



ITSF Rules of Table Soccer

Standard Matchplay Rules

Version 2.0

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Standard Matchplay Rules (SMR) represent 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 2016 ITSF rulebook was showing its age; from the original ruleset adopted by the ITSF, successive changes resulted in a document that was in need of a refresh.

To serve these ends a new scheme was created; the SMR introduced a novel terminology consistently applied in the description of the matchplay processes and proscriptive rules.

SMR Version 1.0 was the first deliverable in this project, a strict 'translation' of the 2016 rulebook that did not include any rules changes. Avoiding rule changes allowed errors and omissions to be more readily identified, so that corrections and clarifications resulting from feedback could then be applied and released as SMR Version 1.1. Neither of the Version 1 documents included any rules changes.

Now that the SMR has stabilised, rule changes can be introduced, and SMR Version 2.0 is the first document in the SMR series to include changes to the rules.

1.2 Philosophy

The bedrock of the Matchplay Rules is a set of definitions which are referenced throughout the document. The consistent use of a coherent set of definitions encapsulates complexity, which allows the rules to be both precise and brief. It also minimises ambiguity, subjectivity, redundancy and contradiction within the document.

The objective of the SMR approach is to facilitate:

- rule interpretation and refereeing
- accurate translation into other languages
- the creation of ITSF Matchplay rule books for other event types
- the introduction of a standard foosball terminology

1.3 Document Structure

Italicised words or phrases are defined terms, which are collected and ordered alphabetically in the [Definitions](#) section.

The sections generally follow a common pattern, the first part of which typically describes what the players can or must do. The next part contains proscriptive rules, which state what a player must not do, and the penalty to be paid for infraction.

Rules and penalties are named, rather than numbered. The details of the process to follow for each penalty are collected in a separate [Penalties](#) section.

Matchplay rules sometimes contain interpretations. While interpretations are not formal rules, they are useful for communicating how common or edge cases are handled.

1.4 Interpretation of Rules

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

1. The English language version of this document takes precedence over translations.
2. Assume the rules and definitions are complete and cover the case even by omission.
3. Refer to the interpretations.
4. Request an interpretation from the ITSF Rules Commission.

1.5 Scope

This document defines the ITSF Standard Matchplay rules of Table Soccer, or foosball, covering the matchplay rules for both standard singles and standard doubles events played on a single table. Matchplay rules for other event types are not described in this document.

The Standard Matchplay Rules define how matches are played; they do not cover all aspects of tournament conduct, substance use or the dress code.

2 Definitions

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 which comes to rest on the top of the *cabinet*.

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

Between games: A *pause* that begins when a point is scored that ends the *game*.

Between points: A *pause* that begins when a point is scored that doesn't end the *game*.

Break: Either a *dead ball*, a *ball off table*, a *pause* or an *interrupt*.

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 in the *playing area* that is not *reachable* by any rod.

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

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

Disruption: An *interrupt* in play which is not initiated by a player or a referee, for example a sudden failure of a table component or an external event unrelated to matchplay.

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 contest which ends when one *team* reaches the *points target*.

Games 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 *dead ball*, *ball off table*, *between points*, *between games*, 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: An exceptional *break*: either a *player interrupt*, an *infraction interrupt* or a *disruption*.

Jar: Any *shake*, *shock*, *slam*, *shift* or *clash* that impairs the other *team's* ability to retain or gain *controlled 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: A contest which ends when one *team* reaches the *games 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 in a state of motion, whether through linear movement or rotation.

Offensive team: The *team* with *possession* of the ball.

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-limited break*, either a *time-out*, *between points*, or *between games*.

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

Pinned ball: A ball that is pressed by a *figure* to any part of the *playing area* and has not been immediately played. A *pinned ball* can be a *stopped ball* or a *moving ball*.

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

Player interrupt: An exceptional *break* in *active play* initiated by one of the players.

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*.

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

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

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

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

Precarious ball: A *stopped ball* where any part of the ball is behind the *goalkeeper rod* and directly in front of the goalmouth.

