
Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all past articles are available online at billiards.colostate.edu. Reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website.

Do you have “good timing” in pool? Recently, I spent some time with pro player Demetrius Jelatis of the Minnesota Pool Boot Camp to film some YouTube instructional videos together. One video dealt with what it means to have “good timing” in pool (see online video [NV J.103](#)). This article summarizes the important points.

Different people mean different things by “good timing” in pool, but the most common interpretation concerns the stroke. A stroke with “good timing” has a slow back swing, a non-rushed transition between the back and forward swings, smooth acceleration forward, and no slowing before cue ball (CB) contact. There are some fun phrases that can help you remember the “timing” of a good stroke, where the first part of the phrase pertains to the backstroke, the middle “and” refers to the non-rushed transition, and the last part pertains to the smooth, accelerating forward stroke. Mark Wilson likes to say: “Ladies ... and ... gentlemen.” My co-Billiard University instructor Samm Diep likes to say: “Peanut butter ... and ... jelly.” I prefer: “Back slow ... and ... accelerate.” I know my phrase isn’t as fun, but it contains the important instructions, which I like.

Diagram 1 compares a good, “smoothly accelerating” stroke to several common “bad timing” strokes. The graph shows how cue speed (vertical axis) changes with time (horizontal axis) from the beginning of the forward swing (left) to tip contact with the CB (right). A stroke with “good timing” starts forward slowly and smoothly accelerates to maximum speed at the CB. People who rush the backswing transition or who try to create speed too quickly have a “rushed or impulsive” stroke. People who generate speed early but then slow down into the CB have a “decelerating” stroke. People who generate speed early and try to keep the speed constant over a long distance into the CB have a “constant speed” stroke. Again, the green “smooth acceleration” curve represents “good timing.”

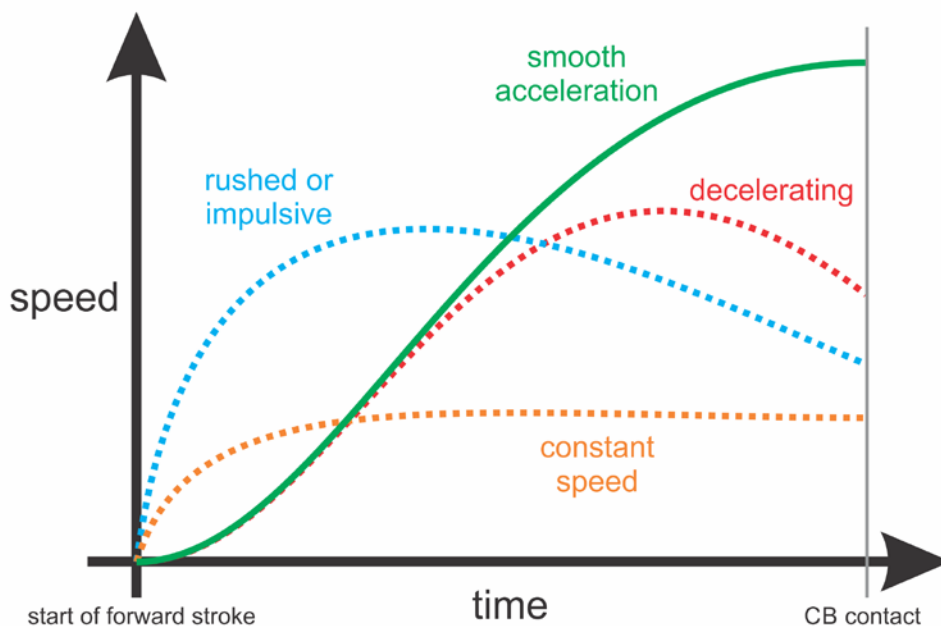


Diagram 1 Stroke timing graph

As shown in **Image 1**, Demetrius likes to push the CB with the shaft to demonstrate the differences among the various stroke types. See [NV J.103](#) for the demonstrations in action. With a “smoothly accelerating stroke,” the shaft gradually pushes the CB forward without any big changes in force. With a “rushed stroke,” the player tries to generate the speed too quickly and loses contact between the shaft and the CB. With a “decelerating stroke,” the player slows the cue down prematurely and the shaft doesn’t remain engaged with the CB. With a “constant speed” stroke, the player tries to establish the desired speed early and maintain it during the whole stroke. Some people can be effective with this approach, but most people will have better and more consistent speed control with a smoothly accelerating stroke where they vary the stroke length with shot speed.

