

## **Stroke**

While bridge, grip, and stance are fundamental, the outcome of your game is ultimately dictated by the quality of your stroke. A proficient pool stroke should be straight, smooth, fluid, and reliable. Much like in golf, pool emphasizes technique over physical strength; for instance, a skilled teenager can drive a golf ball more effectively than a physically stronger individual with poor form. Pool is among the most demanding games in terms of precision, touch, consistency, composure, and above all, technique. Proper grip, bridge, and stance are crucial only insofar as they integrate to support an effective, cohesive stroke. Ultimately, stroke execution governs performance. The integration of these elements determines whether you achieve a fluid, dependable stroke.

Effective stroking is fundamentally straightforward. Although some shots necessitate awkward bridges or stances, the majority require uncomplicated, controlled movements. In all scenarios, essential principles must be upheld: stroking the cue ball should feel natural and unforced, with free and relaxed movement in the wrist, elbow, and shoulder. Your stance should be balanced, and your eyes positioned directly over the line of the cue and cue ball. The arm's natural forward motion provides ample force to propel the ball without excessive exertion.

Maintain an appropriate distance between the cue stick and your body, allowing your back arm to hang naturally without obstruction. On the backswing, draw the cue back comfortably without removing the tip from the bridge hand position; a correct grip ensures the cue remains straight throughout this motion. Avoid gripping too tightly or using unnecessary muscle—allow the cue to do the work. It is beneficial to perform a consistent number of warm-up strokes before every shot, typically three to four, as this routine fosters consistency and readies you for a smooth, controlled follow-through.

The backswing represents the initial phase of the pendulum-like movement, combining relaxed action in the wrist and elbow. Force should not be applied with either joint; the relaxed swing, aided by the cue's weight, will provide the necessary power. Mastery of the closed bridge and pendulum stroke enables reliable shot execution. Importantly, the stroke does not conclude upon contact with the cue ball; a complete follow-through is

essential to maintain control, akin to the role of follow-through in a golf swing.

Both backswing and follow-through must remain fluid and precise. The process of stroking the cue ball parallels a refined throwing motion, starting with a gradual backswing and culminating in steady acceleration through impact. The cue should gain speed until it contacts the cue ball, then decelerate naturally. Keep your bridge hand stable until the follow-through is complete, except when executing specialized shots such as draws.

Throughout the follow-through, maintain head stability and strive to stroke directly through the cue ball, regardless of spin application. While many professionals follow-through 10–12 inches, the optimal follow-through is simply the natural extension of a well-coordinated pendulum stroke.