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*Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all of my past articles can be accessed and viewed online at [billiards.colostate.edu](http://billiards.colostate.edu). The reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website.*

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This is the second article in a series dealing with the “Video Encyclopedia of Nine-ball and Ten-ball (VENT),” a five-disc instructional-DVD set I recently created with fellow Billiards Digest columnist Bob Jewett. VENT teaches all of the skills, knowledge and strategy one needs to excel at 9-ball and 10-ball. Topics include break shot strategy and effects, game planning, position play and english, safety play, and advanced principles, shots, and strategies. An outline of the entire VENT series along with video excerpts from each DVD can be viewed online at: [DrDaveBilliards.com/vent](http://DrDaveBilliards.com/vent).

The topic for this month is how to train your table. In VENT-I, Bob and I describe and demonstrate various ways to achieve a good rack, including how to use a traditional racking triangle or racking template effectively. A good summary of some of this advice can be found on the “[racking](#)” resource page under “break” in the FAQ section at [billiards.colostate.edu](http://billiards.colostate.edu). An alternative to using a racking triangle or template is to “train” the table, where you firmly tap down on the balls in their desired racking positions, ideally when a new cloth is installed, so the balls will naturally settle against each other without the need for any racking aid. The complete table-training procedure is demonstrated in online video [NV I.3](#) and is summarize below.

## **1. Position the 1-ball Carefully**

The first step to train a table is to firmly tap down on the 1 ball in the center of the foot spot. Be very careful to make sure the 1 is centered on the spot. Tapping down on a ball with another makes a mark and semi-permanent indentation in the cloth that allows the ball to accurately settle in the desired position. Don’t be afraid to tap down hard on the ball. It is practically impossible to damage the slate, and you want the training indentations to be well defined and long lasting. If you watch the video, you will see (and hear) how firmly Bob and I tap down on the balls. The amount of force we use might seem alarming to you, especially if it were used on your own personal table, but I had no concern whatsoever tapping down forcefully on my home table.

## **2. Position the Racking Triangle Carefully**

Now place the racking triangle and all of the other balls around the 1 in its set position. In the video, we used an aluminum Delta-13 rack which can help provide higher-precision positioning of the balls. Make sure the rack is aligned properly, and do your best to get all of the balls touching. As we demonstrate in the video, you can use a laser level available at any hardware store to help align the rack centerline. As shown in **Diagram 1**, you can also use an angle square to measure and adjust each corner position of the rack to ensure proper alignment. You can use a fabric pencil to mark the back of the triangle to make it easy to place it repeatedly with the proper alignment.



**Diagram 1** Aligning the rack

### **3. Firmly Tap Each Ball Into Place**

Now, while holding the balls firmly in place, lightly tap down on each. Then firm up the ball placements by tapping down with more force, one row at a time, as shown in **Diagram 2**. It can help to gradually increase the force of the tapping as you continually ensure each ball is touching and slightly pushing against its neighbors. Do this for a full 15-ball rack so the training can be used for all games. If any ball fails to touch all of its neighbors, you might need to tap it down firmly again, being careful to make sure it is pushing against its neighbors while tapping. When done properly, all of the other balls in the rack should move slightly during the tapping.



**Diagram 2** Tapping balls into place

## 4. Test the Training

When finished, you can test the training by lightly rotating each of the outer balls away from the rack center to see how tightly it sits up against its neighbors. If any feel a little loose, re-tap them down again as before. It is good practice to also do the same tightness check with 10-ball and 9-ball racks. This will help ensure the table is trained well for all games. Again, if necessary, re-tap any loose balls up against their neighbors in each rack configuration.

## 5. Get a Perfect Rack Every Time

Now the table is properly trained and, as shown in **Diagram 3**, the cloth has clear marks and slight indentations that will help ensure consistent racking. It is very easy to rack the balls reliably on a trained table, without needing a racking triangle or template. Just roll the balls into place, and they will naturally settle against their neighbors, assuming the balls are not too old and worn, in which case it might be very difficult to get a tight rack. It takes time to train the table, but it is time well spent. The training will tend to lose its effectiveness over time, but balls that get loose can easily be tapped down again to re-train when necessary. Again, the entire procedure is demonstrated in detail in online video [NV I.3](#).



**Diagram 3** Indentations and marks on the cloth after training

I hope you enjoy my series of articles dealing with the “Video Encyclopedia of Nine-ball and Ten-ball (VENT).” If you want to view video excerpts from the entire DVD set, check out online videos [NV I.1](#) through [NV I.11](#). Enjoy!

Good luck with your game,  
Dr. Dave



- [NV I.1](#) – Video Encyclopedia of Nine-ball and Ten-ball (VENT) Instructional DVD Trailer
- [NV I.2](#) – 9-ball Side Soft Break, and Corey Deuel Pattern Racking, an excerpt from VENT-I
- [NV I.3](#) – How to Train a Pool Table for Accurate and Consistent Ball Racking, an excerpt from VENT-I
- [NV I.4](#) – How to be Creative and Consider Various Options in 9-ball and 10-ball, an excerpt from VENT-II
- [NV I.5](#) – Defensive Strategy in 9-ball and 10-ball, an excerpt from VENT-II
- [NV I.6](#) – Common Two-Rail Position Plays in 9-ball and 10-ball, an excerpt from VENT-III
- [NV I.7](#) – Common End-Game Patterns in 9-ball and 10-ball, an excerpt from VENT-III
- [NV I.8](#) – 9-ball/10-ball Object Ball Hide Safety Examples, an excerpt from VENT-IV
- [NV I.9](#) – 9-ball/10-ball Ball-In-Hand Shot Option Examples, an excerpt from VENT-IV
- [NV I.10](#) – 9-ball/10-ball Rail Cut Shot Principles and Examples, an excerpt from VENT-V
- [NV I.11](#) – 9-ball/10-ball Advanced Herd and Cushion-Compression Shots, an excerpt from VENT-V

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 don't fully understand, please refer to the [online glossary](#) at [billiards.colostate.edu](http://billiards.colostate.edu).

*Dr. Dave is a PBI Advanced Instructor and author of the book: [The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards](#) and the instructional DVD series: Video Encyclopedias of [Pool Shots \(VEPS\)](#), [Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#), [Eight Ball \(VEEB\)](#), and [Nine-ball and Ten-ball \(VENT\)](#), [How to Aim Pool Shots \(HAPS\)](#) and [Billiard University \(BU\)](#), all available at: [DrDaveBilliards.com](http://DrDaveBilliards.com).*