

How to organise snooker sessions: a guide for community groups



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Introduction

This guide aims to support community groups in introducing the game of snooker to new players.

This booklet was originally aimed at players with learning disabilities. However, the sessions and activities can be delivered to and adapted, where necessary, for players of any age and ability.

Snooker is an ideal sport for anyone - it offers physical and mental health benefits, the chance to socialise while playing and is a great game for all levels of ability.

We hope that this guide will make it easy for you to deliver sessions so that players can gradually gain an understanding of and enjoyment for the game.

Acknowledgements

This guide has been compiled by Bob Hill on behalf of the WDBS. Bob is a WDBS Director and WPBSA Snooker Coach who runs a regular club for players with learning disabilities in Bristol.

Many of the coaching points included are adapted from the WPBSA coaching course template.

The activities in this booklet include original creations as well as some adapted from existing coaching exercises in the public domain.

How to use this guide

This guide is split into eight easy-to-follow sessions, starting with the basics in the first session and finishing with a fun, mini-tournament in the final session.

Each session starts with a warm-up, followed by a selection of activities chosen to develop particular coaching points. You will find each activity explained in more detail further on in the guide, along with illustrations where necessary.

The sessions have been structured to last for an hour and a half using one full-size table. However, you can be flexible with the length of time, choice of activities, size of table and number of tables used - everything can be adapted, so be creative!

The important things are to make the sessions fun, recognise each of your players' capabilities and enjoy playing the game together.

Contact us

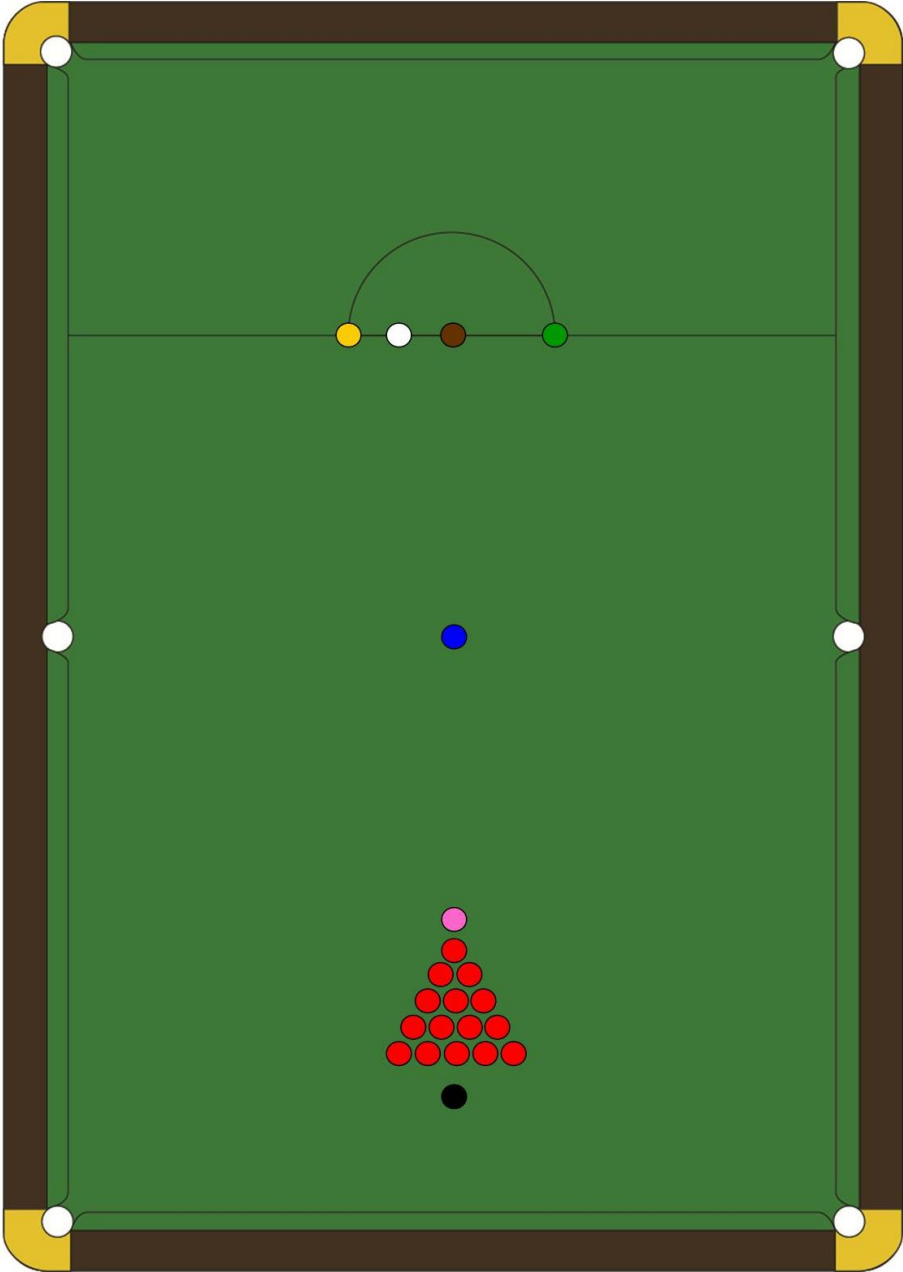
We would love to hear your feedback about this booklet.

To get in touch please contact World Disability Billiards and Snooker on 0117 317 8200 or by email to chris.hornby@wpbsa.com

To find out more about the WDBS visit www.wdbs.info

The Set Up

This is how the snooker balls are set up for a full frame. Many of the activities in this booklet use different set ups to add variety to group sessions. Further diagrams like this are included below to help you set up your activity.



