
Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all of my past articles are available online at billiards.colostate.edu. Reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website.

This is the fourth and final article in a series dealing with a “Top 10” video collection I recently posted on YouTube. The clips can be accessed via online videos [NV J.10](#), [NV J.13](#), [NV J.14](#) and [NV J.15](#). This month, I will cover topics from the last video: **“Top 10 Pool Strategy Errors Amateurs Make ... and How to Prevent Them.”** The video demonstrates many strategy principles that amateurs often fail to consider when selecting, planning, and executing shots. Any player wishing to improve and excel must understand and be able to apply these principles in their game.

1.) Leave the Correct Angles

Sometimes amateurs don't leave angles on shots. If you leave a shot straight in, the only option is to stop, follow forward, or draw back, which limits cue ball (CB) control options for the next shot. [NV J.15](#) shows several game situation examples where leaving angles on shots makes run-outs easy, and where getting straight on a shot can make a run-out extremely difficult. When leaving angles, you also want to make sure you end up on the correct side of the ball. Again, [NV J.15](#) shows examples of what happens when you leave the wrong angle.

2.) Come Into, Not Across, the Shape Zone

The shape zone is the area where you can leave the CB and have a good shot. In **Diagram 1**, anywhere in the area surrounded by the black curve would leave a good shot at the 8. When playing for position, it is best to not come across the narrow part of a shape zone as shown with the yellow-line draw shot. The margin for error with speed is very small. If you come up a little short or go a little long, you can leave a difficult shot on the 8. When possible, always try to come into the line of the next shot, where you will end up in the heart of the shape zone over a wide range of speeds as shown by the white-line follow shot and the blue-line outside draw shot. With either of these approaches, the CB can go long or come up well short and still leave a good shot at the 8. Again, [NV J.15](#) demonstrates all of these shots along with good and bad outcomes.

