocket, traveling almost the full length of the table twice.

up table: towards the head rail.

V-bridge: same as “open bridge.”

VEPP: “Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice.” A five-disc instructional DVD series created by Dr. Dave and Bob Jewett.

VEPS: “Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots.” A five-disc instructional DVD series created by Dr. Dave and Tom Ross.

vertical centerline: used to indicate when you aim at the vertical line passing through the center of the cue ball (i.e., with no sidespin).

vertical plane: the imaginary plane perpendicular to the table surface passing through the cue ball. Adjusting the cue height above and below the cue ball center, in the vertical plane, creates follow (topspin) or draw (bottom spin).

vertical throw: upward or downward motion (and hop) of the cue ball and/or object ball resulting from throw and a fairly full hit with follow or draw. The effect is more dramatic with “cling.”

vision center: the head and eye alignment, relative to the cue, that allows you to see a center-ball, straight-in shot as straight, with the tip appearing to be at the center of the CB.

visit: same as “inning.”

VNEA: Valley National Eight-ball Association pool league and tournament organization.

wagon wheel drill: position control drill where you try to send the cue ball in a wide range of directions off the same shot (like spokes radiating out from the hub of a wheel).

walking stick: a handout to a gambling opponent that has been busted (e.g., so they can walk their injured self home).

wall: see “pocket walls.”

warm-up strokes: back and forth motion of the cue used to prepare for the final forward stroke.

weight: a handicap one player gives another in a money game.

went off X: lost X amount during gambling (often as a “pigeon”).

western side of the bracket: the “loser’s bracket” (on the left side of the chart).

whale: a really big “fish.”

whip shot: same as “fouetté shot”

whippy: describes a shaft that is slender and not very stiff.

white donut: a self-adhesive reinforcement label used to mark a ball’s position on the cloth.

whitey: the cue ball.

wholes: European term for “solids.” See also: “halves.”

wild X: a ball allowed or pocketed without calling it (e.g., the game of 9-ball allows a “wild 9”).

wing balls: the two balls adjacent to the 9-ball (towards the side rails) in a 9-ball rack.

wing shot: a “trick” shot where you roll the object ball and hit it into a pocket while it is moving (“on the fly”)

wiped its feet: when an OB does not go into a pocket cleanly (e.g., “that ball wiped its feet going into the pocket”).

wire: string or metal wire above the table with beads or balls for keeping score.

wired: same as “dead.”

whistle blower: a person that alerts the locals that a good player or hustler is in town looking for action.

whitey: slang term for “cue ball.”

wild ball: an additional “money ball” given as “weight” to a player in a gambling match (e.g., if you give your opponent the 8 in a game of 9 ball, your opponent wins if he or she pockets either the 8 or 9).

window: gap between two obstacle balls just large enough for the cue ball to pass.

winner’s bracket: the portion of the chart or bracket you stay in as long as you don’t lose any matches in a double-elimination tournament.

winning hazard: English billiards terms for pocketing a ball with the cue ball.

wipe its feet: when a ball brushes against the jaws of a pocket on its way in, because it wasn’t hit dead center.

wire: string hanging above a table with sliding buttons for keeping score.

wired: same as “dead.”

wood: slang for “cue.”

woofing: “barking” at or challenging a player, sometimes to gamble, but often as a “nit.”

World Standardized Rules: The worldwide official rules of pocket billiards games, developed and maintained by the WPA.

WPA: World Pool-Billiards Association.

WPBA: Women's Professional Billiards Association.

wrap: a covering on part of the butt to make the grip more comfortable or effective.

WSR: World Standardized Rules.

yips: jerkiness or technique flaws, usually caused by nervous tension.

zone: state in which a player is not distracted by anything and plays top-level pool (e.g., "He's in the zone.").