

Break Shots

This book does not have all of the answers. Neither do I. This was a great undertaking and it took a long time to collect the proper information. Many questions that arise in 14.1 have to do with the break ball, or how to attack the stack on the break shot.

Novice players believe in the rule that says you have to smash the rack to smithereens. That may work for you in 8 ball in 9 ball, but in 14.1 it can cause some major problems. Straight pool is not just about pocketing balls. It is about controlling the table. It is about strategy. It is about knowing what balls to pocket, and which balls to save until later. You will never win if you go into a 14.1 battle with the strategy of just pocketing whatever ball looks open to you. It's not that easy of a game.

Also, the balls aren't always going to spread open for you. For that reason, it is recommended that you familiarize yourself with other parts of the game that will assist you in those areas. There are many intricacies that develop throughout the rack. You need to familiarize yourself with offensive and defensive situations, clusters, secondary break shot opportunities, set up balls, key balls, break balls, and problem balls.

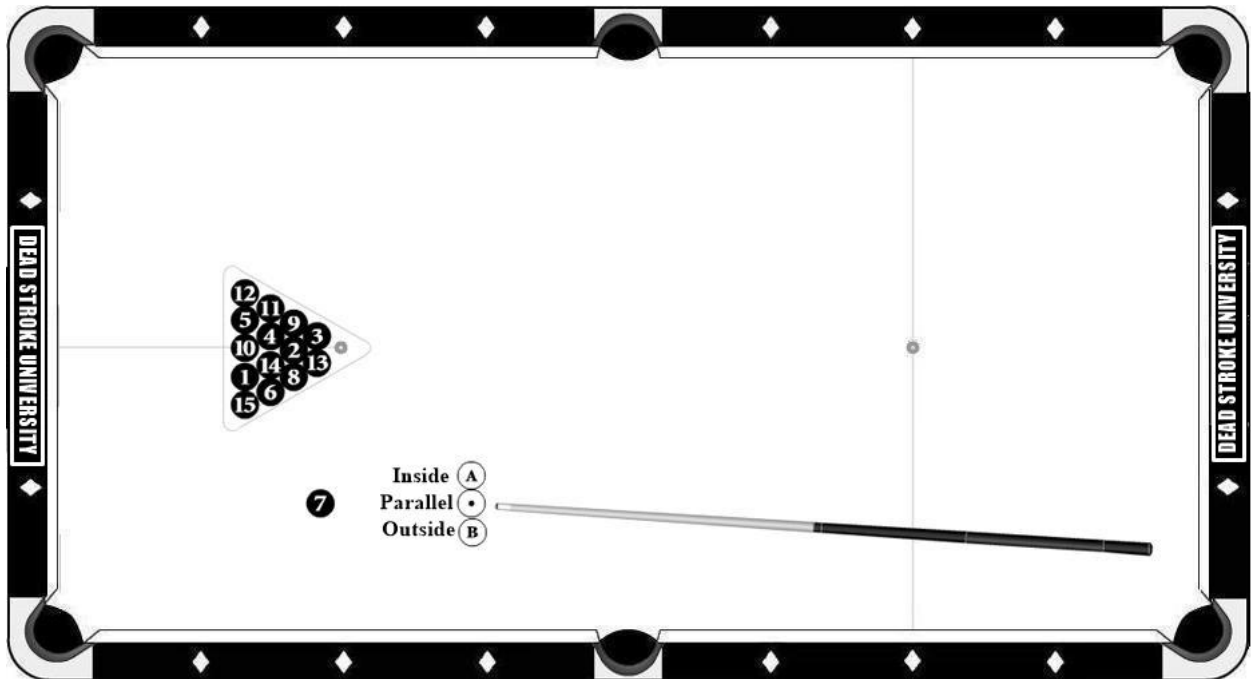
Splattering the balls everywhere is not the solution.

Most of the time if you hammer the stack on the break shot you will leave yourself very few break ball options. Why would you purposely want to eliminate your options? All that is needed is to separate the balls enough to where you can open them for the pockets. Learn how to recognize and utilize secondary break shots. Also - If I try to blast away to spread the pack, I might miss the break ball and open the table for my opponent. I want him to work for his points. I never want to give him an excuse to take advantage of avoidable carelessness.

When pocketing the break ball, I try not to send any of the balls past the side pockets. I don't hit them hard at all. I merely try to move them enough so that they aren't touching each other. From there, my mission becomes finding an open pocket for each ball.