Session 1

Warm-up

⇒ Ice-breaker questions (activity 1)

Games

⇒ Snooker Bowls (activity 2)

⇒ Snooker Relay (activity 3)

⇒ Red Hot (activity 4)

Resources

- Colour print of balls with questions (see activity 1)
- Player laminates or piece of paper
- Stopwatch

Coaching points: basic techniques - stance and bridge

It is important for your stance and bridge to be comfortable and solid, so that you can cue in a straight line without interference. Your two feet and your bridge hand form a triangle, which offers the stance stability.

Stance (for right-handed players; opposite for left-handed players)

1. Place your right foot on the line of the shot
2. Place your left foot approximately shoulder-width from the heel of your right foot
3. Your left leg should be slightly bent at the knee to take the weight while your right leg should be braced

The bridge

1. Place your bridge hand flat on the table and spread your fingers on the cloth
2. Pull your finger tips backwards to raise the knuckles, keeping your finger tips and palm in contact with the cloth at all times
3. Bring your thumb tight against your index finger to form a v-shaped channel for the cue to slide through. This channel should point along the line of aim through your chosen point on the cue ball

Session 2

Warm-up

⇒ Volcano (activity 5)

Games

⇒ Over the spots! (activity 6)

⇒ Pot the lot! (activity 7)

⇒ Trick shots 1 and 2, then create your own! (activity 8)

⇒ Red Hot (activity 4)

Resources

- Football cones
- Trick shot resources, e.g. space dividers, cones, etc.
- Stopwatch

Coaching points: basic techniques - the 'address' position

The 'address' position means the position you need to get in to so that you're ready to strike the cue ball. A sound address position is essential in that it provides the foundation of a good cue action.

Address position

1. Check the distance from the thumb of the bridge to the cue ball; this should be 23 - 33cm
2. Check that your grip is placed on the butt end of the cue in a position that allows your forearm, wrist and hand to hang vertically
3. Your tip should be as close as possible to the cue ball and the cue should be touching the underneath of your chin and a point on your chest, if possible, but without any pressure on each.
4. There must be a gap of approximately 10cm between the inside of your grip and your hip. This is needed to allow the cue to be delivered without interference. If the gap is too small you will need to rotate your hips to increase it
5. Your left arm should be relaxed and slightly bent at the elbow
6. Your cue should be as level as possible
7. The tip and butt of the cue must be in line with the shot

Session 3

Warm-up

⇒ Cushions (activity 9)

Games

⇒ Snooker Tennis (activity 10)

⇒ Yellow to Black tournament - set up the colours on their spots.

Players must attempt to clear the colours in four minutes. Use other players as referees and scorers for learning the rules and ball values. If you have two tables available, players can take each other on to see who can get the furthest in four minutes

⇒ 'Race to 50' - play a full frame as a team, trying to reach 50 points in a given time. If you have two tables available, split into two teams and see who can reach 50 points first

Resources

- Scoring aid and sheet for players with learning disabilities
- Stopwatch

Coaching points: basic techniques - the grip; introduction to basic rules - set up, break off and ball values

The backward and forward motions of the cue in preparation for the final delivery are called 'feathers' and they will help you get a 'feel' for the shot. During these feathers the grip starts to function. It is recommended to grip the cue with a natural grip (a bit like a handshake) with no tension in the fingers or the arm.

The grip

1. Wrap the thumb and first finger around the butt of the cue to form a 'ring'. The ring should dominate in strength, with the other fingers supporting the cue during opening and closing of the grip
2. The back three fingers of the grip and palm are forced to release as the length of the backswing increases. With the maximum amount of backswing, the tips of the three back fingers should still be on the cue

Session 4

Warm-up

⇒ Volcano (activity 5)

Games

⇒ Snooker F1 (activity 11)

⇒ Knockout - with allocated colour each (activity 12)

⇒ Red Hot (activity 4)

Resources

- Football cones
- F1 space dividers, chequered flag, etc.
- Knockout score-sheet (to show 'lives' left)
- Stopwatch

Coaching points: basic techniques - the cue delivery; keeping still on the shot; centre-striking

The delivery consists of one positive thrust of the cue from the pause at the end of the final backswing to the completion of the follow through. The tip should be travelling at its fastest as it strikes the cue ball.

Keeping still on the shot

1. Throughout your preparations and delivery keep your head and body as still as possible. In an ideal world the only things that move are your eyes, your cueing arm and the object ball into the pocket

Centre-striking

1. In the early stages of learning the game you should aim to strike the centre of the cue ball; striking left or right of the centre will impart side spin, which can push the cue ball off its intended line

Session 5

Warm-up

⇒ Cushions - beat your best (activity 9)

Games

⇒ Cushion shots in pairs towards each other - try different bridges

⇒ Trick shots 3 and 4, then create your own! (activity 8)

⇒ 'Through the Gate' (start on cushion) (activity 13)

⇒ Snooker Relay (activity 3)

Resources

- Trick shot resources

Coaching points: standing position; bridging off cushions

Standing position

1. Decide what shot to play
2. Stand in a comfortable position with your shoulders; hips and feet square to the line of aim
3. Visualise the completed shot and decide what pace is needed
4. Proceed to approach the shot and adopt the address position that you've been learning

Bridging off cushions

1. Practise different ways to form a solid bridge when the cue ball is close to the cushion
2. Each method should allow the cue to be delivered as level and as stable as possible, while still connecting with as much of the centre of the cue ball as you can
3. If the distance from the thumb of the bridge to the cue ball is necessarily shortened, then your grip should move further from the butt of the cue to maintain a consistent distance between your two hands. This should help your forearm, wrist and hand to hang vertically

