How To Play -- Basic Guidelines Overview for Table Shuffleboard

Overview: Table Shuffleboard games are loved by all ages!!

There was a time when table shuffleboard games were loved only by the players, not operators, or location owners. The game was thought of as an "older person's game" or an "expensive bar table." Often times table shuffleboard is confused with "deck/floor" shuffleboard where players push a stick on the ground to get their puck to the scoring area. Times have changed! Table shuffleboard has become a competitive and growing sport amongst players of all ages. With the success of Sports Bars, Brewery Restaurants and Family Fun Centers, table shuffleboard has caught on with players of all ages. In addition, many shuffleboard players are putting these shuffleboards in their own homes. The games involve skill and, of course, a little luck. FUN FOR ALL AGES to play!

Table Shuffleboard Description

Briefly, the object of the game is to slide, by hand, all four of one’s Weights alternately against those of an opponent, so that they reach the highest scoring area without falling off the end of the board into the alley. Furthermore, a player’s Weight(s) must be farther down the board than his/her opponent’s Weight(s), in order to be in scoring position. This may be achieved either by knocking off the opponent’s Weight(s), or by outdistancing them.

Outdoor/Deck Shuffleboard Description

A full outdoor shuffleboard court is a long rectangle with scoring areas at either end. A line is drawn across the court toward each end, this is the "baseline" and the area from the end to the baseline is called the "shooting area". From this line to the next line, is the "10 OFF" area. The edges of the 10-off area are reduced slightly by two slanting lines at the same angle as the scoring triangle described next. The 10-off area is also split into left and right sides by a small thin triangle centrally placed. The second line forms the base of an isosceles triangle, the scoring area, the point of which is further down the court. The triangle is divided into five areas: a line is drawn from the tip and the small triangle it delineates is marked "10", the remaining area of the scoring triangle is bisected both horizontally and vertically to form four areas. The two areas next to the 10 area are marked "8" and the two areas next to the 10 off area are marked "7". Even further down from the tip of the scoring triangle is yet another line across the court known as the "dead line" - disks must cross the line in order to be counted as in play.

How To Play With 2 Players (Table Shuffleboard)

To start a game, both players stand at the same end of the shuffleboard. Players toss a coin or otherwise choose who shall shoot first Weight, and what color Weights each shall have (it is a advantage to shoot last).

The first player slides his/her first Weight toward the opposite end of the board, which becomes the scoring end. His/Her opponent then shoots his/her first Weight in a similar manner, attempting either to knock off the other player's first Weight, or to outdistance it. The two players continue shooting their Weights alternately, until all eight Weights have been shuffled. When this has been done, one round of play has been completed.

The player who’s leading Weight is farthest down the board (away from the players) is the winner of the round. The winner’s score is then totaled and registered on the scoreboard (see Method of Scoring on page 3)

The players then proceed to the opposite end of the shuffleboard, where the Weights are now resting. Another round of play is begun in exactly the same manner as described above, from this end of the board, with the winner of the previous round shooting first Weight. The game continues for as many rounds as are necessary, until one player has scored 15 points (or some still play to 21 points) to win the game.

How To Play With 4 Players (Table Shuffleboard)

When four players compete, they play as doubles teams of two players each. One player from each team is stationed at each end of the board, so that two opposing players are at the same end, with their partners at the opposite end.
Having decided by toss of a coin, or by other means, which team shoots first and which will shoot Red or Blue Weights, the play begins as in a two-player game – the first player slides his Weights toward the opposite end of the board, which becomes the scoring end. The opponent at his side then shoots his first Weight in a similar manner. The two players continue shooting their Weights alternately, until all eight Weights have been shuffled. At this point, one round of play has been completed.

The players at the opposite end of the board, where the Weights are now resting, clear the board and begin another round of play from their end, in exactly the same manner and with the partner of the previous round’s winner shooting the first Weight. The players continue as many rounds as necessary, until one team has scored a total of 15 points in knock off typically (or some still play to 21 points).

