
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.

Do you use a closed bridge? And do you know that an open bridge offers many advantages? In the old days of American pool, pretty much every player used a closed bridge. And that's what early books and instructors taught. And many players (and some instructors) still think a closed bridge is better for draw and power shots, but this is simply not the case. Things have changed a lot over the years, with a definite trend towards the open bridge. This was partly influenced by the snooker world, where pretty much every player has always used an open bridge. Snooker players are the most accurate and consistent cueists in the world, as necessitated by the large table and small pockets.

In a recent online video ([NV J.98](#)), I demonstrate the Top 10 advantages of the open bridge, which explain why it is used exclusively in snooker and with growing popularity in pool. Below is a summary from the video. Some of the things not illustrated might be a little tough to visualize, so be sure to watch the video if you want to see clear demonstrations of everything.

1. Easy to Learn

First, an open bridge is very easy to learn and master, even for a beginner. As demonstrated in the video, the simplest way to form one is to start with the hand flat, just make a first, and bend the thumb firmly against your index finger. You can also raise and curl the thumb to create even more support for the cue. A more common open bridge can be formed by again starting with a flat hand, raise the knuckles a little, and place the thumb against the hand. Again, it can be improved by raising the thumb; and if you can curl your thumb up (not everybody can do this), you can create a deep and stable “V” guide for the cue (see **Image 1**). In pool, most things should be relaxed, but the bridge hand should be a little tense, with the fingers spread and pressed into the cloth, and with the thumb held firmly against the index finger.

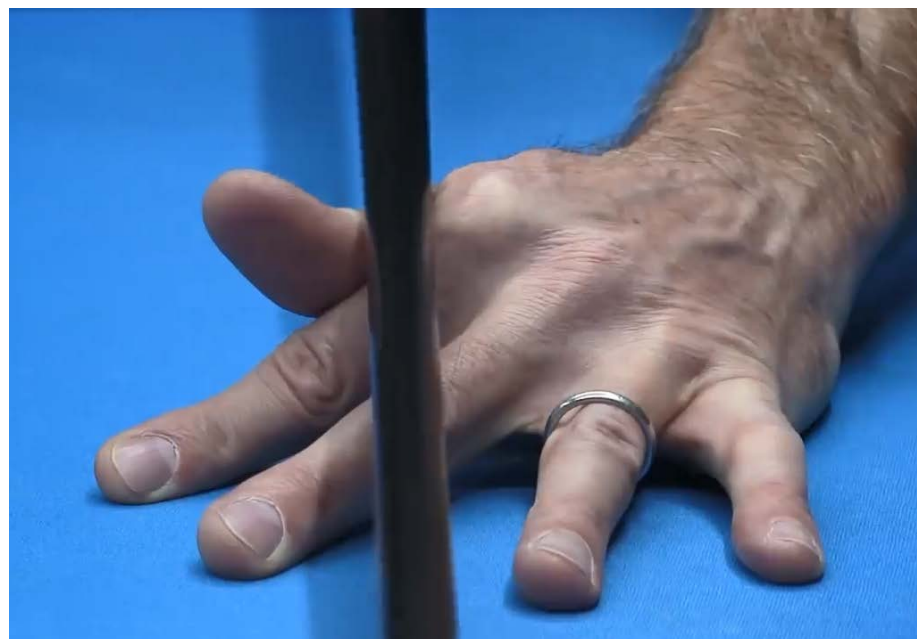
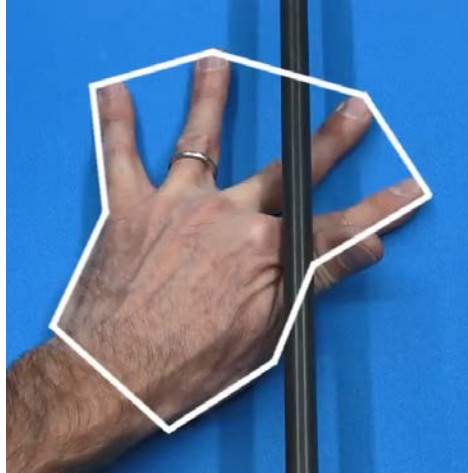


Image 1 Open bridge “V”

2. Stable

An open bridge is also very stable, with a large “footprint.” A typical closed bridge has a much smaller footprint (see **Image 2**). The larger footprint makes it easier to keep the open bridge solid and still during a shot. It can be stable even with high tip positions since the heel of the hand can be kept on the table as the knuckles are raised. A closed bridge is less stable as it is raised.



(a) open



(b) closed

Image 2 Bridge “footprints”

3. Unobscured View

One of the primary advantages of an open bridge is that it offers an unobscured view of the entire shaft, especially when using a low stance, with the chin on the cue (see **Image 3**). This makes it easier to align the cue accurately with the desired shot line. It is like looking down the barrel of a rifle. With a closed bridge, the loop index finger blocks part of the shooter’s view of the shaft, making it a little more difficult to visualize cue alignment. If you want to learn more about the advantages of a low stance and how to comfortably form one, see the “[stance](#)” FAQ page at billiards.colostate.edu.

