



ONE-PAGE HOW-TO-PLAY GUIDE FOR 4-PIN BAR BILLIARDS

BREAK-OFF: Place the four pins in accordance with the diagram below. To break off, place a white ball in the centre of the D and the red ball on the spot. Play the white ball onto the red with the aim of potting either or both. **White balls score the value of the hole they are potted into. The red ball scores double!**

CONTINUOUS PLAY: If you pot a ball, you remain in play and can take another shot. If there are ball(s) on the table then take a ball from the trough and place it anywhere in the D, then play that ball on to any other ball on the table. If the red ball is available in the trough, use it – it is worth double after all! If there are no balls on the table, take a white and red from the trough and break-off.

BUT DON'T BANK YOUR SCORE YET! Keep going for as long as you keep potting balls, taking a ball from the trough each time. Add your score up as you go. Continue playing until either you do not pot a ball into a hole, or you make a foul. If you don't commit a foul, then congratulations – you can now “bank” your score. Add your points to the scoreboard on the table (the amount scored in one continuous visit to the table is referred to as your “break”). If you did commit a foul, then too bad – you don't get to bank anything for that visit.

CHANGE OF PLAYER: Play now passes to your opponent. Reset any pins which may have moved from their starting position and then follow the continuous play (and break-off) rules above. If there is no ball in the trough when you come to the table, retrieve the ball on the table that is closest to the baulk line. Play may pass between players multiple times over the course of a game. Players will bank their score at the end of each visit, assuming no foul has been made.

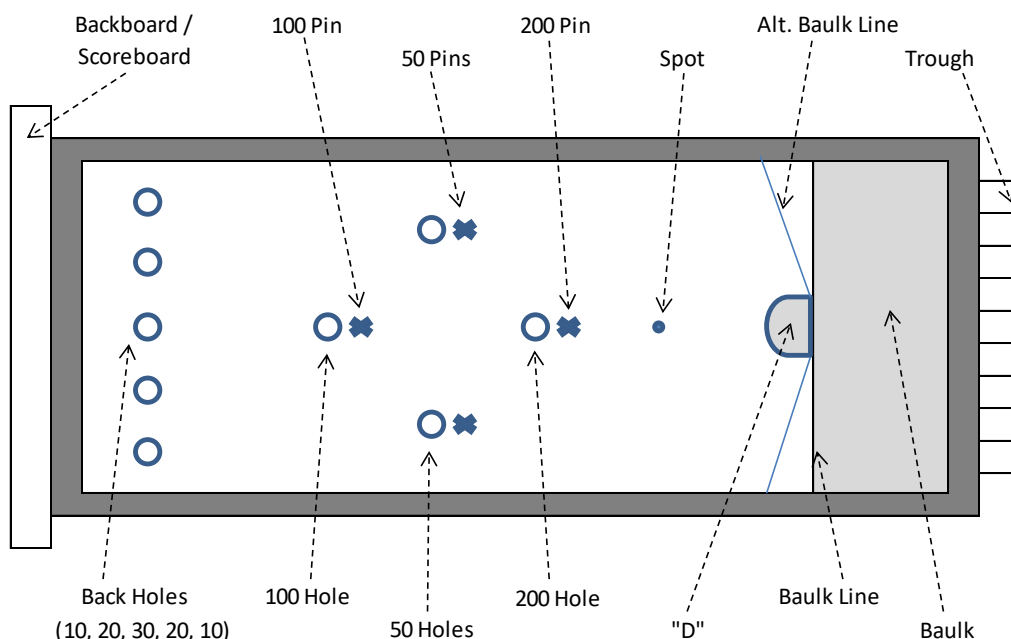
FOULS: The following are examples of fouls which will result in you not being allowed to bank your break and will also result in play passing to your opponent:

- Taking a shot from the D but failing to make contact with a ball on the table (known as a “miss”).
- Causing a pin or pins to fall over.
- A ball or balls returning behind the baulk line or leaving the table.

Be aware that if you knock over the 200 pin guarding the 200 hole, not only do you lose your break and play passes to your opponent, you also lose the entire score you have banked in the game and return to nil points. Stay away from the 200 pin!