**GENERAL METHOD(S) OF SCORING**

**Table Shuffleboard Scoring**

After all Weights in a round have been shuffled, the players whose leading Weight is farthest away from the playing end is the winner of the round. The winner’s score is then determined by adding the values of all his leading Weights which lie ahead of the loser’s leading Weight. ONLY THE WINNER SCORES IN A ROUND.

**EXAMPLE:** If a RED Weight is the most distant Weight from the playing end at the completion of a round, RED becomes the winner of the round, and only RED can score. To determine RED’s score, total the value of each RED Weight which lies ahead of the leading BLUE Weight. RED Weights which are either cut off by or which lie behind the leading BLUE Weight are not scored. If there are no BLUE Weights remaining on the board, all remaining RED Weights are scored.

**Outdoor Shuffleboard Scoring**

Players slide disks alternately. To start, the four disks are placed within the left half of the 10-off area and other four disks within the right side, the small thin triangle in the middle of this area dictating the middle boundary of each side. Each disk must be played and the sliding motion must start within the 10-off area and finish within the scoring triangle. If a disk does not reach the furthest dead line, it is immediately removed from play. Any disk that tips off the edge of the court is also immediately removed from play.

Naturally, players will aim both to push their own disks into the scoring areas or strategically advantageous positions while also attempting to knock opponent's disks out of play or into the 10-off area.

Scoring occurs once all eight disks have been played and is according to the areas marked on the court with 10 points being deducted for any disks in the 10-off area. A disk must be entirely within one of the five areas and not touching the outside lines of that area in order to score the amount marked within. Disks that lie beyond the 10-off area are ignored. For the purposes of scoring the penalty 10-off area, however, the small triangle that delineates the left and right halves of the 10-off area is ignored. Disks still score if they are on top of another disk. Judges should position the eye directly above any disks that are controversially positioned in order to decide whether or not a line is being touched.

The game is won by the first person to reach 75 points although this cannot be achieved during a game - all eight disks of the final game must be played and the scores calculated before a player can claim victory.

**VALUES OF WINNER’S SCORABLE WEIGHTS (Table Shuffleboard)**

The value of a winner’s scorable Weights is determined by the zones in which those Weights lie. There are three main zones: Trey, Deuce, and One, plus a bonus Four for Weights overhanging the far end.

1. Winner’s Weights that touch or are in front of the Deuce line and are completely clear of the first foul line nearest the shooter, lie in the One zone and score 1 point.

2. Winner’s Weights that touch or are in front of the Trey line and are completely clear of the Deuce line, lie in the Deuce zone and score 2 points.

3. Winner’s Weights between the Trey line and the end of the board, but completely clear of the Trey line and not extending over the far edge of the board, lie in the Trey zone and score 3 points.

4. A winner’s Weights, any part of which extends over the far edge of the board, is called a Hanger or Shipper, and scores 4 points.

5. In the case of a tie, or where no Weights are left on the board at the end of the round, there is no winner. Thus no score is counted. The next round is begun in the usual manner, except that the privilege of shooting last changes hands.

6. To be legal, each Weight must pass the foul line closest to the shooter. Whether or not a Weight is resting on a line is determined by looking down directly over the top of the Weight, from the scoring end of the board.

**GENERAL RULES GUIDELINES OVERVIEW (Table Shuffleboard)**

**I. Common Courtesy**

A. All generally accepted rules of good sportsmanship and good conduct should apply at all times during the match.

B. It is considered common courtesy for each player to step back from the board after he/she has delivered a Weight, in order to give his/her opponent complete freedom of the board, with no interference while shooting.

**II. Short Weights**

A. Any Weight not completely clearing the foul line (on longboards this means the foul line nearest the player) after being delivered, shall be considered an illegal Weight and shall be deposited in the alley immediately.
IV. Violations

A. A player may not touch the playing surface of the board with his/her free hand.

B. A Weight which is legal when delivered, but is subsequently knocked back on the near side of the foul line by another Weight, is then considered to be an illegal Weight and shall be deposited in the alley.

C. Any Weight which, after being delivered, clears the foul line, but subsequently bounces back into the illegal zone after striking another Weight(s) or cushion, is considered to be illegal and must be removed from the board. However, its action upon any other Weight(s) before it bounced back is considered to be legal.

