

POOL CUE QUESTIONS

How do I best protect my cue?

The best cue protection is a good case, with a hard case being more protection than a soft case, although most pros use soft cases. The shaft is what plays pool, so anything that can be done to protect the shaft is a benefit. If the case will get bumped much, it might be good to get a set of joint protectors that screw onto the joint ends to add that little extra protection. If all else fails, it is a good idea to buy an extra shaft.....Two cues won't hurt either.....

How do I clean and maintain the shaft?

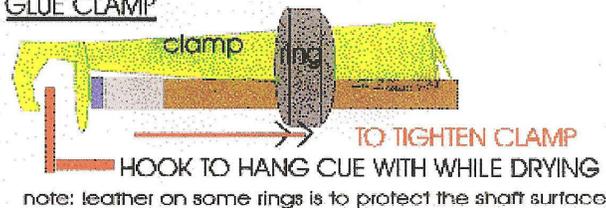
This question has a lot of answers, and we have a lot of materials that come from numerous suppliers to do just this kind of thing. A caution -- wet things will warp cues, and sandpaper will grind them down to pencil sticks.....A book could be written on this subject alone. You can get dirt off with Windex.....put it on a paper towel, not the cue, and get it off quickly. Clorox can get out really nasty stains, but it will warp a cue too. If you like a fluffy smooth cue, some people use very fine grit sandpaper on the shaft, but what you are doing is reducing the diameter, and probably cutting it crooked. If you like a smooth slick shaft, you can burnish with a piece of paper like a grocery bag, but the heat created by burnishing can warp a cue if not carefully done. For a really slick shaft you can use a shaft wax, but you need to know what you are doing to use it properly....read the instructions well. We provide the service of cleaning and doing whatever is needed for cue shafts, and it may be cheaper than a ruined shaft.

How do I replace a cue tip?

This is a job that anyone can do, but with the development of custom cues, it is not something that you want to do unless you know what you are doing, and you have the equipment you need. This reference is to a drawing we did showing the proper equipment and procedure for preparing (sanding) the shaft and tip prior to gluing, and the proper way to use a glue clamp. There are several glue materials on the market at this point that work well for various tip and ferrule materials. We are forced to use different glues in-house to compensate for the multitude of materials that different cue-makers use. The other trick is selecting the right tip.....and there are a lot of tips now!!!!!!

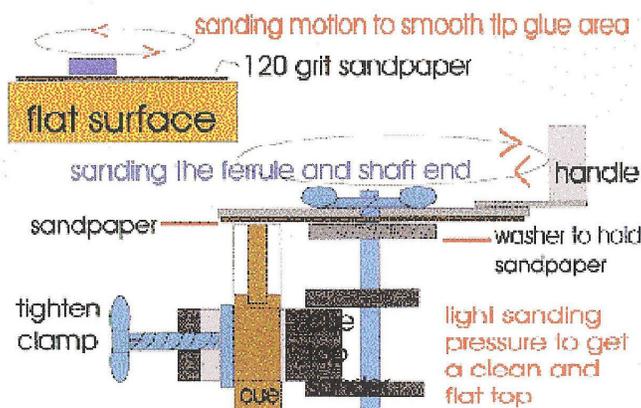
POOL CUE SERVICE PROCEDURE:

GLUE CLAMP



cue tip and ferrule sanding

sanding the cue tip



How do I select a cue tip?

This was once an easy question.....now it is as tough as they get. There are soft, medium, and hard tips....and then very hard tips. Most custom manufacturers use a hard or very hard tip. Most novice players scratch with a hard tip.....for a lot of reasons. I would recommend a medium tip for a beginner, and listen to a lot of grief from most pros. The choice of tips is huge now, with new tips coming out every year. Tips are made of everything from buffalo hide to plastic. The best tip for the individual is the one that does what he needs best, but there are trade-offs. Soft tip holds chalk real well, but a soft tip dents easily and can mess up the next shot. Medium tip is a little forgiving about not chalking regularly, and for some people holds a ball well. Hard tip does not hold chalk well, but does not dent / most pros use a hard tip. Hard tip can be pressed to reduce mushrooming and denting if desired. A very hard tip is available, but is more expensive / usually buffalo hide from France. A plastic tip is available, but I have never seen a serious player use it yet.

How do I get the right size replacement cue tip?