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: The 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 first part of the process for putting the ball into play, consisting of retrieving and positioning the ball followed by the *ready protocol*.

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: A *player 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 two players on the same side of the table.

Time-limited: A period of a match which must not exceed a specific maximum duration, which may be timed by a referee; i.e. *active possession*, *time-out*, *between points*, *between games*.

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.

Tournament director: The person who plans and manages the administration of tournament play.

Uncontrolled possession: An *active possession* where *contact* either does not occur or is momentary and uncontrolled.

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 on one *wall* during one *active possession*.

3 Match Structure

In standard singles and standard doubles a *match* consists of a preliminary process called a *prelude* followed by one or more *games* separated by a *pause between games*.

Each *game* consists of periods of *active play* punctuated by *breaks*. *Active play* resumes by putting the ball back into play with a *restart* followed by the *opening sequence*.

Active play consists of *time-limited* periods when the ball is *reachable* by a rod, called *active possessions*, and periods which are not under time control when the ball is *moving* between the rods.

4 The Prelude

A *match* begins with the *prelude*, a process which includes the following sequence of events:

- Perform the *initial flip*
- Choose the first *kick-off* or table side
- Each *team* adopts their table side
- Each *team* adopts their initial playing positions
- Agree on the *ball supply*
- 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 either taking the first *kick-off* or picking the table side for the first *game*, with the loser of the *initial flip* 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.

During the *prelude* either *team* can practice in order to evaluate the condition of the table, check that the table is level, and to test the table sides and the balls.

The *prelude* is also an opportunity to perform routine maintenance and if necessary 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.

4.1 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*. Once the first *opening sequence* of the *match* has begun permission must be obtained to add a ball to or remove a ball from the *ball supply*.

The player with the *kick-off* has the choice of which ball is selected from the *ball supply*. Once the *ready protocol* has begun the ball can be exchanged with permission during the *restart* or a *break*.

Rule: Ball Exchange

A player must not exchange the ball in play with another from the *ball supply* without permission.

Penalty: Referee discretion, possible Penalty Shot

Rule: Ball Supply Change

A player must not add a ball into or remove a ball from the *ball supply* without permission.

Penalty: Referee discretion, possible Penalty Shot

Rule: Ball Replacement Request Declined

During *active play*, if a player makes a request to replace the ball then the referee shall determine if the ball is fit for play. If the ball is declared unfit for play it shall be replaced, otherwise it shall not be replaced and there shall be a penalty for the requesting team.

Penalty: Charged Time-out

5 Putting the Ball into Play

The *match* begins with a *kick-off* from the central 5-rod *figure* by the *team* which gained the *kick-off* from the *initial flip* in the *prelude*. Each subsequent *kick-off* is performed by the *team* that next concedes a point. The ball is also put into play after a *break*, from a rod specified by the rules.

The ball is always put into play with a *restart* followed by an *opening sequence*. During the *restart* the ball is retrieved and positioned at the *restart* location, after which the player putting the ball into play initiates the *ready protocol* which confirms that the other team is ready to play.

The final step is the *opening sequence*, a series of *contacts* which initiates *active play* and must be completed before the ball can be legally *transitioned*.

The process is summarised as follows:

- *Restart*
 - Retrieve and position the ball
 - *Ready protocol*
- *Opening sequence*

If the ball is put into play by the wrong team and the mistake is discovered before the next *controlled transition* by the other team, then the ball shall be given to the correct team for the *restart*. Once the other team performs a *controlled transition* then no protest shall be allowed and play will continue as if no mistake had been made.

5.1 Restart

The first part of putting the ball into play is the *restart*, a process which begins immediately after the *prelude*, a *break* or if the referee announces that players should “Play!”.

The *restart* process consists of retrieving the ball and positioning it at the *restart* location if needed, followed by the *ready protocol*, which confirms that the opposing team is ready for play to begin.

During the *restart* process players are under time control; any delay is subject to the **Delay of Game** rule.

5.1.1 Retrieve and Position the Ball

If the ball is not on the *playfield* it should be retrieved and given to the player putting the ball into play. This player is then responsible for ensuring that it is positioned at the *restart* location. The ball may be played to the *restart* location or placed there by hand.