III. Violations Which Do Not Carry Penalties

A. Should a player accidentally shuffle an opponent’s Weight, said Weight is to be replaced with one of his/her own, in its final position.

B. A Weight shuffled upside down is a “dead” Weight, and must be removed from the board immediately.

C. If a Weight that is shuffled upside down knocks off a Weight(s) already on the board, the Weight(s) knocked off shall be replaced in the position occupied before being knocked off, and the upside-down Weight removed from the board. Where the Weight(s) cannot be replaced properly, see penalty.

D. Any Weight that is shuffled off the board and which rebounds back onto the playing field are “dead” Weight(s), and shall be removed. Should such a Weight knock off a Weight(s) already on the board, the Weight(s) knocked off shall be replaced in their previous positions.

E. Any Weight(s) struck and knocked upside down by another play Weight, shall be replaced right side up, and the round continued. Same also applies to a delivered Weight.

F. Should a Weight slip from a player’s hand while in the act of shooting, the player should have the privilege of another try provided that his/her arm has not moved in the forward motion for making the shot. Once the forward motion of the arm is started, any Weight which leaves the hand is considered played, and shall not be replayed.

G. A player shooting out of turn and delivering first Weight when he/she has the privilege of last Weight loses that privilege and must complete the round in the same rotation.

H. In Cushion Board play, a Weight which does not strike a side cushion, or which strikes both cushions after being delivered, shall be considered a “dead” Weight and removed from the board.

IV. Violations Carrying Penalties (Table Shuffleboard)

All of the following violations carry penalty of one point. Thus one point is deducted from the score of the offending player or team, and he/she or his/her team must shoot first Weight in the next round, regardless of who wins the round in which the offense occurs:

A. While shooting, the lower half of the player’s body shall not extend beyond the end of the shuffleboard table.

B. Playing Weight must not be held in the hand, while an opponent shoots. Similarly, the person shooting may not hold another Weight in his/her free hand.

C. In team play, a player may not go beyond the foul line nearest him/her at any time during the playing of a round, but he/she may ask or be advised of the position of Weights by his/her partner. However, in singles play, each player may approach the scoring end of the board, to determine the exact position of Weights on the playing field.

D. A player while in the of shooting must not touch the playing surface of the board with his/her free hand, although free hand may rest on the frame of the shuffleboard table.

E. A player while in the act of shooting must not touch the playing surface of the board with his/her playing hand, either before, during or after making a shot.

F. A player preparing to shoot must not rub his hands over the playing surface in any manner, since this either introduces foreign substances onto said playing surface or removes the powder wax already on the board.

G. A player shall not cause any vibration, such as slapping the table, leaning on the table, stamping on the floor, etc., whether intentionally or otherwise.

H. A player may not touch a Weight in play while his/her partner or either opponent is shooting.

I. A player may not touch the playing surface or frame of the table while his/her partner or opponent is shooting.

J. Players at the opposite end of the board from the delivery of Weights may not touch Weights in the gutter until all shooting for the round has been completed.

K. When a legal Weight(s) is moved or knocked off the board by a “dead” Weight and cannot be replaced in the previous position, the player or team who delivered the “dead” Weight shall be penalized.

L. It is understood that if any of the above infractions are committed by other members of the participating teams, who may not be actively engaged in play at the time, the same penalties will apply to their teams.

Outdoor Shuffleboard Penalties (Outdoor/Deck Shuffleboard)
A. Disk touching 10-off area line before being played - 5 off.
B. Disk touching side line or side of triangle while being played - 10 off.
C. Any part of a player's body going beyond or touching the baseline while playing a disk - 10 off.
D. Shooting an opponent's disk - 10 off.
E. Disks that are played illegally are immediately removed from play. Any disks that were displaced by an offending disk are also immediately removed. Any such opponent's disks are given back to the opponent to be replayed. For any disks so removed that had been lying within the 10-off area prior to the foul shot, the offender is penalized 10 points.

