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

Recently, I posted online video [NV J.40](#) that takes a look at a new approach to the pre-stance routine – the steps you follow to get down into your best personal stance. In general, you should not try to emulate somebody’s stance or force your body into a “textbook” or an “orthodox” position. The ideal stance can vary a lot from one person to the next based on body type, height, natural feet angles (especially if you are pigeon toed or duck footed), back/neck/hip/leg flexibility and strength, chest and belly sizes, etc. For demonstrations related to generally recommended stance “best practices,” differences between the pool and snooker stances, and advice for how to find your personal best stance, see my previous stance videos: [NV D.7](#) and [NV J.21](#).

There are two common approaches to the pre-stance routine. One is to first stand behind the cue, where you can visualize the line of the shot from a comfortable standing position. Then you walk into the stance by first placing your back foot on or close to the shot line. And then you step to the side with the front foot, trying to keep your head over the line of the shot the entire time. Notice in [NV J.40](#) how my face is square to the shot and along the shot line during the entire pre-stance routine. Another common pre-stance routine is to start with the back foot already in the final position, with your head again over the shot line. Then you just move the front foot forward and out as you bring your head straight down.



Image 1 New Starting Position

Recently, I have evolved my pre-stance routine into the following. As shown in **Image 1**, I first lock my vision over the shot line and place my feet in the final stance positions. I waggle and adjust a bit until everything feels and looks perfect. At the same time, I am aiming and aligning while standing. My head and grip hand are along the shot line before dropping into my stance. I lock my eyes on my object ball (OB) target (or ghost-ball position) along the required line of the shot. This helps guide me straight down and helps me

align the cue along the necessary shot line. I call this my laser-guided drop, thinking of my eye gaze as laser beams intensely focused on my target. I do not look at the cue ball (CB) until I am already down to fine tune the position of the tip; although, I can see the CB in my peripheral vision as I drop down. If your feet and head are in the right places, the tip will automatically end up where you want after a little practice. With a good pre-stance routine, including aiming and aligning while standing, there will be less need to adjust your aim or alignment once you are down on the shot.

Remember to always start your pre-stance routine with your head and eyes in the right place, with your personal vision center over the shot line. For more information, see the "[vision center](http://billiards.colostate.edu)" FAQ page at billiards.colostate.edu. With your vision center aligned properly, you then place the feet and body relative to your vision-center head position. And keep your head over the shot line during the entire pre-stance routine. Do not start with your head offline and bring it in from the side as you drop into the stance. It will be very difficult to align accurately and consistently with this approach. Again, start with your vision center over the shot line.

To get down into the stance, you can bend at the waist and/or bend at the knees as necessary based on comfort. I am tall and like to get my chin close to the cue, and I prefer deep knee bend to limit discomfort in my neck, back, and hamstring (see **Image 2a**). You can also widen your feet to help get your body lower more easily.

If you have trouble with your chest or belly being in the way during the stroke, you can move your back foot back and front foot forward to create more clearance. As shown in **Image 2b**, this results in a more closed stance. The disadvantage is: more neck and back contortion will be required to get the face square with the eyes level since the face will naturally point away from the shot. If you do not have trouble with clearance, but you experience neck or back discomfort, you might consider opening your stance slightly, by bringing the front foot back and/or the back foot forward (see **Image 2a**). All of this will depend on your body type and situation, and you might not be able to have your face totally square with your eyes perfectly level, but that is okay. All you can do is move around to find the best you can do without too much discomfort.



(a) open stance



(b) closed stance

Image 2 Open and closed stance

You should keep the grip hand along the shot line (with the head also over the shot line) as you drop down into your stance. You can even bring the entire cue into the line (pointing up) before getting down (see **Image 3a**), so everything comes into and stays along the line of the shot the entire time. And as shown in **Image 3b**, you can also pre-place the cue with the tip at the CB and place the bridge hand under the cue as you drop down.

If you have trouble figuring out how close to stand to the CB and where to place your feet, you can work backwards from your stance to find the required feet positions, and to see where your grip hand is relative to your hip when you are standing. As demonstrated in [NV J.40](#), when practicing, you can place the tip at the CB, place your grip hand on the cue at your normal position, move your feet forward until the grip hand is in the right position relative to your hip, and then waggle to place your feet more accurately. This technique can be used with the other pre-stance approaches also.



(a) cue along shot line



(b) tip on shot line

Image 3 Cue and tip along shot line

You can also use a mirror to help practice your head positioning and laser-guided drop. You can place a stand-up mirror in front of the table, use a stool in front of bedroom wall mirror, or bridge on a bathroom counter. This will let you visually confirm that your head drops straight down with your face square and eyes level.

If you need to make significant adjustments after you are down, you should get up and restart the process. You need to be careful to not adjust your aim too much while down on the shot because you cannot see the angles as well in the low position. You need to learn to trust the aim and alignment you established while standing. Sometimes it can help to first look at the shot from far away (and even crouch down with a one-eyed squint) to see how straight a shot might be or to make sure there is clearance past obstacle balls. This can also be helpful when the CB and OB are close together with a cut angle. Standing farther away and with a tall look might help you better see the required angle and line of the shot.

One advantage of my new approach is that you are closer to the table with a higher look at the shot, where you can better see the shot angle and required aiming line. Also, by carefully placing each foot before getting down, they are more likely to end up in the right positions. Also, the new approach encourages you to spend a little extra time aligning and aiming while standing, before getting down into your stance. This is probably one of the most important elements of any pre-shot routine, so doing it more carefully can only help. Be sure to practice with any changes you make to your pre-stance routine. You need to groove it in so it becomes automatic ... in other words, your new "natural."

One disadvantage of the new approach is: you need to start with your head in a slightly unnatural position, but it is not hard to find the position since it is over the shot line (especially if you do the mirror practice). Another possible disadvantage is you might not accurately place the bridge hand on the table by "helicoptering down," as compared to sliding in from farther away. However, with practice, I think either approach is equally good, and it is still possible to slide in some with the new method.

Again, you should use whatever approach works best for you. It does not make much difference how you arrive at your stance as long as you can do so accurately and consistently. I have found that what works best for me is my new pre-stance routine, where I place everything carefully before getting down. I hope the new approach helps you too. Be sure to watch online video [NV J.40](#) that demonstrates everything described in this article.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave



[NV D.7](#) – Pool Fundamentals – The Stance – from Vol-I of the Billiard University instructional video series

[NV J.21](#) – How to Find the Perfect Pool/Snooker/Billiards Stance

[NV J.40](#) – Pre-Stance Routine ... A New Approach

PS:

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

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