



# ITSF RULES OF TABLE SOCCER

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## STANDARD MATCHPLAY RULES

Version 1.1

August 2022

“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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# PREFACE TO SMR VERSION 1.1

Since the publication of SMR Version 1.0 the Rules Commission has processed 84 items of feedback, resulting in this document revision, SMR Version 1.1. We received feedback from players, referees, and officers of other ITSF Commissions; we are extremely grateful for their engagement and invaluable contributions.

SMR Version 1.0 contained no rule changes from the 2015 legacy rules, which made it much easier to interpret the feedback and to be sure that differences were due to errors or omissions. SMR Version 1.1 again contains no intentional rule changes, only corrections and clarifications, some of which resulted from requests for rule interpretations.

Some sections have been rewritten to clarify how edge cases should be interpreted, for example, which parts of the table are considered in and out of bounds when the ball leaves the playfield.

Some feedback items required only small corrections while others involved a lot of work to resolve and resulted in significant changes to the document. The details are too long for this preface, but areas of significant change include: Starting a Match, Putting The Ball Into Play, Kick-off, Opening Sequence, Ball Off Table, Time-out, Three Walls, Trapped Ball, Passing, Adjustment, Distraction, Rod Control, Possession Award, Illegal Practice, Time Control.

This SMR 1.1 document revision completes the project of 'translating' the legacy rules into the language of the SMR. Future revisions will be primarily for the purpose of implementing rule changes rather than corrections or clarifications.

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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 2P and Italian Speedball
  - Wheelchair table 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 *goalie rod*, *goalkeeper rod*, *2-rod*, *5-rod* and *3-rod*. The term *goalie rod* refers to both the *goalkeeper rod* and the adjacent *2-rod* considered together as one rod.

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. Refer to the interpretations
3. Refer the discrepancy to the ITSF Rules Commission

## 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 event 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 moving between the rods.

**Active possession:** A period of *active play* during which the ball is *reachable* from a specific rod.

**Adjusted ball:** Moving the ball laterally in one direction and then in the opposite direction as part of a single *contact* with the front of the *figure* — or, a *contact*, other than the initial one of the *active possession*, on 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 out of play:** The ball is out of play during any of the pauses: Dead Ball, Ball Off Table, Between Points, Between Games

**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 the ball touches a *figure* on a rod, or any part of a rod that is internal to the *playing area*.

**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*, or where the ball has *stopped*.

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

**Direct-pass:** A *pass* with no intervening *contact* on the opposing team's rod.

**Distraction:** A player action that pulls the attention of an opponent away from the game during *active play*.

**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 sufficiently distant from the closest *wall* that a *figure* can fit between it and that *wall*.

**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:** The *goalkeeper rod* and the adjacent 2-rod considered together.

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

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

**Head referee:** A referee appointed by the tournament director who is responsible for officiating a tournament and managing referees.

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

**Implicit possession:** The rod at which the ball is to be put into play following a *ball out of play* or an *infraction interrupt*.

**Indirect-pass:** A *pass* with an intervening *contact* on the opposing team's rod, where that *contact* is not a *controlled possession*.

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

**Initial flip:** A process that determines which team has the option of first *kick-off* 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* that impairs the other *team's* ability to retain or gain possession of the ball.

**Kick-off:** A *restart* at the central 5-rod figure by the team which conceded the previous goal, or if there is no score by the team which gained the *kick-off* from the *initial flip*.

**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 *interrupt* 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 *controlled possession* of the ball.

**Opening sequence:** A series of *contacts* that must contain, in order: a *move* by the *restart figure*, a *contact* by the *possession clock figure*, and a *contact* by any *figure* other than the *possession clock figure*.

**Opposing player:** The player who controls the rod that directly opposes the rod of *possession*.

**Pass:** A *controlled transition* through one rod of the opposing team followed by a *controlled possession* on another rod of the same team.