Depending on the situation there may be one or more legal *restart* locations. If the ball is already at the only legal *restart* location then play continues from that point, for example following a *time-out* or an *interrupt* that occurs during *active play*.

Preceding 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 point scored	<i>Kick-off</i>
<i>Dead ball</i> between the 5-rods	<i>Kick-off</i>
<i>Dead ball</i> behind a 5-rod	Any <i>figure</i> on the nearest <i>goalie rod</i>
Ball off Table	Any figure on the relevant <i>goalie rod</i>
5-rod Possession Award	Central 5-rod <i>figure</i> of non-offending team
Goalie rod Possession Award	Any <i>figure</i> on 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	Any <i>figure</i> on the 3-rod of non-offending team

5.1.2 Ready Protocol

The *ready protocol* cannot begin until all players are in position at the table and in control of their rods. The player putting the ball into play asks the *opposing player* if they are "Ready?", after which the *opposing player* responds with "Ready!". In standard doubles, the *opposing player* may check with their partner before giving the "Ready!" response.

The *ready protocol* ends and *active play* begins when the player with *possession* moves the ball and initiates the *opening sequence*.

5.2 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 further *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*.

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*
- 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*.

Penalty:

- First in *match*: Warning, the same team *restart*
- Subsequent in *match*: 5-rod Possession Award

Rule: Incomplete Opening Sequence

A player must not perform a *transition* before completing the *opening sequence*.

Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award

5.3 Delay of Game

When putting the ball into play, players have 3 seconds to complete each stage of the process, i.e. retrieving and positioning the ball, asking the opposing player if they are “Ready?”, responding “Ready!”, or making *contact* with the *possession clock figure* after initiating the *opening sequence*.

A player who causes delay during this process may be issued with a **Delay of Game** warning by the referee, after which any subsequent delay beyond 5 seconds by the same team during the same *restart* may result in a **Delay of Game** infraction, the penalty for which is a Charged Time-out.

Table: Time management when putting the ball into play

Stage	Stage ends when	Maximum duration
Retrieve and position the ball	Ball positioned at <i>restart</i> location	3s
“Ready?” prompt	“Ready?” prompt offered	3s
“Ready!” response	“Ready!” response given	3s
“Ready!” response given	Make contact with the <i>possession clock figure</i>	3s

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 being instructed by the referee to “Play!”, a player must not cause delay when putting the ball into play.

Penalty:

- First in *restart*: **Delay of Game** warning
- Subsequent in same *restart*: Charged Time-out

6 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 possession*, *paused possession* or *implicit possession*.

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 *time-limited*; 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 *dead ball*, a *ball off table*, a *goal scored* 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. 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

6.1 Relinquishing Possession of a Precarious Ball

A player with *possession* of a ball that is *stopped* and precariously close to the goal has the option to relinquish *possession* to the opposing team's 5-rod prior to expiry of the *goalie rod possession* time.

The ball is considered to be *precarious* if it's *stopped* and if any part of the ball is behind the *goalkeeper rod* and directly in front of the goalmouth, for example if it is:

- overhanging the goal line
- *reachable* behind the *goalkeeper*
- pinned to the lip of the goalmouth, a goalpost or the crossbar

A player who wishes to relinquish *possession* of a *precarious ball* must initiate a *player interrupt* and declare that they want to relinquish the ball. If the ball is *precarious*, consent to reach into the *playing area* is implicit and the ball is then retrieved and placed at the opposing team's central 5-rod *figure* for a *restart*. If the player believes that a *precarious ball* is a *dead ball*, the onus is on them to demonstrate that the ball is *unreachable* before reaching into the *playing area*.

The ball must be *stopped* in order to be *precarious*, therefore if a player legally declares their intent to relinquish a *precarious ball* and the ball subsequently drops into the goal, then the goal will not count; the ball is retrieved and given to the opposing 5-rod.

