



## Official One Pocket Rules

Unless clearly contradicted below, general pocket billiards rules of play and conduct apply to One Pocket, and complete General Rules & Regulations are available from the World Pool-Billiard Association (WPA) or the Billiard Congress of America.

### 1. Object of the game

One Pocket is a unique game for two players or two teams, in that each player or team can only score into one of the two corner pockets at the foot end of the table, while the other can only score into the other corner pocket at the foot end of the table. The other four pockets are neutral pockets, and any balls pocketed in a neutral pocket are spotted rather than scored. There is no requirement to 'call your shot' in One Pocket, and no special order or significance to any numbered object balls. The first player to legally score eight balls into their own pocket wins the game.

*The game can be handicapped by adjusting the required winning score for either one or both players, either for all breaks or for specified player's breaks. With One Pocket's long tradition of after-hours play, many other creative variations in both rules and handicapping have been invented over the years. As long as all those involved agree before play begins, virtually everything is negotiable in after-hours contests. However, these rules provide a complete standard baseline for both tournament and after-hours play.*

### 2. The break

**2.1 Racking and pocket selection:** All fifteen balls are tightly racked in no particular order with the apex ball placed as nearly as possible on the foot spot, in a standard triangle rack in alignment with the table. The opponent may inspect the rack and call for adjustment if warranted. Players lag for the first break. For games that follow, the break alternates back and forth between the players, regardless of who wins each game. Prior to breaking, the breaking player selects one of the corner pockets at the foot of the table as their own, thus the opponent is assigned the other foot pocket by default. In subsequent games, whoever breaks is free to change their pocket selection on their own break.

*In practice, the breaker does not 'call his pocket'; their pocket selection is considered obvious by virtue of the orientation of their break. Players employing an unusual break must declare their pocket selection prior to breaking.*

**2.2 The break:** The opening break begins with ball in hand behind the head string line. The cue ball may be stroked directly into any ball in the rack, or indirectly cushion(s) first. After contacting the rack, the cue ball or at least one object ball must be driven to a rail, or a ball pocketed, otherwise it is a one ball foul penalty. If a pocket scratch occurs, any balls pocketed are spotted, the breaker is penalized one ball for the scratch, and the incoming player receives ball in hand. As long as a legal stroke is employed from behind the head string, the incoming player must play the balls where they lie. If the cue ball is illegally stroked, interfered with in motion, or the breaker fails to contact the rack at all, in addition to the standard foul penalty, the incoming player has the option of requiring the breaker to re-break.

### **2.3 Ball pocketed on the break**

**2.3.1: Traditional One Pocket:** Regardless of who racks, when a ball is pocketed in the breaker's pocket without a scratch or foul occurring, it is counted and their inning continues as with any legally scored ball.

**2.3.2 Modern re-rack option:** When playing "rack your own", players may agree, or a tournament director may stipulate, that in the event the breaker scores a ball in their own pocket on the break, the breaker is to re-rack and break again, rather than scoring the ball and continuing their inning.

**2.4 Ball in hand:** Ball in hand in One Pocket is always behind the line, not anywhere on the table. All references to "ball in hand" within these rules are to be understood to mean "ball in hand behind the line". When placing the cue ball, the whole cue ball must be placed above the head string line, and to play directly into an object ball, the whole object ball must be below the head string line. The edge of either ball cannot be in contact with the head string line. If either is not in a playable position then the referee or opponent warns the shooter and they must adjust and/or agree on the playable position prior to the shot being taken. If no warning is given then the shot stands. But, if the shooter ignores the warning and shoots then it is a serious foul, with opponent receiving ball in hand. ref: 6.6.2 Serious fouls (b)

## **3. Continuing play**

**3.1 Continuing play:** A player's inning continues only as long they pocket a ball or balls in their own pocket on a legal stroke, with no foul occurring. It is not a foul to pocket a ball in a neutral pocket or in the opponent's pocket, but doing so does not entitle the shooter to continue their inning, unless on the same stroke they legally pocket a ball into their own pocket. Any balls pocketed either accidentally or intentionally into the opponent's pocket are counted for the opponent, unless on the same stroke, the cue ball is pocketed or jumped off the table. ref: 5.1 No jumped cue ball option

**3.2 End of the game:** In the event that a player pockets both their own game-winning ball and their opponent's game-winning ball on the same legal stroke, then the shooting player wins. There are no 'ties' and it does not matter which ball drops first, as long as they both drop as a result of the same stroke.

