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*Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all of my past articles can be accessed and viewed online at [billiards.colostate.edu](http://billiards.colostate.edu). The reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website. If you have a slow or inconvenient Internet connection, you might want to view the resources from a CD-ROM or DVD. Details can be found online at: [dr-dave-billiards.com](http://dr-dave-billiards.com).*

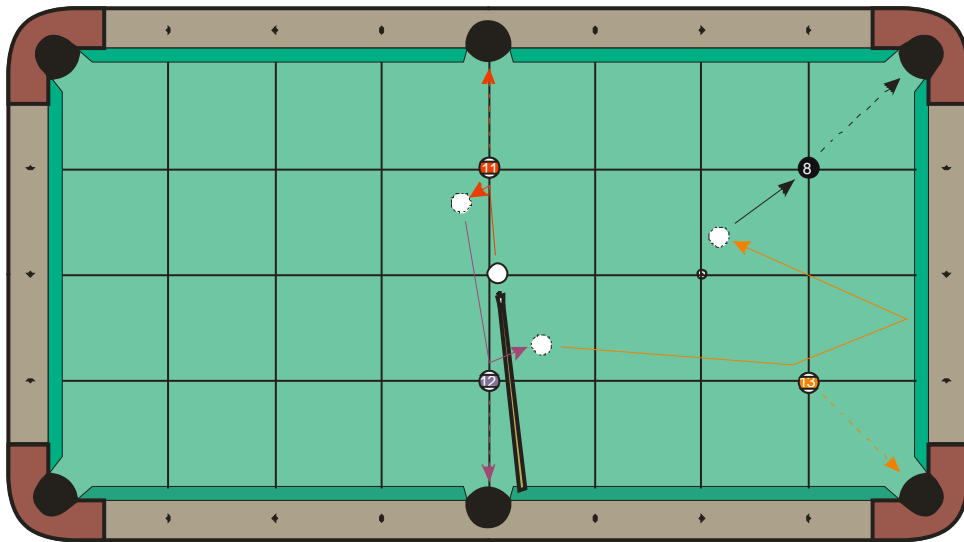
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This is the eighth article in a series based on the “[The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#),” a five-disc instructional-DVD collection I recently created with fellow BD columnist Bob Jewett. VEPP is an organized and methodical training program and pool workout. It teaches you how to develop, assess, and track progress of skills for all facets of your game. An outline of the entire VEPP series along with video excerpts from each DVD can be viewed online at: [dr-dave-billiards.com/vepp](http://dr-dave-billiards.com/vepp). Last month, we looked at some useful 9-ball pattern drills from Disc III: “[VEPP III – Patterns and Safety Play](#).” This month, we look at some 8-ball pattern drills, also from the 3<sup>rd</sup> DVD.

You can work on cut, stop, follow, draw, wagon wheel, and target drills all day long and become fairly proficient with them with practice over time. However, if you can't apply the skills appropriately in game situations, you won't be a good player ... you'll just be good at drills. To help people assess and develop their game-playing skills, Bob and I included a collection of 9-ball and 8-ball pattern drills that help test how well you apply skills in typical game situations. There are existing rating drills that have been around a while to help test offensive skills (e.g., [Hopkins Q Skills](#) and [FARGO](#)), and they are included on VEPP, but these drills begin with a break, which gives a random spread of balls. Because of this, the difficulty level of running the balls can vary wildly from one rack to the next. To provide a more uniform assessment, Bob and I decided to use the fixed-pattern approach.

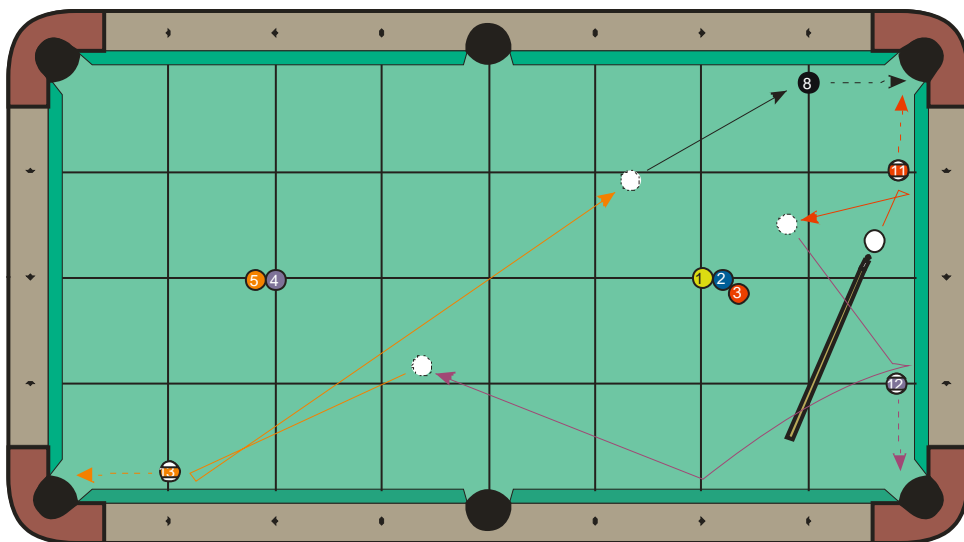
VEPP presents 12 different 8-ball patterns. They are organized into 3 levels with 4 layouts per level. Each layout includes 3 stripes and the 8 ball. Each stripe is worth 1 point and the 8 ball is worth 2, for a total of 5. If you attempt each layout in a level 5 times, that gives a maximum score of 100 ... a nice round number for an “exam.” The difficulty level increases from one layout to the next and from each level to the next. This helps an instructor or player determine a level suitable for practice. As with the 9-ball drills from last month, diagrams for all layouts can be found on the VEPP website (in the “[8-ball Clinic handout](#)”). The handout also contains a scoring sheet one can use to document results and monitor improvement over time.

