

Speed Control

Once you've mastered all of the other basics, playing accurate position becomes the single most important element in distinguishing the good player from the great player. One of the most important elements that lets you predetermine the resulting position of your cue ball after each shot is speed control. The better your speed control, the less often you will find yourself out of line.

Amateurs and beginners should first be aware that the cue ball loses much of its momentum when colliding full with the object ball. To apply artificial momentum in these situations, we can apply overspin (follow) or backspin (draw) when striking the cue ball. Conversely, on thin hits, much of the momentum is retained by the cue ball (not absorbed by the object ball) and it has the tendency to travel much greater distances after contact with the object ball.

Another way of applying artificial speed to the cue ball is through the use of english. Running english, that applied on the side of the cue ball that coincides with the natural angle it will take after striking the object ball, will increase its normal speed after contact with the first cushion. The spin helps give the ball a

kick, similar to the momentum you gather when kicking out into the water from the edge of a swimming pool. And conversely here, english applied to the opposite side of the natural angle the cue ball takes, will slow it down upon contact with the first cushion as the spin is asking it to kick in the opposite direction from which it is already moving.

With all things being equal, we can best program our brains to learn positioning angles and cue ball speed by watching the results of different hits and remembering what we see. In attempting to duplicate the angles and speeds we desire, it is important to use a smooth and slow backswing as we take our warm-up strokes.

As I defined it in my brief discussion of Stroke last month, it should be like a throwing motion. Avoid quick and jerky motions, they will not allow you to pick up the feel of how much force to apply when executing a shot. Again, the analogy is like getting ready to throw a ball and you must mentally decide the distance and direction it must take.

This is an area that should be practiced regularly. Time spent learning speed control is time well spent.