**3.3 Time Out:** Players may call for a time out either between games, or when it is their own inning, with the number and length of time outs limited out of respect for their opponent and good sportsmanship.

Resuming play before the opponent has returned from an approved time out, or leaving the playing area during the shooter's ongoing inning are both considered unsportsmanlike.

#### **4. Safety play**

There is no option to 'call a safety' in One Pocket; if a player legally scores a ball into their own pocket they must shoot again. Players may play safe to the same rail as many times as they wish, as long as either the cue ball or at least one object ball is driven to a cushion after the cue ball contacts an object ball. ref: 8 Frozen ball

#### **5. Jumping**

Players may use jump shots in One Pocket as long as they are performed with the player's own standard playing cue using legal jumping techniques as defined in General Rules. Specialized jump cues are not permitted in One Pocket.

**5.1 No jumped cue ball option:** *Room owners or tournament directors may stipulate that intentionally jumping the cue ball off the table is not allowed. In that case, when a ball is pocketed in the opponent's pocket with the cue ball driven off the table, the ball stays down and is counted for the opponent rather than spotting up; meaning under this optional rule, the only way to pocket a ball in the opponent's pocket and have it spotted rather than counted for the opponent is to pocket scratch.*

#### **6. Fouls**

**6.1 Cue ball fouls only:** When a referee is not presiding over the match, One Pocket may be played whereby disturbing a single object ball is not a foul, as long as there is no effect on the shot. For clarification, it is always a foul to disturb the cue ball, and it is also a foul if a disturbed ball has any effect on the shot; meaning if the disturbed ball has contact with any ball in motion, or if any ball passes through where the disturbed ball originated. It is always a foul when two or more balls are disturbed. When multiple (3 or more) balls are disturbed it is considered a serious foul. ref: 6.6.2 Serious fouls

**6.1.1 Restoring a position:** There is no restoration option when any disturbed ball has had an effect upon the shot; in that case the balls must be played from where they lie. Once it is acknowledged that a ball or more was disturbed with no effect on the shot, then the opponent must be given the option to restore the position or leave the balls as they lie before play is resumed. If the opponent elects restoration, it shall be as near as possible to the original positioning according to both players, with the opponent responsible for final approval. It is a foul upon the shooter to restore a ball without permission from the opponent. However, if the shooter was notified, yet resumes play without the opponent's consent to the final disposition of a disturbed ball, then it is a breach of the restoration option, and a serious foul on the shooter. ref: 6.6.2 Serious fouls

**6.2 Scoring for fouls:** Any scratch or foul results in the end of the shooter's inning, as well as a standard one ball penalty. All balls pocketed in the shooter's pocket as a result of a stroke that includes a foul do not count for the shooting player and are to be immediately spotted, along with the standard one ball

penalty. Also, any balls pocketed in the opponent's pocket on a stroke that ends in a pocket scratch or a jumped cue ball off the table are not to be counted for the opponent, and are to be immediately spotted. However, on a stroke when any other foul is committed (such as a push shot, double-hit or illegal ball contact), any balls scored into the opponent's pocket are to stay down and be counted for the opponent. ref: 5.1 No jumped cue ball option

**6.3 Cue ball after a foul:** Following either a pocket scratch or the cue ball jumping the table, the incoming player has cue ball in hand. Following any other standard foul, the cue ball is played where it lies.

**6.4 Owing balls:** If the offending player has no balls to spot, then they will owe one for each such scratch, which must be repaid by spotting at the end of the first inning or innings in which they score. All owed balls must be repaid before any pocketed balls count towards a player's game score.

*Owed scratches are indicated by placement of a small coin on the rail top adjacent to the offending player's pocket. An additional coin is placed to represent each additional scratch without a scored ball to spot. One coin is removed for each owed ball repaid by spotting at the end of the first inning or innings in which they are scored, until all owed scratches have been repaid, and standard scoring can commence. It is the responsibility of the offending player to place and remove their coin markers.*

**6.5 Ball off the table:** Driving either the cue ball or an object ball off the table is a foul, whenever either comes to rest off the playing surface, or comes in contact with anything other than the table itself while airborne.