If a player declares an intent to relinquish a *moving ball* then they have violated the **Distracting Activity** rule and the opposing team has the option to continue from the *current location* or to take *possession* on their 5-rod.

7 Breaks in Play

A *break* is a temporary suspension of *active play*, any of the following:

- *pause*
 - *between points*
 - *between games*
 - *time-out*
- *dead ball*
- *ball off table*
- *interrupt*
 - *player interrupt*
 - *infraction interrupt*
 - *disruption*

The *pauses* are: *between points*, *between games*, and *time-out*. All *pauses* are *time-limited*, i.e. they have a specified maximum duration.

An *interrupt* is an exceptional *break* in play which can occur at any time, i.e. during *active play*, during a *break*, or during the *restart* that follows a *break*.

Although some *breaks* are not *time-limited*, the ball should always be put back into play as soon as possible. If the referee announces "Play!", the *restart* process begins and the player with *possession* must put the ball back into play without delay.

7.1 Pauses

A *pause* is a routine *break* in *active play* which is *time-limited*, meaning that it must not exceed a maximum duration specified as follows:

Table: Time management for *pauses*

Pause	Pause begins when	Maximum duration
<i>Between points</i>	Goal scored that does not end the <i>game</i>	5 seconds
<i>Between games</i>	Goal scored that ends the <i>game</i>	90 seconds
<i>Time-out</i>	Player calls a <i>time-out</i>	30 seconds

The referee may use a timer to enforce the limits during a *pause*. *Pauses* can be terminated before the time limit expires by the verbal agreement of both teams. When the *pause* ends the ball must be put into play with a *restart*.

7.1.1 Point Scored

A goal is scored when the ball completely crosses the goal line. If the goal is legally scored then a point is awarded to the appropriate team, who must record it on the relevant *tally markers*.

The team that conceded the point then puts the ball into play with a *kick-off*.

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
- 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.

7.1.1.1 Between Points

The maximum duration of the pause *between points* is 5 seconds, a period which may be terminated early by agreement of the teams.

Between points both teams are allowed to:

- change playing positions (in standard doubles)
- call a *time-out*

7.1.1.2 Between Games

The maximum duration of the pause *between games* is 90 seconds, a period which may be terminated early by agreement of the teams.

Between games both teams are allowed to:

- practice
- call a *time-out*
- change table sides (where permitted)
- change playing positions (in standard doubles)
- change handles (where permitted)

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, in which case the teams must change sides. If the teams do change sides then they must subsequently change sides after every *game* in the *match*, but if they do not change sides after the first *game* played then the teams must stay on the same sides for the entire *match*.

Under some circumstances the *tournament director* may generally disallow changing table sides.

7.1.2 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 calls a *time-out* or when the referee charges a team with a *time-out*. A *time-out* taken *between games* counts towards the total in the following *game*.

A team can call a *time-out*:

- during *active play* if they have *active possession* of the ball
- during any of the following *breaks* and the subsequent *restart*:
 - a *pause*, i.e.
 - *between points*
 - *between games*
 - *time-out*
 - *dead ball*
 - *ball off table*

Teams are not permitted to call *time-outs* during *interrupts*, nor during the *restart* which follows an *interrupt* to *active play* unless they have *possession*.

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 called 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 the relevant *tally marker* 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. Players are not allowed to practice during a *time-out*.

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 then subject to **Delay of Game** infraction. In standard doubles, players in either team may switch positions when returning to the table. After the *time-out* ends play is *restarted* by the player with *possession*.

Rule: Time-out Limit

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

Penalty:

- First in *game*:
 - During *active play*: 5-rod Possession Award
 - During a *pause* or *restart*: Warning
- Subsequent in *game*: Penalty Shot

Rule: Charged Time-out With None Remaining

A team must not be charged with a *time-out* when they have none remaining.

Penalty: Penalty Shot

Rule: Illegal Time-out

A team must not call 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

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

Penalty: Goalie rod Possession Award

Rule: Disallowed Time-out

A player must not call a *time-out*:

- during an *interrupt*
- during the *restart* following an *interrupt* to *active play* if their team does not have *possession*

Penalty: Time-out disallowed

Rule: Premature Transition

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

Penalty: 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* if a player requests a *time-out* and then loses *possession* before the ball stops *moving*.
3. After calling 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.

