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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).*

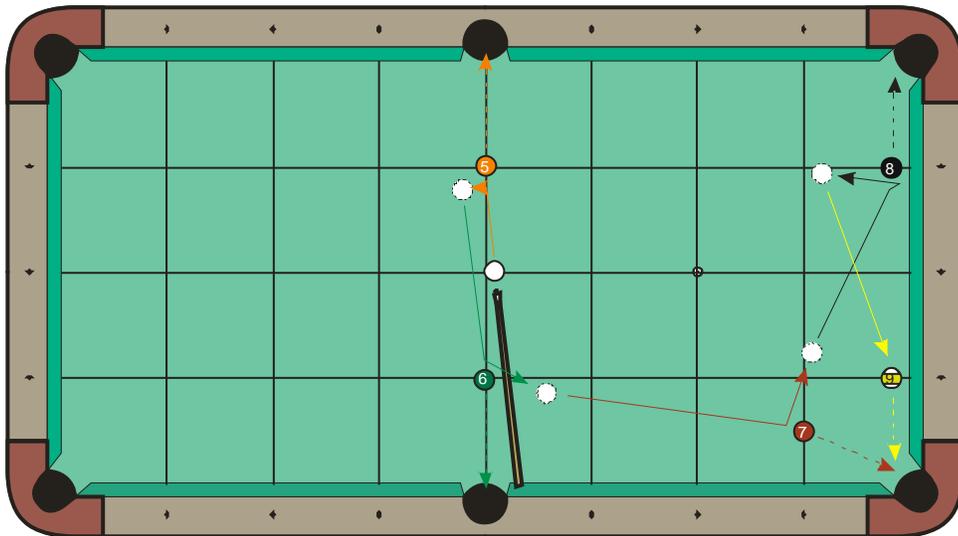
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This is the seventh article in a series based on the “[The Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)](#),” a five-disc instructional-DVD collection I recently created with fellow BD columnist Bob Jewett. VEPP is an organized and methodical training program and pool workout. It teaches you how to develop, assess, and track progress of skills for all facets of your game. An outline of the entire VEPP series along with video excerpts from each DVD can be viewed online at: [dr-dave-billiards.com/vepp](http://dr-dave-billiards.com/vepp). In the last few months, we’ve looked at useful position control drills from Disc II. This month, we look at some 9-ball pattern drills from Disc III: “[VEPP III – Patterns and Safety Play](#).”

You can work on cut, stop, follow, draw, wagon wheel, and target drills all day long and become fairly proficient with them with practice over time. However, if you can’t apply the skills appropriately in game situations, you won’t be a good player ... you’ll just be good at drills. To help people assess and develop their game-playing skills, Bob and I included a collection of 9-ball and 8-ball pattern drills that help test how well you apply skills in typical game situations. There are existing rating drills that have been around a while to help test offensive skills (e.g., [Hopkins Q Skills](#) and [FARGO](#)), and they are included on VEPP, but these drills begin with a break, which gives a random spread of balls. Because of this, the difficulty level of running the balls can vary wildly from one rack to the next. To provide a more uniform assessment, Bob and I decided to use the fixed-pattern approach.

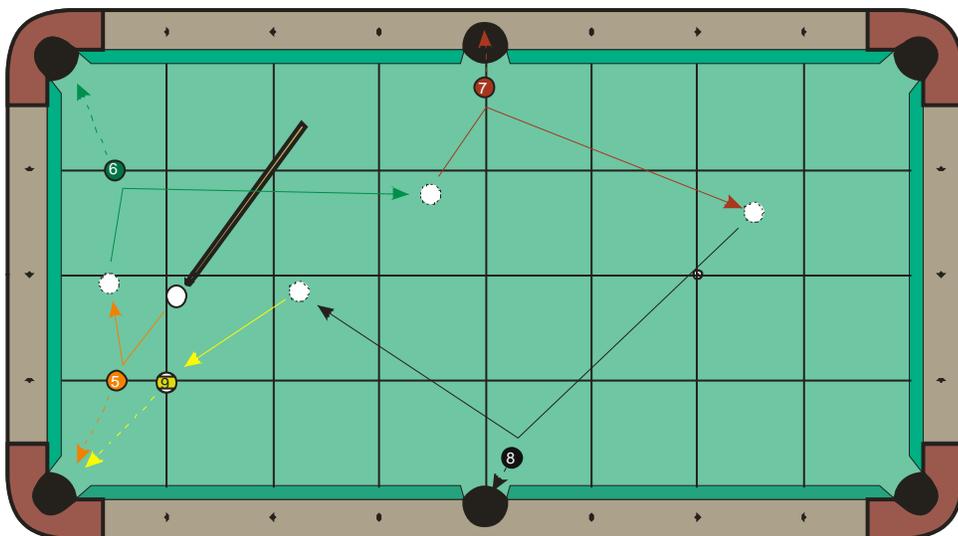
VEPP presents 12 different 9-ball patterns. They are organized into 3 levels with 4 layouts per level. Each level contains 4 layouts of 5 shots worth 1 point each. If you attempt each layout 5 times, that gives a maximum score of 100 ... a nice round number for an “exam.” The difficulty level increases from one layout to the next and from each level to the next. This helps an instructor or player determine a level suitable for practice. Diagrams for all of the layouts can be found in Section 4 of the [9-ball clinic handout](#) available on the VEPP website. The handout also contains a scoring sheet one can use to document results and monitor improvement over time.