WINNING THE GAME: After about 15 minutes, the table clock will run out and balls will no longer be returned to the trough. Carry on playing by retrieving the closest ball to the baulk line. Play continues until there are one or no balls remaining on the table. The player with the highest score wins... unless there is one ball remaining and the difference in score between players is 200 or less (400 or less if the last remaining ball is the red), in which case it's “Endgame” time!

ENDGAME: Flip the scoreboard down to cover the top holes and place the 50 pins into the 50 holes, thus preventing the final ball being potted in any of these holes. Ensure the 100 and 200 pins are on their starting positions. Play the final ball from the centre of the D on to the side cushion so that it bounces off the cushion and into either the 100 or 200 holes. The usual fouls for knocking the pins over still apply, so keep in mind the high risk of playing towards the 200 hole – you lose your entire score if you knock over the 200 pin! Play swaps between players until the final ball is potted.



*** Please refer to our DETAILED RULES OF PLAY FOR 4-PIN BAR BILLIARDS overleaf for further guidelines and specifics. ***

DETAILED RULES OF PLAY FOR 4-PIN BAR BILLIARDS

1. OBJECT OF THE GAME

The object of the game is to win by being the player (or players in the case of a doubles game) to have accumulated the highest points score once the game clock has expired and all playable shots have been exhausted.

2. MECHANICS OF THE GAME

2a. OPENING BREAK-OFF SHOT

A coin toss is used to determine who breaks first. The winner of the coin toss has the option of performing the opening break shot or assigning it to the opponent.

2b. THE BREAK-OFF SHOT

When there are no balls on the table, a break-off shot will be played. The red ball is to be placed on the spot and a white ball is to be placed in the centre of the "D". The break-off shot is initiated by striking the white ball into the red ball. Where the red ball is not available (if it has not been returned to baulk when the bar has dropped, for example), the break-off shot will be played with two white balls instead of a red and a white.

- (a) The break will be deemed a legal break if the white ball makes contact with the red ball, regardless of whether a foul occurs after the cue ball is struck.
- (b) The break is not a legal break if: **1** – The white ball is not played from the centre of the "D"; or **2** – The white ball does not make contact with the red ball (the white ball is deemed to have been played into space); or **3** – The red and white balls are racked and played the wrong way round. Any one of these or a combination thereof will constitute a foul break, resulting in play passing to the fouling player's opponent who will have the option of replacing the white ball and red ball and performing a break-off shot or leaving the balls where they lie and playing on as normal.
- (c) Where both balls are potted from the break-off shot, the player will play a second and subsequent break-off shot and will continue to play break-off shots for as long as both balls are potted, subject to **Rule 2b (d)** below.
- (d) The same break-off shot can only be played a maximum of three times in a row, at which point the player must change their break-off shot to such an extent that it is materially different to the break-off shot played previously. For example, if from a break-off shot a player directs the cue ball to the right of the table into the 50 hole and the object ball to the left into the 10 hole, and performs this break-off shot three times consecutively, they could reverse the shot to play the cue ball to the left 50 hole and the object ball to the right 10 hole. The player can then revert to their previous break-off shot as long as the three in-a-row rule is observed.

2c. CONTINUOUS PLAY

- (a) If a ball(s) is potted and no foul is committed, this entitles the player to one additional shot and this continues until the player fails to make a pot or until the player commits a foul.
- (b) In order to carry on play, the player will draw a ball from the trough and place it anywhere in the "D" (only a break-off and endgame shot are required to be played from the centre of the "D").
- (c) If the red ball is available in the trough, it must be retrieved and played prior to any white ball being retrieved. If no ball is available in the trough, the ball nearest to the baulk line is retrieved (unless two or more balls are deemed the same distance from the baulk line in which case the ball closest to the centre of the "D" is returned).
- (d) A player's visit continues until a non-scoring shot is played, at which point play passes to the opposing player.
- (e) The player must observe the three-in-a-row rule (refer to **Rule 2b (d)**) whenever they are performing break-off shots. Note that the three-in-a-row rule does not apply to any other type of shot other than the break-off.

2d. BALLS OFF THE TABLE

It is a foul if a ball leaves the playing surface and does not return by its own means (other than being potted).

“By its own means”

- (a) It is not a foul if the ball leaves the playing surface, runs along the top of a cushion and drops back to the playing surface. It is not a foul if the ball leaves the playing surface, makes contact with the backboard/scoreboard and drops back to the playing surface.
- (b) It is a foul if the ball leaves the playing surface, comes into contact with a person or objects that are not part of the table and then returns to the playing surface.

