



# ITSF RULES OF TABLE SOCCER

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## STANDARD MATCHPLAY RULES

Version 1.0

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“By relieving the brain of all unnecessary work, a good notation sets it free to concentrate on more advanced problems.”

- Alfred North Whitehead

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# 1) INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 - BACKGROUND

This document represents a significant shift in the way that the rules of table soccer, or foosball, are imagined and presented.

The project was born from a recognition that the existing ITSF rules are showing their age; from the original ruleset adopted by the ITSF successive changes have resulted in a document that's in need of a refresh.

The existing ITSF rules document is a poor foundation for creating rulebooks for other event types, and for accurately translating the rules into other languages.

To serve these ends a new scheme is required, and the Standard Matchplay Rules document is the first deliverable in this project.

## 1.2 - PHILOSOPHY

The bedrock of the Matchplay Rules is a substantial set of definitions which are referenced throughout the document.

The use of a coherent set of definitions to encapsulate complexity allows the rules themselves to be brief and precise and also invites a more general use of the terminology, so that we can agree on what we mean by *possession* or a *stopped ball*, for example.

The readability of the text is balanced by the precision of the rules and definitions, and the consistent use of terms minimises ambiguity, subjectivity, redundancy and contradiction.

The objectives of this approach are:

- To make rule interpretation and refereeing easier
- To facilitate accurate translation into other languages
- To facilitate the creation of ITSF Matchplay rule books for other event types
- To introduce a coherent and consistent foosball terminology

Time will be required for referees and players to become familiar with the novel approach of the Standard Matchplay Rules. While there is a pressing need to rationalise and simplify the rules themselves, making major changes to both the approach and the rules in a single step will lead to much confusion and feedback overload.

Therefore the intent of the first version of the Standard Matchplay Rules is to track the 2015 ITSF rules as closely as possible. In this way we can be sure that any problems are due to the new approach, rather than to new rules.

We then expect the Matchplay Rules to immediately enable the following objectives:

- To expose and isolate complexity in the rules in order to provoke and facilitate simplification

- To create summary rulesets for players of differing skill levels
- To create further ITSF Matchplay rulesets, specifically:
  - Major national styles, e.g. Spanish 2Legs and Italian Rollerball
  - Disabled Rules
  - Classic Doubles
  - Specialty events

## 1.3 - TERMINOLOGY

In this document italicised phrases are defined terms, or conjugations of defined terms. To improve readability italicisation is suppressed in contexts where the term's colloquial meaning is sufficient for understanding, e.g. player or rod, but is used when a more precise meaning is intended.

Historically there has been inconsistency in even the most basic foosball language. Consider the naming of the rods, or bars, for example. We can use whichever term we prefer, but when it comes to a formal rules document, we should pick one term and use it consistently.

Here, the term *rod* is used in preference to *bar*. There is a rationale; a bar is generally considered to be a solid cast beam with any cross-sectional shape, while a rod more typically has a circular cross-section and can be hollow. Further, this document uses the terms *Goalkeeper rod*, *2-rod*, *5-rod* and *3-rod*. The term *goalie rod* is used to describe either the *goalkeeper rod* or the *2-rod*, or both of them, according to the context.

In some cases a common term is defined in a specific way to avoid confusion with a more ambiguous colloquial meaning. For example, a *player* is always a human being, while a *figure* is inanimate and attached to a rod.

The definitions also include novel terms which will initially sound strange, but as their utility becomes apparent they should become more familiar.

For example, two key ideas introduced here are *transfer* and *transition*. A *transfer* is shorthand for when the ball *contacts* first one playing *figure* and then another on the same rod, and *transition* is when the ball leaves the current rod of *possession*.

Where there's complexity it's encapsulated in the definitions, so that it's possible to write, for example, the passing rules both simply and with precision.

Terms and definitions which include inherent notions of subjectivity or 'intent' are avoided where possible; a *transition* might have been intentional, or it might not; the colloquial term 'shot' is subjective. There are some exceptions; for example, the idea of *controlled possession* does carry subjectivity, but is necessary to correctly represent the existing passing rules.

In other cases existing arcane nomenclature is replaced by a more descriptive term (e.g. *Penalty Shot* replaces *technical foul*).

This document uses the pronouns *they* and *them* in both the singular and plural.

## 1.4 - DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

The document begins with the Definitions section where all the defined terms are collected and ordered alphabetically. It's not necessary to read the entire section; specific terms can be referenced as required.

The Matchplay Rules are structured into sections each of which describes a particular situation along with the rules and penalties associated with that situation.

The first part of each section describes the process for that situation, typically what the players can or must do. The next part contains rules, which are always proscriptive, that is, they state what a player must not do, and the penalty to be paid for infraction.

Rules and penalties have brief names which identify them, allowing for easy textual and verbal reference. The details of the process to follow for each penalty are collected in a separate Penalties section.

Stories sometimes contain interpretations. Interpretations do not modify or augment the rules, and are formally unnecessary. However, interpretations are useful for avoiding misunderstanding and for communicating how common cases or edge-cases are handled.

## 1.5 - INTERPRETATION OF RULES

If any ambiguity or conflict is found in the rules the following process should be used to attempt resolution:

1. Assume the rules and definitions are complete and cover the case even by omission
2. Definitions later in the document take precedence over earlier ones
3. Rules later in the document take precedence over earlier ones
4. Sections later in the document take precedence over earlier ones
5. Refer to the interpretations

## 1.6 - SCOPE

This document defines the ITSF Standard Matchplay rules of Table Soccer, or foosball, covering the rules for both Standard Singles and Standard Doubles event types. Matchplay rules for other events types will be published in separate documents.

Matchplay rules define how matches are played; they do not cover more general rules concerning other aspects of tournament behaviour, such as clothing, drugs or general conduct.

While the rules may differ between event types and event formats, the same ruleset is used for all variations in match format. For example, the same rules apply for a match to two games as for a match to three games.

## 2) DEFINITIONS

In this printable document the definitions are listed alphabetically here. An electronic version is envisaged where definitions become visible when the cursor hovers over a defined term.

**Active play:** Periods of live play when the ball is under *active possession* or in *transition*.

**Active possession:** A period of *active play*, whose duration is timed by the *possession clock*, during which the ball is *reachable*.

**Adjusted ball:** A *transfer* followed by a *contact* on either the front or the back of a *figure*, followed by a further *contact* with the same *figure*.

**Ball off table:** A ball that leaves the *playing area* and strikes an object either on the *cabinet* or outside the table, or rolls or comes to rest on the top of the *cabinet*.

**Ball supply:** The specific set of balls in use for the entire *match*.

**Bump:** When a player's rod hits the wall with a small amount of force.

**Cabinet:** Any part of the frame of the table which is external to the *playing area*

**Clash:** When any part of a player's body touches any part of one of the opposing team's rods.

**Contact:** When a *figure* and the ball touch each other.

**Contact spin:** When the rod of *active possession* rotates more than 360° before or after *contact*.

**Controlled possession:** An *active possession* where the ball is controlled following a *contact*.

**Controlled transition:** A *transition* that directly follows a *controlled possession*.

**Current location:** Where the ball is currently located. Either: under *active* or *paused possession* by a specific rod or *figure*, *dead*, *off table*, or in a goal.