7.2 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 without delay with a *restart* from the specified location:

Location of Dead ball	Where to restart
Between the 5-rods	<i>Kick-off</i>
Behind the 5-rod	<i>Any figure</i> 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 make *contact* with an otherwise *unreachable* ball by *flexing* a rod.

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*.

7.3 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 without delay at the *goalie rod* of the other team.

If the ball cannot be retrieved within a reasonable time then it should be abandoned and a new ball taken from the *ball supply*.

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* stops.

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*
- 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 or rolling on the top of the *cabinet*
- 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 an immediate defensive reaction is not a controlled transition.
2. Examples of cabinet fixtures include: a light fitting, camera or microphone.

7.4 Interrupts

An *interrupt* is an exceptional *break* in play which is not *time-limited*, one of the following:

- *player interrupt*
- *infraction interrupt*
- *disruption*

A *player interrupt* is a *break* initiated by one of the players at the table. An *infraction interrupt* is initiated by the referee if one is present, or if there is no referee, by one of the players. A *disruption* is an interruption to play which is not initiated by a player or referee.

If an *interrupt* occurs during *active play* then the ball should be *held* by whichever player has or next gains *controlled possession* of the ball. *Active play* is suspended while the *interrupt* is processed.

When the *interrupt* has been resolved, or when the referee announces "Play!", the player with *possession* must put the ball back into play with a *restart*.

7.4.1 Player Interrupt

In exceptional situations a player can interrupt *active play*, for example in order to:

- Declare a rule infraction in the absence of a referee
- Ask permission to clean the ball or *playing area*
- Request *table maintenance*
- Relinquish *possession* of a *precarious ball*
- Request a referee
- Appeal a referee decision
- Request a *medical break*
- Tighten a loose handle

It is the responsibility of the player to ensure that a *player interrupt* is initiated in a timely manner, otherwise they may be in violation of one of the Distraction rules.

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

7.4.2 Disruption

A *disruption* is an interruption to play which is not initiated by a player or referee, for example a sudden failure of a table component or an external event unrelated to matchplay. Examples of disruptions include:

- A *figure* breaking
- A lighting failure
- A foreign object entering the *playing area*
- Consequential interference from a *spectator*
- A tournament organiser asking play to stop

If a *disruption* occurs which materially impacts the outcome of a play, then the *disrupted* play shall not stand, but shall be replayed with a *restart* from the rod which last had *controlled possession*.

7.4.3 Infraction Interrupt

An *infraction interrupt* is a short *interrupt* that occurs when an infraction is declared, during which the infraction is processed and the appropriate penalty, if any, is determined and applied.

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, if any, is determined and applied

After the infraction has been processed play continues in accordance with the rules.

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.

If a team commits an infraction during *active play* then any play by that team resulting from or directly following the infraction shall not count. However, the non-offending team shall also have the additional option to continue play from the *current location* of the ball, unless the penalty indicated by the rule is only a warning.

Interpretation

1. If a team scores a goal directly following their infraction then the goal shall not count, but if they score an own goal then the non-offending team has the option to continue from the current location, and so the goal shall count.

7.4.3.1 Without a Referee

In an unrefereed *match* any player can declare an infraction by calling “Stop!”.

Rule infractions should be declared as soon as possible after they occur. In the case of an infraction during *active play* the non-offending team will lose the option to declare the infraction once they subsequently perform a *controlled transition*, in which case they are deemed to have implicitly taken their option to continue play from the *current location* of the ball.

If *active play* ends following an infraction, for example if a goal is scored, then the non-offending team should declare any infraction as soon as possible.

Players should resolve any disagreement in an amicable manner, and are permitted to use compromise to do so. If the players cannot resolve the disagreement then a referee should be requested.

7.4.3.2 With a Referee

In a refereed match the players are not permitted to declare infractions. The referee will declare an infraction by calling “Stop!”. Under certain circumstances the referee might delay interrupting play until the outcome of a *transition* is clear.