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

**Paused possession:** During a *pause* or *interrupt*, 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*.

**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*, excluding any *tally markers*.

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

**Possession:** *Active possession*, *paused possession* or *implicit 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.

**Possession clock figure:** During the *opening sequence*, the first *figure* that *contacts* the ball after it is *moved* by the *restart figure*.

**Prelude:** A preliminary process that is completed before the first game that is played.

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

**Ready protocol:** A two-stage process for putting the ball into play; the “Ready?” prompt and the “Ready!” response.

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

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

**Restart:** The process of putting the ball into play.

**Restart figure:** When putting the ball into play, the *figure* from which the *opening sequence* is initiated.

**Restricted ball:** In the context of a *pass*, a ball which is *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.

**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.

**Tally marker:** a table fixture that records the number of points scored, games won or *time-outs* taken by a team.

**Team:** One or more players on the same side of the table.

**Time control:** Periods of the match whose durations are limited and which can be managed by a referee, 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* 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.

**Unprocessed infraction:** An infraction that has just occurred but has 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*, including any side strip that runs along each side of the *playing area*.

**Wall contact:** A *move*, other than a *transition*, that causes the ball to touch the *wall*.

**Wall contact count:** The number of 5-rod *wall contacts* made during one *active possession*.

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### 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 a prelude followed by periods of active play punctuated by pauses or interrupts when play is temporarily suspended. Active play consists of periods of play when the ball is reachable by a rod, called active possessions, and periods when the ball is moving between the rods. Active possessions and pauses are under time control, while the prelude, interrupts and periods when the ball is unreachable 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:

- Positioning The Ball
- Ready Protocol
- Time-out
- Ball Out Of Play
  - Dead Ball
  - Ball off Table
  - Between Points
  - Between Games

## 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
- Medical Break Request
- Medical Break
- Table Maintenance Request
- Table Maintenance
- External Interrupt
- Referee Request
- Referee Appeal
- Time-out Request

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 the *prelude*, a process which includes the following sequence of events:

- *Initial flip*
- Choose first *kick-off* or table side
- Adopt initial playing positions
- Select set of balls to use
- Agree to begin play

The *prelude* begins with the *initial flip*, typically a coin toss between one player from each team. The winner of the *initial flip* has the option of taking the first *kick-off* or picking the table side for the first game, with the losing team taking the remaining option. Once the winning team makes their choice they cannot change their decision.

The team with the option to pick the table side must then do so, and each team must adopt their nominated side. In Standard Doubles the team with the first *kick-off* must adopt their respective playing positions before the other team; one player controls the *goalkeeper rod* and the 2-rod and the other player controls the 5-rod and the 3-rod.

The players must agree on the set of balls which will be used for the match; if there is disagreement then new balls must be used. This set of balls constitutes the *ball supply*.

During the *prelude* either team can evaluate the playing conditions, for example checking the condition of the table, the table sides and the balls. The *prelude* is an opportunity to request *table maintenance*; once *active play* has begun *table maintenance* can only be called for a sudden alteration to the table. Either team can request a referee during the *prelude*.

Players should initiate and complete the *prelude* in a timely manner. *Time-outs* are not allowed during the *prelude*. A referee has the authority to call conduct violations during the *prelude*.

When both teams agree that they are ready to play, the team which has the *kick-off* initiates the *ready protocol*. The *prelude* ends when the player with *possession* asks "Ready?" whereupon all matchplay rules are in force.

## 4.2 - PUTTING THE BALL INTO PLAY

The ball is put into play via a three-step procedure:

1. Positioning the Ball
2. *Ready protocol*
3. *Opening sequence*

In the first step, the ball is positioned at the *restart* location. Then the player putting the ball into play initiates the *ready protocol*, which confirms that the opposing team is ready to play. The final step is the *opening sequence*, which must be performed before the ball can be legally *transitioned*.

