

How to Find the Right Pool Instructor for You

Full responses from 19 instructors | Compiled by Trent Ashton, Trent On The Break

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About this collection. Read the contributors' full perspectives behind the companion video. The shared questions are standardized and repeated before every answer. Response wording, including original spelling and grammar, is retained; spacing and typography are normalized. Missing or unfinished material and later additions are labeled.

Experiences, credentials and results are presented as supplied by the contributors. Views belong to each instructor. Administrative email instructions are omitted; professional details and supplied resource links are retained.

David G. Alciatore (Dr. Dave)

PhD

PBIA Master Instructor

Dean, Billiard University

Emeritus Professor of Mech Engr, CSU

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I've played socially since I was a teenager (45 years), but more seriously since 2001 (25 years). I play socially, in leagues, and in periodically in amateur tournaments.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I've always loved teaching. It is my passion. I tutored math and physics in college, was a teaching assistant in graduate school, and was a university professor for 30 years. Pool is also my passion, so teaching pool is a natural fit.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have taught pool for 20 years, and I have worked with players at all levels from complete novice to semi-pro. My most typical students are intermediate and advanced players in the 450-650 Fargo range.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I have pride in countless success stories in the past. My most memorable moment was working with a 92-year-old student, helping him enjoy the game even more than he did already. I have also worked with a few couples over the years through multiple Boot Camps and private lessons who have advanced quite a bit (mostly due to their strong work ethic and passion for the game). Those experiences have been very enjoyable and rewarding. I have also enjoyed working with many novice players, helping them gain basic competence over a very short amount of time. In some ways, these are the most rewarding experiences since I was able to take them very far in a very short amount of time. This is more difficult at the higher levels. But when working with some advanced players over the years, they expressed a lot of appreciation when I was able to find even very small things in their technique that they hadn't noticed or been told about before. That feels really good also.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

My teaching approach is "thorough" and "flexible" with a focus on fundamentals. I also place importance in building understanding for how and why various practices and techniques work. I also give lots of "homework," providing many resources and advice to help somebody continue to develop over many years to come. My approach is best suited to true "students of the game" who really want to learn and improve and are willing to put in the effort necessary.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

To be a great pool instructor for students are all levels, you need to play or have a history of play at an advanced level. You don't need to be a pro-level player, but you need to know and understand all important fundamentals, techniques, principles, and strategies. You also need to have good listening, observation, communication, and teaching skills. Those are the most important traits of a great pool instructor.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

I first make sure I fully understand a student's goals and get a sense for their level of commitment to achieve those goals. I then mostly look for issues with a student's fundamentals that might be holding them back from improving. After an initial evaluation, the student and I work together on prioritizing the things to work on that might have the biggest impact on improvement. Often, the things the student thinks they want to learn (e.g., bank and kicking systems, jump shot technique, power break technique, etc.) are not the things that will make them a much better player; but if a student really wants or needs help with a certain technique, I am happy to help them with it after I point out the higher priority things that I believe will help them the most.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

If an instructor listens and communicates well, seems to have adequate knowledge, spends most of the lesson time with the student at the table shooting (instead of the instructor demonstrating), and notices things you or past instructors have not noticed, and if you enjoy the time with the instructor, then the instructor is probably a good fit.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

A student should leave a first lesson with a prioritized list of things to work on that will have the largest impact on future improvement. They should also leave with a plan and resources to help them continue to work on and monitor improvement related to those things over time.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

Open and honest discussion in both directions is the best approach. Both the student and instructor need to express their concerns and goals for the lessons. And if the instructor is not open to or able to respond to feedback or requests in a helpful way, then the student should seek a more qualified, experienced, and effective instructor.

Clint Bachan

Manager and Instructor

Cue Sports Academy

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

33 years, National titles : 1x 8 Ball (2008), 2x 9 ball(2008 2025, 2x Snooker(2023, 2025), Caribbean team champions. (2012)

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I stopped playing pool from 2012-2019, when I resumed after those years not many players that i know had any improvement. After a few months getting back into the game, I started to become very consistent, placing in the top 4 and winning most tournaments. Thats when I decided to venture into teaching. Playing competition takes time and dedication to keep in good shape for the game. Its a struggle having the responsibilities of having a family, work and other responsibilities. Teaching can be done at my timing while being able to still make contributions to the sport.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

2020 recognised instructor with Dr. Dave. 2022 PBIA recognised instructor and 2024 Certified PBIA instructor. I mostly deal with beginners, advanced beginners , ameteur.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

One student who always shown his dedication to practice is Mr. Ryan Mohammed. Very diligent, willing to learn and always give his all as best as he can. One Notable tournament was his participation in the National Bclass tournament, which placed 1st. What was most pleasing to me was his routine and mannerisms around the table. It's just NOT about potting balls, its potting balls with purpose. When he played for that event you can track every decision he made and conclude for his level, most of his decisions were spot on. Regarding his execution, his stroke was smooth and pre-shot routine was solid.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

[No answer was included in the supplied response.]

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

Not really, an instructor has the ability to identify and make corrections. They don't necessarily have to be a great player. Yes it helps to demonstrate certain shots and scenarios for the student to understand.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

I allow them to spread balls randomly on the table, give them ball in hand and say shoot the easiest balls you are able to. NO bank, kick or tough cut shots. Everything must be simple shots and where the cue ball rests, continue from there. I tell them its only a warm up, however i use that opportunity to see them in their natural habits. For the first day i give a review on their current condition, make immediate recommendations to simple things like types of bridges, general way to hold a cue, sturdy bridge hand etc. Very simple things they can start working on, and with that they all tend to see improvements between that time an their next session.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

An instructor who can connect with them, the ability to explain for them to understand while keeping them engaged and interested.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

To be aware that pool is an intricate game. There is much more than what they would expect when it comes to playing the game correctly. the importance of guidance and having an instructor. Giving homework with certain exercises that keeps them engaged with fun activities. Their evaluation depends on what they are working on. a table matrix of drills and measuring outcomes.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

Try to figure out what went wrong. get an idea of what they are looking for as everyone has different learning styles. Have them do most of the talking to get as much info, keep asking simple questions to help gather information. Be mindful of what they are sensitive about to know for future interactions.

Richard Carlsten

CueSport College, CueSport Juniors

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I have played for 40+ years. Mainly league, state level tourneys, and national level tourneys.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I became an instructor because I am passionate about the game of pool and billiards. To be able to motivate and inspire more people to enjoy the beauty of colliding rolling spheres.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been teaching the game from the start of playing. In the beginning, there were no coaches or instructor per se. You learned from playing and watching. I would see something happen on the table and try to make it repeatable. So, in my whole life of playing the game, I was always the one that when the timeout was called, I was the coach. After league matches people would ask why or how I did something and I genuinely answered the questions with the inclination to help and not boost my own ego. This evolved into becoming a PBIA Advanced level instructor. That is the accreditation. I work primarily with junior players but have no doubt I can help any skill level at any age.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I cannot name one particular student that sticks out because I would like to believe I have helped them all onto a path of becoming just a bit better. I have worked with national champions to kids that wanted to beat their dad on the home table. The accomplishments are not mine to claim.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I have always had the belief that to become a good teacher, I have to be a good student. I learn as much as I can about the student to better help them. Pool cannot be taught the same to everyone. If it could, one book, one system, one answer would wipe out the need for this list of questions. My teaching approach varies from student to student depending on what they want to do with the game, their goals, and questions. Potential students should really think about A) Why do they want to play, what is their motivation? B) What are some short-term goals in the game? C) What is a long-term goal they want to achieve? These do not need to be set in concrete because most of the time I find they get fine-tuned as they go if not scrapped and reimagined after a few lessons. But we need to have a starting point. That starts the conversation and a lesson plan.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

Do you need to be a great player to be a great teacher? My answer is no. In fact, most outstanding players are probably not the best to learn from. They are great to build motivation. They are very inspiring to listen to. They may even set the spark for learning into a fire. But they play their game great, not yours. Often times they will try to mold you into a version of them. You may not think or work that way. A teacher has to learn from the student to build the vocabulary for a desired outcome. Educators that are good at their craft can help many different people towards their goal. I would say that billiard instructors should have a working knowledge of the lesson they are giving. They should be able to perform the example of the lesson because they are teaching it. I would venture off to say that most billiard teachers I have met or even worked with do actively practice the lessons they are going to instruct. I never would teach something that I do not understand fully or not confident in its relevance.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