A referee’s ruling can be based on information obtained from the players, from *spectators*, from other referees and from any available video recordings.

7.5 Medical Break Request

A player may request a *medical break* at any time outside *active play*, or during *active play* by performing a *player interrupt* when the ball is *stopped*.

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 communicated to the players.

Rule: Medical Break Request Declined

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

Penalty: Charged Time-out

Rule: Medical Break Expiry

The player must be ready to play after their *medical break* period has expired.

Penalty: Forfeit Match

7.6 Practice

Practice is permitted on any table during the *prelude* and *between games*. Practice is not permitted during any other *breaks*. 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 *break*, 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 team has *possession*: 5-rod Possession Award
 - If the offending team does not have *possession*: Warning
- Subsequent in *match*: Penalty Shot

Interpretation

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

8 Time Control

Active possession and *pauses* are *time-limited*; the referee may use a timer to enforce the time limits. The *restart* process is subject to **Delay of Game** infraction.

The following table summarises the time limits and what happens when they expire.

Table: Time control

Period	Detail	Time Limit	When Time Limit Expires
<i>Active possession</i>	On <i>goalie rods</i>	15s	Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award
<i>Active possession</i>	On 5-rod	10s	Penalty: 5-rod Possession Award
<i>Active possession</i>	On 3-rod	15s	Penalty: Goalie rod Possession Award
<i>Active possession</i>	Releasing both handles	3s	Implicit <i>time-out</i>
<i>Pause</i>	<i>Time-out</i>	30s	Initiate the <i>ready protocol</i>
<i>Pause</i>	<i>Between points</i>	5s	Initiate the <i>ready protocol</i>
<i>Pause</i>	<i>Between games</i>	90s	Initiate the <i>ready protocol</i>
<i>Restart</i>	Retrieving and positioning the ball	3s	Warning: Delay of Game
<i>Restart – Ready protocol</i>	Asking “Ready?”	3s	Warning: Delay of Game
<i>Restart – Ready protocol</i>	Responding “Ready!”	3s	Warning: Delay of Game
<i>Opening Sequence</i>	Making the first <i>contact</i> by the <i>possession clock figure</i>	3s	Warning: Delay of Game
Delay of Game Warning	<i>Restart</i>	5s	Penalty: Charged Time-out

9 Referee

Matchplay rules should be respected regardless of the presence of a referee, however if a referee is officiating then infractions cannot be 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.

Rule: Arguing

A player must not argue with an officiating referee.

Penalty: Referee discretion, possible Conduct Violation

9.1 Referee Instructions

Players must be familiar with the following instructions which a referee may issue to indicate the end of a *break* in play:

Referee call	Reason	Player action
"Time!"	The maximum time allowed for the <i>pause</i> has expired	<i>Restart</i>
"Play!"	Play must now begin	<i>Restart</i>

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

Referee call	Reason	Player action
"Stop!"	Referee judgement will be given	The ball must be <i>stopped and held</i>
"Time!"	Possession time infraction	The ball must be <i>stopped and held</i>
"Reset"	Reset infraction	Continue <i>active play</i>
"Reset Warning"	Reset infraction	Continue <i>active play</i>

9.2 Referee Request

A referee can be requested in order to:

- provide a rule interpretation
- resolve a controversy
- continue the match with a referee

In an unrefereed match a player may request a referee at any time outside *active play*, or during *active play* after calling "Stop!" when the ball is *stopped*.

In a refereed match, a player cannot interrupt *active play* to request a second or replacement referee. A team who requests a second or replacement referee will be charged with a *time-out* unless the request was made in a *time-out* which they called.

If two referees are present, the outcome of any request for a replacement will be decided by the *head referee*, or if unavailable, by the *tournament director*.

Rule: Illegal Referee Request

A player must not request a second or replacement referee unless they do so during a *time-out* called by their team.

