"Safeties You Must Master"
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ILLUSTRATED PRINCIPLES

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

Recently, I posted online video **NV J.39** that demonstrates the Top 10 categories of safeties that every pool player must learn to master. Effective defensive play is one of the main things that separates the great players from the good ones, so it is an important skill to practice. Diagrams for all shots in the video are available in the Billiard University (BU) Safety Examples document linked in the YouTube video description (see **Images 1-3**).
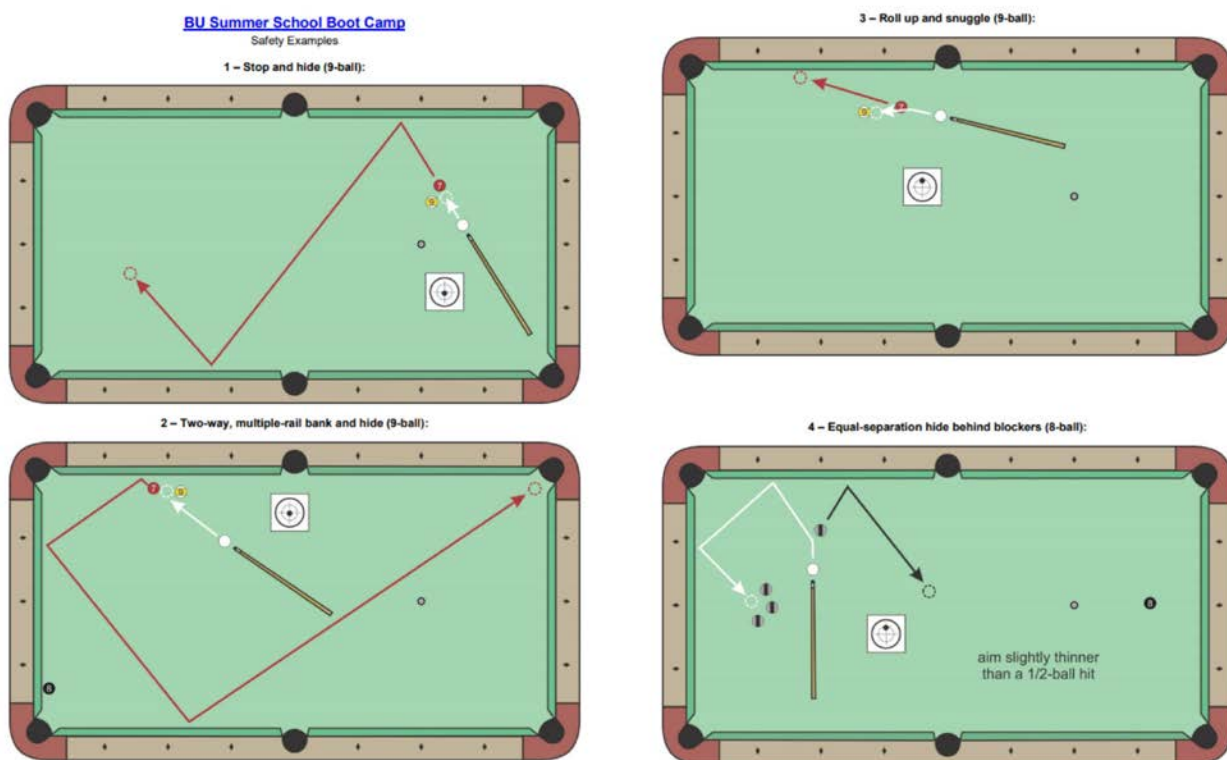

Image 1 BU Safety Examples (shots 1-4)

1. Stop and Hide

The most basic type of safety is a simple stop and hide. **Shot 1** (top-left) in Image 1 is from 9-ball example where there is no good shot at the 7 but the safety is very easy, assuming you can hit a stop shot. As demonstrated in the video, if you need to pull the cue ball (CB) back slightly, you can aim the tip at the stop-shot position and just drop it a bit. And if you need to roll the CB forward slightly, you can again aim the tip at the stop-shot position and just raise it a bit.

Shot 2 (bottom-left) in Image 1 is a similar example, but here there is a two-way shot opportunity. You plan to hide the CB behind the 9 while also attempting to bank the 7 off 3 rails to the top-right corner. If you miss the 7, you leave your opponent in a tough spot. And if you make the 7, you can run out for the win.

2. Roll Up and Snuggle

Shot 3 (top-right) in Image 1 is also a good safety opportunity. There is no shot at the 7, but you can easily roll up on the 9 to snooker your opponent.

3. Equal-Separation Hide Behind Blockers

Shot 4 (bottom-right) in Image 1 is another very reliable type of safety, playing 8-ball as stripes. You just need to roll the CB and aim for slightly thinner than a ½-ball hit, as covered in **NV J.38**, my recently-posted speed control video.

