

Bob Jewett



Spin It In

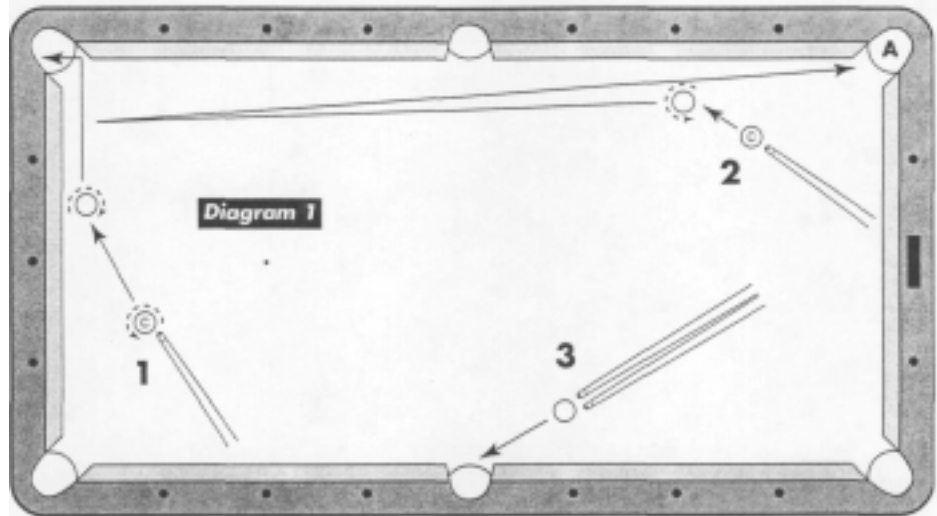
Does "get-in" English really exist?

Is it possible to help an object ball into the pocket by transferring side spin to it? An example is Shot 1 in Diagram 1 where inside (right) English on the cue ball becomes left on the object ball. When the object ball hits the far jaw of the corner pocket, the spin will help it enter the pocket, or so say the believers of "get-in" English. Some even say that "impossible" shots to the side pocket will go if helping English is used.

Is this effect real? If so, is there any shot using it that will quickly convince a skeptic? After working with the shot for a few hours, I'm sure that the answer to the second question is no; there is no obvious demonstration of the effect's usefulness. The first question remains: is there even a marginal benefit in using the technique?

To get a basic feel for the size of the effect, first consider how much spin can be transferred to the object ball. In Shot 2, it is possible to shoot the object ball slightly away from the rail to bank off the short rail at the left and back into pocket A; this is an absolutely standard bank known to all one-pocket players. For a half-ball cut as shown, no added spin is needed on the cue ball; just the rubbing of the cut is enough to "twist" the ball back to the corner. Try it.

Now put the cue ball in the place of the object ball and shoot the cue ball along the same reverse-bank path and note how much side is needed. Using that same spin, aim towards the pocket and see if the spin