Penalty:

- If the request was made when the team is allowed to call a *time-out*: Charged Time-out
- If the request was made at any other time: Penalty Shot

Rule: Replacement Referee Request Declined

In a *match* where two referees are present, there shall be a penalty if a request for a replacement referee is declined.

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 the time limit for *rod possession* 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*.

9.3 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 *match* 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.

Rule: Unreasonable Appeal

A player must not challenge a referee's judgement, or make insubstantial or unreasonable appeals.

Penalty: Charged Time-out

10 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: 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*.

11 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: 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*.

12 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.

The *wall contact count* doesn't increase if the ball is *trapped* by the 5-rod directly following a *transition*.

Wall contacts are counted separately on each side of the table, however, the first wall contact on one side of the table resets the *wall contact count* on the other side.

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
- 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: 5-rod Possession Award

13 Reaching Into the Playing Area

Consent may be required to reach into the *playing area*, for example, to clean the ball, wipe the *playfield*, or pick up a dead ball.

Consent is given by the referee, or in an unrefereed match, by the opposing team. Consent requested during *active play* is treated as a *player interrupt*; *active play* is suspended and the *interrupt* is processed.

Consent is required in order to reach into the *playing area* to touch the ball except when positioning the ball where allowed during a *restart*. If it is demonstrated that the ball is *dead* or *precarious*, then consent is implicit and the ball may be picked up. In other cases, for example to remove oil or dirt from the ball, consent must be explicitly given.

A player wishing to reach into the *playing area* during *active play* must first request consent. Outside *active play* any player is free to reach into the *playing area* without consent provided that they do not touch the ball.

Rule: Reaching In During Active Play

During *active play* a player must not reach into the *playing area* without consent.

Penalty:

- If a *moving ball* is prevented from entering their team's goal: Point Award
- If the player touches a *precarious ball* at their team's goal: Point Award
- If the ball is *stopped* and not touched during their team's *possession*: 5-rod Possession Award
- All other cases: Penalty Shot

Rule: Ball Handling During Break

During a *break* a player must not reach into the *playing area* and touch the ball without consent, unless it is *between games*.

Penalty:

- If the ball is *precarious* at their team's goal: Point Award
- If their team has *paused possession*: 5-rod Possession Award
- If the other team has *paused possession*: Penalty Shot

Interpretation

1. Outside *active play* a player can remove dirt or wipe marks from the *playfield* without consent.
2. In order to tighten a handle that becomes loose during *active play*, a player must *interrupt* play and gain consent before reaching into the *playing area*.
3. The referee may decline a request to touch the ball, for example if it is *precarious* or of doubtful controllability.

14 Switching Positions

In standard doubles the two players on a team are allowed to switch their playing positions during a *time-out*, *between points*, *between games* and before and after a *penalty shot*.

During these breaks both teams are free to switch positions until the *ready protocol* in the subsequent *restart* has begun. The *offensive team* is allowed to switch positions until they offer the “Ready?” prompt, and the *defensive team* is allowed to switch positions until they give the “Ready!” response.

After the “Ready!” response is given and prior to the start of *active play* neither team is allowed to switch positions unless a *time-out* is called.

It is an infraction to switch positions during *active play*.

Players are not permitted to switch positions during the *ready protocol* in contravention with the above formula, or during a *dead ball*, a *ball off table*, or during any *interrupt*; these are not infractions but any such switch is disallowed and must be reversed. Once *active play* has begun, a switch which should have been disallowed is not reversed.

Players are not permitted to switch positions during the *restart* which follows an *interrupt*, unless they would have been legally allowed to do so at the moment that the *interrupt* occurred.

If the ready protocol is interrupted at any point then the “Ready?” prompt will be re-issued. Any such interrupt does not restore switching rights to either team; the *offensive team* cannot switch positions prior to re-issuing the “Ready?” prompt.

Switching positions must be completed in accordance with the time constraint of the break during which it is performed; any delay or disallowed switch may be grounds for a **Delay of Game** infraction.

Rule: Illegal Switch

The players in a doubles *team* must not switch positions during *active play*.

Penalty: Distraction

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

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*.

