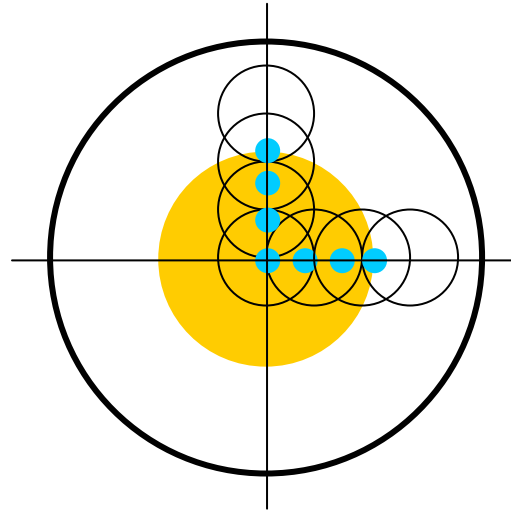


Count Your Tips

by Tom Simpson © August 2002

Alright, I'm tired of hearing players talking about "tips of english" without a clear understanding of what they mean by a "tip". For example, one player might say they hit a shot $1\frac{1}{2}$ tips out from center, while another player might describe the exact same tip position as 3 tips out.

On the diagram, look at the tip circles near the outer edge of the ball. I think it would be more clear if we described this tip location as $1\frac{1}{2}$ tips, because that's how far we're actually displacing the tip. Unfortunately, that's not how most players talk about it. Because most players find it more convenient to describe these $\frac{1}{2}$ tip moves as 1 tip, we say we hit 3 tips out. Since it's what most players use, this is the counting method we'll use here.



The diagram shows a useful way to understand the tips of english concept. The cueball is $2\frac{1}{4}$ " in diameter. The gold circle centered on the cueball is $1\frac{1}{8}$ " in diameter and shows how far out from center you can strike the cueball without miscueing.

The smaller circles show four basic tip positions on the cueball. Each tip circle is $\frac{1}{2}$ " (13mm) in diameter, which is a typical tip diameter. The diagram shows a center ball tip position, 1 tip out, 2 tips out, and 3 tips out. That means each time you move 1 tip, that's about $\frac{1}{4}$ ". You can discriminate more finely if you choose.

The blue circles show the tip contact point with the cueball. In other words, these are where your chalkmarks would appear on the ball for each tip position. Notice how, for each successively further out tip position, our chalkmark is further away from the center of the tip circle. Notice how, as you get farther out on the cueball, the chalkmark (the tip/ball contact point) also moves closer to the edge of the tip. Notice how, at 3 tips out, you're on the very edge of a miscue.

Note that, while we think and aim with the center of our tip, the *only* time we actually strike the cueball with the center of the tip is when we hit dead center on the cueball. Because we think with the center of our tip, but often hit with the edge, that gold circle in the diagram looks small to us. "I can get way farther out on the cueball than that." Sorry, you can't. The gold circle shows how far out from center you can *contact* the cueball without miscueing. Again, look at the chalkmarks.

The diagram is actual size, so you can address the diagram with your cue at each of the tip positions, and learn how to see them more accurately. You can also set up and hit a practice cueball or a striped ball and then look at your actual chalkmarks after each shot to see where you *really* contacted the ball versus what you *tried* to do. Try it. This is really worth doing.

These tip positions can be used to help you make conscious decisions about how much english you plan to apply on each shot. This also helps you to calibrate your spin objectively, gauging it with repeatable precision. So why do we care about this? **Developing a more precise, more conscious awareness of where you're striking the cueball will make your results more consistent and more predictable.** Ya gotta like that.