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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 first in a series of articles dealing with the Billiard University (BU). The BU was cofounded by myself and Randy Russell (a Canadian instructor), and we just launched the website recently. Also involved are a “dream team” of well-known and respected instructors and instructional authors: Jerry Briesath, Mark Finkelstein, Randy Goettlicher, Bob Jewett, Mike Page, Tom Simpson, and Mark Wilson. The mission of the BU is to provide assessment tools, a rating system, and learning resources to help pool players strive for and achieve excellence, and to officially acknowledge excellence through the awarding of diplomas (Bachelors, Masters, or Doctorate of Pool). All of the assessment tools, with detailed instructions and demonstrations, are available on the BU website at: ***BilliardUniversity.org***.

The BU exams have been carefully designed and tested to provide a complete and accurate assessment and rating of pool-playing ability. The examination process is broken into two parts, both of which consist of drills and challenges at the table. The first portion (Exam I – Fundamentals) is a fundamentals assessment and placement examination that measures all important basic pool skills (aim, alignment, stroke, ball pocketing, speed control, and cue ball control). The second portion (Exam II – Skills) is a skills proficiency examination that tests specific skills important in a variety of game situations (position play, strategy, defensive play, kicks, banks, jacked-up shots, jumps, and the break).

There are three levels of Exam II (Skills) labeled Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate. The score on Exam I determines which Exam II the student is placed into based on the demonstrated level of ability. All three Skills Exams test the complete set of pool skills necessary to be a good pool player, albeit at different levels. The drills are consistent, but with increasing difficulty, from one diploma level to the next. This provides a natural and simple progression path as a student advances through the diploma levels, and the increasing difficulty encourages and assesses continued improvement.

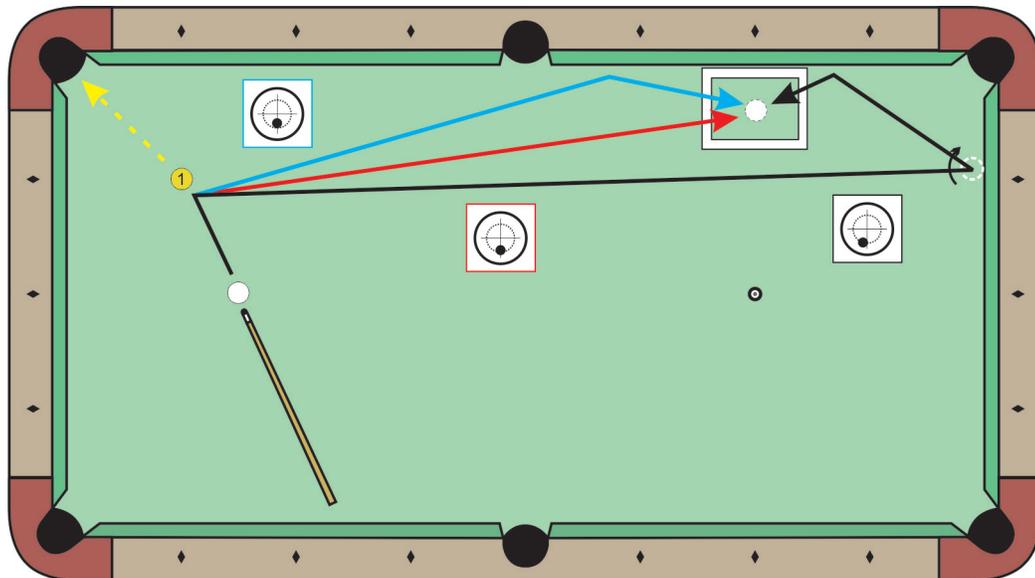
The total combined score on Exam I and Exam II provides a single number corresponding to different levels of playing ability. Also, the total score (regardless of Exam II placement) indicates the player rating and diploma achieved directly. Unlike league handicap systems and other match-statistics-based rating systems, the BU scoring and rating system is independent of league competition level, which can vary significantly from one league to the next and from one region to the next. The BU rating offers the significant advantage that it is based solely on individual performance and not on the performance of others. Therefore, the ratings are meaningful across all regions and internationally.

Everything needed to prepare for and take the exams is available for free online, including exam documents with diagrams and instructions, video explanations and demonstrations, score sheets, online resources, and electronic forms for submitting results and applying for a diploma. If you want to try the BU exams and rating system, or if you want to become a BU instructor, please visit the BU website. Online videos **NV D.1-D.14** demonstrate and explain every step of the process.

**Diagram 1** shows an example drill from Exam I. There are eight drills total. Like many of the drills in Exam I, this drill is “progressive” because it automatically adjusts to your level of performance. Starting with the CB in position 4, you get 10 shots. The goal on each shot is to pocket the object ball (OB) in the corner and have the cue ball (CB) stop within a ball of the ghost-ball position (i.e., the shot should be very close to a pure “stop shot”). With each success, you move the CB farther from the OB to the next higher CB position (e.g., from 4 to 5); and with each miss, you move the CB closer to the OB in the next lower CB position (e.g., from 4 to 3). If you pocket the ball from position 7, the CB remains there, but you receive a bonus point for each success at 7. The score for the drill is the CB position after the 10th shot plus the number of bonus points, not to exceed a maximum allowed total of 10.