Examining The Break Ball

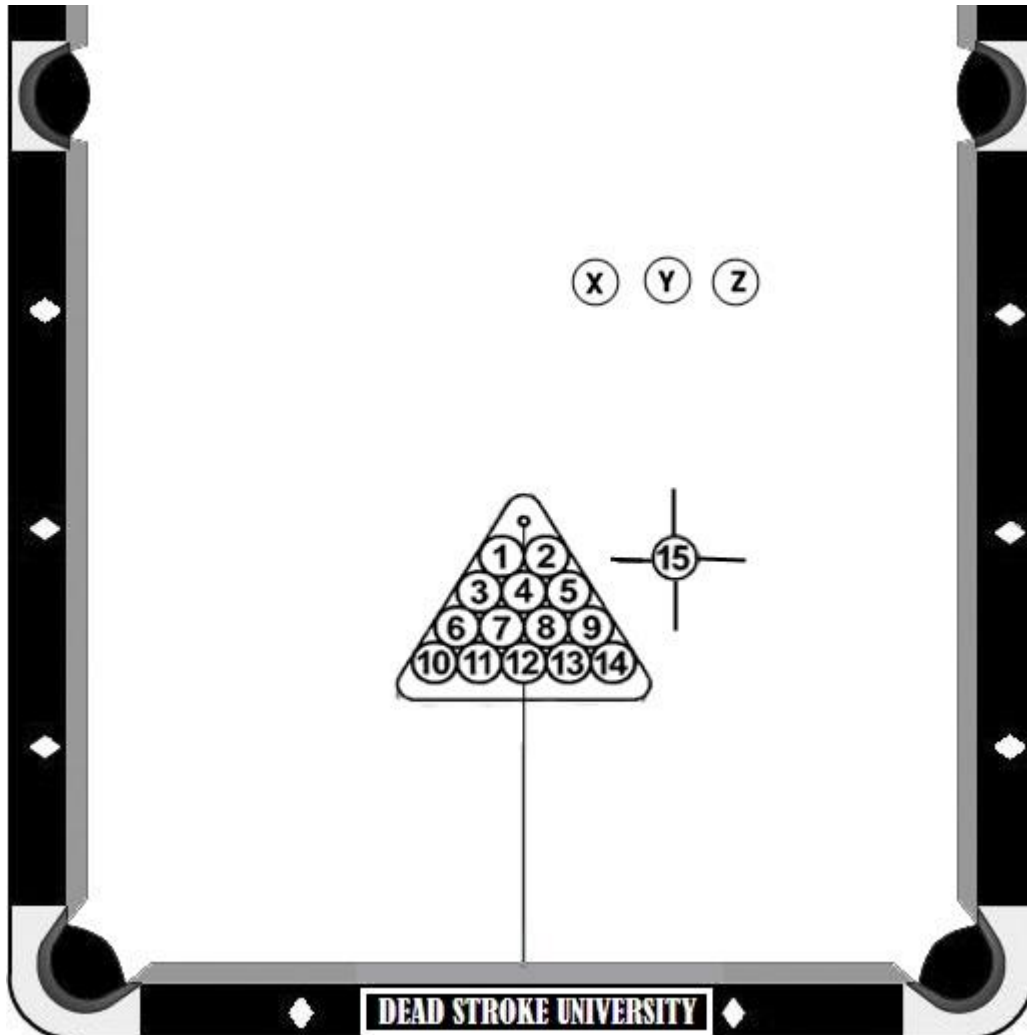
Break shots are never going to be perfect or *exactly the same* every single time. It is wise to familiarize yourself with different types of break shots to ensure you are prepared for anything during competition.



You will have to address the cue ball differently for each of the 3 cue ball positions that are in the above diagram. Cue Ball A is located along the *Inside Angle*. Cue Ball B is located along the *Outside Angle*. The Center Cue Ball is *Parallel* with the break ball. The location to the cue ball (in relation to the location of the Break Ball) will determine whether you use follow, draw, center English. I will cover what to do in each situation in the next class, entitled “Break Shots: Rules of Thumb.