Positioning the Ball and the *ready protocol* are *pauses*, while the *opening sequence* is *active play*. All three steps are under *time control* and hence subject to Delay of Game infractions. See 4.22 Time Control.

### 4.2.1 - Positioning the Ball

It is the responsibility of the player putting the ball into play to ensure that the ball is positioned where it is reachable by the *restart figure*. The ball may be placed by hand or played to the restart location.

The *restart* location is determined according to the preceding event as follows:

Event	Legal restart location
<i>Time-out</i> during <i>active play</i>	<i>Current location</i> of the ball
<i>Interrupt</i> during <i>active play</i>	<i>Current location</i> of the ball
Start of game or goal scored	<i>Kick-off</i>

Dead ball between the 5-rods	Kick-off
Dead ball behind the 5-rod	The nearest <i>goalie rod</i>
Ball off Table	The relevant <i>goalie rod</i>
5-rod Possession Award	Central 5-rod figure of non-offending team
Goalie rod Possession Award	The <i>goalie rod</i> of non-offending team
Team chooses 'Continue' penalty option	<i>Current location</i> of the ball
Team chooses 'Restart' penalty option	Location of the ball at the point of infraction
Penalty shot	The 3-rod of non-offending team

## 4.2.2 - Ready Protocol

The *ready protocol* consists of two steps:

- The player putting the ball into play asks the *opposing player* if they are "Ready?"
- The *opposing player* responds with "Ready!"

In doubles, the *opposing player* may check with their partner before responding "Ready!". The *ready protocol* ends and *active play* begins when the player with *possession* initiates the *opening sequence*.

## 4.2.3 – Opening Sequence

After the "Ready!" response, the player putting the ball into play must complete an *opening sequence* before the ball can be legally *transitioned*.

The *opening sequence* is a series of *contacts* that begins with a *move* by the *restart figure*, at which point *active play* begins. After that there must be a *contact* by another *figure*, which starts the *possession clock*. The *opening sequence* ends with a *contact* by any *figure* other than the *possession clock figure*.

On the 5-rod, the *wall contact count* remains at zero until the first *contact* by the *possession clock figure*.

If a *kick-off* is performed by the wrong team and the mistake is discovered before the next goal is scored, then the ball shall be given to the correct team for the *kick-off*. Once a goal is scored no protest shall be allowed and play will continue as if no mistake had been made.

### Rule: False Start

After the start of the *ready protocol* the ball must not be *moved* before the "Ready!" response is given.  
 Penalty (first in match): Warning; the same team restart.  
 Penalty (subsequent in match): 5-rod Possession Award.

### Rule: Wrong Figure

During a *kick-off*, a player must not initiate the *opening sequence* from the wrong *figure*. Any such infraction expires when the point is scored.  
 Penalty (first in match): Warning; the same team restart.  
 Penalty (subsequent in match): 5-rod Possession Award.

### Rule: Incomplete Opening Sequence

A player must not perform a *transition* before completing the *opening sequence*.  
 Penalty: Continue or 5-rod Possession Award

## 4.3 - POSSESSION

The concept of *possession* relates to which rod, and by extension which player and team, has ownership of the ball at any point in time. *Possession* is either *active*, *paused* or *implicit*.

*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*.

*Implicit possession* is when the ball is about to be given to a specific rod to be put into play following a *ball out of play* 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 in order to request a referee (see 4.16 Referee Request). The player with possession will then *restart* play with the match under referee time control.

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

### **Rule: Time Limit on 3-rod**

A single *active possession* on the 3-rod must not exceed 15 seconds.  
Penalty: Goalie rod Possession Award.

### **Rule: Time Limit on 5-rod**

A single *active possession* on the 5-rod must not exceed 10 seconds.  
Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award.

### **Rule: Time Limit on Goalie Rods**

A single *active possession* on the *goalie rods* must not exceed 15 seconds.  
Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award.