4. Finesse Equal-Separation Hides

Shot 5 (top-left) in Image 2 uses the same equal-separation principle as Shot 4. The downside here is you leave your opponent a chance to jump over the stripe for the win. **Shot 6** (bottom-left) in Image 2 is another equal-separation safe, where you can straddle a blocker. One inevitable downside, as demonstrated in the video, is if your opponent is good at aiming kick shots, he or she might be able to get a good hit and tie up the 8 with the 9.
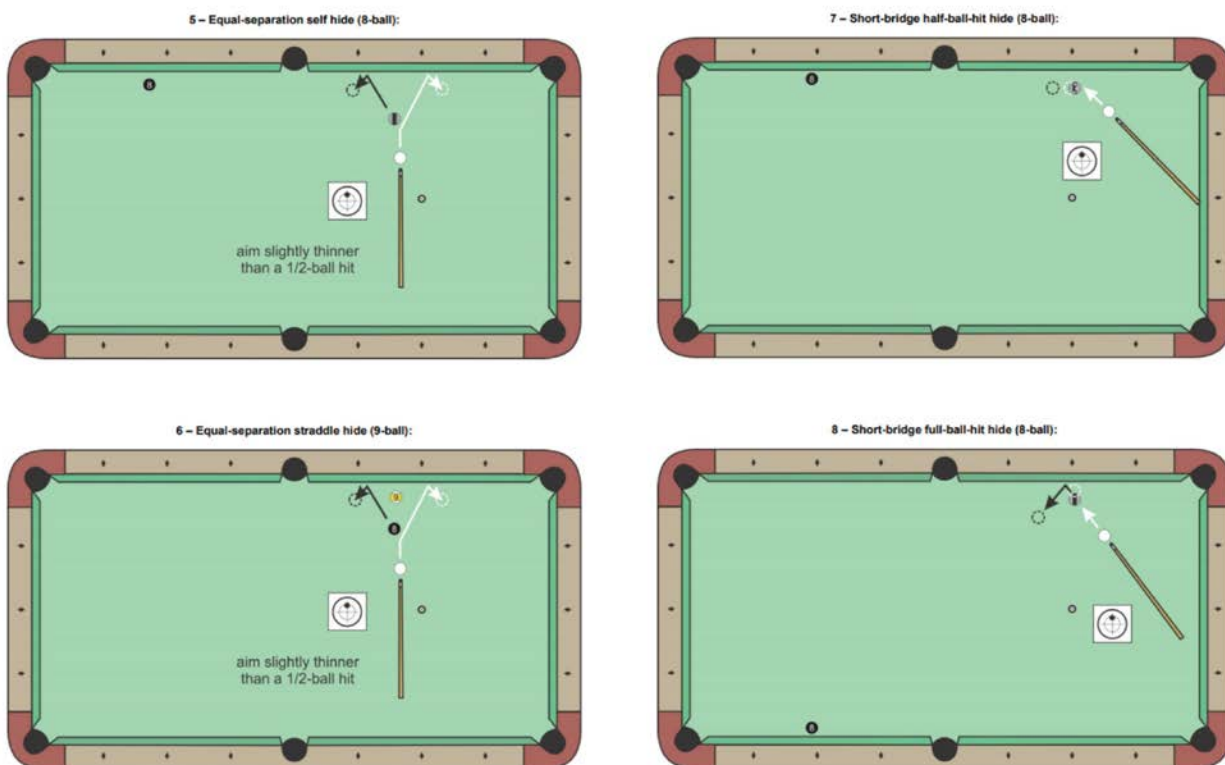

5 – Equal-separation self hide (8-ball):

aim slightly thinner than a 1/2-ball hit

7 – Short-bridge half-ball-hit hide (8-ball):

6 – Equal-separation straddle hide (9-ball):

aim slightly thinner than a 1/2-ball hit

8 – Short-bridge full-ball-hit hide (8-ball):

Image 2 BU Safety Examples (shots 5-8)

