

9-Ball Rulesheet

(BCA Rules Plus Steve's Annotation when clarification helps)

OBJECT OF THE GAME

Nine-Ball is played with nine object balls numbered one through nine and a cue ball. On each shot, the first ball the cue ball contacts must be the lowest numbered ball on the table, but the balls need not be pocketed in order. *In other words, the lowest numbered ball can cause another ball to be pocketed and play will continue.* If a player pockets any ball on a legal shot, he remains at the table for another shot, and continues until missing, committing a foul, or winning the game by pocketing the 9-ball. After a miss, the incoming player must shoot from the position left by the previous player, but after any foul the incoming player may start with the cue ball anywhere on the table (known as a "ball in hand"). Players are not required to call any shot (*although some tournaments require the 9-Ball to be a "called" shot*). A match ends when one of the players has won the required number of games.

RACKING THE BALLS

The object balls are racked in a diamond shape, with the 1-ball at the top of the diamond and on the foot spot, the 9-ball in the center of the diamond, and the other balls in random order, racked as tightly as possible. The game begins with cue ball in hand behind the head string.

ORDER OF BREAK

Winner of the lag has the option to break. *Winning the lag means whoever has the ball stop closest to the end rail whether first contacting the end rail or not.* In 9-Ball, the winner of each game breaks in the next, unless otherwise specified by the tournament organizer (*some tournaments like the alternating break format so that the game is more competitive*). The following are common options that may be designated by tournament officials in advance:

- (a) Players alternate break.
- (b) Loser breaks.
- (c) Player trailing in game count breaks the next game.

LEGAL BREAK SHOT

The rules governing the break shot are the same as for other shots except:

1. The breaker must strike the 1-ball first and either pocket a ball or drive at least four numbered balls to the rail.
2. If the cue ball is pocketed or driven off the table, or the requirements of the opening break are not met, it is a foul, and the incoming player has cue ball in hand anywhere on the table.
3. If on the break shot, the breaker causes an object ball to jump off the table, it is a foul and the incoming player has cue ball in hand anywhere on the table. The object ball is not re-spotted (exception: if the object ball is the 9-ball, it is re-spotted). *This means that balls that jump off the table on the break (except the 9 Ball) are placed in a pocket with the lowest ball currently on the table being the target ball.*

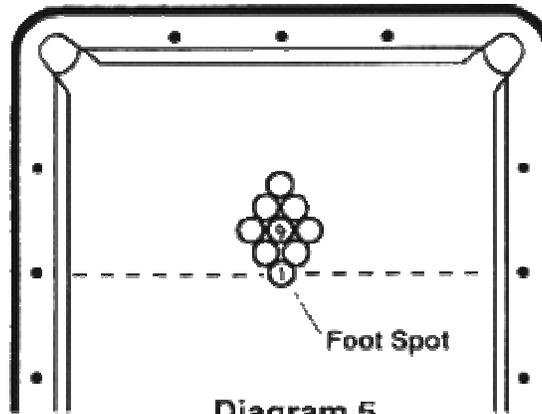


Diagram 5

Diamond Shaped Rack

1-Ball must be on the foot spot.
9-Ball must be in the center of
the rack.

CONTINUING PLAY

On the shot immediately following a legal break, the shooter may play a "push out." (See *the next topic*). If the breaker pockets one or more balls on a legal break, he continues to shoot until he misses, fouls, or wins the game. If the player misses or fouls, the other player begins an inning and shoots until missing, committing a foul, or winning. The game ends when the 9-ball is pocketed on a legal shot, or the game is forfeited for a serious infraction of the rules.

PUSH OUT

The player who shoots the shot immediately after a legal break may play a push out in an attempt to move the cue ball into a better position for the option that follows. On a push out, the cue ball is not required to contact any object ball (*although it is allowed to contact another ball if desired*) nor any rail, but all other foul rules still apply (*such as jumping a ball off of the table or a scratch shot*). The player must announce the intention of playing a push out before the shot, or the shot is considered to be a normal shot. Any ball pocketed on a push out does not count (*meaning that since it's a push shot, a ball pocketed does not mean the player can continue to play as though a non-push shot resulted in pocketing a ball*) and remains pocketed except the 9-ball. Following a legal push out, the incoming player is permitted to shoot from that position or to pass the shot back to the player who pushed out. A push out is not considered to be a foul as long as no rule (*except the "Bad Hit" and "No Rail"*) is violated. An illegal push out is penalized according to the type of foul committed. After a player scratches on the break shot, the incoming player cannot play a push out. *This makes sense because the incoming player would have a ball in hand.*

FOULS

When a player commits a foul, he must relinquish his run at the table and no balls pocketed on the foul shot are re-spotted (exception: if a pocketed ball is the 9-ball, it is re-spotted). The incoming player is awarded ball in hand; prior to his first shot he may place the cue ball anywhere on the table (*this means that even when the player is the incoming player after a foul on the break, the player gets the ball in hand as opposed to spotting it behind the head string after a foul on the break shot such as found in 8-Ball*). If a player commits several fouls on one shot, they are counted as only one foul.

BAD HIT

If the first object ball contacted by the cue ball is not the lowest numbered ball on the table, the shot is foul.

NO RAIL

If no object ball is pocketed, failure to drive the cue ball or any numbered ball to a rail after the cue ball contacts the object ball on is a foul.

BALL IN HAND

When the cue ball is in hand, the player may place the cue ball anywhere on the bed of the table, except in contact with an object ball. The player may continue to adjust the position of the cue ball until shooting.

OBJECT BALLS JUMPED OFF THE TABLE

An un-pocketed ball is considered to be driven off the table if it comes to rest other than on the bed of the table. It is a foul to drive an object ball off the table. The jumped object ball(s) is not re-spotted (exception: if the object ball is the 9-ball, it is re-spotted) and play continues.

JUMP AND MASSÉ SHOT FOUL

If a match is not refereed, it will be considered a cue ball foul if during an attempt to jump, curve or massé the cue ball over or around an impeding numbered ball, the impeding ball moves (regardless of whether it was moved by a hand, cue stick follow-through or bridge).

THREE CONSECUTIVE FOULS

If a player fouls three consecutive times on three successive shots without making an intervening legal shot, the game is lost. The three fouls must occur in one game. The warning must be given between the second and third fouls. A player's inning begins when it is legal to take a shot and ends at the end of a shot on which he misses, fouls or wins, or when he fouls between shots.

END OF GAME

On the opening break, the game is considered to have commenced once the cue ball has been struck by the cue tip. The 1-ball must be legally contacted on the break shot. The game ends at the end of a legal shot which pockets the 9-ball, or when a player forfeits the game as the result of a foul. *Note that some tournaments consider a 9-ball being pocketed on the break as a win.*