## 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>Kick-off</i>
Behind the 5-rod	<i>Restart</i> on any figure on the nearest <i>goalie rod</i>

### **Rule: Playing the Ball Dead**

A player must not intentionally play the ball *dead*.  
Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award.

**Rule: Flex Infraction**

A player must not *flex* a rod in order to *contact* an otherwise *unreachable* ball.  
Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award.

## Interpretation

1. A ball stuck in a serving hole or on top of the goalkeeper rod is a dead ball
2. A player must not play the ball dead by moving the ball out of reach by upward movements of the *figure*

## 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.

In general, if the ball strikes a 'gameplay' table component then *active play* continues uninterrupted, and if it strikes a 'non-gameplay' table component then the *ball is off table* and *active play* is *paused*.

A gameplay component is any table element internal to the table which is necessary for gameplay, including the *playfield*, playing *figures*, bumpers, springs, side strips, ramps, side walls, end walls and the length of the rods internal to the *playing area*. The goal posts and crossbars are considered to be gameplay components even if portions of them are outside the *playing area*.

Non-gameplay components include *tally markers*, table fixtures, objects placed on the cabinet, and anything that is external to the frame of the table, for example, the external parts of the rods, the handles, and any serving cup.

The goal assemblies and the top of the *cabinet* are boundary cases; although they are not gameplay components, the ball remains in play if it strikes one of them and returns to the *playing area*. However, *tally markers* are always out of play, even if they are part of a goal assembly.

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

- strikes a person or any object outside the table (e.g. the floor, ceiling or wall of the room)
- strikes a *tally marker*
- strikes any fixture attached to the *cabinet* excluding the goal assembly
- strikes a foreign object resting on the *cabinet*
- rolls or comes to rest on the top of the *cabinet*

The ball is not *off table* and *active play* continues uninterrupted if it returns to the *playing area* after:

- striking a goal post or crossbar
- striking any part of a goal assembly excluding a *tally marker*
- bouncing on the top of the *cabinet* one or more times
- entering a serving hole from the *playing area*
- going airborne directly above the *playing area* or the *cabinet*

**Rule: Airborne Catch**

A player must not catch or otherwise intentionally interact with a ball that is airborne above the *playing area* or the *cabinet*.

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

**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 Possession Award.

## Interpretation

1. A defensive block or a immediate defensive reaction is not a controlled transition
2. Examples of cabinet fixtures include: a light fitting, camera or microphone

## 4.6 - PLAYER QUERY

Players are permitted to ask the referee a question during a *pause* in play, for example to query the event format or the number of remaining time-outs. Time control during the *pause* is still in effect.

## 4.7 - POINT SCORED

A goal is scored when the ball completely crosses the goal line, in which case play is *paused*. If the goal was legally scored then the team to whom the point is awarded must mark it on their point counter. The conceding team now *has the kick-off* unless the goal ends the match.

However, if there is an *unprocessed infraction* then it should be processed in accordance with the rules before any point is awarded. A goal scored by the offending team as a result of or following an infraction shall not count, but an own-goal scored by the offending team shall count.

If both teams agree that a point was not marked 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 referee* discretion; possible forfeiture of game or match.

## Interpretation

1. If the ball completely crosses the goal line and then leaves the goal, it's still a goal
2. Inadvertent errors in score marking are not subject to penalty
3. An own-goal scored as a result of an infraction by the same team will effectively count, because the opposing team has the option to continue play from the current position

## 4.8 - SWITCH POSITIONS

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

- Between Points
- 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 between points, between *games*, during a *time-out*,

or before or after a Penalty Shot. Any such switch is disallowed.  
Penalty: During active play - 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 *possession*.

Penalty: Second switch disallowed.

## 4.9 - SPINNING

It is illegal to *transition* the ball by rotating the rod more than 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 5-rod Possession Award.