5. Finesse Fractional-Ball Hides

Shots 7 (top-right) and 8 (bottom-right) in Image 2 and Shot 9 (top-left) in Image 3 are common finesse safeties. In **Shot 7**, a ½-ball hit gives good results. As recommended and demonstrated in **NV J.38**, with finesse shots it is best to use a short stroke to control your speed. In **Shot 8**, a full-ball hit gets the job done. And in **Shot 9**, a very thin hit results in a good safety. Notice in **NV J.39** how I use a very short bridge length to help ensure I use a very short and soft stroke. Shot 9 is a very effective safety causing your opponent to go off multiple cushions or attempt a massé kick as demonstrated in the video.
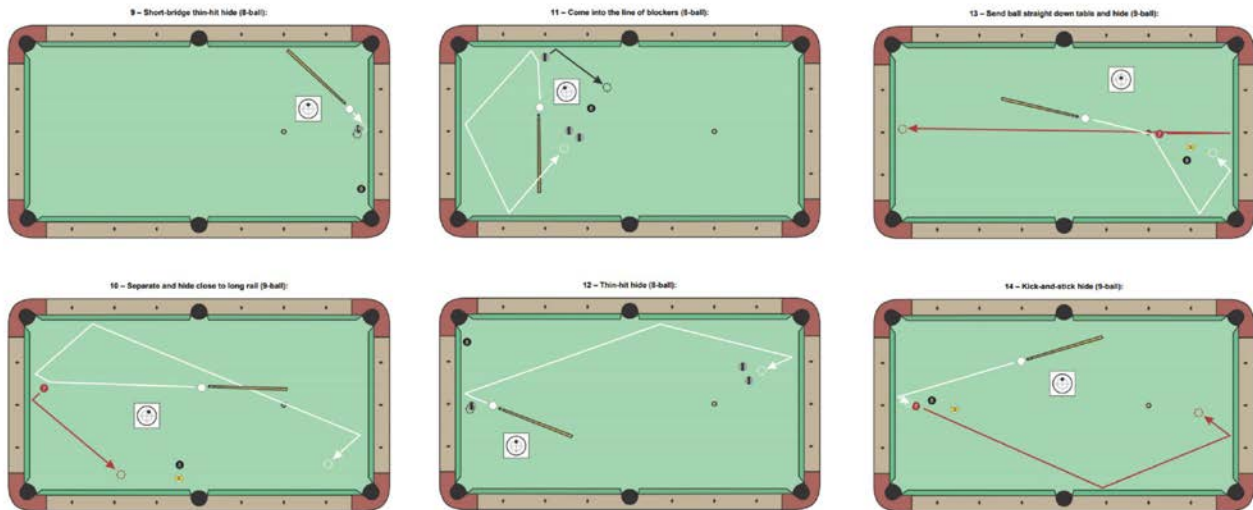
Image 3 BU Safety Examples (shots 9-14)

6. Separate and Hide Against Long Rail

Shot 10 (bottom-left) in Image 3 is another common type of safety where you create distance between the CB and OB, sending both balls close to a long rail with blockers in between. As demonstrated in the video, an opponent good with massé kicks might try to tie up the 7 with the 8 and 9, but you are still a favorite to win against most players.

7. Come into the Line of Blockers

Shot 11 (top-middle) in Image 3 is an 8-ball example where you could use a full hit to snooker the CB from the 8; however, as demonstrated in the video, you leave a chance for any decent jumper to win the game from there. A better play is to send the CB behind the two stripes while also trying to block the pocket with the 3rd stripe. The CB comes into the line of the blockers with this shot, so a wide range of CB speeds will still snooker your opponent. Ideally, you can leave the CB touching or very close to the stripes to greatly limit your opponent's options.

8. Thin-Hit Hide

Shot 12 (bottom-middle) in Image 3 is another useful safety technique where you thin a nearby object ball (OB) to create distance and snooker your opponent. When you thin a ball, it does not move very much and the CB direction is very predictable. Even if you do not hide the CB, you can still leave your opponent with a tough shot. And with the hide, you are a heavy favorite to win.

9. Send Ball Straight Down Table and Hide

Shot 13 (top-right) in Image 3 is another common safety situation, where you send the OB straight down the table and hide behind blockers.

10. Kick-and-Stick Hide

A final common type of safety is a kick-and-stick like **Shot 14** (bottom-right) in Image 3. You want to use a rolling CB with a shot like this since a ball rolling nearly straight into a cushion rebounds with stun. Even if the 7 is off the cushion more, this type of shot still works well if you are careful with your aim. This can be a very effective safety. You can snooker your opponent, create distance, force your opponent to go off two or more rails, and leave the OB off the cushion some where it is a smaller target. As illustrated in the video, the worst place to leave the OB is about a ball off the cushion where it is a "big ball" with a very large margin for error with CB direction.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from my Top 10 safety video **NV J.39**. Be sure to dedicate practice time to these important types of shots. Again, the shot diagrams, if you want to use them as a drill, are available in the Billiard University (BU) Safety Examples document linked in the YouTube video description. Also, many more shots, and much more information dealing with defensive play, can be found in Volume III of the Video Encyclopedia of Eight Ball (VEEB) and Volume IV of the Video Encyclopedia of Nine-ball and Ten-ball (VENT) available at *drdavebilliards.com*.

Good luck with your game,
Dr. Dave

NV J.38 – Top 10 Speed Control Tips and Drills
NV J.39 – Top 10 Pool Safeties You Must Master

normal video

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 PBIA 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.