**Dead ball:** A *stationary* ball that is not *reachable* by any rod.

**Defensive player:** A player on the *defensive team*.

**Defensive team:** If one team has *possession* of the ball, the other team.

**Deflection:** The momentary *contact* in an *uncontrolled transition*.

**Direct pass:** A *controlled transition* directly followed by a *controlled possession* on a rod of the same team, with no intervening *contact*.

**Distraction:** Any player action performed during *active play* that is identified in these rules as illegal, or deemed illegal by a referee.

**Double transfer:** Two consecutive *transfers*, performed when putting the ball into play.

**Event:** A specific foosball discipline, e.g. Standard Singles or Standard Doubles.

**Event format:** Describes how an *event* is to be played, e.g. Group stage then Single Elimination.

**Figure:** A playing figure on any of the rods, used to control the ball during play.

**Flex:** Bending a rod by exerting lateral pressure on the handle.

**Freed ball:** A *reachable* ball that is no longer *trapped*.

**Game:** A fixture which ends when one *team* reaches the *point target*.

**Game target:** The target number of *games* required to win a *match*.

**Goalie rod:** Either the *goalkeeper rod* or the adjacent 2-rod.

**Goalkeeper:** The playing figure on the *goalkeeper rod* that covers the goalmouth.

**Goalkeeper rod:** The rod closest to the goal.

**Has serve:** Within a *match*, a team *has serve* if they conceded the previous goal, or if there is no score, if they gained serve from the *initial flip*.

**Head official:** A suitably qualified person officiating a tournament and enforcing tournament rules.

**Held ball:** A *reachable* ball that is *stopped* and not being played.

**Indirect pass:** A *controlled transition* directly followed by a *controlled possession* on a rod of the same team, with an intervening *deflection*.

**Infraction interrupt:** A brief *interrupt* to *active play* in order to declare and process an infraction.

**Infraction location:** The *figure* where the ball was located when the infraction occurred.

**Initial flip:** A process that determines which team has the option of first *serve* or choice of table side.

**Interrupt:** A period when play is temporarily suspended, not under *time control*.

**Jar:** Any *shake*, *shock*, *slam*, *shift* or *clash* by the *defensive team* that impairs the *offensive team's* ability to retain or gain *possession* of the ball.

**Match format:** Values that specify the *game target* and *point target* for the *match*, e.g. 3/5 (meaning the *match* is first to 3 *games*, each *game* first to 5 points)

**Match:** A fixture which ends when one *team* reaches the *game target*.

**Medical break:** An approved *pause* to allow a player to recover from injury or illness.

**Move:** A *contact* that causes a *stationary* ball to move, or a *moving* ball to change speed or direction.

**Moving ball:** A ball which is changing position or spinning.

**Offensive player:** The player who has *possession* of the ball.

**Offensive team:** The team which has *possession* of the ball.

**Opposing player:** The player on the other side of the table directly opposite the *offensive player*.

**Pass:** A *direct pass* or an *indirect pass*.

**Pause:** A *time controlled* period when *active play* is temporarily suspended

**Paused possession:** During a *pause* or *interrupt*, the rod of *paused possession* is the rod from which the ball is *reachable*.

**Pinned ball:** A ball that is pressed to the *playfield* by the downward pressure of a *figure* on the top of the ball, and which has not been immediately played. A *pinned* ball can be *stopped* or *moving*.

**Play:** A *move*, a *transfer* or a *transition*.

**Player:** A person playing for one of two teams.

**Playfield:** The internal surface of the table on which the ball is played.

**Playing area:** Any part of the internal volume of the table from the *playfield* up to the height of the side of the cabinet.

**Point target:** The target number of points required to win a *game*.

**Possession:** Either *active possession* or *paused possession*. A player and team has *possession* if one of their rods has *possession*.

**Possession clock:** A timekeeping device that measures the duration of *active possession* on each rod.

**Reachable:** A ball is *reachable* from a rod if a *figure* on that rod can *contact* it without *flexing* the rod.

**Referee:** A suitably qualified person officiating in a match and enforcing matchplay rules.

**Released:** A rod that is not currently under player control.

**Reset:** Any *shake*, *bump* or *shock* by the *defensive team* that impairs the *offensive player's* ability to control or play the ball.

**Restart:** Putting the ball into play after a *pause* or an *interrupt*.

**Restricted ball:** In the context of a *pass*, a ball which is *trapped*, *stopped*, *pinned* or *adjusted*.

**Rocking ball:** A ball which is slightly wobbling in place. A *rocking* ball is not a *moving* ball.

**Rod:** The *goalkeeper rod*, 2-rod, 5-rod or 3-rod.



**Serve:** A *restart* at the central 5-rod figure by the team which *has serve*.  
**Shake:** When a player causes the table to shake.  
**Shift:** When a player causes the table to move.  
**Shock:** When a player's rod hits a wall with medium force.  
**Slam:** When a player's rod hits a wall with great force.  
**Spectator:** An observer who is not playing or officiating in the match.  
**Stationary ball:** A ball which is not *moving*.  
**Stopped ball:** A *stationary ball* which has not been immediately *played*.  
**Stub pass:** A *stationary* or *moving* ball which is *passed* as a result of the downward force of a momentarily *pinned* ball.

**Table maintenance:** An *interrupt* during which a problem with the table is resolved.  
**Team:** One or more players on the same side of the table.  
**Time control:** The parts of a match which have a time constraint, i.e. *active possessions* and *pauses*.  
**Time-out:** A *pause* during or between *games* when *players* may converse and leave the table.  
**Transfer:** A *move* directly followed by a *contact* on another *figure* on the same rod.  
**Transition:** A *move* that causes the ball to leave the rod of *active possession*.  
**Trapped:** A *reachable* ball that is *stopped* at or near to the *wall*.  
**Tournament desk:** The place where players go to contact tournament officials.

**Uncontrolled possession:** An *active possession* where *contact* either does not occur or is momentary and uncontrolled.  
**Uncontrolled transition:** A *transition* that directly follows an *uncontrolled possession*.  
**Unprocessed infraction:** An infraction that has just occurred but not yet been processed.  
**Unreachable:** A ball that is not currently *reachable* by any rod.

**Wall:** An internal vertical surface that bounds one side of the *playing area*, or if present the side strip that runs along each side of the *playing area*.  
**Wall contact:** A *move* that causes the ball to make contact with the *wall*.  
**Wall contact count:** The number of effective 5-rod wall contacts made during one *active possession*.

## 3) MATCH STRUCTURE

The Matchplay Rules consider a match to be constructed from component parts; understanding this structure will be helpful when reading and interpreting the rules.

Each *match* consists of periods of *active play* punctuated by *pauses* or *interrupts* when play is temporarily suspended. *Active play* consists of *active possessions* and *transitions*. *Active possessions* and *pauses* are under *time control*, while *interrupts* are not.

### 3.1 - PAUSE

A *pause* is a *time controlled* period of a *match* during which *active play* is temporarily suspended. Because *pauses* are under *time control* they are subject to Delay of Game infraction.

