



Playing With English

UNWANTED ENGLISH

When we use english (side spin) it should be on purpose, never by accident. However, we find that every now and then we have somehow put "unwanted" english on the cue ball.

There are several causes for unwanted english, including not stroking straight and not being able to determine the center of the cue ball. However most unwanted english shots happen because the bridge hand was placed incorrectly on the table.

The finger bridge, whether it be a loop or open bridge, must be perfectly placed on the true line of aim. No other bridge placement can possibly deliver the cue ball to the desired contact point without some amount of english. That is why it is very important to determine your line of aim before you get down to the table to shoot. This will allow you to place your bridge hand correctly for the shot you want to hit.

THE EFFECTS OF ENGLISH

Striking the cue ball to the left or right of its vertical axis imparts side spin which is commonly called "english". English is usually used to change the path the cue ball will take after it contacts a cushion. Left english causes the cue ball to go more to the left after contacting a cushion and right english will cause it to go to the right. Here are three important things to be aware of when using english that might have an effect on the accuracy of your shot making.

1) Assume you are using right english. When you strike the cue ball it will deflect off the cue tip to the left. This is called "deflection". This is something you should compensate for in your aim.

2) As the cue ball travels down the table, it may curve back to the right a little, but never as much as the original deflection unless the cue butt is elevated (which is another lesson entirely). The curve back depends on the speed and distance the cue ball travels before contacting an object ball or cushion. Again, practice and experience will tell you what compensation has to be made on the shot when using english.

3) English may cause the object ball to change its natural direction onto a path that is opposite or away from the english being used. This is called "throw". Our right english can throw the object ball a little to the left of the contact line. Left english could throw the object ball to the right. Again, this effect must be compensated for.

Top players only use english when necessary. Most shots can be made and position attained with a center ball hit (which allows for using a stop, follow and draw stroke). It is the side spin that causes all the problems.

WHEN LEFT IS RIGHT

Almost ALL players know that if they shoot the cue ball into a cushion using right english (side spin), it will rebound off the cushion to the right. And, of course, left english causes the cue ball to rebound to the left.

However, many amateur players have never stopped to consider what happens when drawing the cue ball back into a cushion. After a bit of thought they would all eventually figure it out. But this tip will save them the trouble.

To draw back into a cushion and have the cue ball rebound to the right, the player must apply left english. Thus, to draw back and rebound to the left from the cushion, right english must be applied.

WATCH THE STRIPE

A very good practice method when learning the effects of a Side Spin (English), Follow or Draw stroke, is to use a striped object ball for your cue ball.

You will be able to see and understand how the cue ball is spinning when using different stroke speeds, and how it reacts once it contacts a cushion.

HOW ENGLISH AFFECTS SPEED

When a cue ball rebounds from a cushion while spinning in an opposite direction from the angle at which it arrived (called Reverse), the cue ball will slow down and not travel as far as it normally would after the rebound.

When a cue ball arrives at a cushion while rotating in the same direction as the angle it approached (called Running English), the cue ball will gain speed and travel further than it normally would.

THROW

A cue ball that has been stroked to the left of its vertical center is said to have Left English applied to it. A cue ball with Left English may cause the object ball it contacts to be thrown to the right. Just the opposite happens with Right English.

We say "may", because a lot depends on the speed and fullness of the hit.

UNDERSTANDING DRAW

A Draw Shot means that the cue ball spins back toward you after contacting the object ball. To apply Draw, you must strike the cue ball below its horizontal axis.

The reason the cue ball comes back toward you is that the below-center stroke makes the ball spin backwards. It continues spinning backward even though it is sliding forward toward the object ball. When it strikes the object ball and can no longer slide forward, the backward spin takes over and makes it roll in the opposite direction.

MASTER THE DRILL, GAIN AN ASSET

One of the most effective practice drills for perfecting your draw stroke is to position a half circle of balls (six to eight of them) around a side pocket. The object then is to start at one end of the circle and pocket the first ball in the side while drawing back for position on the second ball in the same side pocket. Continue to the third, fourth etc., until you have made all the balls in that side pocket.

Once you've mastered this drill, you can feel confident that your draw shot will be a valuable asset to your game.

THREE MAIN REASONS FOR USING ENGLISH

English is applying side spin to the cue ball by hitting it to the left or right of its vertical axis. The three main reasons for using English are:

- 1) To change the natural angle the cue ball will take after contacting a cushion.
- 2) To change the speed of the cue ball after it hits a cushion.
- 3) To change the natural direction an object ball takes when struck by the cue ball.