A referee may issue a Warning penalty for the first *distraction* in a *match*; a subsequent infraction 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** infraction.

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.

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 <i>game</i>	"Reset"	Continues
Subsequent in <i>game</i>	"Reset Warning" or "Warning"	Continues
Subsequent in <i>game</i> 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
- Subsequent in *game*: Reset Warning
- 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.

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.

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*: Restart or 5-rod Possession Award
- 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).

15.4 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: Cursing

A player must not curse.

Penalty: Referee discretion, possible Penalty Shot or 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 *match*, apart from during *time-outs* or *between games*.

Penalty (first in *match*): Warning

Penalty (subsequent in *match*): Penalty Shot

Rule: Table Abuse

A player must not *slam* any rod or forcefully *shake* or *shift* the table, even outside *active play*.

Penalty: Conduct Violation

Rule: Aggression

A player must not threaten or behave aggressively towards any other person.

Penalty: Conduct Violation

Rule: Format Deviation

Teams must not play a different format than the one specified for the event.

Penalty: Conduct Violation

15.5 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

16 Changes to the Table

16.1 Routine Maintenance

Players are allowed to briefly wipe the *playfield* without permission outside *active play*, provided that no substance is used to do so.

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

A player can use a substance to improve handle grip provided that they ensure that it does not get into the *playing area* or onto the rods or the ball.

Where permitted by the *tournament director*, players are allowed to replace their handles with other approved handles. This can be done during any *pause* provided that it is done within the time limits.

16.2 Table Maintenance

If there is a sudden alteration to the table or to table fixture such as the table lighting, or a foreign object enters the *playing area*, then the appropriate *table maintenance* should be performed.

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 at the *tournament desk*.

The table may be levelled during the *prelude*. Once *active play* has started in the *match* a player may only request to level the table during a *pause*. 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 is resolved, the ball shall be put back into play by the player with *possession*. However, if the sudden alteration was a *disruption* which materially impacted the outcome of a play, then the *disrupted* play shall not stand, but shall be replayed with a *restart* from the rod which last had *controlled possession*.

Rule: Levelling Request

If the other team disagrees with a player's request to level the table, then the requesting team shall call *table maintenance* and will be charged with a *time-out*.

Penalty: Charged Time-out

Interpretation

1. Sudden alterations include: a broken playing *figure*, pin, screw, spring or bumper, a bent rod, a failure of table lighting

16.3 Illegal Modification

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

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: Rod Limiting

A player must not use any device or object that limits the movement of a rod.

Penalty: Referee discretion, possible Penalty Shot

Rule: Contamination

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

Penalty:

- First in match: Warning
- Subsequent in *match*: Penalty Shot

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
- 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
- Subsequent in *match*: Prohibition from using the substance

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.

17 Penalty Shot

A referee can award a Penalty Shot to the non-offending team for a serious violation of the rules; these cases are explicitly identified in the relevant rules. The referee also has the discretion to award a Penalty Shot for flagrant or intentional violation of the rules.

The Penalty Shot is a single 3-rod *possession* awarded to the non-offending team in an attempt to score a goal against one defensive 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 continues 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

18 Penalties

This section identifies the penalties for rule infractions.

Penalty: Continue

In the event of a rule infraction during *active play* for which the penalty given is not a Warning, in addition to the penalty specified below the non-offending team shall also have the option to continue from the *current location* of the ball.

Penalty: Warning

A warning indicates that a subsequent infraction of a similar nature will carry a more severe 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: Restart or 5-rod Possession Award

The non-offending team can choose to *restart* from the location where the infraction occurred or take a 5-rod Possession Award.

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: Restart or 5-rod Possession Award

Penalty: Distraction (subsequent in match)

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

Penalty: Charged Time-out

A *team* that is charged with a *time-out* loses one of their remaining *time-outs* in the *game*. The *team* is entitled to take the full period of the *time-out* only if they could have legally called a *time-out* at that point in the *match*.

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, 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 *head referee* and/or *tournament director*, expulsion from the tournament venue or a fine.

Penalty: Penalty Shot

See [Penalty Shot](#) section for details.