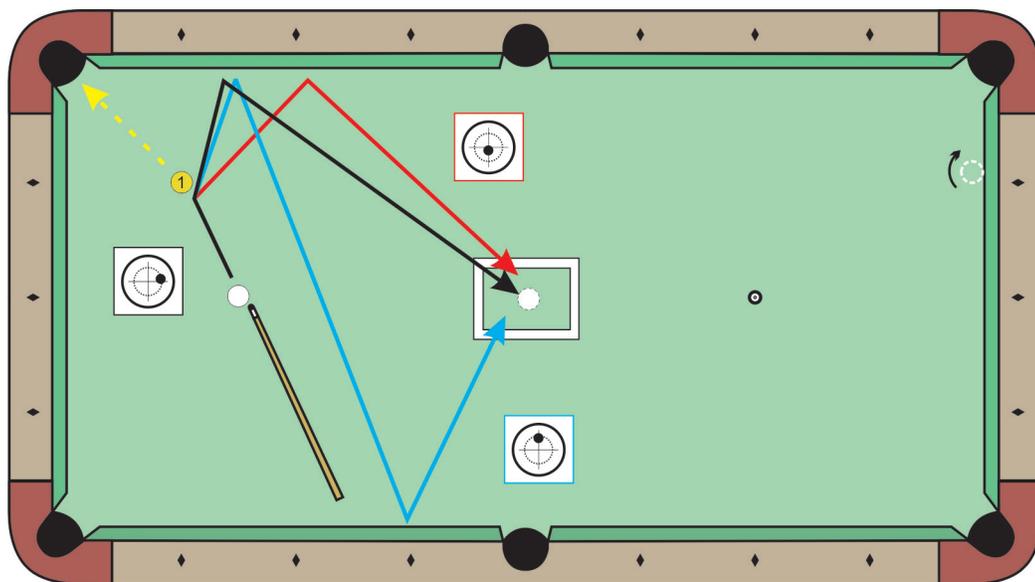


which might be easier to control, and bounce off the side cushion (see the blue path). The cushion can help slow and flatten the path of the CB a little, which can increase the margin for error slightly. A totally different approach is to come off the end rail with left sidespin (see the black path). An advantage of this approach is that both the end and side cushions help kill the CB, as the left spin creates a good angle to the target, providing a wide margin for error with speed. If you have an accurate and consistent draw stroke, this is probably the best approach for target 2. For more details and advice, and to see other options, see **NV D.4**.



**Diagram 3** Options for Target Position 2

**Diagram 4** shows various options for target position 4. One is to use a stun shot to send the CB along the tangent line, which takes a good path to the target (see the red path). Another option is to roll the CB across the table twice, which also offers a natural path (see the blue path). However, this approach will be a little sensitive to the exact cut angle (with pocket cheating) and amount of sidespin (intentional or not). A more natural path is to roll the CB slowly with running english to take a good line into the diagonal of the target to maximize the margin for error with speed. This shot takes touch, and the amount of sidespin required will vary some with conditions, but it is a very natural shot. Again, for more details and advice, and to see other options, see **NV D.4**.



**Diagram 4 Options for Target Position 4**

Practice all of the position route options shown in **NV D.4** for all of the target positions and try to think of others. Another good CB position control challenge on the first exam is the classic “Wagon Wheel” drill. If you want some advice and help on this drill refer to my [June '12 article](#), **NV C.5**, and **NV D.10**.

If you need encouragement to work on the BU Exams, here is the list of benefits outlined on the BU website:

- You will get better at pool in a smarter and faster way and raise your game to the next level.
- The [examination process](#) fully and impartially assesses your current [rating and level of ability](#) relative to others.
- The exam drills identify your areas of weakness.
- The exam drills can provide structure and purpose to your practice sessions.
- You can use the exam and drill scores to monitor and assess your improvement over time.
- You can set a concrete goal for improvement by working toward a [diploma](#).
- When you earn a diploma, you can frame and display it with pride (e.g., in your office or game room) to show off your enthusiasm and excellence.
- With a diploma, you will receive [official recognition](#) of your level of ability on the BU website (with your permission).
- A diploma is a credential you can use as the first step to becoming a BU instructor.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from my series of articles dealing with the Billiard University, and I hope you try the BU Exams and use them as a training tool. Good luck with your practice, and I look forward to awarding you a pool diploma someday. It's time to graduate your game to the next level.

Good luck with your game,  
Dean Dave



- [NV C.5](#) – Wagon wheel cue ball control drill, from VEPP II
- [NV D.1](#) – Billiard University - Part 1: Introduction - overview of the BU process for earning a pool diploma
- [NV D.2](#) – Billiard University - Part 2: Table Setup - preparing to practice and take the BU exams
- [NV D.3](#) – Billiard University - Part 3: Video Recording - recording official exam runs for online submittal
- [NV D.4](#) – Billiard University - Part 4: Exam I Overview - demonstrations and scoring of the Fundamentals Exam
- [NV D.5](#) – Billiard University - Part 5: Exam II Overview - demonstrations and scoring of the Skills Exam
- [NV D.6](#) – Billiard University - Part 6: Submittal and Wrap Up - applying for a BU diploma online
- [NV D.7](#) – Pool Fundamentals - The Stance - from Vol-I of the Billiard University instructional DVD series
- [NV D.8](#) – Stun Shot Drill - from Vol-II of the Billiard University instructional DVD series
- [NV D.9](#) – How to Aim Pool Shots - from Vol-II of the Billiard University instructional DVD series
- [NV D.10](#) – Draw Shot Trisect Aiming System - from Vol-II of the Billiard University instructional DVD series
- [NV D.11](#) – Cue Ball Control Target Pool Drill - from Vol-II of the Billiard University instructional DVD series
- [NV D.12](#) – Safety Drill - from Vol-III of the Billiard University instructional DVD series
- [NV D.13](#) – Kick Shot Aiming Systems - from Vol-III of the Billiard University instructional DVD series
- [NV D.14](#) – Pool Break Technique Advice - from Vol-III of the Billiard University instructional DVD series

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 Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards](#)” book and DVD, and co-author of “[The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots \(VEPS\)](#),” “[The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#),” and the “[Billiard University \(BU\)](#)” instructional DVD series.*