
Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all past articles are available online at billiards.colostate.edu. Reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website.

Recently, I posted online video [NV J.79](#) demonstrating how to how to clean, maintain, and care for a pool cue, a cue tip, a pool table, and pool balls. Below, I summarize important points in each category.

Cue

Basically, to take care of your cue, just keep it clean, and chalk the tip regularly. If you use a shooting glove, the shaft will automatically stay cleaner. You are also more likely to get a consistent feel on every shot. Before or after every use (or anytime it feels dirty) wipe the shaft with a damp towel. You should also rub it dry with a non-wet towel.

If you have a wood shaft that is really dirty, use a damp piece of Magic Eraser. That will usually remove most of the dirt and stains, and it won't abrade the soft wood grain. If you want to remove more dirt and stains, you can use a scouring pad or fine-grit sandpaper; although, these will wear down the shaft slightly, especially the soft parts of the grain.

When you are done with deep cleaning, it is a good idea to burnish the shaft, either with a dollar bill or with a piece of leather, as demonstrated in the video. Burnishing helps seal the grain and provide a smooth and shiny finish. **Image 1** shows the before and after pictures of a cleaned and burnished shaft. Cleaning and burnishing can really restore a filthy and lightly-scratched cue.

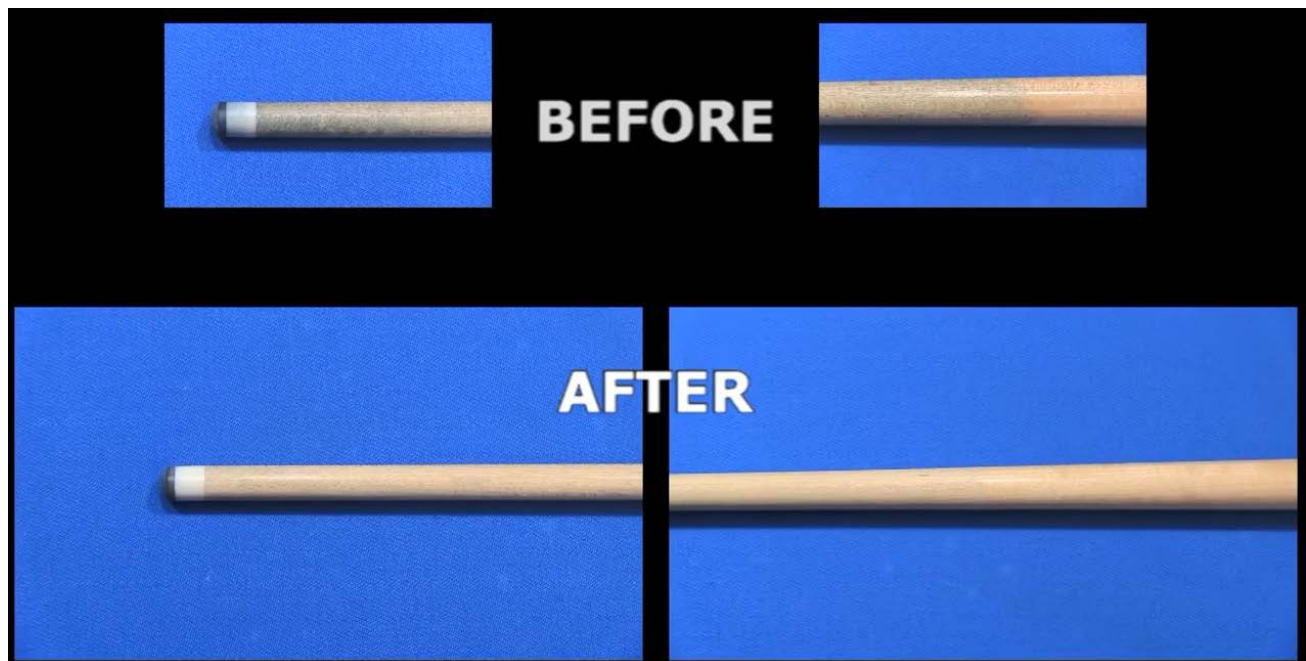


Image 1 Shaft before and after cleaning

If you use a carbon-fiber shaft, it doesn't need much care. You can just wipe it down with a damp towel. If that doesn't get it completely clean and smooth, you can use a little dishwashing liquid. Just be sure to wipe off all the soap residue with a clean and damp towel. If the shaft is really dirty or oily, you can use

rubbing alcohol to make it squeaky clean. And again, if you want to keep your shaft clean, use a playing glove, which will keep the shaft clean for a long time.

