

BILLIARD TRAINING TOOLS

A practical guide to building a straighter stroke, repeatable setup, and better practice habits



For Beginner & Intermediate Pool Players

Featuring the Printable Straight-Stroke Guide, Ball Hoop Trainer, Ball Spotter & Cue Holder

By Robert Ryder

Why These Simple Training Tools Work

A straight, dependable stroke is one of the foundations of good pool. Players often blame aim when the real problem is delivery: the cue moves off line, the grip tightens, the elbow changes position, or the cue ball is not sent down the intended line. The tools in this guide make those errors easier to see and correct.

The goal is not to make your stroke robotic. The goal is to give you repeatable reference points. Practice slowly enough that you can feel a centered backswing, a smooth forward delivery, and a finish that sends the cue ball along the line you selected.

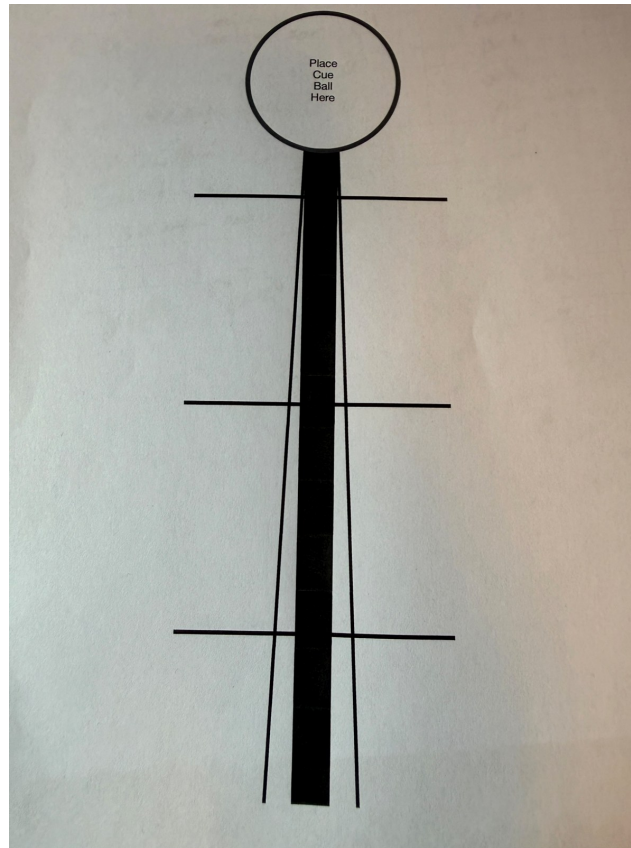
Core rule: Quality repetitions beat fast repetitions. Reset after every poor delivery and make the next stroke cleaner.

The four training stations

- **Printable Straight-Stroke Guide:** trains the cue to travel down one visual lane.
- **Ball Hoop Trainer:** tests whether the cue ball actually travels on the intended line of aim.
- **Ball Spotter / Ball Carrier:** lets you repeat the same object-ball position again and again.
- **Cue Holder:** keeps the cue organized and supports a consistent practice routine between sets.

Use the devices separately at first. Then combine them into a 20- to 30-minute practice routine at the end of this book.

1. Printable Straight-Stroke Guide



The original straight-stroke paper guide. The large circle is the cue-ball reference area; the long center lane gives the player a visible delivery path.