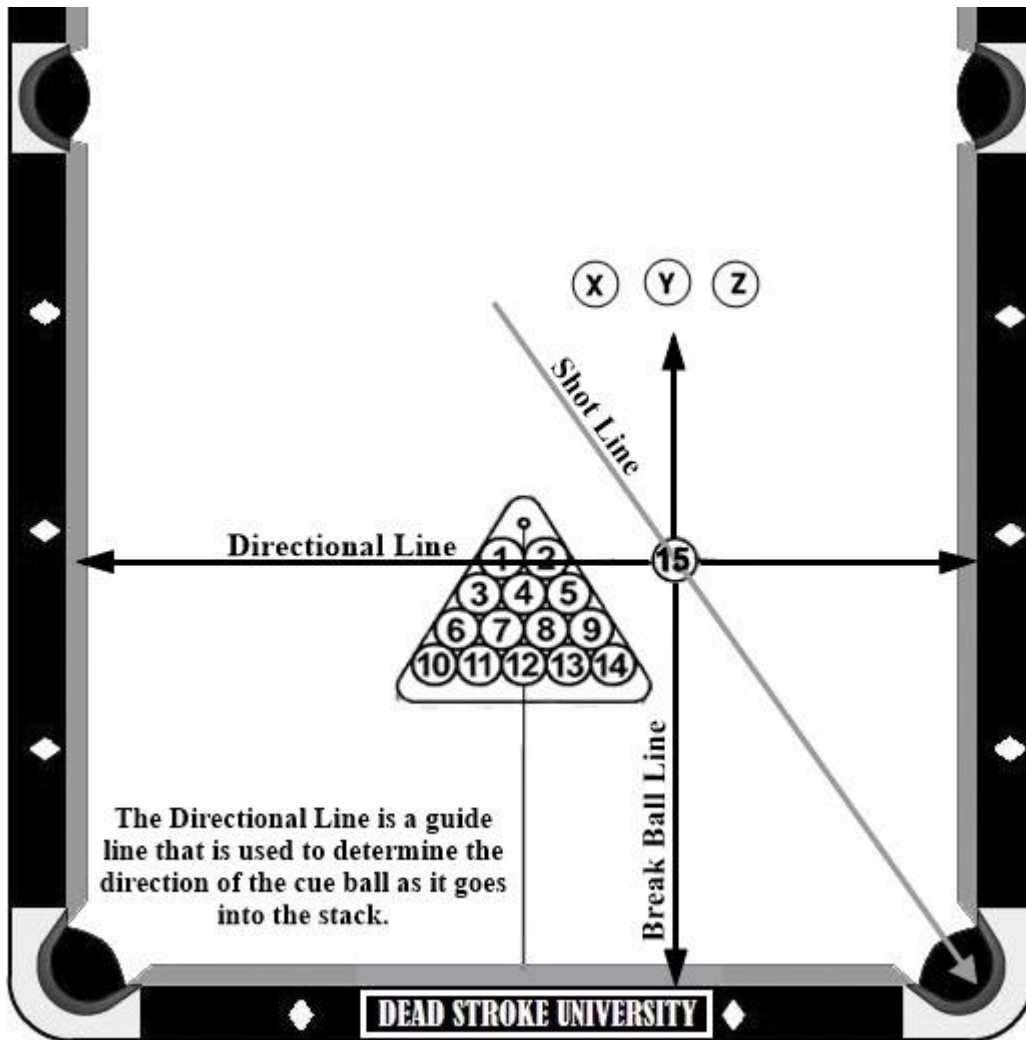
Zoning In

To continue your run at the table, you have to learn how to pocket the Break Ball. This is the Achilles' heel for many players. If you are not able to pocket the break ball consistently – you might want to put this material down until you do.



The above diagram shows 3 cue ball positions that are marked X, Y, & Z. The 15 ball is the break ball, and I have marked it off with a vertical line extending through the ball and up and down the table (the Break Ball Line) – and a horizontal line that extends through the ball – across the table (the Directional Line). This horizontal line extends through the break ball to a point on the stack. You can use the Directional Line as