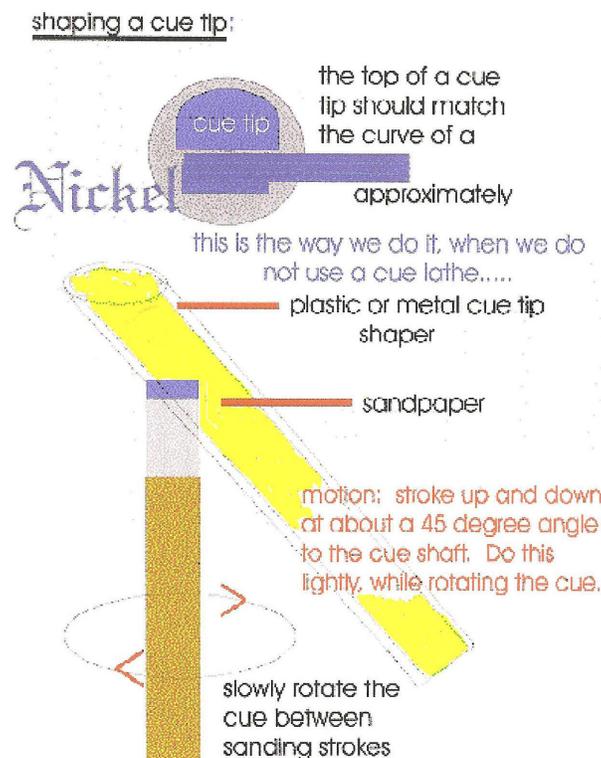
This question has several right answers, but a lot depends on what you are doing, and how you are doing it. For the average player who might want to be able to do emergency repairs at home or in the field, you will need to measure the ferrule diameter in millimeters (ranging from 10 mm. to 14mm), and then buy the proper size tip for your cue. For someone doing commercial tip repair, it is normal to buy the largest tip available and then cut it down to size for the cue you are re-tipping (with a lathe).

How do you measure a cue tip?

We use a micrometer or a tip gauge. A tip gauge looks like a credit card with different size holes in it. Most cue tips are available in sizes 11 mm through 14 mm in whole sizes, and some in half sizes. Cue tips usually come in boxes of 50, but H.E.A.D.S. Inc. will sell them in any quantity desired. In cue tip selection it is much better for the tip to be too large, than too small; especially if you are sloppy at gluing one on. To get odd size tip, and sometimes to make them fit properly, it is often necessary to sand the sides of the tip to exactly fit the ferrule. This is a job that must be done very carefully, or the ferrule and shaft can be damaged.

How do I shape the tip of my cue?

The drawing shows how to use an inexpensive standard issue tip shaper. There are numerous other devices designed to do this same job. The object is the same. The idea is to put a degree of curvature on the tip to allow a greater degree of direction control. A flat tip is worthless. If you want a comparison, use a grinder to flatten out a hammer head, and see how many crooked nails you get.



How do I maintain my tip for best play?

The first thing is to get the correct shape as above, and then to maintain the shape with any of several devices designed for that job. The cue tip will flatten out and possibly mushroom as you play with it. This needs to be cured first. To cause a hard tip to hold chalk better, there are a number of devices designed to put a texture on the tip.....sort of like punching small holes in it. H.E.A.D.S. Inc. has a number of devices for this purpose, with most fitting in a pocket easily.

How do I get out a dent in the cue?

Knicks and dents occur, and to a limited extent can be removed. This is work better left to a professional, but the same things that warp a cue, can occasionally be used very carefully to remove dents.....heat and moisture. A new shaft costs about \$100.00 or more, so be careful.....

How do I straighten a cue shaft?

This is another thing that is a major problem to many, but a real tricky thing to fix. As in getting out dents, the things that warp cues will bend them, but the question is how much. H.E.A.D.S. Inc. has worked with this issue for years, but there is no sure cure. Heat, moisture, and pressure will warp or bend a cue. We will not guarantee any work we do in this regard, but occasionally we luck up, other times we throw the shaft away.

How do I choose a ferrule?

Do you want to match what you have, or do you want something different? There are a lot of ferrules and ferrule materials out there, including brass ferrules. A house cue will normally have a fibre ferrule or plastic of some type. Most custom manufacturers use a special ferrule of some type. You can put most ferrules on any type of stick, but the installation for each type of ferrule may be a little different. It is important to note that the ferrule will change the hit of the cue (a lot in some cases). Another note, if you decide to buy a ferrule, is to get the correct cue shaft diameter. Some ferrules come in various diameters, and some ferrules come in one diameter, and have to be cut to match the diameter of the shaft. To make this a little more difficult, the tenon diameters (center holes) and lengths also vary a lot.

How do I take off a ferrule?

Simple answer is to remove the tip, sand off the glue, and pull it off, if it is not glued on. Before you get out the pliers, remember that the new shaft will be about \$100.00 or more. If you do not break the shaft, but just mess up the tenon, then that will shorten the shaft by as much as the length of the tenon, if not more. This is not a job to be undertaken lightly, and may well end up costing far more than a repair shop will charge to do the job properly. In our shop we usually cut the ferrule off with a cue lathe.

How do I put on a ferrule?

This is a job better left to a professional, but shade tree mechanics are everywhere. The first job is to remove the old ferrule, or to cut a new tenon. This is work best done on a lathe. If this process is not done carefully, the only thing to do is to cut the shaft and start over with a new tenon and ferrule if need be. This is very close tolerance work, and will require a micrometer of some sort, to get as close as you need to be. Normal house cues generally have the ferrule held on with a pressure fit. Some custom cues have the ferrule glued on, or screwed on.

Why does my cue sound hollow when I shoot?

It might be because you broke it, or the joint is loose. The more likely reason is because the tip mushroomed, and is wider than the ferrule. We see this, a lot. The solution is to sand or cut the tip down so that it is the same width as the ferrule. A broken cue or loose joint takes longer, and is not something the average player should mess with.

