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*Supporting narrated video (NV) demonstrations, high-speed video (HSV) clips, technical proofs (TP), and all of my past articles can be accessed and viewed online at [billiards.colostate.edu](http://billiards.colostate.edu). The reference numbers used in the articles help you locate the resources on the website. If you have a slow or inconvenient Internet connection, you might want to view the resources from a CD-ROM or DVD. Details can be found online at: [dr-dave-billiards.com](http://dr-dave-billiards.com).*

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I am very excited to start a new series of articles highlighting drills and principles from a project I recently finished with fellow BD columnist Bob Jewett entitled: “[The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#).” Like the “[Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots \(VEPS\)](#)” series, which I released with past BD columnist Tom Ross several years ago, VEPP is also a 5-disc instructional DVD collection. VEPP is an organized and methodical training program and pool workout. It teaches you how to develop, assess, and track progress of skills in all aspects of your game. VEPS showed all principles and shot types possible at the table and VEPP shows you how to develop the skills required to apply the VEPS knowledge.

An outline of the collection of drills Bob and I cataloged, organized into 5 major areas and 30 distinct categories, is listed below. VEPP includes over 175 drills and challenges within the 30 categories. The complete and detailed outline can be viewed online at: [dr-dave-billiards.com/vepp](http://dr-dave-billiards.com/vepp). Here’s the list of the main categories:

#### **VEPP I – Fundamentals and Basic CB Control**

- 1. Preliminaries and Fundamentals**
- 2. Aiming and Cut Shots**
- 3. Speed Control**
- 4. Stop Shot**
- 5. Follow Shot**
- 6. Draw Shot**
- 7. Follow and Draw**

#### **VEPP II –Position Control and English**

- 8. CB Control Basics**
- 9. Wagon Wheel Drills**
- 10. Basic Target Practice**
- 11. English Basics**
- 12. English Effects**
- 13. Position Control Basics**
- 14. Advanced Target Practice**
- 15. Center-of-Table Position**
- 16. Position Control Challenges**

#### **VEPP III – Patterns and Safety Play**

- 17. 9-ball and 8-ball Progressive Practice**
- 18. 9-ball Pattern Drills**
- 19. 8-ball Pattern Drills**
- 20. Safety Play**

#### **VEPP IV – Banks, Kicks, and Advanced Shots**

- 21. One-Rail Kicks**
- 22. Two-Rail Kicks**

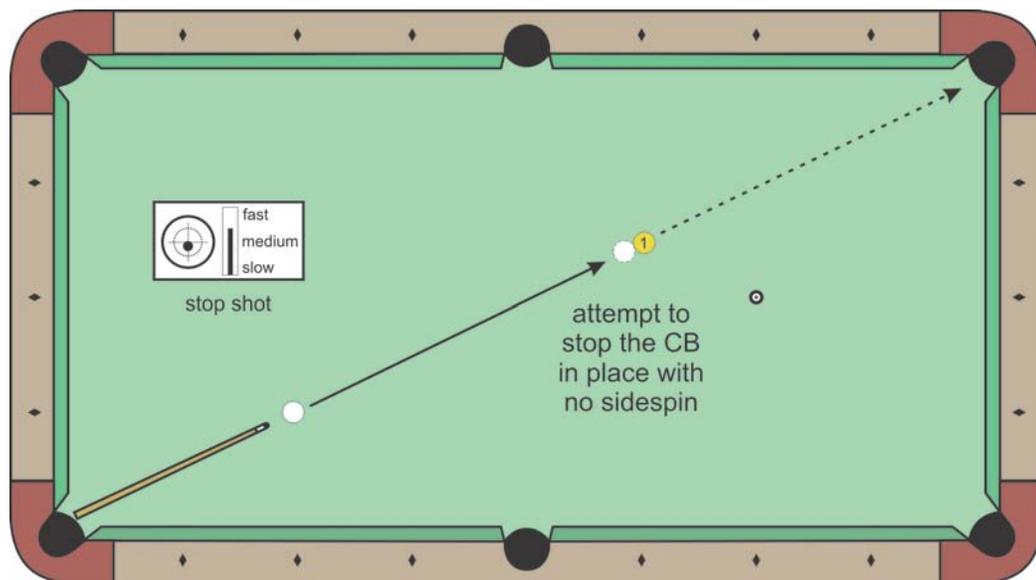
- 23. Three-Rail Kicks
- 24. Banks
- 25. Jacked-up Shots
- 26. Jump Shots
- 27. Massé Shots

#### VEPP V – Challenges, Games, and Advice

- 28. Rating and Challenge Drills
- 29. Drills For Special Skills
- 30. Custom Drills
- 31. Checking out a Table

The list above is a good “catalog of skills” check list for evaluating your game. All of the skills listed are important for a complete and well-rounded pool game. The drills and challenges in VEPP were designed to help you evaluate and improve your skills in each area. Look down the list and ask yourself which might be your weak areas. If you don’t know your deficiencies or don’t think you have any, well-designed drills can help you do a reality check by providing an unbiased assessment and evaluation. Through this series of articles, we’ll look at useful drills for many of the skill areas above. Let’s start with a couple of topics from the first disc: [“VEPP I – Fundamentals and Basic Position Control.”](#)