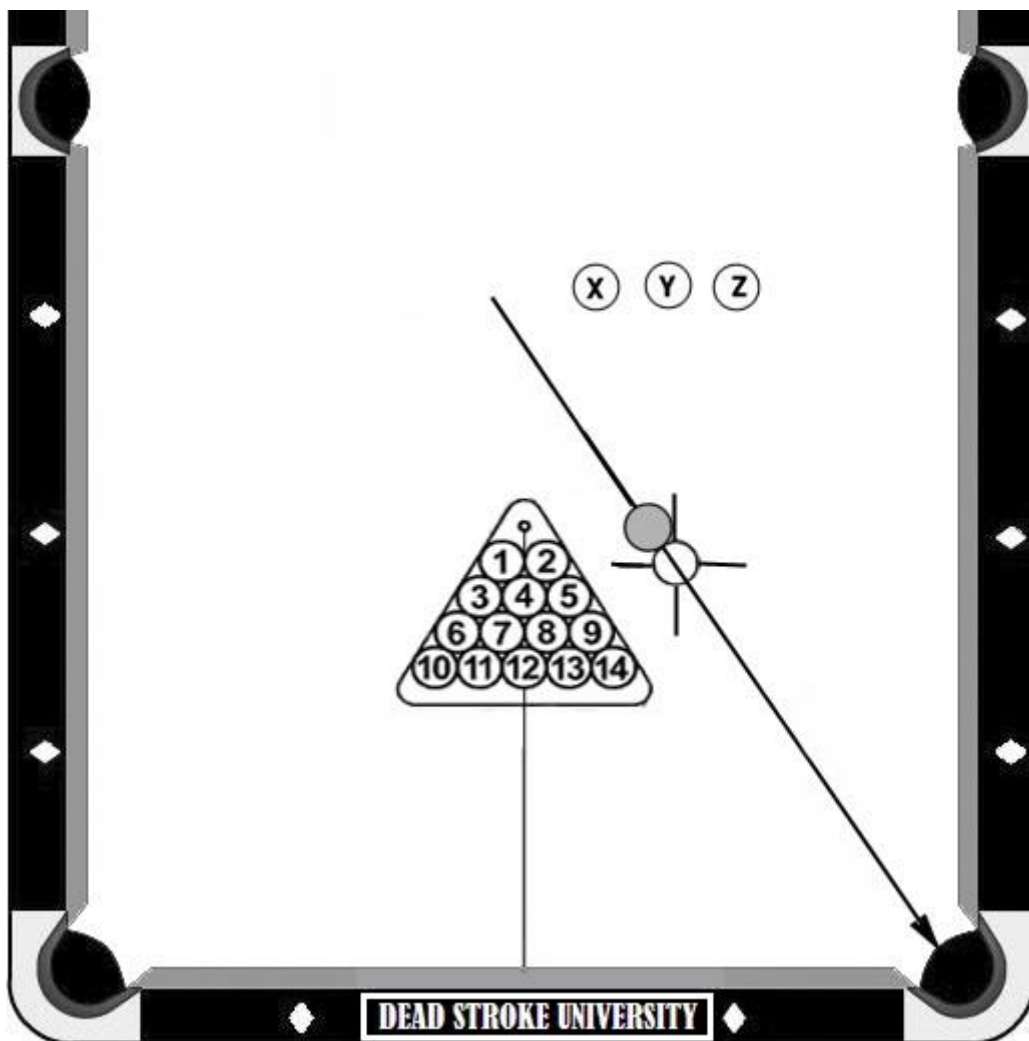
reference to guide the cue ball towards the stack.