The teacher is responsible for listening to the student's query and putting forth a plan to achieve that goal. The student has to be able to have that goal or query. Unless you're starting from the beginning, you need to have an accurate place the student is. A lot of times the answer is to go back to square one and build from there. The first lesson generally consists of building a plan to achieve a goal. Assessing where the student is. Looking at a series of shots from various angles to check what's going on behind the cueball. All depends on where the student is on their path to their goal.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

Did the instructor acknowledge and address their questions? Did the instructor clearly explain the process? Do you have confidence you can come to a clear dialogue with your instructor? Some encouraging signs would be acknowledgement of your questions with either the answer or the process to discover the answer. As well as clearly laying out what a professional lesson consists of, making sure the student is comfortable and is completely aware of what is going on at all times. This includes but is not limited to any contact the instructor makes to correct say hand position on the cue. Make sure the location of the lesson is in a safe place that you feel at ease with. The student should never feel as if any question is not relevant. It is their journey, not the teachers.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

The student should feel inspired after the first lesson. The first lesson is more of making a game plan and assessing the student as well as the student getting to know the teacher a bit. Unless there is prior history with the student it hard to hit the ground running.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

The assessment of the past instructor or lesson can be many different things. This question is hard to answer because I would have to know a bit more. I have heard horrifying stories, and I have heard benign stories as to why a student had poor experiences. Some people have expectations that were not met at no fault of the teacher. If the student wants to try again with that instructor, I advise them to convey their expectations to the instructor and find out if that is even achievable before wasting their time and money. Sometimes the expectation is an impossible dream, and the student needs to readdress the goal, and sometimes it is not in the instructor's wheelhouse to be able to teach.

Devon Cloud

PBIA Certified Billiard Instructor & Creator of Mental Management for Billiards Group

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I have been playing since 5 years old with a long break in my late twenties. I have taken lessons from pros, semi pros and master instructors. I specialize in mental management for billiards as well as mechanics instruction.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I really enjoy the aspect of helping others to enjoy the game and help them reach their potential.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been teaching for around 7 years and work with players of all skill levels and ages.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I am particularly proud of one student in particular (will withhold name as I am not sure if they would appreciate the call-out) that I helped go from a 265 FARGO to a 605 currently within two years. They had played for three years prior to the lesson. They attributed mechanic and pattern training and mental management of emotional states as their main reasons for their improvement which we had worked on.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I am a teacher, and as such, must teach in several different ways in order to not miss a teaching opportunity by pigeonholing my teaching style in one particular way. In my opinion, this is what separates a good instructor from a great one... the ability to read a student and their learning type and base my instruction on the best way to instruct based on their learning style.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

The two are not in any way correlated. Great players rarely make good coaches. For the most part, they tend to believe they found "the way", and teach accordingly, while good instructors take a student's strengths and weaknesses and base curriculum on what helps the individual student improve upon what skill they already bring to the table rather than try to re-invent them into something they are not.

Take any sport you want... while there are some exceptions to the rule, great players almost never make good coaches. These are two very different skillsets.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

Depends on the student's choice of the complete pool school or individual lessons. If an individual lesson, I look at their most blaring issues while performing the shots I ask them to perform. For my poolschool, I address each student in the same way by breaking down their mechanics, their mental approach to the game, and pattern ability and let them know where they need to improve and show them how. I provide tools, not fixes. They must fix themselves.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

Several things, but mainly confidence that they can help them is paramount, as a reluctant student is a non-learning student. I would run away from instructors who claim they have found "the way" to play the game, as this is not the same for each player. We all have a unique approach to the game and trying to make replicas of oneself is a disaster waiting to happen. A good instructor builds on a student's strengths and strengthens weaknesses, they do not re-invent the wheel.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

They should leave understanding what needs to be worked on and have tools in which to do so. They should also have an understanding as to WHY they are working on those particular issues... it's not enough to be told to fix something... they need to understand the "why".

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

I don't think I would go back to an instructor that was unable to reach me in the first day. If the connection wasn't made, it makes no difference whose fault it was... it simply wasn't made. My job as an instructor is to break that barrier and prove my worth since they are entrusting me with their hard-earned money and their time. If I fail, then it's time to allow them to go to a different instructor that can peak their interest.

Dave - Billiard Association of Texas

Owner of Bat Pool Billiard Association of Texas

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I've been playing for over 40 years in every league I've come across. I have been a league Operator for TAP, APA, BCA, CSI, and Ultimate Pool. I've been a Tournament Director for 30+ years. I've been a referee for 20 years and an accredited instructor for 6.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

My initial motivation was watching Junior Pool and thinking they needed guidance. I'm having a difficult time staying motivated because the pool community in my area is money-driven. No one wants to take the time to learn how to play the game.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I've been teaching formally for 6 years, and I gravitate toward novice to intermediate players.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

My first student started as a 390 Fargorate. We worked for a year and he rose to 475. He felt he knew enough and stopped with lessons. He stayed 475-480 for 2 years. He returned for 6 months and became a 500+ player.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I prefer students with little to no prior experience. I start with a free lesson. If they don't learn something, or I feel I'm wasting my time, we don't continue. No one feels cheated

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

I don't. Students should weigh an instructor's ability by what the instructor can do for their game. How many superstar baseball or football players became great coaches?

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

Mostly the ability to take instruction and the desire to improve.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

Am I listening to their responses to my questions? Am I seeing their viewpoint? Do I have the patience to overcome their shortcomings?

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

Did they learn something? Did I give them confidence in their performance? Did I give them hope?

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

Take a few minutes and describe what was negative about the experience. Ask them what they could have done differently. Work together with the student to create a course of action to prevent a repeat of the negative experiences.

Brad Hornshaw

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Brad@pacpool.net

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I Have played pool for 50 years. I began playing at Grandpas house when I was 13. Started Playing tournaments at the local arcade in my late teens. When I was old enough to go to bars I continued playing tournaments and eventually leagues.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

After taking my first couple of lessons when I was 40 I realized how little I knew after so many years about the physical mechanics. One of my Instructors convinced me I would make a good instructor and I reluctantly agreed to give it a try. The thing that motivates me to continue teaching is the light in a students eyes and the smile on there face when they the light comes on and they understand what I am trying to teach them.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I joined the BCA instructor program in 2004, which is now the PBIA. I have worked my way up to Advanced Level Instructor even though I am a part time Instructor and have a full time job as an Ironworker. My students are mostly beginner to intermediate.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I wont give names, but I have seen as much as a 60 point Fargo increase in a little over a years time.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

My teaching approach Is honesty and hard work. I don't sell magic bullets or gimmicks. I admit I don't know it all and I am still learning. I am simply sharing knowledge and experience with my students that I have accumulated over the last fifty years of studying this sport I love. The best type of student for me is the kind that is going to enjoy putting in the work and doesn't believe in quick fixes. Prospective students should know it won't be easy, but it should be fun. If it is not fun don't do it.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

No I don't believe great players are necessarily the best teachers. I had one student who had taken lessons previously from a much better player than me say that he valued his lessons from me much more. Another student recently told me that he felt the reason I was so much help to him was that I had been through the same struggles he experienced.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

Honestly I have a preplanned curriculum that I take every student through. The only thing that changes from student to student is how much time we spend on individual areas.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

I strongly believe a good instructor should use video and have printed preplanned material to hand out to the student.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

Student should leave the lesson understanding the importance of proper mechanics and a idea of what they entail. What are some of the things they do well and where they are going to need the most work. Having said that it is also relevant to the level of student and length of first lesson. At very least I think students should leave feeling comfortable with Instructor and confident they are going to the right place

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

I think communication take effort and honesty. Be hones and make sure you are saying what is on your mind. Never assume. Also look inward if a student had a bad experience they should at least ask themselves what could they have done better to achieve there goal.