Probably one of the most important fundamentals for a solid pool game is having consistent and well-positioned visual alignment. **Diagram 1** illustrates a good drill to help you detect and correct possible issues with visual alignment. Set up a long straight-in shot along the diagonal of the table. The object ball (OB) should be equidistant from the cue ball (CB) and pocket for maximum challenge. Mark the CB and OB positions with hole-reinforcement labels (“little white donuts”) to make it easy to repeat the drill. Shoot the shot at least ten times, attempting to stop the CB in place with no side spin. Take note (or have a helper take note) of what happens to the CB on each shot. Does it drift left or right? Does it have right or left sidespin? Assuming your stroke is fairly consistent, if there is a consistent pattern to the shot imperfections, your visual alignment might be off slightly.



**Diagram 1** “Vision center” drill

Every person has a head position, usually fairly centered over the cue, that will allow him or her to best visualize center-ball tip position and the straight line of a shot. We call this head position the person’s “**vision**”

**center.** If your head is to the left or right of the “vision center” alignment, you will not likely perceive the line of the shot or the center of the CB correctly. As illustrated in Diagram 2a, where the cue is aligned along the straight line of the shot, if your head is to the right of your “vision center,” the cue will appear to be angled to the right and you will typically compensate by angling your aim to the left (as indicated by the yellow line). This will send the CB left of target, sending the OB to the right. As illustrated in Diagram 2b, if your head is to the left of your “vision center,” the cue will appear to be angled to the left and you will typically compensate by angling your aim to the right. This will send the CB right of target, sending the OB to the left. See my [July ‘11 article](#) for more information and additional illustrations related to this topic. **NV C.1** demonstrates the drill and illustrates the effects described above. The drill will help you find your personal “vision center,” and this should allow you to perceive tip position and your line of aim more accurately, not just with straight shots, but with all shots.



a.) head right of “vision center”

b.) head left of “vision center”

### **Diagram 2 Visual alignment perception errors**

Another important fundamental is a good pre-shot routine. On VEPP, we recommend that you consciously practice and reinforce a consistent and purposeful pre-shot routine while working on drills. Doing this will help you incorporate the routine as a natural part of your game when playing. **NV C.2** provides some good advice on things you might consider if your pre-shot routine is not well developed or complete. The routine can vary from one player to the next, but here are some generally recommended guidelines:

1. **Visualize the Shot:** Determine what CB motion and final position you want and think about the tip position and speed necessary to accomplish the shot.
2. **Chalk Up:** Make it a habit to chalk the tip before each shot.
3. **Aim and Align:** While still standing straight up, visualize the desired aim and get your head and vision into alignment with the line of the shot.
4. **Form Stance:** Move your body and cue forward into the stance, keeping your vision aligned with the desired line of the shot.

5. Fiddle and Adjust: With your cue still, and with the tip close to the CB, make small adjustments in your cue alignment and tip position until you are confident you have the cue along the desired aiming line. If any big adjustments are required, go back to step 3.
6. Warm up: Take some warm-up strokes to verify you can guide the cue along the desired line while staying relaxed.
7. Pause and Verify: With the cue still again, recheck the tip position and cue alignment. At this point, you want to be confident and have no doubt or uncertainty concerning the shot. If you do, get up and start over.
8. Focus on the Target: Before the final stroke, focus on your target (e.g., the center of the desired ghost-ball position or the contact point on the OB) and give your eyes time to settle.
9. Stroke with Confidence: Now execute the final stroke with a slow backswing, non-rushed forward transition, and smoothly accelerating forward stroke, concentrating only on delivering the cue straight with the desired speed.
10. Stay Down: Keep your head and body still during and after the final stroke.

And after every shot, be sure to diagnose how the shot went and take mental notes of what was off, if anything. Again, the pre-shot routine guidelines are demonstrated in **NV C.2**. Be sure to view the video to see how everything is applied at the table. And for more stroke advice, see the [stroke "best practices" resource page](#) in the FAQ section of my website.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from my series of articles featuring drills from the "[Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#)." Example clips from the first VEPP DVD can be viewed on the [VEPP website](#) or at [billiards.colostate.edu](#) under **NV C.1** through **NV C.4**. Next month, we'll look at a drill approach developed by Bob Jewett called "progressive practice," and I'll present some useful draw shot challenge drills, also from Disc I.

Good luck with your game,  
Dr. Dave



- [NV C.1](#) - "Vision center" alignment drill, from VEPP I
- [NV C.2](#) - Pre-shot routine recommendations, from VEPP I
- [NV C.3](#) - Progressive practice draw drills, from VEPP I
- [NV C.4](#) - Draw shot challenge drills, from VEPP I

**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 don't fully understand, please refer to the [online glossary](#) on my website.

*Dr. Dave is author of the book, DVD, and CD-ROM: "[The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards](#)," and co-author of the DVD Series: "[The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots \(VEPS\)](#)" and "[The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#)."*