
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.

Have you ever heard the saying: “Draw for Show, Follow for Dough?” In a recent Youtube video series ([NV L.58](#) and [NV L.59](#)), I show many reasons why this is good advice. Draw shots are fun and impressive, and it is cool to make the cue ball (CB) dance around the table, but draw should usually not be your first choice when considering CB control and position play options, as the videos demonstrate and as I summarize below.

One reason a follow shot is a better choice is it is much easier to control CB travel distance. **Image 1** shows a good drill you can use to experience this yourself. I am pocketing the 9, trying to follow forward for shape on the 8. I expect to get shape on the 8 every time with a shot like this. Good follow control like this will help you win games. With a similar draw shot position play instead (see **Image 2**), again pocketing the 9 and getting shape on the 8 up-table, it is much more difficult. Give both drills a try to see how you do. I suspect you will find it much easier to be accurate and consistent with the follow shot.



Image 1 Follow shot drill



Image 2 Draw shot drill

It is also easier to predict and control CB carom direction with follow compared to draw. With a follow shot, the 30° rule peace sign technique can help you accurately predict expected cue ball direction (see video [NV L.58](#)). As demonstrated in the video, the natural angle for rolling-CB follow shots is very reliable, even with slight errors in aim, tip position, and shot speed. **Image 3** shows a good practice shot for draw. Using the 3-times-the-angle system, I can accurately predict where a “good action” draw shot should head, in this case, toward the 8-ball. It is helpful to drill a shot like this to test accuracy and consistency. If you try the drill, I am sure you will find it is much more difficult to control CB direction with draw compared to follow. Any slight changes in tip position, speed, or aim make big differences in CB direction.



Image 3 Draw shot pocket cheat

Tip height obviously has a big effect on draw shot CB control. If the tip isn't low enough, the CB comes up well short of the target. "Good action" draw requires a very low tip; although, it is possible to draw more than the "good action" prediction if the tip is even closer to the miscue limit.

Shot speed is also important. Many people think using more speed, resulting in more backspin, will cause the CB to draw back at a tighter angle. But, as demonstrated in the video, many people are wrong. If you use too little speed, backspin will wear off on the way to the object ball (OB). If you use too much speed, backspin is retained, but the CB persists along the tangent line longer before curving. The fast speed causes the CB to peel out, delaying the curve. To achieve the expected 3-times-the-angle "good action-draw" CB direction, you need to use a "Goldilocks" amount of medium speed, where very little backspin is lost on the way to the OB, and the CB curves soon enough.

The biggest issue with accurate and consistent draw shot CB direction control is precise aiming. If you cheat the pocket in either direction from center, the resulting CB direction will be radically different. For example, in **Image 3**, if I target the right side of the pocket with a full hit, the cut angle is smaller, and 3-times that angle sends the CB well above of the target pocket (see the upper white line). Cheating the pocket to the left instead with a thinner hit results in a much larger cut angle, and 3-times that angle sends the CB well below the target pocket (see the lower white line). With the tip low enough, and targeting the center of the pocket instead, the CB heads in the expected direction. In the video, I used the same low tip position and stroke on each of these three shots, and I pocketed the ball each time, but the CB headed in radically different directions. Again, CB direction is much more difficult to control with draw as compared to follow.

When you have ball in hand after an opponent foul, follow is often the better choice. In **Image 4**, I need to pocket the 11 and get a shot at the 8, inside the white-line shape zone. I could put the CB to the right of the 11 and attempt to draw straight back, but it is easy to come up short. And if you attempt to use more speed to come off the side rail, it is also easy to go long, especially if you cross the narrow part of the shape zone close to the 1. And if you attempt to draw closer to the side pocket, where the shape zone for the 8 is wider, you might scratch by mistake because it is very difficult to control draw shot direction. Placing the CB on the short side of the 11 instead for a longer follow shot (as shown) is much more reliable in this situation. It is very easy to control follow distance. It is also much easier to control follow direction, making it safer to come closer to the side pocket, where the margin for error is bigger in the wide part of the shape zone for the 8. And even if you don't want to risk coming that close to the side pocket, you can safely target the middle of the shape zone since it is so easy to control follow distance.



Image 4 Precision follow

Other factors that make draw shot accuracy and control much more difficult than follow shots include:

- Because a low tip is required for good draw, a miscue is always a concern, especially if you tend to tense up during the stroke.
- At the fast speed often required for draw shots, the pockets play smaller and the ball can rattle out if you don't hit the pocket cleanly. Also, it is more difficult to remain accurate and consistent when we add more power.
- Draw shots are also much more sensitive to variations in cloth conditions. Backspin wears off due to cloth friction drag on the way to the OB. And the drag action varies a lot with cloth properties, ball and cloth cleanliness, and even temperature and humidity. With a rolling cue ball, no judgement is required for drag uncertainty since the CB rolls immediately, making it easier to judge CB travel distance.

All the shots and drills in the videos are excellent practice, so use them to test and improve your skills. I hope this column and online videos [NV L.58](#) and [NV L.59](#) help reinforce the insightful saying: "Draw for Show, Follow for Dough!"

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



[NV L.58](#) – Master Cue Ball Control ... FOLLOW VS. DRAW

[NV L.59](#) – DRAW VS. FOLLOW Position Play Examples ... Follow is not Always Better

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 PBI Master 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.