Any ball that leaves the playing surface and fails to return by its own means is returned to the trough.

2e. INTERFERENCE

If any balls and/or pins are moved during a frame:

- (a) By a person other than the players taking part in the frame; or
- (b) As a direct result of one of the players being bumped; or
- (c) Due to any other event deemed outside the player's control.

No penalty will be incurred for the above situations, and balls and/or pins will be returned as close as possible to their starting positions.

2f. BALL FALLING IN WITHOUT BEING HIT

Ball on edge of hole:

- (a) If a stationary ball falls into a hole without being hit by another ball, a pin, or the cue, it shall be replaced, and play shall continue. The replaced ball will score no points and, if applicable, any other balls potted legitimately during the shot will score as normal.
- (b) If a ball that has been caused to move as a result of a play stops momentarily on the edge of a hole (after having come into contact with a ball, pin or cue) and then falls in within 5 seconds, it will count as in the hole and not be replaced (whether potted legally or as a result of a foul). If potted legally the ball will score as normal. If the fall is outside of 5 seconds, the ball will be considered to be stationary and **Rule 2f (a)** will apply.

2g. SCORING

White balls score the value of the hole whilst the red ball is worth double. A player's cumulative score will be added up during their break after each shot has been played, and the scoreboard will only be updated once a player has banked their break.

There will be no change to scoring once the bar drops: white balls will still score the value of the hole, and the red ball will continue to score double.

2h. DISTURBING PINS

If a pin is knocked over during a player's shot, it will constitute a foul and the applicable penalty will be incurred. If a pin and a ball are wedged in the same hole, the pin is removed first, and the ball is allowed to drop.

If a pin is knocked from its correct position during a shot and remains standing, it shall not be reset for the remainder of that player's visit.

Resetting pins

Pins that have been moved from their starting positions are reset only once the player's visit is completed.

- (a) If the pin's starting position is occupied or obscured by a ball to the extent where the pin could not be replaced without disturbing the ball, the ball will be considered to be out of play and will be returned to the trough allowing the pin to be reset to its starting position.

- (b) If a pin is touching a ball but the pin's starting position is not occupied or obscured, the ball will be considered to be in play and will remain on the table.

Note: *The only exception to the rules concerning disturbing pins is if they have been moved as a result of interference, in which case **Rule 2e** applies.*

2i. COMPLETION OF A FRAME / ENDGAME

The frame will end once all balls are potted (and no balls are available in the trough). The player to have banked the most points will be declared the winner. Should points be tied, the frame will be shared.

If there is only one ball remaining in play and no other balls available, endgame rules will apply if the difference between the two players scores is 200 points or less (400 points or less if the last remaining ball is the red). If the difference in points is greater than these cut-offs, the remaining ball is ignored, and the frame is considered over (though the winning player has the right to invoke endgame play if they wish).

Endgame

The following rules will apply:

- (a) The scoreboard will be folded down to cover the back holes, and the two 50 pins will be placed in the 50 holes. Pins for the 100 and 200 holes will be placed on their starting positions.
- (b) The player whose current visit it is takes the first shot, to be considered a continuation of their break (if the last ball is correctly played but not holed, the player retains the score of that break).
- (c) The ball must be placed in the centre of the "D".
- (d) The ball must be played off a cushion with the intention to rebound (double) the ball into either the 100 or 200 holes (the player does not have to nominate which hole is being played). The ball may be rebounded off more than one cushion (cross-double).
- (e) The ball cannot be played straight toward a hole in the attempt to use the weight of the ball or bend of the table to pot it – it must have made contact with a cushion for it to be considered a legal shot.
- (f) A shot will be deemed illegal if the ball makes contact with the edge of the scoreboard. A shot will be deemed illegal if the ball leaves the table, regardless of whether it returns by its own means or not.
- (g) Legally potting the ball in either the 100 or 200 holes ends the frame, even if the ball has made contact with a pin.
- (h) If a pin is knocked down, a foul has been committed and the penalty for that pin applies as normal.

3. FOULS

GENERAL POINTS

Playing a foul causes the fouling player's visit to end and will result in either the loss of points for that break only (if any have been scored) or the loss of all points accumulated up to that point in the match (including all points that have been banked).