How to use it

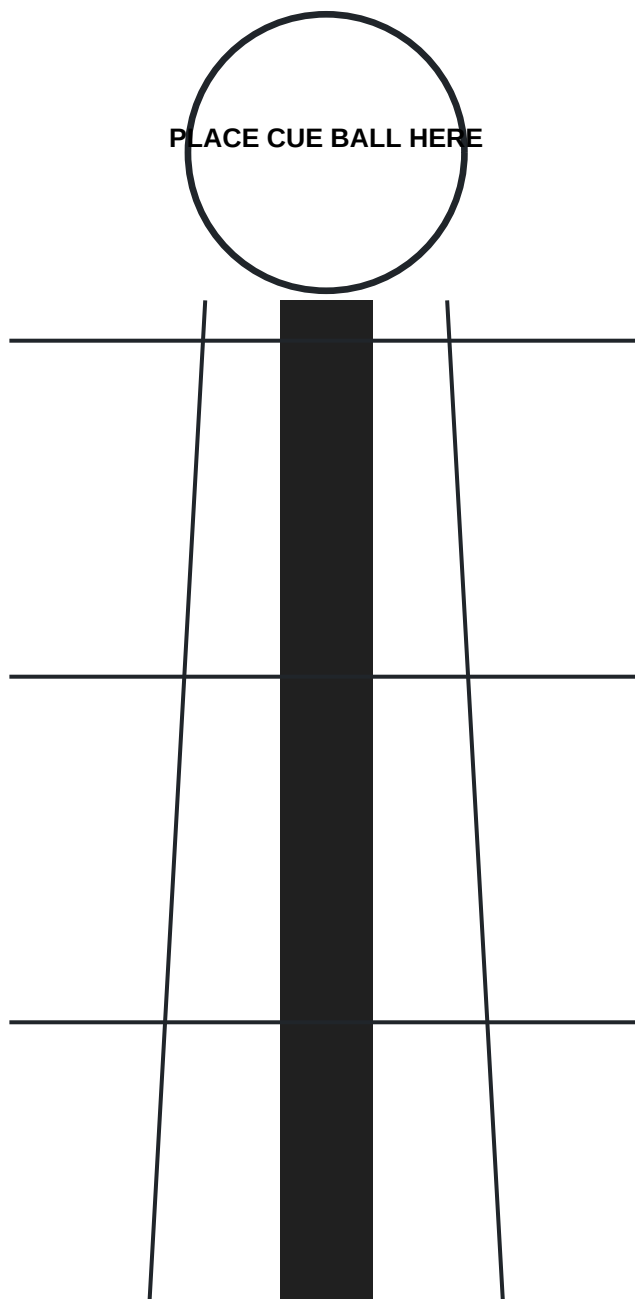
Print the practice page at **100% / Actual Size**. Lay it flat on a safe practice surface. Place a cue ball in the marked circle. Align the cue over the center lane and use the two outside lines as visual rails. The cue should move forward and backward without drifting toward either outside line.

- **Start without hitting a ball:** make 10-20 slow warm-up strokes and watch the cue shaft.
- **Freeze the finish:** after each forward stroke, hold the cue still for two seconds. Check whether it finished on the center line.
- **Keep the grip light:** squeezing the cue can steer it off line.
- **Build distance gradually:** begin with a short bridge and increase your bridge length only when the cue remains centered.

Beginner target: 20 clean strokes in a row without obvious sideways movement. Intermediate target: 50 clean strokes while keeping the same tempo and finish.

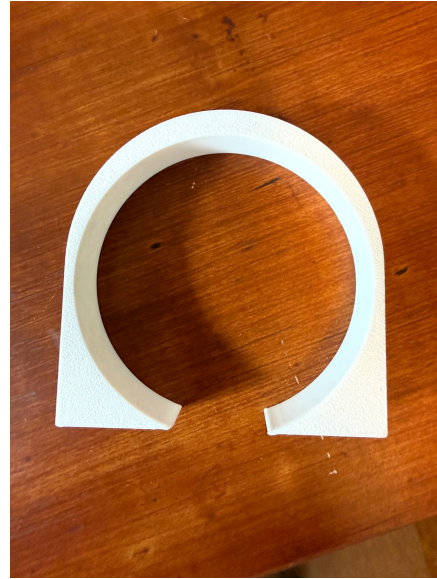
Printable Straight-Stroke Practice Sheet

Print this page using **Actual Size / 100%**. Place the cue ball in the circle and stroke the cue through the center lane. The crossbars give you checkpoints for seeing sideways drift.



Tip: Do not shoot hard on this paper drill. Its purpose is alignment, rhythm, and a straight delivery.