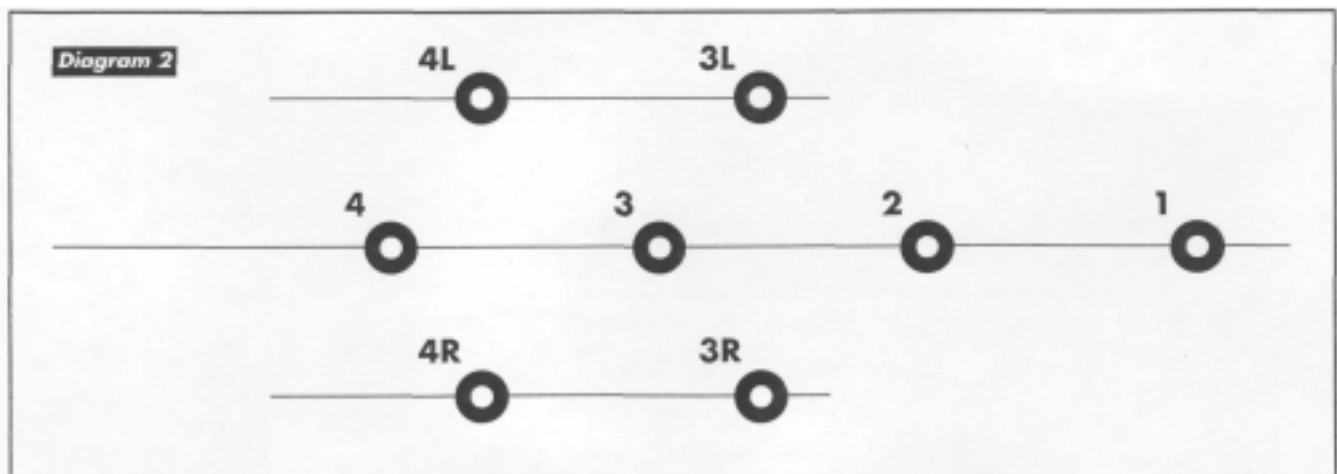


makes the pocket larger or smaller as you use left and right. Can you detect a difference? (The cue ball is used here instead of an object ball because it is easier to direct to a particular part of the pocket with spin.) Try shooting the cue ball into the side pocket from unfavorable angles with that same small amount of side, as in Shot 3.

Let's try to measure the effect that may have been evident in the above primitive tests. Because the effect is clearly small, a very careful test setup is needed. If you're patient enough to carry out the following tests, please send your results to me. I'll arrange for a free one-year subscription for each of the three best submissions.

It's not easy to drive a ball precisely along a given line with a known amount of side spin. The following is a simple way that needs a minimum of equipment: a sheet of clear, hard plastic, self-adhesive paper reinforcements, lined notebook paper, tape, and a permanent marker.

The plastic sheet should be marked with a straight line down the center. Place paper reinforcements at 1-2-3-4 exactly in line and a couple of millimeters more than one ball apart. When balls are placed in the holes, the result is a four-ball perfectly straight combo. Now draw two lines to the sides as shown, one inch from the center line. Place reinforcements at 3L, 3R, 4L,

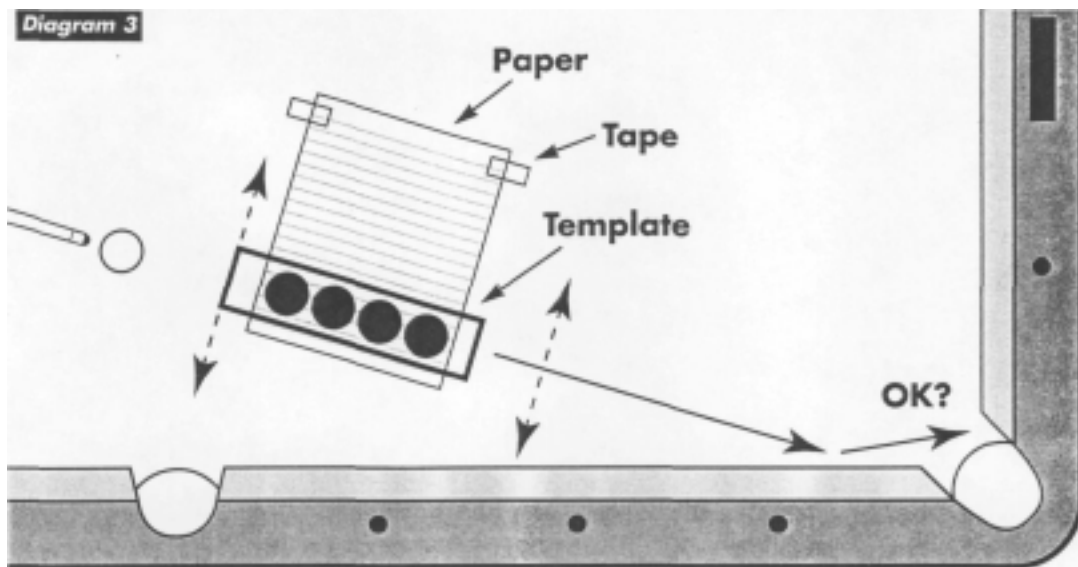


4R so that balls at 4L-3L-2-1 are all separated by two millimeters, and similarly for 4R-3R-2-1. (See **Diagram 2** for a basic outline.)

Tape the lined paper to the table as shown in **Diagram 3** with a slight angle to the rail. Place the plastic template with its center line along one of the paper lines, and place balls — preferably the 1-2-3-4 balls for consistency — in the holes for the straight — in combination.

