

Bridges

A pool player's skill is strongly influenced by their hand bridge, which affects cue stability and shot accuracy. The bridge should be firm and steady, providing a smooth channel for the cue, much like a solid roadway bridge supports precise travel. A proper bridge allows for a level stroke and fluid cue movement, free of friction or instability.

There are two main bridge types: open and closed. While some recommend the open bridge for beginners, others advocate starting with the closed bridge due to its superior control and consistency. Ultimately, mastering the Standard Closed Bridge early leads to better technique, greater confidence, and improved overall performance.

CLOSED or STANDARD CLOSED BRIDGE

Professional players favor the closed bridge for greater cue and cue ball control, especially on challenging shots. To form it, make a fist with your bridge hand, place it palm down about 8-10 inches from the cue ball, then open your thumb and index finger to rest the cue shaft on the thumb. Loop your index finger around the cue, creating an "OK" sign for the channel. Spread the last three fingers for support and turn your wrist slightly inward. An effective bridge features a comfortable channel for smooth cue movement and a stable base—adapt the setup as needed for your own comfort while following these key principles.

OPEN BRIDGE

While the closed bridge is suitable for most shots, there are situations, such as shots near the rail or when shooting over an object ball, where an open bridge is more practical. Stretch shots can be executed using the Five-Finger Open Bridge. The Open Rail Bridge, V-Bridge, and Over-A-Ball Bridge are variations of the open bridge, each designed for specific types of shots. These bridges should be practiced to support a comprehensive playing technique.

Five-Finger Open Bridge

The Five-Finger Open Bridge is simple to form. Place your hand flat on the table, fingers extended. Raise your knuckles to create a small "tent",

keeping the heel of your hand down for stability. Position your thumb next to the index finger's knuckle without lifting it too high. Spread the other fingers, forming a "V" with your thumb for the cue channel—about half the height of the cue ball. Use this bridge when you need extra reach and can't comfortably form a closed bridge.

Open Rail Bridge

This bridge works best when the cue ball is close to the rail. Flatten your hand with the heel slightly raised, spread your thumb, and guide the cue between your thumb and index finger. Use short, controlled strokes, focusing on forward motion and center contact. Avoid lifting the cue off your bridge hand. For shots 2-3 inches from the rail, the cushion edge can help guide your shot.

V Bridge

For shots 3–5 inches from the rail, rest your cue on the rail, tuck your thumb under your palm, and loop your index finger over the cue to guide it between your thumb and middle finger. Keep other fingers flat and maintain a level backswing.

Over-A-Ball Bridge

The over-a-ball bridge is an advanced extension of the open bridge, used to shoot over an object ball by elevating the cue. To form it, stand your base fingers on their tips for stability, arch your wrist with all four fingers on the table, and create a "V" with your thumb and index knuckle. Ensure the bridge is steady before inserting the cue or taking the shot. Raise the butt of the cue as needed and use short practice strokes to guide the cue smoothly over the obstructing ball.

Mechanical bridge

The bridge head should typically be positioned 8-10 inches from the cue ball, though adjustments can be made based on player experience and the requirements of the shot. A shorter bridge is ideal for strokes requiring minimal cue ball movement; a longer bridge accommodates increased stroke length and action. Players should adopt a more upright posture than usual, keep the butt of the cue at chest height, and select the appropriate slot on the bridge head—higher slots for follow shots, lower for draw shots.

The cue should be gripped at the end using the thumb and first two fingers, employing a controlled backswing and follow-through. When shooting over an obstructing ball, the bridge can be rotated onto its side to increase its height, thereby facilitating accurate execution of the shot.