2. Ball Hoop Line-of-Aim Trainer



*The hoop is used as a target gate for the **cue ball**. You shoot the cue ball through the opening from different distances to see whether the ball is traveling on your intended line of aim.*

What it teaches

The hoop tells you whether your stroke is delivering the cue ball straight. If your aim looks correct but the cue ball misses the center of the hoop, your delivery may be steering left or right. Because the opening gives you a clear target window, even a small error becomes easy to see.

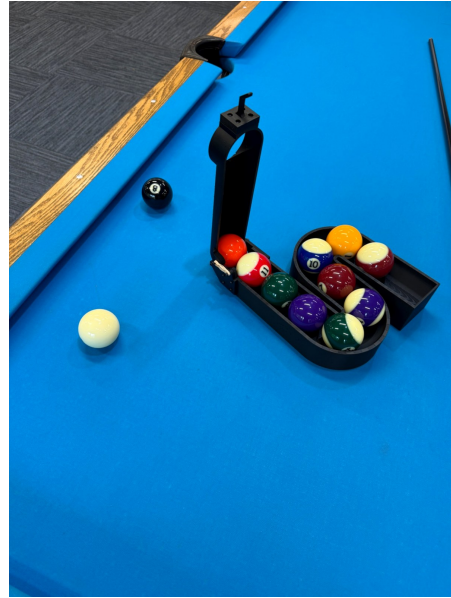
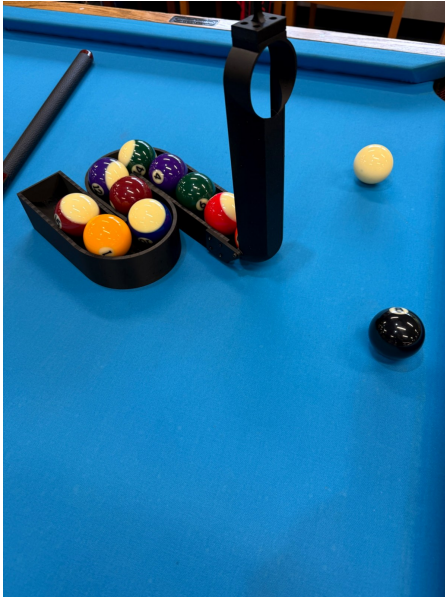
How to set it up

Place the hoop upright on the table and line up the center of the opening with the path you want the cue ball to travel. Put the cue ball a short distance away and aim directly through the middle of the hoop. Shoot at a controlled speed so the cue ball rolls cleanly through the opening. Do not shoot the cue stick through the hoop - the **cue ball** is what passes through it.

- **Distance 1 - Short:** place the cue ball fairly close to the hoop. Make 10 shots and try to send the cue ball through the center every time.
- **Distance 2 - Medium:** move the cue ball farther back. The longer distance makes small aiming or stroke errors easier to see.
- **Distance 3 - Long:** move back again and repeat. At longer distances, a tiny off-line delivery can cause the cue ball to miss the hoop.
- **Center challenge:** do not just get the ball through the opening. Try to send the center of the cue ball through the center of the hoop.
- **Left/right diagnosis:** if the cue ball repeatedly misses to the same side, return to the paper stroke guide and check whether your cue is being delivered off line.

Training goal: Start close and earn your way backward. Do not increase the distance until you can consistently send the cue ball through the center of the hoop. This turns the trainer into a simple test of both aim and straight cue-ball delivery.

3. Ball Spotter / Repeat-Shot Carrier



Load the carrier with object balls, position the unit at your chosen practice spot, and tilt/release a ball so each repetition begins from the same location.

Why repeatable ball placement matters

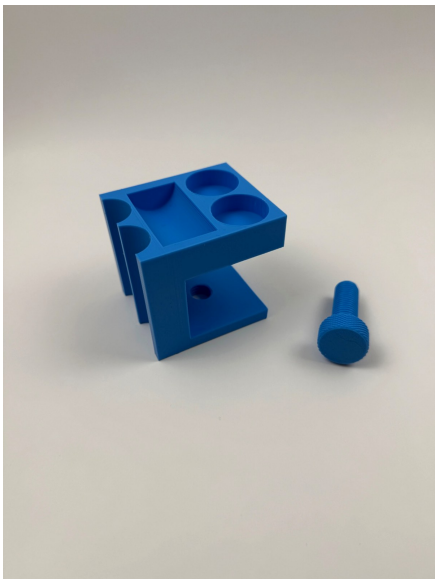
Improvement is faster when you can repeat the same shot. If the object ball changes position every time, it is difficult to know whether a miss came from aim, stroke, speed, or a different setup. The ball spotter reduces that variable.

