

Butt Aiming

by Tom Simpson © August 2001

Aiming is difficult to talk about. We all do it, but describing exactly how we do it, figuring out what matters, and telling someone how to get better at it – well, it's a challenge. Let's look at some of what matters, and see if I can convince you to try just one thing.

Pool is probably the most precise game on the planet. One way to get better is to find ways to improve your precision. We can work on precision in aiming, sighting, speed, cueball contact, planning, position, bridge placement, foot placement, and on and on. Working on precision expands your awareness of small movements and body position, balance, and feedback. It improves your fine skills, your strategic thinking, and your consistency. **Every little bit of control you gain raises your game.** It all matters.

Aiming is a large subject. I'm assuming you're already a pretty good shot. You may not know how you do it, but you can aim and shoot and a good percentage of the time, you make the shot. We're going to work on how to get more precise about the final, tiny aiming adjustments that make the difference between missed and made. Part of getting better is noticing finer and finer details.

OK. Do your pre-shot routine as usual. Get into position and aim as you normally do. Do any form checks you're currently doing (bridge distance, stance stability, chin height, forearm vertical, whatever).

Here's the new part. This is very simple, but very subtle: Now that you're in position and pretty much correctly aimed, **make final micro-aim adjustments by swaying your butt (yours - not the cue's) very slightly.** The cue will move with you, changing your aim as you sway.

You'll be able to **see the correct aim as you sway past it.** Once you can see it, home in on it and then stop swaying. Settle into a solid, unwavering stance at this position. Relax whatever you have to relax so that your butt is no longer moving at all. Shoot from this position, with no hip movement.

My opinion is that a good percentage of our misses, as better players, are due to either or both of:

1. Small, unconscious swaying movement of the hips. If you're not solid in your stance, it's like shooting at a moving target. If you're moving, this practice will make you aware of it, and will fix it because you will *consciously* settle and cease swaying.
2. Imperfect alignment to the shot. We go down into position, get pretty close to properly aimed, but can't see that **we're not perfectly aimed because our body is not perfectly aligned to see and know when we're perfect.** By making these *slight* side-to-side movements, we can see when we're right as we pass through right, and then home in on it.

This unusual practice (let's call it Butt Aiming) may also reveal unnecessary movements during your stroke, and help you feel balance changes worth making. This technique is a doorway to an expanded perception of the fine details of aiming. It will improve your sense of when your aim is right, and will raise your percentage and your confidence on difficult shots. Don't just read this – spend 10 minutes on the table, swaying, seeing, and feeling. Get your butt moving.