Pins are reset to their starting positions. Any balls coming to rest in baulk will be returned to the trough.

Note that if a combination of fouls occurs, **the foul incurring the highest penalty will apply.**

LEGAL SHOT

On all shots, the player must attempt to play a ball that is in play, or in the case of an endgame attempt to pot the ball. Purposely cueing a ball into space or purposely targeting a pin would constitute an illegal shot and would be a deliberate foul.

3a. FOULS RESULTING IN LOSS OF ENTIRE SCORE

- (a) Causing the 200 pin to fall over, even if the 200 pin falls over after other pin(s) have fallen over.

- (b) Potting the final ball during endgame play without first striking a cushion.
- (c) Committing a deliberate foul (when a player deliberately and intentionally plays a foul, or clearly and intentionally fails to attempt a legal shot).
- (d) Not playing in the true spirit of the game or in a sporting manner, e.g. purposely time wasting, forfeiting the frame prior to the frame coming to a complete end (**Rule 2i**), etc.

3b. FOULS RESULTING IN LOSS OF SCORE FOR BREAK ONLY

- (a) Causing any pin other than the 200 pin to fall over.
- (b) Playing a foul break (**Rule 2b (b)**).
- (c) Cueing a ball outside of the "D".
- (d) The cue ball fails to strike another ball (a "miss").
- (e) The player fails to cue the red ball when it is available.
- (f) Any ball returns to the "D" or to baulk. A ball may overhang the edge of the "D" or hang over the baulk line. This is considered to be in play (no foul) unless that ball makes contact with either the "D" or baulk (i.e. a ball is touching the edge of "D"/baulk or touched the edge but rolled back).
- (g) The player causes any ball or pin in play to move other than from a shot cued correctly from the "D", except in the case of interference (**Rule 2e**).
- (h) The ball leaves the table and does not return by its own means (**Rule 2d**).
- (i) The same break-off shot is played more than three times in succession.
- (j) A break-off cue ball or endgame cue ball is not played from the centre of the "D".
- (k) Intentionally jumping the cue ball.
- (l) Playing a push shot (when the tip of the cue remains in contact with the cue ball once it has commenced its forwards motion).
- (m) Striking the cue ball with anything other than the tip of the cue.
- (n) Playing a shot before all balls have come to rest from the previous shot.
- (o) Playing a shot before balls due to be returned or pins due to be reset have been.
- (p) Playing out of turn.
- (q) Double hitting the cue ball (causing the tip of the cue to come into contact with the cue ball more than once in the same shot).

RULES SPECIFIC TO THE NORWICH 4-PIN BAR BILLIARDS LEAGUE

4. THE GAME

The game to be played will be 4-pin bar billiards. It is intended that players and teams should play bar billiards in the true spirit of the game and in a sporting and respectful manner. It is expected that players and teams adhere to the rules of the venue in which they are playing. The referee will be the sole judge that the game is played in accordance with the rules laid out here in sections 1 to 8. The referee's decision is final.

5. EQUIPMENT

The game will be played on a 4-pin or converted 3-pin table. The game clock should be between 14 and 18 minutes. The following equipment should be provided by participating venues:

- (a) One red and seven white balls. Matches can be played if only six white balls are available.
- (b) Four pins.

(c) At least two cues.

(d) Cue chalk.

Players are entitled to bring and use their own cues and chalk. The home venue or home team will be responsible for paying for the frames within a match.

Note: *Alternative baulk lines are ignored for the benefit of consistency.*

6. PRE-GAME

A standard league or cup match will consist of six frames of singles followed by three frames of doubles, with all players to be drawn randomly at the start of the match. No player may play more than one singles frame and one doubles frame in the same match (except where **Rule 8** applies).

Once the coin toss has determined which player will break (refer to **Rule 2a**), the breaks will then alternate by team for the remaining eight frames.

The home team is responsible for providing a referee for the first frame. The provision of a referee should then alternate between away and home teams for each subsequent frame. A player should referee no more than one frame per match.

Matches are to be played in the order they are drawn except if both captains agree otherwise.