David Kasprzycki

PBIA Instructor

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I have been playing pool for 30 years. I started in a local bar league with my mom. I didn't play in sanctioned leagues until I was 20 and have been playing league play ever since. I play in 1 to 3 state events a year (In WI we have 4 sanctioned bodies we play ACS, WSPA, WAMO, & BCA) I played in national events 2 times, and was even lucky enough to get sponsored and played in a Predator sanctioned Pro-Am event in Baraboo WI in 2023 the Predator Wisconsin Open which was by far the best pool related experience I've ever had.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I've always loved teaching people how to play. I got certified to learn how to teach because people weren't understanding what I was trying to teach. Taking the class and learning ways to teach was not only a benefit to me as an instructor, but as a player as well. The things I learned in that process were extremely helpful in making me a better player.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I've been teaching for 2 years and I tend to teach beginner level, and lower rated Fargo players (300-499) My niche is basic fundamentals, stroke, stance, aiming, etc. I have instructed 600 level fargos as well it just doesn't happen very often.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

Early on in my teaching days, I was working on cut shots with one of my regulars. I was teaching him how to use the ghost ball technique to aim. I felt this was easiest, but he just wasn't seeing it. We weren't making progress and we were both getting frustrated I think. While going over it again, on one particular shot, I said it was a "1/2 ball hit" While showing him the ghost ball position. He got down and drilled the shot. From then on, I would show him the ghost ball position and say the ball fraction on hit and he started to see it way better! It was then I learned that just because it was easy to me to learn one way, it's not easy for the next guy. As instructors we need to get out of our own way sometimes and teach how they learn, not how WE learn. The trick is finding the way when even they don't know.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I would say im a very patient instructor. This game is hard, and people will fail to understand some concepts and you have to be patient and work through these things with them so can see the benefit. My style is think works best to people who are open to try and learn new things, and are not stuck in their own particular ways.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

No, they just need to know and understand the concepts, and be open to teaching it in different ways. Teaching and instructing is a skill in its own right, and you don't need to be "great" to do it. Some proficiency helps though.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

My first question to them in the very first session is "ok what is it you feel you need to work on?" Whatever their answer is to this I'll know what to look for when I do their evaluation. Then I'll have them play a rack on their own for 10-15 minutes. I'll take pictures, videos, and notes and at the end I'll let them know what needs to be addressed and that's what we will get started on. 90% of the time I will find something that they didn't realize was an issue, which will help the problem they said they had.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

One thing he can do is see how flexible his teaching style is. If he is teaching a certain way to do things, as the student, suggest adding something. Does he incorporate it? Or does he shove it off? A good instructor will work with the student and be open to trying new things together, and not just try to shove his concepts down your throat.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

Progress is only as good as the time you put into it. A student should leave a session with new tools to use and practice and have an understanding of the concepts taught. If he leaves more confused than when he started, he may need to learn from a different instructor, or he himself may need to be more open to new concepts.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

Be open and honest about the lesson. I feel a good instructor should be able to take criticism about his teaching style and adapt to different students. If coach or instructor doesn't listen to the student in this regard, he may not be a fit for that student.

Donald Lawson

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I have been playing pool for 27 years. Early on, most of my experience came from league play and local tournaments. About 15 years ago, I began focusing more heavily on state and national events. While I still enjoy league play, I primarily use it as an opportunity to stay active in the game and qualify for larger competitions.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

When I started playing, there weren't many instructors available to me. I learned through trial and error, getting beaten by better players and figuring things out the hard way. Looking back, there were years of mistakes that could have been corrected much sooner with proper instruction. That's one of the reasons I teach today.

Pool has given me a great deal throughout my life, and as my understanding of the game grew, so did my appreciation for it. Today, I enjoy helping others experience that same growth and enjoyment. I see pool as poetry in motion when it's played at the highest level, and I want to help other players experience that same feeling and appreciation for the game.

My goal isn't just to help someone play better next week. It's to give them the knowledge and understanding they can continue using throughout their entire pool journey.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been an instructor for about 6 years with my main focus being on junior players, though I also work a lot with adult players.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

Over the past six years, I've worked with junior players who have gone on to win state and national titles in both boys' and girls' divisions. I don't take credit for those victories because their success came from their own hard work and dedication. My role was simply to help guide them toward strong fundamentals and a solid approach to improvement.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

Outside of pool, I work in IT. A large part of my job involves taking complex technical concepts and breaking them down into simple, understandable terms. I apply that same approach to teaching pool, and many students appreciate that style of instruction.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

An instructor doesn't necessarily have to be an elite player to be an effective teacher, but strong playing ability certainly helps. Students often learn faster when they can see a concept demonstrated successfully rather than simply hearing about it. Demonstrating a shot, position route, or banking system allows students to build confidence in both the lesson and the instructor.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

One of my core beliefs is that you can't ask questions about concepts you haven't been exposed to yet. That's why I often start by having students explain or demonstrate what they already know. This helps me identify knowledge gaps, build on their existing understanding, and create a lesson plan tailored to their needs.

My teaching philosophy is that pool is not about learning shots. It's about learning why shots are made and why they're missed. Once a player understands the cause and effect of what happens on the table, improvement becomes much more predictable.

My goal isn't just to help someone play better next week. It's to help them understand the game well enough that they can continue improving long after the lesson is over.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

Every student learns differently. Some are visual learners, while others learn best through hands-on repetition. A student's first lesson should help them determine whether the instructor's communication style matches the way they learn. Just as importantly, they should feel comfortable asking questions and discussing their goals openly.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

After a first lesson, students should leave with a clear roadmap and specific goals. Whether their objective is to advance in league play, become a higher-rated player, or eventually compete at a professional level, having measurable goals is critical to tracking progress. One thing I often tell students is that most players are their own worst critics. They remember missed position plays and mistakes far more than the racks they ran successfully. Setting goals gives you objective markers to measure improvement instead of relying entirely on how you feel you're playing.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

Before booking another lesson, identify exactly what didn't work for you during the previous experience. Was it the material being taught, or was it the way it was presented? If you liked the instructor but felt the lesson didn't address your goals, be more direct about what you want to accomplish. If the issue was communication style, attitude, or teaching approach, consider discussing it with the instructor first. Most instructors genuinely want their students to succeed and are often willing to adjust their approach. If the fit still isn't right, don't be afraid to look for an instructor whose teaching style better matches the way you learn.

Eric Naretto

2025 American Cuesports Outstanding Instructor, 2026 PBIA Instructor of the year.

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

20 years: Leagues, Singles events, Singles and Team National events

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I am a teacher by trade. I graduated Illinois State University with an Education Degree. I chose to use this degree with Billiards to help people improve their games.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been giving instruction for 13 years. I work with players of all skill levels. Highest Fargo I have worked with is a 742.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I had an APA 3 recently win a tournament after one lesson with me. We worked for 4 hours and I was notified that my student broke and ran 3 racks in the tournament and the first time he ever broke and ran a rack was in this same tournament.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

My motto is "It is my job to give you what you want, while helping you understand what you need." If someone wants to come learn about kicks and banks, that's fine... I can teach kicks and banks, but when someone comes to me and I see their stroke and stance is their primary reason for failing the kick or bank... now it has become my job to notify them of what they need. Sometimes this changes the course of the lesson, and sometimes they prefer to stay the course. They come to me for education, so education is what I provide.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

A math teacher can do math, a science teacher can do science. A golf coach can golf, a bowling coach can bowl. What I believe is that the player needs to be able to demonstrate the necessary items in order to be effective. An instructor should not just instruct from the side. Some players need to see it in action to understand. If an instructor can not do... they should not teach the concept. This is why so many American instructors only teach fundamentals in my opinion... because they cannot effectively play the game. "Teaching behind the cue ball is our bread and butter should not be our motto."

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

First lesson for me is always getting to know the student. Again, what do you want vs what do you need? But to be an effective instructor or coach there needs to be a personal level present. Not just business. People learn the best when there is trust and respect present between educator and student. I spend time in the first lesson asking them who they are, why they got started playing. What their short term and long term goals are in the game. How often can they practice a week?