Shoot at medium speed, and move the template back and forth to find the extreme sides of the pocket. Be sure to keep the template parallel to the lines on the paper. The distance between the extreme positions of the template is the effective width of the pocket from this angle at the speed you used. Make a note of that width.

Next, place balls in the 4L-3L-2-1 holes, and repeat the experiment.



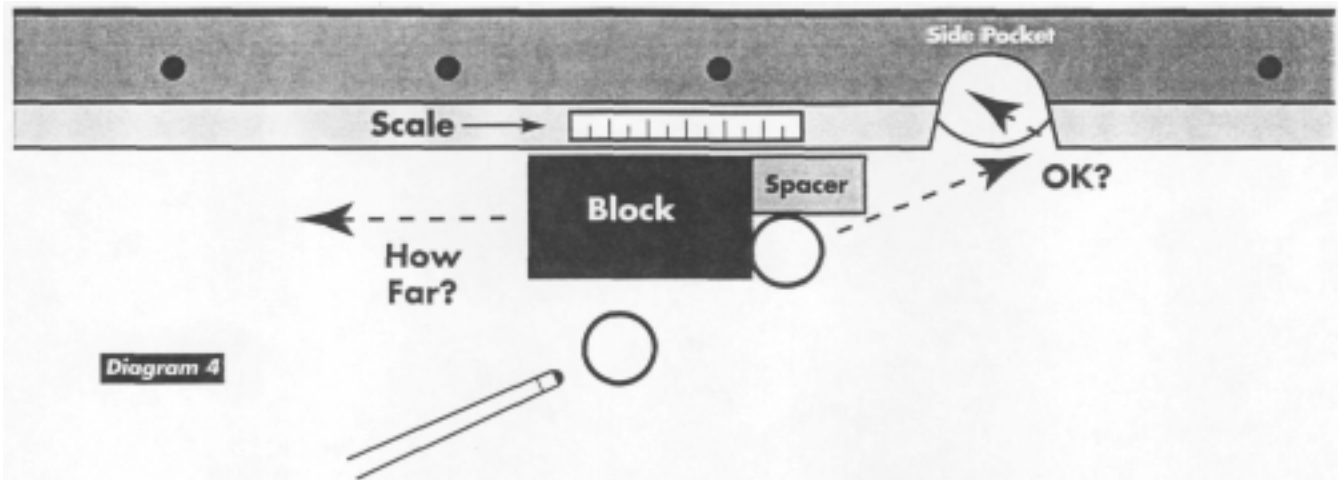
With this setup, the one ball will have "get-in" English from the transferred side from the cut angle. The two extreme points will likely be different from the first set. The number to record is again their separation. Repeat the test with the 4R-3R-2-1 spots, which will give the one ball "get-out" English.

To be really thorough, do this for several

speeds and for pocket approaches from both the left and right. In all cases the "extreme point" is where the shot goes half the time, and its position should be measured to millimeter accuracy.

The effect for side-pocket shots could be measured similarly, but there is a faster test: the idea is to see if spin can improve the shallowest possible angle. You need two

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blocks and a scale, as shown in **Diagram 4**. The ball is placed in an exact position by sliding the large block along the nose of the rail to a point on the scale, and placing the small block flat against the nose of the cushion. Repeatability should be within a small fraction of a millimeter. The exact dimensions aren't critical.

Once the object ball is precisely placed, remove the blocks, place the cue ball, and try to shoot the object ball into the side pocket.

First, find the extreme location for straight — in with no side spin and various speeds. Carefully note the position on the scale. Now make the shot slightly more extreme and try various combinations of speed and side spin.

Is it possible to extend the range of side pocket angles? By how much and with what spin? For this shot, you need to report the distance off the rail (small block thickness) and improvement (or degradation for

the wrong side) in how far up the rail the object ball is. You aren't looking for a 50-50 percentage; just find the limits of where the shot is barely possible.

Please send your write-ups to me in care of this magazine or by email to jewett@net-com.com. Neatness, completeness and promptness count. I'll summarize the results in a future column.

Bob Jewett is the Secretary of the USBA, the governing body for carom billiards in the US.