**Diagram 1** shows the first layout in the first level (labeled “101A” in the handout). All ball positions in all layouts are either at diamond or half-diamond intersection points or an inch off or frozen to the cushion across from a diamond or pocket point. With each layout, you start with ball in hand and attempt to run the table in rotation. Part of the challenge of each layout is to decide where to place the cue ball (CB) to make the runout as easy as possible. The diagram shows a good starting position for this layout, close to the center of the table. This leads to a near stop-stop-stop-stop roadmap. In the [Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots \(VEPS\)](#), we call this a “Tom Cruise runout” because most of the shot sequences actually shot by Tom Cruise in the movie “The Color of Money” were set up to be very natural and easy to where even an actor with minimal pool skills could run out. Although, Mr. Cruise does deserve a little credit for being skilled enough to at least be somewhat convincing as a pool player on the big screen. Tom also created a lasting legacy with his showboating karate-style dance moves that have inspired many people to make fools of themselves in pool halls ever since, especially when “Werewolves of London” is playing on the jukebox. Thank you Mr. Cruise ... thanks a lot! Sorry, I digress. Let’s get back to some 9-ball layouts.



**Diagram 1** 9-ball pattern (level 1, layout 1)

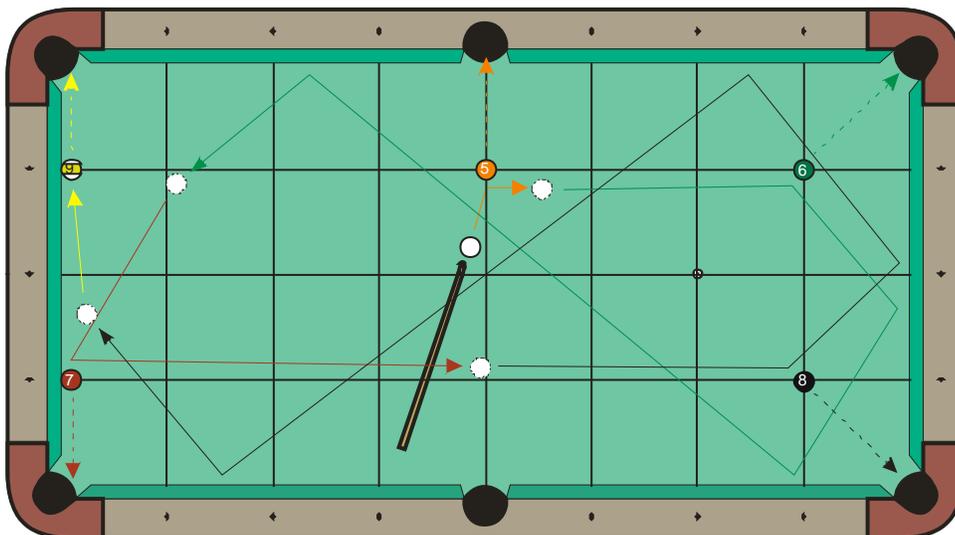
**Diagram 2** shows the first layout in the third level (labeled “103A” in the handout). This layout has the added requirement and challenge that the CB may not touch a cushion. This forces us to use stun and draw while leaving appropriate angles on shots. The diagram shows a suggested runout pattern. The challenge is to use the correct speed on the 6-ball shot to not leave enough but not too much angle on the 7 to get good position on the 8 without hitting a cushion. You also need to come off the 8 and get as straight as possible on the 9 to avoid hitting a cushion on the last shot.



**Diagram 2** 9-ball pattern (level 3, layout 1)

**Diagram 3** shows the last layout from the final level (labeled “103D” in the handout). An added requirement for this drill is to use three-cushion position routes off both the 6 and 8 to get position on the 7 and 9. A good starting position is nearly straight on the 5 to leave a natural three cushion path off the 6. Do you remember the 45° rule from [VEPS-II](#)? As demonstrated in [NV B.74](#), if the CB rolls into the end cushion at close to a 45° angle, the CB will track very close through the center of the table. Here, we want to use a slightly shallower angle off the 6 into the end rail to go behind the 8 and slightly short of the table center giving a perfect line into the 7-ball shot. Running English helps maintain CB speed off the first two cushions and

helps the CB take a natural and consistent path. The three-cushion paths in this runout are very common in 9-ball position play, so it is important to practice them.



**Diagram 3** 9-ball pattern (level 3, layout 4)

Would you have approached these layouts any differently? Try them out, along with the others in the handout to see how you do on the “exam.” Demonstrations of the layouts in this article can be viewed in **NV C.9**, and [VEPP-III](#) demonstrates all 12 of them. As with all of the drills on VEPP, you should record your scores and track your improvement over time. The [“How to Use VEPP”](#) document on the VEPP website contains some sheets to help with this. Scores are useful for both assessment and to provide a challenge. You can also use them to set goals for future improvement.

I hope you are enjoying and benefitting from my series of articles featuring drills from the [“Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\)”](#). Example clips from the third DVD can be viewed on the [VEPP website](#) or at [billiards.colostate.edu](#) under **NV C.9** through **NV C.12**. Next month, we’ll look at a selection of the 8-ball pattern drills.

Good luck with your game,  
Dr. Dave



normal video

[NV B.74](#) - Center-of-table position and routes, with the 45° rule, from VEPS II

[NV C.9](#) - 9-ball pattern drills, from VEPP III

[NV C.10](#) - 8-ball pattern drills, from VEPP III

[NV C.11](#) - Angled-hide safety drill, from VEPP III

[NV C.12](#) - Hide-behind-target safety drill, from VEPP III

**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: [“Video Encyclopedia of Pool Shots \(VEPS\)”](#) and [“Video Encyclopedia of Pool Practice \(VEPP\).”](#)*