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*Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all past articles are available online at [drdavepoolinfo.com](http://drdavepoolinfo.com). Reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website.*

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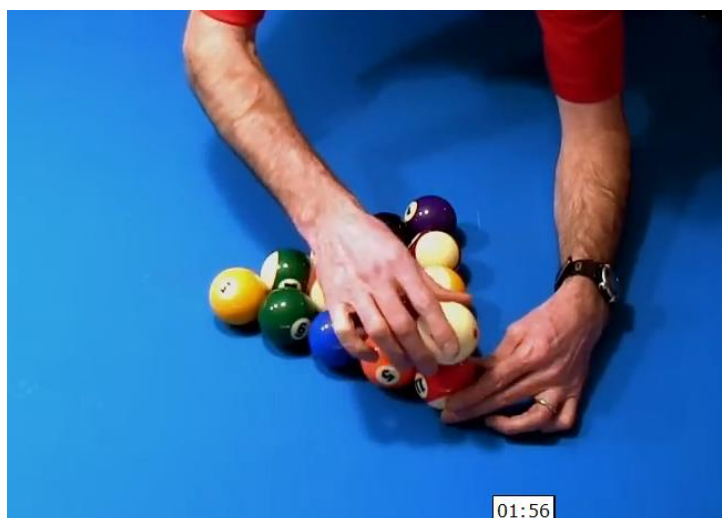
In an online video I posted recently ([NV L.93](#)), I discuss and demonstrate useful techniques for making sure the balls are racked as tightly as possible. This will make your break shots much more effective. I'll summarize some of the important “hot tips” here.

The easiest and most effective way to get a tight rack is to use a racking template, if it is allowed. A racking template (see **Image 1**) is a thin sheet of plastic or paper with hole cutouts that help push the balls against one another. The template remains under the balls during the break and is usually removed from the table after the break. To use a racking template, place the front hole in the desired position and place the balls in the holes from front to back. As demonstrated in the video, sometimes you will need to push and rotate the balls toward the center to help them settle over the template. With balls that are new and in good condition, and with a template that is not too worn, all the balls will be touching, allowing for a good break.

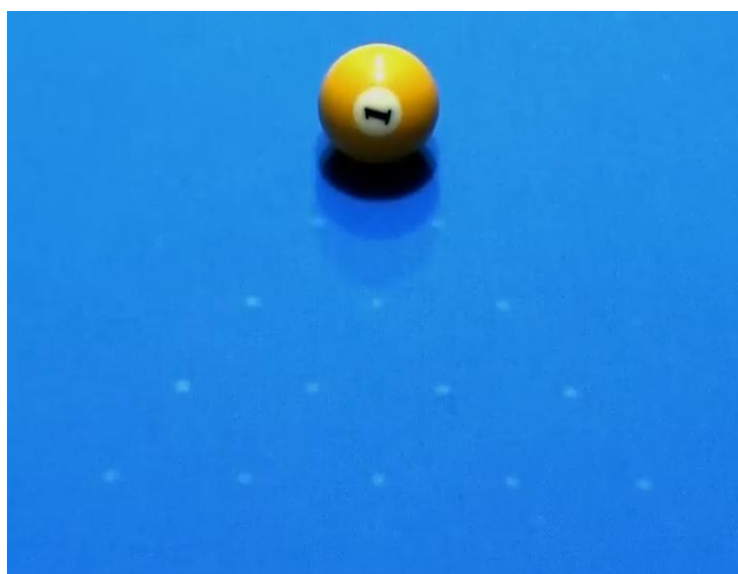


**Image 1** Racking template

An alternative to using a racking template is to “train the table,” where you firmly tap down on the balls in their desired racking positions (see **Image 2**) to make small marks and indentations in the cloth (see **Image 3**) so the balls will naturally settle against each other naturally. This is done routinely in European pool events. It can help to use a training template for this purpose. Some are available on the “[how to get a tight rack](#)” resource page at [drdavepoolinfo.com](http://drdavepoolinfo.com). Alternatively, as demonstrated in online video [NV I.3](#), you can just use a racking triangle or racking template to help position the balls for tapping. See the details in the video for advice on how to train a table accurately and effectively.