**Diagram 1** shows the first layout in the first level (labeled “8-1A” in the handout). All ball positions in all layouts are either at diamond or half-diamond intersection points or an inch off or frozen to the cushion across from a diamond or pocket point. With each layout, you start with ball in hand and attempt to run out the stripes and the 8. Part of the challenge of each layout is to decide where to place the cue ball to make the runout as easy as possible. The diagram shows a good starting position for this layout, close to the center of the table. After using stop or slight draw on the 11- and 12-ball shots, we are left with perfect shape on the 13 to roll forward off the end rail for an easy shot at the 8.



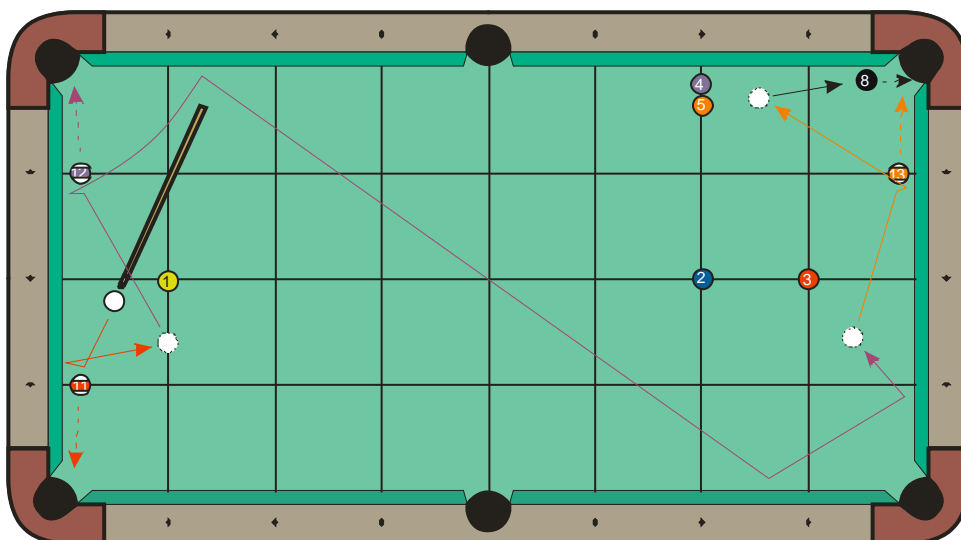
**Diagram 1 8-ball pattern – level 1, layout 1**

**Diagram 2** shows the second layout in the third level (labeled “8-3B” in the handout). Here, there are also some solids on the table serving as obstacles to our runout. With this layout, even though the 11 and 12 balls are close to the 8, they are not good choices for the key ball because it is difficult to get position, with a good angle, coming down table off the 11. A better approach is to clear the 11 and 12 first, using the 13 as the key ball for the 8. A follow shot on the 12 leaves perfect position on the 13, where outside draw is used to head into the line of the 8 while staying well clear of the obstacle solids.



**Diagram 2 8-ball pattern –level 3, layout 2**

**Diagram 3** shows the last layout from the final level (labeled “8-3D” in the handout). Here, the ball closest to the 8 (the 13) is the best key ball. A good starting point is shown with an angle on the 11 to leave enough angle on the 12 to go three cushions to the 13. You just need to be careful to stay above the 1 ball when getting position on the 12. The three-cushion position route from the 12 to the 13, with running follow, is a fairly natural and common position route through the center of the table, especially in 9-ball (as we saw last month). As long as you don’t leave the 13-ball shot straight in, it is easy to get position on the 8 with a follow shot.



**Diagram 3 8-ball pattern –level 3, layout 4**

Would you have approached these layouts any differently? Try them out, along with the others in the handout to see how you do on the “exam.” Demonstrations of the layouts in this article can be viewed in **NV C.10**, and [VEPP-III](#) demonstrates all 12 of them. As with all of the drills on VEPP, you should record your scores and track your improvement over time. The [“How to Use VEPP”](#) document on the VEPP website contains some sheets to help with this. Scores are useful for both assessment and to provide a challenge. You can also use them to set goals for future improvement.

I hope you are enjoying and benefitting from my series of articles featuring drills from the [“Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)”](#). Example clips from the third DVD can be viewed on the [VEPP website](#) or at [billiards.colostate.edu](#) under **NV C.9** through **NV C.12**. Next month, we’ll look at some useful safety drills to help you develop and improve your defensive game.

Good luck with your game,  
Dr. Dave



normal video

- [NV C.9](#) - 9-ball pattern drills, from VEPP III
- [NV C.10](#) - 8-ball pattern drills, from VEPP III
- [NV C.11](#) - Angled-hide safety drill, from VEPP III
- [NV C.12](#) - Hide-behind-target safety drill, from VEPP III

PS:

- I know other authors and I tend to use lots of terminology, and I know not all readers are totally familiar with these terms. If you ever come across a word or phrase you don’t fully understand, please refer to the [online glossary](#) on my website.

*Dr. Dave is author of the book, DVD, and CD-ROM: [“The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards,”](#) and co-author of the DVD Series: [“Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots \(VEPS\)”](#) and [“Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\).”](#)*