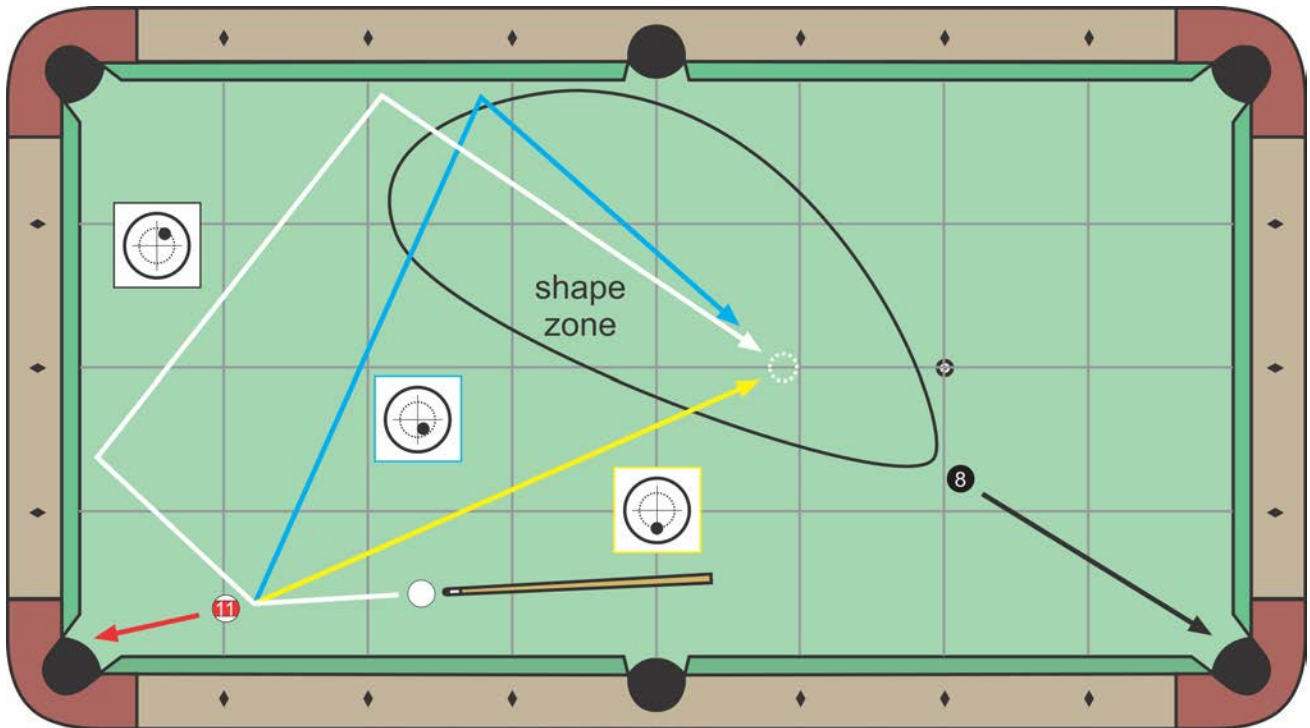


Diagram 1 Come into the line of a shot, not across the shape zone

3.) Solve Problems Early

Do you ever see amateurs pocket easy balls first and then wonder how they will deal with a problem cluster later? You always want to solve your problems as early as possible. As demonstrated in [NV J.15](#), you should always use controlled speed when breaking out a cluster so you can better predict where all of the balls will end up. This will help prevent you from getting into trouble. It is also important to have an “insurance ball” that will guarantee an easy shot after the break out.

4.) Identify Key Balls

See **Diagram 2**. An amateur might be tempted to shoot the 10 first since it is straight-in and easy. However, because the 8 is difficult to get on later, the 10 is a good “key ball” to save. Here, a much better plan is to start with the also-easy 15. A stop shot leaves a perfect angle to come off the 13 to get perfect shape on the 10 to leave an easy shot at the 8. Always wisely choose the “key ball” to get on the 8, and also choose the best “key ball” to help you get to the final “key ball.”