Session 6

Warm-up

⇒ 5 x soft shots without the cue ball leaving the 'D'

Coaching points

⇒ Playing soft shots

Games

⇒ Snooker Golf (activity 14)

⇒ The Square (activity 15)

⇒ Red Hot (activity 4)

Resources

- Player laminates or piece of paper
- Snooker Golf resources, e.g. bunker, water hazard, spectators
- Stopwatch

Coaching points: controlling the pace of the shot

Controlling the pace of the shot

1. The length of the backward movement in the feathers should be dictated by the pace the shot demands: the more pace that is needed, the further the cue should be drawn back
2. For really soft shots you can shorten the distance from the thumb of the bridge to the cue ball for greater control. Also remember to move your grip further from the butt of the cue to correspond

Session 7

Warm-up

⇒ Volcano (activity 5)

Games

- ⇒ Slalom - set out football cones on a slalom route for players to hit their cue ball in and out of
- ⇒ Potting avoiding cones - spread eight red balls around the table, as well as two cones. Players must attempt to pot all the reds without hitting a cone
- ⇒ Aiming - place the blue ball on its spot. Players must have a go at potting the blue in the middle pocket but cannot place the cue ball for a straight pot - the shot must have an angle
- ⇒ Red Hot - with cone (activity 4)

Resources

- Football cones
- Stopwatch

Coaching points: angles off cushions; aiming

Angles off cushions

1. Recognise how the cue ball's angle of rebound off the cushion mirrors the angle at which it hits the cushion, provided it was hit without any spin

Aiming

1. Aiming is a skill developed over time with practice
2. Shots with an angle have a different potting line (i.e. the line from object ball to pocket) to their shot line (from cue ball to point on object ball you wish to hit)
3. Before approaching your shot, look at the potting line before moving behind your shot line
4. Make sure your eyes look up at the object ball to check your intended target when you're in the address position

Session 8

Mini-tournament

⇒ Select a handful of the activities in this booklet and devise a tournament made up of short formats of these activities, awarding points for successes. Set time-limits for the challenges where possible to manage the length of the tournament. See which player can gain the most points.

Resources

- Stopwatch
- Medals, certificates, prizes

Activity 1:

Ice-breaker Questions

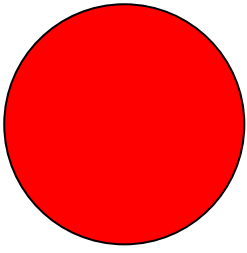
1. Ask the players to spread around the edge of the table
2. Spread out one red ball and all the colours randomly around the table
3. Each ball relates to a question from the questions sheet (see next page)
4. Ask each player in turn to have a go at trying to hit any ball (pot for better players)
5. That player then answers a question related to the colour ball he/she attempted.
6. Move on to the next player around the table

Variations:

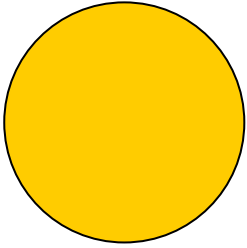
- Choose your own ice-breaker questions using the blank question sheet provided (see subsequent page) or try snooker-related questions to test players' knowledge of the game, e.g. ball values or professional snooker players

Progressions:

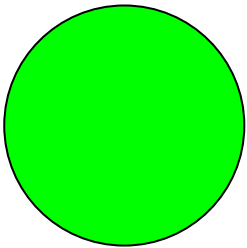
- On the second round, players may want to answer a particular question, so you can show them the question sheet and challenge them to hit the relevant colour



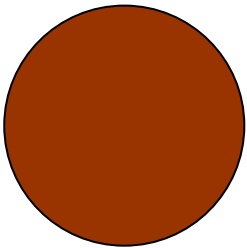
What hobbies do you have?



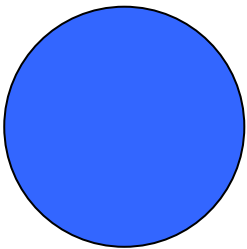
What is your favourite food?



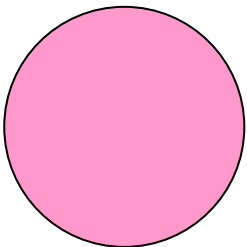
Who is your best friend?



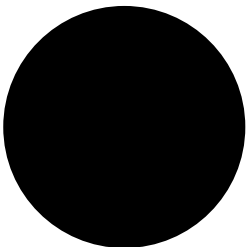
What is your favourite sport?



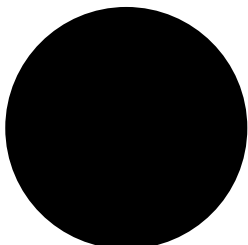
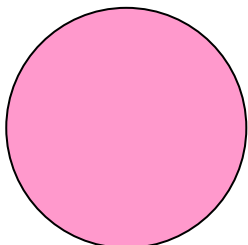
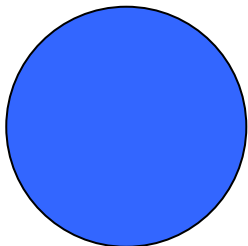
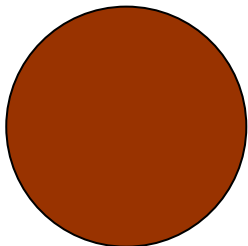
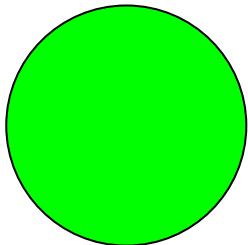
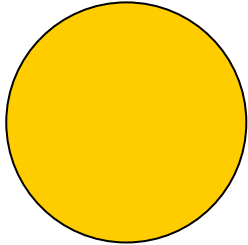
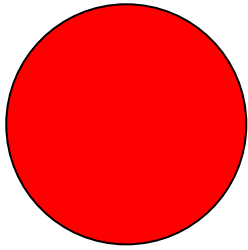
Who is your favourite TV star?



