



EPSB Return to Play – Guidance on running club competitions

These COVID-19 guidelines apply to England only. They have been produced in line with UK Government announcements on the easing of lockdown restrictions.

They should be followed in conjunction with the [EPSB's English Snooker Facilities Re-opening Guidelines](#).

Clubs must consult their Local Authority and Health and Safety Executive for approval of these guidelines, while also adhering to any additional local lockdown restrictions that may be in place.

Clubs in 'High' or 'Very High' Covid-19 alert areas should not run competitions, except for juniors and disabled players – see our [guidance documents](#) on the three-tier alert levels for more information.

Introduction

The EPSB acknowledges that competitive snooker and billiards through club competitions plays a pivotal role both for sustaining our network of clubs and in benefitting the physical and mental health of individuals who participate.

[Affiliated snooker clubs](#) have a legal responsibility in the first instance to provide a COVID-19 secure environment and in which all parties can safely adopt the guidelines contained in this document.

Club competitions must adhere to the UK Government's '[rule of six](#)'. Please see the 'Competition Format Scenarios' section below for suggestions about how to restructure your competitions.

While this guidance applies to England, you should always consider whether there are local restrictions in place in your area. If you live, work or volunteer in an area that is experiencing a local COVID-19 outbreak and where local restrictions have been imposed, different guidance and legislation will apply. Please consult the [local restrictions pages](#) to see if any restrictions are in place in your area.

The EPSB has produced this guidance to make the return to snooker and billiards as safe as possible. We recognise that risk in sport cannot be completely eradicated, but with caution and care, risks can be reduced and the benefits of team sport enjoyed fully again.

We recommend that affiliated clubs and club members carefully read the guidance contained below to understand how we can all play snooker and billiards safely, following measures to mitigate the risks of COVID-19 transmission.

Club Preparation

All clubs running competitions will need to comply with the guidelines set out by the EPSB in its [English Snooker Facilities Re-opening Guidelines](#).

These include the following key points applicable to club competitions:

Standards of Hygiene

- Commit to a thorough clean of the venue daily
- Access to hand sanitiser will be provided at all tables, entrances and toilets
- Club snooker balls and boxes/trays will be cleaned and wiped after every match/rubber
- Staff should wear face coverings and gloves
- Table and equipment will be cleaned between matches/rubbers, with special attention to touch points, such as table edges, scoreboards, triangle, rests

Limit Entry

- Match start/finish times should be carefully considered to avoid any overlap with other club members, and allowing time to clean the area
- Venue entry will be controlled/monitored by staff, where applicable. Social distancing measures should be in place to control any queues

Social Distancing

- Risk assessment to be completed by the club to ensure it is COVID-19 secure in line with current social distancing guidelines
- Clear signage for customer flow to enable players to get to and from allocated tables. This includes government guidance signage on prevention measures
- Tables are used at least one table apart. Where table layout is not uniform, this will be risk assessed for social distancing
- Club will monitor toilet usage to mitigate too many people being in the same area

Competition Preparation

Risk Assessment

Host clubs must consider safety first, particularly minimising the risk of Covid-19 infection/transmission.

A thorough risk assessment must be undertaken/updated by the club, liaising with the person running the tournament (Tournament Director). Appropriate measures must be put in place to ensure participants, staff and volunteers are protected.

Clubs should assess the space available around their snooker tables, the capacity of the club, hygiene and social distancing measures in line with the current [UK Government guidance](#) and our [EPSB Covid-19 Guidance](#).

Pre-attendance Symptom Check

All competitors should undergo a pre-attendance self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms using the [information on the NHS website](#) before leaving home.

No-one should leave home to participate in snooker or billiards if they, or someone they live with, has symptoms of COVID -19, including:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste

If individuals demonstrate any such symptoms, they must follow the [NHS guidance on self-isolation](#).

NHS Test and Trace

If any participating player develops symptoms of COVID-19, that player should be directed to follow the [NHS test and trace guidelines](#).

To support NHS test and trace, clubs should keep a temporary record of participants for 21 days, and assist NHS test and trace with requests for that data if needed.

The club must also display an official NHS QR code poster for customers as an alternative.

Communication

The host club communicate its approach to safe activity to all competitors in advance of the competition.