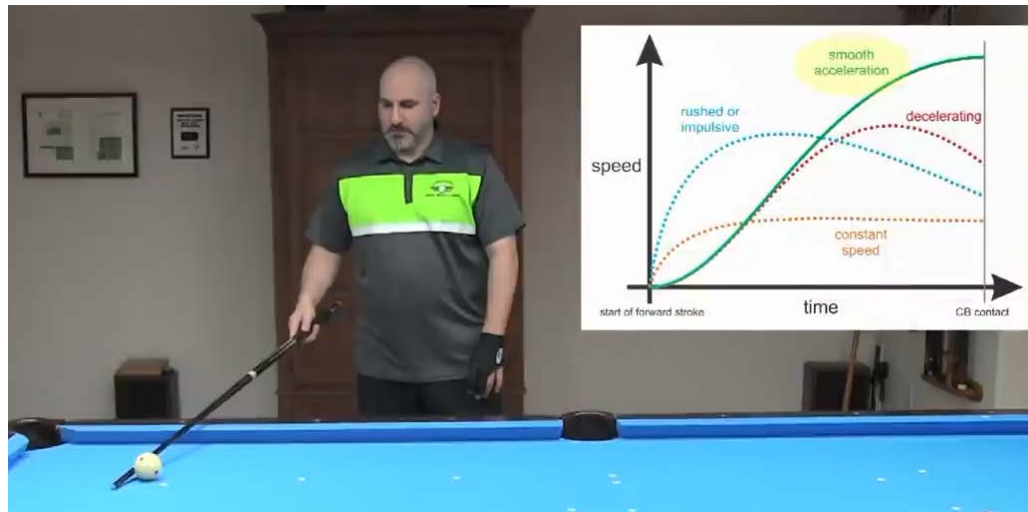


Image 1 Demetrius shaft push analogy

Another technique flaw that can also be considered “bad timing” is dropping the elbow during the forward stroke into the CB. I cover this topic in detail in my “10 Secrets of a Good Stroke” video (see [NV J.66](#)). If you drop your elbow, you will not hit the CB at the height you expect. It is okay to drop your elbow if you can drop it straight and do so mostly after the hit. One problem with elbow drop for some people is that other bad things often come with it like wrist turn and chicken-wing sideways motion. The recommended type of stroke is called a “pendulum stroke,” where the shoulder and elbow remain still and only the forearm moves (like a pendulum). In **Image 2**, the elbow at the end of the stroke is in the same position as at the beginning and during the entire stroke, as if it were “pinned.”



Image 2 Still or pinned elbow

Another form of “bad timing” deals with the eyes and head. With a good eye pattern, you lock your eyes on the object ball (OB) before the final stroke so you have still laser focus during the shot. The final pause in the stroke at the CB gives you a chance to lock and steady the eyes before the final forward stroke. [NV J.103](#) demonstrates an example of a bad eye pattern, where the eyes move quickly between the CB and OB while the cue is moving back and forth, and there is no careful lock on the target before the final stroke. A related type of “bad timing” is getting up too early on the shot. Another is moving your head or eyes too soon to watch the shot. Instead, if you keep your head, body, and eyes still during and after the shot, you will have better and more consistent results.

You can also have “bad timing” with your pre-shot routine. As already mentioned, pausing at the CB is important to give your eyes time to settle and lock onto the target before the final stroke. Not pausing at the CB also tends to cause the backswing to be rushed, which can throw off the timing for the entire stroke. The pause at the CB not only gives your eyes time to focus; it also encourages you to go back slowly and smoothly to begin good stroke timing. Generally, it is best to keep the cue still while you check the aim and tip position carefully, use warm-up strokes to get loose and to judge the desired stroke length while also making sure the cue stays straight during motion, and then pause at the CB again to lock and settle the eyes while you start with your good stroke timing.

As mentioned before, another source of bad stroke timing is rushing the backswing and the transition between the back and forward swings. As demonstrated in the video, for people who rush the transition, it can help to add a deliberate pause at the end of the backswing. For people who rush the backswing, it can also help to add the pause at the CB.

I hope this article and online video [NV J.103](#) help you be more aware of and improve your timing in pool. Be sure to watch the video so you can see everything in action. And be sure to practice with all the topics covered, especially the ones that might be issues for you.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



[NV J.66](#) – 10 Secrets of a GOOD STROKE in Pool
[NV J.103](#) – GOOD TIMING in Pool ... What Does It Mean?

PS:

- I know other authors and I tend to use lots of terminology, and I know not all readers are totally familiar with these terms. If you ever come across a word or phrase you do not fully understand, please refer to the [online glossary](#) at billiards.colostate.edu.

Dr. Dave is a PBI Master Instructor, Dean of the Billiard University, and author of the book: [The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards](#) and numerous instructional DVD series, all available at: DrDaveBilliards.com.