The following *pauses* are recognised:

- Putting the Ball into Play
- Dead Ball
- Ball off Table
- Time-out
- Point Scored
- Between Games
- Player Query
- Medical Break

## 3.2 - INTERRUPT

An *interrupt* is a period when *active play* is suspended. There is no *time control* during an *interrupt*. *Time-outs* are not allowed during *interrupts*.

The following *interrupts* are recognised:

- Infraction Interrupt
- Referee Request
- Medical Break Request
- Table Maintenance
- Official Interrupt

At the end of an *interrupt* play shall restart on the rod of *possession* in accordance with the rules.

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# 4) THE MATCHPLAY RULES

## 4.1 - STARTING A MATCH

A match begins with a coin flip between one player from each team. The winner of the *initial flip* has the option of taking the first *serve* or choosing the table side, with the losing team taking the remaining option. Once the winning team make their choice they cannot change their decision.

The team which *has serve* puts the ball into play with a *serve*.

## 4.2 - PUTTING THE BALL INTO PLAY

This section describes the procedure for putting the ball into play when *servicing* the ball or *restarting* play after a *pause* or *interrupt*.

The ball is put into play in three stages:

- Positioning the Ball
- Ready Protocol

- Double Transfer

The ball can be legally *transitioned* only after this procedure has been correctly completed. There should be no delay when positioning the ball, asking “Ready?”, responding “Ready!” or initiating or completing the *double transfer*; these steps are subject to Delay of Game infraction.

Play remains *paused* while positioning the ball and during the ready protocol.

### 4.2.1 - Positioning the Ball

The ball is positioned by the player putting the ball into play. The starting location of the ball is determined by the specific situation:

- To *serve*, the ball is positioned at the central 5-rod *figure*
- To *restart* after a *time-out*, the ball remains located where the *time-out* was called
- To *restart* after a *dead ball* or *ball off table* the ball may be positioned at any *figure* on the appropriate rod

Performing transfers during Positioning the Ball is not illegal practice except during a *time-out*.

### 4.2.2 - Ready Protocol

The ready protocol consists of two steps:

- The player with *possession* must ask the *opposing player* if they are “Ready?”
- The *opposing player* must respond with “Ready!”

In doubles, the opposing player may check with their partner before responding “Ready!”. The ready protocol ends when the player with possession initiates the first transfer.

### 4.2.3 - Double Transfer

After the “Ready!” response, the player with the ball must perform two *transfers* before the ball can be freely played.

*Active play* begins at the moment the player initiates the first *transfer*. The *possession clock* starts upon completion of the first *transfer*.

On the 5-rod, the *wall contact count* remains at zero until completion of the first *transfer*.

**Rule: False start:** The ball must not be *moved* before the “Ready!” response is given.

Penalty (first in match): Warning.

Penalty (subsequent in match): 5-rod restart.

**Rule: Wrong figure**

A player must not initiate the *double transfer* from the wrong playing figure. Any such infraction expires when the point is scored.

Penalty (first in match): No penalty; the same team restart

Penalty (subsequent in match): 5-rod restart

**Rule: Incomplete Double Transfer.**

A player must execute two *transfers* before *active play* can continue.

Penalty: Continue or Restart

Interpretation:

1. Either team can call a time-out while positioning the ball and during the ready protocol
2. Each transfer must cause the ball to clearly move; touching a stationary ball with two playing figures is not a transfer
3. When putting the ball into play near the *wall* after a *time-out*, the *wall contact count* doesn't increase until completion of the first *transfer*, so multiple *wall contacts* can be used to *free* the ball

## 4.3 - POSSESSION

Possession is about which rod, and by extension which player and team, has ownership of the ball at any point in time.

*Active possession* on a rod begins when the ball is *reachable* by that rod during *active play*, and ends when the ball is no longer *reachable*. *Active possession* is under *time control*; the duration of the possession is measured by a *possession clock* and limited by the rules.

*Paused possession* is when a player has possession of the ball on a rod during a pause or interrupt (e.g. a *time-out* or an *infraction interrupt*).

In a refereed match *active possession* time limits are enforced by the referee; players cannot declare possession time infractions. In an unrefereed match, a player who believes that a possession time limit is being breached may *interrupt* play by calling "Stop!" in order to request a referee. The player with possession will then restart play with the match under referee control. A player who *interrupts* the *opposing team* at the moment that they *play* the ball has committed a *distraction* violation.

If a spinning ball becomes *unreachable* anywhere behind the 2-rod, the *possession clock* is suspended until the ball stops spinning or becomes *reachable* or *dead*.

**Rule: Time Limit on 3-rod:** A player must not keep *active possession* on the 3-rod for longer than 15s.

Penalty: *Goalie rod restart*.

**Rule: Time Limit on 5-rod:** A player must not keep *active possession* on the 5-rod for longer than 10s.

Penalty: 5-rod *restart*.

**Rule: Time Limit on Goalie Rods:** A player must not keep *active possession* on the *goalie rods* for longer than 15s.

Penalty: 5-rod *restart*.

## 4.4 - DEAD BALL

A ball is *dead* if it is *stationary* and not *reachable*. A ball is declared *dead* by the referee, or in the absence of a referee, by agreement of the teams.

A *dead ball* is put back into play according to its *current location*:

Location of Dead ball	Where to restart
Between the 5-rods	<i>Serve</i>
Behind the 5-rod	<i>Restart on nearest goalie rod</i>

**Rule: Playing the Ball Dead:** A player must not intentionally play the ball *dead*.

Penalty: 5-rod *restart*.

**Rule: Flex Infraction:** A player must not *flex* a rod in order to *contact* an otherwise *unreachable* ball.

Penalty: 5-rod *restart*.

Interpretation

1. A ball trapped in a serving hole, or balanced on top of the goalkeeper rod is a dead ball
2. Addressing the ball from below the midline is considered to be an attempt to play the ball dead

## 4.5 - BALL OFF TABLE

The ball is declared *off table* by the referee, or in the absence of a referee, by agreement of the teams. The team responsible for the *controlled transition* which *played* the *ball off table* is identified, and the ball is put back into play at the *goalie rod* of the other team.

The ball is *off table* if it leaves the *playing area* and:

- strikes any object outside the table (e.g. the floor, ceiling or wall of the room)
- strikes a score marker, light fixture or any structure on or attached to the cabinet
- rolls or comes to rest on the top of the cabinet

The ball is not *off table* and remains in *active play*, if it:

- leaves and then returns to the *playing area* without striking any object
- leaves the *playing area*, strikes the *cabinet*, and then returns to the *playing area*
- enters a serving hole and then returns to the *playfield*

**Rule: Illegal Aerial:** A player must not perform a *controlled transition* that causes the ball to directly overfly an opponent's rod.

Penalty: 5-rod restart.

Interpretation

1. A defensive block or a immediate defensive reaction is not a controlled transition

## 4.6 - PLAYER QUERY

During *active play* a player in *possession* of a *stopped* ball may briefly *pause* play in order to ask a question. After the query is resolved the player with *possession* will *restart*.