Why does a cue have so many parts?

A better question is why not use a broom handle? The cue is shaped to make it easy to shoot. A jointed cue is made to make it easier to carry, easier to put in a case, easier to take care of, and easier to keep straight. The various cuts and different woods in the butt are there to add cushion to the shot.....try a broom handle and see the difference. The shaft has a ferrule to keep it from splitting, and a tip to prevent excessive ball slippage. Weight screws and weight inserts (under the wrap) are there to aide balance and feel. The butt rubber is there to protect the cue when you make a bad shot, and bang the cue on the floor in frustration etc. To make this even more complicated, there are a multitude of variances for each of the above features.....not to mention cost.

Who should work on my cue?

A good question with no clear answer. With a custom made cue, it is often best to send it to the manufacturer. For simple things like tip replacement on inexpensive cues, there are a multitude of places to get the work done. For more complicated activity it is best to get a qualified shop. You will know how good the shop is, when you play with the cue after a repair. Just be glad a cue is not an airplane, perhaps you won't lose anything more than your money.

Who is the best manufacturer?

Someone might have answered this years ago, but an answer to this now would get me flamed for sure. We plead the fifth amendment as we look for a deep hole to hide in. The only comment that is safe, is to say that there are now so many differences in quality cues, that there is a tremendous amount of variance for the buyer to consider. Look at the following:

- type of shaft taper and construction....tip / ferrule / taper length / wood / finish / feel / hit balance point
- type of joint / metal to metal Vs. wood to wood, makes a big difference in feel
- weighting and weight adjustment features appearance, finish, color, feel, wrap, smoothness
- reputation of the manufacturer, where was it made, who made it..... warranty, service, replacement parts, resale value
- does it make you feel good just to pick it up, a lot of a cue is your mental attitude.

What is a cue made out of?

Years ago this might have been an easy question. Today anything goes, including diamonds, woods of all types, plastics, metals, leather, string, etc. The primary wood in this country for the shaft is hard rock maple, but in Europe, Ashe is the typical choice, and in the Orient they use Ramin wood. In the future there seems to be a move to plastics, but it will probably take a long time to get accepted by most pros, if ever.

What goes into normal cue construction?

A parts schematic. If you need a part, figure out what it is called, and give us a call. Most of this stuff is not on the website, but we can get most parts of a cue or table that you may need.

What is a brass ferrule?

A brass ferrule is often found on European snooker or billiard cues that have particularly small shaft diameters that need the extra support that metal gives. A lot of these shaft diameters are about 10 mm, which is close to the average tenon diameter.

What is an Irish Linen Wrap?

Irish linen is a string wrap wound around the butt in the general area of the butt where the rear hand holds the cue. The name came from the original Irish source for the string. The string used today comes in every color, and color combination imaginable.

What is the balance point?

The balance point is the point on the butt that will allow you to balance the cue when you hold it with one finger. The balance point will usually be near the top of the wrap, and will be more or less forward with different manufacturers. To adjust the balance point and overall weight of some cues, the manufacturers will use numerous alternatives, running from no weighting to removable weight screws. In commenting on balance point you will often hear comments like weight forward, or butt heavy, or balance neutral. This will normally refer to how the cue feels when you hold it just prior to a shot.....different strokes for different folks.

What is a "pro" taper?

Look at that cue closer. You thought the cue was crooked when you looked down the shaft...huh? More likely what you are seeing is the taper. A Pro taper is the way the shaft is cut to be a fairly constant diameter for some distance down from the tip. This constant diameter will range from 6 inches to about 18 inches back from the tip. This taper makes the cue easier to hold while shooting, and allows the shaft additional flex when hitting a ball. There are a lot of opinions on what length of taper is best.....you be the judge.

What is the big deal about chalk?

There is no big deal if you are using a soft or medium tip, but on a hard or very hard tip there is an adhesion problem that some chalks do better with than others. Try several before deciding what you will use in a tournament. The choice of chalk will make a difference in play.

When do I replace the tip?

Do not play with a tip that gets worn away to the point that you might potentially damage the ferrule or shaft. We do not have a gauge for this, but there should be some side to the tip showing above the ferrule. Replacing the ferrule is expensive, and a lot of ferrules will crack if the tip gets too thin.

When is the cue going to warp?

Most cues are made of wood, need I say more? As with most wood products, a cue does not like water, or wet anything. Wood when subjected to heat extremes will bend, and this is most pronounced with heat, although cold does not help either. Extended pressure (even if light) will also bend wood after some amount of time. The jointed cue, the cue case, and normal reasonable care will go a long way towards combating these influences.

Typical causes for warping are:

- Putting the cue in the back window of a car.....even in a case (heat from the sun)
- Leaning the cue in a corner
- A cue getting left in the rain, or a flooded or damp basement (water)
- Poor quality or improperly installed cue racks
- Left on a table with the tip over the rail (pressure)
- Not separating a two piece cue for storage.....
- Not using a cue case.....
- When you do something stupid, or don't read the instructions, or you have a bad hair day...
- THE WORST.....Poor quality cues.....

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