Note: *Where a black pin is available, it should guard the 200 hole by default. However, players may swap the positions of pins if they wish but they may only do so at the start of a frame (not mid-way through) and only if the home player for that frame is happy to do so. The penalties for the 100 and 200 pins apply regardless of pin colour.*

7. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REFEREE

The referee is the sole judge that the game is played in accordance with the rules.

Responsibilities of a referee during a frame are as follows:

- (a) To accurately keep score on behalf of the player, and to audibly announce the cumulative break score after each of the players shots.
- (b) To call all fouls that are committed.
- (c) To record banked scores on the scoreboard, and to adjust scores for penalties arising from fouls.
- (d) To return balls and reset pins as applicable.
- (e) To ensure that the final score for the frame is recorded on the match scorecard.

The referee is permitted to advise the player of potential situations which may result in a foul (e.g. the red ball not being played when available, or the three-in-a-row shot limit has been reached), and should attempt to announce when the bar has dropped, though the referee should not be held accountable should either of these not occur.

A player may consult the referee at any time to clarify the score or difference in points between players. The referee should not advise a player on the type of shot to play and should not exhibit bias towards one team.

Note: *Only the referee should handle balls (e.g. returning to trough) and pins (e.g. resetting) during play. It is a foul for the player to do so (**Rule 3b (g)**).*

8. MINIMUM PLAYER RULE

Ideally a match should comprise of at least six players on each team, however a match can still proceed should a team have fewer than six players available. A team can temporarily draft in players to make up numbers as long as the player(s) that is drafted has not or will not play for any other team that season.

The minimum player rule allows for one of the available players to play a second singles frame, and for one of the available players to play a second doubles frame. Those two players (one drawn into the singles and one drawn into

the doubles) must be different people – any one player must not play more than three frames (2x singles/1x doubles or 1x singles/2x doubles) in any one match.

The minimum player rule is limited to one use (one player) in the singles and one use (one player) in the doubles. This means that a team with five players will not incur a penalty, but a team of fewer than five players will.

Below is how each situation will work in practice:

Playing with five players

- (a) Names are drawn randomly for the first five singles frames (and randomly for all six frames for the opposing team, assuming they have a full squad of six players). For the sixth singles frame, the team who is missing a sixth player will place the names of the five players they do have into the “hat” for one of them to be randomly drawn to play the sixth singles frame.
- (b) Names are returned to the “hat” and drawn randomly for the three doubles frames. For the third doubles frame, the team who is missing a sixth player will remove the name of the person already drawn to play the third double and remove the name of the person selected to play the additional singles frame and place the remaining names into the “hat” for one of them to be randomly drawn to play the third doubles frame.

In the case of one team having five players, all nine frames are played, and that team suffers no penalty in terms of frames forfeited.

Playing with four players

- (c) Names are drawn randomly for the first four singles frames (and randomly for all six frames for the opposing team, assuming they have a full squad of six players). For the fifth singles frame, the team who is missing two players will place the names of the four players they do have into the “hat” for one of them to be randomly drawn to play the fifth singles frame. The sixth singles frame cannot be played and will be awarded to the opposing team if they have had a player drawn for it.
- (d) Names are returned to the “hat” and drawn randomly for the three doubles frames. The team missing two players will only have names drawn for the first two doubles frame. Although the minimum player rule would allow them to draw one of three players (after excluding the player drawn for the fifth singles frame) to the third doubles frame, there would be no point in this case as they would be unable to provide a doubles partner for that player. As such, the third doubles frame cannot be played and will be awarded to the opposing team if they have had players drawn for it.

In the case of one team having four players, only seven frames will be played with the team forfeiting one singles frame and one doubles frame.

Playing with three players

- (e) Names are drawn randomly for the first three singles frames (and randomly for all six frames for the opposing team, assuming they have a full squad of six players). For the fourth singles frame, the team who is missing three players will place the names of the three players they do have into the “hat” for one of them to be randomly drawn to play the fourth singles frame. The fifth and sixth singles frames cannot be played and will be awarded to the opposing team if they have had a players drawn for them.
- (f) Names are returned to the “hat” and drawn randomly for the three doubles frames. The team missing three players will only have names drawn for the first doubles frame and one name drawn to the second. For the second doubles frame, the team who is missing three players will remove the name of the person already drawn to play the second double and remove the name of the person selected to play the additional singles frame and place the remaining names into the “hat” for one of them to be randomly drawn to play the second doubles frame. The third doubles frame cannot be played and will be awarded to the opposing team if they have had players drawn for it.