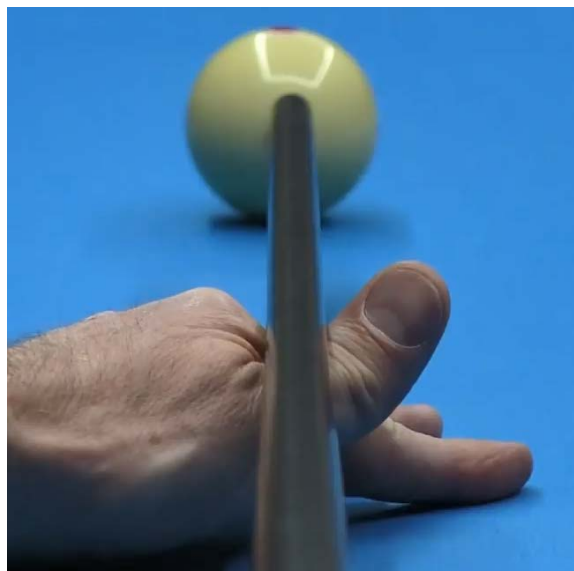


Image 3 Unobscured view of shaft

4. Accurate “V” Guide

Another advantage of an open bridge is it supports the cue in a simple and well-defined “V” shape that provides a very accurate and consistent sliding guide. This is not always the case with a closed bridge, where there are usually many more points of contact at odd angles. The “V” is also bony with very little flesh, so an open bridge provides a stiffer and more solid support.

5. Centered

If the “V” is facing you, as it should, the cue is guaranteed to stay centered in the bridge during the entire stroke, even with a tapered cue. This is not always the case with a closed bridge. You do need to be careful to orient your hand properly. If the bridge hand is turned too much CCW, your wrist will be bent, and the “V” will not face you. This also causes the cue to rub on the fleshy part of the hand, which is not ideal. To orient the “V” properly, many people need to turn their hand CW a little. This not only helps you square up the “V,” it also allows the wrist to be straighter, which can be more comfortable.

6. Low Resistance

An open bridge offers the least resistance to cue movement, especially under hot, humid, and dirty conditions. A closed bridge has more fleshy contact with the shaft, resulting in more and less consistent resistance. Any shaft taper also increases the resistance during the stroke. A shooting glove can help, but it isn’t required with an open bridge (unless you play under hot, humid, and dirty conditions). The “V” of an open bridge is usually bony with little flesh, so there is very little resistance. The low resistance is especially helpful with-finesse shots.

7. Versatile

An open bridge offers a greater range of bridge heights. It can be easily flattened to a low cue position, and it can be raised higher when bridging over a ball. It is also easy to jack up when close to a cushion or to execute a jump shot (see **Image 4**).



Image 4 Elevated open bridge

8. More Reach

An open bridge also makes it easier to reach extended shots, as an alternative to using a mechanical bridge.

9. Accurate Pivots

An open bridge results in more accurate and consistent pivots than with a closed bridge. This is important if you are using any pivot-based aiming system like [CTE](#) or if you are using [back-hand english \(BHE\)](#) or the [System for Aiming With Sidespin \(SAWS\)](#). For more information on any of these topics, see the links in the YouTube video description of [NV J.98](#).

10. Reveals Stroke Flaws

Finally, an open bridge reveals stroke flaws that can be hidden with a closed bridge, allowing you to better diagnose and fix technique deficiencies. For example, if you have a bad habit of tightening up during a stroke and raising the cue off your bridge, you might not get the result you want with an open bridge. A closed bridge can help keep the cue down if you have this technique flaw. I like to call the closed-bridge loop finger a “Band-Aid.” It might help cover up technique flaws, possibly improving tip contact point accuracy. However, the Band-Aid might not always give you the result you want. Tensing up during the stroke is still a problem, limiting stroke effectiveness. A much better solution than covering the flaw with a Band-Aid closed bridge is to fix the technique issue. A relaxed and smoothly accelerating stroke with an open bridge can be much more effective.

Minor Disadvantages

An open bridge does have some minor disadvantages or limitations. First, as demonstrated in the video, an open bridge does not work well with some draw shots close to and along a rail. A closed bridge is required to secure the cue. Also, some people don't like the cue leaving their open bridge hand after a draw shot with a relaxed and complete follow through. However, the CB is long gone before this happens, and it has absolutely no effect on the shot.

If you have never given an open bridge a serious look before, you should consider it. It has many advantages to offer, and it has no real disadvantages except in certain situations. Again, be sure to watch online video [NV J.98](#) so you can see everything in the article brought to life.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



normal video

[NV J.98](#) – Top 10 Reasons to Use an OPEN BRIDGE

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 A 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](#).