V. Scoring And Rail “Hangers”

A. A Weight overhanging the edge of the board at any point is “dead” if it falls from the board before the opponent's following Weight ceases motion. (Exception: See rule C, below.)
B. After an opponent's following Weight has been delivered and ceases motion, a score or rail “hanger” is legal, and must be replaced if it falls from the board without being directly hit by another Weight.
C. Should a hanging Weight fall from the board for any other reason than being legally knocked off, such as slapping the table, stamping on the floor, etc., it must be replaced in its original position and considered a legal Weight. A one-point penalty is made the offending player or team (see Section IV, G).

REGULAR TABLE SHUFFLEBOARD WITH 3, 6, 8 OR MORE PLAYERS

How To Play With 3 Players

By toss of a coin or other means, one of the three players drops out temporarily and the remaining two play one round against each other, exactly as in a two-handed match.

In the next round, the loser of the first drops out and the third party plays the winner. This continues, with the loser of each dropping out each time. In the event of no score, the same two players replay the round until a score has been reached.

When a player reaches designated game points (e.g., 15 or 21 points depending upon tournament format guidelines/rules), he/she wins and drops out. The remaining two continue playing against each other, until another player reaches game point designation (e.g., 15 or 21 points typically, depending upon tournament format guidelines/rules), to determine the second place winner.

How To Play With 6 Players (See 3 Person Team Bracket Format Options (Click To View))

The six players are divided into two teams of three players each. One player from each team drops out temporarily, and play is begun exactly as in a four-handed match.

The losing player of each round then drops out, and is replaced by the third member of his/her team. This continues until one team has scored game points (typically 15 points, but may still be 21 points in some tournament formats) to win the game.

How To Play With 8 or More Players (See tournament Bracket Charts for up to 8, 16, 32, 64 players)

The eight players are divided into two teams of four players each. Two players from each team are then stationed at each end of the shuffleboard. Play commences exactly as in a four-handed match, except that each player delivers only two Weights. A player shuffles his/her two Weights alternately with one of their opponents, after which his/her teammate does the same with the remaining opponent at that end of the table.

The next round commences at the other end, with the players stationed there, and continues until one team has scored 15 points in traditionally played table shuffleboard "kneck off" game (although some tournament formats may still play to 21 points, more commonly seen used in the loser bracket of a double elimination 2 of 3 format tournament event where, for instance, due to time constraints the tournament director may opt to have 2 of 3 in winner bracket, but 21 point in loser bracket), to win the game.

TAP AND DRAW (Overview)

(See tournament Bracket Charts for up to 8, 16, 32, 64 players)

An Excellent Game For A Beginner Opposing A Skilled Player

The object of this game is to shuffle your Weights up to the farthest scoring position on the Playing Field, without knocking your own Weights, or those of your opponent, off the board.

To start a contest, players decide by toss of a coin or other means, who shall shuffle first Weight and which color each shall have. In this game, it is an advantage to shuffle first.

Weights are shuffled alternately, until all eight have been shuffled, which completes one round of play, just as in regular shuffleboard.

You should strive to tap your Weight, with the purpose of advancing it farther up the board. However:

If you knock own Weight off the board, it must remain off and out of play.
If you knock your opponent's Weight off the board, your own Weight must be removed from play, and your opponent's Weight replaced on the board in its original position.
If you knock your opponent’s Weight off the board, and at the same time advance one or more of your own Weights to higher scoring areas, your Weights must be returned to their original position, and your shooting Weight must be removed from the board.

If you tap any of your opponent’s Weights, so that they advance, they remain in their better scoring position.

**Method Of Scoring**

Scoring principals, and the method of computing the score, are identical with regular shuffleboard.

The player or team who scored in the previous round shuffles last in the next round. Remember, in this game it is an advantage to shoot first.

**Cushion Board Play**

To play **TAP AND DRAW** on a Cushion Board model, the same rules and methods explained above apply, except that each Weight must first carom or bank off either side cushion, en route to the scoring area.

**HORSE COLLAR (Overview)**

(See also Technical Points, Rule 1, below)

**How To Play With 2 Players**

Players stand at opposite ends of the board, facing each other. The first player shoots all 8 Weights consecutively toward the opposite end. After all Weights have been shot, the score is counted as shown on the next page. Then the board is cleared, and the opponent shoots the same manner, from the end of the shuffleboard at which he/she is standing. The players alternate shooting until one player has scored 51 points (see also Technical Points, Rule 1, below).