Interpretation

1. A spin which does not result in a *transition* is not an illegal spin
2. It's not an Illegal Spin if a rod that isn't under player control is spun by the force of the ball hitting a *figure*
3. An own-goal scored from a spin effectively counts, because the 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 *goalie 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 *stopped*, *pinned* or *adjusted* becomes a *restricted ball*. When passing from the 5-rod to the 3-rod, a *restricted ball* cannot be passed with either a *direct-pass* or with an *indirect-pass*. When passing from the *goalie rod* to the 5-rod, a *restricted ball* cannot be passed with a *direct-pass*, but it can be passed with an *indirect-pass*. The restriction is cleared by performing a *transfer*, after which the ball can be legally passed.

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

Passing rod	Catching rod	The pass is illegal if the ball is...	...and the pass is...
5-rod	3-rod	<i>Stopped, pinned, adjusted</i>	<i>Direct or indirect</i>
Goalie rod	5-rod	<i>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 5-rod Possession Award**

Interpretation

1. It is legal to pass a *stationary* ball - because if the *pass* is immediate the ball is not *stopped*
2. A *stopped* 5-3 *pass* is illegal even if it *deflects* off the opposing 5-rod (*indirect*)
3. A *rocking ball* is a *stopped ball*
4. A *stub pass* is legal
5. Even if the catching rod performs an immediate *controlled transition*, it's still a *pass*
6. There are no restrictions on passing a ball if it goes through more than one of the opposing team's rods, for example if it goes off either end *wall*

## 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*, multiple consecutive *wall contacts* may be used until the ball is *freed*, all of which will count as a single *wall contact*.

If the ball becomes *trapped* touching the wall, then the *wall contact count* is increased by one, but if the ball becomes *trapped* before it touches the wall, the next *wall contact* increases the *wall contact count* by one. In both cases, any subsequent contacts with the wall do not increase the *wall contact count*, until the ball is *freed*. Once the ball is *freed*, each subsequent *wall contact* will increase the *wall contact count*.

If two or more *wall contacts* are used to free a *trapped* ball then the player must perform a *transfer* before *transitioning* the ball.

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

### **Rule: Trapped Ball Influence**

A player on the team with *active possession* of a *trapped* ball must not influence or attempt to influence the ball by hitting a rod into the wall.

Penalty (first in match): Warning

Penalty (subsequent in match): 5-rod Possession Award.

### **Rule: Three Walls**

The *wall contact count* must not exceed two during a single *active possession* on the 5-rod.

Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award.

### **Rule: Trapped Ball Transition**

If a player makes two or more *wall contacts* to *free* a *trapped* ball on the 5-rod, then they must not *transition* the ball without first performing a *transfer*.

Penalty: Continue or 5-rod Possession Award.

### 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.

When an infraction is declared, *active play* is suspended and the ball must be *stopped* and *held* by whichever player next gains *controlled possession* of the ball. 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 location of the ball when the infraction occurred 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. The maximum duration of a time-out is 30 seconds. Each team has two *time-outs* per game. The number of available *time-outs* decreases when a team legally requests a *time-out* or when the referee charges a team with a *time-out*. A *time-out* between games counts towards the total in the following game.

A team can request a *time-out* during *active play* if they have *possession* of the ball, or during a *pause*, with exceptions according to the rules below.

If the requesting team has *active possession* of a *stopped* ball then the *time-out* begins immediately. However, if the ball is *moving* then *active play* continues and the *time-out* begins only when the ball stops *moving* under *possession* of the same rod.

A team is deemed to have requested a *time-out* if a player on that team releases both handles for more than three seconds, or releases both handles and turns away from the table.

The team requesting the *time-out* must mark it on their *time-out* counter if the table has them.

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 30 second period has expired, or earlier by agreement of both teams. If a referee is present they will instruct the teams when play must restart; any delay is subject to Delay of Game infraction. In Standard Doubles, players in either team may switch positions when returning to the table. See Switch Positions. After the *time-out* ends play is *restarted* by the player with *possession*.