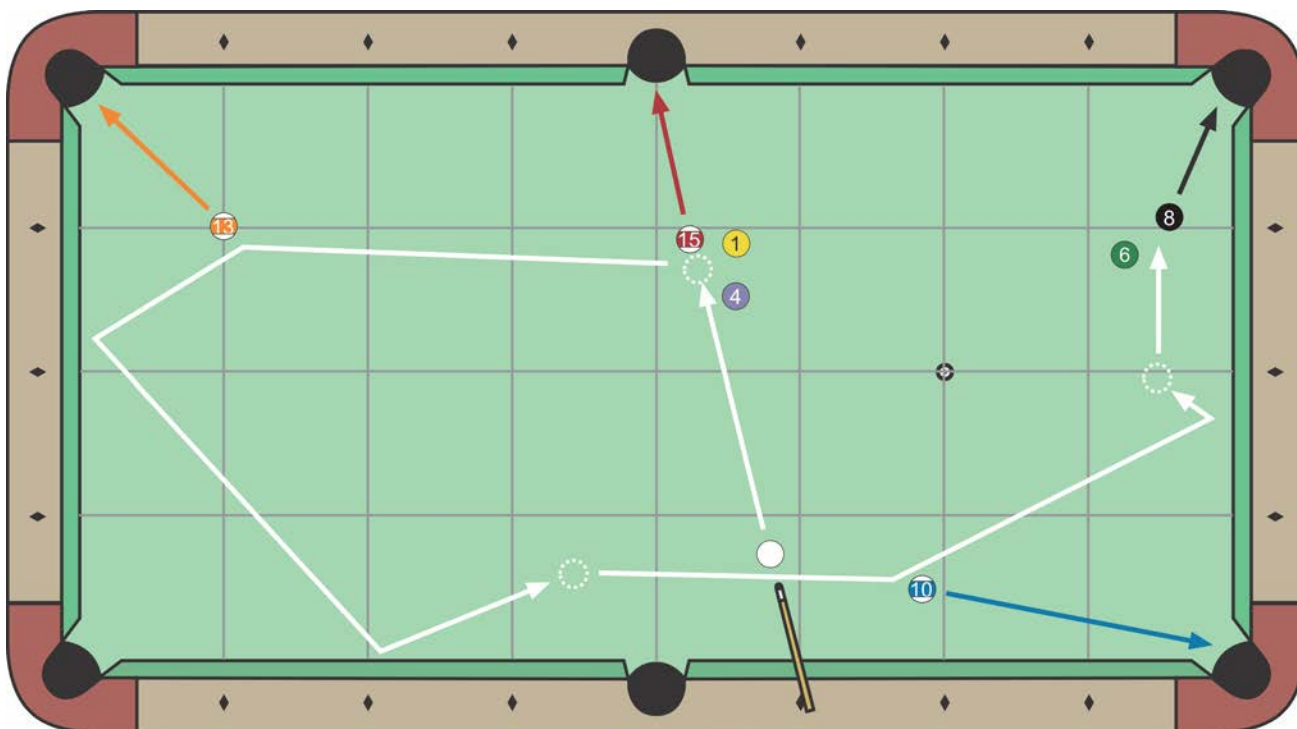


Diagram 2 Choose your key ball wisely

5.) Follow for the Dough

With ball-in-hand, amateurs sometimes choose a shot that requires precise draw to get to the next shot. In general this is a poor choice. Whenever possible, you should always try to roll the CB into position for the next shot, using a follow shot, either straight or at an angle, even if the shot and CB travel distance might be longer. It is much easier to control CB direction and travel distance with a follow shot as compared to a draw shot. Remember, “Draw for Show ... Follow for Dough.” Draw shots look cool when they work, but follow shots are much easier to execute reliably.

6.) Use Ball-In-Hand Wisely

Ever see amateurs shoot at the easiest ball on the table when they have ball in hand, and don't plan or play for shape? Then they wonder what to do next? Ball in hand is an ideal opportunity to solve any problems like a cluster. Again, [NV J.15](#) demonstrates some good examples.

7.) Take What's Offered

Sometimes people try too hard to get perfect shape on the next shot. The result might be great if you play perfect position, but if you snooker yourself by coming up a little short or long, not many people will be impressed. Sometimes it is better to just take what is offered by minimizing CB motion and accepting a longer or tougher shot on the next ball to guarantee that nothing can go wrong. That's often a better option than trying to get fancy.

8.) Don't Bump Balls

Ever see an amateur bump into a ball for no reason and send that ball into a bad place? Sometimes a small bump can tie up a ball or block a pocket. In general, it is best to not bump any balls if there is no reason to do so. This will prevent unforeseen problems and make things much more predictable. Also, minimizing CB motion can help make run-outs more controlled and reliable.

9.) Be Smart With Hangers

Sometimes when amateurs have a hanger for their next shot, they don't think they need to play good position. But from distance or from a wrong angle, even a hanger can present a difficult CB control problem. Getting closer to a hanger always makes the next position play easier. And [NV J.15](#) demonstrates how leaving the right angle can turn a challenging situation into a trivial out.

10.) Play the Percentages

Ever see an amateur go for a tough shot and sell out the game? Always weigh your options and play the percentages, and choose an easy safety over a tough shot if it will increase your chances for winning the game. Smart play is what separates the hacks from the masters.

I hope you enjoyed my "Top 10" video and article series. As always, the video descriptions in YouTube contain links to resource pages that provide additional information and demonstrations related to every topic in the videos. Be sure to watch the videos and check out the resources. Better yet, after watching, try everything out at the table to diagnose your weaknesses and improve your skills.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



[NV J.10](#) – Top 10 Pool Shots Every Player Must Know!!!

[NV J.13](#) – Top 10 Things Pool Players Do Wrong ... and How to Fix Them

[NV J.14](#) – Top 10 Pool Shots Amateurs Play Wrong ... and How to Play Them Right

[NV J.15](#) – Top 10 Pool Strategy Errors Amateurs Make ... and How to Prevent Them

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 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.