All this information allows me to find a starting point and give me an idea of how to approach the student in lessons. First thing they do involving the cue is run a rack of 9 ball with the rules of no kicks, banks, jumps, or masse. Anytime they get locked behind a ball or miss a ball it is ball in hand. This gives me opportunity to see the fundamentals at work and make notes.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

In my opinion the first lesson should be led by the student. Its a trust thing for me. That is, unless the student really opens up and says "I am ready to do whatever you need me to do." I feel the relationship between student and teacher is the most important thing. If you run into a teacher that wants to start right away without getting to know the student... that tells me they aren't invested in the growth of the student, but the growth of their pocketbook. Again, my opinion.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

This really depends on the student and the teacher. We can do our jobs perfectly and we won't be good enough for some students because we didn't give them the pill they wanted. Other students will be amazed at the amount of info they can learn in such a short amount of time.

My goal for the first lesson is that they leave with more understanding of what it is they must do to improve. That might be a drill; it might be understanding that they need more time to play... anything that will set them up for the opportunity of improvement.

Progress is determined by the student working on what the teacher

[The final sentence ends here in the supplied response.]

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

You are our boss. We aren't interviewing you, you are interviewing us. Create a series of questions that we need to answer, and as you search... find an instructor that is truly going to care about your development. Some of us aren't cheap... but the phrase "You get what you pay for" doesn't always apply either. Check the resume of the instructor and if you can't find one, ask them.

Larry Nicholson

Trinity Billiards

PBIA Master / ACS Level IV Instructor

(469) 988-8710

www.trinitybilliards.com

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

recreational play from 8yrs-29yrs old

Amateur leagues the last 30 years

Competitive leagues from 2001-2020

Local, regional, national Tournaments since 2001

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

Athletes and Competitors primarily play for fun, trophies, accolades, money or social acceptance. What these have in common is they all improve one's self. I decided to teach, after becoming a proficient player that others respected and looked up to, when they would ask me questions or give them tips and advice. The reward an instructor receives is very different than that of an athlete or competitor because our reward is the appreciation and gratitude expressed by the student that affirms I played a role in having a positive impact on their journey of improvement. I am motivated to teach because my life's purpose is dedicated to having a positive impact in the lives of others, whether it be on the table, or off.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been teaching a variety of sports since 1985, and teaching pool since 1999. I typically work with people who have an open mind and seek ways to learn and improve. My students range from many juniors, and occasionally the adults who are just starting their journey in pool. Many students are highly proficient and highly skilled, but feel stuck and do not know the next steps to improve. Many are retired people who are looking to fill their leisure time with a new hobby.

I am PBIA Master certified, ACS Level IV certified, a Certified Mental Performance Coach, and a professional Strategy Analyst by trade.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

There's personal bias, but I'm proud of my son, my ex-wife, and my ex-daughter in law whom I still play & work with to this day. However, I am especially proud of the kids I've worked with who have grown up & playing on a national level.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

My approach is quite dynamic. I have very comprehensive curriculum that I cover, but I don't think I've ever covered it all in the same way & same order twice. Because I take the time to get to know the student, not only from the perspective of a player, but also as a person, I am able to identify what teaching style is suited best for them and because of this, I am best suited for virtually any type of student, even those who may have not had a very good experience with other instructors in the past.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

I strongly believe a great pool instructor needs to be proficient in the understanding of the game and the core fundamentals and skills, in order to be capable of being comfortable with demonstrations. As with many sports, history has shown the greatest coaches were not typically the greatest players. There are additional skills, beyond that which an athlete is required to have, that a coach must have.

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

Carrying forward what was previously stated, a coach needs to be a role model, a life coach, calm under pressure, have integrity, and strong communication skills. As a business analyst whose primary career revolves around solving complex problems, breaking down ideas into actionable objectives, and communicating to a variety of people, these are traits that can be difficult for a student to ascertain when seeking a good instructor. Far too often, we've seen highly proficient, even professional, players often fail miserably at coaching, so I would caution students to put much emphasis on an individual's playing abilities and jump to the conclusion they must be able then to teach what they know.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

I am looking for the most critical obstacles that is currently preventing a player from performing at the next level. Are they consistent, do they keep the cue straight, do they aim properly, how is their mind & eyes involved? Are any of their mechanics deficient? By talking with, and observing the player perform some simple exercises, I am able to capture an understanding of the important topics, which we then discuss, or even review a video analysis, which typically identifies the objectives to work on, and then I employ the best suited technique to train the individual to adapt their rituals, routines, process, or mindset to overcome these impediments. Over time, an important goal is to guide the student to become aware, real-time, when any part of their process is disrupted, diagnose what it was, release it for the time-being, and return back to a state of elite performance.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

I personally, am always open for a prospective student to interview me and ask questions. For example, I encourage a prospective student to convey a common obstacle they face and ask the instructor to provide their feedback, while on a call. The instructor should be able to respond with clear questions, if needed, and then convey their understanding of the issue, and demonstrate how they would help the student learn to overcome the issue. The student can determine if the demeanor, communication style, and competency of the instructor is validated and make a decision if time & money is worth investing in.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

This is difficult to answer, without first discussing the content an instructor will provide during that first lesson. If it's a one-hour, topic-based lesson, the student should leave with a better understanding about what the topic is, why the topic matters, what are the minimum standards of the topic, what are the common errors, and what variety of techniques can be used to work on, and improve on the subject of the topic. If the student undergoes a lengthy bootcamp or workshop, my goal is to provide an outline of what will be covered and ask the student ahead of time what their expectations are. Ultimately, my students typically feel like they leave with more information and direction than they expected.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

Unfortunately, there always will be experiences that are dissatisfying depending on the student/instructor relationship. I've had many students who shared their experiences with earlier instructors, and what I would advise students seeking an instructor do is, do NOT measure the professional abilities a player has and think that translates into them being a great instructor. Even entry level instructors are still rather green and continuing to learn how to improve their curriculum, but what I would recommend if a player is desiring the most comprehensive, quality instruction is to seek a PBIA Certified Master or ACS Level IV instructor. These are the few who have the tenure, experience, and reputation of providing the best lessons a player can obtain.

Roy Pastor

PBIA Master instructor

PBIA Instructor of the year 2020

BCA Presidential Award 2024

New England Billiard Hall of Fame 2018

Master instructor at www.learn-billiards.com one of only 6 PBIA Accredited Instructor Training Academies,

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I have been playing pool for about 60 years with a 20-year hiatus to raise my family, finish school, and begin my career. When I returned to pool I realized that my actual skill did not match my memory of my skill level and I realigned my focus to teaching.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I did not have access to an instructor or coach when I was first learning to play. Like many others, I was self-taught. Later in my professional life, I had the experience of teaching college courses. I realized that the structure of effective instruction was a valuable contribution in any field. I decided to focus on teaching billiards and becoming the best instructor that I could be.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been teaching pool for the past 25 years. I am a PBIA Master Instructor. I have created a multitude of training programs for students of all ages. Today I train and coach everyone from 6 year olds picking up a pool cue for the first time to players competing on the pro tour. It is particularly rewarding when the former becomes the latter.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I have been fortunate to have had many successful students. I have worked with notable students like Michelle Jiang, Lukas Verner, Sofia Mast, Vivian Liu, - and many more. I have also had the good fortune to work with and certify several pro players as instructors, including Mike Dechaine and Emilly Duddy.

Of course, success is often defined differently for different students. I have had many students whose success has been defined by increased confidence, creation of a solid work ethic, team work, and pure enjoyment of our sport.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I would describe my teaching approach as honest and patient. Students deserve an honest evaluation of their skill level, a detailed plan of action, and scheduled goals set for improvement.

I believe that setting goals should be something that both the instructor and student can reach a consensus on. Effort and communication are essential.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

If a student is asking about an instructor's skill level as a player, then they are asking the wrong question. The questions that a student should be asking are:

- A. Has my instructor successfully taught someone from first picking up a cue to playing at a high level, including national and international competition?
- B. Has my instructor successfully taught someone like me, with similar goals?
- C. Does my instructor have a track record of success with someone like me?
- D. What level of play and success have the instructor's students reached?