In the case of one team having three players, only six frames will be played with the team forfeiting two singles frames and one doubles frame.

Playing with two players

- (g) Names are drawn randomly for the first two singles frames (and randomly for all six frames for the opposing team, assuming they have a full squad of six players). For the third frame, the team who is missing four players will place the names of the two players they do have into the “hat” for one of them to be randomly drawn to play the third singles frame. The fourth, fifth and sixth singles frames cannot be played and will be awarded to the opposing team if they have had a players drawn for them.
- (h) Names are returned to the “hat” and drawn randomly for the three doubles frames. The team missing four players will only have names drawn for the first doubles frame. Although the minimum player rule would allow them to draw one of two players (the one who hasn’t played an additional singles frame) to the second doubles frame, there would be no point in this case as they would be unable to provide a doubles partner for that player. As such, the second and third doubles frame cannot be played and will be awarded to the opposing team if they have had players drawn for them.

In the case of one team having two players, only four frames will be played with the team forfeiting three singles frames and two doubles frames.

Playing with one player

- (i) Name is drawn to the first singles frame (and randomly for all six frames for the opposing team, assuming they have a full squad of six players). For the second frame, the team who has only one player can play that player again using the minimum player rule. The third, fourth, fifth and sixth singles frames cannot be played and will be awarded to the opposing team if they have had a players drawn for them.
- (j) The team with only one player will be unable to play a doubles frame as they will not have a partner. As such, the three doubles frames cannot be played and will be awarded to the opposing team if they have had players drawn for them.

In the case of one team having one player, only two frames will be played with the team forfeiting four singles frames and three doubles frames.

Note: A forfeited frame will be recorded with a scoreline of nil points for both teams but will be recorded as a win for the team who is able to provide a player. If the opposing team is also short on players and also unable to provide a name for a frame, that frame will be considered void and will not contribute to the final match score.

9. MATCH CANCELLATION

If a team wishes to cancel an arranged fixture, they are requested to give a minimum of two days’ notice, i.e. for a match scheduled on a Wednesday evening, any cancellation should be arranged by the end of the Monday preceding it. There is currently no penalty in place for a team who cancels with short notice, but please give as much notice as possible to allow teams and venues to make alternative arrangements.

10. PROVISION OF FOOD

Both teams will contribute £10 each towards the provision of food on a match night, for a total contribution of £20 per match. If teams do not wish to have food provided that is fine, but please agree this between captains beforehand. Likewise, if a home venue or team are unable to provide food or do not wish to do so then that is also fine, again team captains to communicate this in advance. In these situations where food is not provided, no monetary contribution will be required. The venue/team providing food will decide what food is to be provided. Please be mindful that it can be difficult for a venue or team to accommodate all dietary requirements.

11. REGISTRATION

The following teams are registered for Norwich Bar Billiards league and cup matches:

Artichoke Hearts
Black Stars
Coach & Horses
Cottagecore
Dad's Army
Disasterfarians
Flamers
Golden Stars
International Brigade
Kings Head
Lionhearts
Norwich VR
Serengeti
The Rose
Vikings
White Lions

The following venues are registered to host Norwich Bar Billiards league and cup matches:

Artichoke, 1 Magdalen Road, Norwich, NR3 4LW
Coach & Horses, 51 Bethel Street, Norwich, NR2 1NR
Cottage, 9 Silver Road, Norwich, NR3 4TB
Golden Star, 57 Colgate, Norwich, NR3 1DD
Kings Head, 42 Magdalen Street, Norwich, NR3 1JE
Marlborough Arms, 43 Spencer Street, Norwich, NR3 4PB
Norwich VR, Riverbridge Building, 89 Oak Street, Norwich, NR3 3BP
Rose Inn, 235 Queens Road, Norwich, NR1 3AE
South Walsham Village Hall, School Road, Norwich, NR13 6DZ
White Lion, 73 Oak Street, Norwich, NR3 3AQ

Norwich Bar Billiards Rules Version 3.1 (September 2025)

Please note that this edition of 4-pin bar billiards rules is applicable for Norfolk – there are minor regional variations across the country

Please feel free to copy and distribute these rules