
HOW TO BUY A CUE

1. Remember in the movie “The Hustler” when Eddie Felson walks into the pool room with his two-piece cue and leather satchel? His potential opponent proclaims, “I don’t play guys with leather satchels.”
 2. My, how times have changed. These days serious players and novices alike are sporting “leather satchels”. But it’s what’s inside the satchel that counts. The next time you are in the market for a new cue, keep the following things in mind:
 3. **Budget:** This is your first consideration. Some beautifully crafted cues are actually pieces of art. They carry the price of fine art also. Good cues come in all price ranges nowadays, both new and used, handcrafted and production.
 4. **Customer and Production:** A custom made cue stick is the gold standard for many, but you must know what you want and need before you order it. Production cues are more widely available to try before you buy. Take advantage of the opportunity to hit a few balls before the purchase. This way you can decide if you like the hit and the sound it makes. It’s not an instrument you can play music with but it does have a distinct sound. Who knows? If it feels good to you, you may be able to make the balls dance around the table!
 5. **Looks:** The proliferation of cue makers today gives the consumer an unlimited choice in cue appearances. The varieties of dark woods, light woods, mosaics, inlays, wrap colors and signature series available are enough to spin one’s head! (For humans, that can be an uncomfortable situation.) Take note that the best-looking cue is the one that performs best in your hands! SO, the most important decisions you make about your cue come from an analysis of how your cue can benefit your game.
 6. **The Butt:** Do you have large hands or small hands? A butt thickness that is matched to your hand size will increase the comfort you feel when holding the cue. DO your palms sweat when you play? IF they do, you may want a nice Irish linen, cork, or leather wrap to absorb the moisture. Maybe you prefer a smooth butt with no wrap at all. You don’t want your stick coming out of your hands and flying across the table on a long draw or break shot! Replacing the window could cost more than the cue.
 7. **The Shaft:** Here you need to decide on a level of “stiffness” as well as thickness. A stiff shaft will give you a harder hit, while the whippier shaft will impart a softer hit. Most shafts have a pro taper. (That is, the front twelve inches or so from the ferrule as the same diameter so that the bridge hand does not notice a change in size on the swing). Today the shaft diameters range in size from 11.25 to 14 mm. The thinner shaft will allow you to impart more spin on the ball, but be careful. Without excellent control of your swing, you will spin the cue ball without wanting to. For this reason, a thicker shaft (13 to 14) is recommended for beginners and intermediate players. It will assist your ball-pocketing efforts and center ball hit on the cue ball.
 8. **Length:** Standard cue length is 58 inches. (That’s 4 feet 10 inches). IF you’re a tall drink of water, you will want a longer cue. Otherwise you will be cramped up and unable to follow through. Humans are bigger and stronger today so it stands to reason the cues must be longer to accommodate the body types. Actually a 61-62 inch cue is not that uncommon today. If you are petite, you may want a shorter cue so it is easier to handle and balance.
 9. **Weight:** Typical weights range from 17 ounces to 21 ounces. However, I know a player who’s game of choice is banking (no he doesn’t work on Wall Street) who uses a 26 ounce cue. He feels it helps keep the cue on
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line, and he doesn't ever try to muscle a shot (hit it hard). True enough, a heavier cue may groove your stroke but it can tend to overpower the shot if you are not careful. It is much harder to overpower the shot with a light cue. Snooker players use much lighter cues because snooker balls are so much lighter. However, it eventually comes down to personal preference.

10. **Tip:** While you can always change your tip, you need to take it into consideration with your original purchase. Tips can be hard, medium and soft. Like shaft stiffness, it will effect the hardness of the hit. It will also cause the cue ball to spin to different degrees. Keep in mind also, that a hard tip will retain its shape longer than a soft tip. However you **MUST** rough it up much more frequently due to the glaze formed on the tip. If you don't, you'll be chasing the cue ball all over the pool room from miscues. Remember, some places charge double to play on the floor . . .

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