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

Every student, regardless of skill level, real or imagined, will go through a video stroke evaluation. Before starting, the student and I will review the video and break down the elements of stroke mechanics, pre-shot routine, ball approach, eye patterns and head placement, rhythm and cadence etc. Together we will use this information to reach a consensus on how to advance.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

I have many students that come to me after taking a lesson from other instructors. They tell me that they were disappointed because their first instructor gave them little time at the table, mostly talked at them, and they left feeling that they made little or no progress. I think that at the end of the first session, the student should have a clear idea of where they are in the game, have a plan on the best way to move forward, and have had some practical movement towards the goals set. They should know what they should be working on and how to practice those desired skill sets.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

LOL see answer to #8

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

See answer to #8

Tanner Pruess

www.poolconfidence.com

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I've been playing pool for most of my life - starting in leagues and eventually competing at the state and national level. I've won multiple VNEA World and South Dakota State Championships and have spent years learning what separates playing well from actually performing consistently under pressure.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I realized that I really enjoyed helping other players understand why they were struggling and how to fix it. What keeps me motivated is seeing a player go from frustrated and inconsistent to confident because they finally understand what they need to do.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I've been teaching for over a decade and am a PBIA/ACS Advanced Pool Instructor. I work with players at all levels, from people just getting started to experienced league and tournament players. A lot of my instruction focuses on helping players become more consistent, confident and comfortable when the pressure is on.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

Mike came to me as a student in 2020 and was the first time taking lessons. He was a recreational player that soon turned into a threat to knock out any top South Dakota player. I laid down the plan and he committed to it with great follow through. He now helps me teach group lessons in Rapid City, SD.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

My approach is very individualized. I don't believe every player needs the same lesson or the same solution. My specialty is helping players that want a more consistent and confident pool game. I'm especially focused on building a game that holds up when you're nervous, not just when you're practicing.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

I don't think someone has to be a great pool player, but I do think the ability to play well is important. Especially with competitive players, an instructor should understand what it takes to execute and handle pressure when the outcome matters. Playing experience provides perspective that can be difficult to teach without experiencing it yourself. At the same time, being a good player doesn't automatically make someone a good instructor. Communication and the ability to identify and explain problems are just as important.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

I want to see the whole player before immediately trying to change something. I look at fundamentals, alignment, stroke, decision-making, cue-ball control and especially what happens when they miss. Then we talk about their goals and build the lesson around what will have the biggest impact on their game.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

You should feel like the instructor is actually paying attention to you. They should be able to explain what they see, why it matters and what you can do about it. A good lesson should leave you feeling like you understand your game better, not simply like you were given a bunch of information.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

You probably won't completely change your game in one lesson. You should, however, leave with a better understanding of what you're doing, what needs improvement and what you should work on next. I think progress should be measured by improved understanding and consistency over time, not just whether you happened to shoot a few more balls that day.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

First, figure out why the lesson didn't work for you. Was it the communication, the instructor's approach, too much information, not enough explanation or simply a mismatch in teaching style? Then be honest with your next instructor about what you need. A good instructor should want to understand how you learn and what you're trying to accomplish before deciding how to teach you.

Chris Riser

Founder & Lead Instructor

REAPER POOL SCHOOL

PBIA Certified Instructor · National Billiard Academy Instructor

Private Instruction • Player Development • Performance Coaching

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I've been around pool since childhood, influenced by my father and time spent playing at family homes, friends' houses, and pool halls. During my Marine Corps years, I played casually in barracks and clubs, but I did not begin competing seriously until I joined an APA league after leaving the service in 2006.

I've now played APA for more than 17 years and have competed in over 1,000 matches. I'm currently rated a 6 in eight-ball and a 7 in nine-ball. I still play APA and Masters, though I've reduced league play to about one night per week. I also compete in professional and local tournaments and host tournaments in Wilmington.

My formal path into instruction began when I was an APA captain teaching teammates basic fundamentals. One of my players introduced me to Eddie Israel of the National Billiard Academy, which led me to attend a clinic and begin formal instructor training. I still teach with the National Billiard Academy and am an Advanced Certified Instructor working toward Master certification.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I became an instructor because I enjoyed teaching the players on my APA team when I was captain. What motivates me most is seeing students improve. It is especially rewarding to see someone months later with a stronger game and the confidence that comes from realizing how much they have progressed.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been teaching officially for approximately six to seven years. I enjoy working with players of any age or experience level who are genuinely committed to improving.

The students I connect with most are those who realize another cue, case, or piece of equipment will not solve their problems. They are ready to work on themselves - their fundamentals, habits, and physical execution.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

One student I'm especially proud of is Jonathan Neiman, whom I coached on my Thursday APA team. Over the course of a year, he progressed to the semifinals of the APA World Championships in eight-ball. The following year, he reached the finals and won, becoming a world champion.

I'm especially proud that he remains hungry to compete, continue improving, and pursue more championships.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

My approach is highly individualized. I tailor each lesson to the student and build their game from the ground up, beginning with the stroke.

I believe a consistent, smooth stroke is the foundation for everything else in pool. Once the stroke is reliable, the student can more effectively develop the rest of their game.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

No - not by any stretch. Pool involves distinct abilities: physical execution, mental understanding, and feel or table vision. Some players have natural feel and a smooth stroke, while others understand patterns and strategy but struggle to execute physically.

A good instructor needs to understand these different parts of the game and help students develop the areas they lack. You do not have to be a world champion to be a great instructor.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

I assess how the student approaches and sees the shot line. I look at whether they can identify the line, align their body correctly, and get into position consistently.

I also evaluate their stance, bridge, mechanics, and overall body structure around the shot line. Those fundamentals are usually the first areas I address.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

Students should look for an instructor whose teaching philosophy and language resonate with how they understand and want to play the game. They should also consider whether the instructor's playing style feels comfortable and aligns with their goals.

The first choice does not have to be permanent. As students improve, their perspective and needs may change, and another instructor may provide the viewpoint needed to move beyond a plateau.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

A student should leave with a clear understanding of what they learned, what they still need to improve, and a practical plan for the next 30 days of practice.

That plan should focus on specific goals and progress - not just a collection of drills. The instructor should also explain what the student can realistically expect to accomplish over the next 30, 60, and 90 days based on the practice time they commit.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

A bad experience is not the end of the process. If someone has never worked with an instructor before, they may not yet know what teaching style or personality fits them.

Students should be willing to feel uncomfortable while learning, but if an instructor ultimately does not fit their needs, they should move on without dwelling on it - be like a goldfish with a ten-second memory. Try different instructors until you find someone whose teaching style, personality, and goals match your own.

James Roberts

PBIA Advanced Instructor and ACS Level 3 Instructor

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

30+ years playing recreational and league pool as well as local, regional and open tournaments.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

The results of my own improvement as a result of taking Stan Shuffett's Foundation Course. The more I teach, the more I learn. The more I learn the better I get as a person, instructor and player.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been teaching pool for 20 years. All types of players in terms of ages and skill levels but I've not yet worked with any professional players.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I've worked with a few amateur players who have competed and placed highly in league national championships.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I personalize my teaching based on the student's wants and needs.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

Not necessarily. Everyone physically declines as they age which sometimes translates to a lesser playing ability.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

Analyze fundamentals. Make suggestions based on what I see.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

Ask questions to gauge the instructor's passion for pool, not just their experience and training.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

I ask the student what they'd like to leave with. I've exceeded expectations with nearly every student!

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

Determine what made it bad specifically and ask a new prospective instructor how they would handle it differently.

