

Rules for Cutthroat Pool while playing at the Schuckman Home

These rules are generally based on the 2002 BCA Rules for Cut-Throat Pool as shown on <http://www.billiardsforum.com/pool-rules/2002-bca-rules-for-cut-throat-pool>. Exceptions are noted with a ~~striketrough~~ and comments are in blue.

Introduction

Cutthroat pool is usually played with either 3 or 5 players.

Object of the Game

Each player is assigned a set of numbered balls. The object of Cutthroat is to be the only player with balls from their group remaining on the table. Balls are taken off the table by being pocketed on legal shots. With that said, the object of Cutthroat is to pocket all your opponent's balls. During this process, you will want to "snooker" your own balls into unsinkable positions as often as you are able, while simultaneously pocketing your opponent's balls.

Summary

- You aim for your opponents' balls on the table.
- If you make one, you keep shooting until you miss, scratch or make an illegal shot.
- Players are eliminated when all their balls have been pocketed.
- The winner is the player with any balls left on the table after the other players have been eliminated.
- If you've been eliminated during the game, you can return to the game if an opponent commits a foul.

Claiming Groups

For 3 player games, the ball groups are numbered as follows: 1-5, 6-10 and 11-15.

You claim a group as soon as you pocket a ball.

For example, if the first player pockets a ball on the break, they can claim a group. The next player to sink a ball would then select his or her group. And the third is stuck with – presumably – the worst group.

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If the first player does not pocket any balls on the break, the next player to pocket a ball gets first dibs on a group. And so on.

Balls Used

In Cutthroat Billiards, the standard set of object-balls numbered 1-15, plus a cue-ball are used. The numbered balls are split into three groups, the first group has balls one to five, the second group has balls six to ten, and the third group has balls eleven to fifteen.

Break Shot

Shooting order is determined by lot or lag. The breaker always has the option of racking the balls. Alternately, the breaker may ask their opponent to rack the balls. When starting the game, the one-ball, six-ball, and eleven-ball are placed on the three points of the rack. The one-ball is placed on the top where it is spotted. The rest of the balls can be randomly placed in the rack. A successful breaker gets to choose which balls will be theirs: numbers one through five, six through ten, or eleven through fifteen. The next player to make a ball gets his choice of the remaining two groups, and the third player gets whichever group is left.

The starting player must make an open break or pocket a ball. If they fail to do so it is considered an illegal break, which is a foul, and the second shooter has the choice of either:

- accepting the table in position and shooting, or
- shooting the opening break shot themselves.

Any balls which fall from a legal opening break count as legally pocketed balls if there were no fouls.

Should a player foul on the opening break, their opponent has cue-ball in hand behind the head string. Any balls made on a foul break must be spotted in numerical order, lowest closest to the foot spot.

Scratch

See (Cue Ball Jump, Scratch, or Foul).

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Winning The Game

The object is to be the last player with at least one ball left on the table. When a player has no balls on the table, he is said to be "out" and their turn is skipped in the rotation of taking shots. If one of the remaining players scratches, the "out" player can recover a ball and return to the game.

Loss of Game

In Cutthroat, loss of game does not occur until the game is won by one of the three players. This is necessary since a player can be put out of the game when their last ball is pocketed and at the end of their inning if they pocketed it. Then the player may later be brought back into the game by one of their opponents, choosing to spot one of their balls to pay for a foul they committed. When the game is over, the last person to have been put out is the second player of the next game, the winner becomes the breaker, and the last person goes last.

Innings

A player's turn continues so long as they pocket an opponent's ball with each shot. **A shooter can even pocket their own ball** without sinking an opponent's ball, thereby weakening their own chances to win in exchange for continuing their turn. This circumstance is generally called "cutting one's own throat".

When shooting, the player must make the cue-ball *first* contact an **opponent's** object-ball. On all shots, the player must cause the cue ball to contact an object ball and then either:

- Pocket an object-ball, or
- send either an object ball, or the cue ball to a cushion.

Failure to do so is a foul.

~~A player may shoot at any ball that they choose, but before shooting they must call the ball and the pocket. They need not call any detail such as kisses, caroms, combinations, or cushions, all of which are legal.~~ A legally pocketed ball entitles the shooter to continue.

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~~If a player sinks his last ball he can still win the game if he runs the table out in the same inning.~~

Players Being Eliminated (Going "Out")

When a player's last group ball is legally pocketed, he is eliminated from the shooting rotation. He remains eliminated for the duration of the game unless a foul is committed by a player still in the game.

Eliminated players are said to be "out".

Players Being Reinstated (Coming Back "In")

When other players commit fouls, the penalty is typically pulling out one of each of the other player's balls. This means that players who were "out" can come back "in" to the game.

When a player is reinstated due to a foul, the player coming back in resumes his/her normal position in the original order of play.

Illegally Pocketed Balls

Any balls pocketed by the shooter on an illegal shot will be spotted, unless it was the shooter's ball that was pocketed. ~~Please note that an uncalled shot is considered an illegal shot.~~

Object Balls Jumped off the Table

Jumped object balls will be spotted if they do not belong to the shooter. If the jumped balls belong to the shooter they will count as pocketed. The stroke is a foul, and the penalty for fouls is followed. The incoming player accepts the cue ball in position.

Cue Ball Jump, Scratch, or Foul

Each of these requires the shooter to either:

- Drop one ball from their group (their choice of which ball), or

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- Spot one of each of their opponent's balls. Note that this may not always be possible, which would force them to drop one of their own.

After the penalty has been assessed, the cue ball is put in play from:

- When jumped off table, the cue ball is played from behind the head string.
- When a scratch occurs, the cue ball is played from behind the head string.
- When a foul, the cue ball is played from where it came to rest.
- When the cue ball is in hand behind the head string, and the first ball the cue ball contacts is also behind the head string, the shot is a foul unless the cue ball crosses the head string before that contact. The cue ball must either cross the head string or contact a ball in front of or on the head string or the shot is a foul
- If all of your opponent's balls are behind the head-string, you can pick the ball that is closest to the head-string and spot it at the opposite end.

Penalty for Fouls

When a player commits a foul, the inning ends. See (Cue Ball Jump, Scratch, or Foul).

General Course of Play

The list below will give you a good mental picture of the outline of the course of play for cutthroat billiards:

- Determine the order in which the three players will shoot.
- Rack and break.
- Choose your set of balls when you sink a ball. Choose either one through five, six through ten, or eleven through fifteen. These are your balls now, and you want them to remain on the billiard table.
- Continue playing as long as one of your balls remains on the table.
- Try to pocket all of your opponent's balls.
- Continue your inning each time you successfully pocket a ball.
- Win when you are the only player with at least one ball left.