

The Basic Safety Game, Notebook for Rotation Games

A layout of some basic safety shots to practice.

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Usually safes are played when defense is the most reasonable option. The idea of safety play is to prevent an immediate loss and potentially set up a winning opportunity. Safety play requires practice, thought and patience. Think of the outcome and about exactly what you are leaving your opponent.

When else to play a safety? Here are some answers:

- - when the safe is reasonably easier to execute than the shot
- - when the safe is reasonably easier to execute than getting position on the next shot
- - when the safe is so strong it will likely be the forerunner to an easy win.
- - when balls are tied up, preferably the safe opens them while leaving your opponent hooked.

Most importantly, effective safety play requires skills and knowledge developed through practice, experience, and study.

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Situation 1



The one ball goes in the corner, but position is uncertain at best.

Situation 2 a



Situation 2a Safety



Safety Skill Drill: bring the cue ball to rest behind the 8 ball and the one ball near the rail. This is a soft follow shot where speed is critical. Getting the object ball safe is of foremost importance, although the hook is very desirable from this position.

Situation 2b



Situation 2b Safety



Safety Skill Drill: Focus on bringing the object ball to a safe position on the foot rail. A hook behind the 8 ball is a bonus, but the importance is placed on getting the object ball to a safe position. The key to this shot is to visualize the object ball angle from the first rail to the second rail and accurately judging speed. Practice the shot until you can get the object ball safe at least 70% of the time.

Situation 2c



Situation 2 c Safety



Crossover bank safety: bring the object ball near the center of rail as shown. This safety needs a lot of practice. Position of the 1 is critical, a hook is a bonus. Inside English helps kill the cue ball.

Situation 3



The 2 to 4 ball combo is too risky and there is no assurance of position if the shot is made. The 2 ball bank is risky. There are several safes available here.

Situation 4



The combo is too risky. Any cut angle to a combo makes the shot much more difficult. The cross bank is difficult and potentially a kiss.

Situation 4 Safety—The Double Cross



Double crossover bank. This shot avoids the kiss. Aim to overcut the corner bank.. While appearing difficult, this safe is easier than it looks. The cue ball crosses ahead of the object ball. Other option is the 2 way shot to bank the 1 cross corner leaving the cue ball long

Situation 4 Variation - Non-Crossing Bank



The combo is tempting, but distance makes it difficult. This bank safe is simple from this cue ball position. The cue ball does not cross over ahead of the object ball. Speed is critical to not sell out the 1 ball in the lower corner.

Situation 5



Both banks are difficult and likely to sell out if missed.

Situation 5 —Bank Back Safe



Bank Back safe: the thin cut on the 9 ball gives you all the speed you need. Use English on the object ball to steer it to the correct contact point on the 2nd cushion. While this is a simple safe, it is also deadly if you can make this leave. Most of the time you will win from here because there are very limited responses from this position.

Situation 6



A difficult situation: The concern here is to avoid a sell out or leaving an easy return safe or bank.

Situation 6 Safety— Cutback safety



Long distance Cutback: This shot is delicate. Slow roll the cue ball and take the thinnest of cuts on the 9, or you will sell out. From this angle, figure the object ball will travel about 2 diamonds on an average cut.

The skill required to successfully execute this shot is considerable, only obtained with practice.

Situation 7



Since the one ball is low and close to the rail... the cross over bank safety is a kiss. The combo is not on. This looks like a bad situation.

Situation 7 Safety—Rail First



Rail first safety: Shot with high running English, the rail first safety is easier than it looks. Speed and angle are critical, but with practice a player can get a feel for it. English carries the cue ball around the rails as shown, in this case, left English.

Situation 8 The Dead Zone



I call this the “Dead Zone” because most players will sell out from here. You want to leave the balls like this, object ball in the center and cue ball in the center too. There are very few options from here. On a tight table, if you can leave this shot, you will win from here quite often.

Situation 8 The Dead Zone Safe



This safe looks easy but it's very difficult to pull off. It is shot with slow rolled outside English (left English in this case) lots of spin, low forward speed. Focus on banking the object ball to about the second diamond, even if it's not on the rail. In many cases on all but the tightest of tables, maybe it's a better shot to just try to bank it back into the corner. Practice this safe but practice the bank too and you will have a chance of winning from here.

Situation 9, Tied Up Balls



If you don't like tables where balls are tied up... practice some of these shots and discover golden opportunities to win the game. To be at the table shooting with tied up balls can be a tremendous advantage. It is your opportunity to use your knowledge and safety skills to break out balls and win the game.

Practice all of these tied-up ball safeties, and play position so that you're at the optimum angle to take advantage of these opportunities to win the game.

Situation 9a, Tied Up use the “Tuck and Roll”



This very soft shot should use just enough force to put the cue ball behind the 8. the 8 will make contact with the rail to make it a legal safe. The rest will take care of itself. **To accurately soft roll a cue ball softly like this, practice with a 1” back stroke.**

Situation 9b Tied Up Balls Safety, use the “Inside Out”



Use **inside English** to roll the cue ball up snug to the 8 ball.

Situation 9c Tied Up Balls Safety—2 Rail safe



Two rail safe using low center ball. Aim 3 ball just short of the diamond as

Situation 9d Tied Up Balls Safety—3 Rail Safe



Three rail safe using a stop shop. The key here is to have the correct angle to use a stop shot on the cue ball.

Situation 9e Tied Up Balls Safety – use the “Backstop”



Use the 8 to stop the 3. This is a thin hit at slow speed with left English.

Situation 9f Tied Up Balls Safety, Use the “Zorro”



The key to this safe is to have the proper angle to stop the cue ball.

Situation 10



Situation 10 Safety— Zorro part 2



The key to this safe is to have the proper angle to stop the cue ball. The next page shows how to estimate portion of the table blocked by the 5.

Situation 10 Safety— lining up the blocked area for the Zorro



A couple of inches closer to the 5 results in many extra square feet blocked from the cueball, but avoid the temptation if a simple stop shot will work. The main focus here is to stop the cueball precisely to create a large blocking area. Any manipulation to nudge the cue ball over will greatly increase your chances of selling out a shot or leaving an easy safety.

Situation 11



Situation 11 Safety—"The Tickie Hook"



Rail first Tickie Hook - this is a softly rolled safe—focus on the speed necessary to tuck the cue ball behind the 9. The cue ball hits the rail again after making contact with the 3 to make this safe legal. The key here is to familiarize yourself with the correct contact point to pull off this rail first shot.

A common safe worth practicing.



7 Ball: <Dbl-Click> on it to draw a line, <Arrow Keys> to move it by pixels

Another common safe worth practicing.



Finished Drawing Line 1: 3 Points, Total Dist: 9 inches, Last Pivot Angle: 122°