**Rule: Time-out Limit**

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

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

Penalty (subsequent in game): Penalty Shot.

**Rule: Illegal Time-out Request**

A team must not request a *time-out* during *active play* if they do not have *possession* of the ball.

A team must not perform a *transfer* or a *transition* immediately after requesting a *time-out*.

Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Double Time-out Request**

Once a team initiates the *opening sequence* following a *time-out* that they called *during active play*, they must not request another *time-out* before performing a *transition*.

Penalty: Goalie rod Possession Award.

**Rule: Disallowed Time-out Request**

A player must not request a *time-out* during an *interrupt*, or when the other team is putting the ball into play following:

- An *infraction interrupt*
- An *interrupt* if their team was not allowed to request a *time-out* prior to that *interrupt*

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

**Rule: Premature Transition**

When *restarting* play after a *time-out* taken during *active play*, once the player with *possession* assumes control of the rod the ball must not be *transitioned* prior to the start of the *ready protocol*.

Penalty: Continue or 5-rod Possession Award

Interpretation

1. In Standard Doubles it is a distraction for a player to perform a *transition* at the same time as, or immediately after their partner calls a *time-out*
2. It is a distraction violation if a player requests a time-out and then loses possession before the ball stops moving
3. After requesting a *time-out*, *active play* continues until the ball stops *moving*. Therefore before the ball comes to rest a player is at risk of, for example, exceeding the possession time limit or scoring an own-goal.
4. After the *time-out* begins, an inadvertent transfer or transition is not an infraction; the ball is returned to its original location
5. 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:

- 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 must not be charged with a time-out in a game where they have none remaining.

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	Disrupting a player's control of 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.

A referee may issue a Warning penalty for the first distraction violation in a match; a subsequent violation by the same team in the same match will carry a more severe penalty. Distractions are not limited to those identified here; other actions may be grounds for a distraction call, at the discretion of the referee.

The manner in which players take and release control of their rods is potentially distracting. In general players should have their rods under control during *active play*; they can release handles, e.g. to wipe their hands, to change holds, or to move between rods, but must do so in accordance with the rules. A rod is considered to be under control when a player is holding that rod's handle using any part of their arm from the elbow down to the fingers. This permits a variety of holds using different parts of the arm, including the fingers, hand, palm, wrist, forearm and elbow.

**Rule: Distracting Activity**

During *active play*, and at the discretion of the referee, the following activities may be judged as distractions:

- Making sounds, e.g. talking or shouting
- Allowing an electronic device on the player's person to make sound
- Excessive movement of the hands between the handles
- 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, i.e. a *clash*

Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Illegal Rod Control**

During *active play* a player must not:

- Control a rod using any part of their body beyond the elbow
- In Standard Doubles, control a rod not designated for their position

Penalty: Distraction

**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 with *active possession* must not *release* both handles and reach down or away from the table.

Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Distracting Transition**

In Standard Doubles a player must not perform a *controlled transition* when they or their partner are not controlling each rod with each arm.

In Standard Singles a player must not perform a *controlled transition* on the 3-rod when their other arm is not controlling another rod.

Penalty: Distraction.

**Rule: Sudden Play**

In Standard Doubles a player must not perform a *controlled transition* within one second of either player on the team taking hold of the handle of any rod.

In Standard Singles a player must not perform a *controlled transition* on the 3-rod within one second of taking hold of the handle of any rod.

Penalty: Distraction.

Momentary release of the handle when changing between holds prior to a *transition* is not in and of itself a Sudden Play violation.

## Interpretation

1. Moving the catching rod when passing is not a distraction unless that movement is excessive
2. Spinning a rod may be considered excessive movement
3. A brief whisper by a player on a team 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 player on the *defensive team* that impairs the *offensive player's* control of 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" or "Warning"	Continues
Subsequent in game and second in point	"Stop!"	Stops - Penalty Shot

In the event of *reset* on the 5-rod, the referee has the discretion to make a 5-rod Possession Award.