Todd M. Shirley

PBIA Certified Instructor, a Billiards University Senior Instructor, and an ACS Level 2 Instructor.

www.luckyloserbilliards.com

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

50+ years; competitive player in multiple leagues and orgs. significant live stream challenge matches, multiple pedagogical roles and orgs, tech innovation with AI and ICATS, and more.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

Instruction assists with one's own learning, contributes to others progress, and keeps me mentally & physically fit. It's great having ongoing relationships with students as they explore their own pool journey.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I've been teaching pool for 10+ years. I typically work with under 600 Fargo players, all APA SL players, and newbies.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

Noam King has been a student of mine for several years. He began as a new player, and then joined one of my APA teams for fun & competition. He's gone on to be MVP for 8 Ball, and has competed in WA Regional APA Singles tournaments. His perseverance and good nature have contributed greatly to his success.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I hope my website tells the story: <https://luckyloserbilliards.com/> I primarily focus on technical development by addressing both external & internal aspects, and employing a range of pedagogical roles such as trainer, coach, instructor, mentor, exemplar, and teacher. The content, method, and style a student will encounter with me and the Lucky Loser Billiards curriculum is both rich, but succinct. Student assessment is fundamental to a correct approach. Then communication can lead to efficiency, and the ability to language & demonstration concepts & instructions is powerful for an individual's learning modality.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

100% no. To be great at anything requires many performance and work factors to be exploited. Someone can be great at both, or other things as well, but being great at even one thing in the world is demanding enough.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

Student assessment is essential, and this can be determined by conversation, written discourse, observation, and/or interaction. And, not only capabilities, but interest, and goals both short & long term. I submit you do not want to spend valuable time on things that they already have expertise with, nor waste energy with things that they are not as yet capable of. Experience and wisdom are required for efficient assessment.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

Does the instructor connect with them in an authentic way, is relatable, communicates well, and meets the student at whatever level or psychology they are at.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

There will be many new things, and be able to accomplish some of them to high satisfaction. There will be other things that will clearly need to be practiced on their own. Everything I provide has easy to understand metrics in order for the student to know when they have achieved success. And, they will know they have someone that has joined them on their pool journey, not just a disconnected lesson provider.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

If they did not have a "good" experience that is either because they are not a "good" student, it was not a "good" instructor, or both! In these cases I recommend finding a new instructor that will meet their expectations. I have had students that needed things that I did not offer or was not well suited for. I can determine this before a session is completed. As such, I explain my observation of the disconnect, and have recommendations for other instructors that are more suited for their needs. So, even if we are not a good fit, the student will still obtain a very positive solution before departing our relationship.

Jeff Smith

In Focus Billiards

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I grew up with a pool table in our house, so I've been playing for most of my life. My first organized league play was about 20 years ago, and I've been playing leagues consistently since 2012.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

I have always loved the game, and I enjoy helping others do the same. I've always be happy and eager to share any knowledge and experience with less seasoned players, so becoming a certified instructor seemed like a natural progression. I love seeing those "AHA" moments on students, when the switch gets flipped and something really connects for them.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I was certified in 2022. I feel I'm best suited to with with beginner and intermediate players, as I really think that the fundamentals of mechanics is where I can help the most.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I had a student recently who had never played any organized pool, but has a table at home and had fallen in love with the game. He is super "teachable", and had really progressed quickly. He recently started in the APA, and quickly jumped up to SL 5.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I am a student of Randy G and his SPF school of thought. Much of my teaching skill had come from his instruction, and I truly believe I have learned from the best. I try to give a good combination of time at the table and working from a workbook. I'm not going to just give a student a list of drills and send them on their way. I will explain the reason for each drill or skill, and what each drill is focused on.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

I don't believe that it is necessary for an instructor to be "world beater". The old adage I've heard is, if you want to learn how to play golf, would you rather learn from Tiger Woods or from the guy who taught Tiger? Obviously, an instructor needs to be able to execute what he is teaching, but I believe playing a sport and teaching or coaching that sport are two different skill sets. I know of many professional sport coaches and managers who never won their sport's championship as a player, but went on to much greater success as a coach.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

The first lesson is largely an evaluation of the student's strengths and weaknesses. I have a 'report card' that I complete while observing the student at the table, and we then discuss that evaluation, and how it applies to each student individually.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

Communication is key. If an instructor is able to execute at the table but can't communicate how and why he does what he does, the student is going to have a hard time learning much at all.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

My students leave their first session with a workbook, including their homework drills to perform before our next meeting, as well as a good foundation of a shooting routine to help them improve their stroke.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

My first question might be, was it a personality clash or an actual teaching issue. I think developing a healthy rapport between instructor and student is vital. My mentor told me early on, "Your students will become your friends faster than your friends will become students." My takeaway from this was if you and your student don't get along and see things eye to eye, they will have a very hard time learning from you.

Tim Ward

PBIA / ACS Certified Biliard Instructor

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I've been playing pool for over 40 years. More recreational (Leagues) while younger. Last 7-8 years, have become very much more involved. (Leagues, 2 man tournaments and larger tournaments) Jave played in the Derby City Classic the last 2 years.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

After taking several years off raising a family, I wanted to 'learn' the right way to play and learn things that would really help me improve. My first Instructional was a group setting with Mark Wilson and Jerry Brieseth. I was blown away at what I learned. From there, I took one on one Instruction with Certified Instructors and a couple Pro's. What keeps me motivated to teach is seeing players eyes open when they learn techniques/best practices that immediately improve their playing abilities.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I have been PBIA / ACS certified Instructor for 3 years. (I'm a Level 2 Instructor - out of 4 Levels) Over that time, I have worked with around 150 students (over 500 hours) I would say most of my students are local League Players. Have also worked with very beginners and some advanced players. I always start out with going over the very basics/fundamentals. From there, built up to improving the Stroke, Cue Ball Position, Decision Making, Kicking, Jumping, etc.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

I have many examples of students that have really improved their playing ability. From beginners that couldn't win a match and no teams wanting them to becoming a player several teams sought after. Also some players who went on to win several local tournaments. (And provided feedback that paying for Instruction by me was an Investment and by winning tournaments, more than got their money back)

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I am a very detailed Instructor. I have prepared a PowerPoint presentation with nearly 100 slides of Material. We step through the slides which starts with the basics and builds up to advanced material. We spend as much, or as little time necessary depending on what the student needs.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

Great question. Obviously Pro's who teach have playing ability far greater than most Instructors. However, that doesn't mean they are great Instructors. I do feel however, an Instructor should be able to demonstrate the material being given. Look around any sport, are the Hall of Fame Players now out there Coaching? No.... It's the players who understood what it takes to become better, enjoy helping others and ability to do so.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

I'm a big fan of taking pictures and videos of students the first 10 minutes I spend with them (doing things as they have done) from there, we step through the material I have prepared. As we cover something, together we look at the 'correct' way and compare to pictures/videos taken. A student being self aware of what they're doing is huge. However, there's not always one correct way to do something. Based on body type, previous injuries, and or physical ability, we work together to get them where they need to be.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

A student shouldn't get Frustrated during a session. The Instructor needs to recognize that and adjust material and/or the way the material is presented for the student to embrace and make the improvements. The student should feel encouraged and be given recognition for positive things the student has done (or improved on) The feedback I love to hear, is when the session is over, they tell me they can't wait to go practice what we've covered!

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

This really depends on players ability. But in general, a student should expect from, that I take the time to analyze where they are (through photos and videos taken analysis) and then work together to improve. Most students leave with drills and methods to see/feel progress.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

In life, there are people you just don't 'click' with. A student/Instructor relationship is no different. I would highly encourage a prospective student to call and discuss directly with me. Ask me questions about how I teach, things that will be covered, the training environment, etc. a student needs to feel comfortable walking to a session and having already started building a relationship with me helps.

Art White

Billiards Academy for Women

1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

20+ years

Former WCVNEA champion, winner of the BCA Open WPBA Qualifier in Maryland, and winner of the BCA All American Tour in Illinois. Several team, singles titles and finals placements. Played 5x on the WPBA, and several times in the WPBA regional tours.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

To be honest, right after I built my game up to a high level I became disabled for 10+ years and had to relearn how to walk, talk, and read. So now that I can actually play again, I want to share my knowledge and experience with others. It helps me remember my own knowledge and ignites my passion for the game. It inspires me and gives me joy to see other players transform their game.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

1.5 years as a PBIA certified instructor.

I train a lot of female players. There is a definite understanding there of what they are going through and dealing with in the billiards world. Most of the female players I train are in the 150-450 Fargo level.

I work with higher level players, mentoring, and providing structured practice plans, drills, and mental skillset guidance. Those players are in the 525-725 level.

My expertise is in creating structured practice routines, preparing players for competition and post competition review, structured player development and growth, and then for female players - navigating the unique challenges of being a female player.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

Women who have trained with me have experienced results such as:

Increasing from a maximum run of four balls to ten balls within a month.

Winning their first tournament after 30 years of playing.

Learning shots and techniques they never thought they could execute often in our first practice session.

Feeling excited to practice because they finally had a clear plan.

Becoming noticeably more confident and purposeful at the table.

Having players and pool room owners recognize the quality behind their practice.

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I like working with people that want to learn and work on their game. I love working with either groups to do specific practice routines, or customized lessons for students that want to build their game, learn how to compete, or bring their game to the next level.

