

Draw Control

As we explore the world of different strokes, we learn position possibilities that might have been hidden from us beforehand. Sometimes we examine a certain shot and learn that the best way to achieve the desired result is to apply a stroke different from the one that we might logically choose at first. And sometimes we can explore one shot and achieve many varied results in the same family of shots by altering the stroke.

In the diagram we have a simple shot on the striped ball that requires a draw shot for position on the solid ball lying on the head rail. The dotted line that connects the balls shows that the shot on the stripe is not straight in but calls for a slight cut to the left to pocket the ball. The other dotted line runs perpendicular to the path that the striped ball will take to the pocket, also known as the tangent line. Your goal with this exercise is to pocket the striped ball with draw for position on the solid ball. Further, by applying two different draw strokes, you will move the cue ball into position on both sides of the solid ball for shots in both of the head corner pockets.

Let's begin with a brief discussion of the tangent line. It's important to know that only a stop shot will keep the cue ball on that line. Any follow or draw will make the cue ball stray from it. For that reason, and also because my education taught me that a sphere has an infinite number of lines tangent to it, I prefer to call it the stop-shot line to avoid any possible confusion. Although only a stop shot can *keep* the cue ball on that line, the cue ball begins its journey along that line for all shots, before any spin or roll makes it wander off onto another path. As it turns out, we can control how far the cue ball moves along the stop-shot line before it draws back for the solid ball.

Set up the shot as shown and mark the positions of the balls. You may make a slight adjustment to the shot's angle but be sure you are cutting the striped ball to your left. First you are going to pocket the striped ball and let the cue ball move well out to the right before drawing back to the X for a shot on the solid ball in the bottom, right corner. And you will now begin to associate cue-ball travel with stroke length. For the first shot, you want the cue ball to move well along the stop-shot line before the back spin takes over to move it back toward the X. In order to accomplish that, take a long, level stroke through the cue ball's bottom with a long follow through, 12 inches if possible. The longer the follow through, the farther along the stop-shot line the cue ball will travel before drawing back. Speed, of course, also influences the distance of that travel. At first, you should only concern yourself with moving the cue ball to the desired side of the solid ball. If extra speed causes the cue ball to hit the head rail near the X and bounce out of position, that's okay for now. The important element is learning to match a long follow through with a wide swing to the right. After hitting the desired track you can adjust the speed or raise your tip a bit to take off some draw until the cue ball is coming to rest near the X.

Now we can begin shooting the next draw shot, one which snaps the cue ball off of the stop-shot line as quickly as possible and moves it to the Y for a shot on the solid ball into the top right corner. Since a longer follow through moves the cue ball farther down the line before drawing it back, we're going to apply a short follow through to move the cue ball backwards quickly with minimal lateral travel. Begin with a short bridge, maybe two to three inches behind the cue ball. Then prepare to hit the cue ball at its very bottom. Since you won't be able to generate much speed over such a short bridge length, your tip must meet the cue ball with an explosive burst of acceleration. Play the shot with the idea of a very short follow through in mind, as short as one inch through the cue ball. Miscues are common with this shot as it inspires a tendency to shorten the follow through by tightening the grip on the cue. That will not work for two reasons. Doing so raises the butt of the cue and therefore lowers the tip to dig under the cue ball. In the rare case when tightening the grip does not cause a miscue, the tightened grip serves to kill the acceleration and prevent the desired cue-ball action. Remember to keep the fingers in your shooting hand relaxed. Also, remember that the pool stroke is a throw. This stroke is merely a shorter throw. The short bridge helps immensely to deliver short but accelerating follow through.

Here we have two draw shots that demand two distinctly different techniques to cause two different outcomes. Practice both shots to learn how stroke length influences cue-ball travel. After nailing down the position tracks in the diagram, with the same shot, you can choose a wide range of cue-ball targets and then sharpen your draw accuracy with subtle adjustments to your stroke and follow through.