Reasonable player queries include:

- Confirming the event format or the score
- Asking to clean the ball

## 4.7 - POINT SCORED

A goal is scored when the ball completely crosses the goal line, in which case play is *paused*. If there is no *unprocessed infraction* (i.e. the goal was legally scored), then a point is awarded to and marked by the team attacking that goal. The conceding team now *has serve* unless the goal ended the match.

If both teams agree that a point was not taken for a goal scored earlier in the same game, then the point shall be given. If the teams do not agree, then no point shall be given.

**Rule: Illegal mark:** A player must not mark up a point for a goal that was not legally scored.

Penalty (first in match): Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot.

Penalty (subsequent in match): Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot. Head official discretion; possible forfeiture of game or match.

Interpretation

1. If the ball completely crosses the goal and then leaves the goal, it's still a goal
2. If a goal is scored from an illegal spin there is an unprocessed infraction, so the goal doesn't count and the non-offending team gets a 5-rod restart
3. Inadvertent errors in score marking are not subject to penalty
4. An own-goal scored by a spin effectively counts, because the opposing team has the option to continue play from the current position, i.e. the goal

## 4.8 - SWITCH POSITIONS

In Standard Doubles, the players in each team may switch their chosen playing positions only during the following *pauses*:

- Point Scored
- Between Games
- During a *time-out*
- Before or after a Penalty Shot

A team is considered to have switched positions when both players are in their respective positions and are facing the table.

**Rule: Illegal switch:** A *team* must not switch playing positions except after a point is scored, between *games*, during a *time-out*, or before or after a Penalty Shot.

Penalty: Distraction

**Rule: Disallowed switch:** A team that switches positions cannot do so again during the same *pause* except in response to a switch by the team with *paused possession*.

Penalty: Second switch disallowed.

## 4.9 - SPINNING

It's legal to shoot the ball by rotating the rod if the rotation doesn't exceed 360° either before or after making contact with the ball.

**Rule: Illegal spin:** A player must not perform a *transition* resulting from a *contact spin*.

Penalty: Continue or Restart.

Interpretation

1. A spin which does not result in a *transition* is not an illegal spin, but may be a *distraction*
2. It is not an infraction if a *transition* occurs from a *released* rod that is spinning
3. An own-goal scored from a spin effectively counts, because the Continue or Restart penalty allows the non-offending team to continue from the *current location*

## 4.10 - PASSING

A *pass* is considered to have occurred if the catching rod retains *active possession* of the ball or performs an immediate *controlled transition*.

There are some restrictions when passing the ball forward from the 5-rod and the 2-rod. Put simply, a ball must be moving in order to be legally passed. To appreciate the finer details it's necessary to understand the definition of a restricted ball.

In the context of passing, a ball that is *trapped*, *stopped*, *pinned* or *adjusted* is considered to be a *restricted ball*. When passing from the 5-rod to the 3-rod, a *restricted ball* cannot be passed either *directly* or *indirectly*. When passing from the 2-rod to the 5-rod, a *restricted ball* cannot be passed *directly*, but it can be passed *indirectly*.

There are no restrictions on passes between other rods, or on backward passes between rods.

Passing rod	Catching rod	Pass is Illegal if the ball is...	...and the pass is...
5-rod	3-rod	<i>Trapped, stopped, pinned, adjusted</i>	<i>Direct or indirect</i>
Goalie rod	5-rod	<i>Trapped, stopped, pinned, adjusted</i>	<i>Direct</i>

**Rule: Restricted pass:** A player must not *direct pass* or *indirect pass* a *restricted ball* from the 5-rod to the 3-rod. A player must not *direct pass* a *restricted ball* from a *goalie rod* to the 5-rod.

Penalty: Continue or Restart

Interpretation

1. A restricted ball must be transferred in order to render it legally passable
2. It is legal to pass a *stationary* ball - because if the *pass* is immediate the ball is not *stopped*
3. A *stopped* 5-3 *pass* is illegal even if it *deflects* off the opposing 5-rod (*indirect*)
4. A *rocking ball* is a *stopped ball*
5. A *stub pass* is legal
6. A ball which is momentarily pinned and then un-pinned is considered to be a *stopped ball*
7. Even if the catching rod performs an immediate *controlled transition*, it's still a *pass*

## 4.11 - WALL CONTACT

There are restrictions that govern contact between the ball and the *wall*, and also between the *rods* and the *wall*.

If the ball becomes *trapped* on or near the *wall*, it must be *freed by contact* with a *figure*; it is illegal to attempt to influence the ball by any other means, e.g. by hitting a rod into the wall.

On the 5-rod, the *wall contact count* cannot exceed two during a single *active possession*. However, if the ball becomes *trapped* on or near the wall, the Three Walls rule is suspended while the ball is being freed.

A ball that is *trapped* on the 5-rod directly following a *transition* doesn't increase the *wall contact count*.

**Rule: Trapped Ball Shock:** A player must not hit any rod against the *wall* when the ball is *trapped*.  
Penalty (first in match): Warning  
Penalty (subsequent in match): 5-rod restart.

**Rule: Three Walls:** The *wall contact count* must not exceed two during a single *active possession* on the 5-rod.  
Penalty: 5-rod restart.

**Rule: Trapped Transition:** If the ball becomes *trapped* on or near the wall, the Three Walls rule is suspended while the ball is being freed; any number of *wall contacts* is allowed to *free* the ball, and will count as a single *wall contact count*. If the *wall contact count* would have exceeded two in the absence of the suspension then the player must not *transition* the ball without first performing a *transfer*.  
Penalty: Continue or Restart.

Interpretation

1. *Wall contacts* on either side of the table are counted together during the *active possession*
2. A *time-out* resets the *wall contact count*

## 4.12 - INFRACTION INTERRUPT

An *infraction interrupt* is a short *interrupt* during which an infraction is declared and the appropriate penalty determined.

In a refereed match, only the referee can make an *infraction interrupt*, which begins when the referee calls "Stop" during *active play*. In an unrefereed match, any player can call "Stop" to claim an infraction, or to request a referee.

Infractions should be declared as soon as possible. Under certain circumstances a referee might delay an *infraction interrupt* until the outcome of a *transition* is clear, in order to determine the correct penalty. In an unrefereed match, the non-offending team's right to claim an infraction expires when they perform a controlled transition subsequent to the possible infraction.

When an infraction is declared, *active play* is suspended and the ball must be *stopped* and *held* by whichever player next gains control. This is the *current location* for infraction processing.



An infraction is processed according to the following steps:

- The infraction is declared and play is *suspended*
- The ball is *held* as soon as possible
- The *current location* of the ball is noted
- The *infraction location* is noted
- The appropriate penalty for the infraction is determined

Until these steps have been completed the infraction is considered to be *unprocessed*. When the infraction has been processed, play is *restarted* in accordance with the penalty awarded by the rules.

Interpretation:

1. A pass which is immediately followed by a transition can still be declared illegal if the infraction call is made immediately after the transition

## 4.13 - TIME-OUT

A *time-out* is a *pause* during which the players may leave the table and converse with each other and with other people.

A player may call a *time-out* when their team has *active possession* or during a *pause*.

If the team with *active possession* calls a *time-out* while the ball is *moving*, *active possession* continues until the ball stops, at which point the *time-out* begins.