For players that really like to spend time playing, I like to do longer sessions such as 1.5 to 2 hours. I can work with players starting out, veterans that struggle to progress because of bad habits or technique, or seasoned players starting to move upwards towards pro level.

For players with short attention spans, I do something different. We move it into dynamic lessons where we move through topics as their attention span allows. We do shorter lessons like 20 minutes and then purposeful practice or fun games built around practice routines to keep them engaged.

I can do basic lessons through to customized lessons that switch midstream to adapt to your challenges on that day.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

Depends on the student, what their level is, and what their goals are. A 200 Fargo player can learn from many types of instructors. A 625 player needs a more specialized type of instructor.

Only certain levels of instructors can teach players who are at the top in their community. Only certain people will even understand what top players go through.

Players who are not accomplished in pool may still be excellent instructors if they coached other sports at a high level. There are many things that translate between multiple sports. They could know enough about pool to communicate and still bring lots of skills from outside of the pool world.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

This happens before the first lesson for me. I ask them their experience and goals, and what they have in mind. It would be difficult to show up prepared to give a lesson if you know nothing about your student. You want to know what they are looking for, what game they play, what size table they plan on, and what they are struggling with. You can then prepare your lesson and the first introduction to you and your approach.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

If it is a good fit, you are going to know quite quickly. You will feel comfortable, safe, heard, and you will like the presence of your instructor near you. You will state the issues you are having and feel like they heard you and that they responded to them properly. You will state what you want to work on in your game and feel confident they have a plan for you.

When it is not a good fit, you will also know quite quickly. You will feel irritated, not heard, dismissed, trampled on, negatively critiqued, or just know it is not a fit.

There may be a grey area where you feel concerned and want to say something. This is a really good chance to bring it up, and see the instructor's response. You may say, oh that is not what I meant. I am looking to work on this... or my issue is actually this... You want the instructor to stop and listen, and then try something different based on what you said. Sometimes, it takes a reframe for the instructor to understand what you are saying. It doesn't mean they are not a good fit for you. You want to be able to understand their logic and why they are coaching you a certain way.

There may be a few reasons why you may be missing a shot for instance. It could be your aim, grip, stance, bridge, or stroke. So perhaps in your first lesson you work on adjusting your stance and grip. You go home, the new lesson content works for a little while but then you still struggle to get your cue ball to hit the rail after your shot. You are frustrated that it is not fixed and you don't want to go back. You later decide you will give it a second chance. Your instructor then focuses on your bridge and finds that is where you now need to focus. You now feel heard, seen, and your cue ball gets to the rail after you shoot.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

An introduction to the coach, an understanding of their coaching style and process - how it works, how do lessons unfold, what do you work on, what are you going to work on together over time (this is based on the discussion you have with the student prior to the lesson), and a lesson plan with goals for what you are going to accomplish together. This is dependent on the student, if they want to just take 1-2 lessons it is a different plan, process, discussion. If they want to take several lessons, or sign in for 6 months, then that becomes a different lesson plan rolled out over months.

They should first either have an idea of what they are walking into, such as an introductory call or discussion. If not, then there should be a bit longer to have that initial discussion. The student would explain their history, their proud moments, and then their struggles. From there, the coach will assess the right path for the student, and the first lesson is an introduction to the path. There should be 1-2 concepts discussed initially, not enough to overwhelm them. They should get feedback on those 1-2 concepts and some items to take home with them to work on. This might be drills, something to work on in practicum, or something to use when playing league if their struggles mostly happen in league.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

If they don't feel comfortable, or they feel mistreated, then I would advise them to not return to that instructor. A good instructor doesn't need a few sessions to make someone feel comfortable with their game or with their communication style.

One big miscommunication can put students back months in their game. It can really affect them. I don't think there needs to be any rebooking of a lesson if it really was not a good experience.

Second there needs to be a discussion with the student, to discuss their experience and to understand more about why it didn't work. It might just be a communications issue, or an issue that comes from not feeling heard. Often a student will have a vision for their game and what they want to work on. The instructor might have a different vision. I would want to know how to provide that student with a better experience than what they had with their last instructor.

Over time, that same student might realize it was just communication styles or some misunderstanding with a former instructor. However, I think progress is the main goal and there is no need to spend months trying to 'work it out' with an instructor that you don't feel good using.

Kim "The Dragon" Young

MPM

PBIA Master Instructor | ACS Level 4 Instructor | Billiard University Senior Instructor

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1. How long have you been playing pool, and what has your experience involved?

For example: recreational play, leagues, tournaments, or professional competition.

I've been involved with pool for 27 years with experience as both a competitive player and, much more extensively, as an instructor and student of the game.

Interestingly, I wanted to become a billiards instructor before I even knew how to play pool. When I was a teenager, I saved up \$20 for what I thought was going to be a pool lesson. The "lesson" consisted of the guy breaking and running a rack and then walking away with my money. I remember thinking, "I'm going to become an instructor someday, and I'm going to make sure people actually get taught."

That experience has stayed with me my entire career. I owe everything I've done in this sport to being hustled over \$20 at 15 years old.

Today, I've worked with more than 9,000 students in more than 65 countries, from complete beginners to national champions and professionals. I've also continued taking lessons myself because I believe an instructor should always be a student of the game before being a teacher.

I'm a PBIA Master Instructor, ACS Level 4 Instructor, and Senior Instructor with Billiard University, and one of the only SightRight Certified coaches in the US. Dragon Billiards Instruction, a PBIA Accredited Instructor Training Academy with full pro-shop (online and brick and mortar), and repair services. I was also honored as the 2025 PBIA Instructor of the Year, and am a contributing member of the PBIA and ACS instructor committees.

2. What made you decide to become a pool instructor, and what keeps you motivated to teach?

The \$20 story is what started it--my early years in this game were inspired by spite for that hustler LOL, but eventually I fell in love with the actual teaching.

When I began studying the physics, geometry, fundamentals, and mechanics of billiards, I realized how much there was to understand. Then I discovered something I enjoyed even more than playing: seeing another person suddenly understand something that had been confusing them.

I like playing pool...but I LOVE teaching it.

That moment when a student's eyes light up because something finally makes sense - that's what keeps me going.

I'm also motivated by the idea that instruction should make the game more accessible. Nobody should have to feel embarrassed because they don't know something. There's a stigma about billiards instruction that's often fueled by egos which I have a strong distaste for. That's probably the biggest reason junior instruction and helping new players are so important to me, and I just happen to be lucky enough to work with many of the nation's and world's best too.

3. How long have you been teaching pool, and what types of players do you typically work with?

Please include your teaching certifications and the skill levels or goals you most often help with.

I've been teaching professionally for 10 years, and my students range from people picking up a cue for the first time to professionals and other instructors. My most common student tends to be about 550-650 Fargo, has plateaued in their game, and is interested in learning and doing the work to improve themselves with some professional direction.

Thanks to the live online coaching I provide right along with traditional in-person coaching, I've had the opportunity to work with an unusually broad range of people. Some of my favorite examples is that I've taught a student who was born without arms, a 103-year-old student whose first lessons were how to use Zoom even before we could do online instruction, and high-level junior players paving the way of the future. Every one of those students required a different approach.

4. Can you share an example of a student's progress that you're particularly proud of?

This could be a notable player or someone who reached a meaningful personal goal. What did your work together involve? Please only name students who are comfortable being mentioned.

Honestly, this is difficult for me because I don't believe someone's Fargo rating or tournament trophy automatically makes their improvement more meaningful than someone else's. The average student who spends one year with me usually improves their abilities by 100 Fargo points, 2 APA/TAP skill levels, etc.

I've had students overcome physical limitations, students who were older and learning the game later in life, juniors developing their competitive games, and players who simply wanted to become better than they were yesterday.

One thing I'm particularly proud of is helping players who have been stuck for a long time because they've been practicing the wrong things, the wrong ways.

For example, I've had students come to me after watching countless instructional videos and practicing for years, only to discover that a relatively small fundamental issue - stance, alignment, vision center, grip, or setup - was affecting everything else they were doing. Or, they thought their positioning was weak when really their inability to use patterns to make racks easier was disguised as positional problems.