Cue Tip

You don't need to shape a tip unless the top flattens. This is less a concern with a harder tip, which will also last longer. I often use the same hard tip for years without needing to shape or scuff it. Shaping and scuffing wears the tip down faster, requiring more frequent replacement. But shaping and scuffing can restore a tip when necessary. As shown in the video, there are many tools available for this purpose.

There is no need to scuff a tip unless it is no longer holding chalk. Chalking with a typical abrasive chalk naturally keeps the tip surface in good shape, unless you miscue a lot. It is best to have a tip rounded to the radius of a US nickel or dime. If your tip is really flat, you can use a shaper tool to make it round again. Sometimes, the tip surface will be a little rough, especially in the center, after shaping. This really isn't a concern, but you can use fine-grit sandpaper to smooth it down if you want. When you are done, chalk up the tip, and you're ready to play. **Image 2** shows the before and after pictures of a shaped and chalked tip.

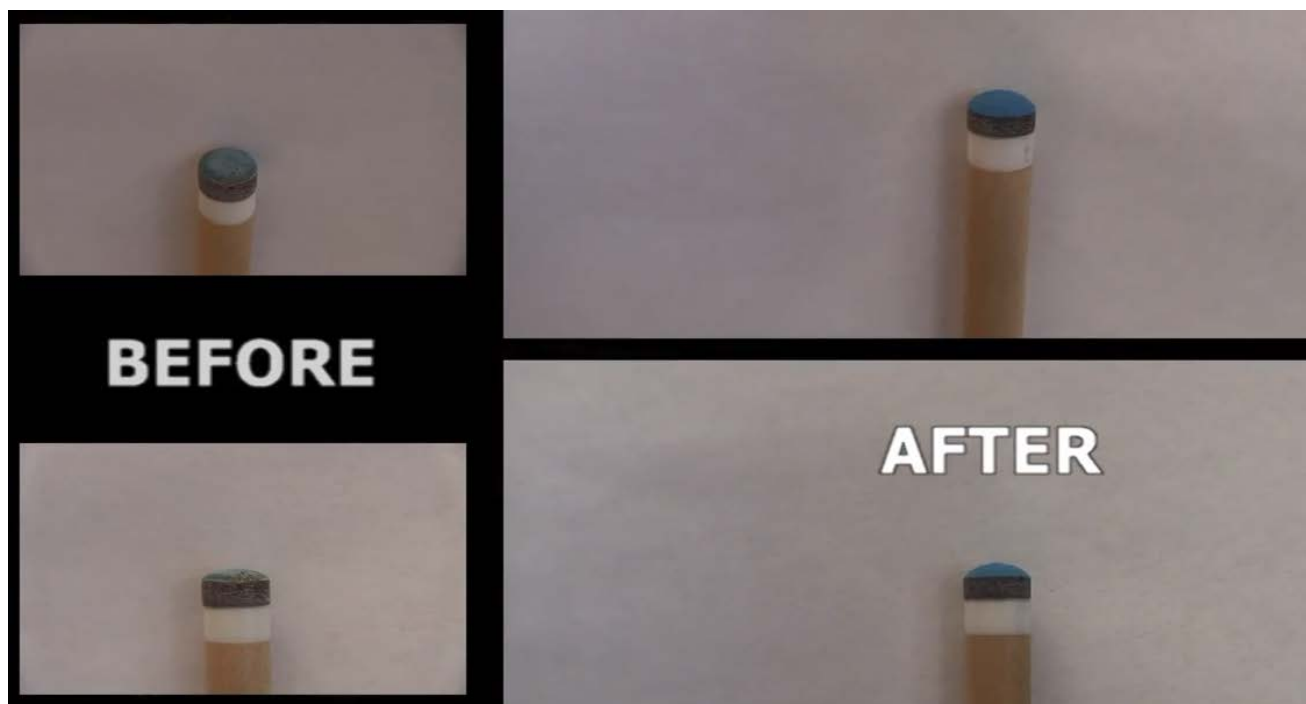


Image 2 Cue tip before and after shaping

Do not use cosmetic style chinks that go on the tip smoothly like lipstick. Because they go on without any abrasion, they don't keep the tip surface fresh. They also stick to the CB too easily, which can cause more-frequent and larger [cling \(AKA skid or kick\)](#). Otherwise, the type and brand of chalk you use really doesn't matter much in terms of performance. For more information, see the [chalk comparison resource page](#) linked in the YouTube video description.