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*. A *rocking ball* is not judged as a *reset*, however a ball that is excessively wobbling in place could be judged as a *reset*.

**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 player on the *defensive team* 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 Possession Award

**Rule: Self Reset**

A player on a team with *controlled possession* must not cause a *shake, bump* or *shock* in an attempt to elicit a Reset call from the referee.

Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award.

Interpretation

1. Active play continues after a "Reset" call, so the defensive team should remain alert

### 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* that impairs the other 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, Restart or 5-rod Possession Award penalty, and subsequent infractions to a Penalty Shot.

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

**Rule: Jar**

A player must not cause a *shake, shock, slam, shift* or *clash* that impairs the other team's ability to retain or gain *controlled possession* of the ball.

Penalty (first and second in match): Continue, Restart or 5-rod Possession Award.

Penalty (subsequent in match): Penalty Shot.

Interpretation

1. A simultaneous *slam* and *transition* from the same rod may be grounds for a jarring infraction
2. Any slamming of the rod during *active play* may be judged a jar
3. A *shake, bump* or *shock* behind the rod of *possession* by the defending team 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*, and also during *active play* by calling "Stop!" when the ball is *stopped*. In a refereed match, a second or replacement referee may only be requested during a *pause*. If two referees are present, the outcome of any request for a replacement will be decided by the *head referee*.

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.

**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 referee* 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* performs a *transition*

### 4.16.1 – Referee Appeal

A Referee Appeal is an Interrupt during which a player appeals to the *head referee* to make a ruling.

If a player believes a referee at the table has incorrectly enforced or failed to enforce a rule or penalty they may formally appeal to the *head referee* to get a ruling. The player must inform the referee of their intent to lodge a Referee Appeal at which point the game will be interrupted until a decision is returned.

Any appeal must be lodged before the ball is put back into play. An appeal involving the outcome of a match must be lodged before the winning team has begun its next match.

The *head referee* shall consult the matchplay rules and at least two other referees (if available) to determine whether or not the referee's decision should be upheld or overturned.

## 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.

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, position the ball if necessary
"Play"	Play must begin	The player with <i>possession</i> must initiate the Ready Protocol

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

**Rule: Unreasonable Appeal**

A player must not challenge a referee's judgement, 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. The Medical Break is timed by the Tournament Director.

**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 - EXTERNAL INTERRUPT

It may be necessary to suspend play for announcements by tournament or venue officials, or for other unscheduled interruptions. 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 it on their game counter if the table has them.

The teams have up to 90 seconds 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)
- Request a time-out

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

After completion of the first game played, 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 Possession Award

Active possession - 5-rod	10s	Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award
Active possession - 3-rod	15s	Penalty: Goalie rod Possession Award
Active possession - Releasing both handles	3s	Time-out request deemed
Pause - Between Games	90s	Initiate Ready Protocol
Pause - Time-out	30s	Initiate Ready Protocol
Goal scored - Retrieving the ball, positioning the ball and asking "Ready?"	5s	Warning: Delay of Game
Pause - Positioning the ball and asking "Ready?"	3s	Warning: Delay of Game
Pause - Ready Protocol - Responding "Ready!"	3s	Warning: Delay of Game
After the "Ready!" response, making the first <i>contact</i> by the <i>possession clock figure</i>	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 Possession Award penalty.

The referee will instruct the teams when to restart play after a *pause* or *interrupt*. 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 Comment**

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 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 Possession Award.

### **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 Possession Award.

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. 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 Playfield 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 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.

The Tournament Director may require the use of specific lubricant products, and may mandate specific requirements and restrictions for their use.

### 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

During the *prelude* 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*.

The ball in play can be replaced with permission during any *pause*. 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 *opening sequence* has been initiated a player must not replace the ball 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**

A player must not introduce a new ball into the *ball supply* without permission.

Penalty: Referee discretion; possible Penalty Shot.