What do you do at the weekend?



Where do you like to go on trips?



Activity 2:

Snooker Bowls

To warm up:

- Place an A4 player laminate or piece of paper on the blue spot and each player in turn to strike the cue ball from the 'D' and aim to land it on the laminate/paper

Progressions:

- Challenge players to hit one cushion before landing on the laminate

Team game:

1. Split the group into two teams
2. One team stands around the yellow pocket, while the other team stands around the green pocket
3. Place 1 x A4 and 2 x A5 player laminates/paper towards the opposite end of the table
4. The first team uses the red balls, with the first player placing the red ball in the 'D' and striking it directly - aiming to land the ball on one of the laminates
5. The second team uses the colours, with the first player attempting the same shot, and so on...
6. A team scores two points for landing a ball on the A4 laminate, or four points for landing on an A5 laminate
7. Decide the number of balls/shots depending on the number of players in each team, i.e. teams of two players can have up to three shots in a round or teams of six players can have one shot each
8. Once all the balls have been played, add up the scores for the round
9. Play the best of three rounds

Variations:

- Move the laminates closer to the 'D' for players who are unable to strike the ball as far

Progressions:

- Players must hit two cushions before landing on the laminate

Activity 3:

Snooker Relay

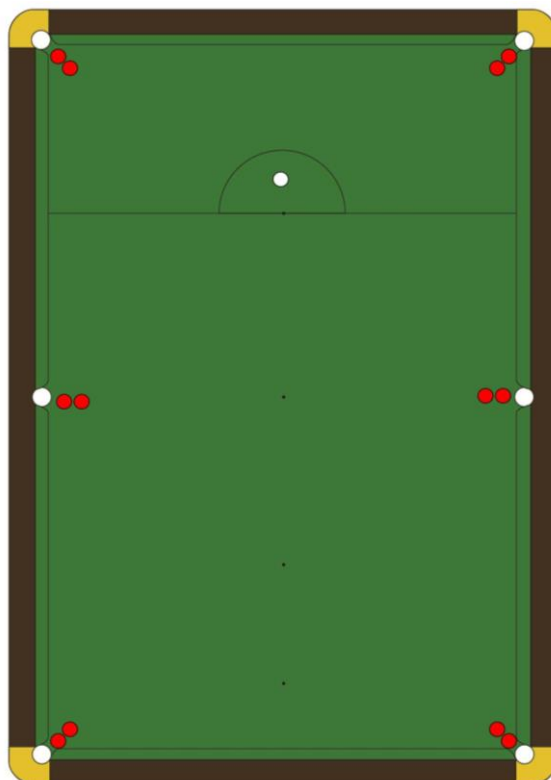
1. Place 6 x set 'plants' (12 reds) over the pockets
2. Players take it in turns to try to pot a red
3. The group must try to pot the balls in a given number of shots, depending on the size of the group, e.g. three shots each

Variations:

- If two tables are available then two teams can play against each other to see which table can pot all the balls first
- Play on one/two tables with a time limit instead of a shot limit, using the stopwatch
- Place a different colour ball over each pocket and pot the colours in order - yellow to black

Coaching:

- Advise players to aim to hit the nearest ball of the plant towards the pocket. This will help the nearest red to stay where it is rather than running away from the pocket



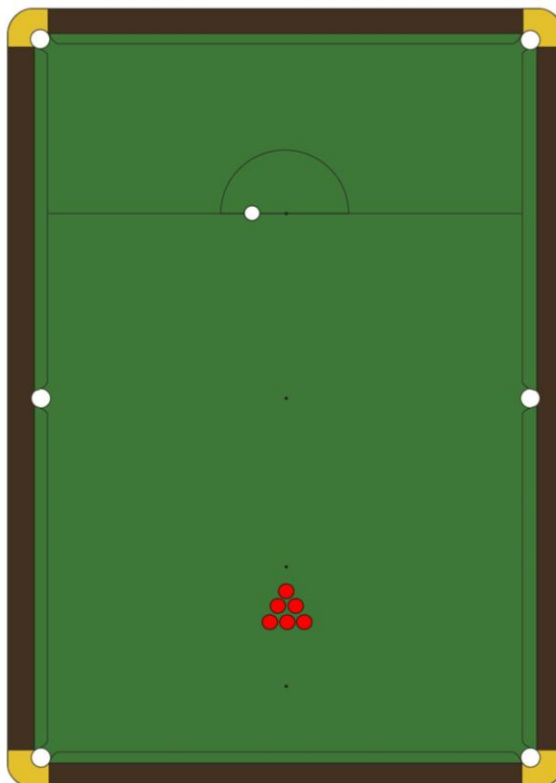
Activity 4:

Red Hot

1. Set up a triangle of six reds balls
2. Each players gets two minutes to pot as many reds as he/she can
3. Start the timer on the first shot after the break off
4. The winning player is the one who pots the most reds!

Variations:

- If two tables are available then two players can play against each other to see who pots the most reds in two minutes
- Change the time-limit depending on the player's ability and time available
- Play as pairs or as a whole group, taking shots in turn
- Play with the six colours, scoring the value of each ball when potted
- Place the football cone in the centre of the table - players have 30 additional seconds at the end to try to pot the cue ball into the cone for an extra five points!



Activity 5:

Volcano

1. Ask the players to spread around the edge of the table
2. Place a football cone in the centre of the table over the blue spot
3. Place a small piece of card beneath the cone to protect the cloth
4. The aim is to strike the cue ball at the perfect pace to run up the cone 'volcano' and land in the hole in its middle
5. The cue ball moves to the next player around the table so that each player has a go
6. Anyone who succeeds should get a round of applause as this is not an easy challenge!