Probably the progress I'm most proud of is when we can find breakthroughs in the mental aspects of the game. Improving emotional regulation and increasing the understanding and psychology of the people playing this game and how that can help my students gain an advantage over their opponents simply through a healthier mental approach--I mean, this game is supposed to be fun, right? That's it. That's what I'm most proud of. Helping people enjoy this game more. Performing better and winning more definitely does help make it more fun!

5. How would you describe your teaching approach, and what kind of student is it best suited for?

What should a prospective student know about working with you before booking?

I don't believe in a one-size-fits-all lesson. My job is to diagnose before I prescribe.

I want to see what the student is actually doing, understand their goals, and determine what is really limiting their performance. Then we work on the things that will have the greatest impact, in a very prioritized and structured format starting with making the weakest parts of their games the strongest.

I'm a big believer in both physical and mental fundamentals. A lot of players spend their time trying to make more balls when the real problem is what they're doing before the cue ever contacts the cue ball. With exception of the the most novice of beginners, our work often starts with some focus on the stuff between the ears before we attack the physical stuff.

I also believe strongly in purposeful practice. One of the phrases I use with students (borrowed from my Dad actually) is:

"Don't rehearse the curse."

If you repeatedly practice something incorrectly, you're not necessarily getting better - you may simply be getting better at doing the wrong thing. Sometimes you need to "reverse the curse". Intentionally miss the other way, not for compensating reasons, but to keep the fragile ego safe with a success--"I meant to do that, and I was successful!" is much less frustrating than doing the same thing repeatedly and hoping for a different result.

Prospective students should understand that I don't want to simply give them a list of things to work on. I want them to understand why we're working on them, and show them how to be their own coach so they can continue improving even when I'm not with them.

Contributor's later addendum to Question 5

Also I should add in question 5, that my model is different than most instructors in the sense that through live online instruction, I can see players much more frequently. Most often weekly or biweekly. This gives me a unique opportunity to build a long term coaching relationship and follow up on previous lessons much differently than the standard model of boot camps or long spans between lessons. I think one of the reasons why my program has been so successful and widely respected globally is because of the results we can earn with this approach compared to the limitations of trying to cram a lot of information into a long weekend with little or no follow up.

6. Do you believe someone needs to be a great pool player to be a great pool instructor? Why or why not?

How should a student weigh an instructor's playing ability against their ability to teach?

I think playing ability is extremely important! But it isn't the entire equation. At a very minimum, the instructor should be able to at least demonstrate what they teach.

Being able to do something and being able to teach somebody else how to do it are two entirely different skills, but they do work together.

A great instructor needs knowledge of the game, but also needs observation skills, communication skills, diagnostic ability, patience, and the ability to adapt to different learning styles.

I'd tell a student to look at the whole picture.

Ask:

Can this person play? Do they understand why things work? Can they identify what is actually wrong with my game?

Can they explain it in a way I understand? Can they give me a way to practice it? Can they tell whether I'm actually improving?

Those things matter just as much or more than someone's tournament résumé. Tournament background says "I've spent years working on my game". A proven coaching record with references says "I've spent years working on how to help you with your game."

I would also encourage students to look at an instructor's education and teaching credentials. Certifications aren't a guarantee that someone will be the right fit for you, but they can provide useful information about an instructor's training and commitment to the profession.

Finding a coach like myself who teaches full-time versus an instructor or player who teaches in spare time from their main job can also provide clues for prospective students.

7. What do you look for during a student's first lesson, and how do you decide together what to work on?

How does that change depending on the student's experience and goals?

Before I speak, I listen.

I want to know why the student came to see me. What do they want to accomplish? What do they think is wrong? What have they already tried, and why hasn't it worked? Then I watch them play.

I don't want to diagnose someone based solely on what they tell me because sometimes the player's perception of the problem isn't actually the root cause. I look at the entire process: stance, alignment, vision, grip, stroke, pre-shot routine, decision-making, cue-ball control, pattern play, speed control, how they approach the shot mentally, and more.

Then we prioritize and set SMART goals for short and long term growth. A beginner may need to establish a foundation. An intermediate player may need to eliminate a fundamental flaw or learn how to practice more effectively. An advanced player may have excellent mechanics but need help with mental management, combating fatigue, decision-making, patterns, consistency, or performance under pressure.

That's why two students of the same ability can come to me on the same day and receive completely different lessons. I've actually had people observe my lessons specifically to see whether everyone receives the same instruction. They don't. We don't start with a textbook here, but you do leave with a very unique one that we write together.

8. What should a student look for during their first lesson to determine whether the instructor is a good fit?

What are encouraging signs, and what concerns should they speak up about?

After making sure your personalities don't clash, the biggest thing is whether the instructor is trying to understand you.

Is the instructor asking questions? Are they watching you play? Are they explaining why they're making a recommendation?

Are they checking to make sure you understand and adjusting how they're teaching or expecting you to adjust how you learn?

Do you feel like you have the tools to keep improving without them watching and have reinforcement drills to practice with measured goals?

One of the things I would be cautious about is an instructor who immediately starts giving you a huge amount of information without first understanding your goals or observing your game.

More information isn't necessarily better instruction. Sometimes it is unfortunately an ego flex for the instructor to show how much they know. The instructor should be more interested in identifying how to help you correct an isolated few things, not a big wide spectrum.

A good lesson should create clarity, not confusion. My philosophy is that we shouldn't rush to teach more pool, we should work to

And students should feel comfortable asking questions. If you don't understand something, say so. A good instructor shouldn't be offended by that.

[The response contains an unfinished sentence. The contributor supplied the clarification below.]

Contributor's later clarification to Question 8

A good lesson should create clarity, not confusion. My philosophy is that we shouldn't rush to teach more pool, we should work to find out what's stopping this player from playing their best pool.

9. What should a student realistically expect to leave their first lesson with, and how should they evaluate progress afterward?

I don't think anyone should expect a single lesson to completely transform their game. What they should expect is clarity. They should understand what their instructor believes is holding them back, what they need to work on, and how they should work on it.

They should leave with something they can take to the table.

Then the real test happens afterward. Did you practice differently? Do you understand your mistakes better? Are you becoming more consistent? Are you making better decisions?

Are you able to reproduce what you learned without the instructor standing next to you?

That's important because the instructor's job isn't to make the student dependent on the instructor. The goal is to make the student increasingly capable of diagnosing and improving their own game.

I want my students to eventually have the tools to become their own coaches, so when we work together again, our time together is more of a want than a need.

10. If a student didn't have a good experience with their last instructor, what would you advise them to do before booking another lesson?

How can they identify what wasn't working and communicate what they need next time?

First, figure out exactly what didn't work--objectively, not subjectively. Try to leave feelings out of it and look solely at the facts. Don't just say, "That instructor sucked."

Ask yourself:

Was the instructor's teaching style wrong for me? What type of teaching style is right for me? What is my learning style and who is the best fit for me to learn from? Perhaps the instructor was technically very good for some people but simply wasn't the right teacher for the way I learn?

Did I get too much information? Not enough? Did the instructor understand my goal? Did I understand what I was supposed to practice? Did I actually get a diagnosis? Was it a personality mismatch?

Then tell the next instructor.

I'd much rather have a student tell me, "My last instructor gave me a lot of information, but I left not knowing what to practice," than simply say, "I didn't like my last lesson." That's useful information that I can use to ensure this player gets the help they need, whether it's with me or someone else.

And I'd tell students not to automatically conclude that a disappointing lesson means the previous instructor was a bad instructor. Sometimes it's simply a bad fit. Finding the right instructor is a two-way process.

The student needs to communicate what they want, and the instructor needs to determine whether they can actually help that student. Again, egos need to be left at the door. Not every coach is right for every student, and not every student is right for every coach.

If the student has a notion they are a better player than the instructor, they probably won't be very listening as deeply as they could.

And if the instructor feels the need to show off how much they know to protect their ego, they won't be teaching as effectively as they could.

We as humans all need to feel safe in our space and that often starts with humility so the ego isn't making us do things our logical brain wouldn't.

Ultimately, I think a student should be able to answer three questions after working with an instructor:

What is keeping me from playing better?

What specifically am I going to do about it?

How will I know if it's working?

If you can answer those three questions, you're on the right track.