## 4.29 - PRACTICE

Practice is permitted on any table during the *prelude* and between games. Practice is not permitted during other *pauses* or *interrupts*. Performing a *transfer* or a *transition* outside of *active play* is considered to be practice, except when permitted in order to position the ball when putting it into play.

**Rule: Illegal Practice**

A player must not perform a *transfer* or a *transition* during a *pause* or *interrupt*, other than between games and where permitted in order to position the ball when putting it into play.

Penalty (first in match):

If the offending player has possession: 5-rod Possession Award

If the offending player does not have possession: Warning.

Penalty (subsequent in match): Penalty Shot.

Interpretation

1. Inadvertently moving the ball is not illegal practice; a referee will use discretion

## 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: Goalie rod Possession Award**

*Possession* of the ball is awarded to the non-offending team for a *restart* on any *goalie rod* figure.

**Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award**

*Possession* of the ball is awarded to the non-offending team for a *restart* at the central 5-rod figure.

**Penalty: Continue or 5-rod Possession Award**

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

- Continue play in accordance with the rules from the *current location* of the ball
- 5-rod Possession Award

**Penalty: Continue, Restart or 5-rod Possession Award**

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

- Continue play in accordance with the rules from the current location of the ball
- Restart from the location where the infraction occurred
- 5-rod Possession Award

In the above two penalties, a player may continue to play without claiming an infraction, in which case they are deemed to have implicitly chosen the 'Continue' option. Their right to claim a penalty expires if they subsequently perform a *controlled transition*. However, if a referee is present they may impose a further penalty on the offending team in accordance with the rules.

**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 Warning!" and the *possession clock* and *wall contact count* are reset.

**Penalty: Distraction (first in match)**

- If deemed benign by the referee: Warning.

- If a goal was scored by the offending team: Goal disallowed and 5-rod Possession Award.
- All other cases: Continue, Restart or 5-rod Possession Award

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

Referee discretion; Continue, Restart or 5-rod Possession Award, or possible Penalty Shot.

**Penalty: Point Award**

The non-offending team is awarded a point. The offending team then has the *kick-off*.

**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 referee* 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

In the event of a serious rule infraction a referee can award a Penalty Shot to the non-offending team. The Penalty Shot is a single 3-rod *transition* performed by one player from the non-offending team in an attempt to score a goal, and defended by one player from the offending team.

The player on the non-offending team who takes the Penalty Shot is here called the penalty taker, and the player on the offending team who defends the shot is here called the defender.

In a Standard Doubles match one player from each team must leave the table before the Penalty Shot is taken. However, the players in each team may first Switch Positions before the two players who are not involved in the Penalty Shot leave the table.

The ball is put into play with a 3-rod *restart* by the penalty taker and the *transition* is performed. During the Penalty Shot all Standard Matchplay Rules are in force.

If the penalty taker's *transition* results in a legally scored goal, then the Penalty Shot is complete and the point is marked by the penalty taker.

The Penalty Shot is also complete in the event of any of the following outcomes:

- A rule infraction with a penalty other than a Warning, committed by the penalty taker
- The penalty taker's *transition* goes backwards
- After the penalty taker's *transition*
  - the ball becomes *reachable* by the defender's 2-rod and then subsequently becomes unreachable forward of the defender's 2-rod
  - the ball stops *moving*
  - the ball goes *off table*

When the Penalty Shot is complete, the referee may issue a Warning that further infractions by the offending team will result in forfeiture of the game or the match.

After the Penalty Shot is complete the players return to the table; in Standard Doubles either team may again Switch Positions.

After the players return to the table play is restarted as follows:

- If the point was scored then the offending team *restarts* with a *kick-off*
- If the point was not scored then *restart* from the location of the infraction or as specified 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)
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- 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\\_Sl.pdf](https://www.tablesoccer.org/rules/documents/ITSF_Uradna_Pravila_2016_Sl.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)