

## What Are “THE FUNDAMENTALS”?

*By Roger Long,*

We probably hear the word *fundamentals* used more often in conjunction with sports than with most other activities. And in any given sport we are told that we must first learn *the fundamentals* before we can learn other facets of the game. And we often hear things said like, “He has gone back to working on his fundamentals.”

But what, exactly, is meant by “*the fundamentals*”? I know that would depend on the chosen sport, but can you tell me what *the fundamentals* in pool are?

When I stopped to ponder this question for myself one day, I realized that even I wasn’t able to properly answer it. I needed help. So I sought the course that I normally take in situations like this, which is to immediately run to my bookcase and get a dictionary.

A quick check of my dictionary informed me that the words *fundamental* and *basic* mean the same thing. A lot of help that was! *Basically* speaking, I was still in the dark.

So I then read the second definition for the word *fundamental* and was told that it is something that forms a foundation for other things to be built upon. That’s good, but it still didn’t answer the question; because if you was to apply that definition to the actual construction of a building, you would find yourself with truckloads of bricks, blocks, lumber and steel, but you wouldn’t know (unless you’re an architect) which should be used in the foundation of the building and which should be used in the upper levels.

So then, still searching for help, I read down to a third definition that said fundamentals are those things that are “*most important*”. I knew, then, I was getting somewhere! All that was left to figure out was: what are the *most important* things to remember in building a solid pool game?

After considerable thought, I came up with a long list of things that I believed to be important in learning how to play good pool. But then I realized that that long list of mine constituted nothing more than truckloads of building materials without any knowledge of where they should go. In other words, which ones should make up the foundation, and which ones should be reserved for the upper levels?

So after even more thought and careful study, I pared my list down to only four essential things that I believe every player should employ on each and every shot.

These four things (*The Fundamentals*) are:

1. **Straight Alignment**
2. **Level Cue**
3. **Stay Down**
4. **Follow Through**

You probably noticed right away (being the well-focused reader you are) that my list didn't include things you might have expected, like *stance*, *grip*, *bridge*, or *stroke*. Well, that's because those things can vary greatly from great player to great player but they still don't keep those players from playing great, so they must not be all that fundamental to great play.

So I'll now elaborate a little on each of my newly found fundamentals so that you will be able to better understand how they made it to my final list of "most" important.

**Straight Alignment.** No player would intentionally line up their feet, head, hands and arms in such a way as to point their cue in some direction other than that in which they want the cue ball to travel. So make sure you're lined up straight on every shot before shooting it.

**Level Cue.** No matter which direction a player aims his cue stick the ball will swerve off of the line of aim if the player hits down on it. Because of having to shoot over rails most of the time, few shots can be hit with a perfectly level cue, but you should always hit every shot with the cue being as level as possible.

**Stay Down.** Straight alignment and a level cue won't mean squat unless everything is held in place until the cue ball is well on its way to its destination. Even the slightest body movement (other than the stroking arm moving straight forward) will pull the shot off line and cause you to miss.

**Follow Through.** Stroke the tip all the way through the cue ball to ensure that the desired action is imparted to the cue ball. Some shots may require a short follow-through, while other shots may require a longer follow-through, but all shots require some sort of follow-through. Following through the cue ball also helps you to stay down on the shot.

You can help yourself remember The Fundamentals by memorizing the following little poem.

With straight alignment  
and a level cue,  
I will stay down  
and follow through.

Yeah, yeah, I know. It's cornball. But it works.