**6.6 Intentional fouls:** Standard intentional fouls are an accepted part of One Pocket tactics as long as they are played by use of a legal stroke, such as by lightly touching the cue ball with the cue tip; by rolling the cue ball to a new location without regard for legal contact with either an object ball or a cushion; by pocket scratching the cue ball; or by using a legal jump technique to force the cue ball off the table. Standard intentional fouls performed using a legal stroke and cue tip contact are penalized as standard fouls.

**6.6.1 Use of an illegal technique:** However, if the shooter employs an illegal technique to their advantage, such as pushing, intentionally double-hitting, use of anything other than the cue tip to shoot, or an illegal prolonged cue contact to wedge/trap, direct or redirect the cue ball or any object balls, such as within the stack or jawed pocket, these acts are considered serious fouls. The offending player may be penalized for a serious foul under the general rules of unsportsmanlike conduct. ref: 6.6.2 Serious fouls

**6.6.2 Serious fouls:** If the ruling is that a serious foul has occurred, in addition to the standard foul the official may further penalize a player at their discretion. If there is no official available, players will need to come to agreement themselves as to the level of penalty to assess the shooter. If it is possible to restore the balls, then the foul may be penalized (a) as a standard foul, with opponent's option of restoration.

The following penalty levels progress from (a) through (c) depending on the seriousness of the offense, and whether the shooter has been issued a prior warning. A prior warning warrants an escalation of penalty. In this context a "prior warning" may mean a prior offense, a pre-tournament announcement or a player agreement prior to a match.

- (a) Assess a standard foul penalty, and a warning to the shooter.
- (b) Assess a standard foul penalty, and opponent receives the option of ball in hand.
- (c) Loss of game.

**6.7 Spotting balls:** It shall not be a foul to accidentally touch the cue ball while removing an object ball from an adjacent pocket, or when spotting a ball where the cue ball interferes. It shall be a foul for the incoming shooter to accidentally touch an object ball while placing the cue ball in a ball in hand situation. The outgoing player is responsible for spotting ball(s) at the end of their inning. Both players have the right to approve the exact spot prior to resuming play, and if the players themselves cannot agree on the spot, then they have to get someone else to spot the ball. Once play has resumed, a ball cannot be re-spotted unless both players agree.

**6.8 Close proximity shots -- foul criteria:** Close proximity shots often come up in One Pocket with no referee available. When stroking towards a ball in close proximity to the cue ball, a double hit foul is indicated when the cue ball is driven immediately forward through the contact point, or immediately forward through the carom tangent line, without first exhibiting the pause and accelerate action of legal follow or draw. This foul criteria applies whether stroking with an elevated cue or not. With advanced skill, it is possible to play close proximity shots without committing these common double hit fouls. Alternatively, players may agree that shooting away at a sufficiently thin angle reasonably avoids a double hit. A ball declared frozen to the cue ball may be legally stroked through.

## **7. Three fouls in a row**

Three consecutive fouls is loss of game, however the opponent or tournament referee must notify the player that is on two fouls, prior to their third foul. Should no notice occur until after the shot resulting in the third foul is in motion, it is not immediate loss of game, but the player will be considered to be on two fouls for their next shot.

## **8. Frozen Ball**

A ball is not considered "frozen" unless it is inspected and designated as frozen prior to a player's shot. To obtain a legal safety to the same rail on a ball declared frozen to a rail then the cue ball must contact the ball and then the rail, or the ball must leave the rail and contact another ball before returning to that rail, or another ball must be driven to a rail. If the cue ball becomes wedged between an object ball and the cushion and frozen to both, then legal shot requirements must be met by pocketing the frozen ball, or by contacting either another ball or another cushion enroute to a legal shot.

## **9. Spotting balls**

**9.1 Balls spotted on foot string:** Balls are to be spotted on the foot spot, or in a direct line below the foot spot in the nearest available opening. Spotted balls shall be tightly frozen to other object balls that fall in or interfere with that line, without dislodging interfering balls. However if the cue ball interferes, the spotted ball is to be placed on that line close to, but not quite frozen to the cue ball. In the event

that the line below the foot spot is full and the bottom rail interferes with a spotted ball then balls are to be spotted on the same line, but above the foot spot.

**9.2 When to spot balls:** Any penalty balls owed by the shooter, or balls pocketed in a neutral pocket, are to be spotted at the end of the shooter's inning. However, if a player runs off all the balls on the table without reaching a winning score, then all such balls are spotted immediately (all at once, not one ball at a time), and the shooter continues their inning. At no other time in One Pocket are balls spotted during any shooter's ongoing inning.