**How To Play With 4 Or 8 Player**

With more than 2 persons, Horse Collar is a team game. If there are 4 players, they divide into teams of 2 each; if 8 players, they divide into teams of 4. To start a game, the opposing teams station themselves at opposite ends of the shuffleboard – all players of one team at one end, all their opponents at the other end. The first team shoots all its Weights toward the opposite end, with each member of the team shooting his/her quota consecutively, in the following manner:

On a 2-man team, the first player shoots 4 Weights in a row, and then his partner shoots the remaining 4.

On a 4-man team, the first player shoots 2 Weights in a row, and each of his/her partners in turn shoots 2 Weights in a row, until all 8 Weights have been delivered.

When all 8 Weights have been delivered, the score is counted as shown on the next page. The opposing team then clears the board, and shuffles its 8 Weights in the same manner described above. The teams continue to alternate shooting, until one team has scored 51 points (see also Technical Points, Rule 1, below).

**Technical Points**

1. A game is not completed until the player or team which has been shooting last has taken its last turn at the board, even though the player or team shooting first has already scored 51 points or more. If both teams go over 51 Points, the one having the highest final score is the winner of the game.

2. During play, no contestant may leave his/her position to check the locations of Weights he/she or his/her partner(s) have played.

3. All Weights which do not completely clear the foul line nearest to the player shooting are dead Weights. However, they must be removed from the board.

4. On Cushion Board models, Horse Collar is played and scored exactly as described above; expect that each Weight must first carom off either side cushion, on its way to the scoring area. Furthermore, the center foul line of a Cushion Board applies to all foul line rules listed herein. (NOTE: Disregard the Five zones when scoring Horse Collar. Anything in these zones is considered to be in the Trey zone).

**Method Of Scoring**

After all 8 Weights in a round have been shuffled; it must first be determined whether at least 1 Weight is completely in the Trey zone, or overhanging the far edge of the playing field. **IF THERE IS NO WEIGHT IN THIS ZONE, NO SCORE OF ANY KIND CAN BE COUNTED**, regardless of how many other Weights remain on the board. If there is at least 1 Weight in the Trey zone, or overhanging the far edge of the playing field, then score is counted as follows:

1. All Weights that touch or are in front of the Deuce line, count for 1 point. This applies to the entire area up to the foul line, nearest the player who shuffled the Weights; but the Weights must be completely clear of the foul line, to be legal.

2. All the Weights between Deuce line and the Trey line, or touching the Trey line, count 2 points.

3. All Weights between the Trey line and the far end of the board, count for 3 points.

4. All Weights overhanging the board at the far end, count 13 points.

5. All Weights which fall into the alleys, or do not clear the near foul line, are dead and do not count.

**BASEBALL** (See also Technical Points, Rule 1, below)
Baseball is one of the many variations of Horse Collar, as described above. Baseball is played and scored exactly like Horse Collar, except that the scores are totaled and a winner named after nine innings (rounds) of play, rather than when one player or team has reached the arbitrary total of 51 points.

**HINTS FOR BETTER PLAY** *(Back to Top)*

Basically, you should strive for three main objectives, in order to win at table shuffleboard:

1. **Well-Placed Weight** – This is of paramount importance. Learn to place a Weight as far down the board as possible, without having it fall off. In Cushion Board models, learn to place it in the corners, for the highest scoring zone. This technique is best attained by frequent practice.

2. **Attacking Opponent’s** – You may have learned how to place a Weight in a high-scoring position, but so may your opponent. Thus, it is of importance to learn how to attack and knock off your opponent’s highest scoring Weights, so as to prevent them from scoring. Frequent practice will help you to develop this technique also.

3. **Blocking Your Own Weights** – When you have learned how to place Weight high in the scoring areas, you will want to protect it from your opponent’s subsequent attacks. The method of doing this is called blocking or screening a Weight, a familiar tactic in football and basketball play. Simply place your succeeding Weight behind your leading Weight in such a position that your opponent will not be able to touch your leading Weight in his/her attack. Never place a blocking Weight too close to the scoring Weight, because a good attacker will then be able to remove both of from the board.

