



Little Tips Equal Big Results!

by Ewa Mataya Laurance

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Sometimes little things mean a lot. (And sometimes little things mean so little you wonder why anybody bothered!)

Below are some little things. None is worth a full column, some may apply to everybody but you, many you'll already know, and some may make a light bulb go off above your head, which can cause tingling in your ears. No matter. Your game will improve a little and that's what it's all about.

- You should have a separate cue for breaking in action rack games (9-Ball, 8-Ball, Rotation/61).
- The tip on that cue should be harder than normal, to handle the pressure, and be shaped flat because you'll only be using center ball strikes.
- On soft break games (14.1, One-Pocket) you can use your regular cue because you don't hit the break shot any harder than any other shot.
- One of the easiest ways to determine how accurately you struck the cue ball is to shoot a combination shot. A pocket is wide and making a ball only says your shot was either on the money or fairly close. A combination exaggerates any error in your aim, making it much easier to see how accurate you were.
- A second easy method is to place both the cue ball and the object ball at one end of the table and shoot into the far opposite corner. Distance also exaggerates error.
- When shooting a bank shot it helps to walk around to the other side of the table and look at it. The added perspective can show the angle clearer.
- In fact, do that on every shot, but only during practice unless you want to irritate the daylight's out of an opponent.
- Bend low on a shot. The Greenleaf era players stood straighter; the Mosconi players bent; today's players get lower. Though the late Jimmy Caras once told me that many of the players in the 1930s and 40s didn't stand as straight as you think. Standing straight was better for pictures.
- Don't bend low before a shot. Many times, especially when balls are close to each other, it pays to take a tiptoe look at them to figure out the actual angles. This can help even when the balls are a moderate distance apart.
- Before you go out to play, whether at a friend's house, in a league match, or in a tournament, spend a little time watching an Accu-Stats DVD of top players. You'll be surprised how much you'll then shoot like them – at least for a while.
- Different table manufacturers cut their pockets and slate openings differently and

that's something to watch out for especially on a table brand you've never heard of before. A firm shot down the cushion may bobble on one and not the other and it's not your fault (unless you keep doing it!)

- Learn to automatically and quickly calculate and understand the contact point on both the cue ball and the object ball before you shoot.
- Shots with the cue ball on the cushion come up often and can be a problem, especially if you have to go past the side pocket or you have to get position off the shot that requires a lot of cue ball spin.

For many people (who swear to me they're aiming the same as a center ball hit and have a cue with little or no deflection) shooting a ball down the cushion on the right is easier with left-hand spin, and right-hand spin shooting down the cushion on you left. So practice the opposite spin on the shot.



Go ahead, bend low and get a good look at your shot!

- Over-chalking a cue tip is as bad as under-chalking it. Once the tip can't absorb any more chalk it begins to form a loose layer on the tip and can slip on the cue ball and fall off and get in the table's cloth. That makes the cloth dirty which transfers to your hand, and wears the cloth excessively – but worst of all it can ruin your shot. So there you have several little tips that can produce big results. I had fun doing this; there are a lot more so maybe we'll do it again some time.