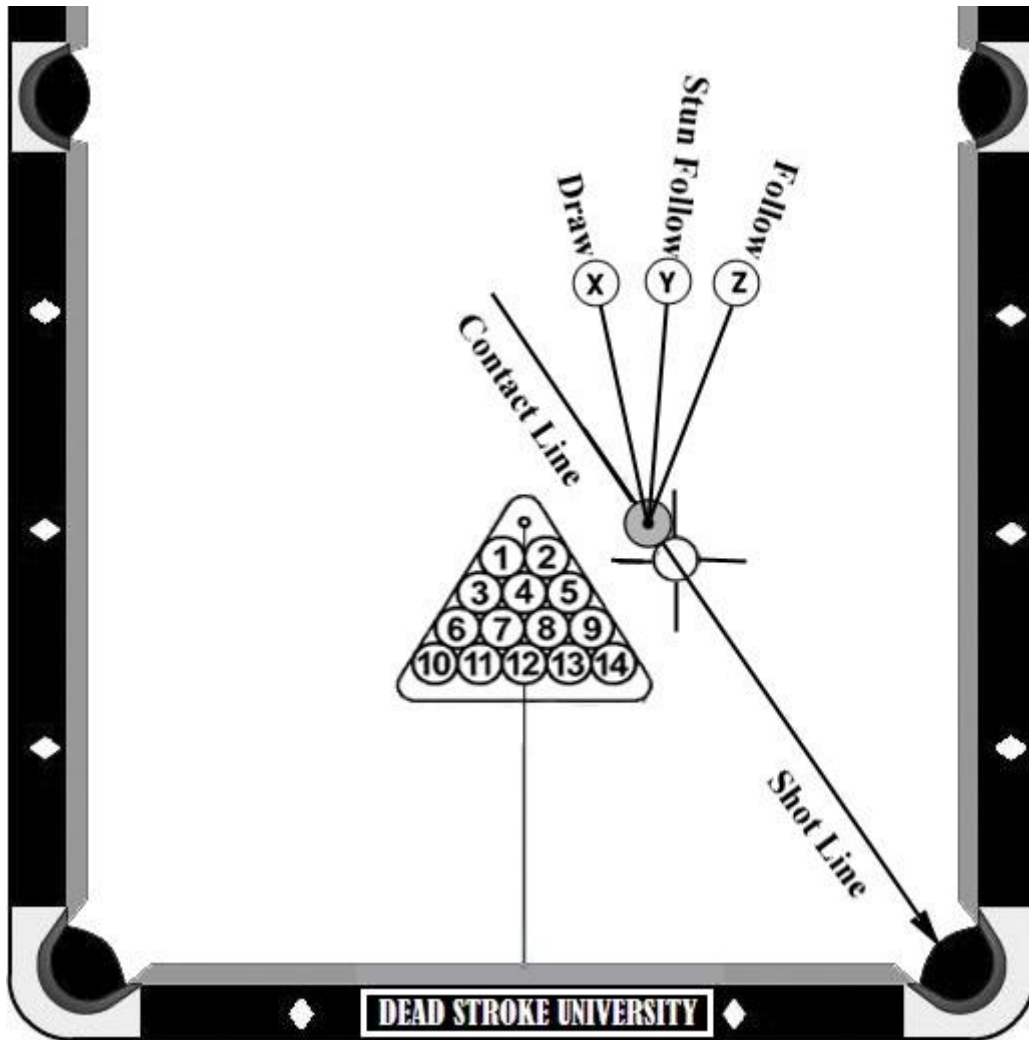


In the above diagram I have divided the break ball using the Directional Line and the Break Ball Line. Also shown is *The Shot Line*. You can locate the shot line very easily by going directly behind the break ball as if you were going to shoot in into the corner pocket with your cue. After determining the contact point – draw an imaginary line from the contact point through the pocket opening as shown in the diagram. Locating the contact point is extremely important – because to determine whether you will use follow, draw or center on the cue ball – you will have to determine the relationship between the location of the cue ball – the direction of the Shot Line – and the Shot Line’s relationship with the Directional Line.

