

Pool Etiquette

Every sport or recreation has its guidelines when it comes to etiquette, and billiards is no different. It helps to be familiar with these sometimes un-written rules when you try something new, and it makes it much easier and less stressful to know them ahead of time. Here are some of the basic do's and don'ts in the billiard room.

A. Consideration of your opponent and other around you.

1. **No sharking!** Contrary to popular belief, sharking has no place in billiards. Sit or stand away from the table when your opponent is shooting. Some recreational players even go as far as placing themselves straight in line with the shot, "accidentally" twitching in the middle of the shooter's back stroke. It's not only impolite and rude, but moves like these – intentional or not – won't win you any popularity contests with the regulars in your local billiard room. The best thing to do is to have a seat when your opponent is shooting.
2. **Speak softly; control your language and temper.** A billiard room is a place where men, women and children should be able to feel comfortable. So respect those around you by lowering your voice.
3. **Mind your attire.** Before heading to the poolroom, picture yourself bending over the pool table and dress accordingly. Dress comfortably so you can focus on the game and have fun.
4. **Respect your opponent before, during and after the match.** See the points above, and always keep in mind the old saying, "Treat and respect others the way you would want to be treated."
5. **Be aware of the player on the next table.** Make sure you don't interfere with the player on the next table. Be courteous and wait until they complete their shot if there is any question. This is especially true when you are between tables to make a shot.
6. **When shooting, always keep one foot on the floor.** Getting up on the table is a no, no. This is not only etiquette, but a rule of the game. No exceptions.
7. **Make it a point to be a gracious winner and a good loser.** No further explanation is needed.

B. Respect the equipment

1. **Keep food, drinks and cigarettes off the table.** Not complying with this suggestion can end up having an even more dramatic conclusion than simply irritating your opponent. Replacing the cloth on the pool table is not cheap and it's amazing the damage a black Russian, a sticky soda or some barbecue sauce can do to the cloth.
2. **Respect the property of the room owner, and play by the "house" rules.** If there is a sign on the wall stating, "No Jump or Masse' Shots allowed," then follow that rule. Even if you're a somewhat accomplished player, house rules rule...
3. **No sitting on the table.** Spend some time in a billiard room and you'll undoubtedly hear someone get yelled at from across the room to "get off the table!" This is an embarrassment that is easily avoidable. Unless a shot absolutely requires it, never sit on the edge of the table. The pool table has been meticulously leveled, ensuring that the ball travels the path you send it on, and excessive leaning on the rail will undo that work over time. In extreme cases, the slate seam can even crack!
4. **Avoid powder at all cost.** Another popular misconception is that hand powder is a staple in the billiard room. Not so. True, there are some places that will supply a talc cone, and talc is by far the lesser of two evils, but both get in the cloth and on the balls, thus affecting the game and the equipment. Try instead to use a glove. It may take some time to get used to, but if your hands are extremely sweaty, then it's worth the effort.
5. **Keep clean!** Do not place the chalk upside down on the rail after chalking or you'll leave chalk residue on the rail that ends up getting everywhere. After chalking, place the chalk side up. This way, after a game you, your clothes and the table won't be covered in blue.
6. **Leave everything the way you found it.** Finally, keep in mind to replace everything just the way you found it. The rack and the mechanical bridge both have their place on the table and if you borrowed a "house cue," return it to where you found it and don't forget to bring the balls back to the counter!

To sum it up, keep in mind to show consideration for those around you in the billiard room, respect the equipment you play on and above all, have a good time!