Each team has two *time-outs* per game. The number of available *time-outs* decreases when a team legally calls a *time-out* and when the referee charges a team with a *time-out*.

A *time-out* between games counts towards the total in the following game.

During a *time-out* any player may reach into the *playing area* in order to lubricate their rods or wipe the *playfield*. The ball may be *handled* only with permission, after which it must be replaced in the same position.

The *time-out* ends when the 30s period has expired, or earlier by agreement of both teams, and the player with *possession* initiates the Ready Protocol.

If a referee is present they will instruct the teams when play must restart; any delay is subject to Delay of Game infraction.

In doubles, players in either team may switch positions when returning to the table. See Switching Positions.

When the *time-out* ends, play is *restarted* by the player with *possession*.

### **Rule: Time-out Limit**

A team must not call a *time-out* when they have none remaining in the game.

Penalty (first in game): During active play: 5-rod restart. During a pause: Warning.

Penalty (subsequent in game): Penalty Shot.

**Rule: Illegal Time-out:** A player must not call a *time-out* when the other team has *active possession*.  
Penalty: If the offending team does not have possession: Distraction.  
Penalty: If the offending team has possession: 5-rod Restart.

**Rule: Untimely Time-out:** A team must not perform a *transfer* or a *transition* immediately after calling a *time-out*.  
Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Double Time-out.**  
After putting the ball into play following a *time-out*, a player must not call another *time-out* before a *transition* has been performed.  
Penalty: Goalie rod restart.

**Rule: Implicit Time-out.**  
A player with *active possession* must not *release* both handles for more than three seconds, or turn completely away from the table.  
Penalty: Time-out Charged.

Interpretation

1. Untimely Time-out covers a situation in doubles when one player performs a transition at the same time as, or immediately after their partner calls a time-out
2. Because the possession clock still runs if the ball moves after calling time-out, it is possible for a player to exceed the possession time limit after calling a time-out. Similarly, if the ball drops into the goal before coming to rest, the goal counts
3. A player in possession of a *stopped ball* may release both handles for up to three seconds, e.g. to wipe sweat away

## 4.14 - TIME-OUT CHARGED

A referee can charge a team with a *time-out* as a penalty for infringing certain rules, including but not limited to the following:

- Implicit Time-out
- Delay of Game
- Unreasonable Ball Replacement Request
- Second Referee Request
- Unreasonable Appeal
- Medical Break Request Declined

A team that is charged with a *time-out* loses one of their remaining *time-outs* in the game, but is permitted to take the full period of the *time-out*.

**Rule: Time-out Charged With None Remaining**

A team that is charged with a *time-out* in a game where they have none remaining has infringed the Time-out Charged With None Remaining rule.  
Penalty: Penalty Shot

## 4.15 - IMPAIRING PLAY

*Distraction, reset and jar* are actions which impair the other team's ability to play, and are illegal. They can be classified according to the type of impairment, as follows:

Common name	Impairment of	Description
Distraction	Attention	Pulling the other team's attention away
Reset	Control	Disturbing a player's ability to control or play the ball
Jarring	Possession	Preventing a player from keeping or gaining possession

### 4.15.1 - Distraction

A player must not pull the attention of the opposing team away from the game during *active play*. Impairing attention is a *distraction* violation.

There is a penalty for the first distraction of the match, and typically a more severe penalty for a subsequent distraction by the same team in the same match. Distractions are not limited to those identified here; other actions may be grounds for a distraction call, at the discretion of the referee.

**Rule: Movement away:** When a player has *active possession* on one rod, another rod on the same team must not hit the wall or be moved excessively.

Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Reaching away:** A player must not *release* both handles and reach down or away from the table.

Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Sudden Play:** In Standard Doubles, a player must not perform a *transition* within one second of grasping or *releasing* the handle of any rod. In Standard Singles once the ball is under control on the 3-rod a player must not perform a *transition* within one second of grasping or *releasing* the handle of any rod.

Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Illegal rod control:** Players must not control their rods using any part of their body other than those parts of their upper limbs from the elbow down to the fingers.

Penalty: Distraction.

At the discretion of the referee, the following may also be judged as distractions if they occur during *active play*:

- Making sounds, e.g. talking or shouting
- Allowing an electronic device on the player's person to make sound
- Excessive movement of a rod that is not part of an offensive or defensive play
- Any bodily movement or gesture that is not part of an offensive or defensive play, e.g. tapping the cabinet in apology or approval
- Making contact with an opposing team's rod

Interpretation

1. Moving the catching rod when passing is not a distraction unless that movement is excessive

2. Sliding down the handle from the hand to the wrist does not constitute *release* of the handle
3. A brief whisper by a player with *active possession* of a *stopped* ball is allowed

## 4.15.2 - Reset

Impairing a player's ability to control the ball is illegal. A *reset* infraction is any *shake, bump* or *shock* by a *defensive player* that impairs the *offensive player's* ability to control or play the ball.

Upon the first infraction in a game the referee announces "Reset", indicating that the *defensive team* has committed a *reset* infraction This means that the non-offending team's *possession clock* and *5-rod wall contact count* are reset. *Active play* does not stop when the referee makes a reset call.

After their first "Reset" call in a game, the next infraction by the same team will be a "Reset Warning" call, and any subsequent infraction by the same team during the same point will result in a Penalty Shot. After a Penalty Shot the next infraction by the same team is a "Reset Warning" again.

For each team, the sequence of reset infractions is as follows:

Reset infraction sequence	Referee call	Active Play
First in game	"Reset"	Continues
Subsequent in game	"Reset Warning"	Continues
Subsequent in game and second in point	"Reset Violation"	Stops - Penalty Shot

In the event of *reset* on the 5-rod, the referee has the discretion to award a 5-rod *restart*.

A *reset* occurs when a *stopped* ball is made to *move*, although a referee can judge it to have occurred even if the ball is *pinned* or *moving*.

### Rule: Reset.

A player on the *defensive team* must not cause a *shake, bump* or *shock* that impairs the *offensive player's* ability to control or to *play* the ball.

Penalty (first in game): Reset Call.

Penalty (subsequent in game): Reset Warning.

Penalty (subsequent in game and second in point): Penalty Shot.

### Rule: 5-Rod Reset

A *defensive player* must not cause a Reset which prevents the *offensive player* from successfully completing a pass from the 5-rod to the 3-rod.

Penalty: Reset call and 5-rod restart

### Rule: Self Reset.

A player on the *offensive team* must not cause a *shake, bump* or *shock* that causes the ball to *move*.

Penalty: 5-rod restart.

### Interpretation

1. Active play continues after a "Reset" call, so the defensive team should remain alert
2. A *shake, bump* or *shock* which causes a *stopped ball* to *rock* (not *move*) is not a *reset*

### 4.15.3 - Jarring

Impairing a player's ability to possess the ball is illegal. A *jar* is any *shake, shock, slam, shift* or *clash* by a *defensive team* that impairs the *offensive team's* ability to retain or gain *possession* of the ball.

The first and second infractions in a match by the same team are subject to a Continue or Restart penalty, and subsequent infractions by a Penalty Shot.