Any time you miscue, the tip will have a skid mark that can cause another bad hit in the future. Always be sure to scuff the spot carefully with aggressive chalking (or if necessary, with a scuffer tool or fine-grit sandpaper).

The only times you need to replace a tip is when it no longer holds chalk even after scuffing, gets damaged or the glue joint fails, or when it wears down to the point where there is very little tip material remaining on the shoulder of the ferrule. See the link in the YouTube video description if you want to [learn how to replace a tip yourself](#). If you use a hard tip, chalk properly, and resist scuffing or re-shaping (unless it is absolutely necessary), a tip can last a long time, even several years with regular use.

Table

Table brushing is not generally recommended since it makes a cloud that is probably not healthy to breathe (and it settles on everything). But if you do not plan to vacuum, brushing is a fast and easy option for getting chalk and dust off the top surface. Just be sure to vacuum or shake out the brush first before using it on the table.

You should vacuum and wipe the table daily with very heavy use, weekly with moderate use, and monthly with light use. A small portable vacuum with a hose attachment and bristle brush is the easiest to use. It is good to vacuum spots that look extra dirty first. Then vacuum the tops of the cushions and under the cushions and along the rail grooves, where dirt and dust like to collect. Then vacuum the entire table surface, one quadrant at a time. It is generally recommended to always vacuum and later wipe in the same direction (e.g., toward the foot rail), as compared to rubbing back and forth, but this really isn't a concern with modern high-quality cloths.

If you are lazy or have many tables to clean, you might prefer using a Roomba (see **Image 3**). You just need to push a button to get it started, and it automatically vacuums the entire table. The rotating bristles also get under the cushions well. My wife and I call our Roomba "Wall-E."



Image 3 Wall-E happily vacuuming the table automatically

After brushing or vacuuming, wipe the table down with a damp cloth. It is best to use a micro-fiber cloth, but a cotton cloth works fine as long as you pick up any lint left behind. The cloth should only be damp and it should not drip when you wring it. First wipe any spots that look extra dirty. Then wipe the rails and cushions. Then wipe the whole table, one quadrant at a time.

It is a good idea to use a spare piece of cloth as a breaking pad, especially if you are practicing the break. Without the break cloth, you will create permanent burn or skid marks on the table cloth. Also use a spare piece of cloth if practicing jump or massé shots so burn or skid marks will appear on the spare piece of cloth and not on the table cloth. The other approach is to just not worry about burn or skid marks. They are a natural part of the game and just show that you play a lot.

A table cover is a good idea, especially if the table is in a dusty environment or if you have pets or young kids. A cover will keep the table much cleaner and you won't need to vacuum and wipe it as often. If the table does get lint or pet hair on it, an adhesive lint roller can be very effective at removing it. Even though I don't have any pets, my hairy arms sometimes shed onto the table, and the lint roller collects it all.

Balls

It is a good idea to wipe the balls with a damp cloth whenever they seem dirty or after heavy use. During play, especially after power shots, the balls can get marks on them. You should clean these any time you have ball in hand or before racking for a new game.

You should also clean all the balls any time they look dirty or have lost their shine. You can use a commercially available ball cleaning machine, especially if you own a pool hall with lots of tables, but it is easy enough to do by hand. It is best to use a cleaning product specifically formulated for pool balls, like Aramith Ball Cleaner. If you do not use a proper cleaning product, playing performance will be affected. See the [link in the YouTube video description](#) for more information and demonstrations.

Be sure to shake the cleaner first. Then apply a drop or two to each ball. Then wipe and rub the entire ball surface by applying pressure and rotating with both hands. Washing the towel and your hands when you are done, gives the balls more time to dry completely. Before buffing, the balls will not be very shiny. Buff the balls with a clean and dry cotton or micro-fiber cloth. As shown in **Image 4**, when you are done, the balls will be very clean and shiny, ready for some top-notch play.



[Image 4](#) Balls after cleaning

I hope you now have a better understanding and appreciation for billiard equipment care and hygiene. Be sure to watch online video [NV J.79](#) if you want to see demonstrations of everything.

Good luck with your game from Dr. Dave!



normal video

[NV J.79](#) – Pool Cue, Table, and Ball Care – How to Clean and Maintain

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 do not fully understand, please refer to the [online glossary](#) at billiards.colostate.edu.

Dr. Dave is a PBIA Advanced Instructor, Dean of the Billiard University, and author of the book: [The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards](#) and numerous instructional DVD series, all available at: DrDaveBilliards.com.