Clubs should make competitors aware in advance that undertaking any activity, including snooker and billiards, has the potential for increased risk of transmission of COVID-19, and advise players to read the [UK Government's guidance on staying safe outside your home](#).

Clubs should consider the UK Government's [guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19](#) to offer specific advice to any competitors who fall into the clinically vulnerable category.

Competition Format Adjustments

As stated above, clubs can run competitions provided these take place in a COVID-19 secure environment, while also adopting the guidelines contained in this document.

Competitions can be designed in a huge variety of formats. Each club should consider its format so that it complies with the current [UK Government guidelines](#).

Based on these current guidelines, we recommend that clubs apply the following principles to competitions:

- Competition formats should be adjusted to ensure players do not compete in a bubble of more than six players during any given day's play to align to the UK Government's '[rule of six](#)'. We have given an example in the 'Competition Format Scenarios' section below.
- In all scenarios, careful preparation will be required to ensure adherence to the rule of six. There should be no interactions between designated social bubbles of up to six people during the course of a day's play at any venue.

- Clubs should consider scheduling matches so as to minimise interactions wherever possible, i.e. so that players know what time they are required to play, which player they will play and which table they will play on.
- Clubs should consider staggering arrival and leaving times of individual competitors to minimise interactions.
- Spectators, parents or guardians should be kept to a minimum and seated in designated areas away from match tables, while also strictly observing social distancing.
- Refereeing can recommence, with referees or markers maintaining social distancing at all times and following the club and player protocols. Gloves should be worn, which must be washed or disposed of after use. Any referee or marker should be considered part of a six-person social bubble.
- There should be no presentations or other activities that would encourage a gathering of people.

Competition Format Scenarios

- We advise clubs to avoid running one-day knock-out formats at present. We offer this advice because we believe that an eight-person knock-out, for example, will effectively form a social bubble of eight interactions over the session once the two finalists meet, not taking into account any referees.
- An example of an alternative format would be to operate four groups of up to six players. Players will play each other within their group, with the four group winners playing a knock-out stage on a different day.
- Each social bubble will need to play its matches on designated tables at a social distance from other social bubbles.
- Each social bubble should remain completely separate for the duration of the day's play, including travel to and from the venue, entry to and exit from the venue and whenever not playing.

Tournament Director Role

Where the rule of 6 applies, Tournament Directors (TDs) are exempt and are not counted as part of these social bubbles, but must maintain social distancing at all times.

To operate safely, a TD should plan the competition in such a way so as to avoid any close interaction with competitors. This should entail communicating with players in advance about the competition format and Covid-19 protocols, the scheduling of matches and a system in place by which results can be collected and published without social contact with competing players.

TDs should not engage in any group briefings in order to avoid congregations or raised voices.

Further details on working safely during coronavirus in the context of [providing grassroots sport](#) is available on the UK Government website.

Player Protocols

Before arrival...

Players should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before leaving home and sanitise their hands before and after play.

Participants are encouraged to follow best practice for travel including minimising use of public transport and limiting car sharing wherever possible. See the government's [safer travel guidance](#) for passengers for further information.

Players must not enter the club if they are symptomatic or living with someone who has a possible confirmed case of COVID-19 – please read the 'Pre-attendance Symptom Check', above.

At the club...

All players shall abide by the following protocols throughout their time in the venue:

- Social distancing between players should be maintained at all times, in line with the latest [UK Government advice on staying alert and safe \(social distancing\)](#)
- Players will be encouraged to bring their own cues from home
- Player seating will be at least two metres apart
- Players will have access to hand sanitiser at all tables, entrances and toilets
- All players will be allocated their own set of table accessories to minimise contact, and will be responsible for fetching and returning this equipment to its position in the club
- Strictly no handshakes or physical contact between players
- Avoid unnecessarily touching club surfaces, and minimise sharing touch points such as triangles and score boards
- Prior to re-entering the club, after any toilet breaks or intervals, players will be requested to perform hand washing for 20 seconds with soap and water in addition to using a hand sanitiser
- Players should use their own cue, chalk and cue towel, and not leave these on the table
- Players must pack up and leave the designated table at the end of the match/rubber before the next players approach the table
- Players must avoid congregating around the table before or after play to allow access for others
- All table accessories and equipment used will be sanitised after each match/rubber
- Sharing food or drink is not permitted