*Jarring* infractions can also be called at the discretion of the referee.

**Rule: Jar.**

The *defensive team* must not cause a *shake, shock, slam, shift* or *clash* that impairs the *offensive team's* ability to retain or gain *possession* of the ball.

Penalty (first): Continue or Restart.

Penalty (second): Continue or Restart.

Penalty (subsequent): Penalty Shot.

Interpretation

1. A simultaneous *slam* and *transition* from the same rod may be grounds for a jarring infraction if the opposing team clearly fail to gain *possession*
2. Any *slamming* of the rod while the ball is in play may be judged a *jar*
3. A *shake, bump* or *shock* by an opposing player behind the rod of *possession* is treated as a *jar* rather than a *reset* (i.e. when one forward impairs the possession of the other forward)

## 4.16 - REFEREE REQUEST

In an unrefereed match a player may request a referee during a *pause* or when the ball is *stopped*. A referee can be requested in order to:

- Provide a rule interpretation
- Resolve a controversy
- Continue the match with a referee

If a question of rule interpretation arises during an unrefereed match, then the game may be interrupted in order to ask a referee to provide an interpretation.

If a controversy arises in an unrefereed match, a referee may be requested to make a ruling. The referee's ruling can be based on information obtained from the players, from spectators, from other referees and from any available video recordings.

If two referees are present, then a player may request a replacement referee when the ball is *stopped*. The outcome of the request will be decided by the Head Official.

**Rule: Moving Ball Referee Request.**

In an unrefereed match, a player must not request a referee if the ball is not *stopped*.

Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Second Referee Request.**

In a refereed match, a player who requests a second referee will be charged with a *time-out*, unless

the request was made during a *time-out* which they called.  
Penalty: Time-out Charged.

**Rule: Active Play Additional Referee Request.**

In a refereed match, a player must not request a second or replacement referee during *active play*.  
Penalty: Penalty Shot.

**Rule: Replacement Referee Request Declined.**

In a match where two referees are present, if a request for a replacement referee is declined by the Head Official there shall be a penalty.  
Penalty: Penalty Shot

Interpretation

1. In an unrefereed match, a player who does not have possession may request a referee if the ball is *stopped*, e.g. if they think that a rod possession time-limit is being exceeded
2. It is considered a distraction if the *defensive team* requests a referee at the same time that the *offensive player* makes a play
3. A team requesting a second referee is always charged with a *time-out*, even if the request is made during a *time-out*

## 4.17 - REFEREE

Matchplay rules should be respected regardless of the presence of a referee. However, if a referee is officiating then infractions are not declared by the players, but only by the referee.

The referee's authority must be respected at all times during the match and begins when both teams are at the table. A referee's instructions must be obeyed during a match. Referee judgements must not be challenged, and players are reminded that human error is part of the game.

Although a referee's judgement cannot be challenged, a rule interpretation can be appealed if the appeal is filed with the referee before the ball is put back into play following the controversy. An appeal involving the loss of a match must be filed before the winning team has begun its next match. Appeals will be heard by the Head Official and at least two members of the officiating staff, if available.

Players must be familiar with the following referee instructions, which are given during *pauses*:

Referee call	Why?	Player action
"Time"	The maximum time allowed for the <i>pause</i> has expired	Prepare to play
"Play"	Play must begin	The player with <i>possession</i> must now <i>restart</i>

Players must be familiar with the following *interrupts* which a referee can make during *active play*:

Referee call	Why?	Player action
"Stop"	Referee judgement will be given	The ball must be <i>stopped</i> and <i>held</i>
"Time"	Possession time infraction	The player with <i>possession</i> must <i>hold</i> the ball

"Reset"	Reset infraction	<i>Active play continues</i>
"Warning"	Reset infraction	<i>Active play continues</i>

**Rule: Unreasonable Appeal.** A player must not challenge a referee's judgment, or make insubstantial or *unreasonable* appeals.

Penalty: Time-out Charged. Referee discretion; possible Delay of Game.

**Rule: Arguing.** A player must not argue with an officiating referee.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Delay of Game and/or Conduct Violation.

## 4.18 - MEDICAL BREAK REQUEST

A player may request a medical break when the ball is *stopped* or during a *pause*.

The outcome of the request will be determined by the referee, who may also involve the Tournament Director. In an unrefereed match the request must go directly to the Tournament Director.

If the request is approved, the maximum duration of the Medical Break will be specified; it cannot exceed 60 minutes.

**Rule: Medical Break Request Declined.**

There is a penalty if the request for a medical break is declined.

Penalty: Time-out Charged. Referee discretion; possible Delay of Game.

**Rule: Medical Break Expiry**

A player must be ready to play after the Medical Break period has expired.

Penalty: Forfeit Match.

## 4.19 - TABLE MAINTENANCE REQUEST

A table maintenance request may be made by any player if there has been a sudden alteration to the table or to the table lighting, or if a foreign object is discovered in the *playing area*. After the request has been processed play shall *restart* on the rod of last *possession*.

Interpretation

1. Sudden alterations include a broken playing figure, pin, screw, spring, or bumper, a bent rod, a failure of table lighting, or a foreign object entering the *playing area*

## 4.20 - OFFICIAL INTERRUPT

It may be necessary to suspend play during an announcement or other interruption by tournament or venue officials. In this case the player with *possession* should *hold* the ball. When the interruption is over, the player with *possession* will put the ball back into play with a *restart*.

## 4.21 - BETWEEN GAMES

The team that wins a game must mark the game on the game score marker if the table has one.

The teams have up to 90s to start the next game, a period which may be terminated early by agreement of the teams. Exceeding the time limit is grounds for a Delay of Game infraction.

During the pause between games the teams are allowed to:

- Change table sides
- Change playing positions
- Change handles (where permitted by the Tournament Director)
- Call a time-out

A time-out taken between games counts towards the total in the following game.

After completion of the first game, either team may request a change of table sides. The other team cannot refuse this request, but if the teams do change sides then they must subsequently change sides after every game in the match. If they do not change sides after the first game then the teams must stick to the same sides for the entire match.

Under certain circumstances the Tournament Director may generally disallow changing table sides.

## 4.22 - TIME CONTROL

*Active possession* and *pauses* are subject to *time control*. The following table summarises the time limits and what happens when they expire:

Time controlled event	Time Limit	When Time Limit Expires
Active possession - goalie rods	15s	Penalty: 5-rod restart
Active possession - 5-rod	10s	Penalty: 5-rod restart
Active possession - 3-rod	15s	Penalty: Goalie rod restart
Pause - Medical Break	60m (max)	Referee says "Play!"
Pause - Between Games	90s	Referee says "Play!"
Pause - Time-out	30s	Referee says "Play!"
Referee says "Play!" after a pause	3s	Warning: Delay of Game
Pause - Retrieving and positioning the ball after a goal or <i>dead ball</i>	5s	Warning: Delay of Game
Pause- Putting the ball into play <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● asking "Ready?"</li> <li>● responding "Ready!"</li> <li>● starting the <i>double transfer</i></li> </ul>	3s	Warning: Delay of Game
Delay of Game warning	10s	Delay of Game infraction. Penalty: Time-out Charged



Exceeding the *active possession* time limit on a rod results in a *restart* penalty.