**Develop Use Of Both Hands**

Shuffleboard is a game that requires ability with either hand. Beginners will find making shots with one hand just as simple as with the other, after a bit of practice. One should learn to favor neither hand, but rather to try to shoot an equal number of shots with either hand. Doing so will greatly improve his/her ability to play.

**The Use Of “Side-Wheeling” On Longboard Models**

While it may seem easier to shoot your Weight from the center of the board (free-hand), most players eventually learn the more accurate “side-wheeling” method of delivering a Weight on the Longboard models. To shoot in this manner, the player allows the third and fourth fingers of his/her shooting hand to slide along the side edge of the playing surface, so as to act as a guide and balance. His/Her Weight is more easily controlled, and he/she is assured a much greater degree of accuracy in placing it.

**The Use Of “Top-Of-Board” Shooting On Cushion Models**

Because angle-shooting is an important part of the Cushion Board game, a cushion player must learn to shoot from the center area of the board (Top-of-Board style), from any angle and with either hand. Thus he/she does not make use of the side edge of the playing top. Rather, he/she must rely more acutely on his/her own sense of direction and judgment in placing Weights.

**The Use Of “English” (Twist) On Longboard Models**

The use of English or twist on a Weight being delivered on a Longboard can greatly aid accuracy. Putting English on a shot is accomplished by twisting the thumb and forefinger away from the wrist and in toward the body, as the Weight is being delivered. Properly applied, it may greatly improves that Weight’s chance of remaining on the board, after it makes contact with an opponent’s Weight. The English acts like a brake, holding it in place. It also enables players to hide delivered Weights behind Weights already on the board, thus gaining the advantage of having a just-delivered Weight well blocked without further play. English can be of great value when making draw shots as well. Never use English on Cushion (aka Bumper or Bank) model shots because it can deflect Weights erratically when they strike the side cushions.

**SOUND WINNING STRATEGIES** *(Back to Top)*

**Shooting First Weight** – A Player who shoots first Weight should try to place it as far down the board as possible, along either rail. If his/her opponent fails to knock off that Weight, the first player should then try to place his/her next Weight in the opposite corner (similar to split in bowling). This gives him/her two Weights in good scoring position, yet far enough apart so that his/her opponent can attack only one of them in his/her next shot. Following this, the first player should then block his best scoring or remaining Weight. Shooting First Weight Against A Good Draw Player – A player who shoots first Weight against an expert draw player (one who can place Weights far down the board), should follow these basic tactics in order to prevent the draw player from getting high scores:

1. The first player should shoot his/her first Weight so that it lands in the Deuce zone. The expert draw player will have to knock off this Weight, rather than out-draw it.

2. In turn, the first player knocks off his opponent’s Weight and tries to stay on the board with his attacking Weight. Each time, the remaining Weight will lie slightly behind the previous Weight’s position. This strategy will result in only one Weight remaining on the board, it will be the expert’s Weight), but it will lie only in the One zone, thereby preventing a high round score.

3. Assuming there are no Weights left on the board after each player has delivered three Weights, the player shooting first should then attempt to place his/her final Weight as close to the Trey line as possible, straddling the same, if he/she is able. Such a placed Weight makes it extremely hazardous one. Actually, the draw player will have but one logical play: to knock off that Weight in hope to remain on the board with his/her own.

**Shooting Last Weight** – A player who shoots last Weight (it is known as the hammer) has the advantage in that round. How he/she uses this advantage depends on his/her skill. If he/she is a good draw player, he/she can count on last Weight to out-draw any Weight his/her opponent may have on the board.

However, the safest strategy for the novice is to play a Weight-for-Weight game when he/she has the hammer. That is, he/she should attempt to knock off anything his/her opponent has placed well down on the board, and at the same
time try to keep his/her own attacking Weight on the board (in most cases, unless you do not want to stick a weight, for instance, that your opponent may hide a weight with a go-around shot that you may not be able to hit or hit and stick with your hammer weight).