Pocketing the Ball

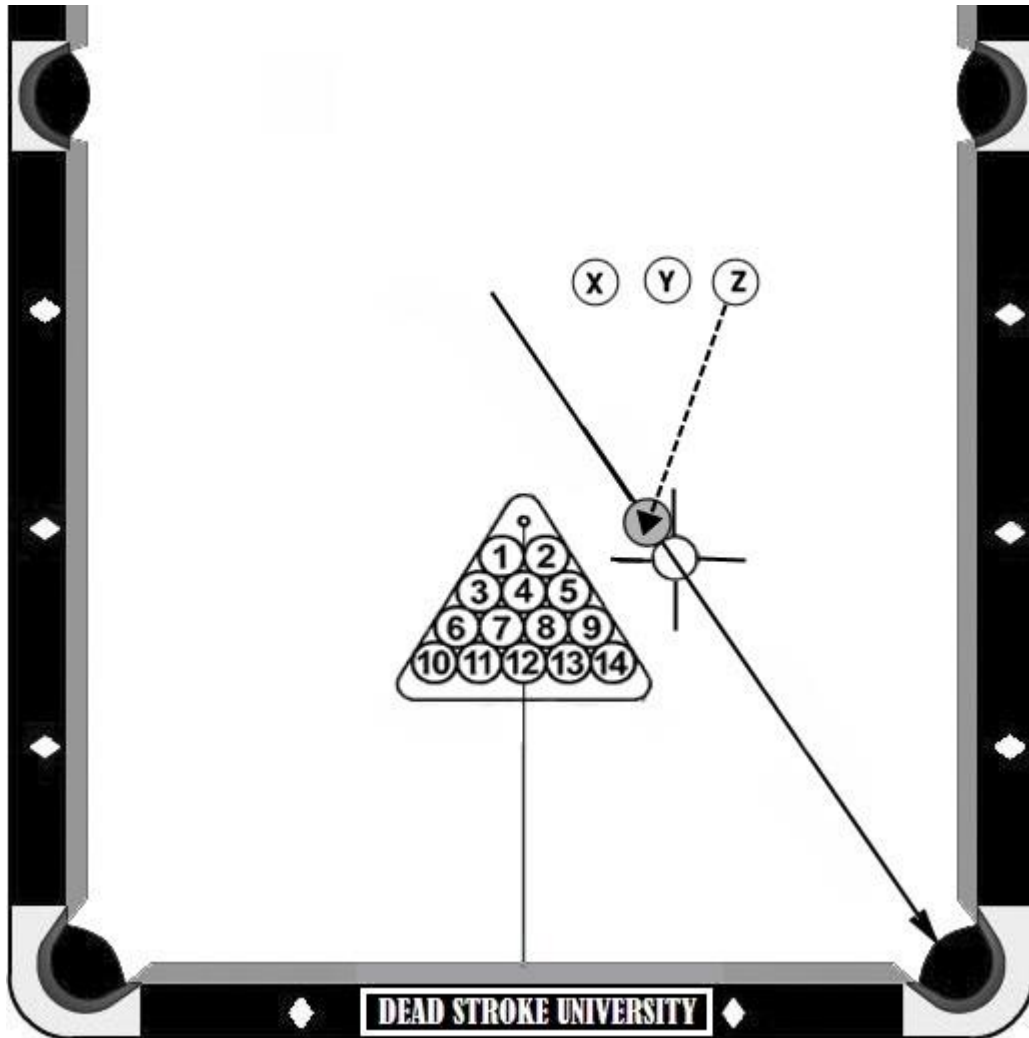
Once we have divided the break ball with the vertical and horizontal lines – we now must determine if we are using follow, stun, or draw English on the cue ball. In the below diagram, I have placed a grey ghost ball at the point of contact on the break ball. If you look a little closer, you will see that the Directional Line extends through the break ball to an exact point in the rack. On this shot, the contact point is above the directional line. If we were shooting from the location of Cue Ball Z – we could use follow to contact the 2 ball along the Directional Line – or – we could use center – or stun English contacting the 2 by guiding it along the tangent line – which would contact in the 2 direct center.



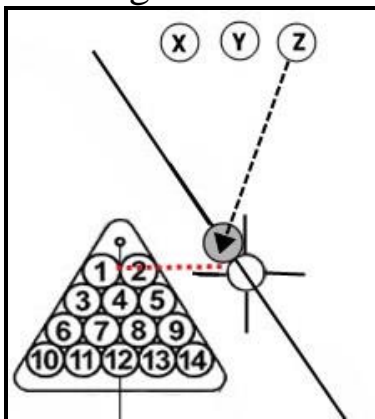


The above diagram shows what English to use for each of the cue balls. Notice that as the angle closes, we move our tip lower on the cue ball. As the angle opens, we move the tip up the cue ball.

Every situation is different – but this is a general rule for most situations. Cue ball and break ball position will dictate the variances. Stroke speed is another variable that will affect the direction of the cue ball. If the cue ball is struck too hard – or traveling too fast – then the cue ball will not have time to react after making contact with the break ball. This is why I always recommend initially visualizing every shot in slow motion. Once you can see what the ball needs to do in slow motion, you slowly increase the speed and directly apply what you have rehearsed during your visualization.



In the above diagram, we are shooting the shot from Cue Ball Z. There is a gap between the contact point and the Directional Line. To have the cue ball move along the Directional Line, follow would be needed. Center English – or Stun English would have the cue ball travel along the Tangent line and contact the 2 ball as diagrammed below.



The dotted red line shows the direction of the cue ball with Stun English. This dotted red line can be *bent forward* by using follow – or it can be *bent back* by using draw. This line begins at the contact point and extends to a direct point on the rack. By using this method, you can accurately determine EXACTLY where you will contact the stack.