The referee will instruct the teams when to restart play after a pause (Medical Break, Between Games or Time-Out). If the player with possession does not *restart* within 3s they may be given a warning for Delay of Game. If the player receiving a Delay of Game warning does not *restart* within 10s they have committed a Delay of Game infraction, the penalty for which is being charged with a *time-out*.

Delay of Game warnings and infractions are declared at the discretion of the referee, and can be issued for cases other than those explicitly identified above.

**Rule: Delay of Game:** After receiving a warning for Delay of Game, a player must not take more than 10s to restart play.

Penalty: Time-out Charged

## 4.23 - PLAYER CONDUCT

Players must behave ethically and respectfully during a match. The referee has the discretion to determine the penalty or the escalation process in the case of a Conduct Violation.

**Rule: Cheating.** A player must not cheat or attempt to cheat.

Penalty: Conduct Violation.

**Rule: Arguing.** A player must not argue with an officiating referee.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Delay of Game and/or Conduct Violation.

**Rule: Cursing:** A player must not curse.

Penalty (first in match): Penalty Shot

Penalty (subsequent in match): Referee discretion; possible Conduct Violation.

**Rule: Derogatory comments:** A player must not make derogatory or inappropriate comments about other players or officials, either directly or indirectly.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot

**Rule: Illegal coaching:** A player must not receive assistance from a spectator at any point in a match, except during time-outs or between games.

Penalty: Conduct Violation

**Rule: Device usage:** A player must not use headphones, earbuds, a mobile phone or any other electronic device during a game, apart from during *time-outs* or between games.

Penalty (first in match): Warning

Penalty (subsequent in match): Penalty Shot

**Rule: Aggressive behaviour:** A player must not cause a *shake, shock, slam, shift* or *clash* when the ball is not in active play.

Penalty: Conduct Violation

**Rule: Format deviation:** Teams must not play a different format than the one specified for the event.

Penalty: Conduct Violation

## 4.24 - SPECTATOR CONDUCT

Spectators are subject to Conduct Violations at referee discretion. Spectators must not coach or distract players during active play.

**Rule: Spectator coaching:** A spectator must not influence or attempt to influence a match by transmitting information to a player, except during time-outs or between games.

Penalty: Conduct Violation

**Rule: Spectator distraction:** A spectator must not influence a match by distracting the players or the referee.

Penalty: Conduct Violation; possible expulsion.

## 4.25 - PERMISSION

Certain player actions require permission before they can be taken. The request to take a specified action must be made to and then granted by the referee, or in an unrefereed match, by the appropriate player in the opposing team.

Examples of player actions that require permission include; reaching into the playing area in order to pick up the ball, clean the playfield, or tighten a handle.

## 4.26 - REACHING INTO THE PLAYING AREA

During *active play*, it is legal to reach into the playing area with permission.

During a *pause* or *interrupt*, it is legal to reach into the playing area and touch the ball with permission.

During a *pause* or *interrupt*, it is legal to reach into the *playing area* without permission if the ball is not touched.

All other cases are illegal, according to the following rules:

**Rule: Reaching-in During Play:** During *active play* a player must not reach into the *playing area* without permission.

If the action prevents the *non-offending* team from scoring a goal: Penalty: Point award.

If the ball is moving or the *non-offending team* has *active possession*: Penalty: Penalty Shot.

All other cases: Penalty: 5-rod Restart.

**Rule: Ball Handling During Pause:** During a *pause* or *interrupt*, a player must not reach into the playing area and touch the ball without permission.

If the ball is *reachable* behind the *offending team's goalkeeper*: Penalty: Point award.

If the *non-offending team* has *paused possession*: Penalty: Penalty Shot.

All other cases: Penalty: 5-rod Restart.

**Rule: Airborne Catch:** A player must not catch a ball that is airborne over the table.

Penalty: Penalty Shot. If the Penalty Shot is not scored: 5-rod restart.

## Interpretation

1. It is always illegal to reach in and pick up the ball without permission
2. During a *pause*, a player can remove dirt or wipe marks from the *playfield* without permission
3. During *active play*, a player must ask permission to reach into the playing area in order to tighten a handle
4. It is legal to catch a flying ball that has left the *playing area* and is not directly over the *cabinet*
5. The referee may decline a request to touch the ball, for example if it is close to the goalmouth or of doubtful reachability

## 4.27 - CHANGES TO THE TABLE

Changing Handles, Wiping the Table and Lubricating the Rods are routine maintenance activities which are allowed during pauses and are subject to delay of game infraction.

Problems with the table are resolved by Table Maintenance. Other changes, classified as Table Modification, are illegal.

### 4.27.1 - Changing Handles

Where permitted by the the Tournament Director, players are allowed to replace the table handles with other approved handles.

Players may change their handles before each game, during time-outs, and between points, provided that they do so within the time limits.

### 4.27.2 - Wiping the Playfield

During any *pause* a player is allowed to briefly remove dirt or wipe marks from the *playfield* or the ball, without permission, provided that no substance is used to do so.

**Rule: Illegal cleaning:** A player must not use any substance, including saliva or sweat, to wipe marks off the *playfield* or the ball

Penalty (first in match): Warning

Penalty (subsequent in match): Penalty Shot

### 4.27.3 - Lubricating the Rods

Players may lubricate their own team's rods during *time-outs* and between points.

Pipette or sponge applicators must be used when applying lubricant directly to the rods. Lubricant must not be sprayed directly onto the rods, but can be applied indirectly.

Table manufacturers and event promoters may require the use of specific lubricant products, and may mandate specific requirements and restrictions for their use.

**Rule: Illegal lubrication:** A player may only use lubricant products in accordance with the rules.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot

## Interpretation

1. Table manufacturers may require that internal telescopic rods should not be lubricated by the players

#### 4.27.4 - Table Maintenance

If a foreign object enters the *playing area*, or if any part of the table suffers a failure or other problem which renders it unfit for play, then there shall be an *interrupt* to perform *table maintenance*.

With permission, a player may reach into the *playing area* in order to tighten a loose handle.

If the table requires cleaning, approved products may be used in accordance with table manufacturer and event promoter specifications and restrictions.

If the problem cannot be resolved by the players, a *table maintenance* request should be made to the *tournament desk*.

The table should be levelled before the match begins. Once the match has started a player may during a *pause* request that the table be levelled. If both teams agree to level the table then this can be done either by the players or by a *table maintenance* request made at the *tournament desk*.

After the problem has been resolved play shall *restart* on the rod of last *possession*.

##### **Rule: Levelling Request**

Once the match has begun, if the teams disagree about whether to level the table, then the requesting team shall call *table maintenance* and will be charged with a *time-out*.

Penalty: *Time-out* charged

##### Interpretation

1. Table failures include a broken playing figure, pin, screw, spring, or bumper, a bent rod, or a failure of table lighting

#### 4.27.5 - Table Modification

A player must not modify the playing characteristics of the table or the balls.

A player must not allow any substance to contaminate the *playfield* or the ball.