Variations:

- Players at either end of the table strike a cue ball at about the same time to see if they can both succeed!

Progressions:

- If a player has succeeded, challenge him/her to 'pot' a red ball into the volcano

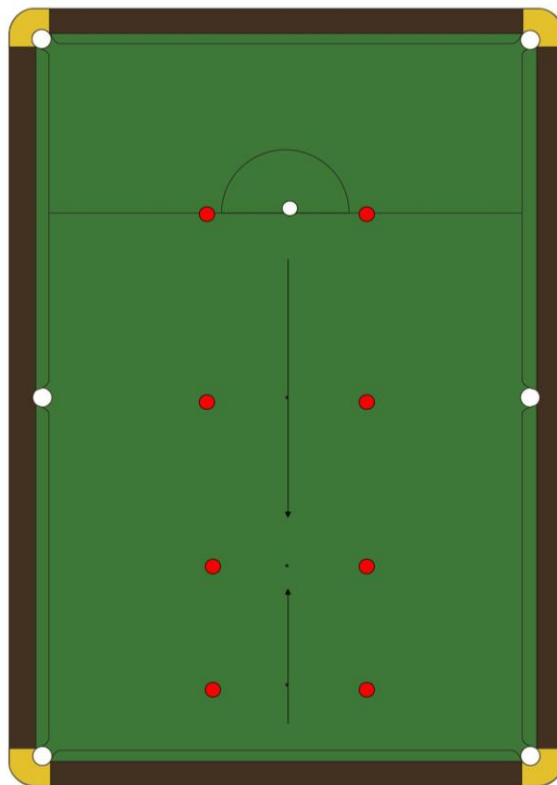
Activity 6:

Over the spots!

1. Place reds either side of the central spots to create a gateway running up the centre of the table
2. Each player takes it in turn to strike the cue ball up and down the spots from the brown spot
3. Players must try to strike the ball as straight as possible so as to return to the 'D' without hitting any red balls.

Progressions:

- Narrow the gaps between the reds to make it more difficult or widen the gaps if players are finding it too difficult
- See if any players can hit the ball so straight that it rolls over all the spots and returns to hit the player's tip! This also encourages players to stay low down for the whole shot, holding the finishing point of the cue's follow-through.



Activity 7:

Pot the lot!

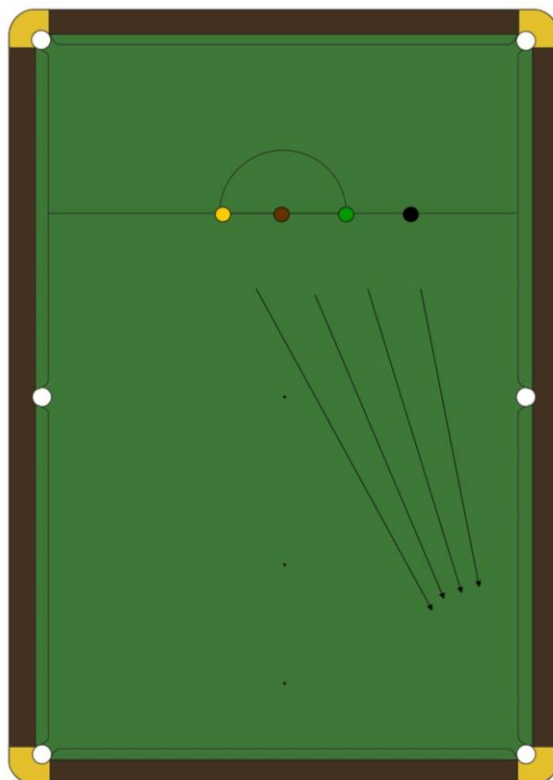
1. Place the yellow, green and brown on their respective spots, plus the black as a fourth ball along the baulk line between the green and the cushion
2. Each player takes it in turn to have four attempts at a long pot, starting with the yellow, striking each ball directly (as if it were a cue ball) towards the far corner pocket
3. The shots get harder as the angle become narrower

Variations:

- Place the black ball near to the far corner pocket and strike the white from each of the four cue ball positions to try to pot the black

Progressions:

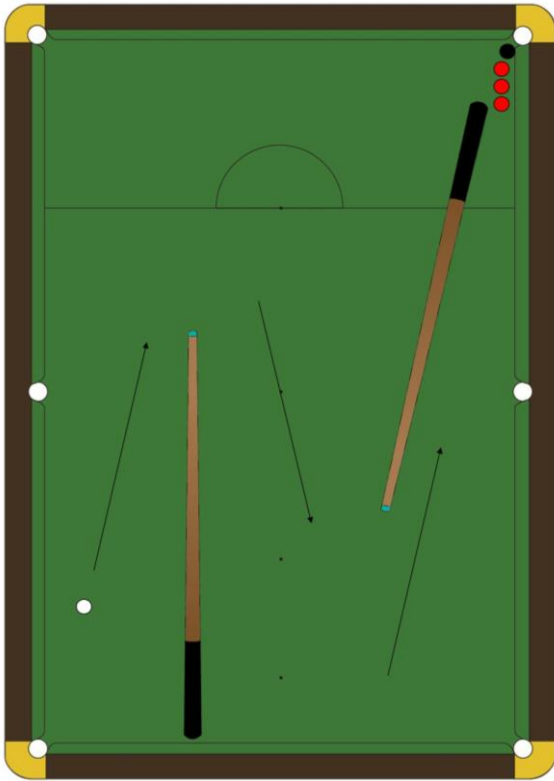
- Add a cue ball right on the side cushion to see if any players can pot it along the length of the cushion