**Image 2 Training a table**



**Image 3 Trained table cloth marks and indentations**

When using a standard racking triangle instead, there are many ways to help ensure you get a tight rack. Below is a summary of “best practices” advice for racking, all of which are demonstrated in detail in the video:

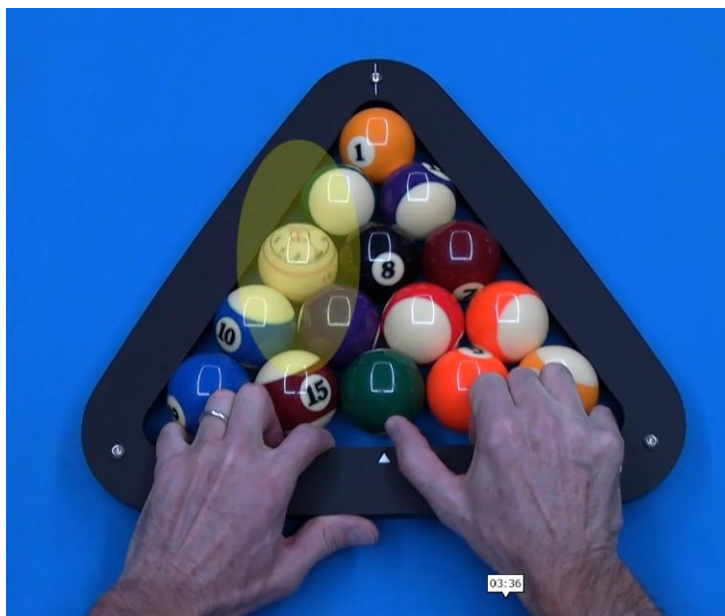
- First find where the lead ball wants to settle and rack the balls behind it, in this position. The ideal position might not always be in the center of the foot spot. This is probably the most important advice.
- Pushing the balls in the rack toward the center and down (from the back) can help them freeze together (see **Image 4**).
- Spinning the perimeter balls toward the center can help them push the cloth fibers outward, allowing the balls to better sit in place.
- If any of the perimeter balls roll out of place, they can be tapped down into position with another ball or the rack.

- If there are gaps between balls in the rack, sometimes turning the balls or rearranging their positions can help, especially if the balls are old, worn, and slightly out of round. Sometimes, flipping the rack upside down or turning it can also help, especially if the rack itself is irregular, worn, or dirty.
- When removing the rack, lift the back first and then slide it forward away from the front ball.
- If the lead ball is sticking to the inside of the rack, causing it to move when you try to tilt or move the rack forward to remove it, clean the rack or spin it to use a less dirty corner.
- If the balls do not sit well, sometimes brushing or wiping the cloth in the rack area before racking can help.



• **Image 4 Pushing the balls down and forward from behind**

Special care is required when the balls are old and worn. First, you should make sure that any balls that are smaller than the others are placed in the back row, preferably in the corners. Slight ball size differences can be common, especially with older balls that might have worn unevenly over time. The 1-ball is often the smallest since it takes the most abuse when at the front of the rack. As demonstrated in the video, to help find any small balls in a 15-ball rack, hold the rack while pushing forward on the entire back row (see **Image 5**). Any balls that are small will rotate while you slide the rack back and forth. If you move a smaller ball to a back corner, you can more easily get a tight rack since the smaller ball will be able to touch all neighbors, which is not the case if it is next to four slightly larger balls. As demonstrated in the video, with a smaller ball moved from the middle of the rack to the back, none of the balls rotate when the rack is slid, indicated that there are likely no gaps between the balls.



**Image 5 Sliding the rack to find small balls**

If you want to rack and break as well as the pros, try out all the techniques demonstrated in online video [NV I.3](#). It can also help to have good break technique. If you want help with that, check out the videos and info on the “[break shot technique advice](#)” resource page at [drdavepoolinfo.com](#). A tight rack is not guaranteed to give you a good break; but if the rack is not tight, it is unlikely you will have good and consistent break results.

Happy racking, and good luck with your game from Dr. Dave!



[NV I.3](#) – How to Train a Pool Table for Accurate and Consistent Ball Racking, an excerpt from VENT-I

[NV L.93](#) – HOW TO RACK Pool Balls as Tightly as Possible

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 [drdavepoolinfo.com](#).

*Dr. Dave is a PBIA 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](#).*