



Playing It Safe

INTENTIONAL FOULS

PLAYER ASKS: "Is there ever a time when one would commit a foul on purpose?" Someone told me I should have taken an Intentional Foul during league play last week."

Definitely. If no logical shot is available, don't try to invent something that just isn't there. Since it looks like you will be giving up the table and ball in hand anyway, make sure you leave it as difficult as possible. Use your foul to tie up several balls into clusters or hit balls into positions that will make a run out by your opponent very difficult.

A "RAIL" GOOD SAFETY

One of the best safety plays is to leave your opponent a long shot with the cue ball frozen to the center of one of the end rails.

Shooting a "frozen-to-the-cushion" cue ball is very difficult, especially a long shot. The shooter is forced to hit close to the top of the cue ball which requires an exact center hit. The least bit of right or left english will cause the cue ball to deflect or "squirt" from its intended path.

8 SAFETY GUIDELINES

The most important thing to know about playing a safety is when to do it.

Unfortunately, there is no hard-fast rule that tells a player when to play defensively or offensively. A few guidelines are:

- 1) If making a tough shot won't get you into position to win, opt for the safety.
- 2) If the safety is as tough as making the shot (which could get you the win) opt for the shot.
- 3) If the shot is way tougher than the safety, take the safety.
- 4) If your opponent probably won't get out even if you miss, go for the shot.
- 5) If you are way ahead in the match, stay on the offensive rather than trying to protect your lead.
- 6) If you are way behind in the match, go for it.
- 7) Always ask yourself, "Would I rather give up the table after missing a tough shot, or, would I rather get ball in hand after snookering my opponent?"
- 8) Go with your gut instinct because it usually will be right.

PICK ONE

Playing a safety is often the "correct" shot. However, a common mistake is to complicate the shot by trying to control both the cue ball and one or more object balls. You must decide whether you want to hide the cue ball or an object ball, and then pick one and focus on it.

Assume you want to hide the cue ball. Basically, all you're doing is playing position with it, hopefully hiding it behind other balls to snooker your opponent. Focus all your attention on the cue ball and the speed you need to accomplish your goal. If you are trying to also control the speed of the object ball you played off, you may not get either ball to where you want them to be.

If your play is to hide an object ball, focus all your attention on it, and not on the cue ball. Your chances of success increase greatly if you pick only one of the balls to focus on.

RULE OF THUMB

A "Rule of Thumb" when you are confronted with making a decision as to whether or not you should go for it or play safe:

When the safety play is as tough or tougher to execute than pocketing the ball, always give yourself a chance to win by attempting to pocket the ball.