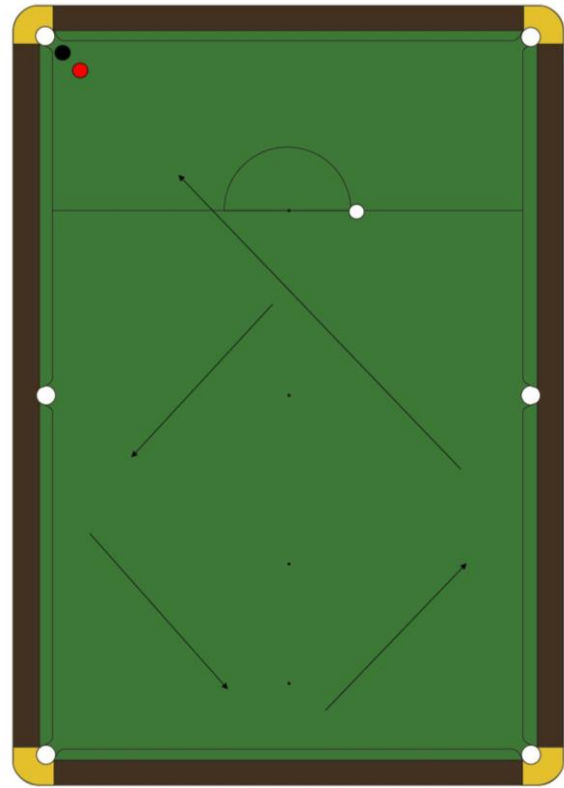
Activity 8:

Trickshots

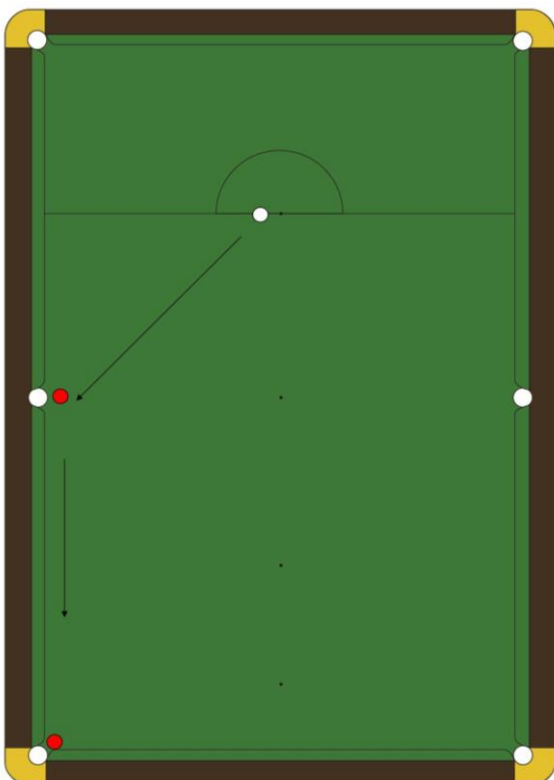
1 - up and down, around dividers



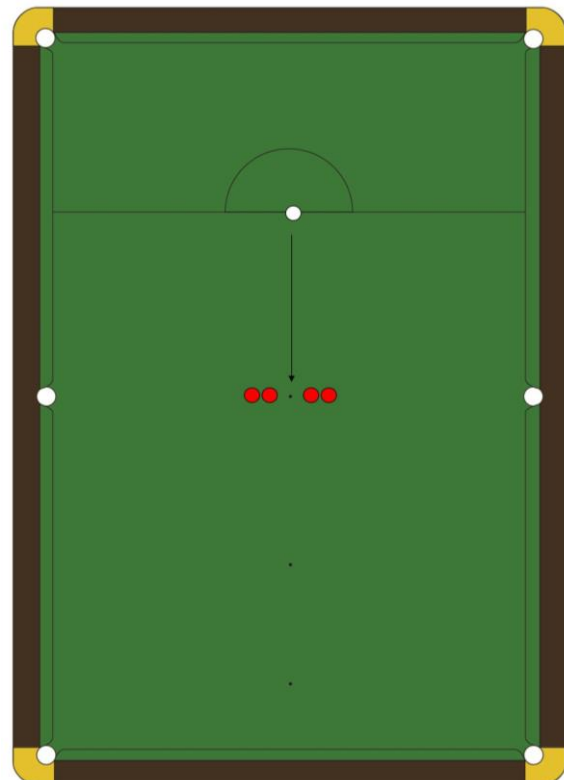
2 - around the cushions



3 - two pots in one



4 - two plants in one



Activity 9:

Cushions

1. Any number of players can take part
2. This game is played with the white ball only
3. Players take it in turn to hit the cue ball at exactly one cushion to go through to the next round
4. Then, each player must hit exactly two cushions, then three cushions, and so on...
5. Any player not completing the correct number of cushions remains on that number for his/her next shot
6. Players must hit two different cushions before returning to the same cushion
7. The winning player is the one who reaches the highest number in a set number of rounds

Variations:

- Add a cone to the table, which players must avoid hitting

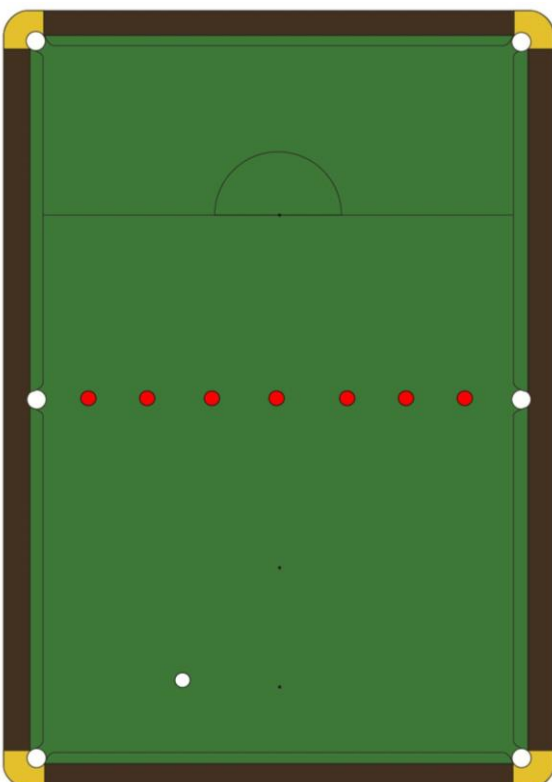
Progressions:

- Players must nominate which cushions they are going to hit before taking the shot and can only progress if they hit the correct ones

Activity 10:

Snooker Tennis

1. Play as two teams of any number
2. Teams stand at opposite ends of the table - baulk cushion and top cushion
3. Set up a 'net' using some red balls, with gaps between them, running between the middle pockets across the blue spot
4. The aim is to hit the cue ball (your 'tennis ball') between the gaps of the net and land it in the opposite half of the table
5. A player from Team A serves first from anywhere within 20cm of their cushion. If the player hits any red, under-hits or over-hits the shot, then a second serve is played
6. If the shot is successful a player in Team B must play the ball from where it lands back into the opposite half of the table - like a tennis rally
7. Play continues until someone hits any red, under-hits or over-hits a shot, or double-faults the serve, resulting in a point for the other team
8. The next player from Team B then serves
9. Play to a pre-determined number of points



Variations:

- Rallies can alternate through all players in the team or can be 1 v 1 for each point played, depending on mixed ability levels

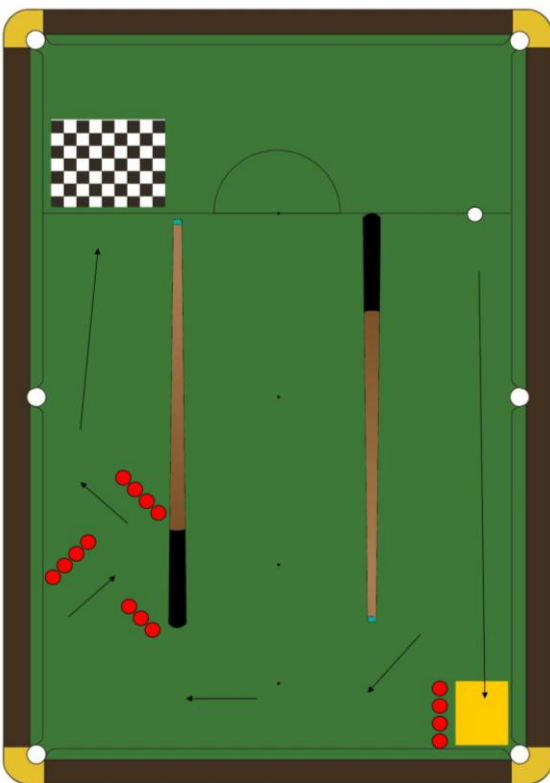
Progressions:

- Add more reds to the net to make the gaps narrower
- Each shot must finish past the baulk line or the equivalent at the other end

Activity 11:

Snooker F1

1. This is best played in small groups, as a team
2. The baulk line acts as the start/finish line
3. Set up a Formula 1 'track' around the edge of the table using cues, balls and F1 resources, i.e. pit lane and chequered flag
4. The aim is for players to navigate their cue ball (your 'car') around the table in as few shots as possible
5. Players take a shot each in turn
6. The cue ball must stop in the pit lane on the way round
7. Take several laps around the track, trying to beat the previous best lap score



Variations:

- Play as individuals to see which player can do a lap in a few shots
- Play 1v1 with two cue ball 'cars', taking alternate shots - either on one table or two

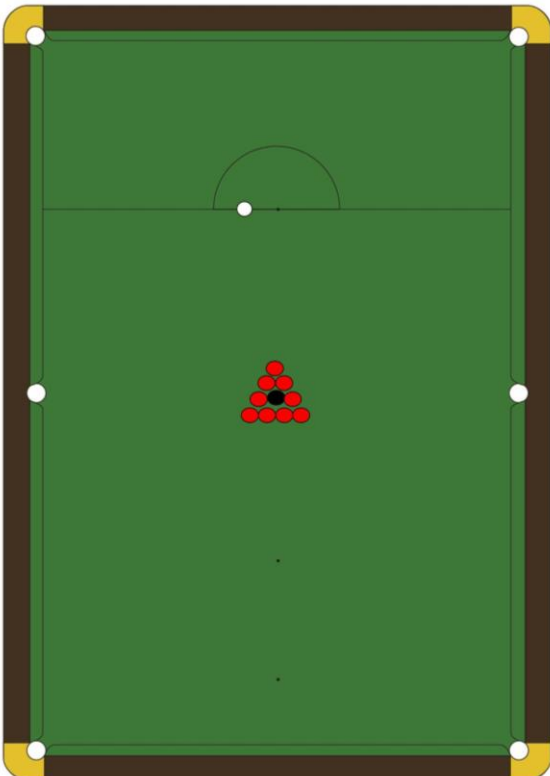
Progressions:

- Add extra hazards to make the track more demanding, with penalties if hit, e.g. go back to the pit lane

Activity 12:

Knock Out

1. Any number of players can take part
2. Set up a triangle of a black and 9 reds - placed in the middle of the table
3. Each player has an agreed number of 'lives' depending on their standard - fewer lives for better players
4. The first player breaks the balls up.
5. If no ball is potted, the breaking player goes again and tries to pot any ball. If a ball is potted then that player's number of lives remain intact. If no ball is potted then that player loses a life. If the black is potted then the player gains a life.
6. The balls stay in the pocket once potted
7. After each attempt play moves to the next player
8. If all balls are potted and players still have lives remaining then the black and nine reds are re-set in the middle of the table
9. The winning player is the one with at least one life remaining when all others have lost theirs



Variations:

- To avoid players sitting out when they have lost their lives, those players can continue to try to pot the black on their go in order to regain a life
- If potting a ball is too difficult for some players then challenge those players to hit the red against any cushion as an alternative
- Play with a triangle of six colours. Each player is allocated a colour and must directly hit that colour on his/her turn to retain a life

Activity 13:

Through the Gate

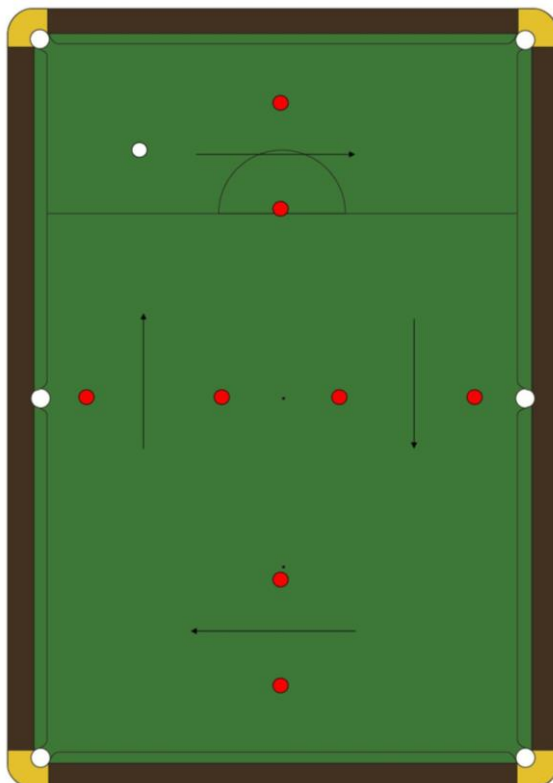
1. Play as individuals
2. Set up four 'gates' of two reds clockwise from the 'D' around the table
3. The aim is to navigate the cue ball through the gates in as few shots as possible

Variations:

- Add more gates
- Specify a direction through the gates (using paper arrows)
- Finish with a cue ball pot or through the central gate
- Finish by potting a red in as few shots as possible

Progressions:

- Make the gates narrower or wider depending on ability level and success



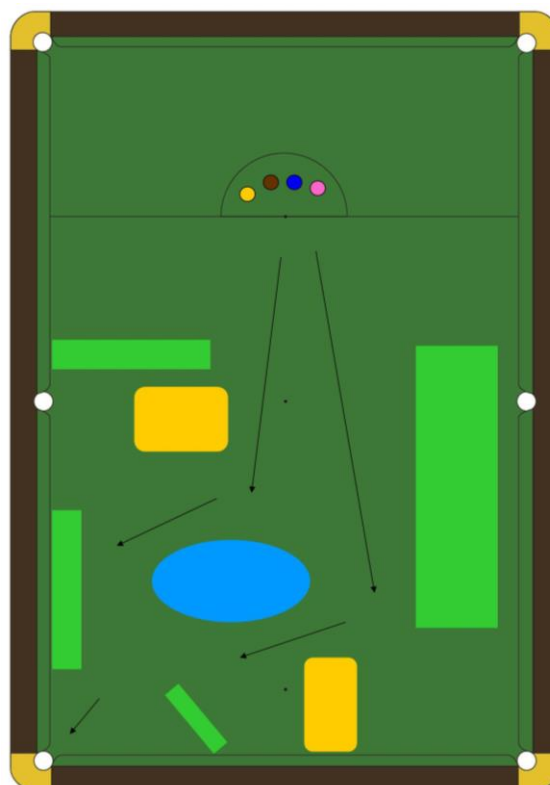
Activity 14:

Snooker Golf

1. Play as individuals (if four players or fewer) or in two teams
2. Set up a golf 'hole' using the Snooker Golf resources, i.e. yellow card for bunkers, blue card for water hazards, green card for trees
3. The aim is to navigate the cue ball (your 'golf ball') into the chosen pocket in as few shots as possible
4. Players score a one-shot penalty for landing in a bunker, a two-shot penalty for landing in the water and must go back to the start if they land in the trees
5. Players take a go in turn with the cue ball, starting in the 'D'
6. Play a few rounds, changing the target pocket (hole) and layout of the hazards

Variations:

- Play individually with one player completing a hole before the next player's attempt
- Play as two teams with two different colour cue balls



Activity 15:

The Square

1. Play as individuals - at least six players, each with a different colour cue ball
2. Place four A4 player laminates together at the top end of the table so that they form a square in the middle of the laminates
3. The aim is to be the first player to land their ball in the baulk area directly from the square - whoever succeeds first wins the game
4. Players start in the 'D' and take alternate shots, trying to land their ball in the square while knocking others out of it
5. If a player is in the square on his/her turn, but fails to land the next shot in the baulk area, or is knocked out of the square by another player between turns, he/she must get back into the square to have another chance to win
6. If a ball goes in a pocket that player must start again from the 'D'

Variations:

- Players score a point each time they land in the square to determine a winner if the game goes on for too long!