**9.3 Spotting balls in handicapped games:** In the event of a handicapped game with the combined winning ball count needed by the two players totals greater than sixteen at the start of the game, then the player going to the longer count must spot the first ball or balls they score, immediately at the end of the first inning in which they score, as necessary to bring the combined winning ball count back down to sixteen, at which point the game continues in standard fashion.

**9.4 When to spot forgotten balls:** If any owed balls, or balls that have fallen into a neutral pocket are forgotten and later remembered, then they are spotted after each player has shot once, unless there are no balls left on the table, in which case they are all spotted immediately. In any case, any owed balls are not forgiven, but still must be paid. As long as there is full consent, players may agree to waive 9.4 and spot forgotten balls at any time they are remembered.

**9.5 Spotting from the kitchen:** In the event of a scratch with the offending player having no balls to spot when all of the balls are located behind the head string, the ball nearest the head string may be spotted at the request of the incoming player. If two or more balls are equally close to the head string, the shooter may designate which ball to spot.

## **10. Keeping Score**

**10.1 Score keeping responsibility and opponent commenting on the score:** It is the responsibility of the shooting player to handle and collect their scored balls, and to verify their own ball count as they approach their out ball. If the opponent inappropriately and on their own volition mistakenly states a lesser amount of balls needed to win the game, and the shooter scores said balls then it stands as a win. If the non-shooting player disturbs the balls, or breaks down their stick, or in the judgment of the acting official otherwise significantly disturbs the shooter in the assumption that the shooter is already out, such acts are considered a concession, and the shooter is considered to have won, regardless of whether a subsequent count reveals that more balls are needed.

**10.2 Shooter's mistaken game ending:** If the shooting player disturbs only one of the remaining balls on the table under their own mistaken assumption that the game is over, then the rules governing cue ball fouls only apply. However, if the shooting player disturbs two or more of the remaining balls in play on their own premature mistaken assumption that the game is over, then it is the shooting player that forfeits the game.

**10.3 Pocket courtesy:** Players should refrain from moving or removing balls from their opponent's pocket or scoring tray for any reason, except to spot a ball following a scratch or to sufficiently clear a

pocket to permit entry of additional balls for an impending shot, and should only do so with respect for their opponent's scoring preferences.

## **11. Keeping track of scoring pocket**

**11.1 Shooting to the wrong pocket:** It is each player's responsibility to keep track of which pocket is theirs. Opponents are under no obligation – other than good sportsmanship — to correct such an error prior to an opponent's shot. A ball legally pocketed in the wrong pocket counts for the player who legitimately has that pocket, regardless of who shot the ball. However, a ball shot into the wrong pocket does not entitle the shooter to continue their inning, unless on the same stroke they legally score into their own pocket as well.

**11.2 Continuing to the wrong pocket:** In the event that a player shooting into the wrong pocket is permitted to continue the same inning at the table (beyond what is entitled by legally pocketing a ball in their own pocket) by their opponent's or the referee's failure to notify them of their error, such failure of notification does not legitimize any additional balls pocketed in that inning, whether pocketed in the shooter's pocket or their opponent's pocket. Thus the first shot to the wrong pocket in a given inning is the shooter's responsibility, and the shooter's opponent is entitled to any balls pocketed on that first stroke. Any subsequently pocketed balls in the same inning are to be immediately spotted as illegally pocketed balls, because it is the referee's or opponent's responsibility to notify the shooter before they erroneously continue their inning. However, if the game is continued in error to a concession by the opponent, then the game stands as a win.

## **12. Close calls and conflict resolution**

Unless a referee is assigned, players shall be responsible for refereeing their own match. Whenever the players themselves can come to an amicable agreement on any scoring or officiating issues to their satisfaction, and play continues, their decision shall be deemed final. If at any time in a match either player anticipates a close call, or would like a neutral party to spot a ball, or wishes to have an official ruling in any conflict, then an official should be called. The non-shooting player bears extra responsibility to call an official if they anticipate a close call or potential ruling dispute. In the event of any 'too close to call' situation, arbitration should favor the shooter unless there is verifiable mitigating evidence in the judgment of the official. In the event of a disagreement over a contested ball, with no evidence in the judgment of the official to warrant crediting the ball to either player, then the contested ball shall be deemed a neutral ball, and spotted according to rule 9.4.