Choose one shot - for example, a straight-in shot, a slight cut, or a common league position. Mark or remember the carrier location. Load several object balls. Tilt the carrier so one ball is placed at the same target position. Shoot, replace, and repeat.

- **10-ball accuracy set:** pocket 10 balls from the identical position and record makes/misses.
- **Speed-control set:** keep the object ball fixed but give the cue ball a landing zone after contact.
- **Stop/follow/draw set:** use the same object-ball position and change only the cue-ball contact point.
- **Miss diagnosis:** if misses repeatedly favor one side, return to the paper guide or hoop and check your delivery.

Consistency is the teacher: same shot, same setup, same routine - then change only one variable at a time.

4. Cue Holder & Practice Station



Examples of cue-holding / organizing devices used to keep the cue secure and the practice area consistent.

How it helps your training

A cue holder is not an aiming system by itself, but it supports good practice habits. It gives the cue a safe, repeatable home between sets so you are less likely to lean it against furniture or place it where it can roll or be bumped. More importantly, it encourages a deliberate reset between repetitions.

After a set of 10 shots, place the cue in the holder, step away, and review what happened. Ask: Did the cue finish straight? Was my grip relaxed? Did I stay down? Was my speed controlled? Then begin the next set with one specific correction.

Practice habit: Treat every pickup of the cue as the beginning of a new pre-shot routine. Step into the shot, set the bridge, settle the grip, make smooth warm-up strokes, pause, deliver, and hold the finish.

A 25-Minute Straight-Stroke Training Session

Use this routine two or three times per week. Keep a simple score so you can see improvement rather than relying only on feel.

Time	Station	What to do
5 min	Paper guide	Slow alignment strokes. Hold every finish for 2 seconds.
5 min	Hoop - short/medium/long	Shoot the cue ball through the center of the hoop. Increase distance only after consistent success.
10 min	Ball spotter	Repeat one object-ball shot. Record makes out of 10; then repeat with a cue-ball position goal.
5 min	Review/reset	Use the cue holder between sets. Identify one correction for the next session.

Three checkpoints for every shot

- **Before:** Is the cue on the intended line and is your body balanced?
- **During:** Is the backswing slow and the grip relaxed?
- **After:** Did the cue ball travel on the line you intended, and did you stay down long enough to see the result?

Do not chase perfection in one session. Your objective is to make your delivery more repeatable. A straighter cue path helps your aiming system become more trustworthy because the cue ball is actually traveling where you intended.

Common Problems & Corrections

The cue keeps drifting to one side. Shorten the bridge, reduce speed, loosen the grip, and return to the paper guide. Watch whether the cue butt swings sideways during the final stroke.

The cue ball keeps missing the hoop to one side. Move closer to the hoop and slow down. Check that the hoop is centered on the intended line. If the cue ball still misses repeatedly to the same side, work on the paper guide before moving back again.

I make the shot but the cue ball goes somewhere unexpected. Use the ball spotter so the object ball remains fixed. Then work on one cue-ball action at a time: stop, follow, or draw. Keep speed moderate until the contact is predictable.

My stroke gets worse after several repetitions. Fatigue and rushing can reduce quality. Use sets of 10, place the cue in the holder, stand up, reset, and begin again.

Final thought

Beginners benefit from learning what a straight stroke feels like. Intermediate players benefit from proving that the cue ball stays on line over longer distances, different speeds, and repeated-shot pressure. These training devices give you simple feedback you can see and measure.

Shoot straight. Practice with purpose. Repeat what works.

Robert Ryder