A player can use a substance to improve handle grip but must ensure that it does not get into the *playing area*, or onto the rods or the ball. If this occurs the substance must be removed before play continues, and if the ball is affected it must be replaced. The substance must be completely removed from the handles before changing sides between games.

**Rule: Table Modification:** A player must not make any modification to the playing characteristics of the table or the ball.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot or Exclusion.

**Rule: Contamination:** A player must not allow the *playfield* or the ball to become contaminated by any substance.

Penalty (first in match): Delay of game

Penalty (subsequent in match): Penalty Shot

**Rule: Substance on Handle:** When changing table sides between games, a player must not leave any substance on the handles.

Penalty (first in match): Warning. Player is required to remove the substance within the time limits.

Penalty (subsequent in match): Prohibition from using the substance

**Rule: Rod Limiting:** A player must not use any device or object that limits the movement of a rod.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot

Interpretation

1. Examples of table modification include; filing a playing *figure*, sandpapering the *playfield*, and directly applying a foreign substance to the *playfield*, the playing figure or the ball
2. Examples of contaminants include; lubricant and substances used to improve handle grip

## 4.28 - BALL SUPPLY

Before the match starts, the players must agree on the set of balls that will be used during the match. If there is disagreement then new balls must be used. This set of balls constitutes the *ball supply*.

Once the ball has been served, any request to replace it should be made during a *pause*; it can then be replaced with permission.

If a request to replace the ball is made during *active play*, the ball will be replaced if the referee deems it to be unplayable.

**Rule: Ball Replacement:** After the ball has been served, a player must not replace it without permission.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot.

**Rule: Unreasonable Ball Request:** During *active play*, if a player makes a request to replace the ball then the referee shall determine if the ball is unplayable, in which case it will be replaced. If the ball is deemed playable then the requesting team is charged with a time-out.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Time-out Charged.

**Rule: Ball Adding:** Once the match has begun a player must not introduce a new ball into the *ball supply* without permission.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot.

## 4.29 - PRACTICE

Playing the ball during a *pause* or *interrupt* is considered to be practice. Once a match has started practice is only permitted between games.

**Rule: Illegal Practice:** A player must not perform a *transfer* or a *transition* during a *pause* or *interrupt*, other than between games and when putting the ball into play.

Penalty (first in match):

If the offending player has possession: 5-bar restart.

If the offending player does not have possession: Warning.  
Penalty (subsequent in match): Penalty Shot.

Interpretation

1. An inadvertent transition is not an offence; a referee will use discretion
2. Introducing a second ball into the playing area is illegal practice
3. Moving the rods without contact with the ball is not illegal practice
4. Performing transfers in order to position the ball while putting the ball into play is not illegal practice

## 5) PENALTIES

This section identifies the penalties for rule infractions.

### **Penalty: Warning**

A warning indicates that a subsequent infraction will carry a further penalty.

### **Penalty: 5-rod restart**

The ball is awarded to the non-offending team to put back into play with a *restart* on the 5-rod.

### **Penalty: Goalie rod restart**

The ball is awarded to the non-offending team to put back into play with a *restart* on either *goalie rod*.

### **Penalty: Point Award**

The non-offending team is awarded a point. The offending team then has serve.

### **Penalty: Continue or Restart**

The non-offending team has the choice of one of these options:

- Continue from the *current location* of the ball (including the goal)
- *Restart* from the *infraction location*
- *Restart* from the 5-rod

### **Penalty: Distraction (first):**

- If deemed benign by the referee: Warning.
- If a goal was scored by the offending team: Goal disallowed and 5-rod restart.
- All other cases: Continue or Restart

### **Penalty: Distraction (subsequent in match):**

Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot.

### **Penalty: Reset Call.**

The referee announces "Reset!" and the *possession clock* and *wall contact count* are reset. The next *reset* infraction will result in a Reset Warning penalty.

**Penalty: Reset Warning.**

The referee announces "Reset!" and the *possession clock* and *wall contact count* are reset. The next *reset* infraction will result in a Penalty Shot.

**Penalty: Forfeit Game**

The team forfeit the game.

**Penalty: Forfeit Match**

The team forfeit the match.

**Penalty: Conduct Violation**

At the discretion of the referee, Head Official and in accordance with the severity of the infraction, any penalty from a warning to the forfeiture of a game or the match. Also, by escalation to the Tournament Director, expulsion from the tournament venue or a fine.

**Penalty: Penalty Shot**

See Penalty Shot section for details.

## 5.1 - PENALTY SHOT

A referee can award a Penalty Shot as a result of a rule infraction. This is a single 3-rod shot taken by one player from the non-offending team, and defended by one player from the offending team. After taking the Penalty Shot play restarts from the point where the infraction occurred, unless the Penalty Shot was scored, in which case the offending team *has serve*. All matchplay rules remain in force during the Penalty Shot.

In a Standard Doubles match the players in each team may Switch Positions before the offending team's forward and the non-offending team's defender leave the table.

The non-offending team's player puts the ball into play with a 3-rod restart and takes the shot. During the penalty shot all Standard Matchplay Rules are in force.

The Penalty Shot is considered complete when the attacking player executes a transition with one of the following outcomes:

- the ball enters the defender's goal
- the ball enters and then leaves the defender's goalie area
- the ball stops *moving*

After the Penalty Shot is complete, the referee may announce that further infractions by the offending team will result in forfeiture of the game or the match.

When the Penalty Shot is complete play is restarted as follows:

- In Doubles, the players return to the table and either team may Switch Positions
- If the penalty was scored then the offending team now has serve
- If the penalty was not scored then continue from the point of infraction in accordance with the rules

**Rule: Penalty Shot Limit:** A team must not be charged with three Penalty Shots in one game.

Penalty: Forfeit game

## 6) OLD RULES DOCUMENTS

This version of the SMR does not intend to change the rules of the game.

You will find a link to the "Old Rules" document below:

- Arabic: <https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/2016%20ITSF%20Rules%20-%20Arabic.pdf>
- Bulgarian: [https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/2016\\_Rulebook\\_BG.pdf](https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/2016_Rulebook_BG.pdf)
- Chinese: [https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/ITSFRulesChinese\(Traditional\)2016.pdf](https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/ITSFRulesChinese(Traditional)2016.pdf)
- English: [https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/2016\\_Rulebook.pdf](https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/2016_Rulebook.pdf)
- French: <https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/ITSFRulesFrench2016.pdf>
- German: <https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/ITSF-Regelwerk%20Deutsch2016.pdf>
- Italian: [https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/Official\\_rules\\_Book\\_Italian\\_2016.pdf](https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/Official_rules_Book_Italian_2016.pdf)
- Russian: <https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/ITSFRulesRussian2016black.pdf>
- Turkish: <https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/2016%20ITSF%20Rule%20Book%20TURKISH.pdf>
- Slovenian: [https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/ITSF\\_Uradna\\_Pravila\\_2016\\_SI.pdf](https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/ITSF_Uradna_Pravila_2016_SI.pdf)
- Spanish: [https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/\[15-16\]%20ITSFRulesSpanish%20v0.5.pdf](https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/[15-16]%20ITSFRulesSpanish%20v0.5.pdf)